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Marching on Together: the Future of Non-Profit Museums in a For-Profit World

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Museum Professions
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Abstract

This thesis proposes a model of increased collaboration among museums as an alternative to the commercialization of the museum field. Through a combination of internal and external factors, museums are finding it necessary to operate in a manner akin to that of commercial enterprises. This trend threatens to undermine the cultural and educational mission of museums. At the same time, the ability of museums to carry out their missions necessarily depends on a solid financial base. Collaboration, whether in the form of consortia or consolidated institutions, provides an avenue whereby museums can not only make more economical use of their resources, but do so in a manner that also furthers their work as cultural institutions.

Contents

Introduction

The undeniable cultural and economic trend in the United States is one of privatization, commodification, and commercialization. In essence, the logic of business is increasingly being applied to all aspects of society, including those which have historically not been understood in economic terms. This trend will have significant implications for American museums, whose traditional status as community-oriented, not-for-profit institutions places them at odds with the prevailing winds. As government funding dries up and budgets grow ever tighter, revenue and finances are becoming ever more pressing matters for museums, and concern is growing that the traditional model for funding museum operations may be untenable. At the same time, an obligation to get the best return from limited resources has compelled museums to conduct themselves in a manner that, more and more, resembles that of a business. Indeed, the possibility of museums as commercial enterprises is an idea that is gaining some traction. But if museums were to embrace commercialization, would that course prove any more reliable than the status quo? It is anything but a sure bet. If neither the traditional museum nor the commercial museum are tenable models in the long run, a more radical course of action is necessary. Rather than soldiering on as isolated institutions, museums must develop robust collaborative partnerships, as a result of which new and unified institutions can arise. This process of collaboration and convergence represents the best way for museums to meet these challenges, and in the process, secure the future of their field.

The idea that two or more museums in a given city or geographic region could combine their efforts - whether in the shape of a cooperative network, or by merging into a single entity - is not an entirely new one. Moreover, libraries and archives have also been suggested as possible partners with whom museums can collaborate (Zorich et al. 2008). Given that these institutions have similar objectives of serving the public, their comparable intellectual and cultural resources, and the fact that they exist primarily within the same "third-sector" of the economy as museums, partnerships with libraries and archives are absolutely a viable avenue for museums. It is the museum, however, with which this thesis is primarily concerned, and as such the analysis contained herein will focus on museums.

While the current situation for museums is to no small extent the result of external economic, cultural, and social factors, much of the explanation also lies in the evolution of museums. Museums of the modern era began as private collections of individual wealth and academic enlightenment, but with the passage of time they have become public-minded institutions, devoted to providing education and enjoyment to the widest possible audience. Indeed, museums such as New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art have become major players in the civic and cultural lives of their communities, drawing visitors from around the world. The first chapter of this thesis traces this paradigm shift in the philosophy of museums.

With the historical context of museum work thusly defined, we then turn our attention to the nature of museum work. There are many ways in which the day-to-day functions of museums are analogous to that of for-profit entities. Museums provide services to their audiences, incur operating costs such as wages and marketing, and depend upon revenue to maintain their operations. However, there are significant legal, practical, and (perhaps most importantly) philosophical differences that inform the manner in which museums, as nonprofit organizations, carry out these ostensibly commercial functions. Crucially, it is not the profit motive that guides museums, but the mission which each museum sets for itself. The revenue that museums generate is not distributed to the museums' trustees in the way that profit is distributed to business owners or shareholders, but reinvested in the operation of the museum. The second chapter of this thesis presents a detailed analysis of these distinctions.

As important as the distinctions between museums and businesses might be, no less important is the recognition that business practices and philosophies are beginning to wield significant influence in the museum field. The most salient of these developments is the increasing supremacy of the bottom line, a development to which Robert Janes has given the name "museum corporatism" (Janes, 223). Financial concerns are becoming the determining factor in institutional decision-making, to which conventional museum considerations such as public education or collection development have taken a back seat. A knock-on effect of this museum corporatism has been a rising focus on short-term planning at the expense of long-term vision: rather than planning for the next five years, businesslike museums are neglecting to look past the next fiscal year. Another way in which museums have followed in the footsteps of businesses has been their pursuit of growth. Museums have expanded their facilities, increased their revenue-generating operations, and have even established new galleries and branches in markets far removed from their traditional communities (the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation's establishment of museums in Europe and the United Arab Emirates being a particularly glaring example of this practice). The third chapter of this thesis examines these practices, as well as their implications for the museum field.

While museums may have adopted business practices in response to the wider trend of global commercialization, these are beyond the means of the vast majority of museums. Moreover, they raise valid concerns regarding the relevance of these practices to the mission of museums, and may indeed represent a problematic departure from mission-driven work. How are museums to resolve the tension that arises from the need to be simultaneously financially sound and dedicated to their missions? As it prioritizes financial gain above all other considerations, commercialization fails to reconcile this tension adequately. An alternative, therefore, is necessary. The process of collaboration and convergence presents an ideal alternative, as it allows museums to resolve the tension between money and mission far more effectively.

In many ways, this convergence model is not a radical departure from established museum practice. Museums commonly share their collections with one another in the form of loans, coordinate with one another to develop and host travelling exhibitions, and participate in local or regional networks of community service organizations. Nor is the concept of convergence entirely without its parallels in the for-profit realm: mergers and acquisitions are common phenomena in the business world. Museums will benefit from convergence in a number of ways. By sharing operating costs, converged museums can ameliorate the financial burden otherwise borne by individual institutions. This, in turn, will allow museums to focus less on revenue-generating activities and invest more of their resources in their collections and community obligations. Beyond that, convergence will increase the accessibility of museum collections. Converged collections provide opportunities for exhibition and comparative research that siloed collections do not currently provide. Finally, convergence will simplify the administration of museums by combining the day-to-day operations of multiple institutions into a single organization. The fourth chapter of this thesis summarizes these benefits.

The potential benefits of the convergence model certainly hold much appeal, but what does convergence look like in practical terms? Certainly, convergence presents a significant paradigm shift for museum operations. Convergence, fortunately, is not without precedence in the museum field. The Cincinnati Museum Center opened in 1990 in the former Union Terminal. The Museum Center hosts six different organizations under one roof, and provides an appealing example of physical convergence. Physical convergence may represent the ultimate goal, however more limited forms of convergence will almost certainly precede it. Digital convergence, in the form of unified online portals to museum collections, serves as a highly achievable form of convergence, as well as a possible first step in the evolution toward physical convergence. The fifth chapter of this thesis outlines the process of convergence, how it may come about, and what form or forms it might take.

Admittedly, the convergence model proposed herein represents a significant paradigm shift in the conception and operation of museums. Nevertheless, the history of museums has proven them to be capable of making the philosophical and practical changes necessary to keep up with a changing cultural and social landscape. The pivot toward public service, as embodied in the American Alliance of Museum's seminal 1992 report *Excellence and Equity*, represents one such evolution. A similar transformation, necessitated by irresistible political and social trends, may soon be necessary. This thesis proposes that by combining their efforts, resources, and operations, museums can best situate themselves to meet the challenges of the future.

I - At the Crossroads: On the Economic and Humanistic Heritage of Museums

The typical American museum of the early twenty-first century is a nonprofit, public-minded and education-oriented organization. This familiar spirit of public service, however, is a relatively recent development in the history of museums. Indeed, the museum as an institution evolved from the private collections of the aristocracy. It is only in the latter half of the twentieth century that the museum field as a whole seriously committed itself to public service. As fate would have it, this turn toward public service has coincided with a precipitous decline in public funding for museums since the 1980s, both in the United States and elsewhere. In order to truly appreciate the situation of museums in the 21st century, it is necessary to understand the developments which have led museums to this particular moment in their history. The museum as it exists today is the result of two distinct lineages. The first of these may be broadly defined as the humanistic lineage - art, history, artifacts and the interpretation of these for the betterment of humanity. On the other hand, the museum also owes its existence to industry and commerce, which gave rise to the wealth that paid for the great museum collections. This may be broadly defined as the economic lineage of museums. These two disparate lineages - the humanistic on the one hand, the economic on the other hand - have pulled museums in different directions over the course of their history, and the tension between the two effectively encapsulates the present situation of museums.

Of the two museum lineages, the humanistic lineage is the one that resonates most strongly with the cultural and social perception of museums. This is hardly a coincidence: museums have deliberately - and justifiably - played up this aspect of their heritage. Museums are institutions devoted to preserving the past for posterity, therefore it is perhaps appropriate that they have adopted their name from an ancient place. It is no coincidence that the very word "museum" conjures up images of neoclassical facades replete with columns and pediments - it is ultimately derived from the *mouseion* (or, in Latin, *musaeum*) in Ptolemaic Alexandria, an academic institution which included the famous Great Library (Macdonald, 116). As the name suggests, the Ptolemaic kings christened the *mouseion* in honor of the muses, the nine goddesses who inspired mortals with such pursuits as literature, science and the fine arts. Ironically, the ancient *mouseion* did not host a collection of art or artifacts in the style of modern-day institutions, making it more similar to an academy or university than a twenty-first century museum (although a comparable library in ancient Pergamum did collect and display works of art) (Macdonald, 117). Nevertheless, that the museums of the modern era have taken their name from the *museion* of antiquity is befitting of their aspiration to be comparable centers of learning.

The resuscitation of the museum name was part of a wider cultural trend in western Europe. Throughout the Renaissance and into the modern era, a recurring fascination with the ancient world inspired a revival of classical forms, techniques and motifs in art and architecture. During this same period, collecting emerged as a serious hobby among learned men, royalty and the aristocracy. These collections of art, relics and various other specimens of interest were displayed in *kunst*- and *wunderkammern*, or cabinets of curiosities. While the name may conjure up a piece of furniture, these cabinets were chambers or rooms, akin to studies. Collections such as these served a variety of purposes: they may have been reflections of genuine interest on the part of the scholarly collector, or they may have acted as symbols of material wealth or intellectual achievement on the part of the worldly aristocrat (Macdonald, 121). However noble or ignoble the reasoning behind the collection, modern museums widely recognize such cabinets of curiosity as their earliest ancestors. Indeed, many museums owe their beginnings to these collections. But while collecting grew in popularity throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, such collections remained largely private, and were accessible only to the elite (Simmons, 132).

The opening of the Ashmolean Museum in 1683 represents a watershed moment in the history of museums. This was the first time that a major collection opened its doors to the public in a manner still recognizable today - paid staff, admission fees and guided tours of the gallery were prominent features of the Ashmolean (Macdonald, 124-5). In 1753, an act of Parliament established the British Museum (the aptly titled British Museum Act 1753). The private collection of Sir Hans Sloane, which Sloane bequeathed to the crown in exchange for a sum of £20,000, formed the core of the British Museum's collection (Macdonald, 126). Following in the footsteps of the Ashmolean, the British Museum opened to the public in 1759. This opening was part of a wider trend - spurred by the ideals of the Enlightenment, royal collections became accessible to wider audiences. Nevertheless, these galleries remained largely exclusive to the educated and the gentry - it was not until the 1793 opening of the Louvre Museum in the wake of the French Revolution that the idea of the museum as a truly civic space began to gain traction (Duncan, 22).

Just as the French Revolution would profoundly influence the politics of Europe, so too would the Louvre provide an archetype for the development of European museums in the 19th century. Whether voluntarily or by political necessity, the royalty and aristocracy of Europe opened their collections to the public. This was the process by which the many great museums of Europe - from the Uffizi Gallery in Florence to the State Museums in Berlin - came into being. While these museums certainly served as temples of enlightenment, they also served a propagandistic purpose for the nation-states of Europe. If the *wunderkammern* of the Renaissance served in part as trophies for the individual collector, the great museums of 19th century Europe also served to represent the greatness of the nations to which they belonged (Macdonald, 129). Certainly, state patronage - from Prussia before 1871, and afterwards from a unified Germany - was key to the development of Berlin's Museum Island (Gaehtgens, 53). The symbolic value of an outstanding museum collection, then, provided a significant - though by no means the only - rationale for the operation of these museums as a function of the state. To this day, most European museums still operate under the auspices of national or local governments.

Across the Atlantic, meanwhile, a markedly different situation was unfolding. As with their European predecessors, museums in the United States owed their genesis to private collections. A glaring difference, however, was the role of the state - or, more accurately, the lack thereof. With the exception of the Smithsonian Institution (established in 1846) and a number of state museums (e.g. the New Jersey State Museum), the lion's share of American museums were established as private institutions (Macdonald, 130). This development was to have major implications for museums in the United States. To begin with, American museums have been blessed with a significantly greater degree of autonomy than their counterparts in Europe - institutions such as the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago do not operate under the same government oversight as the Louvre or the National Gallery in London. Independence from the imprimatur of national governments provided American museums with the latitude to pursue a different path: that of public benefit (Macdonald, 132). Rather than to glorify the nation in the manner of their European counterparts, museums in the United States would serve to instruct, inspire, and ennoble the populace. American museums, of course, did not arrive at this democratic ideal entirely on their own; visionary leadership from directors such as John Cotton Dana - founder and first director of the Newark Museum - was crucial to bring about this new paradigm.

Yet if American museums did not rely on the largesse of the nation state to build their collections, the wealth had to come from somewhere. It is no coincidence that many of the most prestigious museum collections in the United States bear such names as Morgan, Carnegie and Frick. If the museum collections of Europe arose from the wealth of royalty and nobility, the collections of America came into being thanks to the wealth of the American aristocracy - the magnates of finance and industry from the Gilded Age of the late 19th century. It is at this point that the second lineage of museums - the economic lineage - enters the picture.

For the first half of the 20th century, these two lineages managed to coexist in the United States in a comfortable equilibrium. Economic stability - particularly in the decades following the Second World War - enabled museums to grow both their collections and their facilities. Greater government support, in the form of such agencies as the National Endowment for the Arts, was a key contributing factor to this seeming prosperity (Harris, 40). The situation began to change, however, beginning in the 1960s and 70s. The economic downturn of the 1970s had a profound impact on the finances of museums - inflation, in particular, leading to an increase in operating costs (Harris, 39). This inflation coincided with a number of other factors which exacerbated the economic situation of museums. The first of these was the rapid commodification of contemporary art - beyond their aesthetic purposes, buyers and sellers of art were now finding works of art to be valuable investments. Consequently, new acquisitions became much more expensive, and much less frequent (Rub, 246-247). The second of these was the decline in financial support from the various levels of government (symptomatic, perhaps, of a wider trend of privatization that continues to this day). Compounding this was the fact that museums grew too fast too quickly - if the increase of government funding allowed for the growth of museums in the 1950s and 1960s, museums were left holding the bill for new facilities and operating costs when that financial support began to dry up (Feldstein, 78). Finally, there was the increasing professionalization of the museum field. Partly necessitated by the expansion of museum operations, institutions came to rely on professional management to keep these operations running smoothly - and these professionals needed to be paid accordingly (Feldstein 186-7).

To meet the financial demands precipitated by these developments, museums found it necessary to generate greater revenue. This was not an unprecedented development - museums had been involved in revenue-generating activities since before the Second World War. These activities became far more prevalent, however, in the 1960s and 70s (Harris, 41). Shops and restaurants became important revenue streams, and remain so today. Museums also began to rely on large-scale "blockbuster" exhibitions to drive up visitor numbers and enhance the prestige of the institution (Macdonald, 381-2). Finally, the pressure to seek new streams of revenue led museums to embrace corporate sponsorships as a means to acquire funding. This trend, which has its genesis in the United States in the latter decades of the 20th century, has grown more commonplace in 21st-century Europe. The involvement of corporate funding in museum operations has, not surprisingly, been the cause of significant controversy, with the oil and gas company BP's sponsorship of the Tate in the United Kingdom being among the most controversial recent examples. In effect, museums have found it necessary to revivify their historical links to commerce in order to keep up with the pace of an increasingly commercialized world. This is likely to remain the case for the foreseeable future.

The changing museum paradigm of the late 20th century did, however, engender developments beyond the economic realm. For much of their history, museums had been inward-looking institutions, whose administrators concerned themselves primarily with building and maintaining the collections. The self-image of the museum, however, underwent a pronounced transformation toward the end of the 20th century. Much as museums found it necessary to reconsider their position in the economic landscape, so too did they begin to reevaluate their position in society. While museum collections, particularly those in the United States, had long been understood as a vehicle for public education, museums now envisioned a wider role in their surrounding communities. Certainly, this new attitude arose in part due to economic considerations. Revenue from visitors, in the form of admission fees and store sales, was more important than ever, thus it made perfect sense for museums to attract as wide an audience as possible (Ballantyne and Uzzell, 87-88). Of course, finances were hardly the sole catalyst for museums' shift in attitude. The social upheaval of the 1960s impacted museums just as profoundly as it did other segments of society. The 1969 exhibition *Harlem on my Mind* at the Met provoked a vociferous backlash from black residents of New York (and others), and stands as a particularly egregious example of a museum failing to weigh the impact of its programming on the public (Simmons, 249-250). If museums could no longer afford to ignore the influence of money on their affairs, neither could they afford to ignore the voice of the community in collecting and interpreting in their gallery space, much less alienate broad segments of that community. In more ways than one, the erstwhile inward-looking museum now had to turn its gaze to the world beyond its walls.

While external circumstances could not be ignored, change would ultimately come from within the museum field itself. In 1991, the American Association of Museums (now the American Alliance of Museums) published its landmark report *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*. The report made numerous prescriptions regarding the direction of museums in the country, but all pointed toward an overarching conclusion: fulfilling their educational potential, promoting social inclusivity, and serving the public were the future of museums. In essence, the mandates laid out by *Excellence and Equity* charged museums in the United States with honoring their humanistic lineage.

Buoyed by the institutional reforms initiated in the late 20th century, museums perhaps had reason to be optimistic as the 21st century began. The Great Recession of 2008-2012, however, had a tremendous impact on museums worldwide. Government support, already in short supply, declined even further. Adding to that misery, grants and charitable giving also declined sharply. Museums responded to the financial crunch in a number of ways, from cutting hours of operation to increasing admission prices. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the recession impacted smaller museums the most - the Morris Museum in Morristown, New Jersey reduced its annual budget by $1 million, instituted four-week unpaid furloughs, and reduced salaries for its professional staff (Miller, 150). Between 2008 and 2009, the Met saw its endowment decrease by 25 percent, amounting to $700 million (Vogel 2009). Elsewhere, the trustees of Brandeis University voted to close the Rose Art Museum at that institution, although they ultimately reached an agreement to keep the museum open after a lengthy court battle (Wilton 2011). In a particularly egregious episode, the city of Detroit declared bankruptcy in 2013, leading the city's creditors to cite as a source of revenue objects in the collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA) that had been purchased with municipal funds (the museum having been operated under the auspices of the City of Detroit since 1919). Fortunately for the museum, the final bankruptcy settlement did not require the sale of any such objects, and restored independent, non-profit status to the DIA (Bomey 2014).

While the worst of the great recession may now be over, museums are still grappling with its long-term ramifications. Museums remain committed to their public service obligations, but their efforts in this regard are constrained by very pressing financial realities. The genesis of the modern museum lies in overlap of these two realms - the humanistic on the one hand, the commercial on the other. Lofty ideals of philanthropy inspired the idea of the museum, while great wealth - whether that of the state or that of individuals - made the idea a reality. The tension between these two lineages has always been present, but 21st century museums find themselves being pulled in two very different directions: they cannot fulfill their humanistic objectives without ensuring that their fiscal houses are in order, nor can they commit themselves to the pursuit of financial prosperity without undermining their obligations to the public. To satisfy both of these conditions, then, museums must simultaneously play two roles. The next chapter will survey how museums, by necessity, must be creatures of the economic jungle while at the same time being creatures of a more gentle nature; how museums must be businesses while simultaneously being organizations with a radically different purpose.

II - Horses of Different Colors: Museums and Businesses

If one is to appreciate the particular situation of museums, it is necessary to understand precisely how they are distinct from businesses. To the outside observer, the differences are not readily apparent. This is perhaps understandable, given that museums and businesses operate largely within the same economic landscape. For all their surface-level similarities with businesses, however, museums operate under a profoundly different philosophy from that of for-profit enterprises, and employ decidedly different methods and strategies from those of their for-profit counterparts. Moreover, many of these differences are required by law, given the legal distinctions between not-for-profit and for-profit organizations. Put simply, the differences between museums and businesses can best be discerned in observing what these organizations do, how they do what they do, and why they do what they do.

Before examining the differences between museums and businesses, however, it is instructive to touch upon their similarities. The most glaring similarity is that both museums and businesses have finite financial resources and must budget these resources in the most efficient way. In order to balance their budgets, both museums and businesses are largely - though not exclusively - dependent on income. Quite commonly, museums will operate shops or restaurants on their premises in order to generate revenue. In directly selling such goods or services to their visitors, museums are clearly following in the footsteps of commercial entities. Admission fees represent yet another source of earned income for museums, as well as another way in which they may be seen as selling a product or service in the manner of a business. Finally, it has become increasingly common for museums to advertise themselves in a fashion resembling that of a business - marketing has become an important aspect of museum operations (Kotler et al.

2008). In the social media age, platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have become crucial elements of museum marketing (Sinclair 2016).

While the similarities between museums and businesses should not be ignored, the differences between the two types of organizations are every bit as important (if not more so). The most obvious difference is that museums - or at least an overwhelming majority of museums - are not-for-profit entities, whereas businesses are for-profit. This may seem a banal observation, but this distinction is nevertheless the wellspring from which the more profound differences arise. The distinction between not-for-profit organizations (e.g. museums) and for-profit organizations (i.e. businesses) is legal, philosophical and practical.

In the United States, museums are generally recognized as charitable or educational organizations, and as such are exempt from taxation (26 U.S.C. § 501(c)(3)). With legal recognition of nonprofit status, however, come certain restrictions on what museums can do, and how they are structured. Most significantly, nonprofit organizations are forbidden by law from distributing profits among owners or stakeholders (Donley, 15). Any and all revenue generated by admission fees, shop sales or other sources must, therefore, be reinvested in the museum and its operation.

Assets - and the ownership thereof - present another significant legal distinction between nonprofit and for-profit entities. Nonprofit museums hold their property (i.e. their collections) for the benefit of the public implicitly (as a matter of law) and explicitly (as a matter of stated mission). Consequently, the Internal Revenue Service does not consider the collections of nonprofit museums to be monetary assets, and the collections are not taxed as such. For-profit organizations, by comparison, ultimately hold their property for the benefit of the owner (or stockholders) of the organization (Malaro and DeAngelis, 8). The collection of a museum incorporated as a for-profit entity, therefore, is understood by law to be the property of the museum's owner, rather than the property of the museum itself (Donley, 20). This plays into another legal divergence between nonprofit and for-profit entities: the officers and board members of nonprofits are considered legally distinct from the organization itself, whereas the officers of for-profit entities are not.

Finally, the legal constraints on nonprofit museums determine the fate of their collections, should the organization dissolve. Specifically, the collection of dissolving nonprofit museum must be transferred to other museums or nonprofit organizations. No such constraint exists for dissolving for-profit organizations, whose assets may be sold off to the highest bidder (including private collectors). As a commercial enterprise, a for-profit museum is funded by shareholder capital, rather than an endowment. This means that, should the museum not generate sufficient return on investment, it is subject to closure in order prevent further drain on that capital (Donley, 21). This factor, in conjunction with the lack of regulation regarding the sale of commercial assets, means that objects in a dissolving for-profit museum are likely to be auctioned off to the highest bidder, winding up in all probability in private collections. Such a situation represents a significant loss of cultural and intellectual material not just for museum audiences, including scholars of art and history, but for the public as a whole.

As important as the legal distinctions may be, the operating philosophy of museums is the stratum in which they differ most sharply from businesses. The purpose of for-profit organizations is self-evident: they exist to generate profit for their owners. Nonprofit organizations, on the other hand, exist to carry out a charitable or philanthropic mission, which they determine for themselves. Where museums are concerned, these missions typically involve collection, preservation and interpretation of objects. While no doubt worthwhile ends in and of themselves, these and related museum functions are understood as segments of a greater mission of public benefit - in other words, serving the museum's community. This relationship between museums and their users stands in stark contrast to the relationship between businesses and their users (i.e. customers). While the distinction between community and customers may seem purely rhetorical, it has significant implications for the manner in which museums operate vis-á-vis their audiences.

Commitment to accessibility is a realm wherein museums differ quite sharply from commercial enterprises. Museums task themselves with making their collections and facilities accessible to the widest possible audiences - this imperative of accessibility is multidimensional, incorporating physical and intellectual strata (Majewski and Bunch 1998). Where museums might charge admission fees or request suggested donations, it is common for these fees to be reduced or even waived for a variety of reasons: museums typically provide student and senior discounts, and several museums allow reduced admission fees for low-income visitors. Neither is it uncommon for museums to allow free admission to their galleries at certain times - the Museum of Modern Art in New York, for example, allows free admission every Friday between 4:00 PM and 8:00 PM. Many museums have gone so far as to set aside special hours for visitors (such as those afflicted by learning disabilities or mental illness) who would otherwise find the museum gallery an inhospitable place. While certain legal stipulations may exist, much of this social service work has been voluntarily undertaken by museums, and is largely self-directed. Commercial enterprises, meanwhile, have no such obligations beyond those required by law: building codes and regulations - most notably the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 - may stipulate handicapped accessibility, but access to whatever goods or services a business might offer is effectively dependent upon the ability of the customer to pay market price for them.

Indeed, for a business to do otherwise would be to undermine the market value of those products. Moreover, prioritizing inclusivity in the manner of a museum simply does not make much sense, from a financial point of view. Certainly, for-profit businesses may be willing to make accommodations for their customers, but revenue remains the ultimate goal for these entities. From the perspective of commerce, free admission, such as that provided by the Museum of Modern Art, is analogous to giving away a product or service that ought to be sold instead. That museums are so often willing to forego revenue in order to make their collections available to a wider audience underscores the degree to which public benefit, rather than profit, is their *raison d'etre*.

For museums, the ethos of public benefit and community service goes beyond merely providing access to their collections and facilities. As museums gain an ever greater appreciation for the importance of community service, many have begun to organize exhibitions and programming in collaboration with their constituent communities (Filipovic, 136). In effect, these institutions are giving their audiences a say in the operation of the museum. While a transactional element does exist in this relationship - for example in the form of membership fees - the growing emphasis on collaboration represents a sharp departure from business practices, which remain almost purely transactional: the customer provides payment in exchange for the goods or services provided by the organization, with little collaboration, if any, between the two parties involved. Moreover, the collaborative aspect of the relationship between the nonprofit institution and the community which it serves is only likely to become more significant in the future, both in the United States and elsewhere (Dickenson, 169). The relationship between vendor and consumer that characterizes the for-profit sector, on the other hand, will not likely change in the foreseeable future.

Admittedly, this turn toward social engagement has led to its fair share of controversy. Within the museum field, an ongoing debate exists regarding the appropriateness of social service work, and whether or not such work represents too sharp a departure from the traditional museum functions of curation and scholarship (Lasser, 205). Museums, however, have found that the choice between curation and social engagement is not an either-or situation; rather, these two functions can inform and augment each other (Lasser, 209-211). As museums have been able to reconcile the apparent contradiction between their scholarly and social obligations, they can just as effectively resolve the seeming disconnect between social work and financial stability. The key to this lies in understanding why and how audience members decide to support the museum in the first place. Admission fees and memberships are the primary means by which museum users support the institution financially. The former is largely analogous to paying for a service in the manner of the commercial sector, drawing comparison to theme parks and other segments of the entertainment industry (Ballantyne and Uzzell, 88). The latter, meanwhile, is more characteristic of the nonprofit sector. What is particularly notable about museum membership is that the costs of membership is far greater than the benefits that membership confers. For museums that offer various tiers of membership, this gap between cost and benefit is even greater at the higher strata of membership (Paswan and Troy 2004). Framed purely as a commercial exchange, museum memberships do not represent an appealing purchase for consumers. Museum members, however, are quite cognizant of this fact - in choosing to support museums in the form of membership fees, they are motivated not by the economic value of the membership itself, but by a variety of factors, including a love of art or history, a desire to share the experience of the museum with family, or a desire to engage in philanthropy (Paswan and Troy, 8-9). Museum users, therefore, appreciate the purpose of the museum beyond its economic utility, and are willing to support it financially on that basis. This is consistent with the legal status of nonprofit museums as charitable organizations. Museum supporters who pay for memberships are not buying a product so much as they are donating to a cause. Moreover, demonstrable social impact has emerged as a crucial criterion for obtaining grant funding for museums (Crew, 43-44). In light of this, the social work of the museum represents a major contribution to the museum balance sheet, rather than a detriment.

If the purpose of museums is to serve communities, it is worth examining what forms that service takes in the museum space. The traditional role of museums has been to collect, preserve and interpret art and artifacts, and these essentially educational functions still represent the core ways in which museums serve their publics. The evolving philosophy of museums, however, has led institutions to take on a wider social and cultural role in their communities. Beyond this dialogic approach to visitors and audience members, partnerships with health clinics and social service organizations have emerged as avenues by which art museums can better serve their communities (Filipovic, 130). While such ventures do have the benefit of increasing the user base of the museum's facilities and collection, the financial returns from these partnerships are minimal at best. For the nonprofit museum, providing a benefit to the community - or a specific segment of the community - remains the ultimate objective.

While it is certainly not unheard of for businesses to make strategic investments in social service organizations in a manner similar to that of museums, such endeavors are not purely philanthropic endeavors. However noble such partnerships may be, they are ultimately subject to the same cost-benefit analysis as any other business venture: from a business point of view, these partnerships are only worth pursuing if they provide sufficient return on investment. Per the logic of business management, ostensibly philanthropic ventures can best be justified on the grounds that they will improve the organization's image, thereby leading to more opportunities to generate revenue. In that regard, business philanthropy essentially serves as an extension of marketing. In effect, charitable partnerships are means to an end (i.e. profit), rather than ends in and of themselves.

Finally, there remains the matter of how mission-oriented museums, having fundamentally different objectives from those of profit-oriented businesses, define success. Reasonably enough, for-profit organizations are ultimately concerned with the bottom line - if profits are high, then the business is fulfilling its purpose. The degree to which a museum serves its public, however, is not so easily explained. Revenue and attendance are easily quantified, and given their practical implications for the museum, cannot be ignored. Less clear, however, is how those figures translate into quality of community service. Museums, therefore, are compelled to rely on qualitative rather than quantitative analyses. These might include such methods as visitor surveys, feedback from collaborative partners, or even media exposure. None of these metrics are entirely satisfactory as a barometer of success, however, which remains problematic from a management standpoint. Such a lack of quantifiable data perhaps represents a glaring inefficiency in the museum field, and in the realm of business it would be anathema. The nonprofit realm of museums, meanwhile, is more forgiving of inefficiency so long as it does not present an impediment to the mission of the organization (this is, of course, not to say that inefficiency is or need be characteristic of nonprofit institutions).

While museums exist, by and large, in the same social and economic landscape as businesses, the legal and philosophical distinctions between the two types of organizations permits them to operate under a radically different set of assumptions. Museums, as nonprofit organizations, are insulated from the pressures and influences of the free market that weigh so heavily on businesses. Consequently, museums are able to prioritize objectives beyond generating revenue, such as community service, inclusivity, and collaboration with other institutions. Moreover, giving primacy to considerations beyond generating revenue gives museums some leeway to experiment with new techniques and ideas regarding exhibition and interpretation. For all that, however, museums must ultimately grapple with the same financial considerations as their counterparts in the for-profit sector. And as those financial considerations become ever more pressing, business practices have gained a significant degree of influence on the management of museums. Stark though the differences may be between the museum and the business, the line of demarcation between the two has grown increasingly blurred. The next chapter will explore the implications of that trend for the operation of museums.

III - Necessary Evils? Business Practices in Museums

Museums, justifiably, pride themselves of being institutions with high-minded principles and objectives - public service and education, rather than commercial gain, represent the purpose the museum. These lofty aspirations, however, must necessarily rest on a foundation of financial stability. The shifting sands of the economic landscape, in conjunction with ever-shrinking government support, have made that necessity ever more imperative in the 21st century. For all their differences from businesses, museums have been compelled by economic realities to operate in an increasingly business-like fashion. This, understandably, has become a cause for concern among tradition-minded members of the museum field, who worry that the need for revenue will lead museums to neglect their educational missions. Such concerns are absolutely legitimate, yet the bottom line remains the bottom line. Business practices have become integral to the operation of a museum, and given the social and economic climate, that is not likely to change any time soon. However, the adaptation of business practices by museums need not be an entirely negative development. Beyond merely being necessary evils, these practices can become positives if applied judiciously, and in furtherance of - rather than in spite of - the museum's educational mission.

In discussing business practices in museums, it is essential to define precisely what these activities are. Broadly speaking, these activities fall under three categories. Revenue-generating operations not immediately relevant to the educational mission of the museum represent the first category. Marketing and branding of the museum constitute the second category. Finally, entrepreneurial governance of the museum - that is, operating the museum in a style analogous to that of a profit-generating enterprise - represents the third category. Each of these categories presents a unique set of challenges for museums.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, museums have turned to seemingly commercial activities to generate needed revenue (i.e. earned income). These activities include operating shops and restaurants, renting museum facilities for events, and licensing photographic reproduction of works or objects in the museum's collection. In 1994, museum shops contributed between two and ten percent of earned income for museums (Harney, 136). Between the 2015 and 2016 fiscal years, the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) estimated that income from museum shops amounted to eight percent of all revenue and support for art museums across the United States, Canada and Mexico. Including income from restaurants, facilities rentals, and other sources of earned revenue with that figure, 17 percent of all revenue and support for art museums came from earned income (Association of Art Museum Directors 2016, 4). It is reasonable to say, therefore, that earned income represents a not insubstantial contribution to a museum's operating budget.

While the potential certainly exists for the pursuit of earned revenue to displace the museum's educational mission - particularly if museums become more dependent on earned revenue to balance their budgets - that does not appear to have happened, even among the most cash-strapped museums. There are a number of reasons why this is the case. While museums may certainly find the income generated by commercial activities an important part of their operating budget, it is not yet a large enough segment of the budget to cause museums to prioritize earned income over educational mission (Harney, 136). Moreover, museums are limited in their capacity to generate earned revenue, lacking the reserves of capital necessary to invest in revenue-generating ventures. Finally, institutional ethics cannot be ignored - museums remain committed, first and foremost, to their educational missions and community service obligations.

For all the problems that dependence on earned revenue raises for museums, the commercial efforts required to generate that income may have positive benefits for the museum beyond the money itself. Revenue-generating activities such as restaurants, cafes, and renting museum facilities can establish a stronger social presence for the museum in the community, and raise the museum's profile (Harney, 139). In the case of urban museums, satellite stores in suburban communities can serve this role (Harney, 135). If commercial activities can serve as a gateway to more substantial support for the museum - in the shape of increased visitorship or membership numbers, for example - they need not be seen as a negative development in museums. So long as revenue-generating activities serve to further - rather than distract or detract from - the primary educational objective of the museum, they may remain a valuable addition to the visitor experience at the museum.

Marketing is another stratum of business practice that has become part and parcel of museum operations. Where once museums could afford to insulate themselves from the market, the ever-growing importance of visitor numbers has made it necessary for museums to establish a market presence. Marketing departments are relatively recent developments in museums, being virtually unheard of prior to the late 1970s (Ames, 16). Between 1989 and 1999, the percentage of art museums with a Director of Marketing on their staff increased from 17 percent to 50 percent (Smithsonian Institution 2001, 3).

In the museum context, marketing serves a number of purposes. The most obvious of these is to boost visitor numbers to the museum. Marketing aims to attract financial support from philanthropic organizations or corporate sponsors (Wallace, 55-56). In addition, marketing serves the more subtle purpose of maintaining the museum's brand in the conscious of the public. While branding the museum in this fashion certainly aims to increase visitorship, it also benefits the museum by perpetuating the institution's social presence and bolstering its stature in the community (Lord and Lord, 158).

The adaptation of marketing techniques by museums was spurred to no small degree by the same financial pressures that led museums to embrace shops and restaurants, and has raised similar concerns. The question of a museum's priorities remains a key point of contention: as museums devote greater shares of their operating budgets to marketing activities, educational departments could find their slice of the budget pie getting proportionally smaller. At the same time, if a museum concerns itself first and foremost with attracting as many visitors as possible through its doors, the quality of the education offered by the museum could suffer - as could the overall quality of the museum visitor experience. It is notoriously difficult for museum visitors to engage with the content of an exhibition in a gallery that is noisy and overcrowded (Balantyne and Uzzell, 89). Moreover, large crowds place a greater strain on museum staff and resources, and increases the likelihood that an object on display could be damaged (Hartz, 114). Admittedly, the gravity of these concerns may vary between museums, depending on their facilities and available resources - larger and wealthier museums will be better situated to deal with these issues. Beyond the issues presented by large crowds, however, there is also the concern that in catering too much to public tastes, museums run the risk of devaluing the content of their exhibitions and the intellectual quality of their programming (McLean, 52). The Brooklyn Museum came in for such criticism when it hosted an exhibition on the *Star Wars* franchise in 2002 (Feinberg 2002).

Another major concern regarding marketing in museums is the possibility that the marketing of a museum will ultimately result in the commercialization or commodification of the museum. Museums certainly task themselves with providing a service to the public in the form of education, however that service is provided in the spirit of public benefit; it is not a commodity or product sold by a producer to a consumer. This critique of marketing suggests that, by marketing the museum experience, museums are effectively reducing that experience to a purchase, analogous to a consumer good or a piece of popular media (McLean, 43). By commodifying their collections in this fashion, museums are, by extension, undermining their institutional integrity (Boylan, 175). One such incident occurred in February 2018, when Tate Britain granted permission for footwear manufacturer Dr. Martens to produce a line of boots featuring a reproduction of a J. M W. Turner painting from the museum's collection, provoking sharp criticism from the descendants of the artist (Alberge 2018).

These critiques of marketing arise from legitimate ethical concerns - the educational mission of the museum must take precedence over other matters. Moreover, marketing as a concept has negative connotations - particularly among those in the museum field who are passionate about the scholarship aspect of museums (Walsh, 59). Marketing and branding a museum, however, need not come at the expense of the museum's mission. The crux of the matter is that any marketing activities must be applied in service of, and in a manner consistent with, the mission of the institution: "the commercial aspect should only exist to ensure that the goal of the museum is achieved" (McLean, 45).

The primacy of mission also gives context to the potential commodification of the museum experience. From the perspective of the visitor, paying admission fees to a museum seems analogous to buying a ticket to a movie. Much like revenue generated through shop sales and restaurants, money earned through admission fees is reinvested in the museum itself. That visitors may have been attracted to the museum as a result of marketing does not fundamentally change how the money they spend at the museum is used afterwards. While there is a case to be made that the experience conferred by the museum upon the visitor is - or is at least analogous to - a product (McLean, 105-6), the blame for this ultimately lies with factors well beyond the control of museums and museum administrators.

To be sure, the combination of revenue seeking and marketing on the part of museums do expose such institutions to ethical risks. To mitigate these risks, it is essential that each museum have a clearly articulated mission that reflects the organization's educational purpose, and that any ostensibly commercial activity in which the museum takes part be subordinate to that mission. Achieving this delicate balance, however, requires effective leadership on the part of museum administrators. It is at this point that the third stratum of business practice in museums enters the equation.

If the shifting economic sands made it necessary for museums to embrace such ostensibly commercial activities as shops, admission fees, and facilities rentals, the incorporation of a commercial style of management seems a logical consequence. On the surface, this might seem an entirely positive development. Certainly, a long-standing perception exists that for-profit management is more competent than its nonprofit equivalent (Fleming, 100), to the extent that nonprofit management has been derided as an oxymoron (Janes 2009, 113). Given that perception, the appointment of business-minded people to leadership positions in museums certainly gives the impression that museums are getting their houses in order. Beyond external perceptions, the ever-increasing importance of financial literacy for museum management implies that a business-minded approach to management is the way of the future for museums.

The importation of directors and professionals from the business world, however, is not a panacea for the issues facing museums. Managers who do not have a background in the museum field can fail to appreciate the crucial differences between museums and businesses. The tenure of Jeffrey Deitch as director of the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) in Los Angeles perhaps serves as an illuminating example. A crossover from the world of commercial art galleries, Deitch was hired as director of MOCA in 2010. Under Deitch, MOCA saw a precipitous drop in fundraising, and the museum's budget fell to its lowest point since the late 1990s (Boehm 2013). Moreover, Deitch's approach was unpopular with museum staff and board members, leading to a number of resignations ("MOCA in Flux"). Deitch resigned as director in 2013. An article in the *Los Angeles Times* would later refer to his tenure as a "short-lived fiasco" (Knight 2015).

At the heart of the matter is the fact that directors with a business background - rather than a museum background - will be accustomed to operating in a paradigm where profit is the ultimate measure of success. Upon their accession to the museum field, business-minded directors have frequently been unpopular among long-serving museum staff, particularly those directors who have focused on cutting programs as a means of reducing operating expenses (C. Smith, 32). Nor is the conflict between the business management paradigm and the museum field purely one of clashing personalities; in attempting to apply the logic of the market in a museum context, business-minded directors are catering to an entirely different set of priorities from those of the museum: monetary gain, rather than collective well-being (Janes, 317). As a consequence of the singular focus on the bottom line, business management methods place a significant emphasis on short-term goals, such as quarterly results (Janes 2016, 225). This is a stark contrast to the long-term focus museums must take, particularly with regard to their collections (Janes

2016, 318). Moreover, it is questionable just how effective an entrepreneurial style of management is in accomplishing the objectives of a museum. A 1999 survey of museums in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States found that leadership and organizational cohesion, rather than financial considerations, were key qualities of effective museums (Griffin et al. 1999). Finally, regardless of the efficacy of entrepreneurial management in museums, leading non-profit museums in an increasingly commercial direction can place the tax-exempt status of the organizations in jeopardy (Toepler, 60). This would have catastrophic implications for museums, particularly those without generous endowments.

This is not to suggest, however, that a degree of entrepreneurship is not beneficial to museums. Quite the opposite: business literacy has become - and in all probability will remain - an essential element of operating a museum (Janes 2016, 167). A sturdy financial base serves as platform from which museums can carry out their non-market functions of education and collection stewardship: “museums are not businesses, although they are duty bound to be business literate” (Janes 2016, 304). Ultimately, the test of museum management is to find the golden mean between financial sustainability and intellectual integrity (Alexander, 405). It is crucial that this balance not be thrown off by sensitivity to social and economic pressures.

Much as museum professionals may bristle at the notion, the fact is that business practices have established an indelible presence in the museum field. For those who are passionate about the museum’s traditional distance from the marketplace, this can feel like a hostile takeover. Financial stability, however, need not come at the cost of the museum’s soul. Revenue seeking, marketing, and even entrepreneurship have their place in the museum, but it is essential that these commercial functions be subordinate to, and contribute to, the mission of the museum. In this way, museums can establish an equitable symbiosis between their humanistic and commercial lineages.

This symbiosis, however, need not end at the threshold of an individual museum. It is certainly true that each museum has its own unique mission. Museum missions, however, tend to center around common themes, public service being among the most prominent. If the missions of museums converge more than they diverge, it is worth considering whether those objectives might be more effectively achieved when museums work together. The next chapter will argue that just as the seemingly disparate lineages of the museum can be synthesized in the service of a common good, institutions can best ensure their survival and prosperity by establishing an interorganizational symbiosis.

IV - A Possible Future: Collaboration and Convergence

Museums give every indication of being bespoke institutions. Each museum will emphasize its unique mission, its unique collection, and its unique public programs. For all their differences, however, museums have a great deal in common. Whatever they collect, preserve and interpret, museums across the board recognize that they carry out these functions in order to benefit the public. Indeed, this spirit of public service is the thread that ties all museums together - while each museum takes a slightly different path, they are all ultimately moving toward the same destination. If museums are all striving to reach the same end goal, might they not find their common objectives easier to obtain if they work together? Such a process is hardly unprecedented, and there are many avenues along which this process could occur. Moreover, there are varying degrees to which institutions can combine their efforts, some more radical than others. At the same time, no collaborative process is without its obstacles, and the more museums seek to collaborate, the more imposing these obstacles are likely to become. While museums cannot overlook these difficulties, the rewards of collaboration far outweigh the difficulties that are certain to arise as a result of the process. An examination of these factors ultimately reveals that cooperation, collaboration, and even convergence represent the way forward for museums in the 21st century.

The bulk of the literature on the subject of interorganizational collaboration focuses not on museums alone, but rather on the grouping of libraries, archives, and museums, collectively referring to these institutions as LAMs (i.e. Libraries, Archives, Museums). In many ways, libraries and archives make ideal partners for museums - all three are “memory institutions” concerned with collecting and preserving various materials (Trant, 369). For museums, greater collaboration with libraries and archives is absolutely an avenue worth pursuing - indeed, it is not unheard of for museums to maintain libraries and archives of their own. Given that this thesis is primarily concerned with museums, however, the analysis here will focus primarily on collaboration between and among museums.

If museums are to pursue a program of ever-greater collaboration, it is necessary to define how this process might occur. Zorich, Waibel and Erway conceive of collaboration along a continuum of five distinct stages: contact, cooperation, coordination, collaboration, and convergence (Zorich et al., 10-11). In this schema, the process begins with contact and ends with convergence. Each stage in the process requires greater investment, entails greater risks, but also yields greater benefits. The contact and cooperation phases are comparatively self-explanatory: institutions begin by communicate with one another, then work together on a limited or project-specific basis. Planning becomes more significant during the coordination phase, as does mutual accountability - unlike the previous stages, institutions in the coordination phase are now truly interdependent. In the fourth stage, collaboration, the participating institutions engage in a major paradigm shift. The collaborative work results in new procedures and policies: "as units reorganize their workflows and policies around the shared capacity, they discover new ways in which to leverage their combined assets, and over time realize the transformational quality which is the hallmark of deep collaboration" (Zorich et al., 12). In the final stage, convergence, the collaborating institutions are functioning not as partners but as arms of a *de facto* single organization. The collaboration "has matured to the level of infrastructure and becomes, like our water or transportation networks, a critical system that we rely upon without considering the collaborative efforts and compromises that made it possible" (Zorich et al., 12).

Zorich, Waibel and Erway are, admittedly, proposing their model in the context of campus-based libraries, archives, and museums - in other words, institutions that exist under the aegis of a university or college. Because the university serves as an umbrella organization for these institutions, the logistical hurdles they face are likely to be somewhat less problematic than those which independent museums might face - in such an arrangement, the university can provide a means and an impetus for greater collaboration. Nevertheless, their collaboration continuum provides a critical framework for defining the process of collaboration for museums that are not beholden to an institutional superior.

Viewed through the lens of the collaboration continuum, the current state of collaboration among museums sees their efforts fall somewhere along the first three phases of the continuum. It is common practice for museums to loan objects from their collections to other institutions, whether for purposes of exhibition or research (cooperation). Beyond that, travelling exhibitions are an established practice in the museum field, and require a close working relationship among the institutions hosting the exhibition (coordination). Finally, museums participate in a number of professional organizations to establish best practices and advocate for museums. These organizations are regional (e.g. Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums), national (e.g. the American Alliance of Museums) and global (e.g. the International Council of Museums) in scope. These organizations encompass a variety of purposes and functions, including the establishment of a degree of accountability. Member museums, however, remain largely autonomous, without much in the way of interdependence. Consequently, the effects of such organizations emerge among the first three phases of the continuum. These collaborative efforts among museums certainly represent a solid foundation, however the lion’s share are temporary in duration and limited in scope. Establishing deeper and longer-lasting partnerships among museums will be necessary if they hope to reap the benefits of collaboration.

While the benefits which collaboration and convergence present to museums may be numerous, they essentially fall under one of two broad classifications: financial sustainability or educational utility. These classifications present unmistakable parallels to the two lineages of museums: the economic and the humanistic. A thorough analysis of the advantages of collaboration and convergence in museums must take both of these factors into account.

As the economic issues facing museums are the most pressing, it is perhaps fitting to begin by examining collaboration and convergence from an economic standpoint. The financial advantages of collaboration and convergence are twofold: a more efficient expenditure of limited resources, and increased potential for income. To begin with, a judiciously-applied collaborative model should mitigate the operating expenses of museums by distributing those costs evenly among a coalition of museums. Todd Smith envisions a scenario wherein a group of museums form a consortium, sharing costs and collaborating on special exhibitions: "there would be a one-stop shopping opportunity for the museums involved to present higher caliber exhibitions, educational programming, marketing and sponsorship opportunities, and as a result, they can achieve a significant decrease in project funding" (T. Smith, 89). Moving along the continuum from collaboration to convergence, unifying the members of a consortium of museums into a single organization "will increase the cost effectiveness and operational efficiency by removing the redundancies of separate institutions" (Latham and Simmons, 147). In effect, convergence can streamline multiple operations into a single unit. In that regard, it is analogous to a merger of two or more for-profit businesses. In its reduction of operating costs, convergence also resembles the process of rationalization.

Beyond the immediate reductions in operating costs, the greater efficiency which convergence engenders has deeper implications for raising funds. The demonstrable efficiency of a converged museum or consortium of museums presents a more attractive investment for grant-making organizations, whether private or governmental. Such organizations are keen to know that the funds they give will be efficiently and effectively utilized by recipient institution, and a museum or consortium that can demonstrate an efficient use of its resources is much better positioned to successfully apply for increasingly limited grant funds. Indeed, grant funds from organizations such as the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) can serve as an impetus for collaborative endeavors (Marcum, 77). In addition, as corporate sponsorships become ever more important sources of income, efficient museums or consortia represent more attractive promotional partners. This is especially the case for consortia, as an organization with multiple facilities provides corporate sponsors with multiple outlets for exposure (T. Smith, 89).

As indispensable as the economic benefits of collaboration and convergence may be, in the museum context these financial considerations must ultimately be subordinate to the educational purposes of museums. But if one purpose of the collaboration and convergence process is to establish a solid financial foundation for museums, that same process can serve as a launchpad for greater educational endeavors by museums. Indeed, it is in the humanistic realm that collaboration and convergence hold the most promise for museums.

If a core function of museums is to make their collections accessible to their users, a collaborative consortium or converged organization is able to carry out that duty more effectively than a loose association of individual museums. This is especially true online: "Disclosure of collections into online information hubs, social networking sites, and search engines on an institution-by-institution basis is far less efficient than collective mechanisms for disclosing LAM content" (Waibel and Erway, 324). In other words, it will be far easier for users to find what they are looking for through a single website, as opposed to a number of different websites. Moreover, improving online access to museum collections becomes all the more important in light of the fact that the internet has become the primary means by which organizations reach and develop their audiences, as well as the first place most people will look to gain information (Trant, 372). Online presence, therefore, is not only a matter of user convenience, but of reaching new users as well.

As collectors of physical objects, however, it is not sufficient for museums to publish digital representations of their collections, no matter how thorough: "this new digital space is an adjunct to, not a replacement for, physical spaces" (Trant, 375). Physical objects are the heart and soul of museum collections, and museum visitors should expect these objects to be accessible. Collaboration and convergence allow museums to meet these expectations in a variety of ways. At the level of collaboration, a small museum with limited gallery space can display objects from its collection in a partner museum that has more available gallery space. In the case of a converged organization, many smaller collections can be combined into a larger, more extensive collection (Bishoff, 34). Consequentially, museums will be able to create exhibitions with more diverse content and produce a greater variety of programs for wider audiences.

Finally, collaboration and convergence can have a transformative effect on the public perception of museums. By embracing the collaborative spirit museums can dispel the all-too-common belief that museums are cloistered, elite institutions, and reimagine themselves as vital contributors to the life of their communities (Yarrow et al., 35). Just as a unified online presence can enhance the digital profile of partner institutions, museums that combine their efforts in the physical realm can enhance their social stature. Whether in the digital realm or the physical, collaboration and convergence will ultimately improve the ability of museums to serve as valuable resources for their users.

In both economic and humanistic terms, museums have much to gain from collaboration and convergence. The process, however, is certainly not without its difficulties. As with any ambitious program, collaboration entails risk and requires the navigating of obstacles in order to achieve its goals. Walker and Manjarrez identify four main categories of risk for interorganizational partnerships: capacity, strategy, commitment, and compatibility (Walker and Manjarrez, 47-48). Capacity is a matter of resources - a successful collaboration requires investment of money, energy, and time by the parties involved (Marcum, 79). Without the necessary resources, museums may not be able to hold up their end of the collaborative bargain. Strategy is about planning - a collaboration may be well thought-out, but can still fall prey to unforeseen developments. Commitment requires that collaborating partners know exactly what they are in for, and that they establish and maintain a relationship based on mutual trust and accountability (Zorich et al., 30). Finally, there is the matter of compatibility. No two museums are exactly alike - some focus on art, others on history or science. Even within those categories, museums have different collecting foci, different missions, and even different approaches to their work (Martin, 84). Where one or more of these elements fail to mesh, collaboration becomes all the more difficult.

Achieving convergence presents its own set of hurdles. Museums - especially American museums - are “fiercely independent” institutions (Janes, 157). As such they may bristle at the prospect of converging with a previously separate institution. Moreover, each museum is governed by its own board of trustees, and these board members will be passionate about their museum. They are not likely to willingly cede their authority in their museum to a higher power, even if it is in the museum's best interest - in their view, it may seem like the equivalent of the for-profit realm's hostile takeover. With that in mind, the consortium model proposed by Todd Smith may be a more palatable alternative to outright convergence into a single entity.

There are a number of strategies museums can employ to mitigate the risks that arise from collaboration and convergence. Setting clear and realistic goals, maintaining lines of communication, and recognizing the contributions of all parties are just a few of these strategies (Walker and Manjarrez, 52-55). However museums approach collaboration, Leadership will be absolutely crucial - just as committed management is necessary to maintain the balance between museums' financial and humanistic obligations, so too will it be necessary to ensure that the process of collaboration delivers on its potential.

It would be irresponsible to ignore the risks that collaboration and convergence entail. Even with the most thorough planning and the best of intentions, such efforts may not succeed: "Collaboration is a potentially effective strategy, not a feel-good panacea" (Marcum, 79). Nevertheless, the benefits museums stand to gain by committing to collaboration and convergence far outstrip the risks involved. Museums are all in the same boat, though they may not all realize it. To preserve the future, they will need to sail together.

But what does this look like in practical terms? To this point, the analysis has discussed collaboration and convergence on a theoretical level. It is one thing to develop a theory; it is quite another to put it into practice. The next chapter will examine how the process of collaboration has unfolded - and can continue to unfold - in the real world of museums.

V - Collaboration and Convergence from Theory to Praxis

In and of themselves, collaboration and convergence do not represent a radical change for museums (or, for that matter, libraries and archives). Museums, however, have arrived at a moment where these processes are taking on a much greater importance. On the one hand, the tightening of the financial screws compels museums to be ever more thrifty with their limited resources; on the other hand, museums face greater internal and external pressure to make their collections relevant and useful for their communities. On their own, even the most efficiently run museums will struggle to slay this two-headed hydra. The solution, rather, lies in coming together: by combining their efforts and sharing their resources, museums will be able to meet the challenges facing the field as a whole. Cognizant of this fact, museums (along with other educational and public benefit institutions) are finding ways to build bridges across institutional divides. Museums are diverse institutions, thus it makes a great deal of sense that their collaborative efforts employ a diversity of tactics. Nevertheless, a survey of these efforts reveals a number of recurring themes and methods. These common elements represent the fundamental building blocks of successful museum collaboration and convergence. It is from this foundation that museums can put the theory behind collaboration and convergence into practice.

A review of the literature suggests that a general agreement exists regarding the importance and utility of collaboration. The importance of technology, particularly in the guise of online collection databases, is another point on which there is a general consensus (Wythe, 54). Far less agreement, however, exists on the matter of putting collaboration - much less convergence - into practice (Yarrow et al., 8). In addition, much of the literature focuses on collaboration between museums and other types of institutions - libraries and archives, in particular - rather than on collaboration between museums and other museums. Finally, it appears that there is a greater proclivity toward collaboration among European museums - or museums founded and operated in the European model - than among American museums. This is not to suggest that collaboration or convergence has not been attempted in the American museum field, nor that these efforts have not been successful. Rather, the issue seems to be that museums in the United States are reluctant to engage in deeper collaboration. This might stem from the lack of an umbrella organization in the form of Europe's ministries of culture, as such institutions can provide an impetus for collaborative efforts. Alternatively, it may reflect a desire among American museums to be self-sufficient (another example, perhaps, of entrepreneurial thinking in the museum field). This is not to suggest, however that collaboration is unheard of among American museums. Museum collaborations certainly occur in the United States, and it is instructive to begin with a close look at these endeavors.

Collaboration between museums in the United States tends to occur, by and large, on a project-by-project basis. Some of these have been more ambitious than others, a particularly noteworthy example being the New York Art Resources Consortium (NYARC). Established in 2006, NYARC currently consists of three major art museum libraries in New York City: the Frick Collection, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Brooklyn Museum. Initially a member of the consortium, the Metropolitan Museum of Art withdrew in December 2010, although it remained open the possibility of future collaboration with the remaining members (Bury, 27). The purposes of NYARC are threefold: to share resources, to make the holdings of the constituent art libraries more accessible, and to save money (Bury, 25). Notably, these objectives cover both the humanistic and economic necessities of museums. As a result of their participation in NYARC, the constituent museums have been able to make a great deal of their holdings available in online databases, most notably the Arcade database, which includes the collections of the Brooklyn Museum Libraries and Archives, the Frick Art Reference Library, and the Museum of Modern Art Library (Lawrence, 62). Launched in 2009, Arcade now includes over one million records. In addition to being an invaluable font of information regarding art history, Arcade is also a sterling example of the rewards which museum collaboration can reap.

There are several aspects which contributed to the success of NYARC. The first of these is that NYARC built on existing relationships: in particular, the Brooklyn Museum and the Museum of Modern Art already had in common their membership in the Art Museum Library Consortium, which dates back to the 1980s (Lawrence, 61). That all the constituent museums were located in New York City also proved beneficial: geographic proximity can both facilitate the collaborative process itself, and engender a sense of shared community or audience. Finally, commitment to the collaborative partnership was crucial: the withdrawal of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from NYARC might have been a death sentence, given the prominence of that museum and the vast resources of its library, but the remaining institutions stuck with the partnership. The assembly of the Arcade database is only the most significant result of this commitment. Applying the collaboration continuum to NYARC suggests that the NYARC museums have achieved the collaboration phase: while the member museums remain independent of one another, they are sharing resources, and have co-created a valuable resource that none of the partners could have achieved on their own. While it may be conceivable that, given the success of the consortium, the NYARC museums might seriously consider establishing ever stronger bonds, full convergence is not a probable outcome. Despite their commonalities, the member museums will not likely desire to give up their independence. Moreover, given the size and relative stability of these institutions, it may simply not be necessary for them to consider convergence. To find a situation in which convergence presents a more compelling possibility, it will be necessary to look elsewhere.

Away from major urban hubs such as New York, smaller, regional museums stand to benefit from collaboration just as much as their more famous counterparts. Museums10 is a consortium of ten museums in western Massachusetts, and presents a compelling example of collaboration among smaller, regional institutions first begun in 2006. The consortium consists of the Hampshire College Art Gallery, the Mead Art Museum, the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, the Smith College Museum of Art, the University Museum of Contemporary art (at the University of Massachusetts Amherst), the Beneski Museum of Natural History, the Emily Dickinson Museum, the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art, Historic Deerfield (itself composed of eleven historic house museums), and the Yiddish Book Center. The member museums have used the consortium to unify their branding and marketing efforts, have collaborated to produce several themed exhibitions, and - as a result of their promotional efforts in the regional tourism industry - have seen a significant increase in attendance (Chase, 27-28).

There are several noteworthy aspects of the Museums10 consortium. The most salient of these is that, like NYARC, Museums10 built on existing relationships - many of the museums in the consortium are university or college museums, and these schools have been members of the Five College Consortium since 1965 (indeed, Museums10 is an outgrowth of the Five College Consortium). Also like NYARC, the Museums10 consortium takes advantage of geographic proximity - the consortium centers around the city of Amherst in the Connecticut River Valley. Finally, the consortium has enabled its constituent museums to better serve their communities - in addition to strengthening the ability of constituent museums to serve as cultural resources for the region, the consortium has attracted significant tourist dollars to local businesses (Chase, 28). Viewed through the lens of the collaboration continuum, the constituent institutions of Museums10 are clearly well established in the collaboration phase of the continuum; they share their resources, and co-create programs and exhibitions. But while the ten museums have formed a deep working relationship, they remain autonomous. Given that many of the museums are operated under the auspices of independent colleges and universities, it is doubtful that the Museums10 consortium will evolve into an independent, unified institution.

The Cincinnati Museum Center, meanwhile, presents an example of a more thoroughly converged museum. Opened in 1990, the Cincinnati Museum Center operates three distinct museums: the Cincinnati History Museum, the Duke Energy Children's museum, and the Museum of Natural History and Science (the Cincinnati History Library and Archives also operates under the aegis of the Cincinnati Museum Center). The Cincinnati Museum Center occupies the same building as Cincinnati Union Terminal, which resumed rail service as a result of the opening of the museum center. But whereas NYARC and Museums10 are consortia of autonomous museums, the Cincinnati Museum Center is a unified institution with a single governing structure and a single board of trustees. In that respect, the organization has achieved convergence, the fifth phase of the collaboration continuum.

While the story of the Cincinnati Museum Center has much in common with the stories of NYARC and Museums10, there are also several notable differences. Like NYARC and Museums10, the Cincinnati Museum Center is built on a foundation of pre-existing elements. Both the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History and Science and the Cincinnati History Library and Archives have their origins in the 19th century. Also like NYARC and Museums10, geographic location facilitated the establishment of the Cincinnati Museum Center, the city of

Cincinnati being the obvious common catalyst. What did not exist, however, was a previous collaborative relationship: where NYARC represents a continuation of the Art Museum Library Consortium, and where Museums10 arose from the extant Five College Consortium, no comparable organization existed in Cincinnati. The Cincinnati Museum Center owes its existence to an unprecedented collaboration between the Cincinnati Historical Society, the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, and the Union Terminal Association ("Gateway to the City: Union Terminal Today - 1985 to Present"). In addition, the physical convergence of the organizations that constitute the Cincinnati Museum Center could not have occurred without the availability of the Union Terminal building, and significant financial support from Hamilton County ($33 million), the State of Ohio ($8 million), and the City of Cincinnati ($3 million) ("Gateway to the City"). That degree of government financial support will not be forthcoming in the economic climate of 2018. Thus, while the Cincinnati Museum Center may represent a tremendous success story for museum convergence, museums in the United States will find it a tall order to replicate that success.

While museums may not be able to replicate the particular situation of the Cincinnati Museum Center, the case of the museum center - as well as NYARC and Museums10 - provides several insights regarding how museums should approach the work of collaboration. In these cases, collaborative work built either on established relationships, or on a set of shared interests upon which partnerships could be developed. Local or regional identity provided another key element - in Cincinnati, New York, or western Massachusetts, the geographic proximity of the participating museums served to facilitate the process. Finally - and perhaps most importantly - the process of collaboration brought together the various resources of the participating museums to create a new product, service, or facility that the partner museums could not have created on their own. This could be a universal research portal (NYARC's Arcade), a unified marketing presence (Museums10), or an entirely new museum facility (the Cincinnati Museum Center). In all these examples, the collaborations both increased the accessibility of the participating museum's collections, and improved the financial position of the organizations.

Collaboration need not end at the boundaries of the museum field, however. Libraries and archives, as fellow memory institutions, present the most common candidates for museum partnerships, but organizations such as theaters (Leahey and Bruton 2014) and public broadcasters (Walker and Manjarrez 2003; Rodger et al. 2005) also occur in the literature as potential collaborative partners.

A 2008 report by the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) surveyed collaboration among museums, libraries, and archives in thirteen countries (Yarrow et al., 4). The report enumerates some 62 different collaborative projects, and groups these programs into three categories: collaborative programming, collaborative electronic resources, and joint-use/integrated facilities. One example of collaborative programming lies in the multi-site exhibitions co-curated by the Denver Museum of Art, the Denver Public Library, and the Colorado State Archives (Yarrow et al, 11). Though grander in scale, these exhibitions are comparable in nature to the themed exhibitions co-curated by the Museums10 consortium. The IFLA report lists numerous examples of collaborative electronic resources, subdividing these collaborative projects into global, national, and regional databases. In the latter category, the Museums and the Online Archive of California (MOAC) project is a particularly noteworthy example. The MOAC project was a collaboration among thirteen museums in the state of California to contribute material to the Online Archive of California (an initiative of the California Digital Library). While the MOAC project has since wound down, its contributions to the OAC live on. The project's focus on a unified, online research portal is strikingly similar to NYARC's Arcade database. Finally, the report categorizes its examples of joint-use/integrated facilities into three subgroups: minimal integration, selective integration, and full integration. In the third subgroup, the Lafayette Library and Learning Center (LLLC) in Lafayette, California serves as an example of a fully integrated facility (Yarrow et al., 30). The LLLC contains material from a number of organizations, including the Oakland Museum of California, in a single facility. In that regard, it is quite similar to the Cincinnati Museum Center.

While the IFLA report lists many examples of collaboration among museums, libraries, and archives, it also identifies five criteria for determining best practices in collaborations. According to these criteria, collaborations should support lifelong learning or community development, optimize the services provided by the partner institutions, enable universal access to community resources, broaden the customer base for the institutions involved, and address the need for preservation of heritage materials (Yarrow et al., 31). The report presents these criteria in the context of collaboration between museums, libraries, and archives, but they are every bit as applicable in a museum-specific context. Indeed, NYARC, Museums10, and the Cincinnati Museum Center all satisfy the majority - if not all - of these criteria. Moreover, these criteria address both the humanistic goals (e.g. lifelong learning and preserving heritage materials) and the economic responsibilities (e.g. optimizing services and broadening the customer base) of museums. In that regard, these criteria present an invaluable barometer for measuring the efficacy of collaboration in the museum field.

Finally, efforts at collaboration and convergence are by no means limited to the United States. In various guises, museums - as well as libraries and archives - are coming together to form consortia, or even institutions. In Germany, unified research portals (such as the nowdefunct *Bibliotheken, Archive, und Museen*, or BAM) have been proposed as a way of supplementing the development of a national digital library with materials from libraries, archives, and museums (Kirchhoff et al. 2008). A similar development has occurred in Finland, which now boasts its own national digital library (Hormia-Poutanen et al. 2013). Further afield, a consortium model for libraries, archives and museums has been proposed in India (Prasad 2011). Unlike the American context, however, these projects take place under the aegis of national ministries (e.g. India's Ministry of Tourism and Culture). No comparable ministry exists in the United States. Collaboration and converge in American museums, therefore, will need to occur from the bottom up.

Putting the theories behind collaboration and convergence into practice will most likely prove easier said than done. Museums can form partnerships to work together on long-term projects (such as NYARC), form consortia to share resources and increase their profile (such as Museums10), or they can merge into single organizations under one roof (such as the Cincinnati Museum Center). Whatever their approach to the work of collaboration and convergence, museums will need to ensure that their efforts satisfy both their humanistic and economic obligations. Though by no means foolproof or exhaustive, the practices and criteria presented in this chapter provide a framework by which museums can approach collaboration. Certainly, every museum operates within its own particular circumstances, and each museum will need to tailor its efforts to address those circumstances. Nevertheless, in arming themselves with methods listed here, museums will be well situated to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Conclusion

Although museums may have an aura of permanence and stability, they have always been dynamic institutions. The story of museums has been a story of evolution, of adapting new ideas and forms and reconfiguring old ones. Indeed, changing with the times has been a constant in the history of museums. The 21st century has been a time of rapid change, and the ability of museums to keep up with the wider trends of society has become ever more crucial. Museums have traditionally been insulated from the forces of markets and commerce, but as the logic of the market expands its influence across all segments of society, museums will have to reckon with this transformation. To reconcile the tension between their humanistic obligations on the one hand and economic necessities on the other, collaboration will be essential for museums. Indeed, it may even be expedient for separate organizations to converge into new, larger institutions.

Conscious of their public image, museums tend to distance themselves from the economic realm. As institutions concerned with the preservation and interpretation of art and artifacts, it is understandable that museums should want to emphasize their educational role and their humanistic ideals. But while the financial crisis of 2008-2009 certainly perforated the boundaries between museum and business, in point of fact museums have never been completely independent from the business world. This is especially true in the United States, where the private collections of industrial and financial magnates formed the nuclei of museum collections. Moreover, generous philanthropic support was - and remains - essential to the foundation and expansion of American museums.

But while museums certainly owe a great deal to the business realm, they are categorically not businesses. In legal terms, the bulk of museums in the United States are private, not-for-profit organizations. In practical terms, museums may engage in revenue-generating activities such as operating shops or restaurants, but the revenue that these activities generate are not distributed to owners or board members as profit; rather, they are reinvested into the museum itself. In philosophical terms, the institutional mission of the museum informs every aspect of its operation. In furtherance of these missions, museums task themselves not with selling a service or product, but instead with providing a benefit to the public.

However, with the tightening of the financial screws has come an increasing need for museums to generate more income, and to be ever more careful with how they spend their limited budgets. The rising urgency of financial matters has inspired museums to appropriate a variety of practices native to the business realm, from revenue-generating operations that seem inappropriate in a cultural institution, to marketing, to entrepreneurial management strategies. Such practices often seem at odds with the educational missions of museums, but so long as financial gain does not displace public service as the core objective of a museum, a businesslike approach may be a net positive for museums.

This subordination of commercial matters to humanistic matters means that museums, rather than competing with one another for market dominance, can instead collaborate to better accomplish their public service missions. Collaboration exists on a continuum, from simple contact to thorough convergence. The collaborative process does entail some risks, and is by no means a guaranteed success. Museums will certainly need to weigh the risks and the benefits, and suit their approach to collaboration to fit their particular situations. With this thoughtful application, collaboration presents the best way for museums to accomplish their public service objectives while simultaneously meeting their financial obligations.

In reviewing real-world examples of collaboration, a number of recurring factors emerge. Successful collaborations build on existing relationships (or at least the building blocks of such relationships), take advantage of local or regional identities, and combine the resources of partner organizations to create a new outcome that could not be accomplished without collaboration. Moreover, collaborations should meet criteria that address both the humanistic and economic aspects of museums.

What, in a perfect world, might convergence look like? Imagine a network of historic house museums operating under the aegis of a local historical society. In turn, this historical society would be part of a consortium of historical societies and history museums in given region. These history-focused organizations would have a close working relationship with art museums and other cultural organizations (including libraries and archival collections) in the region, collaborating on special exhibitions and programs. These institutions would be members of county, regional, or even state-level associations with a unified media presence and funding pool. This hypothetical model comes, of course with the caveat that the collaborative process must be governed by the material conditions and needs of the museums in question, and should not attempt to fit a prescribed model.

It is a well-worn cliché that money makes the world go 'round, but the idea nevertheless contains an element of truth. As the ethos of commerce exerts an ever-strengthening influence on civilization, one is left to wonder what the fate of museums might be. Among the great strengths of museums, however, is their ability change with the times. Throughout their history, museums have consistently proven capable of evolution and adaptation, of bringing together a collection of seemingly disparate elements to assemble something greater. Just as an individual museum is more than a collection of objects, a collaborative alliance - whether in the form of a consortium or a single, entirely new institution - is more than just a clustering of museums. If evolution is about survival, then the collaborative process symbolizes the next stage in the evolution of museums. Applied under astute leadership and governed by the mission of the museums involved, the collaborative process will safeguard the presence of museums - and their vital service to civilization - in the unforgiving ecosystem of the 21st century.

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