

Expanding Museum Studies: An Introduction

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Museum studies has come of age. Over the past decade in particular, the number of books, journals, courses, and events dedicated to museum studies has grown enormously. It has moved from being an unusual and minority subject into the mainstream. Disciplines which previously paid relatively little attention to museums have come to see the museum as a site at which some of the most interesting and significant of their debates and questions can be explored in novel, and often excitingly applicable, ways. They have also come to recognize that understanding the museum requires moving beyond intra-disciplinary concerns to greater dialogue with others, and to adopting and adapting questions, techniques, and approaches derived from other areas of disciplinary expertise. All of this has contributed to museum studies becoming one of the most genuinely multi- and increasingly inter-disciplinary areas of the academy today.

This *Companion to Museum Studies* is intended to act as a guide through the thronging multi-disciplinary landscape; and to contribute to and develop cross-disciplinary dialogue about museums. By bringing together museum scholars from different disciplines and backgrounds, it presents a broad range of perspectives and identifies the most vital contemporary questions and concerns in museums, and in museum studies. Authors discuss what they regard as particularly important and interesting within their own fields of expertise in relation to key topics in museum studies, and they present original perspectives and arguments that constitute significant autonomous contributions to their specific areas as well as to museum studies more generally. The chapters have been specially commissioned for this volume, though in two cases they are expanded from earlier, shorter papers (chapters 15 and 33). Contributors to this *Companion* are museum scholars versed in relevant academic debates and many also have direct professional experience of working in or with museums, in a closer and more vibrant relationship between the museum and the academy – and practice and theory – that is a hallmark of expanding museum studies today.

The museum studies represented by this volume has its roots in, and takes up the challenge set by, developments often described as “the new museology” (see below). However, it also goes beyond some of what might be called the “first wave” of new museological work by broadening its scope, expanding its methodological

approaches, and deepening its empirical base. It also asks questions of some of the new orthodoxies – including the supremacy of the visitor – that have found their way into contemporary museum practice; and it suggests possible new avenues for future museum work and study. This expanded and expanding museum studies does not, however, have a single “line,” and it is significant that a collective plural noun is replacing a singular one. Perhaps more than anything, museum studies today recognize (to use the plural now) the multiplicity and complexity of museums, and call for a correspondingly rich and multi-faceted range of perspectives and approaches to comprehend and provoke museums themselves.

The New Museology

In his introduction to *The New Museology*, an edited collection published in 1989, Peter Vergo expressed well the change from what he called “the old museology” to the new. The old, he wrote, was “too much about museum *methods*, and too little about the purposes of museums” (Vergo 1989: 3). The old was predominantly concerned with “how to” matters of, say, administration, education, or conservation; rather than seeking to explore the conceptual foundations and assumptions that established such matters as significant in the first place or that shaped the way in which they were addressed. By contrast, the “new museology” was more theoretical and humanistic. Although Vergo’s volume was only one of a number of interventions made under the rubric of “the new museology” (see chapters 2 and 10 of this volume), it is worth looking at its content and coverage (despite its own acknowledgment that these are not intended to be comprehensive) in order to identify some of the main points of departure from “the old museology.” Three seem to me to be particularly indicative.

The first is a call to understand the meanings of museum objects as situated and contextual rather than inherent. Vergo’s own chapter, with its elegant concept of “the reticent object,” makes this argument, as do various others, including that of Charles Saumarez Smith (1989), whose story of the way in which a seventeenth-century doorway became the logo of V&A Enterprises, the Victoria and Albert Museum’s new commercial company, has become a classic example of shifting object meanings.

The doorway example also illustrates the second area to which the new museology drew attention: namely, matters that might earlier have been seen as outside the remit of museology proper, such as commercialism and entertainment. Chapters on great exhibitions and theme parks, as well as Stephen Bann’s reflections on what he calls “fragmentary or incomplete expressions of the museological function” (Bann 1989: 100) – for example, individual quests to assemble histories – highlight continuities between museums and other spaces and practices, thus throwing into question the “set apartness” of the museum or the idea that it is “above” mundane or market concerns.

Linked with both the first and second is the third: how the museum and its exhibitions may be variously perceived, especially by those who visit. This is speculated upon in many of the chapters, and some valuable empirical evidence is provided in that of Nick Merriman (1989; see also chapter 22 of this volume). Collectively, then,

these three areas of emphasis demonstrate a shift to seeing the museum and the meaning of its contents not as fixed and bounded, but as contextual and contingent.

Representational Critique

The shift in perspective evident in *The New Museology* was part of a broader development in many cultural and social disciplines that gathered pace during the 1980s. It entailed particular attention to questions of representation – that is, to how meanings come to be inscribed and by whom, and how some come to be regarded as “right” or taken as given. Academic disciplines and the knowledge they produced were also subject to this “representational critique.” Rather than seeing them as engaged in a value-free discovery of ever-better knowledge, there was a move toward regarding knowledge, and its pursuit, realization, and deployment, as inherently political. What was researched, how and why, and, just as significantly, what was ignored or taken for granted and not questioned, came to be seen as matters to be interrogated and answered with reference not only to justifications internal to disciplines but also to wider social and political concerns. In particular, the ways in which differences, and especially inequalities, of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class, could be reproduced by disciplines – perhaps through exclusions from “the canon,” “the norm,” “the objective,” or “the notable” – came under the spotlight. This mattered, it was argued, not least because such representations fed back into the world beyond the academy, supporting particular regimes of power, most usually the status quo.

In response to such critiques, greater “reflexivity” – in the form of greater attention to the processes by which knowledge is produced and disseminated, and to the partial (in both senses of the word) and positioned nature of knowledge itself – was called for. This led to a flourishing of work that sought to “deconstruct” cultural products, such as texts or exhibitions, in order to highlight their politics and the strategies by which they were positioned as “objective” or “true,” and to probe the historical, social, and political contexts in which certain kinds of knowledge reigned and others were marginalized or ignored.

The critique of representation at the level of cultural products and disciplines was itself part of a broader critique of the way in which the “voices” of certain groups were excluded from, or marginalized within, the public sphere. The challenge came especially from postcolonial and feminist activists and scholars who argued that existing, broadly liberal democratic, political models were inadequate to tackling the fundamental representational inequities involved. What was needed was a politics of recognition, specifically addressing not just whether people had the right to vote and otherwise participate as citizens but potentially more fundamental matters, such as whether the concerns of marginalized groups even made it onto the agenda. In the increasingly multicultural cities of North America and Europe in particular, political positions and claims came with increasing frequency to be articulated in terms of the needs and rights of “under-” or “mis-recognized” identities.

Identity Politics

It was in this context of “identity politics” that museums were subject to new critical attention. In many ways, the museum is an institution of recognition and identity *par excellence*. It selects certain cultural products for official safe-keeping, for posterity and public display – a process which recognizes and affirms some identities, and omits to recognize and affirm others. This is typically presented in a language – spoken through architecture, spatial arrangements, and forms of display as well as in discursive commentary – of fact, objectivity, superior taste, and authoritative knowledge.

The challenge to museum representation came, then, not only from theory and the academy. As is discussed especially in Part VI of this *Companion*, there have been a number of high-profile controversies about exhibitions, especially since the 1980s, which have collectively raised questions about how decisions are made about what should end up on public display, and who should be involved in making them. Various groups have protested about the ways in which they were represented in exhibitions, or excluded from museum attention altogether; and there have been demands for the return of objects to indigenous peoples (see, for example, chapters 5, 26, and 27 of this volume).

At the same time, others spoke out against what they saw as an unnecessary political correctness and postmodernist relativity leading museums away from their proper mandate to represent the majority high culture and truth and act as repositories of the collective treasure for the future. Museums found themselves at the center of the wider “culture wars” over whether it was or was not possible or permissible to see some cultural products and forms of knowledge as in any sense more valuable or valid than others (see chapters 29 and 30 of this volume). Museums became, in short, sites at which some of the most contested and thorny cultural and epistemological questions of the late twentieth century were fought out.

The Museum Phenomenon

These were not the only reasons why museums began to excite new levels of interest among cultural commentators, policy-makers, and scholars in many disciplines. The empirical fact that intrigued many was what Gordon Fyfe (chapter 3) calls “the museum phenomenon”: namely, the extraordinary growth in the number of museums throughout the world in the second half of the twentieth century, especially since the 1970s. Ninety-five per cent of existing museums are said to have been founded since World War II (see chapter 13). This “phenomenon” showed not only that the museum could not just be understood as an “old” institution or relic of a previous age, but also that the critiques of representation had not undermined confidence in the museum as a cultural form. Indeed, as chapters 10, 11, and 29 demonstrate, the museum came to be embraced precisely by some of those who had reason to be critical of aspects of its earlier identity-work.

The museum phenomenon cannot be accounted for wholly by a proliferation of museums to represent previously marginalized groups, however. Indeed, just as sig-

nificant as the expansion in the number of museums was a stretching of their range and variability, including a blurring into other kinds of institution and event. So, while at one end of the scale there was a proliferation of small, low-budget, neighborhood museums, often concentrating on the culture of everyday life or local heritage; at the other, corporate museums, the development of museum “franchises,” “blockbuster” shows, iconic “landmark” architecture (chapters 14 and 15), “super-star” museums (chapter 24) and “meta-museums” (chapter 23) also flourished. Certainly, these could be bound up with the representation of identity too – especially with cities promoting their distinctiveness in the global competition for prestige and a share of the cultural tourism market, and with corporations deploying the museum as part of their own image-marketing. But understanding them needed also to consider questions of spectacle, “promotional culture,” the global traffic in symbols, and flows of capital (see, especially, chapters 23, 24, and 31).

The museum phenomenon is best seen as a product of the coming together of a heady mix of partially connected motivations and concerns. These include, *inter alia*, anxieties about “social amnesia” – forgetting the past (chapter 7); quests for authenticity, “the real thing,” and “antidotes” to the throwaway consumer society (chapters 3, 6, and 33); attempts to deal with the fragmentation of identity and individualization (chapter 12); and desires for life-long and experiential learning (chapters 19 and 20). Indeed, although discussion of the changes in museums in the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first was not a specific remit for most contributors to this book, almost all comment upon it, so providing a wide-ranging, multi-disciplinary reflection on its nature, significance, and implications.

One of the key questions arising from the proliferation of museums is whether it will be possible to sustain. Will the public be afflicted with collective “museum fatigue” in the face of too much of a similar thing, however good (however defined)? The evidence at present is inconclusive: new museums continue to open, though there have also been closures and (some high profile) plans shelved. The question is also complicated by the fact that it is not always clear what should “count” as a museum. The development of “museums” that do not possess permanent collections or only “token” ones, including some corporate museums and most science centers, and the emergence of the virtual museum (chapter 18), also contribute to a definitional quagmire and to the continuing soul-searching about what is a museum – and also to what it might or should be. Contributors here offer their own, various, answers. Rather than seeing these developments and difficulties as threatening the validity of the museum as a focus of study, however, the new museum studies embrace these as part of a continuing and expanding fascination with museums.

Expanding Museum Studies

The expanded and pluralized museum studies build on insights of the new museology and representational critique to further develop areas to which these drew attention but also to extend the scope of study. In addition to this broadening of scope, there is also a growing recognition of the complexity – and often ambivalent

nature – of museums, which calls for greater theoretical and methodological sophistication. What we see in museum studies as represented here is a broader range of methods brought to bear and the development of approaches specifically honed to trying to understand the museum. Also characteristic is a renewed commitment to trying to bring together the insights from academic studies with the practical work of museums – to return to some of the “how to” concerns of the “old museology” from a new, more theoretically and empirically informed, basis.

This *Companion to Museum Studies* as a whole speaks to and illustrates the new museum studies more eloquently than can a brief introduction and overview. It is, however, worth noting some of the ways in which the new museum studies have built on and developed the three areas outlined above as particularly indicative of the new museology. First, the new museological idea that object meanings may change in different contexts has been fleshed out through a range of work that addresses the ways in which objects may take on particular meanings and values. For example, there is research that has involved developing techniques to try to elucidate a language or grammar of exhibitions (chapters 17 and 32); or to distinguish different kinds of visual – or multi-sensorial – regimes (chapters 16, 21, and 31). Some of the newer work has also tried to move beyond predominantly text-based models in order to understand the significance of the materiality of objects and, indeed, of forms of exhibiting themselves (chapters 2, 13, and 18); and to explore how this interacts with notions such as “heritage,” “authenticity,” “narrative,” and “memory” (chapters 3, 7, and 13). Further study has considered how these may play out in different cultural or political contexts (chapters 10 and 28) and has addressed questions of the legal status and ethical implications of how objects are treated (chapters 26 and 27). There has also been a move toward looking at the meanings of museum objects not only as a reflection of changing contexts or the perceptions of different groups, but as themselves helping to shape how various other kinds of objects – and, indeed, a complex of related notions, including subjectivity, knowledge, and art – are apprehended and valued (chapters 4, 6, and 16).

Expansion and Specificity

The new museological broadening of remit, and in particular its attention to matters of commerce, market, and entertainment, has also continued and become further developed in the expanded museum studies. Some such work follows from the recognition that “museological” practices (for example, collecting, assembling heritage, performing identity via material culture) are not necessarily confined to the museum, and that the museum may shape ways of seeing beyond its walls. This has also seen further scholarly attention given to some of the historical ideas about what constitutes a museum (chapter 8) and its links with other institutions, such as world fairs (chapter 9).

At the same time, there has been empirical and theoretical work dedicated to trying to understand the (sometimes subtle) implications for museums of the various and changing financial and governmental contexts in which they operate. As chapters here variously document, these include such matters as the effort put into

attracting commercial sponsorship or maximizing visitor numbers, the relative amount of space allocated to the display of objects or to the museum shop, the numbers of staff working on different museum tasks and their expected levels of expertise (chapter 25), the ways in which the museum audience is conceptualized (for example, as child or adult, as customer or citizen), the kinds of looking or learning that are encouraged, and how challenging or controversial exhibitions are likely to be. By providing a greater range of studies of what is going on in museums in various places, the new museum studies are also able to highlight some of the alternatives available. For example, Bruno S. Frey and Stephan Meier's discussion of museum economics in chapter 24 shows various possible options and gives attention to the agency of museum directorates – agency that sometimes may feel rather depleted when certain ways forward come to be taken for granted rather than critically interrogated (chapter 33).

What also emerges – perhaps initially apparently paradoxically – from this broadening of scope and the recognition of overlap between the museum and other institutions is an acknowledgment of the relative specificity or distinctiveness of museums. As with the move beyond approaches that look at museums as texts, there is greater recognition in the expanding museum studies of the necessity to extend, reconfigure, or even move beyond, approaches that have been developed primarily for the study of other institutions or practices, and to find ways of recognizing aspects of museums that might otherwise be overlooked. To take the case of museum economics as the example again, Frey and Meier argue that while many conventional economic concepts can be used to provide insights into the economic situation of museums, the “cultural value” of museums – typically ignored – should also be included in the analysis.

Similar arguments are also evident in a range of other areas in the *Companion*, such as education, the profession, and technology. In making these, contributors are not seeking to essentialize the museum or identify the *only* aspects that are really important but to put these together with other features in order to better understand the complex and often diverse nature of museums themselves. Museums, whatever family resemblances they have with other institutions or practices, are also a particular kind of mix, drawn from a partially shared repertoire of ambitions, histories, structures, dilemmas, and practices. It is for this reason that museum studies cannot just be dissolved into, say, media studies or cultural studies, however much museum studies may profit from plundering those areas for insights.

A note here is perhaps necessary on the use of the singular and plural forms “museum” and “museums.” It has become a rather standardized and sometimes hackneyed move in cultural studies to reject the use of singular terms and to use plurals. In choosing to talk of “museum studies” rather than “museology,” I have also given preference to a plural term – which seemed appropriate in this context and given the argument made. As Mieke Bal (chapter 32) argues in relation to the term “the public,” however, a singular term does not necessarily have to indicate an entity understood as undifferentiated. Moreover, it can be helpful to use the singular, especially to indicate where an abstract idea (which may be variously realized) rather than specific instances are intended. For this reason, the term “the museum” is used in the *Companion* – as well as, where appropriate, “museums.”

The Plural Public

The third of my suggested indicative areas of the new museology was that of the museum audience/public/visitors. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's contribution (chapter 22) here shows especially, the amount of work dedicated to trying to understand how museums and exhibitions may be perceived or otherwise related to by those who go to them – and also, though this remains under-addressed, by those who do not – has expanded greatly since *The New Museology* was published. Not only has there been an expansion of the quantity of visitor research, but a greater range of methodological approaches – particularly qualitative – has also been brought to bear.

Some of the predominant methodological developments are bound up too with changes in the way that “the audience” or “the public” is understood – both by those conducting the research and by museums themselves. As is argued in many chapters in this *Companion*, there has been a shift, underway for quite some time now though still only patchily achieved, toward understanding the public as diverse, plural, and active, rather than as a relatively homogeneous and rather passive mass (see, for example, chapters 2, 8, and 19). This is evident not only in styles of research, which have increasingly involved methods that allow variations and ways of seeing beyond pre-defined research frames to come to light, but also in the approaches of some museums themselves (for example, chapters 16 and 20).

What is also evident, however, is a more critical take on some of the ways in which aspects of the new orthodoxy of visitor sovereignty – and various linked ideas, such as “accessibility,” “diversity,” “community,” “interactivity,” “visitor involvement” – have been understood or put into practice. There is plenty of evidence of this more critical approach throughout this volume. It is important to note, however, that for the most part the aim of those producing such critical analyses is to contribute to, rather than to abandon, the original ambition to find better ways of helping museums to relate to diverse audiences. Take, for example, Andrea Witcomb's (chapter 21) dissection of “interactivity” in museums – something that too often is reduced to a rather mechanistic approach; or Mieke Bal's (chapter 32) analysis of a range of exhibitionary attempts to alter the relationship between the museum and the public. In both cases, as in many others discussed in this *Companion*, they are also concerned to identify more promising strategies and to suggest possible ways forward.

Policy, Practice, and Provocation

All of the developments in museum studies outlined here have significant implications for museum policy and practice. They provide not only more nuanced theoretical tools but also methodological techniques and a growing and more robust empirical base of research and critical accounts of existing museum practice. What this adds up to, I suggest, is a reconnecting of the critical study of the museum with some of those “how to” concerns that the “new museology” saw itself as having superseded.

This reconnection is not only evident on paper: it is also underway in many museums, though to varying extents in different places and in different types of museum. What it involves is a greater openness on the part of museums and museum staff to engage with those who study museums but who do not necessarily work in them. Pioneering directors and curators want to know what some of the exciting critical disciplinary and trans-disciplinary ideas can say to help them create innovative exhibitions. My own sense is that this is coming to supplant the idea, common over the past decade (though more so in some countries and types of museum than in others), that market research on visitors is the panacea for the museum's ills. While understanding what might be wanted by visitors – and those who do not visit – is crucial to the successful museum enterprise, simply playing back what visitors might think that they already wish to see, tends to produce uninspired and quickly dated exhibitions.

Thought-provoking, moving, unsettling, uplifting, challenging, or memorable exhibitions, by contrast, are more likely to be informed by extensive knowledge of diverse examples, questions of representation, perception, museological syntax, and the findings from nuanced and probing visitor research. Those who work on museums – practitioners of museum studies – are coming to a new extent to be in demand to provide the wider perspectives and knowledge that are, increasingly, required. The fact that Mieke Bal – one of the most significant but perhaps also one of the most “difficult” theorists of museums – has been involved in exhibition-making (as she describes in chapter 32) is an indication not only of this development but also of what it can contribute to both museums themselves and to the understanding of them.

The Encyclopedic Struggle

In compiling this volume, I have sometimes found myself thinking about Gustave Flaubert's story of Bouvard and Pécuchet, a pair of autodidacts who seek numerous means – including creating a museum – to try to grasp and catalogue all knowledge. What they find, however, is that the world and things resist their schemes, and that their ordering attempts fall apart. Flaubert's story speaks eloquently to museums today, many of which have questioned their own earlier attempts at encyclopedism and have embraced other approaches to collecting and exhibiting, as various chapters here show.

In shaping this *Companion to Museum Studies*, however, I undoubtedly felt an encyclopedic urge even though I knew that as soon as I had completed one list of “definitive topics” others would rapidly emerge. Nevertheless, rather like Bouvard and Pécuchet, I persevered, for there was also something tantalizingly attractive about at least trying to approach some kind of provisional comprehensiveness. Unlike Bouvard and Pécuchet, however, my recognition of the inevitability of provisionality and incompleteness meant that I did not come to abandon the task altogether.

Moreover, having spent several years as an ethnographer watching museum staff struggle to create exhibitions (Macdonald 2002), I also knew that even with the most meticulously laid plans and precisely defined rules of selection, the process of cre-

ation often takes unexpected turns – and that these could even turn out to be the most interesting. Just like the curators whom I observed shifting their plans because they had fallen in love with a particular object that they had happened upon in the museum’s store-rooms, I sometimes found my intentions to include a chapter on a particular topic swayed when the potential contributor whom I approached suggested something slightly different which he or she most wanted to write. Recognizing, too, that this was a better way to ensure lively, engaged chapters, I either acquiesced or, as I also witnessed in my study of exhibition-making, agreed to settlements that were usually far superior to – if harder to classify than – my original conceptions.

The Compass of the *Companion*

Despite the negotiated nature of the production of this *Companion to Museum Studies*, the volume does cover the topics which seem to me to be central to an expanding and vibrant museum studies. Many of these are signaled explicitly in the titles of the chapters, though others, such as “objects,” are so fundamental that they run through many chapters or throughout. Some of these links are indicated in the short introductions to each of the Parts of the *Companion*. Each chapter also contains its own bibliography of selected works in its area and indicates (with an asterisk) a number that are particularly recommended for initial further reading.

What I have not tried to do in the *Companion* is to catalogue different kinds of museum, though there are some chapters, such as Anthony Shelton’s on anthropology (chapter 5), that do in effect provide excellent overviews of particular types of museum; and in the volume as a whole, under many different titles and themes, a wide range of types of museum are discussed. Many of the discussions and questions covered in the various chapters are, of course, common to many different kinds of museum, though there is recognition throughout that differences matter and that variations such as museum genre, subject matter, scale, size, funding arrangements, location, national or political context, and so forth are all relevant. What this *Companion* seeks to do is to open up this awareness rather than attempt to chart it.

This opening up of possible directions and routes is in the nature of a Companion and is part of what distinguishes it from an encyclopedia. So, too, is the fact that it is a collection of distinct, individual voices rather than a shared authorial declaration. There are differences of language, approach, and opinion here; and, in effect, the reader is presented with a set of (carefully chosen) companions, rather than a single guide, on their journey into museum studies. In this respect, too, the *Companion* bears similarities with the post-encyclopedic museum developments toward polyphony.

There are other ways, of course, in which this volume might have been organized. Chapters often speak to concerns in other sections. For this reason, the introduction to each Part also identifies at least some of the other chapters which bear upon the themes of those included in that particular Part. Readers may wish to begin at the beginning and work through the volume; and chapters have been organized such that some of the earlier ones provide a useful basis for understanding some of those that

follow. Chapters have also been grouped in order to bring particular themes together and to enable readers to follow a relatively ordered course through particular territories. The independent traveler may, of course, wish to simply wander or to follow his or her own itinerary, perhaps assisted by the index, that venerable if flawed convention that also has its origins in the taxonomic urge.

The *Companion* is divided into six parts. Part I: *Perspectives, Disciplines, Concepts* has a double remit to present some of the disciplinary perspectives that have been pre-eminent in reshaping the new museum studies and to explore key museum concepts and practices. The chapters highlight some of the main elements of the critical discourse that has emerged to interrogate the museum and its role; and they show how good the museum is for thinking through key and timely concerns in a wide range of disciplines. These chapters introduce the volume by exploring some of the fundamental aspects of museums and highlighting the reasons why museums matter.

Part II: *Histories, Heritage, Identities* follows up and extends some of the concerns introduced in Part I through a focus on a range of aspects of museum history, including both histories *of* the museum and ways in which museums have, variously, represented and been the cultural repositories of history and heritage. This Part also looks further into one of the central dimensions of museums, raised in Part I, that of identities, especially – though not exclusively – in relation to national identities.

Some of the chapters in Part III: *Architecture, Space, Media* might equally have been placed in a section on histories. Brought together here, however, they are intended to draw attention to the ways in which the museum is physically or materially encountered. Museum buildings, the organization of space and exhibits, and their forms matter. All of these incorporate particular assumptions about the nature of the museum – its role in relation to both its collections and to the public. And all of them have implications for the visitor's encounter with the museum and its collections.

Part IV: *Visitors, Learning, Interacting* takes up questions of the visitor's encounter in relation to debates about education and learning. Chapters here explain different models of education, of visitor study, and of museological approach that have predominated at certain points in time. All show, in various ways, a move toward what could be called a more “interactive” approach – often literally so in the case of modes of exhibit, though all also, again in various ways, question quite what this might mean; and they provide provocative suggestions for future possibilities.

Part V: *Globalization, Profession, Practice* looks at some of the most pressing aspects of the museum context today, including changes that are often described as “globalization,” and some of the practical dilemmas currently facing museum professionals. This section includes discussion of the changing economic context, something partly shaped by a growing corporatization and privatization in many countries. Dealing with increasingly complex economics – such as the need to garner income from a range of public and private sources – is one of the factors involved in moves toward a greater professionalization and complexity of the museum workforce. So, too, are the legal and ethical dilemmas facing museums, which are also often bound with both globalization and the identity politics and shifts to a greater voice for minorities discussed above and in the following Part.

The final Part of the *Companion* – Part VI: *Culture Wars, Transformations, Futures* – directly takes up the debate from the previous Part, and continues questions raised throughout the volume in its focus on some of the controversies – often dubbed “culture wars” – that museums have faced in recent years. These return us to some of the fundamental and awkward aspects of museums: questions of “truth,” of whom they speak on behalf of and to, of the role of objects, and of possibly changing sensibilities. This final section both discusses some of the changes underway and makes provocative suggestions about where they – and museums – might, or should, go in the future.

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