THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE COMMUNITY MUSEUM

by

JULIE ANNE VALLANCE

B.A., University of Western Ontario, 1977

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Department of Anthropology)

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

September 1981

© Julie Anne Vallance, 1981
In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of Anthropology

The University of British Columbia
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver, Canada
V6T 1W5

Date Sept 1, 1981
Acknowledgement

I wish to thank all of my informants, whose insights and hospitality were invaluable to me.

I also wish to thank Dr. Marjorie Halpin, Dr. Martin Silverman, and especially Dr. Michael Ames for his infinite patience and encouragement.
ABSTRACT

The following paper is an attempt to explore the internal dynamics of small community museums. This exploration takes the form of two case studies in which the various points of view of staff and volunteers are presented. The results point to the emergence of two distinct and generally conflicting orientations on the part of individuals in both museums. These orientations are identified respectively as service to the community, on one hand, and as a concern with standardization and control or professionalism, on the other.

The second focus of the paper deals with some of the recent reports concerning evaluation of training programs as well as future directions for community museums, as perceived by organizations such as the British Columbia Museums Association, the Canadian Museums Association, and the National Museums of Canada. What emerges from the examination of this literature is the growing preoccupation on the part of these organizations with the creation of a museum profession. It becomes clear that those who espouse this notion of professionalism demonstrate the same preoccupation with control and standardization as do the "professionally-oriented" individuals in the two case studies presented.

Finally, three alternative futures for community museums are presented. The first one envisions the complete professionalization of the small museum and the loss of its community service orientation. The second future shows the two orientations continuing in conflict, in some instances providing a creative dynamic. The third possible future is one in which all of the organizations and individuals involved recognize and take steps to preserve the unique nature of the community museum through astute training programs and support mechanisms, while
allowing for the limited and appropriate use of professional methods and standards.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter I. Pioneer Museum</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Volunteers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Interpretation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Spatial Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Alliances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creative Tension in Pioneer Museum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter II. Specialty Museum</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Staff</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Trustees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Responsibility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Professional Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Concept of Museum Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Spatial Orientation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Tensions in Specialty Museum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter III. Toward Professionalism</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Polarization of Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Current Focus of the Literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Backgrounds of Professionally-Oriented Individuals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Creating and Controlling the New Elite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Three Alternative Futures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The institution which runs by strict adherence to general rules gives up its own autonomy. If it tries to adopt equality or seniority or alphabetical order or any other hard and fast principle for promotion and admission, it is bound to override the hard case. Furthermore, it is bound to abandon its traditions and so its identity and its original special purposes. For these humanizing influences depend upon a continuity with the past, benevolent forms of nepotism, irregular charity, extraordinary promotions, freedom to pioneer in the tradition of the founders, whoever they were. (Douglas, 1970, p. 188)

We in Canada are witnessing the growth and development of a museum "profession." The new professionals differ from their predecessors, not only in terms of training, but in terms of attitudes and expectations as well.

This paper is an attempt to describe and analyse the differing orientations developing in two local museums, and to relate these orientations to the dynamic growth of professionalism as it is appearing in recent publications and reports.

The following case studies were conducted in two British Columbia museums in the summer of 1980. The methods used for description included both observation and interviewing. The case studies took place over a period of approximately two and a half months.
DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The research for this paper took place from mid-May to the end of August, 1980. It was funded by a student fellowship from the University of British Columbia.

Acquisition of data comprised two basic techniques. The head (or acting head) of each museum was first contacted by letter and later by telephone, during which time appointments for interviews were scheduled. Paid staff generally scheduled interviews in advance, while volunteers were generally interviewed in groups as they worked. Some interviews were conducted while simply following the staff member around in the course of his or her duties. All interviews followed a basic set of questions from which informants were free to digress (see appendix). The other technique was ethnographic observation and note-taking which involved visiting each museum on a number of occasions, making sketch maps, and chatting casually with staff and volunteers as they worked.

In Pioneer Museum [pseudonym], I interviewed fifteen individuals, but found that only eleven of the interviews yielded sufficient information to be used in the case study.

Specialty Museum [pseudonym] is a much smaller institution than Pioneer Museum, with only four individuals working on the premises. The trustees were supplied with questionnaires at the request of the director, who handled both their distribution and collection. Although I received responses from all twelve trustees, only two supplied sufficient information to be used in the study.

The third museum did not yield sufficient data for use in this paper. I visited the museum on several occasions, interviewed five
individuals, and chatted casually with a few others. The atmosphere of the museum was so fraught with apparent tension (which may or may not have been caused by my presence) that I failed to achieve the necessary rapport with the individuals involved to gain a clear understanding of the situation.

At this point, it is perhaps appropriate to point out the difficulties of doing such research in small museums. Although all of the museums in the study attempted to accommodate me as much as possible and almost all informants willingly gave long interviews, the conflicting forces operating in each case were such that my presence appeared to constitute a source of concern for several individuals. I soon learned that any outsider coming into a potentially unstable situation, asking questions and interviewing various individuals, can be perceived as a catalyst at best, ready to set off any underlying conflict. Yet, as I point out later in this paper, this experience is precisely the kind required by students to foster an appreciation of the day-to-day problems faced by museum staff members and volunteers in small community museums. Having acquired some awareness of the potential for conflict, I can only be grateful that they opened their doors to me at all, let alone with such hospitality as they generally extended.
CHAPTER I. PIONEER MUSEUM

Pioneer Museum is a "living" museum, with a professional staff of approximately twenty paid staff (including part-time workers) and a corps of approximately one hundred twenty volunteers (which fluctuates considerably from one season to the next). It is a popular local attraction which focuses on the history of the late nineteenth century, particularly that of the local area. Its exhibits include an ice cream parlour, a chapel, and a smithy. Volunteers man the various exhibits, explaining the artifacts, and performing craft demonstrations, as well as leading tours for children.

The museum has a relaxed, interactive atmosphere and visitors can be seen engaging the volunteers in prolonged conversations, mostly about the artifacts which they themselves have seen in the hands of their own parents or grandparents.

The Staff

Curator

The curator is a young man who has occupied this position for four and one-half years. He was originally hired as a cataloguer and gradually rose to his present position. At one point he worked as a janitor as well as a cataloguer. His background consists of three years as an English major in university, followed by a year of arts at a college. He had a three-month internship at the British Columbia Provincial Museum, all of the British Columbia Museums Association workshops, and the Canadian Museums Association correspondence course.

The responsibilities of his present position include care of the artifacts and research, including assistance in the training of volunteers. He also leads tours when the museum is short-handed. Much of
his time is spent in dealing with prospective donors and with requests from small museums for assistance.

Assistant Curator

The assistant curator was appointed to his position only three months prior to the study. He feels that he has "no special training" for the position. He studied archeology and anthropology in college and worked as both a volunteer and a paid staff member at an archeological field school. He is about to attend his first Provincial Museum seminar at another museum. He applied for the present job because he wanted to follow the artifact from "the archeological site to the museum."

His responsibilities include cataloguing and research, as well as leading tours when the need arises. Since he is relatively new to the job, he feels that he has yet to develop a complete relationship to the rest of the museum staff and the local community.

Education Coordinator

The coordinator has been with the museum for four years. Her background includes a degree in communications, a legal stenographer course, a "multi-small group and sociology background," and one year in an art gallery. Prior to working in the museum she owned her own business. When she "needed a rest," she applied to Canada Manpower and was placed with the museum. The responsibilities of her position include training and supervision of volunteers, and the arranging of special events, such as craft demonstrations.

General Store Manager

The general store manager is an elderly woman who has worked in

---

1 All quotations not otherwise attributed are taken verbatim from the writer's field notes.
the museum for three years. Prior to that, she worked with the Canadian Pacific Railroad and held a position in the Yukon as a resident supervisor of native children. She has worked in various areas in the museum, including the ice cream parlour and the gift shop. Her present responsibilities include the supervision of the store and most of the interpretation of artifacts for the visitors. She also takes over for other workers while they take their coffee breaks.

**Ice Cream Parlour Manager**

The ice cream parlour manager is a young woman who has recently completed a year of college. She is taking some time off from school to work, but plans to return to school in the future. Although she has had little real training for her position, she has spent several years as a volunteer with her church youth club. In addition to learning leadership skills from the experience, she also acquired a knowledge of public relations which serves her well in her present position. Her present responsibilities include the management of the museum's food operations, including staffing and inventory.

**Volunteer Coordinator**

The volunteer coordinator is a middle-aged woman who has occupied the position for only three months. Her background consists mainly of extensive volunteer administration experience which she gained as a volunteer herself. Her contact with the museum came about through her membership in a local vaudeville group which has put on numerous performances at the museum over the past three years. She also worked with senior citizens as a volunteer. Her areas of responsibility are volunteer staffing, recruitment, and supervision.

**Bookkeeper**

The bookkeeper is a middle-aged woman who has worked in the museum
its opening almost a decade ago. Her background consists of several years in business as a keeper of accounts with a local firm. Until recently her responsibilities included all of the museum's financial accounting. Recently, however, the museum's accounts have become somewhat too large for one person to handle and the municipality has assumed some of the responsibility for keeping the books.

**Gift Shop Manager**

The gift shop manager is a middle-aged woman who has held this position for two years. Prior to this, she was a volunteer and a docent, working in virtually every aspect of the museum's operation. She developed leadership skills during her several years of volunteer work and she continues to work as a volunteer in the gift shop of the local hospital. Her present responsibilities include the staffing and management of the gift shop.

**Volunteers**

Interviewing of volunteers was done in group settings, usually while they worked. I chose to focus on three women only.

**Mrs. A**

Mrs. A is a volunteer who has worked in the museum for seven years. She maintains that she has no real skills for the job, only interest and commitment. Her background includes years of volunteering as a Girl Guide leader, coordinator for Meals On Wheels, and church auxiliary member. She reports that her museum involvement is just the logical extension of community involvement in other areas.

**Mrs. B**

Mrs. B has been with the museum for only a year, having recently moved from another neighbourhood. She does volunteer work in order to
become part of the local "network" of women. Her background includes leadership of Cubs and Brownies and participation as a driver for the local cancer outpatient clinic. She reports that volunteer work has become more important to her as a social outlet since her children have grown up and left home.

Mrs. C

Mrs. C is a retired businesswoman who has worked in the museum for five years. Prior to volunteering in the museum she volunteered with the Red Cross and with local senior citizens. She feels that volunteering is important for her because she is used to being around people and misses them. She is caring for two elderly people at home, and the museum gives her an opportunity to mix with young people on a regular basis.

Responsibility

There are two basic levels of responsibility operating in Pioneer Museum. At one level is the responsibility to maintain professional standards and authenticity. At the other is the responsibility to serve the community and to be the source of community values. While they are not mutually exclusive concerns, most staff and volunteers tend to place one or the other responsibility first in their list of priorities.

Professional Standards

Regardless of the size of the museum or its handling staff, it is important for the director to imbue his staff with a clear understanding of the basic museum values. (Canadian Museum Association, 1975, p. 59)

The curator, assistant curator, and educational coordinator report concern over what they perceive to be "cumulative errors" within the
museum. They feel that these problems are reflected not only in interpretation but in the general behaviour of the museum's volunteers and in the museum's overall lack of coordination. They also complain that lack of knowledge and training on the part of some volunteers causes them to handle and display artifacts in potentially destructive ways. The curator in particular feels responsible for the safety of the artifacts, saying that the priorities of the museum are

... to collect, preserve, document and make available artifacts. The first three make the fourth almost impossible.

The curator reports that local donors frequently fail to understand the rules of donating and that problems are caused by their interference "after the fact." He wants to keep such individuals around for documentation and, if possible, for volunteering. However, he is forced to keep them at a distance and to call upon nonexistent rules to control them because they frequently attempt to use their positions as a form of leverage to exercise rights of use and display. He feels that such manipulation by donors is a threat to the integrity of the museum.

These three staff members report that their concern with the issues of standards places them in varying degrees of opposition to other staff members and volunteers. The assistant curator believes that volunteers have a casual approach to museum work:

Many are playing at their jobs. ... Volunteers should take the professional approach. ... They are here to do a job for us.

The curator feels that this same lack of professionalism extends to the local community and affects the museum in a negative way. A recent local festival, for instance, in which the museum was involved was an embarrassment because it was badly organized. The curator feels, due to the "missed deadlines and late pamphlets," that the community
should have hired a professional promoter, who would have done a more professional job.

All three of these workers express commitment to professional museum standards. These standards include professional attitudes on the part of all staff members, freedom of the curatorial staff from outside influence, and appropriate handling and interpretation of artifacts. These are standards promoted by the museum community and all three staff feel any lowering of these standards would reflect upon their own credibility and would be cause for concern. As senior staff members, they feel accountable to the museum community for the standards of professionalism in their museum. As the curator states, "Your reputation is at stake all the time." This commitment to professionalism and identification with museum colleagues at some points appears to take precedence over their identification with the local community, though the two sets of interests can also reinforce each other (see below).

Community Service

In order for the museum to fulfill its role in the community, it must be a conscious part of the community and the community must be conscious that the museum is part of it. (Canadian Museums Association, 1975, p. 73)

The gift shop manager, ice cream parlour manager, volunteer coordinator, bookkeeper, general store manager, and all three volunteers express the view that their first priority is to serve the community. All of these women have done volunteer work in the past; all except the bookkeeper and the general store manager have also done volunteer work in this museum. The notion of service or "doing good" reflects the concern on the part of this group with being useful to the community. The actual museum work appears to come second to the idea of performing a service for one's neighbour. The nature of their commitment appears
to be virtually unconditional. All of them refer to times when they willingly put in longer hours and did more than was necessary because the museum was in need. As Mrs. A states, "Indeed, we don't mind coming in every day if we're needed." The importance of their work lies not just in the act of volunteering itself but in long-term commitment, and willingness to respond to the needs of the institution as they arise, regardless of any personal inconvenience. This group does not perceive its responsibilities as limited or specific. These individuals tend to define what they perceive to be the needs of the museum and attempt to fulfill them without being asked. For instance, Mrs. A reports that through her conversations with a visitor she has been able to locate and have delivered a supply of firewood for the museum free of charge. Mrs. B states that she has encountered potential donors and has been able to solicit valuable donations for the museum. The bookkeeper recalls the opening of Pioneer Museum almost a decade ago, when she and many other workers put in long hours of overtime in order to ensure that the museum opened on time. These women feel that their responsibility to the museum and to the community is open-ended and not simply confined to the job that they happen to be doing at the moment.

Another aspect of the service offered by the museum and its staff is the chance for local people to volunteer and participate. The volunteer coordinator in particular feels that one of the museum's priorities is to provide both old and young individuals with opportunities to perform interesting and worthwhile volunteer work. For younger people it means that they can acquire a good work reference and some job skills. In fact, the museum is at present participating in a juvenile offenders' program, whereby a young person sentenced to a given number
of hours of community service can serve those hours in the museum under the supervision of the volunteer coordinator. For older individuals the museum can provide a worthwhile pastime and help to assuage loneliness. As the volunteer coordinator states,

We should contact these people. There's far too much isolation. I feel that very strongly. . . . Everybody is so desperately lonesome.

A final aspect of the museum's responsibility and one which these individuals feel is their special area, is the transmission of traditional community values. All of these workers report that the importance of the "living museum" concept lies in the ability to directly transmit a personal and local version of the past to children. Mrs. A feels that her own children, for instance, are ignorant of many important features of the local past and that the museum is the place to teach them:

I think that the education of the children and keeping alive [local] history is probably their biggest asset.

The members of this group, excluding the bookkeeper, who does not deal with the public, prefer to teach by demonstration, allowing children to "work" by filling coal oil lamps, chopping wood, and making soap. This, they feel, is the most effective way of teaching the young. As Mrs. B states,

Young children today don't know what the past was like. I'm sure they don't teach it in school. . . . People have got to remember what went on before.

These women feel that it is important to convey to local children a sense of "how much things have changed." They want children to appreciate values such as "hard work" and "community spirit" that were important to their ancestors.
Overlapping Responsibilities

The principle of professional standards and that of community service, while representing differing orientations in Pioneer Museum, are not mutually exclusive. While the ice cream parlour manager, volunteer coordinator, gift shop manager, general store manager, bookkeeper and three volunteers all place their primary emphasis on service to the community, they acknowledge the need for certain standards. The volunteers in particular talk about their role in assisting the caretaking work of the paid staff by maintaining a watch over the artifacts. As Mrs. A states,

If we see something broken or about to fall down we report it. . . . I think the volunteer is an important person in that way.

The manager of the ice cream parlour store states that she feels that the volunteers for the most part have an appreciation of the need for high standards. She herself expresses sympathy for the staff, reporting that conflicts over standards are inevitable and difficult for the paid staff to handle in a tactful way.

The curator, assistant curator, and educational coordinator report varying degrees of desire to increase the museum's role in the community. The assistant curator feels that it is possible to "cater the museum" and he hopes that the museum can have better communication with the community through the creation of a local historical society.

The educational coordinator expresses positive feelings about her involvement with local craftspeople who perform demonstrations. She herself is making an effort to establish a stronger personal relationship with the local community by volunteering on committees for local events. She describes herself as "committed" to the idea of the "living" community museum.
Illustration

An incident which illustrates a conflict brought about by these differing orientations is one which centres on the use of artifacts. The museum has a wood stove which, according to the curator, is old and somewhat fragile. The volunteers use the stove for demonstrations of traditional baking, an event which is popular with visitors. The curator is attempting to stop the volunteers from lighting it because he feels it is irresponsible behaviour, given the condition of the artifact. The volunteers are resisting his orders because they feel that demonstrations for the visitors are more important than the preservation of the artifact itself. They feel that artifacts must be used, and handled by visitors whenever possible. This particular controversy has become a test of power between the curator and some of the local volunteers. The curator feels that such erosion of his authority could make his position at Pioneer Museum untenable. Although he himself states that "Ninety percent of the collection is not unique, significant, or irreplaceable," he feels that the museum's major priority is to preserve artifacts rather than to possibly harm them by making them available to the public.

Definitions of Responsibility

The curator, assistant curator, and educational coordinator share a fairly specific definition of responsibility. Unlike other staff members who see their responsibility to the museum and the community as the same thing, these individuals are concerned almost exclusively with the museum itself. Their sense of responsibility is expressed as a concern with control over artifacts, donors, volunteers, and so on. Those aspects of the museum which are or threaten to be outside their control are a source of trouble for them. Therefore, for them "responsibility" appears to mean authority. They do not feel accountable in any
large degree to the local community for the state of the museum. They are instead accountable to the source of their own professional standards, and that is the museum world, or other paid museum workers.

The second group of paid and volunteer workers perceives its responsibility as providing generalized service to both the museum and the community. The museum for them serves as a place in which members of the local community can serve that community by helping to preserve, and more importantly, to transmit the local past to the visitor. Because they are themselves a part of the community and not members of any particular profession, these individuals represent the community values reflected in the creation of the museum. Since they also view themselves and the museum as reflections of the community, the scope of their responsibility is more diffuse and wide-ranging.

Interpretation

The act of interpretation is another area in which museum staff and volunteers demonstrate several different orientations. As was previously mentioned, the issue of interpretation is related directly to the issue of responsibility in Pioneer Museum. One group is primarily interested in the standardization and control of interpretation. The other group is more concerned with creative expression and interaction.

Standardization

Part of the museum curator's job is to abstract, simplify, and make interesting the important information about the objects he shows. He does not attempt to tell; he should not dwell on unimportant details. He should render into simple, standard English what should be said. (Burcaw, 1975, p. 137)

The curator, assistant curator, and educational coordinator concern themselves primarily with control and supervision of interpretation. Their notion of interpretation is one of instruction, "explaining" the
use and history of the artifacts.

The curator feels that there is an increasing amount of unauthorized material creeping into volunteer interpretations. He reports that this can lead to embarrassing situations. According to him, the job of paid staff members, particularly the educational coordinator, is to watch for and suppress these inaccuracies. He feels that volunteers are not "inventors" and that they should adhere more conscientiously to the information that they are given by the staff members in charge. The job of "inventing" heritage or interpretation is the sole responsibility of the curatorial staff, who "know and subscribe thoroughly to the limitations" of inventing. The curator describes this process as "pure invention." While it appears to be the task of the curatorial staff to create and manipulate the meanings of the artifacts, they feel that it is inappropriate for other individuals to do so.

The educational coordinator reports that she attempts to ensure conformity on the part of the volunteers by regularly monitoring their performances, reading the guest register for comments, and giving regular quizzes which keep her informed of their knowledge "in a fun way." She feels particularly concerned about the "lack of professionalism" in volunteer interpretations:

The public doesn't expect a certain standard, so there is little pressure. The more embellishment you add, the more the public likes it. You must decide whether you want good gate attendance or high standards. Which side of the fence are you on?

The assistant curator noted that sometimes volunteers seem to be what professionals would consider to be negative toward interpretation. In such a case, probably the only way to detect such unauthorized versions would be "by chance," since volunteers might not want to do these things
in front of the curatorial staff. According to him, interpretation can be an area of serious conflict in the museum.

Creative Interaction

Interpretation does not exist in a vacuum. It is communication between the museum staff (as students and teachers) and the public. . . . (Burcaw, 1975, p. 135)

The volunteer coordinator, gift shop manager, general store manager, ice cream parlour manager, and all three volunteers prefer to use individualized forms of interpretation.

The volunteer coordinator, ice cream parlour manager, and the three volunteers characterize their interpretation as "theatre," a dramatic form in which they can make the past "come alive." Their notion of interpretation goes beyond simple instruction or explanation to become a kind of art form or creative social interaction. The volunteer coordinator states that she particularly enjoys participating in this way:

I came down here yesterday on a volunteer basis. . . . I went and got out my yellow satin dress with.... low cut neckline . . . and I slunk down that street like Mae West.

The other women describe their experience as "fun," "romantic," or "an excuse to dress up in costume." Mrs. A and Mrs. B note that their personalities have changed somewhat, becoming more outgoing and confident as a result of performing the past. All of these women feel that they have themselves benefited and grown as a result of participating in a dramatic, public way.

All of the women in this group feel that it is important for all of the individuals involved in presenting the "past" to give credible performances. While they enjoy the experience, they also feel that it is their responsibility to ensure that the museum maintains an authentic pioneer atmosphere. This means that all those in costume must strive to
remain in character all the time. The volunteer coordinator reports that she monitors all of the "performers" regularly, not for the content of their interpretation, but to ensure that they do not do things which are out of context for the character which they are portraying (for instance, smoking or whistling). She reports that she recently threatened a young male volunteer with a "trip behind the woodshed" for smoking, a punishment he would have received during the period he was portraying. All of the women who perceive their interpretation as "theatre" point out that their performances have a substantial impact on the visitor and therefore must be approached in a responsible manner.

Another aspect of interpretation which all of the women in this group view as important is the creation of a "good" atmosphere. This is expressed as "spirit," "attitude," and "morale." The atmosphere of the museum must reflect the fact that its staff operates with warmth and enthusiasm toward each other and the visitor. All of these individuals report a concern with maintaining this atmosphere. They report that visitors often notice and comment favourably upon it. Mrs. B states that

... a lady stopped me on the street and said, "This is such a nice place to visit. All you volunteers make it so warm."

These women feel that "attitude" is the most important aspect of their jobs and that the museum can succeed only to the extent that they are successful in creating positive feelings on the part of the visitor. As the manager of the ice cream parlour said:

You can have the most gorgeous place... but if you don't have the morale... that's going to reflect to the public what the place is really like—it's no good. You'd better just close the doors.

These women themselves view the museum in personal and sentimental ways. The volunteer coordinator likens her experience to "coming home."
The ice cream parlour manager states that "It's really nice having a place you can belong to." It is this sense of personal involvement which they wish to convey to the visitor.

Overlapping Responsibility

As with the issue of responsibility, there is a degree of overlap between these two groups. The volunteers report that they are constantly educating themselves by reading and visiting other museums. According to Mrs. A:

I think . . . that you do a lot of self-training, like when an exhibit comes to town that might tie in, you would go and see it. Also anything you might see, like an article in the newspaper. You initiate your own learning.

These three women feel that they have a responsible attitude and that they do not "make anything up." The gift shop manager agrees, stating that the volunteers with whom she works know more about the museum than anyone else, including her, and that they can be trusted in the area of interpretation. The general store manager reports that she uses her own interpretation entirely and feels justified in doing so because she actually worked in a general store like the one in the museum. She feels that her expertise makes her able to rely on her own judgement.

All of the members of the group oriented toward creative interaction report that when they do not know an answer to a visitor's question, they freely admit it and relay the question to the curatorial staff. In fact, Mrs. A also feels that volunteers perform a valuable service for the curatorial staff by providing them with information from visitors:

I've had somebody say, "You know, you're displaying such and such . . . and that's not correct." And it may be something new that's just come in and, really, the curatorial staff hasn't had time to research it and they aren't sure about it.

The educational coordinator, on the other hand, recognizes and
acknowledges the importance of the volunteers who work directly with the visitors and help to create a positive experience for them. As she states, the visitor "... may forget the facts, but they'll remember their smiling faces."

The assistant curator also recognizes that volunteers can create a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere which is beneficial to the museum. He himself reports that he was surprised to find himself caught up in the excitement and enthusiasm of the volunteers who were performing a craft demonstration recently. As a result, he states, "I had fun, too."

Illustration

The example below illustrates one conflict caused by these differing orientations toward interpretation. The curator reports that volunteers persist in telling visitors that a particular dining room set in the museum was hand carved by a local pioneer. The curator states, "Anyone looking at it can see that it is manufactured." This, in his opinion, creates an embarrassing situation because the curatorial staff sees itself as responsible for such errors. The curator cannot understand why the volunteers persist in telling the story when they have been informed that it is untrue. The three volunteers, on the other hand, insist that they always tell the truth and they never make anything up and they do not know of any volunteers who do.

Form versus Content—Two Definitions of Interpretation

It appears that, in terms of interpretation, one group concerns itself with "form," that is, a professionalized, standardized version of the "facts," while the other group is primarily concerned with "content" or "experience." The three paid staff members who are concerned with form do not claim that they are transmitting truth, but only that they are more constrained by the facts as limitations when inventing the story.
The other group, which includes both volunteers and paid staff members, is primarily concerned with creating a vivid and personal experience for themselves and for the visitor. Because for them the act of interpretation is essentially a creative, individual performance, it necessarily will deviate, at least in subtle ways, from the museum's "official" interpretation.

If the curatorial staff and the educational coordinator insist on imposing absolute limitations on the interpretation of volunteers and other paid staff who work with the public, they will be robbing the act of its creative aspects. To give the artifact an "official" interpretation is to fundamentally change its significance. Its mythic past, the one which the local volunteers and paid staff perceive to be its "real" meaning, is exchanged for a meaning which makes it interchangeable with any other artifact of the same description in any other museum.

If those advocating creative interpretations, on the other hand, insist on interpreting the past in a totally dramatic way, with little concern for the limitations imposed by fact, the museum will suffer a loss of credibility in museum circles.

This conflict over interpretation of artifacts may reflect another deeper conflict. If the artifacts are allowed to retain their unique, esoteric meanings, which come from the local community, then the "experts" are the local interpreters who know the stories best. If, on the other hand, the local meanings of the artifacts are replaced by "official" ones, which come from sources outside the local community, then the "experts" will be the paid staff who have contact with the larger museum world. Defining the artifact helps to define the situation of "who's in charge" in the community museum.
Spatial Orientation

The way in which various individuals orient themselves spatially in relation to each other within the museum reflects the basic patterns established through the issues of responsibility and interpretation.

As might be expected, the senior staff—curator, assistant curator, and volunteer coordinator—occupy single offices. Those of the curator and the volunteer coordinator are located on the top floor of the museum building. The curator's office is less accessible than that of the volunteer coordinator, because one must pass through the bookkeeper's reception area to reach it. The volunteer coordinator's office is regularly used by the younger volunteers as a place to change and iron their costumes. The office of the assistant curator is the least accessible of the three because it is located in the rear corner of another building and is difficult to find.

Other museum staff are located in varying degrees of shared space. The bookkeeper occupies an open reception area outside the curator's office. The telephones and intercom are also located in this area and staff members regularly pass through it. The educational coordinator shares an office with another paid staff member. It is located on the far side of the museum complex, adjacent to the volunteers' area. The volunteers share a large basement and that is where they make costumes and handicrafts, in addition to taking their breaks and socializing. The basement is also used as a demonstration area when the museum holds crafts demonstrations. The general store manager, the gift shop manager, and the ice cream parlour manager share a lunchroom in the basement of the building, which also houses the curator and volunteer coordinator. This lunchroom is also used by various paid staff, such as maintenance personnel.
Attitudes Toward Space

The staff and volunteers at Pioneer Museum have their own clearly defined areas and they respect each other's space. Volunteers enter the areas of the paid staff only on business, and vice-versa. There is little interaction between staff and volunteers, such as eating lunch or taking coffee breaks together. The three volunteers in the study preferred to be interviewed in their area and in the context of the larger group which consisted of women working, and coming and going. They explain that interacting with other women is one of their major reasons for being in the museum. The style of their interaction is supportive, each woman giving and seeking confirmation of her views and opinions from the others. The younger volunteers, students working for the summer, do not share the volunteers' area. All of the younger volunteers remain outside or in the office of the volunteer coordinator.

Alliances

The curator and the assistant curator are friends and spend time socializing together during the work day. The educational coordinator spends her free time with the other staff member who shares her office. The volunteer coordinator spends her free time interacting with the young volunteers in her office. The bookkeeper spends time interacting with some of the other older paid staff members, especially one of the maintenance people. The other paid members tend to socialize with each other, with the exception of the gift shop manager, who interacts to some extent with the volunteers. The volunteers keep to themselves and have little social contact with any of the paid staff.

Creative Tension in Pioneer Museum

The patterns which emerge from Pioneer Museum reveal two orientations,
one identifying with other museum workers or the "museum world," and the other identifying with the local community. The differences between them are not drawn along fixed, immutable lines. Rather, they represent two important aspects of museum work: concern with proper procedure and form, and concern with the creation of an enriched personal experience. When in balance, the interaction between these two orientations provides a creative tension within the museum, a positive source of growth and development. But when they become concretized into divisions between people, the different views can no longer coexist peacefully. Tension escalates and becomes counterproductive, leading to conflict between groups.
CHAPTER II. SPECIALITY MUSEUM

Specialty Museum is located in a large building in a community complex. It has a paid staff of four: director, administrative assistant, museum curator, and secretary (who was hired just after this study began). The museum gives regular tours for children but it is busiest during an annual festival which lasts for approximately one month. The museum also hosts an annual banquet for supporters, during which it does most of its fund-raising.

The collection ranges from photographs and newspaper clippings to articles of clothing. The offices are located near the entrance and there is a video security system, but there is no regular guide or docent to greet visitors and show them around.

The Staff

Director

The director of Specialty Museum is a middle-aged man who has occupied his present position for eight years. His background includes "lots of business training" and extensive public relations training and experience, but no museum training. He is responsible to a Board of Trustees which appoints and pays museum staff.

Administrative Assistant

The administrative assistant is a young woman who has occupied this position for three years. Her background is in business and office procedures. She also has an interest in the museum's specialty. She took the job as part of what she describes as a "life change." She feels that her job gives her opportunity for being creative and a chance to make "a real contribution."

Museum Curator

The museum curator is a young woman who has occupied the position
for one year. She has just completed a bachelor's degree in fine arts, which included one course in gallery administration.

**Trustees**

From the twelve trustees, who are elected by the specialty association, I selected two. Many others, who felt that the director could speak for them, gave somewhat brief answers on the questionnaires I submitted.

**Trustee A**

Trustee A is a man who feels that he has no special training for his role. He is acknowledged by others (in the museum) as an expert in the museum's field of specialization. He chaired the committee which founded the museum and serves on other local voluntary committees.

**Trustee B**

Trustee B is a woman who also feels that she has no particular training for her role in the museum, other than her own expertise in its field and her personal interest. She has been on the board for three years. She also volunteers in the community and feels that the museum should be an "integral part of all historical celebrations."

**Responsibility**

Like Pioneer Museum, Specialty Museum has within it a divergence of opinion with regard to responsibility. Unlike the members of Pioneer Museum, who manage to integrate both viewpoints, the members of this museum appear to be unable to bring them into harmony.

**Promotion and Public Service**

The director, the administrative assistant, and both trustees regard their primary duty to be the "promotion" of their particular specialty in the province and the country. Because they regard their particular audience as being specialty enthusiasts drawn from a large geographical
area, they do not appear to have the small community orientation that is evident in Pioneer Museum. Implicit in their idea of "promotion" is the idea of progress. All of these individuals feel that the museum should expand, and that its potential is virtually unlimited. As the director stated:

If we have any "hang-ups" it is that we don't have tentacles to the far corners of the province. We need a network for gathering information.

The two trustees share this expansionist view of the museum's impact and regard themselves as important from a public relations point of view. Both feel that this is their greatest contribution to the museum.

All of these individuals place emphasis on "educating" the young. What the museum communicates is social values, particularly ones that contribute to the creation of good citizens. The director regards this aspect as a particularly important one:

The whole museum is an inspiration. It carries the message, "Hey, I can go out and do that, too."

The director has created an "educational kit" with the help of a local teacher. He travels to various schools, promoting the museum and introducing its specialty. The children then have a field trip to the museum where they receive a tour of its exhibits and film library. The director feels that the museum has a "democratizing influence" on children, giving them a hobby that all of them can enjoy regardless of age.

Kids today relate to [our specialty]. Therefore we will be open to kids. . . . Grandfather, father or son can relate. . . . We have a product that appeals to the whole family.

Another public service that these individuals feel the museum provides is the processing and storage of information. The administrative assistant
said that this is the museum's most important public service. The museum's primary objective, she said, is

... to gather information from involved people and pass it out ... to the province, not to mention nationally and internationally.

The director shares this feeling. He emphasizes the fact that his high profile makes him and the museum more accessible to the public.

Other guys are more knowledgeable but the public is aware of me. ... We're here to share. We're not here to cage it up and not let anybody look at it.

Like some of the individuals in Pioneer Museum, these individuals see their responsibility to their public as unlimited. They consider it to be part of their job to deal with any need that arises. This was the reason for hiring a museum curator and for introducing museum techniques into their operation. As the director stated:

We don't have goals. ... We have a continuous job to do, to fill needs and requirements placed on us by the community.

These individuals feel that another one of their responsibilities is to work prudently with the funds given to them by the "taxpayer" and they take pride in their ability to raise money on their own. All of them report that their ability to raise funds in various ways is "outstanding." As the director expressed it,

We believe in the ripple effect of promotion. We try to make one dollar stretch into two.

Professional Standards

The curator feels that Specialty Museum is not a "museum" in the strict sense because it does not place sufficient emphasis on caring for the artifacts in its possession. She also feels that she has become an "outcast" in the organization because of the stress she places on care of the artifacts:
I consider the place to be a museum and I treat everything as an artifact . . . properly accessioned, etc.

The curator complains that the other staff members have little real appreciation of her job or of museum management in general. She illustrates this point by referring to the museum's nonexistent collection policy.

He'll take anything. "Just accession it," he says, "then we'll give it away and you can de-accession it." What happens if that person comes back and wants to see their picture? . . . It'll come back to me.

She reports that the director will frequently arrive with a "vanload" of artifacts for which there is no room in the museum's already overcrowded storage facilities. He dismisses this as her problem, saying:

"My job is to get the stuff for you and you take care of it. If I didn't, you'd have nothing to do." I really don't think he realizes what my job entails . . . He's asking me to do the impossible.

The curator also reports that when the museum is busy or extra work needs to be done, it is the performance of her job that suffers. She is often asked to make coffee and do office chores which she feels are not part of her job.

He says some days, "The secretary is too busy, so you can stop what you're doing and fold envelopes." My job is the sort of job that can wait.

The curator also feels that the others regard her job as somewhat easier than it actually is, and that they expect her to take on more work than she can handle. She said, for example, that the director has calculated that it should take eleven minutes to catalogue a single artifact and therefore he cannot understand why the work of cataloguing the museum's collection is not progressing more rapidly. She is aware that her perspective differs from that of the other staff members:

If we look in the same showcase, I'll say, "This is a 1940 jersey, moth-eaten, worn, lanolin on it, etc." I'll talk about the article and the condition it's in. But he'll say, "This is the jersey worn by so-and-so . . ." He's using it to "promote."
Illustration

The following is an incident which illustrates the conflict between the responsibility to promote the specialty, on one hand, and the responsibility to maintain what the curator perceives as good museum standards, on the other. The museum decided to perform a pageant in which all of its costumes would be modeled by young student volunteers. The curator reported that the costumes were too fragile for such use and attempted to stop the staff from using them. When they insisted, she selected several of the least damaged ones. The director then put the secretary in charge of the pageant and of selecting the costumes, telling the curator that she "couldn't handle it." What she has come to understand is that

The only time I'm important ... is when they want a job done. ... Otherwise I'm expendable.

Concept of Museum Work

Staff members have different concepts of the nature of museum work in Specialty Museum, which in turn have different implications for the relationship of this museum with other museums in the province.

Leadership

In fact, the pace of change has been so rapid that the fairly recent "good enough" museum has been left far behind... so far as the future is concerned the only certainty is that the pace of change will continue to accelerate... (Canadian Museums Association, 1975, p. 35)

The director, the administrative assistant, and both trustees feel that Specialty Museum must take the lead in establishing new procedures and in trying new methods. The director reports that most other museums lack expertise in dealing with the public and that they "don't really want" the visitors.

I don't know what the dictionary defines as a museum. I think of museums as displaying things and saying nothing.
He characterizes other museums as "too individualistic" and "too competitive" because they appear to him to be unable to cooperate with each other. The feeling may stem partially from the fact that, although the director has attempted to gain the acceptance of the museum community, he feels that he has been somewhat unsuccessful. He feels that this situation could be remedied by the British Columbia Provincial Museum and the British Columbia Museums' Association, both of which should award greater recognition and support to museums on the basis of "merit" and "participation" (attending seminars and workshops).

The director feels that his museum is particularly deserving of recognition and funding because it has wider appeal than most museums. He reckons that his museum is "more interesting than the Museum of Milk Cans"; it is more innovative and more aware of public relations than other museums. He refers to Specialty Museum as a "'yes' museum . . . a museum of the future."

The plans of the director, administrative assistant, and trustees include the formation of a network of all museums across the country which share the same specialty. This network would provide greater power and influence. He has already started to implement this plan by travelling across the country, visiting other specialty museums and inviting them to form such an organization. He recently installed a security system after a break-in. Afterward he sent letters to all of the other specialty museums explaining the new system.

The administrative assistant feels that the museum exists primarily as a sideline of the specialty association. She does not feel that it is as important as the promotion of the specialty itself and downplays its importance. Its function according to her is simply to create
"some prestige for the members." It is essentially a "shrine" for the memorabilia of the specialty association members and just another aspect of promotion of the specialty.

Cooperation and Identification

In addressing the neophyte, a veteran could point to great progress and to a very promising future in museum work. (Canadian Museums Association, 1975, p. 14)

The curator has been attempting to build up contacts in other areas of the community, including among curators, archivists, and other professionals whom she feels she may call upon for advice. She feels that her efforts have largely been unsuccessful because the director insists on signing all letters and handling all relations with other museums himself.

The curator reports that although the director insists on handling these contacts himself, he frequently fails to do so in the proper manner. For instance, three different groups of conservators have visited the museum at his request. She reports that he always asks them "to do the impossible," because he fails to understand the difficulty of conservation techniques. The worst part, she feels, is that he will not implement any of their suggestions. She feels that the only reason he asks these busy individuals to come is that he wants to tell the trustees that he is taking care of the museum.

The curator also complains that, although she is the one who attends all British Columbia Museums Association workshops and meetings, only the director is listed as a voting member. She reports that this lack of recognition of her position has hurt the museum's image in the eyes of her reference group, the British Columbia Museums Association, and made her ineffective in her position.

Illustration

The director asked the curator to obtain some information concerning
a local statute. She wished to consult another worker in another museum and, because the director was absent, wrote and signed the letter herself. When the director returned and found out, he became angry. She says that

He called me into his office and said, "I cannot believe you went ahead and used your head. You went ahead and did something without consulting me first." I said, "That's what you pay me for."

The curator feels that her work has suffered from a combination of alternating neglect and interference on the part of the director. She says that as a result she is unable to perform her duties in a satisfactory way.

Spatial Orientation

The director, administrative assistant, and secretary occupy a set of offices near the entrance. The entire area has glass windows, so that it is accessible to the public. The curator at one time occupied an office in this area. However, the administrative assistant wanted the office, so the curator was moved across the hall, to an office which is isolated, not only from the rest of the staff, but from the public as well. This is a particularly sore point for the curator because she did not want to move and feels that the move has created an even deeper rift between her and the other staff:

From that point things have been no good. He takes everything on his side [of the museum]. . . . He said my job required more concentration. I can't believe how isolated I am.

Tensions in Specialty Museum

The director, the administrative assistant, and the trustees of Specialty Museum view the museum as a by-product, albeit an important one, of their promotion of their specialty. It is not an end in itself to them, nor does it serve all of the "normal" purposes of a museum. Because its target audience is a broader one than that of the usual community museum,
it does not have the same local community interests and roots. For these individuals the museum is more like a business, in the sense that they view it as part of an enterprise which must continue to expand and modernize. This view also seems to account in part for their somewhat negative feelings about other museums which do not have this same aggressive approach. The director, in particular, appears to view relations with other museums as public relations, which are in his domain, rather than in the domain of the curator.

The curator, on the other hand, reports that she "doesn't fit in" with the other workers in Specialty Museum. The relationships which she has established with a few workers in other museums have been disrupted by the "meddling" of the director. What she views as collegial relationships with other museum workers, the director appears to view as relations with business competitors. This may account for the director's desire to control and monitor such contacts.
CHAPTER III. TOWARD PROFESSIONALISM

Polarization of Attitudes

The two preceding case studies indicate a polarization of attitudes within the two museums concerning the basic orientation of staff members and volunteers is occurring. It should be repeated and emphasized that several of these individuals recognized the necessity of incorporating both viewpoints. However, it appears that almost no one staff member embraces both equally, and that even those who do concede the validity of the opposite perspective tend to remain allied with one group only. While this may be simply a comment on human nature, it also attests to the divisive power of these differing orientations.

Service

Those who emphasize service to the community or some other specific group as a major orientation tend to be those who have personal ties with their "audience," either as fellow members of the same local community or, as in the case of Specialty Museum, as representatives and promoters of the specialty itself. What is absent from these individuals is an orientation toward other museums and toward the museum "community" in general. These individuals receive their rewards directly from the community or group they serve. They tend, therefore, to maximize this relationship by deferring to the needs and desires of their audience. These needs and desires come ahead of such considerations as standardizing interpretation and protecting the artifacts themselves from harm. Since most of them occupy "public" positions in any case, the "service" orientation is an appropriate orientation for them and undoubtedly beneficial to the museum. Because most of them deal with areas outside of those which involve direct aspects of control and standardization such as artifact handling and collection policy, it would be somewhat inappropriate for them to exhibit
excessive concern with such matters. As public representatives of the museum, they fill an essential need, one in keeping with their objectives.

**Control and Standardization**

Those who emphasize the need for control and standardization tend to identify primarily with the professional museum community rather than with local audiences. In fact, most of them regard museum work as a career, and their positions in a particular museum more as a result of circumstance than of having an orientation toward a specific museum. Their concern with standardization and control is attached to an idea of "proper" or uniform procedures. These procedures are derived from the world of museum "professionals" rather than from the museum or its community. Along with this notion of standardization goes the idea of clearly-defined responsibilities—in many cases, rather narrowly defined. The curator in Specialty Museum, for instance, resents such duties as clerical work and coffee making because she regards them as somewhat beneath her.

These individuals demonstrate greater concern for the opinions of other museum workers in other museums than do those who have a predominantly "service" orientation. This may indicate the beginnings of what one might call professional consciousness.

As professionally-oriented staff members, these individuals are expected by their fellow staff members to be responsible for those areas of the museum which require special training. Certain aspects of museum work such as artifact handling, cataloguing, and research are generally considered to be appropriate areas for such staff members. It would be inappropriate for these individuals to abandon their concern with standards in these areas and to assume completely the service orientation of those
individuals who are more concerned with the public aspects of the museum. Given also that these individuals are inevitably concerned with their status among other museum professionals, it would be somewhat unrealistic to expect them to jeopardize their standing by completely abandoning the idea of control and standardization.

The Current Focus of the Literature

Preserving the Mythical Past

Jean Cannizzo, author of "Historical Myths and Mythical Histories: The View from the Small Museum" (1979) and co-author of Community in Transition: A Report on Training Needs and Opportunities in British Columbia Museums and Galleries (Cannizzo & Luna, 1980), focuses attention on the special nature of the small museum, as opposed to its larger counterpart. History for the small museum represents an idealized past whose function is to provide a certain moral orientation and a set of values for people struggling to live in "the culturless [sic] cosmopolitanism of the contemporary urban environment" (Cannizzo, 1979, p. 4).

The most important characteristic of this type of history is that it is embodied in certain individuals old enough to remember it. The historical period most often displayed begins about 1890 and ends during the inter-war years, i.e., it is a period which falls within living memory, and, indeed history is conceptualized as experience. The best historians are those who have lived it and there is very little room for vicarious visions and interpretations of that kind experienced by academics. (Cannizzo, 1979, p. 2).

This "personal" orientation toward the past as embodied in certain individuals extends to the people who work in small museums, according to Cannizzo. No training program can create such an orientation because "You can't learn to be a museum person" (Cannizzo & Luna, 1980, p. 24). In fact, such individuals now working in small museums reported to
Cannizzo that the effects of training are, in their eyes, largely negative:

While declining to specify a precise self-identity, they are very articulate in delineating the detrimental aspects of "academic" training and defining the negative attributes thus acquired by "professionals"; "a history specialist can't administrate." "a [sic] person in a museum for ten years is as professional as someone who walks out of university with no experience at all . . . the professionals will be shocked by the type of person who is really qualified or suitable to run a small museum." (Cannizzo & Luna, 1980, p. 26)

In addition to this negative characterization of "professionals," local museum staff members list "a knack for working with people" (Cannizzo & Luna, 1980, p. 25) as the most important attribute of any worker in a small museum, thus creating a definition of small museum work which effectively excludes from the enterprise those with professional orientations toward standardization and control. Their pronounced emphasis on the service orientation of museum work constitutes a denial of the possibility that those who regard themselves as professionals can make any meaningful contribution to the small museum.

Mario Luna, her co-author, devotes several pages plus a complete section to the perceived inadequacies of student interns and to their own unrealistic expectations of museum work. Luna, in his portion of the report, makes a number of assumptions in his interpretation of the data.²

A series of rather unfortunate performance records compiled by a number of summer placement personnel at several institutions during the past year had served to discredit university museums' training, and its value, to many more institutions and staff members than had actually interacted with these "trained museologists." I was told repeatedly, and frequently with emphasis, that student interns were ill-prepared, naive in the extreme, narrowly trained, insensitive, and not flexible enough in the face of the multiplicity of tasks that comprise the reality of museum or gallery work in many institutions. Most of all, they were said to be self-impressed: they wanted too

²He wrongly assumes that a museology degree is offered at U.B.C.
much, worked too little, negatively differentiated between themselves and their "peers" as against non-university trained regularly employed, or contract, local staff. (Cannizzo & Luna, 1980, p. 89)

The interesting aspect of this interpretation of the data is that the "series" consists of the three out of one hundred fifty-four museums whose personnel made complaints on the basis of actual experience with student interns. The others which expressed negative feelings did so without having had any real contact. Yet Luna interprets this data as being a major criticism of university museology programmes in general. He reports that institutions' complaints concerned general competence and most of all the attitudes of these student interns. He then attempts, through a questionnaire, to ascertain the expectations of students in courses at the University of British Columbia and the University of Victoria. Not surprisingly, he found that museology and gallery administration students, for the most part, regard themselves as aspiring professionals, with professional expectations concerning salary and specialized work. The question is whether university museology courses can be held solely accountable for these attitudes and expectations on the part of students. Are these courses the only source of "professional" attitudes and expectations? It may be wrong to affix the blame for the "insensitive" and unrealistic attitudes of these individuals on university museology courses.

Another interesting aspect of their study is that the descriptions of these student interns sound somewhat similar to the description of the professionally-oriented individuals in the two preceding case studies. The two groups exhibit many of the same characteristics, including narrowness of training, desire for specialized work, and "peer" group
identification. In their complaints about student interns with whom they have had no contact, the staff members of the museums in the survey may actually be voicing apprehension about professionalism in general.

**Backgrounds of Professionally-Oriented Individuals in the Two Case Studies**

It might be useful at this point to summarize once again the backgrounds of the professionally-oriented individuals in the two case studies. A closer look should reveal whether or not they have acquired their professional values of standardization and control from any single source, such as a university museology course.

**Pioneer Museum**

Curator: three years of university English; one year of arts at the college level; three-month museum internship at the British Columbia Provincial Museum; Canadian Museums Association correspondence course; British Columbia Museums Association workshops.

Assistant Curator: college diploma in anthropology and archeology; archeological field school; one British Columbia Provincial Museum seminar.

Educational Coordinator: Bachelor of Arts in communications; legal stenographer course; one year of experience in an art gallery; business experience.

**Specialty Museum**

Curator: Bachelor of Arts in fine arts; one course in gallery administration; the Canadian Museums Association correspondence course.

There is no apparent uniformity in the backgrounds of these individuals. While two have, subsequent to being hired, completed the Canadian Museums Association correspondence course, the only real common feature is post-secondary education. None received training in a professional
museum studies programme. In fact, each one has had surprisingly little actual museological training or experience. This suggests that their professional attitudes are not derived primarily from museological training itself, but from the idea of museum work as a profession, like dentistry or teaching. If professional attitudes are the shared characteristic, and none of these individuals has any university-level museological training, then the shared attitudes must be created and reinforced by some other agency.

Creating and Controlling the New Elite

In a recent issue of the periodical "Museum Round-Up," the British Columbia Museums Association presented a brief to the provincial government which outlines what the Association feels to be its evolving role in the development of museums in British Columbia:

We are certainly still needed as advisors but in former years our advice centred on the function of the museums themselves and all the many facets of that demanding trust. Now there are demands of a different kind. These concern funding, ethics, training, standards, community responsibility, individual accountability, guarding against weak performances, and the genuine concern to try to separate the inspired ideal from the will o' the wisp dream. A formidable responsibility but one which the B.C.M.A. is in the best position to assume. (British Columbia Museums Association, 1981, p. 5)

The brief focuses on the issue of increasing the power of the association in a number of areas. It also makes several suggestions concerning funding priorities and criteria, one being that the association be given authority in deciding which museums will receive funding.

Another area of potential control is the standardizing of job descriptions. The brief suggests that the job descriptions of present British Columbia Provincial Museum staff members be used as a "benchmark" for assessing training needs. This helps to ensure that only those museums with approved credentials will qualify for funding, and,
ultimately, for accreditation. Also, what they refer to as the "upgrading" of "existing levels of expertise" will require that museums hire only professionally qualified candidates for positions as they become vacant.

The final and perhaps most important aspect of the brief for the purposes of this paper is the British Columbia Museums Association's own perceived future role in the direct governing and regulation of British Columbia museums.

We feel the Association is the only body which is capable of, and should be policing and monitoring [emphasis mine] the growth of the profession. ... In order that we may assume an enlarged role in meeting collective requirements we would hope the provincial government would provide adequate systematic support which would enable the B.C.M.A. to serve the needs common to all the members of the B.C. Museum Community. (British Columbia Museums Association, 1981, p. 10)

The British Columbia Museums Association (a voluntary association) seeks to exert greater control over the museum community in the areas of training, funding, job descriptions (hiring), and quality control. This concern with control and standardization of procedures corresponds closely to the attitudes expressed by the professionally-oriented individuals in the two case studies.

Another publication, Report on Training Opportunities for Museum Workers in Canada, written by Martin Segger (1976) for the National Museums of Canada, indicates some awareness of the pressures being exerted on small museums by the growth of professionalism.

The emphasis of the National Museum Policy on public accessibility has placed almost intolerable burdens on a traditional structure which was previously inward rather than outward oriented. This shift in priorities has affected internal political structures, modes of operation, styles of management. ... There will also have to be attitudinal changes among the older members as museums must now live up to new public expectations. There is no going back. (Segger, 1976, p. 40)

The change in local museums may indeed be inevitable; for older staff members there is probably "no going back." However, it is not
solely the "public" whose expectations are bringing about the change. The Canadian Museums Association, National Museums of Canada, and British Columbia Museums Association, insofar as they promote and encourage the growth of professionalism, are actively contributing to the "intolerable burdens" being experienced in local museums.

What Segger refers to as the "outward" orientation of museums means that new staff members are oriented beyond the immediate community to a new professional peer group. Like the professionally-oriented individuals in the two case studies, their loyalties are directed outside the communities they serve.

Segger also suggests that voluntary provincial associations be given the responsibility for establishing training needs:

In each case, however, there are core organizational structures which deliver training to the community museums and galleries and thus have a role to play in training, and, as it progresses, the democratization and decentralization policy. These associations provide a network of contacts and communication links through which the effects of policies and activities can be monitored. (Segger, 1976, p. 38)

Segger's report, like those previously mentioned, primarily addresses the question of how best to institute professional control of local museums, in terms of training and funding.

Another publication, Professional Directions for Museum Work: An Analysis of Museum Jobs and Museum Studies Training, written by Lynne Teather (1978) for the Canadian Museums Association, attempts to provide standardized job descriptions for museum workers nationwide. The reason given for the perceived need to standardize job descriptions is "professionalism."

At the annual conference of the Canadian Museums Association in Kingston, Ontario, in May 1976, the membership's decision to accept in principle the intent to introduce a category of professional membership in the Association put the onus on the
C.M.A. to define professionalism in museum work. This meant dealing with questions of standards, certification and accreditation—components of this issue—whether for individuals, training programmes or institutions. However, one problem became increasingly clear: the definition of professional membership depends in part upon detailed information on museum work, museum workers and training programmes. (Teather, 1978, p. 15)

The "Museum Job Profiles" as compiled by Teather divide the responsibilities of museum work into nineteen specialized areas. Each job profile provides an exhaustive list of items under the headings of "Primary Duties and Responsibilities" and "Various Additional Duties," as well as "Qualifications," both "official" and "recommended." The interesting aspect of this list is that in almost every case an undergraduate university degree appears as a minimum official qualification.

In the two case studies presented earlier in this paper, the only individuals possessing this university background are those in the professionally-oriented group, all of whom have completed university degrees. None of the service-oriented individuals had completed university degrees. Therefore, the individuals matching most closely the idealized descriptions of Teather's report are those in the professionally-oriented group.

Teather's report, like those of Segger, Luna and Cannizzo, and the British Columbia Museums Association executive, focuses on the need to "create" a museum profession, by standardizing job descriptions and by evaluating existing training programmes as to their perceived effectiveness in creating "professionals." Ultimately, the effect of such standardization and accreditation will be management of local museums on the basis of "outside" standards.

Three Alternative Futures

Complete Professionalization

The four publications previously discussed are all concerned with the
growth and development of professionalism in local museums. The implications of this trend for the local museum are uniform training programmes, standardized hiring procedures, and regulation of funding by "monitoring" agencies. Other, less obvious implications are standardized interpretation of artifacts, and externalized loyalties of professional staff members.

This move toward professionalism would mean the growth of an elite group of workers in different museums, who regard one another as peers. The loyalties of the new professionals would almost certainly tend to be toward their fellows rather than to the specific communities they are hired to serve. The impetus for the cultivation of these attitudes would come directly from associations such as the Canadian Museums Association, the British Columbia Museums Association, and the National Museums of Canada.

The undermining of the local museum would be caused by the intrusion of "professional" values such as standardization and control into the traditional "service-oriented" museum structure. The professionally-oriented individuals would determine the future trend of museums in this province. Looking ahead, these individuals could be regarded as "the workers of the future." Such future professionals might be better trained, but they would almost certainly possess the same general attitudes as the individuals described in the two case studies. This professional domination would ultimately destroy the link between local communities and their museums.

Continuing Conflict

Another possible future for small museums is that the two orientations would continue to exist in conflict. Local British Columbia museums would continue to be founded and managed by individuals with local community loyalties. As these museums grew, they would hire, in some cases, staff members with professional orientations, who would attempt to impose their
professional standards on the museum's operation. These individuals would emerge from various training programmes and courses with a firm orientation toward standardization and control of artifacts, interpretation, and so on.

In some cases, the two orientations might create a dynamic situation which would contribute some creativity to a particular museum. In most cases, however, the two orientations would conflict, producing a situation in which museum workers, both staff and volunteers, find themselves polarized and estranged from one another.

Bridging the Gap

A third possible future for local British Columbia museums would be the result of consistent and coordinated effort by both service-oriented and professionally-oriented individuals and associations to bridge the gap separating them.

The British Columbia Provincial Museum would promote the autonomy of local museums by giving greater recognition to their predominant service orientation and by providing support and encouragement in addition to advice and workshops. Since several professionally-oriented students are involved in internships at the Provincial Museum each year, this would present an ideal opportunity for this museum to provide a basis for achieving familiarity between these students and local community museums. By exposing a prospective professional to small museum work in a number of different contexts, a person with some expertise and understanding in this area could instill in that student a greater appreciation of the community service perspective. A good internship would include constant supervision by knowledgeable individuals who would provide some insight and help the student to analyse the situations he or she encounters in various small museums. Ideally, the student would acquire a greater
understanding of the dynamics of small museums. An internship without proper guidance of this type would not be considered a satisfactory introduction to museum work.

Associations such as the British Columbia Museums Association and the Canadian Museums Association would recognize and deal with their own orientation toward standardization and control, instead of regarding themselves as representatives and promoters of small museums and their interests. The British Columbia Museums Association, as a voluntary association of museums in the province, would, in the interests of promoting the autonomy of each local museum, back away from its current "policing and monitoring" approach toward its membership (and, more importantly, toward those who are not part of its membership). It would instead act to support each museum, to encourage its uniqueness, and to preserve its community service orientation in the face of growing professional sentiment. It could accomplish this by stressing the positive value of the community service orientation and by attempting to provide an organizational framework for its members in which there is room for local autonomy as well as for those workers who regard museum work as a profession. It would also strive to instill sufficient confidence in local museum staff members and thus enable them to deal with incoming professionals from a position of strength.

The Canadian Museums Association would re-evaluate its current trend toward standardization or at the very least review its proposed job descriptions. The assumption that small and large museums are essentially similar in nature has already been demonstrated to be a questionable one. Yet the Canadian Museums Association continues in its attempt to create convenient standardized job descriptions for all Canadian museums, almost
all of which include university degrees. It would be preferable for the Association to spend its time and money in an effort to further illuminate and understand the differences between small and large museums before undertaking such large-scale standardization.

University and college museology and gallery administration programmes would be adjusted to create a longer period of study, including alternating periods of internship (like many present-day engineering programmes). This is where the British Columbia Museums Association and the Provincial Museum could contribute by coordinating and helping to supervise such internships, in conjunction with the academic institutions. The essential differences between small and large museums would be conveyed to students, early and often. The case study, a useful tool in other professional courses such as business administration, would be introduced into museological courses to a greater extent. Through realistic, well-constructed cases, students would become familiar with the dilemmas facing all local museum staff members on a daily basis. The goal of such courses would be to produce, not completely trained professionals proficient in every possible aspect of museum work, but adaptable individuals who approach the interpersonal problems of small museum work with a broader analytical perspective.

Museological courses in particular would place more emphasis upon techniques for collecting oral histories. Students would be encouraged to view the collection of oral history as an essential part of their training in research and cataloguing. This would provide professional staff members with a greater orientation toward the local community, as well as a greater respect for and understanding of its mythic past.
Summary

The aim of this paper has been to illustrate two different orientations of museum staff and volunteers in two local museums, and in doing so, to shed some light on the possible future problems of such museums. Associations such as the British Columbia Museums Association and the Canadian Museums Association appear to advocate wholesale professionalization of the small museum through accreditation and standardization of job descriptions. Segger's (1976) report for the National Museums of Canada suggests that the small museum perspective is hopelessly outdated and concludes that "There is no turning back." All of these outside agencies are seeking ways to control the growth of museum work in this province. Their ideas are based on the assumption that there is no room within the professional perspective to include the traditional service orientation toward the local community. The fact is that, due to their own insistence on standardization and control, these agencies are themselves posing a threat to the survival of the community-service orientation in the small museum.

The only viable alternative is through education and support to enable both the aspiring professional and the community representative to integrate their limited perspectives in a dynamic way. Only such integration will assure the small museum of having a vital and relevant role in the future.
Selected Bibliography


Appendix

Questions Used in Discussions With Informants

1. What position do you hold here, and how long have you held it?

2. Did you take any special training for your job here? If so, please describe it.

3. What attracted you to this particular museum?

4. What kind of role does this museum play in local festivals or other celebrations?

5. Do people in the community seek you out personally to help with festivals or publications concerning local history? If so, please give examples.

6. Do you ever volunteer to do such work? If so, please give examples.

7. What kind of role do you personally think that a museum should take in local celebrations about the past?

8. What type of policy does this museum have with regard to building and maintaining rapport with the local community?

9. With which local amateur experts do you work or consult often?

10. Are these people generally donors as well?

11. In what areas of the museum or its functioning do other people in the community regard you as an expert?

12. What is your personal definition of "heritage" as it applies to your museum?