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# From Kings to Corporate Executives: The Evolution of the Art Museum in the Modern World

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# From Kings to Corporate Executives: The Evolution of the Art Museum in the Modern World

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**From Kings to Corporate Executives:  
The Evolution of the Art Museum in the Modern World**

**by  
Laura Lembus**

**A Senior Thesis Submitted to the  
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Have you ever wandered through an art museum and wondered why a particular piece of art work was displayed on the wall or who decided that this object appearing in front of you qualified to be put in a museum? From the sixteenth through the eighteenth century, these decisions were made by European princes and aristocracy. Simply, they collected any object they believed to be rare, beautiful, scientific, or interesting. This method of collecting lasted until the eighteenth century when European monarchies were replaced by democracies and republics. The leaders of these new governments believed in the educational value of the museum. Therefore museum directors from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth century chose objects based on their educational value. For example, George Stevens, director of the Toledo Museum of Art in 1903, brought the first collection of Impressionist paintings to northwest Ohio because no one in the region had seen artwork like that before. He wanted to educate the people of the area about the Impressionist movement. But he did not bring the exhibit to Toledo to make money.

Unfortunately, modern museum directors do not have the same motivations when they compose exhibitions. Modern directors select exhibits that they believe will draw people into the museum, or exhibits that will be enticing for a specific ethnic portion of the community. Then, they begin to think about how the exhibit will educate members of the community. Not far from the mind of any museum director is the need for each and every exhibit to turn a profit and a close eye is always kept on “the bottom line”, as modern museums struggle to maintain a profitable balance sheet.

Why did museums transform from institutions rooted in academia into civic center dominated by a major concern for profitability and run according to generally accepted principles of business? My research will investigate the origins of the modern art museum from

the sixteenth century up to modern institutions. I will explain why museums began as mere collections of interesting objects for wealthy Europeans, why these collections evolved into academic communities, and finally, why these academically orientated institutions transformed into business operations with the goal of making money. Ultimately, museums evolved from their roots in the sixteenth century as collections of interesting objects into places of business in the twentieth century because during the mid-twentieth century a majority of museum in America went through a financial crisis. In order to remain open, museum administrators were forced to learn how to make a profit otherwise they would be closed.

In order to properly explain the above mentioned evolution of the museum, the work is divided into three sections. The first chapter I will argue that museums transformed from collections of interesting objects in the sixteenth century to public institutions focused on education by the end of the nineteenth century because during the eighteenth century the monarchies of Europe were replaced by democracies and republics. The leaders of these new types of government believed in the educational value of the museum and that all citizens should have access to that education. The second chapter will argue that museums were forced into becoming organizations run like a business because of a loss of funding from the federal government and a significant change in the way nonprofit organizations handed out funding in the mid-twentieth century. The third chapter of my research is devoted to two case studies, one on the Detroit Institute of Arts and the other on the Toledo Museum of Art. “Each case study will examine how the transformation outlined in the previous two chapters manifested themselves in the evolutions of the Detroit Institute of Arts and the Toledo Museum of Art.

## Chapter I: The Educational Value of the Museum

Glory, fame, pride, bounty, riches, and beauty: these were the reasons for the creation of the world's first museums. In the Middle Ages, the nobility of Europe seized treasures during their military exploits and proudly displayed the fruits of their victories in their homes. In rudimentary collections, this practice continued and even expanded through the Renaissance, as the aristocracy and wealthy elite across Europe began to collect anything that interested them: paintings, sculptures, instruments of war, books, and scientific inventions. Kings and queens, in the early modern era, encased these trophies in cabinets which they proudly displayed in private rooms in their palaces. However, during the late eighteenth century the idea of a museum began to change from the notion of private collections held by royal courts and wealthy individuals for personal gratification, glory, and pleasure, into the belief that the public should see these collections. Personal glory became civic pride. Why did museums begin this evolution from private princely collections that “catered to aristocracy” into multicultural public institutions focused on education? Museums were transformed from private princely collections into educational institutions accessible to the general public because during the late eighteenth century European monarchs lost their power to republics and democracies. The leaders of the emerging republics and democracies believed in the educational value of a museum. They believed all citizens should have access to the treasures that royal courts and wealthy individuals had kept for themselves.

The notion of organizing rare or valuable objects into a collection did not originate with the aristocracy of Europe, however, the basic idea of a museum came from the minds of the ancient Greeks. The scholar Athenaeus, living the second century, made note of the influence of the Ancient Greeks when he described the city of Athens as a museum unto itself and the palace

of Alexandria as a place where one could study science.<sup>1</sup> In the ancient world, museums existed in places like Persia, Assyria, Babylonia, and Egypt.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a museum was kept alive by rulers such as Alexander the Great (356-323 bce) and Constantine (273-337 ce) who collected various items of interest and brought back treasures from their military conquests.

Unfortunately, when Rome fell in 476 ce the idea of a museum was forgotten for nearly a thousand years, only to be revived during the European Renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Since the time of the Renaissance, a vital duty of being a prince involved collecting various works of art. A prince's wealth was often measured by how many rare and precious objects he owned. These objects were a source of pride and prestige and gave the prince an element of power because he decided what was to be labeled as beautiful and precious. These royal collections also provided a venue for courtly celebrations and ceremonies as well as a place for the prince or members of the royal family to rest and retire.

Prior to the eighteenth century, different types of collections were all housed in the same museum under one roof. Every item in the collection was put in the same building no matter if it housed paintings, stuffed animals, or armor. However, each room in the museum was arranged according to the needs of the collection. This plan had two parts: the cabinet and the gallery. These arrangement styles, developed in the later part of the eighteenth century, dominated museum layout design until the nineteenth century. The main themes reflected in the cabinet arrangement were individual study and civilized socializing. This meant that there needed to be enough space in the room for people to go off by themselves to study and reflect, as well as enough room for groups of people to stand around various pieces of the collection and socialize. Groups were said to be socializing in a civil manner because there was room for more than one

group to enjoy the collection at the same time without feeling suffocated and constrained.

Cabinet rooms were full, but the rooms themselves were “large enough to retain an air of calm and repose.”<sup>3</sup> The largest and most important pieces were placed on tables while lesser or incomplete pieces were placed on the floor. Cabinet rooms were also often lined with cupboards which were good for storage and helped when the owner wanted to rotate items in the collection.

While cabinet rooms focused on pleasant society and individual contemplation, the gallery style invited movement and was meant primarily to provide a venue for ceremonies.<sup>4</sup> Galleries were also meant to house large statues and paintings. Examples of famous galleries include the Uffizi in Florence built in the 1570s and the Grand Gallery of the Louvre built in 1610. Often during the eighteenth century German princes would convert parts of their palaces into galleries. This was done so frequently that the word gallery came to “refer to only the collection of a sovereign prince.”<sup>5</sup> Galleries symbolized the glory and wealth of the ruling elite. This connection between the social and ruling elite and patronage of art would remain for centuries.

As galleries became richer and richer they were no longer a scene of courtly life, instead they took on their own identity. In the later half of the eighteenth century, separate buildings were designed for galleries. These galleries preserved collections better than prior galleries and organized them in such a way that the viewer was shown a series of pieces that led up to the finest piece in the collection, which was usually located at the end of the hallway. Although galleries were no longer housed inside the palace, they were still connected to the palace; usually by means of a hallway or garden. These new galleries also had separate entrances where local nobles, civil servants, artists, and foreigners could enter without having to go into the palace.<sup>6</sup>

Changes in museum philosophy dating from the second half of the eighteenth century



were best seen in the work of Christian Mechel, who in 1778 designed the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna to house the art collections of the great Habsburg family. Mechel introduced the scientific principles of reason and order in his arrangement of the paintings in the Belvedere. Paintings were divided by schools and then arranged in chronological order. This event marked “the first historically organized exhibition of painting[s].”<sup>7</sup> Mechel arranged the paintings historically because he wanted to emphasize learning and instruction. To aid the viewer, Mechel also had all the paintings labeled. For the first time, the viewer was not assumed to automatically know the work of art. Labeling symbolized Mechel’s belief that the Belvedere would be visited by people who were not masters of art.<sup>8</sup> Other changes instituted by Mechel include placing paintings in simple frames so that the frame would not distract the viewer from the piece of art itself. Mechel was half a century ahead of the rest of the museum world in his attitudes about who should be allowed to visit museums. The rest of the world would not begin to adopt these practices until the last half of the nineteenth century. It took the museum world a century to implement Mechel’s system because of the upheaval caused by the French Revolution and its aftermath.

During the French Revolution, the revolutionaries emphasized the relationship between politics and art.<sup>9</sup> The Grand Gallery of the Louvre was created in 1789 as a statement of political power. Prior to being named The Grand Galley of the Louvre, the artifacts in the museum simply existed as a royal collection. In 1794, one year after the completion of the Louvre, the revolutionary government of France sent representatives to the newly conquered territory of Belgium to bring back works of art. General Napoleon Bonaparte, who was leading troops in Italy in 1795, agreed with this policy and began to ship Italian treasures back to France as well. General Bonaparte continued to transport works of art back to France as he led various

military operations around the Mediterranean and across Europe. By the time Bonaparte became Emperor Napoleon I in 1804, what had been a simple royal collection had been converted into a vast and magnificent collection known as The Grand Gallery of the Louvre. “In the Louvre’s Grand Gallery, art was transformed from an old-regime luxury, traditionally associated with conspicuous consumption and social privilege, into national property, a source of patriotic pride and an instrument of popular enlightenment.”<sup>10</sup>

The Louvre symbolized many things for the people and government of France. The museum itself not only provided visual proof that global treasures belonged to the people of France, but it also provided a way to teach the people of France “the virtues essential to the citizens of a free society.”<sup>11</sup> Bonaparte systematically took artistic treasures from the lands he conquered and proudly displayed them in the Louvre. By displaying works of art from conquered lands, Bonaparte transformed the Louvre into a place that the people of France could be proud of.

Moreover the actual, physical artwork in the Louvre symbolized Bonaparte’s political power and the arrangement of those pieces symbolized democratic values and educational philosophies. The Louvre’s first curators followed Bonaparte’s lead and often chose to hang pictures that portrayed civic and republican virtues.<sup>12</sup> Like the Belvedere in Vienna, works of art in the Louvre were arranged historically and by school. This allowed visitors the opportunity to understand the historical evolution of artistic thought and style. After Bonaparte’s final defeat at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, the Louvre was systematically stripped of the artwork Bonaparte had taken from conquered lands. However, even though the stripped Louvre symbolized humiliation and defeat, the museum still carried with it the spirit of national pride and the notion that artistic treasures should be accessible to all people.

During the nineteenth century, national pride and the desire for the masses to be educated by great works of art were not the only reasons for patronage of the arts. Many members of the social and wealthy elite sponsored the arts for personal gain. A perfect example of this artistic patronage can be found by studying the wealthy Medici banking family of Florence during the Renaissance. Cosimo de Medici (1389-1464) began his support of the arts in the fifteenth century when he acquired a collection of rare books, made copies of them, and then made the copies available to all scholars. However, one of his greatest acts of patronage was the decoration of the church of San Lorenzo. Because of the enormous size of the project and the fact that Cosimo underwrote the cost of renovation for an entire church, the building of San Lorenzo was seen as more than just private patronage: Cosimo was seen as a princely donor. Cosimo's social status greatly increased as a direct result of his funding of San Lorenzo. The deeds of Cosimo were not lost on the wealthy nineteenth century Americans who viewed the Italian Renaissance as the "epitome of high culture."<sup>13</sup> Affluent Americans such as John Pierpont Morgan and Andrew Carnegie looked to the Medici family to serve as models for "the new civilization in the new world."<sup>14</sup> After studying the actions of Cosimo and other members of the Medici family, wealthy capitalists took what they learned and applied these lessons to the needs of nineteenth-century America.

By analyzing the achievements of the Medici family, men like Morgan and Carnegie learned that the main reasons for patronage during the Italian Renaissance were piety, prestige, and pleasure.<sup>15</sup> Because modern wealthy capitalists wanted to gain power and prestige like the Medici family, they needed to transform the reasons for patronage during the Renaissance into reasons that would make sense in the minds of nineteenth century Americans. Therefore piety was transformed into patriotism and a sense of civic duty. During the late nineteenth century,

America was celebrating its centennial and art was used to promote patriotism. During this time, it was quite beneficial to one's social status to sponsor public commissions such as public libraries.<sup>16</sup> "The very concept of a public library, a place holding the potential for every citizen to gain knowledge, a place that is both free and open, is at the heart of American democracy."<sup>17</sup> Carnegie understood this concept and used what he learned from the Italian Renaissance to create the public library system to benefit the entire nation.

The Vanderbilt family understood prestige to mean displaying one's wealth, and they built at least seventeen mansions across the United States between 1876 and 1917 as a visual display of the family's wealth. The Biltmore house in Asheville, North Carolina, was constructed in 1895 at a cost of five million dollars.<sup>18</sup> The house was modeled after early French Renaissance architecture, and stood as a visual link between the social status of the family and the arts. With such prestige also came the belief that one had to be of certain wealth and have been schooled in the appropriate manner in order to purchase and choose the appropriate pieces of art to display in museums.

In the nineteenth century wealthy Americans believed pleasure was to be found in the collecting of beautiful objects which in turn would be uplifting to the spirit and mind. In the end "better art would make better citizens."<sup>19</sup> Similarly, there was also the belief that better art would make a better nation. Nineteenth-century Americans further believed that collecting art and establishing museums was a sign of an advanced culture. Museums came to symbolize the nation's contribution to civilization and provided "evidence that the nation cares for things of the spirit."<sup>20</sup>

Because America had no preexisting monarchy or aristocracy from which to confiscate treasures, and create museums, the first museums in American were started by men who

belonged to clubs. These associations were established in all major American cities between 1830 and 1860 and admitted members on the basis of social, hereditary, and financial status. While these qualifications might make the men of the Union Club of New York and the Century Association of New York seem like aristocracy, they actually formed these clubs out of a love for collecting and a spirit of reform.<sup>21</sup> Many of these men had come to America as paupers and had made their fortunes through genuine hard work. Surprisingly, the idea of these clubs was not unique to the North American continent. The notion spread elsewhere, even to places that had preexisting monarchies. Dozens of art associations were instituted all over Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. In Germany these organizations were known as the Kunstvereine and most cities including Berlin, Munich, and Dusseldorf had such an association.<sup>22</sup> The Kunstvereine believed in the “universal value of art as a means of personal edification and social improvement,” and the Berlin branch was directly responsible for improvements and upkeep at the Bremen and Hapsburg museums.<sup>23</sup> Often clubs like the Kunstverine were dominated by the remnants of the aristocracy or made up of civil servants and scholars.<sup>24</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, the idea of a museum had been transformed from the notion of individual collections owned by the aristocracy or a wealthy elite, to collections owned by institutions that reflected the quality and characteristics of a nation. This shift in ownership of artistic collections brought with it the drive to open up museums and their works of art to the masses. This change can be seen by looking at the evolution of collection procedures, museum accessibility, and exhibition methods, and the shifting ideas about museum practice and overall orientation.

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While collecting, in the modern sense began in the sixteenth century, it would take

approximately two hundred years for museum practitioners to iron out a system of cataloging that was organized and followed a set of standard rules. The system took so long to perfect because the people who first started to collect objects of interest followed no guidelines of any sort when they arranged the items in their collections. Each collection was generally arranged according to the tastes and preferences of the owner without any thought for the advancement of knowledge.<sup>25</sup> Wealthy men and men of science surrounded themselves with objects of beauty, interesting specimens, and whatever else caught their attention. Usually objects were acquired on account of their rarity, grotesqueness, beauty, or educational value. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries collections comprised of such works became the property of the state as monarchies and princes fell across Europe and new types of governments were established. Because the collections that the new republics and democracies inherited were arranged in a rather archaic, unsatisfactory fashion, many governments turned to the work of Caspar F. Neickel and his work *Museographia*, published in 1727, to help solve problems dealing with museum classification.<sup>26</sup> A modified version of his system is still employed by many museums today.

From the very start of collecting artifacts, various owners had arranged their collections in their own particular style. In the sixteenth century Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria organized his private collections according to raw materials.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it was “quite reasonable to put his master of linens in charge of his picture gallery—paintings are, after all, made of cloth.”<sup>28</sup> At the close of the seventeenth century, ideas began to swirl around the world’s intellectual community that museum collections should be divided into specific categories. Lord Bacon, in his philosophical text *New Atlantis* (1627), was the first to suggest that collections should be divided into what was considered art and what was consider science or

history.<sup>29</sup> Works grouped under the art category symbolized pleasure, emotion, value and form, while historical items represented reason and learning.<sup>30</sup> However, Lord Bacon's revolutionary idea was slow to spread and did not catch on with the majority of the art world until the nineteenth century. Eventually, instead of huge storehouses, museums evolved into scientifically organized institutions with a proper place for every object under its roof.

The goal of many American museums during the late nineteenth century became to acquire extensive collections of art and artifacts. However, many experts agreed that the most valuable pieces of art were already stored in English and continental collections.<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, these masterpieces were too expensive for most fledgling museums to purchase from European collections. To solve the problem of collecting, newly founded American museums turned to purchasing the reproductions of masterpieces. Reproductions solved the problem because they still allowed museums the ability to educate the nation in art. This meant that, instead of only the elite having access to art, now larger numbers of people could have access to and gain knowledge from art by viewing close copies of precious artifacts.

Unfortunately, the visitation policies of museums during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries reflected aristocratic notions that only the privileged should be able to view a museum's treasures. Although Pope Sixtus IV (1471-84) set a precedent in the fifteenth century by opening up the Capitoline Museums free of charge to artists, scholars, and amateurs, accessibility to early museums for the general public remained extremely difficult down to the modern period.<sup>32</sup> In a lecture delivered in 1927 at Oxford University, Sir Fredric George Kenyon described the difficulty a visitor encountered while attempting to visit the British Museum during the early part of the nineteenth century:

He must pay one visit to the porter's lodge to present his credentials for so rare a privilege. He must come again to receive a ticket if his character had survived

this scrutiny. Then he must wait some months before he was informed that his turn had come; and when the great day had arrived, he was rapidly conducted through the rooms in a group of ten, by a guide who was apt to rebuff with severity any request for information.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the British Museum was not unique in its narrow and complicated visitation policy. Museums in Berlin during this time were only open twice a week, Monday through Saturday, from 10:00am until 5:00pm.<sup>34</sup> These hours made sure that no one who worked on a regular basis would be able to attend because the museums were only open during times when people worked, and were closed on Sundays, the day the majority of workers had free. The atmosphere inside these museums was also quite daunting for the casual visitor. Often items were not well lit and were frequently insufficiently labeled. Catalogues were scarce. The first guide book to the British Museum was not printed until 1808 and was not much use for anyone unfamiliar with the items in the museum. Many museums also hired security to watch visitors because they feared that they would damage the items in the museum. Museums did not become easily accessible to the general public until later in the nineteenth century with the spread of general education.

At the start of the twentieth century, museum reformers tried to make art museums accessible and understandable to visitors who had no prior knowledge of art. New galleries were designed to hold large quantities of the best works in hopes of educating the casual visitor.<sup>35</sup> Catalogues were also published to supply viewers with information about the pieces and to enable viewers to have a truly aesthetic experience. Unfortunately for the casual visitor during the early part of the twentieth century, many museums were stuffy, crowded, and overall poor places to study great works of art. These exhibition problems were noticed by leaders of the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston. To resolve the problem they proposed a solution known as the theory of separation, which called for dividing great and minor works into separate galleries, and



for these works to be studied as separate collections.<sup>36</sup> Supporters of this theory wanted to transform the atmosphere of a museum into one where the visitor could enjoy art and study it at the same time. Similar studies conducted by other museums found the need for better circulation patterns, labeling, and oral and written interpretation.<sup>37</sup> These studies pushed museums to create a more democratic atmosphere, one that met the needs of the majority of the population.

One motivation to found museums in nineteenth century America was the belief that they would have a positive effect on manufacturing and industry. This connection arose because of fairs and exhibitions and the fact that American manufacturers paled in comparison to English manufacturers at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. The exhibition in London was seen as a sign that England had fully transformed from a “feudal and agricultural” society to a “democratic and commercial” society.<sup>38</sup> In other words, a successful exhibit was a crowning achievement of a civilized society, and Americans wanted global recognition that they were a civilized society. The plan then became for American museums to exhibit works of the past for the benefit of industrial designers. Through industrialization, America would become great. Emphasis was strongly placed on the cleanliness and comfort level of exhibition halls because that was where artists copied designs of great masters. It was believed that through copying and the study of fine arts, one could learn and improve upon any problems of industrial design.<sup>39</sup>

However, exhibitions did more than improve industrial design. They offered services once provided by salons, academies, and special-splinter groups.<sup>40</sup> Exhibitions provided the most efficient method for large groups of people to view a museum’s collection because they provided the opportunity for “collective as well as individual significance.”<sup>41</sup> They offered a way to educate and entertain the masses. Exhibitions reached out into the community because such programs were carefully selected “with themes that [told] a story, [had] emphasis on

functional arrangement, and [included] participatory activities to involve the viewer.”<sup>42</sup> Well thought out exhibitions also helped and continued to build respect and understanding for past civilizations. They fulfilled the belief that art would make people better citizens. Well planned exhibitions proved to be the winning method for exposing art to the masses.

In America, from 1900 to 1930, three main philosophies concerning the overall orientation and direction of art museums arose. The first philosophy was the aesthetic philosophy which maintained that the purpose of an art museum should be cultural rather than educational. People subscribing to the aesthetic philosophy believed art museums should only contain “objects which reflect, clearly or dimly, the beauty and magnificence to which life has attained in past times.”<sup>43</sup> The original founders of the Museum of Fine Arts, in Boston believed in such a philosophy. Collections inspired by the aesthetic philosophy would be arranged by artists and designed in such a manner as to benefit most the mind while keeping a high standard of aesthetics in the community. Explanations about the works of art were considered of secondary importance. The main goal was to facilitate the best possible visual and aesthetic experience for the visitor.

The second philosophy of museum practice came into existence around 1912 and held that the art museum should first and foremost be an educational institution. This guiding principle had more of a democratic flare than the aesthetic philosophy. The educational philosophy maintained that museums could be adapted to meet “the needs of the mechanic, the factory operator, the day laborer, the salesman, and the clerk, as much as to those of the professional man and the man of leisure.”<sup>44</sup> Theories on the educational value of a museum held that the goals of an educational institution were to increase knowledge and then help spread this knowledge to the surrounding community. To accomplish these goals, many museums

sponsored lectures and promoted comprehensive identification of items in the collection. By providing education to members of the community, supporters of the educational philosophy believed museums would help community members become happier, wiser, and more productive.<sup>45</sup> In promoting education, supporters also maintained that art museums should hold all types of artwork including fine art and industrial works as well.

The final museum practice theory that arose from the period was known as the comprehensive philosophy. This philosophy combined aspects of the aesthetic and educational philosophies into one belief that maintained, “aesthetic enjoyment can be educational and education can lead to aesthetic enjoyment, with no line of demarcation to mark where one leaves off and the other begins.”<sup>46</sup> The mission statement made by officials at the Chicago Institute of Art in 1916 reflected the ideals of the comprehensive philosophy when it stated that the primary duty of a museum was to obtain and display, in the best manner possible, works of art. This obviously reflects the aesthetic half of the comprehensive philosophy. The educational side was found in the second half of the mission statement when it stated that museums should do all they could to encourage people to visit and to ensure that people got the most out of their visit. Many museums followed the lead of the Chicago Institute of Art and still practice the comprehensive philosophy today because it was believed that if museums focused too heavily one philosophy, aesthetic or educational, some viewers would get enjoyment out of exhibits while other viewers would feel isolated. The goal of museums was to be inclusive not exclusive.

At the same time American museums were struggling over which philosophy of museum practice to follow, administrators noticed that museums which were approaching the century mark needed to be renovated and brought up to speed with modern technological innovations. Layouts were changed to incorporate more natural light as well as to install new methods of

artificial lighting.<sup>47</sup> Each item in the museum was also labeled well enough so that it provided sufficient information to answer the majority of questions a visitor might have about a specific piece. Some museums also added libraries, reading rooms, and lecture halls to fit their educational missions. In addition, many museums kept reference books on hand to aid scholars. Most importantly, the majority of museums added new rooms for storage, staff, restoration, and conservation. These early renovations reflected the manner in which the museum had become a public institution.

The second part of museum renovation involved the way museums were structurally organized. Prior to the twentieth century, museums in America were operating independently of one another. This organizational structure led to the waste of valuable resources and over staffing because museums saw themselves as competing with one another instead of trying to educate the country as a whole.<sup>48</sup> In 1900 the American Association of Museums (AAM) was formed to regulate and unite the goals of museums in America. To achieve its goals the AAM established a publication entitled *Museum Work* whose objectives were to foster communication between museums and improve the image of museums in the eyes of the public.<sup>49</sup> To help alter the perception of museums, the AAM sent out researchers who evaluated the conditions of museums in America and provided feedback on how to improve them.

During this time, museums in Europe also facilitated renovations by moving away from the use of period rooms to display art. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when most European museums were built, museums usually decorated the space around the artwork in the same architectural style of the piece. Typically done in Baroque and Rococo styled buildings, blending the architecture with pieces of artwork was meant to “ease the transition from one structural element to another or to extend the building’s interior space.”<sup>50</sup>

Museum designers also believed that the architecture provided a frame of reference for the viewer, and this system, in a way, was a precursor to catalogues.

This decoration scheme, however, posed several problems for museums. First off, museums rarely had enough pieces from a specific time period to decorate an entire room in one style. While period rooms provided a visual explosion for the viewer, they “no longer offered a visual history of art;”<sup>51</sup> something that Mechel was attempting to create at the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna. Finally, period rooms were also expensive to build and once they were built they were very difficult to change. To fix this problem, museum designers followed Mechel’s lead and dropped the idea of filling all available wall space with works of art. Instead museums began only to display a small number of pieces with enough space around each piece so that they could be viewed as individual works of art.<sup>52</sup> Of the 376 pictures on display at the National Gallery in Berlin when it opened in 1876, only 88 remained after the turn of the century.<sup>53</sup> Other reforms included changing color tones and adding comfortable seating, so that exhibit rooms became brighter, more spacious and generally more pleasing to visitors. In all, museums were redesigned to be places of public entertainment, sites of scholarly research, and gatekeepers of artistic wonders; a far cry from the princely collection of the early modern era.

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<sup>1</sup> George B. Goode, *Museum History and Museums of History* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 65.

<sup>2</sup> Goode, *Museum History*, 66.

<sup>3</sup> James J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the Rise of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28.

<sup>4</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 28.

<sup>5</sup> Moritz Stubel, “Duetsche Galeriewerke and Kataloge des 18. Jahrhunderts,” *Monatshefte fur Bucherfreunde and Graphiksammler* (1925), 247, quoted in Sheehan, *German Art World*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 33.

<sup>7</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 40.

<sup>8</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 40.

<sup>9</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 49.

<sup>10</sup> Remy Saisselin, *The Enlightenment Against the Baroque: Economics and Aesthetics in the Eighteenth Century*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), quoted in Sheehan, *German Art World*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 50.

<sup>12</sup> Didier Maleuvre, *Museum Memories: History, Technology, Art* (Stanford, Stanford University Press: 1999), 10.

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- <sup>13</sup> Nancy Einreinhofer, *The American Art Museum: Elitism and Democracy* (London: Leicester University Press, 1997), 1-2.
- <sup>14</sup> Einreinhofer, *Elitism and Democracy*, 1-2.
- <sup>15</sup> Einreinhofer, *Elitism and Democracy*, 10.
- <sup>16</sup> Einreinhofer, *Elitism and Democracy*, 12.
- <sup>17</sup> Einreinhofer, *Elitism and Democracy*, 12.
- <sup>18</sup> Einreinhofer, *Elitism and Democracy*, 13.
- <sup>19</sup> Einreinhofer, *Elitism and Democracy*, 15.
- <sup>20</sup> Frederic George Kenyon, "Museums and National Life," Lecture, Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford University, June 17, 1927.
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- <sup>22</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 111.
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- <sup>30</sup> Detlef Hoffman, "The German Art Museum and the History of the Nation," in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles*, ed Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 10.
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- <sup>32</sup> Anthony M. Clark, "The Development of the Collections and Museums of 18<sup>th</sup> Century Rome," *Art Journal* 26, no. 2 (1966-1967): 141.
- <sup>33</sup> Kenyon, "Museums and National Life".
- <sup>34</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 116.
- <sup>35</sup> Theodore Low, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Art Museums in the United States* (New York: Columbia University, 1948), 35.
- <sup>36</sup> Low, *Educational Philosophy and Practice*, 38.
- <sup>37</sup> Edward P. Alexander, *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence* (American Association for State and Local History: Tennessee, 1983), 12.
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- <sup>39</sup> Low, *Educational Philosophy and Practice*, 18.
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- <sup>41</sup> Goode, *Museum History*, 74.
- <sup>42</sup> Alexander, *Museum Masters*, 10.
- <sup>43</sup> Low, *Educational Philosophy and Practice*, 32.
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- <sup>45</sup> *The Museum*, 1, (1917): 1. Quoted in T. Low, *Educational Philosophy and Practice*, 41.
- <sup>46</sup> Low, *Educational Philosophy and Practice*, 39.
- <sup>47</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 178.
- <sup>48</sup> Laurence V. Coleman, "A New Era for American Museums," *Science* (New Series) 58, no.1497 (1923): 172.
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- <sup>50</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 132-33.
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- <sup>52</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 180.
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## Chapter II: When Money Began to Matter

After renovations in the early twentieth century, museum collections in America and Europe were a long way from their original status as possessions of monarchies and princely courts. When museums were under the direction of the aristocracy only wealthy and powerful people were permitted access to the treasures of the world. The value of art was unknown to a majority of people. However, this situation changed with the French Revolution. After the Revolution, museums were seen as educational institutions that could not only educate a population about art, but also strengthen nationalistic ideologies through propaganda methods. Museums then became thought of as institutions where all people could see art, learn about art, and be taught community values. After battling over institutional philosophies and significant interior design changes in the early twentieth century, museums were finally transformed into national institutions intended for the benefit of all people.

Two of the most well known museums in the United States, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (MFA) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (Met) exemplified the desire for museums to benefit a majority of the population with their foundations as museums of academia in 1870. However, this ideology faltered a mere thirty-five years later when in 1905, the Met stopped displaying its collection of architectural and sculptural casts that it had been accumulating and showcasing since 1883. The original purpose of the plaster reproductions, as discussed in the previous chapter, was to educate people on the principles of art. Part of this plan was to have art students come into the museum, sketch the reproductions, and thus learn how to draw and master the effect of light and shadow in artistic composition. After the removal of the plaster casts, the board of trustees at the Met began to acquire only original works of art. The main reason why the Met eliminated its collection of plaster casts was because people stopped

coming to the museum.

Instead people began to flock to places that housed original or novel works of art. A short four years later, the MFA followed in the footsteps of the Met when it too eliminated its collection of architectural and sculptural casts in favor of original works of art. Why did museums in the twentieth century undergo such an abrupt transition—a transition not completed until the late twentieth century when modern American museums found themselves firmly under the control of directors deeply concerned with the profitability of the museum, much more so than with the quantity and breadth of their collections? Museums transformed from institutions rooted in academics into institutions run along business lines because of a dramatic decrease in funding from the federal government during the mid-twentieth century which caused museums to begin competing with one another for outside funding. By conforming their own operating practices and goals with those used in the world of business, modern American museums learned how to elevate museum work to the status of a profession, organize their internal hierarchies efficiently, and gain financial backing from local communities and businesses which allowed them to remain viable civic institutions.

At the turn of the twentieth century, administrators still believed that the primary function of a museum was as an academic institution. Therefore exhibition methods focused on the content of the collection, not on how much revenue the exhibition could bring to the museum. The collection was the core of a museum's concern and its prime responsibility.<sup>1</sup> This inward, academic focus of museums lasted from the early twentieth century up until the 1960s. During this time period, acquisitions were considered of prime importance along with the conservation of those objects already owned by the museum.<sup>2</sup> Money was spent on research and the development of catalogs. Public service was not the main goal of museums. They kept short



hours and were only open during business days which prohibited many people from visiting the museum.<sup>3</sup> In a perfect world, many curators believed that all visitors should come to the museum out of respect for the dignity of the works of art. Curators also believed that visitors should already have a considerable amount of knowledge about the works of art that they were visiting. However, most curators knew this was an unrealistic and an unobtainable goal. Therefore they designed exhibits for the casual visitor.<sup>4</sup>

Early twentieth century American museums hoped through their collections to provide healthy entertainment, instruction, and an atmosphere in which to conduct academic research.<sup>5</sup> These hopes were a reflection of the inward focus of museum administrators because they considered themselves to be educating the masses for the betterment of society. Museum administrators believed that the artifacts they presented must be entertaining in order to attract visitors and leave some type of educational impact on them. Didactic information, including wall essays on historical content, was seen as a way of attracting a variety of visitors, including those with little background in art.<sup>6</sup>

Concurrent with this philosophy, administrators also believed that a majority of visitors did not like to follow predetermine paths set up by curators. They felt that this type of systematic exhibition was too narrowly focused for the casual visitor and provided him or her with an overload of information. Therefore museum officials designed exhibitions that highlighted single points from specific subject matter. Unfortunately this proved to be quite tricky. Museum administrators wanted to avoid programs that “tend[ed] to make the public believe that without any effort, by listening for a brief hour or less to the exposition of a problem, they have mastered it.”<sup>7</sup>

Additionally museum administrators wanted to avoid making exhibitions too technically

complex because they worried that people would become distracted by how the exhibit was put together and not concentrate on the material that was presented. Officials feared that if they displayed the skeleton of a large dinosaur, for example, that the crowds would be more impressed by how the skeleton was strung together than by the overall size of the dinosaur.<sup>8</sup> Therefore many museums concentrated on showing rare and beautiful objects that attracted attention all by themselves.<sup>9</sup> For example, museum administrators would design an entire room around a painting or series of paintings by Claude Monet, instead of putting various European impressionist painters together in one exhibit. Museums also avoided using group presentations because administrators feared visitors would become bored by the idea being repeated over and over.

Although museum officials focused on bettering society, they also realized museums existed for the educated and elite members of society as well.<sup>10</sup> For academia and the few visitors who liked systematically organized exhibitions, museums placed specially designed exhibitions in wings and select halls throughout the museum. These exhibitions presented the material in an in-depth fashion that satisfied multiple points of view. The American Museum of Natural History in New York City was designed in this fashion because of its popularity with New York City public schools.<sup>11</sup> This meant that people from different academic institutions or cultural backgrounds could analyze the information and reach meaningful conclusions on their own. In order to provide such a setting museums made sure their collections were easily accessible to anyone who needed to do a bit more research.<sup>12</sup> These systematic exhibitions were especially common in museums located in large cities with diverse populations or in university settings.

A large part of the reasoning behind the belief that the majority of visitors would not like

systematic exhibitions had to do with the perceptions of the museum founders in general. Many museums established at the end of the twentieth century were started by men of great wealth such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller. These men believed that museums should exist in highly civilized communities among enlightened peoples only.<sup>13</sup> However this did not mean that only people with highly educated minds should visit a museum. These wealthy men of the late nineteenth century believed it was their duty to educate the masses and provide them lessons in culture. This notion led to the belief that the mere presence of a museum enhanced the well being of a city.

Prior to the mid-twentieth century, it was a common belief in the museum world that the only way a museum could survive was through a governmental subsidy or through a secure connection with an institution that had proper endowments. Any museum left unprotected by means of support through individual gifts or societies without ample endowments would eventually fall to the way side.<sup>14</sup> This belief about the proper types of funding existed well into the twentieth century. During this time there was a huge boom in the number of museums constructed in the United States. Museums created during the mid-twentieth century were also significantly larger than their predecessors. According to Kenneth Hudson, a writer for the magazine *Museum International*, three quarters of the world's active museums were established after 1945.<sup>15</sup> In the United States federal funding could not keep up with the pace of museum growth and fell into significant decline by the 1970s.

As federal dollars kept declining museums were forced to rely on revenues gained from entrance fees, gift shops sales, and restaurant sales to make up the difference. Museums began to place more and more emphasis on attendance records and on exhibitions that would draw in crowds. In order to attract more visitors and assure potential sponsors that it was worth their

while to invest in the museum, museums began to pick up on marketing techniques from the business world. Museum administrators attempted to discover the needs and interests of the community and then create programs that would cater to those needs. When the Met and the MFA eliminated their collections of plaster casts in favor of original works of art, they were catering to the needs of the public. The leaders of the Met and the MFA realized that people were not interested in copying replications. Visitors wanted to see original works of art. Therefore the Met and the MFA got rid of their casts and enjoyed an increase in attendance.<sup>16</sup> These changes instituted by the Met and the MFA were revolutionary and implemented before their time. Eventually, the actions taken by the Met and the MFA would be referred to as “deaccession” and seen as vital to maintaining a healthy collection. The rest of the museum world in America did not institute changes of this magnitude until a dramatic drop in federal funding caused museum officials to listen to what the public wanted.

The loss of federal funding was not the only reason museums began to look outward for other sources of revenue. In the world of business, museums are categorized as not for profit institutions. During the mid-twentieth century, as federal funding was declining, non-profit funding agencies began to change the criteria for who received funding. During this time there was an increased emphasis placed on organizational performance.<sup>17</sup> Administrators in nonprofit agencies only wanted to support institutions that posted real results. Museums were no longer perceived as successful institutions merely because they existed. The two events that precipitated the change in the way in which non-profit agencies handed out money were the work of Harvard Business School Professor J. Gregory Deer in the 1960s and an evaluation model adopted by the United Way of America in 1973.

Prior to Deer’s work, museums in the mid-twentieth century were still being considered

successful institutions if they were open to visitors. Existing was a sign of a successful museum. The literature at the time said nothing about the accomplishments of the museum or what type of impact museums intended to make on a target audience, but instead focused inwardly on the administrators of the museum. The most common words used to describe these high minded individuals was “philanthropic (from the Greek for a “lover of humankind”), benevolent (from the Latin for “somebody wishing to do well”), and charitable (from the Latin also, *caritas* or “with loving care”).<sup>18</sup> Deer’s work, known as the social enterprise model of third sector or non-profit organizations, provided a method for evaluating the work of these types of institutions. Professor Deer believed that outcomes mattered, “not goodwill, not an accumulation of resources, not good process, and not even highly acclaimed programs, but actual outcomes, impacts, and results.”<sup>19</sup>

In his work, Deer drew parallels to commercial institutions by stating that they were both driven towards a bottom line. However, Deer also admitted that commercial institutions and non-profit institutions were not exactly the same in their quest for the bottom line because non-profit institutions generally strove for social outcomes that were ascertainable but difficult to quantify. In fact it might take years for the efforts of a museum to become visible. Because of this hardship, Deer believed that a museum must identify its own bottom line and thus would be deemed a success once that stated bottom line was achieved. However, because museums were not commercial institutions, they did not have bottom lines. Instead, Deer equated the bottom line philosophy of the business world with the non-profit world’s practice of establishing goals.<sup>20</sup> To ascertain out how to develop an appropriate bottom line or more accurately an appropriate series of goals, museum administrators followed the evaluation model as adopted by the United Way of America.

Throughout the early twentieth century, funding from the United Way had been based on the curriculum of an individual program, how well the instructors were qualified, and if enough materials existed for the program to run properly.<sup>21</sup> However, beginning in the late twentieth century, the United Way modified its way of determining which agencies received funds. It began to look at the recipients of the program instead of the providers of the program. In order for health and human-service agencies to receive funding from the United Way of America, agencies had to prove their ability to “make positive differences—differences in knowledge or attitudes or values—in the quality of the individual or communal lives.”<sup>22</sup> Part of the criteria for receiving funding also meant that the results of the positive difference must be constantly met. Faced with a significant loss in federal funding, museum administrators could not ignore the policy changes implemented by non-profit funding agencies. Therefore many museum administrators began to establish outcome based goals in order to receive funding from these agencies.

Most museum administrators believed that the challenge of making a positive difference in the life of an individual or a community was not too difficult to achieve because they believed they were already doing it.<sup>23</sup> However many officials within the museum community placed warnings on outcome based evaluations. These officials warned against museums making their goals too large. They feared that museums that established unrealistic goals might only be setting themselves up for failure.<sup>24</sup> For example, wanting to increase attendance by 50 percent in a year was unrealistic. Goals needed to be smaller such as wanting to increase attendance over a year by 10 percent, or designing a specific program for a targeted audience. In all, museum officials pushed for a sense of modesty.

The second warning museum administrators issued was as equally important as the first.

They warned against distorting the content of collections to only include information that could be measured. In other words, officials strongly advised against museums only presenting programs that audiences wanted to view. Officials compared a stripped down museum to standardized testing in public schools across the nation.<sup>25</sup> They believed that if museums were to strip their collections down to that which could only be measured through an outcome based evaluation they would have lost part of what makes a museum a museum; namely a place where one can go to study, learn, analyze, and simply view great works of art from a broad range of time, taste, and provenance.

Even if the federal government had enough money to fund all of the museums in the United States during the later half of the twentieth century, it is likely that they would still have switched over to outcome based evaluations. In 1993 Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) which made every federal agency responsible for establishing goals for its programs and then reporting annually how well those goals were obtained. GPRA was designed to make “sure that government programs actually [worked] to achieve their intended outcomes and that federal money [was] being spent not only honestly but effectively.”<sup>26</sup> Although few museums were directly affected by this change in federal policy, the GPRA provided a model for various state and local governments as well as for private funding institutions. Basically the GPRA was a sign to all non-profit agencies that the traditional sense of leniency they enjoyed was gone. It was replaced by a heightened sense of accountability. Because of the GPRA and its influence on other funding agencies, museums undoubtedly would have had to adopt outcome based evaluation even if non-profit agencies had not changed their evaluation policies.

Accountability requirements from non-profit funding agencies caused many museum

administrators to realize the lack of coordination and organization in the museum field as a whole. To enable museums to become more structuralized and uniform, museum officials called for the elevation of museum work to the status of a profession. Many museum administrators wanted museum work to be recognized as such because “professionalism has the power to confer upon its practitioners some of that same elevated prestige that might elsewhere be obtained only by wealth or through aristocratic birth.”<sup>27</sup> In other words, professionalism provided the opportunity to gain status through work. In the last half of the twentieth century museum workers have acquired a series of attitudes and practices that have enabled museum work to rise above the status of mere employment to the level of professionalism. The first of these attitudes was the belief that museum workers did their job with the mind-set that they were following a calling whose prime purpose is public service.<sup>28</sup> Museum workers were passionate about what they did and worked to benefit individuals and the community at large. This passion helped museums in a variety of ways. It helped convince local elites to donate works of art, made museums more attractive in the eyes of governmental and private funding agencies, and built audiences by attracting local people to exhibits.<sup>29</sup>

The second way in which museum work has been elevated to the status of a profession has been the establishment and maintenance of a network of national, regional, and local organizations designed to deal directly with professional concerns. The largest of these organizations in the United States is the American Association of Museums (AAM) which was founded in 1906. Today, this organization has grown to include over 10,000 members spread out over 2,000 separate institutions.<sup>30</sup> The primary function of these organizations is to provide a venue in which to exchange information and build networks. These organizations are also in charge of creating and monitoring academic training required for entry into the museum



profession, providing educational programs, publishing scholarly research, enforcing standards of achievement, and perusing political interests of the constituents that they represent.<sup>31</sup> There are over 80 such organizations in existence throughout the United States today and countless organizations across the globe.

The third way in which museums orientated themselves as a profession was through the development of codes of ethical conduct that not only pertained to the museum field as a whole but also to the specialties within it. The development of ethical codes that applied to museum workers was a major step in museum work becoming recognized as a profession because this silenced many skeptics. One of the greatest obstacles to museum work being perceived as a professional occupation was the belief that the work was too diverse to be regulated by a single code of conduct. Many members within the museum community questioned if there was “any unique body of knowledge or set of skills that could be found in museums of every discipline and which could provide a unifying basis for a single profession.”<sup>32</sup>

The final way in which museum workers positioned themselves as professionals was through the development of an institutional accreditation program that emphasized high standards of achievement. Interestingly, an examination of an accreditation handbook from the mid twentieth century and one from the late twentieth century shows the transformation museums underwent as they attempted to become more professional and outwardly focused. When the AAM first began its accreditation programs, accreditation hinged on how well an institution cared for its collection and maintained its facilities. These standards were similar to the funding evaluation standards used by the United Way in the mid-twentieth century. According to a 1970 accreditation handbook, in order for museums to receive accreditation they needed to avoid “amateurish and crude exhibits, [display] evidence that exhibition cases were

dust and vermin proof, [show that] exhibits served some purpose and were not just visual storage boxes, and [make sure that] special exhibits appealed to the general public.”<sup>33</sup> Everything involved in the accreditation process during the 1970s reflected an inward focus.

However by the late twentieth century, accreditation programs had been altered to reflect an outward focus. According to a 1997 accreditation handbook, accreditation hinged on “how effectively a museum involve[d] its audiences in developing public programs and exhibitions, how effectively it identif[ied] and knew the characteristics of its existing programs and potential audiences, and if it had the ability to effectively evaluate its programs and exhibitions in terms of their audience impact.”<sup>34</sup> The accreditation handbook published in 1997 kept pace with practices in the business world. It stated that in order for museums to be accredited, they must be able to effectively evaluate their audiences and design programs to fit that audience. Gone were the days when the mere existence of a museum was considered a sign of success.

For many museums, part of joining the business world meant an increased awareness in their responsibility to the public. This heightened awareness has manifested itself in the complexities of an idea known as public trust. Public trust generally implies a responsibility to “preserve, protect, and enhance the property held on the behalf of the public and a code of conduct to ensure that this responsibility is discharged with the highest degree of skill and diligence.”<sup>35</sup> This notion of public trust applies to all museums whether they were funded publicly or privately. Public trust also implies that museums will behave in a way that is in line with the values they are perceived to protect. The problem is that different museums are entrusted to protect different values, and the concept of public trust means different things to different museums. To figure out what public trust means most museums have to individually establish a relationship with their respective communities and then act in a manner that is

consistent with the guidelines of that relationship.<sup>36</sup> Most of the time public trust entails the museum displaying information that is not in any way distorted for economic, political, or any other reasons, including marketing. The public also trusts that museum administrators will carry out their duties with a high degree of competence, which will result in an outcome that enhances the quality of life for individuals living in the community and improve the community itself.<sup>37</sup> On the part of the public, individual members of the community must trust that the items in the museum's collection have been obtained legally and are genuine.

In the museum's attempt to have an outward focus, there has been an increase in attention paid to visitors. This intensification of attention creates a paradox when it comes to the issue of public trust. When museum administrators focus most of their energy on the cares and needs of visitors they are not focusing on the needs of the collection, which is what the visitor comes to see in the first place. This area of public trust is a source of potential tensions because visitors trust that the collections they look at are genuine while museum administrators are spending less and less time making sure that their collections are verifiably genuine and have been assembled with integrity.

The final way in which museums evolved from being academic institutions supported primarily by governmental funds to academic institutions with a business philosophy was to become self sufficient. During the last decade of the twentieth century there was a large push by museum administrators for museums to become completely self sufficient entities. To help educate museum workers, administrators sponsored sessions on marketing and finances for managers.<sup>38</sup> They also challenged directors to expand and acquire new skills in order to handle larger and increasingly complex budgets. However the biggest change museum administrators implemented in their drive for self sufficiency was to shake up the typical organizational

structure of museums.

Models prior to the last half of the twentieth century resembled large pyramids and the inward focus of museums. Technically the director was located at the top. However, the concerns and needs of curators were seen as more important than the concerns and needs of the director. One possible explanation for this practice was the fact that many early directors were former curators. Directors were seen as “intellectual and social leaders of museums” and the fastest way to become a director was to be curator of a disciplinary division in the museum or be the head of a public program.<sup>39</sup> The hierarchical structure of early museums placed curatorial departments in charge of education directly underneath the director. The offices of development, accounting, and grounds and maintenance branched out from the curator’s position.<sup>40</sup> However this inward thinking did not last when, by the mid-twentieth century museums were forced to start looking outward instead of inward.

Models developed in the last decade of the twentieth century looked quite different from the hierarchical model described above. These newer models were characterized by a president, a director, and an exhibition department. The president was in charge of the business aspects of the museum and presided over public relations, development, membership, and finances. The director was placed in charge of all aspects of the museum relating to art; including a number of curatorial departments, conservation, education, and the registrar.<sup>41</sup> Communication between these two branches was handled by the exhibition department. As museums began to shift to a more lateral organizational structure, museum administrators began to recruit upper management from marketing departments rather than from production departments. “As museums [became] more dependent on outside funding, uncertainty [shifted] away from concerns about the authenticity of a painting or the history of a sculpture to concerns about financial resources and

financial solvency.”<sup>42</sup> As a result museums came to be run by business administrators instead of art historians or curators because it was believed that such officials were the ones capable of keeping museums operating in the black.

The transformation from an inward focus to an outward focus can also be seen in the educational background of the directors. Prior to 1963, most directors graduated from Ivy League schools, but very few of those directors held advanced degrees. Most of their grandparents had been born in the United States as well.<sup>43</sup> This suggested that these directors came from established and elite backgrounds. After 1968 most directors tended to have advanced degrees obtained from a variety of colleges across the country. Furthermore, their respective grandparents were more likely to have been born in countries outside the United States. This evidence shows that the museum world was opening its doors to new members.

A final way in which the move from an internal focus to an external concentration can be seen is in the practice of “deaccession”. Deaccession was a verb coined to describe the permanent removal of an object from a museum’s collection. Prior to the later half of the twentieth century, the practice was thought to be unethical and unthinkable. The museum community of the time held the belief that once an object entered a museum it should be a permanent member of the collection.<sup>44</sup> Objects simply could not be discarded or returned to donors because the objects would return to the status of private property. There was also a fear at the time that if an object were returned to its donors, the donors would take offense and consider it a breach of faith. However as collections became larger and larger, museum administrators realized that they did not have enough space for everything in their holdings and thus they came up with a set of guidelines for deaccession. The first reason for deaccession has to do with the amount of time spent on care for objects in a museum’s collection. It was

reasoned that time spent on objects considered of secondary importance or objects no longer useful to the museum was time ill spent. Museum administrators came to believe that energy and resources should be spent on items most valued by the museum.

The second reason museum administrators believed deaccession could be a positive move was if this freed up funds to acquire new materials. In 1983, at a museum conference at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington architect George J. Hartman Jr. estimated that the annual cost to keep an object in storage was twenty-five dollars a square foot and that the average object occupied two square feet.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, the cost to construct the storage space was \$215 a square foot. “Viewed from this perspective, it is possible to conclude that a museum may have a positive duty to disburden itself from the care of objects that are of little or no value in carrying out its mission.”<sup>46</sup>

Lastly, museum administrators rationalized that an object could be deaccessioned on the grounds that it would be better represented, stored, or analyzed in a different collection. This last principle especially pertained to objects in scientific collections. For example in 1984 the Stanford Museum and Nature Center in Connecticut transferred the Hubbell Collection, which consisted of ninety thousand mollusks, to the Delaware Museum of Natural History, because the Delaware museum had a better storage facility.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Vincent Van Gogh’s Haystacks are better understood and appreciated when shown collectively rather than as separate individual paintings.

As a civic institution, museums represent one of the few places where the needs of the most elite and privileged members of society can be met alongside the needs of the most marginalized members of society. In order to remain such viable civic institutions, museums had to adopt the goals and operating practices of the business world. If museums had remained

academic institutions that were only focused on themselves they would have ceased to exist today. By adopting an outward focus, changing their organizational structure, and having their workers achieve professional status, museums have successfully transformed from academic institutions into organizations run best practices from the world of business.

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- <sup>3</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 84.
- <sup>4</sup> Harry S. Parker III, "The Art Museum and the Time of Change," *Art Education* 24, no 9 (1971): 6.
- <sup>5</sup> Franz Boas, "Some Principles of Museum Administration," *Science* 25, no. 650 (1907): 921.
- <sup>6</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 106.
- <sup>7</sup> Boas, "Principles of Museum Administration," 922.
- <sup>8</sup> Boas, "Principles of Museum Administration," 923.
- <sup>9</sup> Boas, "Principles of Museum Administration," 923.
- <sup>10</sup> Laurence Vail Coleman, "Museums-Educational Storage Batteries," *Journal of Social Forces* 2, no 5 (1924): 722.
- <sup>11</sup> Boas, "Principles of Museum Administration," 926.
- <sup>12</sup> Boas, "Principles of Museum Administration," 930.
- <sup>13</sup> B. Goode, "The Relationship and Responsibilities of Museums." *Science* 2, no 34 (1895): 200.
- <sup>14</sup> Goode, "Relationship and Responsibilities," 202.
- <sup>15</sup> Weil, *Making Museum Matters*, 31.
- <sup>16</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 164.
- <sup>17</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 36.
- <sup>18</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 37.
- <sup>19</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 37.
- <sup>20</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 37.
- <sup>21</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 84.
- <sup>22</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 39.
- <sup>23</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 39.
- <sup>24</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 40.
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- <sup>28</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 76.
- <sup>29</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 116.
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- <sup>31</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 78.
- <sup>32</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 75-6.
- <sup>33</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 33.
- <sup>34</sup> Weil, *Making Museums Matter*, 33.
- <sup>35</sup> James Cano, ed., *Whose Muse? Art Museums and the Public Trust* (Princeton: Princeton United Press, 2004), 134.
- <sup>36</sup> Cano, *Whose Muse?*, 135.
- <sup>37</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 82.
- <sup>38</sup> Sherene Suchy, *Leading with a Passion: Change in Management in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum* (New York, Altamira Press, 2004), 17.
- <sup>39</sup> Hugh H. Geroways and Lynne M. Ireland, *Museum Administration: an Introduction* (New York, Altamira Press, 2003), 331.
- <sup>40</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 104.

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<sup>41</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 102.

<sup>42</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 104.

<sup>43</sup> Alexander, *Museums and Money*, 109.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen E. Weil, *Rethinking the Museum & other Meditations* (Washington: Smithsonian Institutional Press, 1990), 105.

<sup>45</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 107.

<sup>46</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 107.

<sup>47</sup> Weil, *Rethinking the Museum*, 108.



### Chapter III: The Real World

This final chapter will examine how the changes in museum practice and orientation analyzed in chapters one and two were implemented in the Detroit Institute of Art and the Toledo Museum of Art. Each study will begin with an examination of why the museum was founded and why ultimately it was transformed from an academic institution into a business organization. These studies will reinforce my central argument that museums in America changed from educational centers into organizations run according to business principles because of the financial crisis experienced by a majority of museums during the mid-twentieth century.

#### Case Study I: The Detroit Institute of Art

In founding its art museum, the city of Detroit went about it backwards. Unlike most museums in the United States during the later half of the nineteenth century, the Detroit Institute of Arts was not born out of a club or society. The society came second. Typically museums in America during the late nineteenth century grew out of associations founded by a group of wealthy men. Examples of these clubs, which were popular in the United States from 1830-1860, include the Union Club of New York and the Century Association Club of New York.<sup>1</sup> Detroit's major art museum was not explicitly begun in this manner. The DIA, or the Detroit Museum of Art, as it would be known for the first 36 years of its life, actually started because of the Art Loan Exhibition of 1883. The third exhibition of such kind to visit Detroit featured "987 oil paintings, 206 water colors and pastels, 112 black and white sketches, 342 prints, 673 photographs and student drawings, and 2,481 miscellaneous items ranging from statuary to needlework to coins to assorted bric-a-brac."<sup>2</sup> It was quite successful, averaging 1000 people a day for over ten weeks

with a total attendance of 134,924 people.<sup>3</sup> While the exhibition was still in progress Senator Thomas W. Palmer pledged to donate \$10,000 to establish a permanent art gallery if another \$40,000 could be raised and a corporation were created to run such an institution. By being sponsored by a wealthy member of the community, the Detroit Museum of Art was similar most museums in America. William H. Brearly, the man who organized and directed the Art Loan Exhibition of 1883 quickly went about collecting the required funds. He secured a \$1000 donation from 40 wealthy Detroiters. Dubbed “The Immortal Forty” by Detroit newspapers, they became the original incorporators of the Detroit Museum of Art.<sup>4</sup>

When the museum opened its doors in the fall of 1888, it was full of items that today would not be considered appropriate for a credible art museum. A majority of the collection consisted of plaster casts and marble copies of Greek and Roman statues. Interestingly, this was not a unique situation for American museums. Almost all museums in the United States, including the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (MFA) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City (Met), began their respective collections with copies of famous pieces and plaster casts. Most experts in the art world during the late nineteenth century agreed that the most valuable pieces art were already on display in European museums.<sup>5</sup> Most fledgling museums could not afford to purchase these masterpieces from European museums so directors and curators resorted to reproductions. Replicas not only allowed a museum to create a vast collection, but also helped educate people about art.

As discussed above in chapter two, between 1900 and 1930 three different concepts emerged about why a museum should exist. These included the aesthetic philosophy, the

educational philosophy, and the comprehensive philosophy. When the DIA was created it was founded on the principles of the aesthetic philosophy; meaning that the purpose of the museum leaned more towards cultural improvement rather than educational improvement.<sup>6</sup> Works of art were laid out in such a fashion as to create the best possible visual experience for the visitor. Guide books and information on the works of art were considered a secondary importance. Interestingly, when William R. Valentiner was appointed to the post of director in 1924 he would tweak the founding philosophy of the museum. Valentiner, who led the museum until 1945, would transform the museum during his tenure into a museum based on a comprehensive philosophy of presentation. This philosophy combined the beliefs of the aesthetic philosophy and the educational philosophy into one.

German art historian William R. Valentiner's appointment as director in 1924 was typical for the behavior of museums at the time. Museum administrators were men well versed in art. A museum's collection was its main concern and prime responsibility.<sup>7</sup> Therefore directors were chosen based on their knowledge in art, not how well they could run an organization. Luckily for the DIA, Valentiner proved to be qualified in both areas. He was an expert in Italian sculpture and painting, Flemish and Dutch masters, and modern European art. He also brought with him some revolutionary ideas for the time on how to arrange exhibition halls.

The original layout of the collections at the Detroit Museum of Art closely resembled the manner in which private collectors displayed their collections. That is to say, the arrangement of the collection at the Detroit Museum of Art was originally not based on the goal of educating visitors but instead based on the wishes of the first director

John W. Dunsmore who led the museum from 1888-1890. Dunsmore, displayed the collection according to medium.<sup>8</sup> This meant that all of the paintings were group together in one area and all the sculptures and sketches were grouped together in their respective areas. Valentiner completely changed this system. He introduced the ideas of Christian Mechel and what were known as period rooms, to the Detroit Museum of Art. In 1778 Mechel had redesigned the Belvedere Gallery in Vienna based on the scientific principles of reason and order. He placed the paintings in chronological order to emphasize learning and instruction.<sup>9</sup> Valentiner applied Mechel's system to the Detroit Museum of Art by arranging galleries historically. In addition to arranging galleries sequentially, he also divided the collection into periods of art history and created period rooms. Visitors could now see a presentation of various paintings and sculptures from the same time period in one room, instead of a number of paintings loosely grouped together from different time periods. Period rooms were revolutionary at the time in that they not only displayed works of art from a specific time period, but also provided an example of the architecture from that particular period as well. The architecture was meant to provide a frame of reference for the viewer.<sup>10</sup> Later Valentiner's implementations would be abandoned when scholars successfully argued that the architecture of the room distracted visitors from the works of art on display. Period rooms were also complicated to construct, difficult to change, and expensive to maintain.

Valentiner also greatly improved the level of scholarship at the Detroit Museum of Art by hiring professional staff and expanding the museum's literary works. Throughout his career at the museum, from 1924-1945, Valentiner personally brought loan exhibitions showcasing art from all over the world. For each of these exhibitions he wrote an

interpretive essay for the exhibit's catalog. "These catalogs, together with his numerous journal articles, historical studies, and monographs, constitute a body of scholarship definitive in its own time and still an important source for the study of many of the individual artists and historical periods involved."<sup>11</sup>

Beginning with Valentiner in 1924 and continuing until 1962, all of the people appointed director of the DIA had backgrounds in art history. In 1962 Paul Grigaut, chief curator of the museum, was poised to take directorship of the museum after the retirement of Edgar P Richardson. However, it was thought by some that he was too focused on the collection when many believed that the primary need of the museum was an architectural expansion to meet the needs of the collection, and new programs that could reach out to members of the community.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, instead of Richardson, Willis F. Wood of the Norton Gallery and School of Art in West Palm Beach, Florida was chosen to be director. This was the first time a non-art historian took the helm of the museum. Coincidentally, as museums were changing what type of people they hired, they were also restructuring their financial foundations. As pointed out in the previous chapter, museums in America during the mid-twentieth century were experiencing financial emergencies. Museums came to be run by business administrators instead of art historians or curators because it was believed that such officials were the ones capable of keeping museums operating in the black.

Prior to 1919, the Detroit Museum of Art was funded by private donations. However, during the early part of the twentieth century many people in Detroit wanted to see the museum turn into some type of civic center and many doubted how this feat could be accomplished without city aide.<sup>13</sup> Additionally, there was some question about the legality of the ability of the city to use tax money on an institution that was not a

government agency. Earlier in 1893, the city gave \$5000 to the museum in order to eliminate the quarter entrance fee, which caused attendance to soar to 64,000 in 1894.<sup>14</sup> For these reasons ownership of the Detroit Museum of Art was transferred to municipal control in 1919. It was at this time that the name was changed from the Detroit Museum of Art to the DIA.

Like most institutions, the museum took a hit during the Great Depression. The city could no longer afford to be as generous to the museum as it faced heavy debts. The highly respected staff that Valentiner put together was laid off. It would take almost thirty years to reassemble a staff with the same qualifications.<sup>15</sup> Ironically because of the budget cuts, the museum was forced to rely on private donations to stay open. For the next forty years the DIA operated on mixture of public and private donations. Unfortunately for the museum this delicate balance toppled over in the 1970s.

During the mid-twentieth century most museums in the United States experienced financial difficulties. This was due large in part to the sheer number of museums founded in the twentieth century and changes in the way non-profit organizations handed out funding. Simply put, there were too many museums during the 1960s and 1970s for federal and state governments to support. The financial crisis the DIA experienced in the 1970s mainly due to its reliance on government funding. “The public-spirited citizens who had established the original museum and seen it through its formative years never felt it necessary to establish a permanent operating endowment that would allow the museum to function independently of governmental support.”<sup>16</sup> All financial crises experienced by the DIA prior to the 1970s were handled by the city. However, due to a reduction in the city budget in 1975 the city could not fully support the museum and 58 people were laid off.

On June 16, 1975 the museum was closed for the first time since it became an agency of the city in 1919. Unsure of what to do, museum administrators held an emergency meeting with Mayor Coleman Young to decide the fate of the museum. Several options were suggested, including laying off the professional staff in order to keep the building guarded and opened. Fortunately for the museum, director Frederick Cummings argued against this plan by stating no that serious administrators would come to work for the museum if their job was threatened every time the budget was tight.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately what would come out of these discussions was the financial aid plan known as the “Detroit Aid Package,” Public Act No. 166, which would essentially save the museum.

Because the museum was thought of as a cultural asset to the city of Detroit, it had many supporters in the state legislature at the time, including Governor William G. Milliken and Senator Jack Faxon. Together they came up with the “Detroit Aid Package” which appropriated 3.5 million dollars of state money to the museum in 1976. Today the “Detroit Aid Package” finances over half of the operating budget of the museum. The DIA is unique in its financial situation. A majority of museums in the United States do not have such staunch government support and have been forced to become self-sufficient.

Although the DIA is heavily supported by state government, it has taken steps like most museums in the United States towards self-sufficiency. As discussed in the previous chapter, the most common way museums pushed for self-sufficiency was through volunteer programs and the creation of master plans. During the 1960s the DIA created the Docent Program which greatly improved the museum’s ability to give tours and educate visitors. “Where five or six education department staff members and other trained art historians had previously struggled to provide this service, forty or fifty well-prepared

volunteers were able to present the collection to a much larger audience.”<sup>18</sup> By the end of the twentieth century, the Docent Program and the museum’s education department reached 200,000 people annually by means of lectures, tours, classroom instruction. The museum also coordinated activities with several universities including Wayne State University. The most important feature of the Docent Program was that it was all done by volunteers. In other words, while the DIA was receiving funding from the government, it still made an effort to be independent of government money.

The DIA also showed steps towards self-sufficiency through the creation of a master plan. As noted earlier, the creation of master plans was a sign that museum administrators were no longer just focusing on the collection. Instead, they were looking at the museum as a whole. The implementation of master plans also signaled that museum administrators were planning for the future, especially in the area of finance. One of the main goals of a master plan is to figure out what money will be appropriated where. In 1988 the DIA set about to implement an updated version of a master plan from 1983. The 1983 plan addressed the issues of physical maintenance, since most of the building still had the original mechanical equipment from 1927. Touched upon too were the problems of climate control and traffic patterns which had become congested since the addition of the two wings. Financially the plan also address the possibility of cooperation between a number of related institutions including the Center for Creative Studies, Detroit Science Center, Museum of African-American History, Children’s Museum, Detroit Historical Museum, the Detroit Public Library, and the DIA.

The possibility of coordinating all the above mentioned institutions was a good example of the DIA adhering to its original founding aesthetic philosophy. As stated in the



previous chapter, the goal of the aesthetic philosophy was cultural improvement, which was what the board of trustees at the DIA was striving for by engaging in cooperative activities with the above mentioned centers. The latest renovations also showed the DIA's continuing commitment to the aesthetic philosophy and a renewed commitment to the educational philosophy. In 2001 the museum started a \$158.2 million renovation project. According to director Graham W.J. Beal, the goal of the renovation project was to "provide viewers with a more comprehensive and engaging experience of the museum's exceptional collection."<sup>19</sup> In order for this to be accomplished, prior to beginning the renovations researchers at the museum conducted surveys on what patrons liked to see when they came to the museum. As concluded in the previous chapter, this was also a sign of self-sufficiency because administrators realized that attendance levels increased when museums displayed what people wanted to see. Researchers for the DIA compiled all of their information and used it to redesign the areas that were most popular. Additionally the architects of the renovation, Michael Graves & Associates of Princeton, N.J., resigned the galleries of the museum to create better traffic patterns. All of the renovation work was done with the concerns of the community placed first; signaling that the helm of the DIA was concerned with aesthetic and educational experience of the visitor. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the DIA was a far cry from the museum created in 1888 which was solely organized on the wishes of Director Dunsmore.

### Case Study II: The Toledo Museum of Art

Unlike the DIA, the Toledo Museum of Art began like most museums in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Toledo Museum of Art

was born out of an association known as the Tile Club which gathered regularly beginning in 1895 to provide its members the opportunity to make sketches of models.<sup>20</sup> This group of individuals provided support for Edward Drummond Libby's dream of creating a museum in Toledo at the turn of the century. Seven of the members of the Tile Club would be the initial incorporators of the museum and 130 members of the Club would sign the articles of incorporation. Edward Libby, generally accepted to be the founder of the Toledo Museum of Art, moved his New England Glass Company from Boston to Toledo in 1888 because of cheap natural gas, availability of good sand, and access to rail ship lines.<sup>21</sup>

Libby and his wife Florence Scott Libby belonged to a class of wealthy Americans that remembered the Civil War and who saw the invention of the transcontinental railroad, the implementation of electricity and telephone service into homes as a sign of civic progress. In other words, the Libbys belonged to the same class of Americans as Andrew Carnegie and John Pierpont Morgan in that they believed museums were a sign of an advanced culture and that they had an obligation to spread culture and education to the masses.<sup>22</sup> In 1902 Libby met the man who could turn his dreams of providing education and culture into reality. He was introduced to George Stevens, an amateur astronomer, painter, poet, and writer. Stevens shared Libby's belief that an art museum would be as useful to a community as public libraries and schools. Stevens was made director of the museum in 1903. He began the collections of the Toledo Museum of Art with this thought in mind: "The first thing I want to do is remove from the minds of the people the idea that the Toledo Museum of Art is an ultra-exclusive association, or an expensive luxury. It is neither one nor the other. It has something to give that all the people want and we want

them all with us.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, Stevens, like Libby, wanted to spread art education to large groups of people.

The Toledo Museum of Art is a prime early example of a museum founded on an educational philosophy. As discussed in the first chapter, this philosophy, which came into mainstream existence around 1912, held that museums should serve the needs of everyone from the lowest member in society to the upper crust. By providing education to member of the community, proponents of the education philosophy believed that these people would become happier and more productive.<sup>24</sup> The best example of Libby promoting the educational philosophy was his decision to allow the museum to be open to the public every day free of charge. This decision, made in 1908, was nearly unheard of. In that same year *Museum News* reported over 5000 school children had benefited from the museum being free to the public.<sup>25</sup> Fortunately, Libby’s passion for education did not stop there. In 1919, one whole side of the museum was converted into a school of design. The school was outfitted with workshops, studios, and classrooms, and was headed by Nina Stevens, the wife of Director Stevens. The school, which ran programs until the end of World War II, gave free art classes to children on Saturdays, provided instructional training for teachers, and even had an art class for preschoolers. In 1921, the Toledo Museum of Art also started a program that allowed students at the University of Toledo to receive credit for all art courses. The museum provided the University of Toledo with instructors, and access to studio space, its library and its collections.

A second example of how the Toledo Museum of Art was founded on an education philosophy can be seen by examining the exhibitions put on by the museum when it was first opened. When the museum was initially launched and barely had anything that

resembled a collection, it stayed open by putting on exhibitions. In the first years of the museum, Stevens had approximately 16 different exhibitions annually and occasionally some of them lasted for more than three weeks! Exhibitions were part of the educational philosophy because they provided a method for large groups of people to be educated about art at one time. Exhibitions reached out into the community and helped foster the belief that education about art would make people better citizens. Libby and Stevens had the opportunity to put on so many exhibitions because most exhibitions in America were traveling. In accordance with his desire to educate the community about the principles of art and culture, Stevens brought the first Impressionist paintings to Toledo. In keeping with the roots of the museum an exhibition that was started in 1918 in coordination with the Toledo Federation of Art Societies still runs every year to this day.

Like the DIA, the Toledo Museum of Art came into existence prior to having a permanent home. However, unlike the DIA, no architects competed to design a permanent home for the museum. The first home for the Toledo Museum of Art was a converted house on Madison Avenue. However in 1908, Stevens began to argue that as long as the museum occupied a temporary home, no one would make any donations of great importance.<sup>26</sup> In other words, he forcefully informed Libby that if he wanted the museum to grow and become a civic institution, then the museum needed a permanent home. Steven's words were enough to persuade Libby to pledge \$105,000 towards a permanent structure for the museum if the city could raise an additional \$50,000.<sup>27</sup> The money was raised in less than a month. In support of the museum's policy of free admission to the public, ten thousand school children raised \$500 in pennies, nickels, and dimes that Stevens cleverly placed in a large pile in the window of a downtown bank which brought

national press to the museum. Because of the enormous support of the community, Florence Libby donated the building site of her father's home on Monroe Street and adjacent property to become the permanent home of the museum. The location of the Toledo Museum of Art is quite unique. Because it is housed on the site of a former home, it is located in the middle of a residential neighborhood. A majority of museums in America are located in downtowns.

Just as the very idea of the Toledo Museum of Art came about in a quite different manner from the DIA, so too did the collection of the Toledo Museum of Art start in a very different fashion. The collection at the Toledo Museum began in the typical manner for museums at the turn of the twentieth century. It began its collection with a series of plaster casts. After this initial purchase, however, Stevens set in motion a precedent that Director Otto Wittman in 1959 would refer to as acquiring "art of the highest quality without regard to its culture, material, or an artist's relative unfamiliarity."<sup>28</sup> Stevens began this precedent in 1911 by purchasing the entire estate sale of the American graphic artist John LaFarge. This trend continued 1913 when he acquired 80 pieces of European glass and in 1917 the entire collection, almost five hundred pieces, of pioneer American glass done by Edwin AtLee Barber. Fortunately, Steven's taste was not limited to American glass makers. In 1919 he purchased an entire collection of ancient Islamic glass from Thomas E.H. Curtis.

After these initial acquisitions, however, the Toledo Museum of Art and the DIA followed similar methods of acquiring new pieces of art. For example, they both benefited greatly from donations from wealthy benefactors. After Libby's death in 1925, his wife donated their entire collection of paintings to the museum and by 1933 Arthur J. Secor, a prominent Toledo man and former vice president of the board, had donated his entire

collection of paintings which ranged from seventeenth-century Dutch to late nineteenth-century American works.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Toledo Museum of Art subscribed to the belief that a museum's survival depended on government funding or the support of a wealthy benefactor. The Toledo Museum of Art received support from the latter. When Edward Libby died in 1925, he endowed the museum with substantial funds to acquire works of art, continue educational programs, and to enlarge the building.<sup>29</sup> His wife Florence continued this tradition in the early 1930s when she gave up part of her inheritance to give Toledo construction workers a job. In her own words Libby stated that she renounced part of her inheritance so that "work might proceed at a time when the expenditure of a large sum of money will do the greatest economic good."<sup>30</sup> Interestingly, the workers did not complete the expansion on the museum. They left most of it unfinished to be completed when future acquisitions would determine what kind of construction needed to be done.

The Toledo Museum of Art, unlike the DIA and a majority of museums across the country, did not experience a financial crisis during the mid-twentieth century due to a lack of financial support from the federal government and the reorganization of financial assistance given to nonprofit organizations. In fact, the Toledo Museum of Art did not implement its first public campaign fund until the early 1990s. However, even though the Toledo Museum of Art did not experience a financial crisis, it still took steps towards self-sufficiency like the majority of museums in America. From 1977 to 1992 the museum embarked on a four-phase major renovation project. The first phase began in the late 1970s and focused on educational renovations. The museum modified the Plough Pavilion

entrance, student galleries, and music classrooms. The next phase of the renovations involved the public face of the museum. During the second phase, the core of the museum was remodeled. The project was done by the New York architectural firm of Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer, and involved the creation of a new public entrance to the museum. The second phase also saw the creation of visitor facilities and a sky lit stairway that connected the ground and main floors. The third phase, which was started in the late 1980s, renovated the museum's fifteen oldest galleries which surrounded the center core of the museum. This was an expensive undertaking because those galleries had stayed in the same condition since they were first construction in 1912. Therefore some these rooms were period rooms. However the most grand and extensive renovations came during the fourth phase which was begun in 1990.

The fourth phase, funded jointly by a public capital campaign, the board of trustees, and the University of Toledo, involved massive internal renovations including the opening of an east-west access to improve air and people circulation throughout the building and changes to the Great Gallery. In the Great Gallery renovators replaced skylights with clerestories to help protect pieces against ultraviolet light. Heating, air conditioning, and humidity controllers were modernized. However the greatest achievement of the fourth phase was a new home for the University of Toledo's art department and the Museum's Art Reference Library.

A second push for self sufficiency occurred when the museum instituted programs that were designed to draw people into the museum. As discussed in detail in chapter two, volunteer programs greatly increased the public's access to collections because more people were available to give educated talks and tours. Men and women who wanted to

become docents at the museum were obligated to undergo rigorous training programs before they could even start explaining collections and exhibits to school children and adult visitors. Twenty years later the museum added docents to its musical department. In 1957 the board of trustees created the Art Museum Aids which has a membership campaign as its principle mission. In the 1960s the board of trustees and the director establish The President's Council to ensure the fiscal well-being of the Toledo Museum of Art. This council was founded to attract major donors and work along side a Business Council to attract support for the museum's many activities. The best example of this push towards independence came in 1981 when the museum created a minority advisory committee to help plan programs to reach more members of the community. "Now named the Committee for Cultural Diversity, its members play an expanding role in the development and evaluation of museum programs."

Almost one hundred years after its foundation The Toledo Museum of Art is still committed to its original goals. Former director Wittman stated it best when he said "Without art the Museum would only be a school. Without education the Museum might become only a warehouse. Both must be present if the Museum is to continue to play its significant cultural role in our community."<sup>31</sup>

As shown in the cases of the DIA and the Toledo Museum of Art, museums in the United States went through a general transformation. Both museums began in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as self-centered institutions that were mainly focused on their collections. However, as the twentieth century progressed, both museums became more conscious of the needs of the public and made changes accordingly. The only questions that remain are how far will museums go to please the public and how



much artistic individualism are they willing to give up to remain open? If the public decides it does not like a particular artist or style, will it be censored from the museum world?

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- <sup>1</sup> Nathaniel Burt, *Palaces for the People: A Social History of the American Art Museum* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1977), 89.
- <sup>2</sup> Wallace E. Clayton, *The Growth of a Great Museum: an Informal History of the Detroit Institute of Arts* (Detroit: Founders Society Detroit Institute of Arts, 1970), 11.
- <sup>3</sup> Detroit Institute of Arts, *From the Inside: the Archives of the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1883-1915* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1980) 4.
- <sup>4</sup> Detroit Institute of Arts, *From the Inside*, 4.
- <sup>5</sup> Charles Callahan Perkins, *American Art Museums* (Boston: Osgood, 1870), 10.
- <sup>6</sup> Theodore Low, *The Educational Philosophy and Practice of Art Museums in the United States* (New York: Columbia University, 1948), 32.
- <sup>7</sup> Stephen E. Weil, *Making Museums Matter* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002), 31.
- <sup>8</sup> Detroit Institute of Arts, *From the Inside*, 18.
- <sup>9</sup> James J. Sheehan, *Museums in the German Art World: From the Rise of the Old Regime to the Rise of Modernism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 40.
- <sup>10</sup> Sheehan, *German Art World*, 132-33.
- <sup>11</sup> Detroit Institute of Arts, *From the Inside*, 18.
- <sup>12</sup> William H. Peck, *The Detroit Institute of Arts: a Brief History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 123.
- <sup>13</sup> Detroit Institute of Arts, *From the Inside*, 18.
- <sup>14</sup> Detroit Institute of Arts, *From the Inside*, 10.
- <sup>15</sup> Peck, *Detroit Institute of Arts: a Brief History*, 148.
- <sup>16</sup> Peck, *Detroit Institute of Arts: a Brief History*, 148.
- <sup>17</sup> Peck, *Detroit Institute of Arts: a Brief History*, 148.
- <sup>18</sup> Peck, *Detroit Institute of Arts: a Brief History*, 132.
- <sup>19</sup> Roger Green, "Multimillion renovation will mean big changes for visitors to DIA," *Ann Arbor News*, November 24, 2006, sec D.
- <sup>20</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1995), 11.
- <sup>21</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 11.
- <sup>22</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 13.
- <sup>23</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 13.
- <sup>24</sup> George B. Goode, *Museum History and Museums of History* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901), 73.
- <sup>25</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 21-2.
- <sup>26</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 22.
- <sup>27</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 22.
- <sup>28</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 15.
- <sup>29</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 24.
- <sup>30</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 24.
- <sup>31</sup> The Toledo Museum of Art, *Toledo Treasures*, 21.

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