

Building value into university museums and forging international partnerships

Peter Stanbury

Chair, International Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC)
Museums, Collections & Heritage
Vice-Chancellor's Office
Macquarie University
New South Wales, Australia
peter.stanbury@mq.edu.au

University museums have special qualities. One of the most recent and colourful definitions that I have heard recently was 'a supermarket for the mind'. This definition could apply to many museums, but it gives an idea of the enormous range of items found in university museums. However, university museums have many characteristics that make them different from other museums. These differences arise from their history, the kind of institution to which they are attached, the people that look after them, the stated function of the museum within the university and the range of people that the museum seeks to serve.

Over the last ten years or so in Australia there has been a distinct university museums movement. This movement has sought to ensure that the resources in these museums are properly utilized for the benefit of the various communities that universities serve. The movement has resulted in the formation of a national curators group, two national reviews, shared data base systems, responsible policies, greater advocacy, increasing awareness of the importance of preventive conservation and a sense of pride of belonging to this special museums sector. This Australian experience has been mirrored in many countries in Europe and in the United States.

Most successful university museums have a number of factors in common. These include:

- a similarity between the university's mission and strategies and those of the museum,
- written policies which are reviewed from time to time,
- clear title to the objects in the collection,
- an understanding of preventive conservation,
- assured security, much work to ensure continuing funding,
- a network of contacts
- commitment to a variety of communities,
- surveys to understand what the audience wants
- a strong volunteer or friends' group.

In 2001 the International Committee of University Museums and Collections (UMAC) was established. It is one of the Committees of the International Council of Museums. UMAC has six main aims. It strives to:

- Clarify the role, requirements and relationships of university museums and collections with the university and its communities
- Assist the preservation of academic and cultural heritage
- Promote university museums and collections within governments and their agencies, institutes of learning, the broad museum sector, the professions, business and the population generally

大学博物館 —その価値と国際的パートナーシップの構築—

Peter Stanbury

Chair, International Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC)
Museums, Collections & Heritage
Vice-Chancellor's Office
Macquarie University
New South Wales, Australia

大学博物館にはいくつかの特色が見られる。最近の大学博物館の定義の中でも、とくに際だったものに「知性のためのスーパーマーケット」という言葉がある。この定義は、他の博物館にも言えることかもしれないが、この言葉は、大学博物館で見られるものがどれだけ幅広いかをよく表している。しかしながら、大学博物館には他の博物館とは異なる多くの特徴がある。その違いは、博物館が持つ歴史や、属している大学の種類、中で働く人々、大学内における役割、そしてその博物館がサービスの対象としている人々の範囲などに由来するものだろう。

オーストラリアではここ10年ほどの間に、大学博物館に関する大きな運動が起こった。この運動の目的は、大学博物館の資源が、大学のサービス対象である様々な人々のために正しく活用されるようにするというものであった。この運動の結果、国立の標本管理者組織が作られ、国による2つの調査書がまとめられた。また、共有データベースシステムが設立され、信頼性できる政策方針がとられるようになり、支持者も増加した。標本の破壊を保護するという、予防的保全活動の重要性も認められるようになり、大学博物館という特殊な博物館に携わる人々の自信にもつながった。このオーストラリアでの経験は、ヨーロッパやアメリカなど多くの国に影響を及ぼした。

今日成功している大学博物館には、いくつかの共通点がある。そのうちの数点を挙げると以下のようになる。

- ・大学の持つ使命や戦略と、その大学の博物館の持つ使命や戦略が近いこと
- ・明文化された方針があり、それが継続的に見直されること
- ・資料収蔵の目的が明らかになっていること
- ・資料の損傷を予防する保存に理解があること
- ・セキュリティが確立しており、運営資金獲得のための努力を払っていること
- ・様々な分野へコンタクトできる連携のネットワークを持っていること
- ・様々な団体との交流があること
- ・入場者が何を望んでいるのかを知るための調査を行っていること
- ・強力なボランティアや友の会をもっていること

2001年、国際大学博物館委員会 (UMAC) が設立された。これは、国際博物館評議会に設置された委員会の一つにあたる。UMACはおもに次の6つの目標を掲げている。

- ・大学博物館の大学や地域との関係、期待、役割を明らかにすること
- ・学術的遺産や文化的遺産の保全を助成すること
- ・政府や政府機関、あるいは学習施設や広範囲な博物館関連分野、および関連する職務や事業等において、大学博物館の地位を向上させること

- Provide advice and guidelines for those collections which are emerging, isolated, deteriorating or otherwise in need
- Facilitate international and regional collaboration to stimulate networking, partnerships and research and to initiate exchanges of artifacts, exhibitions, standards, practices and other information
- Encourage staff in charge of university collections to participate in museological training, mentorship and career development

UMAC is a forum for all those working in, or associated with, academic museums, galleries and collections (including herbaria and botanical gardens). UMAC is concerned with the role of collections within higher education institutions and the communities they serve. It provides its members with a forum to identify partnership opportunities concerning the resources in the collections, to share knowledge and experience, and to enhance access to the collections. The aim is to protect the heritage in the care of universities. UMAC communicates with its members through all available means throughout the year in order to deliver its aims. UMAC, when required, advises ICOM and other professional bodies on matters within its jurisdiction.

UMAC will hold its second conference in Sydney and Canberra Australia from 30 September to 4 October, 2002. A special invitation is extended to all university museum staff in Japan, especially to those attending the conference in Nagoya.

Please see the web site:

www.icom.org/umac

Dr Peter Stanbury Vice-Chancellor's Office, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia
Peter.stanbury@mq.edu.au

- ・コレクションについて、形成途上のもの、孤立無援のもの、劣化しつつあるもの、その他必要に応じ、助言や指針を提供すること
- ・ネットワークや共同事業および研究活動を促し、資料、展示、実践やその他の情報交換を開始するための国際的または地域的な協力体制を促すこと
- ・大学におけるコレクションに携わるスタッフの、博物館学方面のトレーニングや相談、経歴の向上を奨励する。

UMACは、学術関連の博物館、ギャラリー、標本収蔵施設（標本室や植物園を含む）に関わるすべての人々の交流の場と位置づけられる。UMACの関心は、高等教育機関およびそのサービスを受ける団体をもつ収蔵資料の役割にある。この組織は、そのメンバーが、博物館等の持つ資源に関する共同事業を行う機会を得たり、知識や経験を交換したり、収蔵施設へのアクセスを増やすことができるような交流の場を提供する。そしてUMACの目的は、大学の管理下にある文化遺産を守ることにある。UMACはこの目的を果たすため、年間を通じて、できる限りの方法でメンバーとの交流を図っている。UMACは必要であれば、その権限の範囲内でICOM（国際博物館会議）やそのほかの機能団体へ助言もおこなっている。

UMACの第2回会議はオーストラリアのシドニーとキャンベラにて、2002年9月30日から10月4日まで開催される予定である。日本のすべての大学博物館スタッフ、とくに名古屋でのこのフォーラムに参加されたみなさんに、ぜひ来ていただきたいと願っている。

UMACについては、以下のウェブサイトを御覧頂きたい。

www.icom.org/umac

Dr Peter Stanbury Vice-Chancellor's Office, Macquarie University, NSW 2109, Australia
Peter.stanbury@mq.edu.au

Building value into university museums and forging international partnerships

Peter Stanbury

Chair, International Committee for University Museums and Collections (UMAC)
Museums, Collections & Heritage
Vice-Chancellor's Office
Macquarie University
New South Wales, Australia
peter.stanbury@mq.edu.au

Introduction

Over the last ten years more papers have been published about university museums than in the 90 preceding years. This has been due to the actions of university staff in many countries, and the International Committee for University Museums and Collections (or UMAC), about which I will talk later, is proud to have made its own contribution.

How Museums Evolved

In order to understand how university museums should or might operate today it is useful to glance at their evolution. The ancestors of what we call museums were established within centres of learning. As these were the ancestors of universities, the first museums could be called university museums. The earliest traces of such museums are recorded from archaeological excavations in Mesopotamia. Aristotle had a collection of natural history specimens to assist his teaching.

In medieval times, collections became cabinets of curiosities open only to the owner and his guests. Even today many private collections fall into this category. In such museums the objects tended to be diverse and little research was done. Possession and display was the chief aim.

Gradually, say by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, objects in collections became valued for the information about the natural world that could be extracted from them. Collections became scholarly. Related objects in a limited field were sought. They became used to extend understanding. They were used for research and for teaching. Documents related to the objects became companions in the search of knowledge. The library and the collection became two aspects of the same endeavor.

It is noteworthy that my university, Macquarie University in Sydney, is presently developing a search engine for its collections that is compatible with the University's library catalogue. When the word eagle is entered one will be offered a choice of books on eagles or a range of objects — coins, paintings, skeletons or historical documents. The object contains information, often more than is found in books, if you know how to read it.

University Museums — Changing Views

University collections were established as an integral part of research and teaching. The objects became the primary source of information. The room housing the museum was situated next to the lecture theatre, the laboratory and the library. The teacher (or the professor) was automatically

the keeper or director of the museum. Sometimes teaching units evolved from the nucleus of a collection. This model — which lasted some three hundred years — was scattered by the unprecedented and explosive growth of the universities in the 1960s and 70s, combined with significant changes in research and teaching. At many universities it was considered we had sufficiently catalogued the world, and that taxonomy was old fashioned and that there was no longer any need for collections. The intimate details of the cell, the nature of mechanisms and how living organisms behave became the focii of study. Collections were often neglected, consigned to storage, or worse still thrown out together with the related documentation.

The situation was made further difficult by financial constraints and changes in management practice. University management was adopting all the best and all the worst of modern business practice. This often meant employing senior managers who did not always have a feeling for the special atmosphere of liberal education and historical significance that was traditional within universities. University museums often were reduced to a bare minimum of staff or left isolated. In part it was the fault of the university museum staff themselves. In many instances they had not used the good times to advocate their uses, and to make a strong network of contacts. Some typical problems are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Some factors which affect the performance of a university museum*

FAILURE	SUCCESS
No University relevance	Connection to University's development
No relevance to unit	Relevance to teaching and research
No strategic plan	Relevance to university's strategies
No title to objects	Clear title
Damage	Continuing preventive conservation
Missing items	Security
Data missing	Policies & documentation
Poor staffing / funding	Long term funding

Little advocacy
Active networking & partnerships

What Do University Museums Do?

The job of university museums is to:

- reflect the aims of the institution
- act as a centre of liberal education
- open doorways and provide links
- engage in research and teaching and assist others to do so
- reflect scholarly traditions, and
- show how our world has been, and is being, shaped (i.e. to forecast as well as summarise the past).

Collections of real objects are primary sources of information, both material and documentary. University collections, like culture, landscape, nature and the environment, are literally priceless

because they are irreplaceable. Real objects communicate something that photographic or digital representations do not.

What Makes University Museums Different?

On one hand, university museums have unique access to the skills and knowledge of academics and have had a head start in the electronic revolution. No other group of museum workers is surrounded by such a strong tradition of scholarship, research and publication. The staff of university museums thus has privileged access to knowledge.

On the other hand, no other museums are expected to serve such a variety of communities: from groups of pre-school children through all stages of education: to university of the third age and retired groups as well as distinguished international visiting scholars. No other group of museums is so intimately connected to secondary, tertiary and post-graduate students. No other museums are expected to maintain a cloistered scholarly following while at the same time mount contemporary exhibitions sufficiently attractive to bring people from the surrounding communities used to the glamour of modern television onto the strange, unfamiliar territory of a fenced campus. Some university museums are moving into the centre of town.

Universities have the opportunity to introduce both secondary and tertiary students to museums over extended periods of time. Their collections play an essential role in teaching specific fields of study. It is difficult to imagine medical or veterinary students not studying anatomical collections, or art students not visiting the university gallery.

University museums make a further contribution. Students, whatever their field of study, should over the years they spend on the campus find the university museums and art works becoming familiar friends, loaded with meaning. When this happens understanding of the important role that collections play in our heritage is unconsciously deepened. Commitment to preservation is fostered. It remains with students throughout life, influencing decisions made in work and leisure. In addition, the start of a career may be considerably assisted as the result of the practical skills learned, and contacts made, by voluntary assistance in a university museum. This means that the public role of the university museum may become as important as the teaching and research roles. By contrast other museums have fewer targeted audiences.

Are University Museums Private Collections?

University museums often start as the result of the enthusiasm and activities of one individual, or a small group. However, the originator does not own the collection. The university does. But while it is true that the collection is the responsibility of the institution, the collection does not even belong solely to that institution. Public funds have gone into its formation, and the collection is part of the local, regional, national, sometimes even international heritage. University collections have significance beyond the institution. However it should be noted that university collections are also of particular significance to the institution's own history.

How did University Curators in Australia Start Their Museum Movement?

What did Australian university curators do to convince university managers and others that many of their collections contain irreplaceable information of scientific, historic cultural and academic heritage? The first thing to be done was to find out how many university collections there were in Australia. A preliminary survey showed that there were perhaps 125, although universities themselves clearly did not know what they held. In 1992, university curators in Australia were

asked to a meeting to discuss the next move. It was decided to form a national association, called *The Council of Australian University Museums and Collections* (CAUMAC). The main aims of the Council were to lessen the isolation of the curator and to collect information. As there was seemingly little help to be had from the universities themselves, it was felt necessary to point out to government that it was in danger of losing a part of the Distributed National Collection.

However, there was a difficulty approaching government. Universities came under the authority of one Ministry; museums were under the authority of another. Spoken to separately they each said that the other was responsible for university museums, and that in any case it was up to each university, or each State to look after university museums. Well, it was known that the universities were not particularly interested. The States, when approached said that was a matter for the universities — they themselves were fully committed with local historical society museums and their big State museums in the capital cities.

It seemed to be back to the beginning again. However, Vice-Chancellors of universities in Australia have a committee that meet from time to time to discuss matters of mutual concern. This committee was powerful enough to approach senior ministers directly, and, more importantly, to expect a reasoned response. CAUMAC found a Vice-Chancellor (Professor Yerbury), who was a collector, and who therefore had some sympathy for the plight of university museums. She agreed to try to have the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) persuade the two government ministries to speak to one another about university museums. As it happened it was the end of the financial year and there was a small amount left in the budget of one of the ministries. It agreed to fund a review of Australian university museums.

Within 18 months a 225-page report had been published listing 250 university museums and collections and making 68 recommendations. Most of the 68 recommendations required a change of attitude or the formulation of policy rather than the expenditure of money. There were recommendations on:

- recognition of established university museums and collections;
- governance;
- management and forward planning;
- accreditation;
- staffing and volunteers;
- funding;
- accommodation and facilities;
- use and access;
- relationship to museum training programs;
- collection management; and
- cooperation.

The report, which was called *Cinderella Collections*, was well received. It drew attention to the fact that there were university collections and that senior administrators, as managers of universities, were responsible for this part of the nation's heritage. The curators were encouraged by the report and did take action on as many of the recommendations as they were able. After two years action had been initiated on three-quarters of the recommendations and over half had been substantially completed.

Reinforcing the Message

CAUMAC received acclaim for its part in initiating the review and managed to persuade the government to fund a second review (*Transforming Cinderella Collections*, 1998), this time with a grant provided by the second of the two ministries. The second review continued to investigate the management of museums within universities and strategic planning; it also paid particular attention to the problems of conservation. The review attempted to draw attention to the physical storage of objects and to provide advice on preventive conservation. It funded 15 visits to university museums by professional conservators to review the physical conditions and to write a detailed conservation assessment report. Some physical conservation was also carried out on specific nationally important objects.

By this time it was known that there were 275 university museums and collections in Australia. *Transforming Cinderella Collections* updated details about these and recorded 15 simple pieces of information about each (name; curator; address; location; phone; fax; email; opening hours; description; number of objects; date of establishment; number of staff; web address; national and international significance).

This information was put on a web site called the Australian University Museums Information System (AUMIS). The real importance of the two reports was the networking and lessening of the isolation of the curators. University museums can not function properly in isolation.

From National to International

After having listed the university museums in Australia on the web; it seemed logical to add other countries. Knowing the difficulties Australian universities had in nominating the museums and collections they owned there was going to be many problems. Language was one, and how was contact to be made to find out about the situation in other countries? There is nothing like action, any action, to solve a problem: a start was made by asking friends and contacts (Philippines, Spain), asking permission to summarise existing lists (Japan, the Netherlands and England), by surfing the web (Canada), or simply waiting for museums to contact us (Denmark, Germany, France, USA). You can see the results at www.icom.org/umac and clicking on the world map.

The Formation of an International University Museums Group

This experience of looking at the global situation raised another idea. If the Australian curators' group, CAUMAC, had worked well, perhaps an international group of university museum curators would prove worthwhile for all concerned. The idea was introduced to two international meetings held in Melbourne in 1998. (the UNESCO *Universities and Heritage Forum* and a triennial meeting of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)).

ICOM had a number of International Committees for different areas of museology (for example for public relations, natural history, and regional museums), but there was no committee for university museums. At both meetings the idea was presented and well received. Comments and signatures were gathered sufficient to ask ICOM formally for permission to form an International Committee for University Museums and Collections.

This request raised considerable discussion. Some members of ICOM's advisory committee were in favour, but others were against the idea. Some of those against argued that all the other ICOM International Committees dealt with one subject area, whereas university museums covered many areas. Others against argued that there were already too many International Committees. The discussions went on for over a year. It would have been easier to form a Committee outside ICOM.

But it seemed to me that it was important that ICOM understand that university museums, especially the small, relatively unknown ones, were just as much part of the museum profession as the larger city, state and national museums. If a committee was formed outside ICOM, it was possible ICOM would soon forget about university museums, just as university management in Australia had in the 1980s. It was important that ICOM, as the premier world body of museums, publicly recognise university museums, and it was equally important that university museums felt part of the world community of museums.

Help came from unexpected quarters. The editor of *Museum International*, a journal published by UNESCO four times a year in five languages, offered to publish a series of articles in two successive issues (206 and 207) about university museums. This series of articles helped sway the case with ICOM. University museums were granted permission to join ICOM as an international committee in July 2000.

Soon after, two international conferences helped the formation of the new committee. In September 2000, the university museums in Scotland (a group called UMiS) were holding a conference in Glasgow ironically entitled *The Death of Museums?* Another international conference for university museums followed the next week organised by Scandinavian countries and the OECD. It was held in Paris under the title *Managing University Museums*. (The papers are available in book or electronic form from the bookshop on the OECD website: <http://www.oecd.org/>).

These conferences were a great opportunity to spread the word about the new committee and to elect interim office bearers. Their job was to ensure that the new committee, which was called UMAC (International Committee for University Museums and Collections), held its first conference in Barcelona in July 2001, which was when the Committee was formally established. In September 2001, Spain decided to form its own national university museum group.

UMAC's Work

The aims and objectives of UMAC can be read in the abstract to this paper or on the web at www.icom.org/umac.

UMAC's first conference had the theme *Intensifying Support For, and Increasing Audiences in, University Museums and Collections*. UMAC members from over a dozen countries presented over two dozen papers and workshops to an audience of 60 persons. The presentations can be read on the web or purchased as a special issue of the journal *Museologia* (for details of either, please see the UMAC website www.icom.org/umac).

At its first meeting UMAC set up five working groups:

- Directories;
- Ethics and Disposal;
- Staffing;
- Future conferences; and
- Recognition for University Collections within Tertiary Institutions & Governments.

These working groups are due to report at UMAC's second conference. This is in Sydney and Canberra from 29 September — 4 October 2002. Its theme is *Exposing and Exploiting the Distinct Character of University Museums and Collections*. Details are available on the UMAC website or brochures.

In 2003 ICOM will publish for UMAC a monograph on university museums.

Conclusions

Working together allows strengths and opportunities to be maximised and weaknesses and threats to be counteracted. Curators working alone in 2002 are as eccentric and anachronistic as an author using an old fashioned manual typewriter.

Working together as a team is stimulating and is the main reason for the existence of committees of management, networking groups and professional associations. Teamwork should exist in individual museums and universities, in local districts and regions, in individual countries and internationally. Talking with and listening to your colleagues is never a waste of time. Museum associations improve the morale and efficiency of staff. Associations raise the local, national and international standing, and assist an institution's contribution to future generations.

UMAC warmly invites you to become a partner with one or more university museums in Australia or elsewhere, and to attend the international conference in September.

Some Respectful Words of Advice for University Museums

- Discover, attract and work with your communities – do not run the museum for your own pleasure and aims
- Present exciting exhibitions – use your communities to help initiate and mount them
- Serve the university
- Harness electronic technology – use it in advertising and catalogues
- Apply for grants – even when you do not get them it makes others aware of your existence, which leads to the final point
- Be noticed – or to put it another way, position yourself where God will see you