

**UNIVERSITY OF CANBERRA**

*Managing the New Museology: The changing role,  
purpose and management of Australian museums  
since 1980*

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**April 2013**

## **Abstract**

Significant shifts have occurred in the management of Australian state museums since the 1980s. This is due to the confluence of new public sector management trends within the organisations and the impact of new museology. Museums in Australia in the 21st century are at a cross-roads, subject to a number of external and internal pressures that are impacting upon their provision and type of services, changing purpose, new social and economic roles and management style and focus. Within the evolving social, cultural and economic context in which Australian museums have operated during the last few decades, state museums provide key insights into the nature and impact of these organisational and management changes.

This thesis investigates and analyses shifts in the management of Australian state museums since the 1980s. How have museums, as public sector organisations, adapted and changed their management practices since the 1980s? How and why are museums responding to these challenges through the introduction of new strategies and a redefinition of their roles and purposes? At management level, how are museums responding to organisational issues such as greater access and information provision, attracting diverse audiences, increased emphasis on education and learning, evolving business models, the transition to professional bureaucracies and a greater social and economic role within communities? These issues are investigated within the thesis. Similarly, how museums operate as hybrids within the public sector, combining commercial and public roles, and the ramifications of this, is explored.

The thesis uses a number of lenses from the disciplines of public sector management, organisational studies and museum studies to cast a fresh eye over the management of Australian state museums from a multi-disciplinary perspective. The research presented in the thesis has implications for museums, organisational studies and public sector management theory and practice. There are similarly few studies of museums which focus on institutions from the perspective of them as qualitative case studies, particularly in Australia. Overall the study provides insights into the factors influencing the changing management, institutional role and purpose of Australian museums today.

## **Acknowledgments**

Throughout the research, preparation and writing of this thesis a number of people have assisted, advised, supported and guided me in a variety of ways. I would like to thank and gratefully acknowledge the roles of my supervisors in this, at times, ungainly undertaking. To my initial supervisor, Dr. Jenny Stewart, for her good sense, useful words regarding forming the shape and contents of the thesis, encouraging initial forays into essay and thesis writing and for providing advice on many public sector management sources and theories. Professor John Halligan stepped in at a time when the thesis was evolving and the initial draft writing had begun, providing constructive criticism to strengthen arguments, theories and ideas. At the same time as Dr. Halligan, Associate Professor Monica Kennedy provided another supervisory role, as primary supervisor, one in which she was keen, both about the PhD process itself as well as the topic of my thesis, and did so in a way that has been patient, encouraging, supportive and constantly helpful, providing guidance and clarity, even while dealing with my sometimes frustration towards the end. All of the support from my supervisors was greatly valued.

My Advisors for the thesis, initially Dr. James Warden from the University of Canberra and subsequently Dr. Kirsten Wehner, Senior Curator at the National Museum of Australia, were helpful in providing feedback and advice regarding the historic development of museums in Australia and museum studies generally. Kirsten's intelligent, thoughtful and wide-ranging knowledge of the development of museums and of the many institutional, staffing and philosophical quandaries now facing museums in Australia was particularly appreciated.

I would also like to extend thanks to the University of Canberra Librarian, Pat Tandy, for her good will, advice and ability to find even the most obscure (but highly useful) references in a field of studies, public sector management, that was not my undergraduate discipline nor forte. The many senior executive staff and Board members at the three case study museums, the Melbourne Museum, Australian Museum in Sydney and South Australian Museum in Adelaide, are thanked for willingly and enthusiastically giving their

time and thoughtful reflections on the changing management of their cultural institutions during fieldwork undertaken in 2008 and 2009.

Former museum directors interviewed at the South Australian Museum (Dr. Tim Flannery) and Australian Museum (Dr. Mike Archer) also offered information and insights into the changing role of museums in the current century.

To my 'new' Uni friends, work colleagues at Old Parliament House and long-term 'old' friends, I'd also like to thank them for the respite they provided from the often nebulous path that is undertaking a PhD and for their humour, support, much needed diversions and shared experience.

My greatest thanks go to my family; my brother S and dedicated, supportive and proud parents, V and P who have learned a thing or two having a daughter undertake something as monumental (or so it seems) as a PhD, and to my 'special friend' CK, whose constant encouragement, compassion and emotional strength helped me remain sane while undertaking the PhD.

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## 1 Introduction

This thesis seeks to explore the relationship between the new museology, changes in public sector management and the development of museums as hybrid organisations in order to investigate their impact on the role and management of Australian museums since the 1980s.

Museums in the current century are at a crossroad, subject to a number of internal and external pressures that are reshaping their provision and type of services, their social and economic roles and their management style. Museums have become subject to greater scrutiny and questioning of institutional purpose as it relates to their ‘value, meaning, control [and] interpretation’ (Stam 1993, p. 267). This has led to theoretical debate about the validity and applicability of museums’ existing internal and external operations.

The context in which Australian museums now operate is complex, with many organisational, strategic and management changes occurring. An awareness of the significance and impact of these changes to museums as organisations has become paramount to understanding their shifting roles and purposes today. State museums, as some of the most historic cultural institutions in their respective states which have undergone change over the last few decades, represent key organisations to study. In addition, they provide a snapshot of emergent managerial trends in Australian museums today.

In recent decades, Australian museums on the whole have been transformed by a number of factors. Public sector reform, under the guise of new public management, has reshaped expectations around accountability, governance and strategic management within museums. The rise of the philosophy known as ‘new museology’ has heralded a reorientation in museums away from collections towards audiences and an associated re-shaping of museum bureaucracy. Closely related to this, museums are increasingly called upon to commercialise their services as a way to supplement public funding and provide new forms of revenue.

This study explores the intersection of these factors, investigating their impact on the role and management of Australian state museums since the 1980s. In order to understand how museums have responded to these factors, we need to move beyond existing scholarly frameworks that characterise contemporary museums as simply public institutions. This thesis suggests that museums have evolved and changed as institutions since the 1980s and as such should be re-conceptualised and analysed as hybrid organisations. That is, organisations that in their conception of purpose and focus, their structure and management, incorporate aspects of both public and private sector organisations. The appeal of hybrid entities for governments and institutions lies in the belief that through merging aspects of public and private sectors, ‘they combine the best of both worlds: public accountability and private efficiency’ (Kopell 2006, p.1). This is increasingly a model governments are utilising with state museums. It raises a number of questions related to the involvement of levels of government and government funding sources in relation to state museums which are subsequently explored in this thesis.

The evolution of museums as hybrid organisations has emerged as their positions within state government agendas have been re-formulated within the context of state cultural and tourism agendas. Museums have similarly become hybrid organisations through the impact of new museology and new public sector management concepts and practices resulting in organisational and managerial change. Since the 1980s, Australian cultural policy has tended to question understandings of museums as providing an inherent ‘public good’. Instead such policies, particularly at state government level, have called for museums to justify their purpose in relation to identifiable social and economic outcomes. This shift has converged with new professional trajectories insisting that museums shift their focus from collections and scholarly research to becoming more accessible and appealing to a broader range of social groups. This drive for inclusion and accessibility has further intersected with pressure on museums to develop non-government revenue sources.

As explored in this thesis, these conjunctions have generated a series of tensions and debates around the core role of museums, their role within political agendas and their obligations to their ‘customers’. Overall, since the 1980s, Australian state museums have challenged and devalued traditional forms of taxonomic knowledge and associated management practices, resulting in adaptations to new organisational and strategic

practices. Organisational change within museums is not only the result of public sector reform but of increasing commercialisation and responses to trends in organisational foci, structure and management. Through the theoretical lenses of organisation theory, institutional theory and professional bureaucracies, this thesis seeks to analyse how and why museum management in Australia has changed over the last few decades and explore the implications and impact of this changing organisational purpose.

The research presented in this study has implications for museums, organisational studies and public management theory and practice. There are few studies of museums which focus on actual institutions from the perspective of them as qualitative case studies, particularly in Australia. This study will provide insights into the factors influencing the changing managerial focus, institutional role and purpose of museums today.

### 1.1.1 New public management

While museums have been subject to change through the impact of new museology, they have similarly been subject to changes through new public management. The application of corporate management techniques to the running of organisations such as public services emerged during the 1980s. As a means of ‘modernising’ the public sector, new public management strove to promote the benefits of greater market orientation on the premise of greater cost efficiency for governments in many Western countries. It has been argued that new public management advocated a model of the public service that ‘reflect [ed] a ‘reinvented’ form of government which is better managed, and which takes its objectives not from democratic theory but from market economics’ (Ewalt 2001, p. 8).

In addition, new public management is an organisational theory concerned with outcomes which offer a new set of tools and strategies for organisational change and greater efficiency. It represented a way of dislodging ‘the bureaucratic model with a new management paradigm’ (Ewalt 2001, p. 12). Changing organisational expectations regarding accountability and oversight, funding uncertainty and institutional performance,

service objectives and program goals have all occurred within Australian museums since the 1980s, as a result of new public management.

### 1.1.2 New Museology

The term new museology gained prominence during the 1980s, and represented the changing philosophical, economic and social approach to the way in which museums were conceptualised as organisations. New museology paved the way for greater openness, accessibility and visitor engagement as museum tenets. Vergo (1989, p.3) defined it as a ‘state of widespread dissatisfaction with the old museology, both within and outside the museum profession...the old museology is too much about museum methods and too little about the purpose of museums’. The new museology, however, was more complex than simply dissatisfaction. To a large extent it reflected the widespread development and implementation of new theories, methods and critical approaches designed to enable museums to attract, communicate with and engage existing and new audiences.

The move away from elitism and exclusivity in museums heralded ‘a climate of increasing reflexivity within the profession...[which was] identified as a ‘new museology’ (Ross 2004, p. 84). Moreover, the new museology created a movement towards a more audience-focused ethos within museums. Consequently, this has led to a corresponding shift in the institutional identities of museums and the professionals within them. In response to the new museology, museums underwent a period of transformation and flux. This resulted in a new relationship between museums, their audiences and stakeholders. At the same time, museums underwent structural, corporate and professional staffing changes as a result of the new museology.

### 1.1.3 Museums as hybrids

In addition to framing museums through the lenses of new museology and new public management they are defined, for the purpose of this study, as hybrids. Hybrids are organisations that operate in the public sector yet simultaneously develop commercial activities. As a result they have become a mixture of both: a part of government and a commercial enterprise, combining public and private interests. Despite this, hybrids are ‘not commonly referred to as a class of institutions because each is unique in terms of

history, purpose and organisation' (Kopell 2006, p.2). They remain elusive to easy definitions and classification.

Operating between the interface of the public sector, the private sector and society, museums, however, can be defined as hybrids. They have begun to combine public duties with for-profit activities such as shops, cafes and the paid provision of services and public programs. As Evers (2004, p. 2) states in relation to hybrids, 'the traditional clear cut separation...of market based, state-based and civil society units has become increasingly insufficient; instead... institutions are shaped simultaneously by all three possible "sectors", their values and steering mechanisms'. For museums operating as hybrids, the impact of these three forces – the market, the state and the public- has been greatest in the areas of re-structuring and delivering services, governance and organisational change. At a state based level, governments in Australia have increasingly favoured a reduction in the budgets and financial dependence by museums. This, in turn, has led government policy makers to view organisations such as museums operating as hybrids favourably. In doing so, governments have sought 'alternatives that will ease the burden on public appropriations' (Kopell 2006, p. 3). The development of state museums in Australia as hybrids has been influenced by this government, political and economic context since the 1980s.

The relationship between new museology, new public management, government policy and operating as hybrids is intertwined in museums. These constructs relate to the study's research questions, particularly how and why museums, as public sector organisations, have adapted and changed their management practices since the 1980s. What are the management implications for museums as hybrid organisations as they adapt to these challenges? The implications of these changes on museums as organisations, their management and evolving roles are analysed throughout the study.

How museums function as organisations within the public sector and as hybrids will be examined to highlight the changing organisational profile of Australian state museums over the last few decades. Where empirical research has been undertaken on the management of museums in Australia, researchers have tended to focus on aspects such as marketing, human resources, collections management, leadership, administration and

managerial decision making. This provides implications for applied practice. However, the operation of museums within this changing environment, the implications of this for museums' purpose and the ramifications of new organisational forms such as hybrids have seldom been explored. In recent years an emerging economic and political interest in museums as institutions has been combined with the physical expansion of many museums and growth of the sector as a whole. While museums have seen an increase in expectations for, and commensurate provision of, more public services, there is a lack of a trained management cadre in museums. Management training for museum professionals, while increasing, remains a low priority (Holmes and Hatton 2008, p.111). Few museum professionals identify themselves as managers; rather as curators, educators, research scientists or marketing staff. As Holmes and Hatton note (2008, p.113) in relation to the United Kingdom, but equally applicable to Australia, there is a lack of research on museum management and this has 'resulted in a predominantly deductive, quantitative body of research, with only limited impact on museum practice'.

Although the emphasis on museum management and leadership has gained momentum since the 1980s, the political, economic and social circumstances in which museums operate, competing pressures within their organisations and web of stakeholders, public and government requirements combine to make their management diverse and complex. In addition, the shifting emphasis in museums towards management and organisational change has had a twofold impact; on museum professionals and museum governance. Summarising the changes in Australian museums since the late 1970s, Griffin and Paroissien (2011, p. 6) note that 'museum professionals have increasingly found themselves faced with significant shifts in the structure and funding of their institutions... as museums have raised more of their capital and recurrent funding from sources other than their sponsoring government... they have effectively become public-private partnership institutions'. Nevertheless, studies of the impact on the management and organisational evolution of museums resulting from these developments are few. Debates about the relevance, appropriateness and how organisations adapt and respond to these changes in museum management in Australia infrequently appear in the published literature in either museum studies or public sector management.

In response to these issues, this study integrates knowledge related to the changes in selected Australian museums since the introduction of new museology, changes in the

public sector due to new public management and museums as hybrids through empirical investigation and multi-disciplinary research. Through combining approaches drawn from museum studies and public sector management, the study's significance lies in the convergence of these fields and offers a novel perspective on a number of the management issues facing Australian museums in the 21st century.

## **1.2 Definition**

For the purpose of this study, it is important to define what constitutes a museum, both in terms of organisational characteristics and to outline the type of institutions delineated in this research. While a museum can be defined as a public institution dedicated to preserving and interpreting material collections, The International Council of Museums (ICOM) has sought over many years to clarify the meaning of the word 'museum' and the purpose of such organisations. In 2001 at the ICOM General Assembly in Barcelona, a museum was described as 'a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, the tangible and intangible evidence of people and their environment'. The words 'tangible and intangible' were substituted for 'material' at the ICOM triennial General Assembly in Seoul in 2004. This indicates the meaning of the term museum is continuously undergoing revision as professional standards change, public expectations evolve and museums seek to redefine their role in society. As indicated previously, museums can also be defined as hybrid organisations. Given that hybrids 'place equal emphasis on their common-good mission and financial performance...[blurring] the distinction between non-profit and for-profit entities' (Boyd, Henning, Reyna 2008 , p.iii) the ICOM definition of museums as 'non-profit making' is open to conjecture and possible redefinition in light of this study.

Many museums collect objects and artefacts related to particular subject areas and so become specialised institutions. These include fine arts, applied arts, archaeology, anthropology, ethnology, history, science and technology, natural history, local history, city, aviation and agricultural museums. This study is limited to an analysis of natural history museums through three case studies, which are further discussed in Chapter 3 –

Methodology and Research Design. As this study examines the changing role, purpose and management of a selection of museums in Australia since the 1980s, the abovementioned ICOM definition, in addition to the definition of museums as hybrids, is used to explain and limit the type of cultural organisations analysed in this study.

In Australia, museums operate at local council, state and national levels, frequently funded through Arts, Environment, Community & Cultural Services and Science and Technology portfolios. Many are open to the general public free or for a small fee. The state museums analysed in this study are publically owned and receive the majority of their funding from state governments, supplemented by private philanthropy, sponsorship, fees and charges. They operate as statutory authorities, which has implications for the degree of government control over the institutions and operational and structural decisions at management level. The balancing of funding museums, declining revenues and new sources of commercial enterprise, combined with a 'public good' role remain a source of tension in Australian state museum management which is explored in this research.

### **1.3 *Brief background to the study***

Within the literature on Australian museums, there is a surprisingly diverse range of disciplinary perspectives. Until the 1980s much of this literature defined museums within humanistic, scientific, historical or philosophical frameworks. Few works examined museums from the perspective of their management, organisational structures or operations within an environment of uncertainty and change. The focus of much recent museum studies literature has been on the history of museums and their role, education in museums (Heumann Gurian 2007; Hein 1998), the role of collections (Witcomb 1997), attracting audiences and catering to visitor needs (Black 2005; Dexter Lord 2007), museum evaluation and governance (Adams 2002; Malaro 1994; Borun & Korn 1999) and the inclusion (or exclusion) of museums within cultural policy (Bennett & Carter 2001; Craik 2005; Throsby 2006).

Research on new museology has reflected a substantial shift in what constitutes a museum's purpose, where the organisational focus lies and how the institution positions and validates itself within society along economic, political and social lines. As

Hauenschild (1988, p.5) states, new museology has radically altered the ‘working methods, content and structures of an institution that some thought outdated. The purpose was to help museums achieve social meaning...in regard to the museums’ concrete contribution to everyday life’. New museology represented an all-encompassing analysis of existing moral, political, social and curatorial practices within museums.

Closely associated with the rise of new museology has been a realignment of the role of museums within contemporary society. Government policy in Australia, as well as in other countries such as the United Kingdom, has focused on building social capital such that museums are increasingly expected to ‘make a difference in terms of long-term social impact’ (Scott 2006, p.45). Public sector reform since the late 1970s and the rise of new public management have ensured that museums now place greater emphasis on fiscal ‘efficiency’. Similarly, the introduction of monitoring, evaluation and business practices has entailed greater accountability and striving for ‘measures of success’ that can be quantified in museums.

The relationship between Australian museums and governments, particularly state governments, has changed over the last few decades such that museums are often linked into wider economic, social capacity and tourism agendas. The extent to which these changes in museum management and approach have been mandated by government or have occurred internally within institutions will also be analysed in this study.

Over the past three decades, with attention directed towards new business practices, museums have undergone a fundamental ‘...process of re-engineering related to strategic planning, marketing, performance measurement, organisational restructuring, partnerships and professionalisation’ (McNichol 2006, p. 2) . There is a growing body of literature on the strategic management of museums and the application of management techniques in such organisations (Kovach 1989; Griffin 1991; Genoways & Ireland 2003). Less well researched, however, have been the operational consequences of these new forms of management in museums. Changes in museum management within the context of limited resources and under circumstances of complexity and uncertainty due to political and economic factors require further exploration. This study enquires into a number of aspects surrounding these changing management practices in Australian museums. While

comparison of the Australian museum management and government context with that of other countries would be useful, and references are made to museums in the United States and Europe, the focus of this study is centred on Australian state museums since the 1980s.

Where much management research has focused on large, often corporate institutions, the study of museum management has been limited. Museums have been slow to take up and embrace management practices as part of their professional and institutional activities, although today there is growing recognition of its importance. As Griffin and Paroissien note (2011, p.6) 'Museum professionals have increasingly found themselves faced with significant shifts in the structure and funding of their institutions; some have not been in a position to provide the appropriate leadership for change, or even equipped to do so'. The formation and history of particular institutions, diversity of roles, and need to balance control and creativity may have further contributed to the lack of emphasis on museum management until recently. As Chatelain-Ponroy (2001, p. 38) states, the important role of management has been 'an issue that museums seem to have either ignored or neglected'. Forces outside the museum, however, have brought about necessary changes in management function and processes. With demands often from governments and social expectations to be educative, address social and economic issues and attract wider audiences, while still collecting, conserving and displaying collections, museums are questioning their mission in the current century. At the same time, many museums, not just in Australia but internationally are considering '...how to become a public forum, an educational leader, a technology leader, or a community leader without additional funds' (Falk and Sheppard 2006, p.76). The exploration of a number of these issues and their implications for the evolving purpose of museums in the current century are examined in this thesis.

The intervention of marketplace and corporate sector management practices and concepts has had a significant impact on museums. Strategic management and its application have been most readily embraced by cultural institutions in Australia over the last decade or so. However, this remains problematic for museums. Kovach (1989, p.137) notes that the '...application of strategic management for many museums must incorporate an understanding of the differences between the public and not-for-profit sectors'. For a number of museums the clear distinctions between these two spheres are blurring and

debate surrounds issues of governance, structure, funding mechanisms and the nature of the organisation's operations and purpose. Traditionally hierarchical, with divisions between specialist staff and those in supervisory positions, museums today are best defined as hybrids, as previously noted. The study of museums as hybrid organisations has received little attention in Australia. This study explores how and why museums operate as hybrids, providing insights into museums as institutions and current operational concerns.

Research into museums within the context of management presents a new way of analysing these organisations. In discussing non-traditional organisations in management research, Hatton (2005, p.3) states that museums are important 'because they are professionalised, value-driven, offer very largely 'intangible' products or services and are a confused mix of public, non-profit and volunteer sector institutions'. This thesis is intended to integrate knowledge related to changes in selected Australian state museums since the development of the new museology in the 1980s, through empirical investigation and multi-disciplinary research. It aims to provide insights into changes in museum management, how these are being manifested at an organisational level, and the implications of these changes for the future role and purpose of Australian museums.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions for this study arise from the integration of three theoretical constructs: new museology, new public management and hybrid organisations. The application of this theoretical framework to key issues in museum studies and management leads to the following key questions, incorporating and reflecting a combination of themes derived from across the disciplines of museum studies and management.

The key, guiding questions of this study are;

- What are the impacts on Australian museum management since the introduction of new museology and new public management since the 1980s?

- How have museums, as public sector organisations, adapted their management practices as a result of these changes?

Given these questions, the sub questions for this study are;

- How and why museums are responding to these changes through new organisational strategies, processes and a redefinition of their roles and purposes?
- What internal and external forces, including government policies, have impacted on Australian state museums over the last few decades and what are the ramifications of these for management practice?
- What are the management implications for museums as hybrid organisations as they adapt to these challenges?

This study aims to analyse these questions through an exploration of the literature, data gathered through fieldwork, including interviews, and case study analysis.

### **1.5 Research objectives**

The objectives of this study are to;

- Describe, analyse and interpret changes in the management of Australian state museums at a structural, program and organisational level since the 1980s, through the development and comparison of three case studies;
- Analyse how and why museums in Australia are responding to these changes through strategies that include greater access and information provision, attracting new audiences, increased emphasis on education, new interpretations and uses of collections and scholarship, evolving business models and a greater civic and economic role within communities;
- Contribute new and innovative research to the understanding of museums as

organisations, their management and their changing roles and purposes in the twenty-first century.

The study of Australian museums, in particular how they operate as public sector and hybrid organisations, has received little attention in either the public sector management or museum studies disciplines. While the museums literature is under theorised, many empirical studies have been written on the practice of museum management and administration. These tend to be process-focussed guidelines, incorporating techniques and principles on how to improve the management of such organisations, concentrating on recommendations for ethics and professional conduct (Malaro 1994) , strategic planning (Griffin 1991) , marketing and public relations (Rentschler & Hede 2007), increasing education and audience development (Roberts 1997) , and leadership and the administration of museums (Genoways & Ireland 2003). Few of these studies are concerned with the analysis of museums as organisational types and the implications for their management as part of the public sector.

Much of this literature is published with an understanding of the economic, social and political climate in which museums currently operate. They reveal a desire by museums to be responsive to the ‘market’, promote their services through marketing, and yet retain their identity as public sector organisations (Lehman 2009). The ramifications of this shift in thinking in terms of the management of museums and how they operate in a market economy is beginning to be explored, but has not been analysed in any depth. The perspective taken in this study aims to provide new opportunities for the exploration of museums as organisations and their evolving roles within this framework.

The aim of this study is to analyse how and why fundamental changes in the purpose, focus and structure of Australian state museums since the 1980s have occurred and the impact this has had on museums. The fields of public sector management, public policy and administration, social sciences and not- for-profit management offer approaches to interpreting the organisational complexity and function of museums and their evolving purpose in contemporary society. Similarly, the organisational structures and practices, along with the interrelationship between museums and governments may be explored through these diverse disciplines, providing new insights.

The framework is applied to the analysis of three case study museums; the Australian Museum in Sydney, the Melbourne Museum in Victoria and the South Australian Museum in Adelaide. The research questions are answered through the case studies. The case studies are further discussed in Chapter 3- Methodology and Research Design and throughout the thesis.

The aims of this study are;

- To investigate how a selection of Australian state museums have responded, at an organisational level, to changes in their role and purpose as a result of a number of internal and external pressures of a political, cultural and economic nature;
- To explore how Australian state museums have changed and adapted their management and organisational practices in light of changes to the public sector and the development of new museology in the 1980s;
- To further explore the abovementioned aim through an analysis of how museums function as ‘hybrid’ organisations, combining the roles of public sector organisations with commercial functions. This research makes an important contribution towards the study of museum management in Australia. The research findings acknowledge the multi-faceted and problematic nature of contemporary museum management.

## **1.6 Structure of the thesis**

With an interdisciplinary study of the changing management practices in Australian museums, it was necessary to choose a number of thematic areas which best highlighted the impact of these changes on museums. The areas within museums which most clearly reflect changing organisational and managerial practices have revolved around the growth in museum marketing and branding, educational programs, the uptake of technology, governance issues and the expanding and intertwining of the relationship between museums, the state, cultural policy and economics. Similarly, these themes are inherently

linked with the theoretical constructs that have been introduced since the 1980s which have impacted on museums; new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrids. Other areas of change within museums over the last few decades, such as new exhibition practices and design, the rise of visitor services and the concept of museums as ‘entertainment’, although equally important, are not explored in this study. It is intended that the emphasis in this study lies in exploring a number of the internal and external forces related to political, economic and social factors that have had the most significant, long-term and transformative impact on museum management. Given this, the structure of this study begins with the Introduction to the thesis outlined in this chapter. Following on from this is the review of the literature on the development of museums, from colonial to contemporary, museums and new museology and museums and public sector management provided in Chapter 2 -Literature Review. Key themes related to museums, marketing, branding, architecture and cultural tourism, information, technology and access are explored here. With a view to emphasising the interrelationship between cultural policy and the State, this section highlights the governmental context in which museums currently operate. The final section of this chapter outlines literature surrounding museums as part of the public sector, from the perspectives of an overview of studies regarding new public management, museums as hybrid organisations, statutory authorities, governance and Boards, as professional bureaucracies and their evolving social and economic roles.

Chapter 3 is an overview of the Methodology and Research Design used in the thesis. It provides an explanation of the overall research approach, the theoretical framework for the study, and an outline of the qualitative research methodologies used. Details are similarly provided in this chapter on the empirical and applied research methods used throughout, including case studies, interviews and triangulation, the choice of interdisciplinary research, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and the strengths and limitations of the methods chosen.

Discussion and analysis of the research findings, incorporating aspects of the three case studies, are interwoven in Chapter 4 which is concerned with Museums, New Museology and New Public Management. This chapter explores the convergence during the 1980s of new museology and new public management that represented a fundamental shift in

defining the role and purpose of museums. The chapter also covers a contextual overview of the development of museums in Australia during the 19th century and the philosophical and organisational values embedded in these early institutions.

Following this, the three case studies are introduced and their selection explained and justified. A summary is provided of museums in Australia during the 20th century, subsequent to an exploration of the implications and changes brought about by new museology, changes to public sector management through the new public management and museums operating as hybrids. Underpinning these analyses are examples and quotes drawn from the three case studies in support of the discussion. The chapter concludes with an exploration of museums in Australia as particular organisational types; in this case statutory bodies, and the implications of this for accountability, management culture and evaluation.

Museums as organisations and as hybrids are analysed in Chapter 5 Museums as Organisations. Changes in museum governance, citing internal and external factors and the impact of these on museums are discussed in this chapter. The interactions between museums, governments, the State and culture, through cultural policy are similarly considered in this chapter. Insights into this are revealed through the case studies and interviews.

Research on various aspects of technology used by museums in the current 'information age' and the alteration this is having on everyday practices, while offering the possibility of improving services and generating income is considered in Chapter 6 Museums – Technology, Information and Access. Encompassing museum informatics, collections, access and data to questions of authority, the potential of life-long learning, social media and new forms of interaction, this chapter is underpinned by an examination of the impact of and implications for the contemporary use of technology in museum management and practice.

Chapter 7 Museums- changing organisations and a changing focus? further examines research in relation to museums as types of organisations, in particular professional bureaucracies. As professional bureaucracies, museums are challenged by the need to effectively manage, evaluate, motivate and reward staff, an issue that has been

exacerbated by the perceived problems of institutional identity. The relationship between museums, research, evolving and declining staff roles, marketing, architecture and public service are examined with reference to the case studies and their experiences in relation to changing organisational focus.

The thesis concludes with Chapter 8 Conclusion which draws together the themes from the discussions and considers some of the most pressing contemporary issues facing the management of museums in Australia as seen through the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 3. The research implications of the thesis and suggestions for areas for possible further investigation and development are included. Overall, the conclusion reflects on the transformation of museums into organisations with a much greater role to play in community service and broader government economic and social agendas. These emerging agendas relate to the initial question posed by this study of how and why museums have adapted and changed their management practices since the 1980s and the implications for museums, in terms of their role and purpose, as they adapt to these challenges. The development of these questions has emerged from the literature and gaps identified in existing publications which are analysed and discussed in the following chapter, the Literature Review. The Literature Review presents discussion of the multi-disciplinary sources explored for this study. Key themes and gaps in the literature are highlighted, drawing out connections between the existing literature and this study.



## **2 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Since the 1980s museums have been subject to a number of internal and external pressures that are impacting upon their provision of services, social and economic roles and management style. The confluence of new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrids has similarly impacted upon museums as organisations. Museums are responding to these changes in a variety of ways: through new services and strategies such as greater access and information provision, attracting diverse audiences, increased organisational emphasis on education and community learning, new interpretations and uses of collection and scholarship and evolving business models within the public sector.

Much of the current thinking about museums published in the scholarly literature focuses on a combination of historic and post-modernist perspectives on the history, purpose and evolving rationale of museums. This literature review is intended to summarise and critique a number of major themes in the discourse related to contemporary museums and their management. It does not aim to cover all factors impacting on modern museum management. Rather, it aims to highlight some of the major influences relevant to this thesis, particularly those evident at the confluence of the changes resulting from new museology, new public management and museums as hybrid organisational forms.

### **2.2 Museums as Organisations**

The study of museums as organisations, in particular how their role and purpose has evolved over the last few decades, has received little attention in public sector management literature. In addition, few museum studies or management publications have systematically analysed individual museums, or the factors contributing to the management context in which they now operate. While the museums' studies literature is under-theorised, a number of empirical studies have been published on the practice of museum management and administration (Griffin 1993; Fopp 1997; Byrnes 1999, Suchy 2006; Falk & Sheppard 2006). In the early 1990s, Griffin (1993) examined museums from

the perspective of categorising them as places defined by their functions, rather than their purposes, and the implications of this for museum management. As highly differentiated organisations, with staff undertaking a variety of specialised roles, and with an emphasis on the decentralisation of tasks, he argued that the management of museums needed to accommodate these varying requirements.

In comparison, Fopp (1997) analyses the history of management and the museum context. Outlining the various principles and practices of management ranging from scientific management and the systems approach to the situational approach, he offers possible models and provides alternative perspectives on ways museums could be managed. In a similar vein, Byrnes (1999) discusses the need for integrated strategic thinking in museum management, an understanding of business, finance and economics and the cultural and social environment in which museums operate. This offers only a broad and well-known outline of some of the factors influencing the management of museums today. There is little analysis of the implications of changing management practices for the evolving function of museums. Suchy (2006) argues for the emotional value of connecting and building community engagement as a museum management tenet, while Falk & Sheppard (2006) advocate an emphasis on knowledge-age business models, accounting for the interrelationship between internal and external factors, beginning with the consumer. Such contributions, while offering potential alternative models for museum management, do not reflect upon the implications of these models for changing management practices.

As this section of the literature illustrates, many of the studies on museum management tend to focus on process-focused guidelines, incorporating techniques and principles on how to improve the management of such organisations. Yet others concentrate on recommendations for professional conduct, strategic planning and management (Reussner 2003; Kovach 1989), marketing and public relations (Gilmore & Rentschler 2002), the challenges to museum management of commercialism and changing social values such as multiculturalism (Genoways & Ireland 2003), increasing entrepreneurial approaches to museum management with stakeholders and state governments (Burton 2003) and the need for leadership, staff development, succession planning and management training (Shestack 1978; Baldwin & Ackerson 2006). Much of this literature is published with an understanding of the current economic climate and the desire for museums to be responsive to the market. However, the factors, which have led to these changes and the

ramifications of these new practices on museum management, are poorly understood. The trend towards an increase in the number of publications on museum management as a whole reflects an increased concern with the professionalisation of museums. There has been acknowledgment of the low status attributed to management within the museums sector (Holmes & Hatton 2008). How circumstances have contributed to fundamental changes in the focus and structure of museums since the middle of last century, however, and consequently the development of new organisational structures and processes, has not been well researched. Most recently Griffin and Paroissien (2011) have provided a succinct overview of the changes occurring Australian museums since the 1970s, with an emphasis on the impact of national policies, how museums have responded to a rapidly changing society, information technology and governance, funding and management developments. Absent from this study, however, is analysis of Australian museums within the context of the public sector change and the evolution of museums as hybrid organisations.

This chapter provides an overview of the academic literature, government documents and archival material related to key themes influencing the changing role of Australian museums since the 1980s. The literature discussed and analysed here considers some of the principal historical, economic, political and theoretical factors that provide a contextual background to the evolving purpose of Australian museums in the current century. The Literature Review outlines, through historical, thematic and contextual sections, gaps identified in the literature in relation to this study and the key research questions. It similarly highlights emergent themes in relation to the concept that museums in Australia are undergoing organisational change as a result of these three conceptual, environmental and institutional forces.

The review begins by tracing the development of museums in Australia during the 19th century and literature in this field. It then focuses on a number of aspects of changing museum philosophy and museum practices that have gained significance in current museum management. Museums as part of the public sector are subsequently explored, as well as museums as hybrids organisations, professional bureaucracies and changing professional roles within these institutions. To conclude, this study is contextualised within the existing literature, research gaps identified and possible future directions for museums in Australia outlined.

### **2.3 Museums and the new museology**

Research on new museology and museum philosophy over the last 20 years or so suggests that there has been a fundamental shift in the notion of what a museum does, where its focus lies as an organisation, and how it operates within society. Weil (1989) contends that although collections and the care of objects lie at the heart of the museum enterprise, primary to museums today is their relationship with audiences. Ross (2004) similarly argues that museums have shifted to a more visitor-centred ethos, have become more community focused and representative in their programs and have done so in response to market forces and the economic redefinition of the public as consumers.

Alternatively, Carr (2003) argues that museums are increasingly public places intended for learners, spaces for reflection and intellectual engagement with artefacts and experiences. While it could be argued that cultural institutions have always been places for learning and understanding the world, the emphasis on accessibility and visitor learning in museums is a recent phenomenon. Museums serve to capture and explain human knowledge and experience through public access, and do so with varying degrees of success. From a philosophical perspective, Heine (2000) asserts the notion that museums have undergone a fundamental conceptual change, such that as organisations they no longer focus solely on collections, scholarship and the ordering of knowledge. Instead, she is critical of the increasing emphasis in museums towards accessibility and transitory experiences at the expense of their previous fundamental role. While there are common themes and consistencies in the arguments of these authors, although from varying perspectives, little attention has been paid to how a shifting emphasis towards learning, visitors and public access has affected museum management and the provision of services.

Espousing modern management methods which involve the consumer at the heart of the museum's focus (Mayrand 1985), new museology has led to major changes in museum practices. Others have fostered this view of the impact of new museology, arguing that it represents a shift towards attracting visitors who are less interested in aesthetic or intellectual experiences than in opportunities for consumption and interaction (van den Bosch 2005). Museums have moved away from being meritocratic institutions to ones focused on revisionist principles which influence visitors' political opinions (Munson 2000). This disregard for notions of originality and authenticity in favour of postmodernist

incoherence (Crimp 1980); the shift away from an active, culture-debating public to one that is passive, unenlightened and culture-consuming (Ward 1995), towards social and community concerns replacing the object as the focus in museums (Stevenson 1987) are also mentioned. Kimball (1997) has pointed out the transformation in museums where they align themselves with the entertainment and recreation industries while also espousing a pseudo political activism, which he declares to be ‘cappuccino radicalism’.

Similarly, Haacke (2004, p. 411) contends that museums are now in the ‘business of moulding and channelling consciousness’. Supporting this, Starn (2005, p. 71) argues that new museology is a ‘movement of criticism and reform incorporating new developments in the social and human sciences with the aim of revitalising techniques of display, exhibition and communication and ultimately, altering traditional relationships between the institution and the public’. While these studies question and critique the underpinnings of new museology and the changing approach to narratives associated with social and political interpretations of collections, they do not explore the impact of this on day-to-day management processes within museums. The complexity of managing new relationships with the public since the advent of new museology is acknowledged, yet the implications for internal operations within museums are not.

As much of this literature from the museum studies, cultural history and history fields does not explore management issues because of the humanities-based nature of the disciplines, studies in new museology which examine institutional change are infrequent. Among the exceptions are Stam (1993), who analyses the implications of new museology for both internal and external aspects of museum operations. Additionally, Harrison (1993) examines the rise of organisational change in museums, business practices, performance measures, greater accountability and social responsibility while commodifying museum ‘products’ since the 1980s. Alternatively Hewison (1991) places changing museum practices within the context of the growth of the heritage industry during the 1970s and 80s. He argues museums have exploited and profited from using ‘the past’ not as memory and cultural history, but as a resource for reassuring marketing.

As Busse (2008, p.189) states, over the last 20 years museums have attracted academic attention and have been ‘the subject of theorising as well as intense...public debates about their place in the contemporary world’. New museology has led to new forms of

interpretation, programming, and focus within museums, with a renewed commitment to social issues, communities, audiences and education. The changing nature of the relationship between museums and their visitors represents an important principle of new museology, one that continues to impact on museums.

#### **2.4 Museums and the new public management**

The analysis of museums as part of the public sector in Australia has received little attention in the literature. From the 1980s, an emphasis on the importance of greater efficiency and effectiveness within government heralded the beginning of new public management. Using models adapted from the private sector, new public management represented a 'clear practical and intellectual advance on the older sub-discipline of public administration' (Stewart 1997, p.2). Corbett (1996), in outlining the meaning of new public management, explores the cases for and against this new form of managerialism, its strengths and shortcomings. Gunn (1988), however, questions the value of making the public sector more business-like, and notes the diverse range of values, stakeholders and outcomes that need to be accommodated within public sector management. Zifcak (1994, p. 26) provides a comprehensive overview of the political and economic circumstances that precluded new public management when he states that 'The severity of the economic downturn which had begun in the late 1970s provided British and Australian governments with a very powerful incentive to rein in public expenditure and maximise public sector productivity...economic thinkers advocated market solutions to national economic problems'. The shifting emphasis towards public sector productivity has had a marked effect on Australian museums over the last few decades, particularly on institutional culture and management.

The broader process of public sector reform associated with new public management and its impact upon internal processes is examined by Bradley & Parker (2001) in relation to organisational culture. Hughes (1998) notes that new public management represented a new managerial concept, one in which changes to accountability, external relations, internal systems, and the government itself dominated. As Considine (1994) states, the role of the public sector has changed, shifting attention from operations to strategy. In addition, Maor (1999) discusses organisational changes as a result of new public

management, with its vocabulary accentuating responsiveness to customers, performance and decentralisation. Attempting to rectify weaknesses in public sector management, James (1997) notes that new public management has occurred as a consequence of powerful financial and global trends, the globalisation of capital markets and commerce and the changing role of governments and bureaucracies. As a result, the new management ideology has been embraced by the Australian public sector, with clear, goal-driven priorities dominating organisational purpose. The implications of this for institutions such as museums remain under-explored in the published literature.

## **2.5 Museums as hybrids**

The convergence of new public management and new museology signalled a fundamental modification to the organisational structure, processes and rationale of many museums. The ‘public good’ of museums has increasingly expected to become a measurable commodity under new public management and cultural activities have become ‘products’. In summarising this, Belfiore (2003, p. 5) noted that with ‘cultural bureaucracies in the 1980s...the notion of ‘subsidy’ as welfare was no longer regarded as politically correct and the semantics of business and managerialism were introduced’. Despite this, the effects of new public management on the cultural sector are seldom examined in the public sector management literature. It is more frequently analysed, however, in the literature relating to museums as not-for-profit organisations.

While for the purpose of this study, museums can be defined as hybrids, they do share elements that make them similar to ‘pure’ government, the third sector and not-for-profit organisations. In the management of museums, organisational strategies are often drawn from a variety of sources, including the private, public, not-for-profit and Third sectors. However, the Australian museum sector developed and operates differently from those in the United States, Europe and Great Britain. In Great Britain, contemporary museums have become strongly tied to the government-led promotion of a ‘third sector’, a joint application of policy and practice, linking social motivations, outcomes and profit. As Westall (2009:1) states ‘The current conceptualisation of the third sector in the UK is informed partly by the US-influenced non-profit space or ‘sector’...on organisations that respond to market and government failure. The ‘third sector’ is therefore implicitly

positioned in opposition to the private and public sectors'. With museums more closely linked to notions of the 'social' sector in Great Britain, this represents a different concept of the current role and purpose of museums to those in Australia.

The location of museums along the public-private sector continuum in the United States again differs from those in Australia. Museums in the United States are more firmly located in the not-for-profit sector (individually initiated, foundation funded and supported by private benefactors, philanthropy and endowments), than those in Australia. Funded by either local, state or Commonwealth governments, museums in Australia are therefore part of the public sector. As Lehman (2008:24) notes, the development of the museum sector in Australia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by independent organisations being established, such that 'by the beginning of the twentieth century each of the six Australian colonies had its own museum system'. Despite this, museums in Australia today continue to rely on the funding and policy direction from their respective level of government as part of the public sector, with a growing emphasis on obtaining external sources of revenue, grants and funds raised through commercial enterprise.

The trend towards 'marketisation', changes in public sector management and the need for 'fee for service' programs has been examined in relation to specific organisations, but not museums. Hughes (1998) provides a comprehensive overview of changes in the public sector in Australia since the early 1980s, new managerial approaches and a shift towards client focus. Considine (1994) and Stewart (2002) examine and define public policy and public policy making, providing a broad overview of the impact of new management ideologies on public organisations.

Although they are part of the public sector, museums are often referred to as not-for-profit or more frequently hybrid organisations. Neither purely private enterprise nor governmental, the not-for-profit sector is growing rapidly. However, the term 'not-for-profit' is more applicable to the management of museum in the United States than those in Australia, which largely rely on government funding. In the 1970s, a small number of authors in the United States began to explore museums under the guise of not-for-profit organisations. Sukel (1978) provided an early analysis noting that 'artistic-cultural' organisations had received little academic attention in either the social sciences or public administration field. Due to the essential character, complexity and often intangible goals

of museums, he noted that they were ‘a hybrid phenomenon for which existing models in the private or public sector may not be appropriate’ (Sukel 1978, p. 348). Similarly, Newman and Wallender (1978) questioned the popular belief that business management concepts could be applied to not-for-profit organisations, such as museums.

More recently, Weisbrod (1997) has contended that not-for-profit organisations mostly operate in the service sector, that their growth has seen them expand and compete with private enterprise and that this has policy implications for the future of the not-for-profit sector. In addition, Brooks (2005) argues that not-for-profit organisations provide goods and services for which there is demand, but no supply, from either the public or private sectors. Schuster (1998) suggests that organisational restructuring of institutions in the cultural sector has created tensions between the public and private sectors, resulting in the development of hybrid organisations, which combine functions from both. Given this blurring of possible definitions for the ways in which contemporary museums in Australia operate - as part of the public sector, but also drawing on elements of the private sector and not-for-profit sector- for the purpose of this study, it can be argued that museums can be best defined as operating as hybrids.

A number of authors have begun to explore the characteristics that constitute a hybrid organisation. Thomasson (2009) argues that hybrids exist in the range between government agencies and commercial firms. These organisational types have emerged in the wake of changes to the public sector under new public management. The mixed interests encompassed by hybrid organisations- the complexity of relationships between their stakeholders, governance and the organisation- result in an ambiguity of purpose and responsibility that impacts on their management.

Despite offering ways to characterise and understand the make-up of these new organisations, Thomasson does not explore the types of organisations which can be categorised as hybrids, providing little insight into the nature of contemporary museums. Brown, Waterhouse and Flynn (2003) seek to determine whether a hybrid model delivers more favourable outcomes in the public sector, in terms of organisational and cultural change, than older models. In attempting to classify organisational types, Emmert and Crow (1988) examine the role of publicness, administration, funding patterns, governmental influence and goals as a way of distinguishing hybrid organisations.

Although this provides a useful research framework to analyse what constitutes a hybrid, it does not explore how being a hybrid impacts on day-to-day organisational processes and management, which would be applicable to museums.

Lerntz (1996) assesses the structure of hybrids and the decentralising of decision making in these organisations. However, he does not explore examples of public sector organisations that operate as hybrids. Examining management in hybrids, Joldersma and Winter (2002, p. 98) conclude that it is a dynamic process in which the organisations are subject to both the constraints of a governing body and a competitive environment. Given this, 'strategic management in hybrid organisations seems to be the result of the struggle for balancing environmental determinism and strategic choice'. This provides insights into the complex environmental and organisational context in which hybrids operate. It is, however, another way in which to define or classify hybrids, rather than exploring the nature of organisations, such as museums, which operate in this manner. In contrast, Scott (2006) suggests that even though museums may operate as not-for-profit or hybrid organisations, policy directions at government level have moved the emphasis in museums away from intrinsic worth towards the potential contribution of these organisations to wider social and economic goals. Given this, the way in which museums in Australia today operate can best be thought of as hybrids. They draw on elements from the management of the public sector of which they are a part, some tenants of the US-style not-for-profit sector, particularly an increasing emphasis on obtaining revenue from non-government sources and philanthropy and most recently the United Kingdom's embrace of museums as part of the Third Sector; social enterprises that deliver public services for empowerment and economic development. This, combined with measures for commercial development, is the current focus of museum management in Australia.

The increased commercialisation of the not-for-profit sector, the implications of this for organisations such as museums, their resource structures and policies, are explored by Weisbrod (1998), Tuckman and Chang (1987) and Dart (2004). More generally, Anheier (2005) discusses the theory and management of not-for-profit organisations, while DiMaggio (1987) analyses the intersection between the not-for-profit sector, the market, and public choice models. In a similar vein, Rainey (2003, p. 59) argues that public organisations can no longer be viewed as a distinct category, with the public and private sectors overlapping and interrelating in recent years.

Despite these publications on the nature of public and private sector organisations, DiMaggio (1987, p. 444) notes that ‘we lack powerful theories about the increasingly important phenomena of hybrid organisations, which contain elements of at least two organisational forms’. The importance of the centrality of values and ethics in understanding the nature of organisational types that do not fit comfortably into either public or private definitions is receiving attention in the hybrid literature. As Rothschild & Milofsky note (2006, p.138) hybrids are often ‘scrutinized by the public and regulated by government or institutional associations...as a result they may adapt to fit conventionally accepted images of proper management style and organizational form’. How museums in particular operate as hybrids under these auspices has received little attention.

The issue of the proper management of not-for-profit organisations and hybrids, including museums, is often linked to notions of accountability and governance. Rentschler & Potter (1996) argue that concerns about accountability in cultural organisations need to take into consideration the relevance of organisational mission and distinctiveness, rather than a narrow emphasis on financial accountability. In a similar vein, Woodward & Marshall (2004) suggest that accountability to a broad range of stakeholders and the stakeholder theory of governance are important considerations in the management of not-for-profit organisations. Standards of accountability and the lack of clarity surrounding public-serving organisations is also analysed by Baulderstone (2007). Despite this, there are few studies of cultural organisations, such as museums, within not-for-profit studies or in the hybrid literature.

In Australia, museums are just one of many institutional types that exist as government organisations with some for profit aspects. Lyons (2001, p.60) explores the types of organisations that constitute the not-for-profit and third sector in greater detail, yet does not specifically focus on museums. Many museums combine buildings owned and maintained by state or local governments, staff employed as public servants by state governments and collections sometimes owned by charitable trusts. They are hybrids bringing together different forms of ownership, management, and a combination of commercial and public sector organisational models. The nature of museums as hybrid organisations is rarely analysed in the published literature on Australian museum management. However, research has increasingly focused on statutory authorities, the

governance of museums and the nature of their Boards, providing insight into the changing management of these institutions.

The interaction between these sets of literature, and the gaps identified, form the basis of the enquiry for this study. Against this interdisciplinary framework- the confluence of new museology, new public management and museums as hybrids- a number of themes in the history and development of Australian museums, particularly those related to organisational and management changes since the 1980s, are explored further in the Literature Review. These particular themes have been selected as they best reflect a number of prominent internal and external factors influencing the change roles and purposes of Australian museums over the last few decades. A number of themes, including the history of museums as organisations, their governance, broader relations with the State and cultural policy are examined first. The changing nature of and interaction between museums, audiences, technology and education are then examined within the literature as an important theme. The evolving role of museums is further discussed in the literature through an exploration of museums as professional bureaucracies, new staff roles and the marketing of these organisations. Together, these areas of the literature invite us to examine Australian museums through a variety of lenses, drawing out the research questions and emergent areas for further analysis in the subsequent chapters.

## ***2.6 The development of museums in Australia - colonial to contemporary***

As part of the development of museums in Australia during the early 19th century, there has been relatively little published on the organisational structures of early museums and their management. Early museums in Australia reflected museum ideals transplanted from Great Britain. They were seen as keepers of culture, places for the ordering of scientific knowledge, classification and collecting. In many ways, the early museums were a product of ‘Renaissance humanism, 18th century Enlightenment and 19th century democracy’ (Dalibard 1986, p.2) and focused intensely on the value of collections. The dichotomy between education and entertainment that still persists today in museums became established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. By the end of that century, museums in Australia had become instruments of education and moral guidance. While within the literature there are explorations of the transplantation of British ideas in early Australian museums

(Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983) and of the emergence of museums within the severe limitations of colonial life (van Leeuwen 1995), many of these studies concentrate on the nature of the collections and the scientific underpinnings of 19th century collecting (Gore 2001).

Little is written about the organisational structure of early Australian museums, how they were funded and how they operated as institutions. However, they were organisations in which the ethos centred on notions of authority, authenticity and classification, presiding over the ordering of scientific and cultural knowledge. Museums appealed to a small, select audience and colonial governments provided small sums for their upkeep and staff. Despite this, ‘virtually no money was available to supply the museums...their collections depended on the ad hoc donations of local naturalists, colonial officers and expedition leaders’ (Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983, p. 4). During the early 19th century, museums believed that their educational mission was to serve the ‘needs of industry, history and scientific enquiry, as well as to provide enculturation and aesthetic appreciation’ (Williams 2001, p. 317). By mid-century, the role of museums in Australia began to change. They became a means of providing ‘intellectual and moral culture to the working classes’ (Gore 2001, p. 40), while also places of ‘material or intellectual consumption’ (Rigg 1994, p. 192). At this time museum collections were included in inter-colonial and international displays, highlighting Australia participation in world exhibitions.

Participation in these displays provided a stimulus for the evolving role of museums and they became prominent public institutions. A number of studies published on 19th century Australian museums, such as the Museum of Victoria, founded in 1854 (Rasmussen 2001) and the Australian Museum, Sydney, established in 1827 (Strahan 1979), focus on the beginning and growth of the collections, the institution, its context within the city and key individuals such as Directors and curators. As MacDonald notes (1990, p. 225), the study of museums until the 1980s, on the whole, ‘tended to be regarded as a rather specialised and even esoteric pursuit’. Given this, few studies of Australian museums established during the 19th century consider or incorporate perspectives on the development of the organisation in terms of its management or as part of the public sector. By the late 19th century, Australian museums had become venues of broad educational appeal. In addition to strong financial commitments from the states, museums experienced a surge in growth and funding. Increased collecting, research and scholarship, the provision of public lectures and the physical expansions of buildings, represented a high point in the development of

Australian museums. For much of the following century, museums in Australia continued to focus on displaying and collecting natural science and science specimens.

It was not until the 1940s that museums began to reveal a growing internationalist perspective. An interest in aspects of Australian history and identity became evident with the opening of the Australian War Memorial in 1941. As a number of authors have observed, there was little criticism of museum practices or museological theory before the 1980s (Duclos 1994). The main focus in museums was the 'past' dominated by the 'moral as well as...aesthetic authority' of Modernism (Crimp 1980, Krug 1997). There was little concern for the cultural, social and political implications of display and exhibition (Neill 2004). Welsh (2005, p. 108) maintains that 'museums have become the institutions that claim rights to manage materiality that has acquired significance by association with time, aesthetics, personality, community or discovery... this acquired significance can also have association with colonialism, domination or plunder...[which] makes the position of museums particularly charged'. While this is a contemporary concern, earlier perspectives on Australian museums were often concerned with more pragmatic issues.

In 1933 the American Carnegie Corporation undertook an inquiry into the types of museums in Australian - their staffing, the nature of their collections and funding by state and federal governments. This represented the first significant international study into the development of museums in Australia. It explored not only the nature of the collections, but their economic situation as well: 'probably in no other country in the world is there such an overwhelming proportion of government museums and probably in no other country in the world do cities do so little' (Markham & Richards 1933, p.13). It was not until the 1980s and 1990s, through a series of federal government papers and reports, that the economics of museums in Australia and the 'value' of their role and collections was again highlighted. Within the context of material culture and heritage collections, fiscal concerns and legislation, the discussion papers *What Price Heritage? The Museums Review* and *The Measurement of Museum Performance* (1989), *What Value Heritage? A Perspective on the Museums Review and the Performance of Museums* (1990) and *The Role of the Commonwealth in Australia's Cultural Development: A Discussion Paper* (1992) represented the beginnings of the formulation of explicit policy goals relating to the arts, museums and culture in Australia. In addition, museums introduced policies to guide their dealings with indigenous people, such as *Previous Possessions, New*

*Obligations*, released in two stages in 1993. By the 1990s the Cultural Ministers Council (CMC), as part of the Commonwealth government's Arts portfolio, established the Heritage Collections Council (HCC) which 'developed specific programs to build a national database for heritage items and a national collection conservation program' (Griffin and Paroissien 2011, p.5). Most recently the Collections Council of Australia (CCA) was established at federal government level to develop long term strategies to address issues facing museum collections. However, the CCA ceased to be funded from 2009 and as a result 'Australia, along with Canada, remains one of the few developed nations with no nation body concerned with a national policy on museums' (Griffin and Paroissien 2011, p.5). Given this, broad national policies for Australia's museums and cultural sector remain elusive and their management and future roles a topic that is infrequently discussed.

While in the past much museum literature focused on the development of individual institutions, their growth and collections, this has gradually changed to recognise the broader social and economic significance of museums. Despite this, few studies centre on the management of museums and the impact of management changes on the mission of museums in the contemporary climate. While the changing purpose of museums is of contemporary concern, the antecedents of this began after the Second World War. The war impacted on and restricted the programs that could be provided by individual Australian museums. After this period of privation, there was a surge of interest in Australian heritage and history. Due to modernisation after the war, and the subsequent boom in the 1950s and 60s, there developed a 'new interest in the past, in the sense that attitudes to it became nostalgic and sentimental' (Gore 2001, p. 44). Additionally, it has been noted that Australian cultural life underwent 'something of a renaissance' in the period following World War II, with the 'federal government accepting a limited role in the funding of the arts. Very little, though, changed in the museum sector, particularly the way museums viewed their role in society' (Lehman 2008, pp.27-28). A proliferation of local and regional history museums sprang up in Australia at this time. Simultaneously, an extension of what constituted a museum, both physically and conceptually, began to emerge by the late 1960s.

New museum forms reflected the burgeoning interest in social history, folk history and broader community groups. While Bennett (1988, p. 63) explores the change in museum

focus towards displaying ‘artefacts relating to the daily lives, customs, rituals and traditions of non-elite social strata’, few studies of museums of this era look at changing notions of museum management within the new social and political context in which museums began to operate. These limitations made the study of changing museum management practices and an analysis of factors impacting on the evolving role of museums a primary focus of this research.

In 1975 the Piggott Report highlighted the need for preservation and documentation of museum and heritage collections. This report, the outcome of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, headed by P.H.Piggott, was undertaken between April 1974 and November 1975. The Piggott Report was also a ‘catalyst for the reassessment of the role and construction of history in Australian museums’ (Walliss, p.105) highlighting the separation of indigenous and European history and the need for a reassessment and reinterpretation of this in Australian museum policies and displays. The Report revealed that ‘over 1000 institutions called themselves museums, many of which had emerged in the preceding 15 years’ (Foster 2004). The Committee of Inquiry on Museums and Collections that produced the Piggott Report, in announcing the committee noted that until the 1970s ‘the development of museums and collection had been piecemeal and valuable collections were at great risk’ (Conde 2011). The Committee of Inquiry’s terms which recommended: improving collection and conservation facilities for national material; ensuring effective co-ordination of the Australian Government’s activities in the museums field; the development of new institutions and developments and longer term measures in the field of museums and collections, with particular attention to the Australian government’s role in relation to state, local government and institutional authorities (Conde 2011) were largely not achieved.

However, in addition to recommending regular funding and research on collections, the Piggott Report became a catalyst for current directions in Australian museums. Subsequently, the new museology emerged worldwide in the 1980s. In many ways it represented an analysis of, and change in, the moral and political aspects of museum practice (Lindauer 2003), new debates about the status, value, interpretation and meaning of objects (Witcomb 1997), improvements in the accessibility of museums through education, and shifting notions of curatorial and professional roles (Burlington 1989, p. 683). As the majority of publications on new museology critique changes brought about in

museum philosophy and programs, few of these analyse the impact of new museology on museum management theory and practice. However, Stam (2005) provides a systematic explanation of the institutional impact of changing management practices in light of the new museology, exploring new approaches to exhibitions, audiences, staffing, collections and organisational strategies.

## **2.7 Museums, education and life-long learning**

Closely associated with the rise of museums as places of learning has been a huge increase in the literature published on this theme. Although this represents one of the most important and influential trends in museum studies literature, it is rarely presented from the perspective of how an increased emphasis on learning in museums affects the practice of management. In addition, the literature seldom explores how museums are increasingly being expected to fulfil governmental, social, and economic agendas beyond a cultural or aesthetic experience. As Schubert (2000, p. 74) notes, since the 1980s, ‘...museums now have a much clearer idea of who their visitors are, know their gender, race and creed as well as their educational and social backgrounds. They can differentiate between various audience segments’ educational standards, needs and expectations’. The political and economic pressures on museums over the last few decades have led to a more ‘visitor centred ethos’ (Ross 2004), one in which greater accessibility and representations of multicultural society and diversity have become hallmarks of ‘successful’ museums. While this new discourse has made museums more visitor-centred, little research has been undertaken on the impact of these changes on the museum’s roles and, as a result, changing professional and organisational identities within these institutions.

The increased emphasis on education and learning in museums has taken place within the changing context of museums, leisure, and the commodification of learning. Roberts (1997) examines the changing status of learning, arguing that it is a reflection of the increasing number and power of educators within museums. This is aligned with growing professionalisation, accountability and educational reform, shifting museum programming away from operations such as collection, research and display, towards learning. Moreover, Roberts suggests that this has led to museums becoming less concerned with knowledge and classification of objects than with narratives. While acknowledging the

changing role of museums as a result of this new emphasis, she does not examine the effects this has on the structures and practices of museums and their management. In contrast, Falk and Dierking (2000) argue that learning in museums has become necessary to the success and livelihood of these organisations today and the main reason why people visit museums. They place this increased emphasis on learning in museums within the blurring of boundaries between education and entertainment. Pitman (1999) similarly states that the educational mission is paramount to museums and has resulted in them being viewed as significant community assets.

The alignment of museum learning with larger non-museum agendas is examined by Illeris (2006). Describing the rise of lifelong learning as a museum goal, she contends that it has become central to a museum's existence, and the links between lifelong learning and the individual museum visitor are intertwined, due to larger political and economic aspirations. Using Nordic countries as examples, Illeris describes an increasing expectation that museum visitors are motivated in relation to their own learning, and are involved in a never-ending developmental process that constitutes a form of social engineering, reflective of the changing needs of the market. She does not draw upon any empirical data to support her argument, nor cite any specific examples of museums where this agenda is evident. Her argument is thought-provoking and reflects the centrality of, and fixation with, audiences in much of the current museum literature.

The history of the rise of education in museums, of education as a museum function, and changing definitions of what constitutes education and learning in museums are systematically examined by Hein (1998). Weil (1990) proposes that museum 'excellence' is determined more by the quality of its educational programs, its purpose and value of its collections, rather than its management. Many of the changes in museums since the 1980s centre on the provision of new forms of learning.

Both formal and informal education within museums is paramount. Black (2005, p. 5) explores the concept of the museum as a learning environment, arguing that this is 'currently at the top of the political agenda for museums across Western society'. Despite there being a number of consistencies in this literature related to the importance placed on education in museums as a measurement of the success of the institution, there is little discussion of the impact of this single emphasis in relation to the future purpose and

management of museums, other than in the publications of Hooper- Greenhill (2007, 1994, 1992).

Other research on the growing prominence of learning in museums attests that it is a product of larger dilemmas in museums between curatorial and educational forms of communication, and a blurring of distinctions between learning and entertainment. In this regard, Edwards (1987) presents a philosophical viewpoint, contending that the use of museum collections for learning risks distorting the public's understanding of the core function of museums which is to collect, research and preserve objects. Others, such as Dexter Lord (2007) attest that museums are powerful public spaces for ideas and communication and the link between the creative economy, civil society and lifelong learning. Increasing the role of education and learning which in turn invites a wider audience is seen as a way to build the new, community focused museum (Maximea 2007, p. 20). Bloom & Mintz (1992) argue that the contemporary importance of informal learning has led to a greater emphasis on the broad educational significance of museum visits. Although a number of authors acknowledge the changing focus within museums towards learning, few analyse the organisational and managerial changes brought about by this shift towards the primacy of an educational experience.

Despite recognition of the increasing educational mission in museums, there is little discussion about the growing authority and ascendancy of educators within museums. The exceptions are Roberts (1997) and White (1992, p.51) who argue that the idea of museum education is amorphous and unclear, while 'museum educators lack a sufficient intellectual base and theoretical foundation ... [they] have little or no technical training in research or evaluation methods relevant to their professional tasks'. In contrast, Heumann Gurian (2007, p. 23) suggests that learning in museums is self-directed and self-paced, and that museums in the future may become more conceptual; 'a visual non-judgemental repository in which many intellectual directions are possible'. While associations between the role of museums and education continue to flourish, questions have arisen about the nature of the learning that occurs there. This is evident in Barr (2005, p.100) where it is argued that museums have increasingly come to be defined by ideas of 'access' and 'education', but this may mean that 'intellectual life has been undermined by the pursuit of inclusion for its own sake...museums... adopt policies that "flatter" students and visitors'. Education and life-long learning are now entrenched concepts in the mission of most

museums and are perceived to be essential to the development of both the individual and the society to which they belong.

The focus on education in museums is associated with the post-Second World War professionalisation of museum practice that accompanied the major boom in museum building and expansion at this time (Message 2007). Today, however, education and outreach, in the form of public programs, has shifted again towards notions of social inclusion. Positioning museums as agents of social change is an emerging role for these institutions. It is one that Sandell (2003, p.45) argues positions museums as ‘agents of social reform, echoing interpretations of nineteenth century museum’s roles as civilising instruments of the state’. Regardless of this possible role for contemporary museums, there is insufficient analysis of the implications of these changes for the management of museums. This represents a limitation not only in our current understanding of the roles of museums in society, but how museums operate as organisations.

## **2.8 Museums, marketing & cultural tourism**

The pronounced concern with learning in museums and provision of educational experiences for visitors has coincided with an increase in the marketing of these institutions. The increase in marketing in many ways reflects not only competitive pressure on cultural organisations to extend their audience reach and diversity, but the need for more strategy and leadership in relation to positioning museums within cultural tourism and leisure markets. From the 1980s onwards, there has been recognition of the importance and applicability of marketing to organisations such as museums. Lehman (2008, p.28) argues that the increasing profile of the marketing profession from as early as the 1960s began to impact on the way in which museums viewed visitors. Gilmore and Rentschler (2002) assert that more recently the change from a custodial emphasis to a marketing emphasis has impacted on the way museums are managed and has required a more entrepreneurial approach to service provision. Subsequently, Rentschler (2007) questions the effects of an ongoing rational economic approach to museum marketing, and how it may dilute the impact of a museum’s educational purpose.

Museums now compete in a marketplace for the leisure and tourism dollar and are

diversifying their revenue sources by chasing new audiences, developing new products and building new venues. Most recently Rentschler and Hede (2007, p.16) explore this, suggesting that 'In tandem with this shift, [there] has been increased focus on identifying the nature of the relationship between the visitor, the museum and the market'. Marketing used to promote an 'entertainment experience' has become a deliberate strategy which museums may use to build audiences (Lockstone 2007) and the reliance on marketing to attract audiences, moving them from the periphery to the centre of museum practice, has also been noted by Lehman (2008). Similarly, Tobelem (1997) attributes the rise in the importance of marketing by museums to the competitive environment into which a range of cultural institutions, including museums, have been propelled. Elements of this are echoed in Goulding (1999), who observes that the rise in marketing has coincided with the popularisation of heritage and the shift in museums from the realm of high culture to mass culture. Rowley (1999, p.306) continues this theme with an analysis of measuring customer experience in museums from the marketing perspective, noting that today visitors to museums 'seek a total experience that may embrace leisure and recreation, culture, education, space and social interaction'. The complex relationship between the visitor, museum and market is further scrutinised by Toepler and Dewees (2005, p.132) who conclude that 'while policy makers embrace privatization as a mantra for injecting management efficiency and new private revenues into public institutions, cultural managers are haunted by the spectre of commercialization'. Concerns about the impact of marketing on museums are, however, infrequently explored in the literature in terms of organisational change, new management processes and the evolving role of museums.

Burton and Scott (2007) observe that the redefinition of museums' relationships with the public and the integration of principles of customer service into the public service in the 1990s, have had a significant impact on the way museums market themselves. Falk and Sheppard (2006) propose a new 'knowledge age business model' for museums in order for them to compete for audiences and successfully promote themselves. In their research, Yorke and Jones (1984) suggest that marketing in museums is an important aspect of modern management techniques, yet question whether the promotion of public museum services can result in excessive demand which cannot be met from existing resources, or future institutional developments. In a similar vein, Sargeant (2005) states that knowledge in the field of marketing in the not-for-profit sector is still in its infancy, that the tools and techniques used in commercial marketing cannot be readily applied in the not-for-profit

sector and that sensitivity needs to be used in marketing museums in order to ‘preserve the essence of what is being marketed’. While these authors provide a comprehensive overview of the many external factors that have influenced the rise of museum marketing and some of the more problematic issues surrounding the application of marketing principles in museums, they do not analyse the impact of marketing on museum management practices.

In addition to the marketing of museums, the development and advancement of museum brands has begun. Caldwell and Coshall (2002) provide a useful contribution to the emerging literature on the branding of cultural institutions, and how the assessment of the brand strength of cultural institutions represents a new concern for museum marketing. Increasingly, museums are recognising the need for creative marketing strategies at a time of decreasing resources coupled with increased competition for people’s leisure time (McNichol 2005). Within this context, the museum ‘brand’ becomes its personality and ‘is a combination of the organisation’s products, services, and perceived attributes’ (McNichol 2005, p. 243).

Museums are also increasingly required to become more businesslike in their marketing, drawing on private sector strategies and processes (Kotler & Kotler 1998). Despite this emphasis on the need to develop marketing plans, promote museums through marketing strategies and cultivate a brand that highlights the ‘product’, much of this literature does not question the impact of marketing and branding on the changing aspirations of museums. Further, there has been little exploration of the organisational and procedural changes in museums as a result of this shift in emphasis towards a marketing focus.

The increased prominence of marketing and branding of museums has coincided with a rise in cultural tourism. With a growing emphasis on the educational, experiential and the ‘authentic’, museums provide visitors with ways to learn about the past and contemporary cultural life. In defining cultural tourism, Douglas, Douglas and Derrett (2001, p. 116) note that it provides audiences with the ‘opportunity to sample remnants, exemplars, replicas of facsimiles of cultural life-past or present. This may occur in cultural precincts, theme parks, heritage sites or centres, museums, galleries ...or even ordinary street life’.

Cultural tourism offers a new way of looking at museums and a new set of attractions. While cultural tourism and its market potential have been recognised in Australia since the 1990s (Douglas, Douglas and Derrett 2001), only recently have museums become aware of the increased impact of tourism on their organisations and visitor market. Capstick (1985) discusses the rise of cultural tourism as necessitating a much needed management change in museums, yet also acknowledges that while tourism is susceptible to fluctuations, conservation, research and educational programs should remain at the forefront of a museum's rationale. Harrison (1999) similarly questions the museum's ability to draw in wider tourist audiences, the burden this places on institutional infrastructures, and the threat to traditional tasks such as preservation and curatorship. The growing importance of museums as cultural attractions, the 'economization of culture', closer links between cultural and economic agendas and consumption, heritage and tourism are reviewed by Richards (1996), Herreman (1998) and Tufts and Milne (1999).

Concurrent with the rise of cultural tourism and its associated economic values is the burgeoning research on museums as part of the 'leisure' industry. While Stephen (2001) argues that the facilitation of 'leisure' within museums has helped to enlarge their civic and recreational value within contemporary society, others such as Stebbins (1996) contend that cultural tourism represents a search for deep intellectual, cultural, emotional and psychological experiences. With such an emphasis on the personal or public value of this new form of tourism to museums and their visitors, there is a lack of understanding or exploration of the impact of cultural tourism on museums, their management processes and evolving institutional functions.

The nexus between cultural tourism, income generation and increased visitor attendance is advanced by Silberberg (1995). Staiff (2003, p.153) continues this notion, stating that tourism has become an economic necessity for museums, yet he questions the consequences of this and the concern that the 'museum world and the heritage industry [is] submitting to the dictates of an uncritical consumer-driven market orientated tourism'. Similarly, Prentice (2001) declares that museums today are immersed in the wider commodification of culture and that this represents a major change in demand for the kinds of experiences museums can offer. Granting this, few of the cultural tourism studies that include museums analyse the changes in management practice brought about by this shift. Cultural tourism, along with marketing and branding and, most recently,

technological innovations, have had a significant impact on the new roles undertaken by museums. The ramifications of these changes for the evolving roles and purposes of museums in Australia today remain under-researched in the majority of the literature.

## **2.9 Museums-information, access & technology**

As well as an increased emphasis on marketing, there are a number of other factors which have recently contributed to redefining museums and their role. One of the most significant of these is the use of technologies in museums. Not only has the use of computer technologies provided systems for exhibition and collection management, but it has also revolutionised public information provision and access in museums. The uptake of technologies by museums has occurred within a broader social and economic context. The use of technologies in this context is altering their everyday practices, creating new relationships with audiences and changing perceptions about museums.

Witcomb (1997) argues that the status and primacy of objects in museums has been challenged by the inclusion of audio-visual technologies and interactive computer programs and this, in turn, has resulted in a questioning of the concepts of authenticity and originality in relation to museums' claims to knowledge. Rowland and Rojas (2006) propose a more positive and vital role for technology in museums. Despite perceptions that the role of technology in museums is thought to be minimal, they contend that technologies make possible many of the activities with which museums are now identified and are a precondition for the museums' legitimacy. In this regard, McKeown (2003) similarly argues that cyberspace and the Internet offer new possibilities for museums in terms of access, allowing them to move beyond the limitations of physical space and three-dimensional objects. Knell (2003) further endorses this view, but argues that museums are not exempt from the current 'information age' and that technology alters their everyday practices and position within society.

The new practice of using technologies, while offering the possibility of improving services and generating income, challenges public perceptions of museums. Both Taylor and Ryan (1995) and Dawson (2002) note the potential for the public, rather than curatorial staff, to create new relationships and connections between museum objects

when they have a presence on the Internet. Ferren (1997) questions what is being communicated through the World Wide Web, yet argues that technology use is linked to the future of museums. The opportunities presented by digital technologies also challenge the nature of what defines a museum according to Mintz (1997). This is supported by Sumption (2006, p. 26) who comments on museums' willingness to embrace new technologies leading to opportunities for learning, marketing, and scholarly outreach, such that 'museums find themselves at the confluence of ...two digital revolutions affecting interpretive practice both inside and outside their walls'. Maier (1999), Mortensen (1995) and Dawson (2002) investigate the long-term implications of the use of new technologies in museums, the potential for new forms of information dissemination, and their economic and educational potential.

Much of the museum-orientated literature today is primarily focused on technologies related to information storage and retrieval practices, electronic classification and the use and development of databases. As a result, few studies analyse the effects of technological integration into the organisational context of museums and changes in management practices. Exceptions to this are Peacock (2008) who analyses the impact of new technologies on the organisational structure of museums, internal processes and knowledge management. Parry (2007) explores the ways in which technologies have resulted in a pronounced shift in the values and mission of many museums. These authors all note the challenges which technologies have created in relation to defining a museum's role and the potential for electronic information services in museums. However, all of them discuss technology from the perspective of it being a beneficial tool, rather than how it is integrated into museum structures.

While touching on the wider social and economic context for the emerging use of new technologies in museums, many authors do not elaborate on who is driving this uptake – is it being driven internally by museums or externally by public demand? This is especially relevant to the current uptake by museums of social media. This is further challenging the 'authority' of knowledge held by museums and the means of communicating this to the community. Kelly and Ellis (2007) articulate the benefits of Web 2.0 for museums and its capacity to allow members of the public to share content, comment, collaborate and add information on-line. However Russo, Watkins, Kelly & Chan (2006) and Greenfield (2008) see Web 2.0 engendering debate surrounding quality, accuracy, authority and 'user

generated content' within cultural institutions. While museums have previously built their organisational procedures and processes around their core functions of collections and display, the relationship between the museum, its collections and the public changes in the on-line world (Middleton 2007). While museums seek to increasingly mediate with their communities through technology, promising to transform our capacity to interact with the museum experience, this potential is yet to be realised (Shahani, Nikonanou & Economou 2008). The way museums are responding to changes at a program and organisational level, as a result of new technologies and Web 2.0, continues to evolve. The ramifications of the extensive and increasing use of technology in museums, in relation to their management, has not yet been analysed in any depth.

### ***2.10 Museums, cultural policy, the State and architecture***

Museums are often compared to other 'service industries' such as universities and hospitals. Increasingly, however, they are being aligned with the 'cultural industries'. Throsby (2006) explores the history of cultural policy in Australia, the development of 'cultural industries' and comments on the narrowness of Australian cultural policy in comparison to the role that it plays in national and international affairs in Europe. Ginsburgh and Throsby (2006) similarly examine the 'creative industries' in relation to the 'new economy' and their importance in relation to sustaining and expanding this economy.

Despite this, little specific research has been undertaken on museums in Australia in relation to cultural policy. Battersby (1980) examines the development of cultural policy in Australia from a historical perspective, suggesting that it was not until post-Second World War that social, economic and political factors contributed to greater financial support for a variety of cultural forms. Research in Australian cultural policy has looked at the shifting definition of what constitutes culture, and how this is becoming an important sector in the Australian economy. Bennett and Carter (2001) argue that culture is no longer understood solely as a private good, but as a public good of national economic and social significance. Berenson (2005) and Caust (2003) concur with this view, but question culture being relegated to a commodity (an aspect of national wealth creation) and the impact this has had on the practice of artists and cultural institutions. Craik (1997, 2007)

has explored cultural policy in Australia in relation to case studies and institutional impact, cultural policy and tourism and the historical phases of cultural policy in Australia.

The sentiments expressed about the role of cultural policy in Australia are mirrored internationally by Fisher and Fox (2001, p. 33). They note that there is confusion over the consumption of culture in Europe, a failure of 'the cultural sector's inability to convincingly measure its real impact'. It can also be argued that the growing interest in cultural policy and greater scrutiny of cultural funding is supporting changes in business models for the management of organisations such as museums (O'Regan 2001). It is problematic how these objectives can be integrated into cultural ones (Boylan 2006). Culture is increasingly being defined by governments as a 'whole way of life'; one that is broadly inclusive and democratic, yet also encourages the commercial (Turner 2001).

The subject of cultural policy is most often explored in the literature within the disciplines of sociology, political science, education, economics and the social sciences. Research in these areas has often sought to link culture with wider government policies. Sterne (2002) examines this in relation to cultural policy being developed to link into non-traditional areas such as economic and social development and the growth of 'cultural industries'. The links between cultural policy, economic and social development and the development of 'cultural industries' in Australia are examined by Cunningham (2004), Toepler (2006), Griffiths, Bassett & Smith (2002), Craik, McAllister & Davis (2003) and Gibson & O'Regan (2002).

International perspectives present a similar view on the link between cultural policy and social, political and economic agendas. Skilling (2005) observes that the assumptions made by the New Zealand government in relation to culture contribute to a dynamic economy, job creation, a cohesive society and national identity. Boylan (2006) examines cultural policy in the United Kingdom since the 1960s and notes that recently governments have sought to introduce private finance, such as corporate sponsorship, into the cultural sector. Similarly, Lang & Bramham (2006) discuss cultural policy and museums under 'New Labor' (Tony Blair's Labor Party) and how museums were expected to give priority to economic and social policies, demonstrating relevance to these major policy areas, rather than to cultural policy per se. Although this is not rigidly

enforced in Australia, since the release of *Creative Nation* in the 1990s, the arts and culture sector has been subject to market principles. In this regard, Radbourne (1997) argues that the museums sector is often highly critical of cultural policy and each organisation's priorities are developed within the context of these policies, but not unduly influenced by them. Given that museums operate within this cultural policy context, little research has been undertaken on the management of museums in these circumstances. This represents an important gap in the current literature explored in this thesis.

The relationship between museums and the state, particularly those that fund them, is also an area within the museum studies and public sector management literature that is under-researched. Often made possible with state funding, contemporary museum architecture represents a new and dynamic form of culture. Museum buildings provide a home for collections, yet also assimilate 'history, tradition and the urban context' (Lampugnani 2006, p. 247). Sirefman (1999) contends that architecture increasingly represents the museum's public image, defining the institution's relationship with its environmental context and shaping the visitor's experience. In addition, Nacher (1997) and Jencks (1997) comment on the proliferation of museum building in the 1990s, linking the simultaneous changes in museums towards fulfilling market demands and commercial activities. Giebelhausen (2006, p. 49), in contrast, reflects upon the evolution of the museum building from a transformative, educational space, to a space for 'self-improvement and societal self-regulation'. In discussing the growing significance of museum architecture as a stand alone phenomenon, Hamnett and Shoival (2003) argue that these institutions now serve social functions as well as being a tool for modern urban development. This represents another state government role aided by the cultural benefits of museums.

### **2.11 Museums as statutory authorities, governance and the Board**

Within the public sector, organisations such as museums often exist as 'non-departmental public bodies' or statutory authorities. In a number of publications, Wettenhall (1998, 2003, 2007) defines a taxonomic system for public sector organisations. He classifies statutory authorities as public enterprises at arm's length from ministerial departments of government; specialist service providers that operates with a degree of autonomy. Thynne (2006) similarly defines statutory authorities as formally constituted organisations of the

State, used as service providers and regulators and notes that their flexibility and autonomy both equip and constrain them in their relationship with governments. Yet others such as Macintosh (2007) examine the reduction of the independence of statutory authorities under recent Federal governments in Australia. The requirement for museums, as statutory authorities, to operate effectively and strategically manage, promote, and govern their organisations in an autonomous manner, while maintaining links to governments and government funding, is relevant here.

The need for statutory authorities to exist at all and the sometimes-conflicting reasons why they do, is further examined by Wettenhall (2004) when he discusses the need within governments to undertake functions outside Ministerial departments to ensure objectivity. Little attention, however, has been paid to how museums operate as statutory authorities and increasingly as hybrids that combine aspects of the public, private, and civil-society sectors. Within this literature, the main bias has been towards an empirical classification and definition of what constitutes a statutory authority, rather than how particular statutory authorities operate and their unique characteristics. This represents a gap in the knowledge of museums and their management, both as public sector organisations and as statutory authorities.

Although museums are often defined as statutory authorities, little extensive research has been undertaken on governance theory and its application in museums. Unlike literature available on the governance of for-profit organisations, the study of governance in museums is a relatively new field. As Pybus (2002), Rentschler (2004) and Regev (1998) discuss, there is little published material on ‘best practice’ governance related to the museums sector. Babbidge (2002) ascribes the growing interest in museum governance to greater external scrutiny of the organisation, increased emphasis on accountability, organisational restructuring and changes in strategic methods through operating in a market economy. In defining governance, Adams (2002, np) describes it as a ‘public trust responsible for the institution’s service to society...[which] protects and enhances the museum’s collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources’. While these assumptions are reasonable and he provides a useful context for understanding some of the reasons why museum governance has become of greater concern, there is little analysis of how increased governance is effecting the management of museums operationally or strategically.

Similarly, in relation to the role of museum boards and trustees, Carver argues (1997) that they represent total authority and total accountability for all corporate activity. However, he does not provide data on how this is achieved in museums, either in practice or at a conceptual level. Griffin (1991) examines this further, outlining how museums should be governed, what role the board of trustees should play, and acknowledging the interrelationship between museums, government and governance. He suggests that museum governance be categorised into two main areas; policy formation and reviewing the performance of executive staff. Like much written on the governance of museums, this presents a pragmatic, process-orientated approach to understanding the role, function and responsibilities of those involved in this task. Malero (1994), however, presents a broader interpretation of museum governance, positioning it within the not-for-profit sector and concluding that as it is part of this sector it is not understood by most (including governments) subject to attack and 'pragmatic solutions'.

In the disciplines of management, law, economics, sociology and finance, the literature focuses on, and is biased towards, corporate governance, with few studies relating to the governance of public organisations, especially museums. Similarly, the study of museum governance is relatively recent within the museum studies field and is not part of any core body of theory related to museums. This may indicate that there already exists a degree of consensus about what constitutes 'effective' museum governance and little is published as a result. Alternatively, it may mean that museums are still coming to terms with the application of business models for governance in their organisations. Dickensen (1991, p. 294) explores the nature of governance and the Board/ Trustee relationship, stating that 'Trustees derive much of their power and authority from their relationship to the private sector and ...often from their positions in the public sector'. The complexity of how museums should be governed, who make the most suitable Board members, and the link between governance, mission and strategic direction are explored by Marsh (1983) and Griffin (1991). Similarly, Cornforth (2003, p. 246) analyses the legal, regulatory, social and political context in which Boards operate in not-for-profit organisations, yet concludes that 'while there has been widespread academic criticism of the adoption of business-based models of governance in the public sector, there have been few empirical studies that systematically compared governance in different sectors or in different organisational fields'. Little attention has been paid to critical thinking and analysis of governance in relation to the management of museums and their evolving roles within Australian society.

In comparison with other public sector organisations, the evaluation of museums, both from the perspective of the internal programs and services that they offer and externally in terms of how they function as organisations, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Much of the current evaluation in museums occurs in relation to audience research and visitor-orientated perspectives. As previously noted, the study of museums as hybrid organisations has often been overlooked in the fields of management and business studies, and has not yet appeared in the museum studies literature.

Research on museum evaluation has focused on quantitative and, more recently, qualitative methods of carrying out various forms of visitors' surveys, audits, observational studies, and assessments. Rowley (1999) argues that museum evaluation is carried out in order to ensure visitor satisfaction and aid the creation of experiences within museums that encompass leisure, recreation, education and social interaction. Pearce and Moscardo (1985) report on the importance of visitor evaluations in building up demographic and psychological profiles of audiences for museums. Borun and Korn (1999) describe a framework of types of evaluation, such as 'formative evaluation', 'front-end evaluation' and 'summative evaluation' which can be used to survey museum exhibitions and programs.

Weil (1994) and Ambrose and Pierce (2006) report on the development of performance indicators within museums. They note how they can be used to monitor a museum's objectives and mission, while proving a ready source of information to be used to recognise the economic and cultural value of museums. Unlike the evaluation of social or economic programs at government level that can assist with policy improvements that Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999) describe, review of the roles and services of museums at a broad government level is rarely undertaken. Little attention is paid in these studies to how evaluation is used in relation to the management of museums, what external economic and political factors have influenced the rise of museum evaluation, and the possible detrimental effects on the role of museums in relying solely on visitor evaluations as a source of management decision making. This represents an important and omitted area for future study.

## ***2.12 Museums as organisations-professional bureaucracies and professional identities***

As previously discussed, the impact of new public management on museums has been significant. Traditional bureaucratic forms, under new public management, were seen to be inadequate for new organisational and procedural requirements. As Considine and Lewis (1999, p. 469) note, by the 1980s many bureaucracies became ‘inadequate in a more dynamic public sector environment’. As bureaucracies, and particularly professional bureaucracies, museums were influenced by changes in the public sector as a result of the new public management. Museums, along with other professional bureaucracies, are characterised by a theoretical body of knowledge, sets of professional norms, careers supported by an association of colleagues, and community recognition (Sorensen & Sorensen 1974). Much has been written about how professional bureaucracies function (Cheng 1990; Wallace 1995; Brewer 1996; Currie & Proctor 2005). In defining professional bureaucracies, Leitko & Szczerbacki (1987) note the importance of professional staff within the organisations that have control over task performance, review and planning. While museums are rarely explored within the context of professional bureaucracies in the published literature, the fact that they employ specialist, professional staff such as research scientists, curators, and conservators allows them to be seen through this lens, providing insights into their organisational nature.

Much of the debate surrounding professional bureaucracies focuses on the tension between allegiances towards the organisation, the profession, or the public good (Toren 1976; Brewer 1996; Vigoda 2002; Recasino Wise 2004). Currie and Proctor (2005, p. 1330) analyse this, noting that with traditional bureaucracies the power and influence was concentrated at the top of the hierarchy, whereas the key employees ‘with whom middle managers need to interact are the professional operating core of the organisation’. Alternatively, Kearney and Sinha (1988) question the rise of professionalism amongst public sector bureaucracies, arguing that while it leads to greater democracy, increasing professionalisation also leads to greater narrow self-interest, and less concern for the public interest. Furthermore, Maravelias (2003) comments on the demise of bureaucratic organisations, suggesting that ‘post-bureaucracy’ dissolves the distinction between professional and non-professional staff, and involves sophisticated forms of managerial domination. Von Nordenflycht (2010) similarly explores the impact of greater

professionalisation on bureaucracies, noting that an intellectually skilled workforce presents its own challenges; ‘... highly skilled individuals have strong preferences for autonomy and a consequent distaste for directions, supervision, and formal organisational processes’.

Despite this examination of the role of professionals in professional bureaucracies, little research has been undertaken on the effects of greater professionalisation in organisations, such as museums. The question of how to manage professionals within museums remains vexed. Watkins, Drury and Preddy (1992, p.86) discuss this in general terms, noting that ‘organisations both large and small are faced with new problems with regard to the management, evaluation, motivation and reward of the professional...the dilemma faced by many senior managers is how to direct, control and co-ordinate the work of professionals’. Closely associated with the move toward bureaucracies becoming more professionalised is the changing nature of professional identities within museums. As professional bureaucracies, museums have become adept at adjusting to internal and external pressures within the socioeconomic and political context in which they operate. Evolving professional identities, the nature of museum roles and the changing purpose of museums as organisations, however, remain pertinent management issues.

The changing role and status of curatorial and specialist staff today had its beginnings in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As one of the oldest professions in the museum and key staff in the area of scholarship and collection knowledge (Mayer 1991), curators are increasingly expected to balance their scholarship with a broader range of responsibilities in order to justify their positions. Ballard (2002) analyses the changes in curatorial roles, arguing that the source of tension within museums exists between populism and elitism. Anderson (1990, p. 199) maintains that although the main responsibilities of curators in the past was to conduct research through the study of collections, today, ‘the large specialised bureaucratic structures, which reflected Taylor’s management theories, have been replaced in industry by smaller more highly skilled units, able to respond and adapt to rapid changes in demand from the public’. This is supported by Strong (1988) who proposes the end of the scholar-curator and scholar-director towards the advent of administrators. Anderson (2005) similarly sees some museum roles diminishing, with the balance of staffing moving towards generalist administrators, and away from specialist curators.

Within museums the crisis of professional identity and evolution surrounding specialised staff such as curators has been compounded by concerns about managing these professionals (Sola 1992). While the trend is towards increased diversity and specialisation amongst museum staff, (Boylan 2006) paradoxically there is also a rise in generalist staff, such as educators, administrative, managerial and marketing staff being employed. However, as Miller (1994, p.138) states the changes to curatorial roles have not been driven by external influences, rather it ‘emanates from within the museum community. The public has no problem with the traditional role of a curator’. Concurrent with these changes, there is equal recognition of the need to maintain and support specialist museum roles, such as curators.

Wilton (1990) argues that in striving for ‘popularity’, museums are militating against their real purpose, which revolves around collections, exhibitions, and research. Witcomb (1997) and Hein (2007) assert the ongoing importance of collections and objects as the basis for museums’ existence. Chhabra (2008, p. 431) additionally states that museums exist to provide an ‘authentic ‘experience, while acknowledging that the contemporary paradigm of museum ideology is a ‘union between forces that represent material culture and influences, postmodern concepts rooted in social theory and practice and consumerism’. The need for professionals in museums, the changing, problematic role of the curator, and tension between organisational and professional concerns, remains unresolved. The nexus between these forces of organisational, managerial and professional evolution remains unexplored in much of the museum studies and public sector management literature, and represents an important area requiring further research.

### **2.13 Conclusion**

In conclusion, much of the current mainstream thinking about museums focuses on a combination of historic and post-modernist perspectives about the functions and purposes of museums. While this literature is mostly empirically grounded and concentrates on the analysis and improvement of museum practices, some studies take a more conceptual approach and question the newly emerging roles of museums. The management of museums, particularly from the perspectives of their role in the public sector, the impact of

new public management, as hybrid organisations and as professional bureaucracies, remains under-researched.

The exploration of these areas through this thesis will contribute to the management literature on cultural institutions such as museums. The significant factors that are highlighted in this study - new museology, education and life-long learning, marketing and cultural tourism, access and technology, and cultural policy, the state and architecture - have affected changes in museums, particularly in relation to their management. By utilising a number of Australian state museums as specific case studies, and placing their development within the broader context of changes in museums since the mid 20th century, it is hoped that this exploration extends current knowledge about museums in Australia and their management. It is also intended that this thesis offer an alternative approach to the study of museums, given the research limitations of management and museum studies methodologies, and present an innovative approach to understanding how museums function as organisations. Overall, the chapter provides, through an analysis of the literature, an examination of factors affecting change in Australian museums, the changing environment in which they operate, the management of museums, and the impact these factors have had on museums more generally.

This literature review has surveyed a number of factors that have impacted on the changing role and management of museums, before reviewing museums as institutions, and organisational types. The identification of research gaps, which this has highlighted, will be addressed in the study. They also provide a rationale for the research topic and research questions that are explored and analysed in this thesis. The next chapter will describe the Methodology and Research Design used for the thesis.



### **3 Methodology & Research Design**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This study is situated within the changing context in which Australian museums have operated since the 1980s. It explores how museums are responding to these challenges through new strategies and services, evolving business models within the public sector and greater social and economic roles within communities.

The research approach is designed to address the issues that emerge at the intersection of new museology, new public sector management and hybrid organisations. The resultant research methodology is outlined in this chapter. It incorporates the overall research approach, justifying the methods chosen, the choice of methodologies and their theoretical basis, providing details and analysis of the methods and processes used in the collection of various forms of data, evaluating various methodologies, including case studies; triangulation, primary and secondary sources; case study rationale, design and composition; data analysis; concerns and limitations of the methodology and ethical considerations.

##### **3.1.1 Research framework for the study**

This study aims to analyse the reasons for, and the impact of, changes in Australian museum management since the 1980s. State museums provide key insights into the nature and impact of these changes. Responding to a range of complex issues, State museums have developed a number of strategies at an organisational level that are altering their purpose. The intersection between new museology, new public management and hybrids has highlighted some specific themes for research attention, which are analysed in this study. This includes the pressures museums face for financial profitability, commercial acumen, identification and exploitation of market niches, professionalism and greater accountability towards the community, stakeholders and governments.

For the purpose of this study, a particular sector of the industry, state museums, have been chosen for analysis. State museums in Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia

were chosen to allow comparisons and contrasts to be developed between the three case studies, institutions with similar organisational histories. All three were established during the 19th century as natural history collections, and are facing similar institutional changes and transitions regarding their current roles and purposes. The shared historical beginnings – as colonial museums – with comparable natural history collections, each established as State institutions, underpinned the basis for the selection of these three museums for this study. Despite the State museums of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia being specifically chosen for the purpose of this study, the museums of other states- Queensland, Western Australia and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery – are comparable in terms of establishment, collections and organisational change since the 1980s. They form a broader population of Australian State museums fitting these criteria from which the three for this research were chosen.

In addition, state museums were chosen for this study as they suggested themselves most strongly as illuminating sites in which to study the conjunction of the new museology, new public management and the development of hybrid organisations. Although museums in Australia at both the local and federal government levels have also been impacted upon by this confluence of factors, to varying degrees, for the purposes of this study, the changing management of Australian state museums is the prime focus.

As public sector organisations, museums are constantly subject to changes in their environment, whether at a government, department or policy level. This thesis, through case studies, analyses the governmental and political environments of museums which are important for understanding them as public organisations. Whether as public sector organisations or hybrids, pursuing public services missions, museums are organisationally complex and are best analysed through a number of lenses and organisational theories for the purpose of this study.

The fields of study chosen to delineate this thesis combine approaches from public sector management, including organisation theory, and museum studies disciplines. In doing so, the topic helps to define the most appropriate methodology chosen for the study. The framework is similarly developed through an analysis of the existing literature and how the three case study museums chosen for the study engage with the broader discourses related to museum studies and public sector management.

The intent is to analyse how and why museums are responding to changes at a structural, organisational and program level and the implications of this for their changing role and purpose in the 21st century. As a single approach from public sector management, museum or organisational studies disciplines would limit this study, a research framework has been established which draws upon aspects from all the disciplines.

### **3.2 *Qualitative research methodologies***

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research methods have been chosen. This methodology was considered the most suitable for the purposes of the study as qualitative data best allows the characteristics of museums in organisational transition to be analysed, providing insights into their management.

As ‘a number of organisational issues are related to the intersection of human agents and organisational structures’ (Feagin 1991, p.55), qualitative data allows the garnering of a full and many faceted understanding of the interaction between people and their workplaces. Moreover, qualitative research enables the organisational setting and role of individuals within the setting to be scrutinised in such a way that the researcher can ‘look holistically at the setting to understand linkages among systems and...trace the historical context to understand how institutions and roles have evolved’ (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p.207). This is not to question the value of quantitative research methodologies; they allow the researcher to follow linear sequences, undertake sampling and ‘summarise large quantities ...using measures that are easily understood by the observer’ (Burns 1997, p. 42).

The questions raised in this study, however, were best addressed and undertaken in a naturalistic setting, through interviews in workplaces with museum staff and board members, using an exploratory approach. For this reason, a qualitative methodology was considered more suitable than a quantitative methodology. In addition, the units and levels of analysis in the museums - the institution, the collective or professional workgroups and the individuals could again be best analysed through qualitative means.

Qualitative research allows the agency of actors (individuals) in organisational change to be identified, particularises the roles of these actors and how they are affected by structural change. It allows an exploration and understanding of changing internal processes and the impact of these on individual and organisational outcomes. With this study, qualitative research methods allowed the analysis of how museums, as organisations have changed as the people within them seek to negotiate and manage the various forces of this change. Through the gathering of data from fieldwork and interviews access to and records of the expression of this agency, such as individual perceptions, knowledge, intent and vision could be gleaned. As Miles (1979, p. 590) notes 'Qualitative data are attractive for many reasons; they are rich, full, earthy... 'real', their face validity seems unimpeachable; ...in principle [they] offer a far more precise way to access causality in organizational affairs'.

Even with the qualitative methodology chosen as a framework for the study, conceptual development occurred throughout the research. This was clarified by the analysis of data obtained from the interviews, categorising and identifying themes within the data, archival research, and case study design. The characteristics associated with qualitative research- its focus on context, interpretation, and 'movement between deduction and induction' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p.1) - assist in understanding complex institutional phenomena such as museums. The qualitative research methodology adopted for this study acknowledges the often subjective description and exploratory information used in defining and framing the research.

The significance and usefulness of qualitative methodologies for this study is further enhanced by the study's ability to link the research undertaken to both perspectives in organisational theory and concerns with everyday practice in museum management.

Commenting on the practice of management research, Lowstedt and Stjernberg (2006, p. 7) note that much of it is 'primarily not research for management, but increasingly research about management and, more specifically, about the processes in organisations whereby management is exercised'. This study similarly seeks to analyse and account for the significant organisational, structural, and philosophical changes in the management of Australian museums since the 1980s.

### Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

As a way of studying the changing management systems of museums, qualitative research methods offer useful tools for this study. Qualitative research is particularly well suited to investigating changing patterns and management relationships within organisations and ‘excels at illuminating process, whether this is organisational change or individual decision- making since it allows us to examine how changes affect daily procedures and interactions’ (Barbour 2008, p. 13). The reliability, precision and ‘trustworthiness’ of qualitative research is, however, open to criticism. The credibility of qualitative research often depends not only on the use of a combination of multi-faceted methods, which add to the rigour of the study, but on the judgement and astuteness of the researcher in applying these methods to the study.

Given that this study concentrates on analysing the changing management practices in Australian state museums since the 1980s, qualitative research methods are particularly well suited to exploring the mechanisms and variables that have contributed to these changes. This study emerged from an interest in ‘how’ and ‘why’ these changes, the result of a confluence between new museology and changes in public sector management, continue to impact on museums in the current century. As Marshall and Rossman state (2006, p.27) ‘the curiosity that inspires qualitative research often comes initially from observations of the real world, emerging from the interplay of direct experience, with emerging theory, of political commitment with practice as well as from growing scholarly interest’. As a way of engaging in a systematic enquiry about museums as phenomena, qualitative research methods allow insights into a range of issues.

For the purpose of this study, the use of qualitative research methods have allowed information to be gathered about the multiple elements of the specific political, cultural and economic settings in which the case study museums operate. Through the case studies and interviews conducted, the realities of staff working within these contexts have been gleaned. As Burns has stated (1997, p. 291), qualitative research ‘attempts to gather evidence that will reveal qualities of life, reflecting the...specific settings from participant’s perspectives...the thoughts, feelings and perceptions of ...informants are vital’. With this contextual knowledge, propositions can be developed regarding understanding and interpreting what causal factors have contributed to organisational changes in museums and their ramifications for contemporary museum management.

Overall, the application of qualitative research methods is considered the most appropriate for this study. Within the literature on Australian museums there is a surprisingly diverse range of disciplinary approaches to the study of these cultural institutions and museum studies is often defined by its interdisciplinarity. The study of museum management, in addition, is best served through a multidisciplinary framework, often lacking in current public sector management literature.

The quantitative methods allow information, such as statistics, to be gathered by the observer and are seen to be a ‘pervasive, scientific mode of inquiry; a mode characterised by objectivity, reliability and prediction’ (Burns 1997, p. 291). Alternatively, the qualitative method recognises ‘the implicit relationship between knowledge and human interests...an alternative, more humanistic, investigative paradigm’ (Burns 1997, p. 291). This thesis demonstrates that qualitative methods are more suitable for the study of changes in the management of cultural organisations and the conceptual, human and applied impact these changes have had on museums.

The qualitative research methods chosen best facilitate the exploration, interpretation and aim of the research questions in this study. In order to obtain a rigorous analysis, a number of qualitative methodologies have been employed to obtain, where possible, a holistic picture of the museums studied. Case studies, interviews, archival data collection, the use of primary and secondary sources and documentation, playing an active role with equal status to the interviews, provide a guiding research framework in this study, supporting the approaches adopted.

### ***3.3 Empirical and applied research***

The benefits of this study are a greater understanding of an organisation, the museum, and the context in which it operates, with a contribution to ‘policy or practice’, theoretical and applied fields.

It is intended, through case studies, to analyse the changes in management practices and processes of a selection of Australian state museums to show how and why these changes

have taken place. The intended outcome of this is two-fold. First, a greater understanding of the factors that have influenced these changes, the context in which these changes have occurred, and the ongoing impact of these changes for the current roles and purposes of museums. Second, an improved and innovative framework, resulting from the integration of theory about the new museology, public sector management and hybrid organisations, providing a novel and contemporary theoretical set for investigating the functions of modern museums. This may, in turn, involve transferring the research and theoretical knowledge gained from the study into everyday museum management practice.

As a result, an empirical approach to the research undertaken for this study has been chosen. The epistemology can be further defined as 'interpretivist' and the research approach is underpinned by this epistemology. The interpretivist approach is an analytical and critical method that looks for 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty 1998, p. 67). The study interprets and analyses the causal factors related to changes in Australian museum management since the 1980s, reflecting the confluence of new public sector management, new museology practices and the evolution of museums as hybrids.

This study similarly argues that changes in management practices in Australian museums since the 1980s are part of the ongoing development of the roles and purposes of museums and their need for increasing political and economic accountability and community relevance. As museum management changes are seen as part of a continuum of institutional change in this study, an empirical approach, utilising information obtained from staff working in museums via interviews was used as the basis of the study. The interviews, in which the interviewees' own experiences and observations of the effects of management and organisational change were primary, were chosen to underpin this study. With the study, the discussions and conclusions emerge from the data gathered, an evidence based, empirical methodology.

### 3.3.1 Interdisciplinary research methods

In addition to the qualitative research methodologies used in this study, the research design has been shaped by the choice of an interdisciplinary approach. The study

combines knowledge and concepts that are drawn from the disciplines of museum studies, public sector management and organisation studies. This approach was considered the most suitable to obtain, where possible, a holistic picture of the museums case studies.

The interdisciplinary approach to the study has allowed the selected museums to be analysed not only from the perspective of their place within the development and history of Australian museums, but also from their place within the public sector. Although part of the public sector in Australia, funded at local, state or federal government level, the literature on museums within the disciplines of public policy, public sector management and business administration is scant. Studies of museums as organisations have received little attention in either the public administration or social sciences disciplines. This is despite museums operating in the services sector and being subject to substantial organisational reform since the 1980s. In addition, museums increasingly play a role in non-traditional areas such as social and economic development and cultural planning designated by governments (Cunningham 2004, Craik, McAllister & Davis 2003; Griffiths, Bassett & Smith 2002; Stevenson 2000). As public sector organisations, museums are infrequently discussed within the context of public sector management, organisational theory or organisational change literature (Sukel 1978).

The interdisciplinary nature of this study, while allowing new insights to be gained about Australian museums, has its limitations. The lack of information available on the management of specific organisational types, such as museums, in the public sector management literature does not allow extensive background research to be carried out on these institutions from the perspectives represented within the discipline. Similarly, the museum studies field, on the whole, lacks detailed analysis of museums from an organisational and structural perspective and from their position within the public sector. This is despite the publications of Weil (2000) and Janes (2007) which engage with contemporary museum management issues, albeit not from a public sector perspective. Given this, the thesis draws upon relevant literature and theories from the disciplines of museum studies and public sector management, as required to shape and define the research. Further research is needed on the management of museums in Australia and their position within the public sector to provide a more comprehensive picture of these significant cultural organisations.

### **3.4 The Research Methods**

The research methods used in this study include the case study and, in particular multiple case studies, interviews, archival data and primary and secondary published sources. Outlined below is a detailed description of, and justification for, the research methods used, the case studies developed, the methods of data collection, interviews and participants chosen and archival data searched.

### **3.5 Case Studies**

For the purpose of this research, three case studies of Australian state museums were developed. The comprehensive and in-depth approach facilitated by the use of case studies as a research method allows instructive comparisons to be made between several Australian museums in terms of their changing histories, management practices and evolving role and purpose. Marshall and Rossman state that (2006, p.164) case studies ‘begin in natural settings and incorporate socio-political contexts, they...use the full array of data collection strategies’. The nature of this study suggests that case studies, as a qualitative research method, are most suited to systematically gathering information about the organisations chosen, in order to interpret and gain insights into how they operate. As Yin (2003, p.1) has argued, case studies are a useful tool to ‘collect and analyse data fairly...[and] in many situations...contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organisational, social, political and related phenomena’. When questions related to how or why are asked in a study, such as this one, case studies are often the preferred method, and may be explanatory, exploratory or descriptive in nature (Yin 2003, p.1).

Case studies often bring to light new causal interpretations in a way that forges ‘new generalizations that embrace and supersede earlier understandings’ (Ragin & Becker 1992, p.127) of a particular phenomena, group, or organisation. It is anticipated that the three case studies developed through this study will provide insights into the organisational characteristics, structure, processes and programs of selected Australian museums in order to draw some generalisations about and explanations for current management practices.

While case studies provide the opportunity to collect a rich array of data about a particular organisation, they require the observer to scrutinise the situation and experiences, yet selectively choose some features to study thoroughly. In organisational research, case studies have become popular where the ‘focus is on understanding a particular work environment or structure and not necessarily on predicting results in other areas’ (Zach 2006, p.7). As Stake also notes (2006, p. 3) the ‘qualitative case study was developed to study the experience of real cases operating in real situations’. In this way, each of the cases chosen is an entity in its own right. However, the use of multiple cases allows explanation and analysis of many of the functions, programs and relationships between organisations selected for this study. Each of the case studies chosen has its own organisational dynamics and historical, political, social and cultural context.

Each of the cases provides insights into generalisations between the cases as well as the particulars of each local situation and organisation. They do not assure us of reliability in other settings but serve as a useful ‘empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context’ (Stoecker 1991, p. 97). As a research method, case studies are appropriate for inquiring into organisations when there are many factors, relationships, and events which impact on the functions of the organisation. When the researcher can directly observe these factors and relationships, case studies allow a comprehensive understanding of the organisation to be gained.

As a way of studying changing management practices in museums, case studies are a useful tool. While case studies allow for intensive exploration and interpretation of a particular topic or subject, there are a number of issues associated with their subjective bias and methodological status. Gerring (2007, p. 7) has noted that while ‘good’ case studies are accurate and convincing, ‘poor’ case studies have been ‘relegat[ed] ...to the non-rigorous, non-systematic, non-scientific, non-positivist end of the academic spectrum’. The interpretation of collected observations and data in case studies is subjective and ‘external checks’ are often not employed. However, as Burns (1997, p. 383) states, the ‘emphasis of the case study is on the characteristics of the particular case, therefore external validity is not of great importance’.

The reliability, precision, objectivity and rigor of case studies that have been subject to criticism (Yin 2003, p. xiii) can be enhanced through using a combination of qualitative

### Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

methodologies. Several data gathering techniques, including interviews, triangulation (multiple methods) and archival analysis have been used in this study to enhance the validity of the case studies.

In addition, there are a number of potential problems associated with the case study method. Initially, there is a need to set boundaries around the case study and these may be in many forms, including time periods, selected themes, the exploration of processes. Similarly, there is a concern with case studies in relation to access to subjects. It is important to secure access to participants for interviews, observation, focus groups and so on to gather data for the case studies. However, as Zach (2006, p.10) indicates the most effective approach to secure access is through personal contact, so the personal credibility of the researcher is considered essential. For the purpose of this study and the case studies developed, direct contact, via email and telephone calls, was made to a number of participants to arrange or conduct the interviews. The interviews, the selection of interviewees and the information collected through this method will be discussed later in the chapter.

A further consideration with case studies is the possibility of subjective participant bias. A number of authors (Zach 2006; Burns 1997; Yin 2003) acknowledge the problematic nature of the interpretation of collected observations in case studies. Yin, in particular (2003, p. 61) notes that with case studies it is important to be 'wary of them being used only to substantiate a preconceived position'. In order to counter this, the researcher needs to be open to contradictory evidence, irregularities and contrasts, while being a disinterested observer.

With the case studies selected for this research, the sample group is three Australian state museums. They are all funded by state governments, have a similar organisational history, and have comparable organisational, governance, programming and staff structures. While this basis for the museum selection was established, the goal of the case studies was to investigate how each individual museum was responding to changes wrought by new museology and new public management and hence explore the questions underlying this research. No preconceived notions of the possible effects of these changes were used to develop the case studies. Rather, through interviews, data collection, triangulation

methods and documentation, a picture gradually emerged of the management issues facing Australian museums in the current century.

The museums chosen for the case studies provided concrete illustrations of institutions in which significant management changes have occurred since the 1980s. In this study, the interests of the researcher lie in both the context in which changes in museum management have occurred and the changes themselves. The advantage and justification for using case studies in this study is that the description, interpretation and analysis provided through the case studies, along with references to the theoretical frameworks developed, allows the management changes in a selection of Australian museums to be thoroughly explored.

### 3.5.1 Multiple case studies

In order to explore the museums being studied in more depth, a multiple case study design was chosen. The three museums chosen were selected to facilitate systematic investigation into the management of each museum, allowing some comparisons and generalisations to be drawn between the museums while also examining the complexity, 'situational uniqueness' and variables of each museum (Stake 2006, p. 7). The single case studies are meaningful in relation to the other cases cited. Combined together, cases in a multiple case study allow what is similar or dissimilar about the case studies to be researched and 'starts with recognising what concept or idea binds the cases together' (Stake 2006, p. 23). This allows variables in each case and the group of cases as a whole to be understood.

The development of multiple case studies allows patterns and uniquenesses, particulars and generalisations in the cases to be analysed (Zach 2006, p. 4). Multiple case studies facilitate further scrutiny of the cases through a replication strategy. Through theoretical replication, multiple cases are selected to 'explore and confirm or disprove the patterns identified in the initial cases' (Zach 2006, p. 7). If the cases provide similar results and insights into the phenomena explored, they are particularly useful in describing and analysing the phenomena itself. What is most important in multiple case studies is an understanding of the group of cases and the common characteristics that can be ascertained from them. The use of multiple case studies allows a variety of issues related

to the management of Australian museums to be revealed. They provide an understanding of the complex and contextual nature of the cases within their different environments.

Similarly, the use of multiple cases provides a way to both highlight specifics within the cases as well as common relationships across the cases. Although each of the case studies explores the factors impacting upon the changing management of Australian State museums, the cases together have a number of themes and issues in common. As Stake notes (2006, p. 39) with multiple case studies, the researcher has an obligation to 'provide interpretation across the cases', making a comparison of the cases possible, rather than increasing the understanding of each specific case. As a result, multiple cases are useful in providing 'formal generalizations for guiding policy and collective practice' (Stake 2006:89).

While the case study method has been subject to criticism regarding its validity, reliability and possible biases (Stoecker 1991, p. 91) this is equally applicable to multiple case studies. For practical and theoretical reasons, multiple case studies can be questioned for their unpredictable focus and 'lack of standardised procedures for choosing sites' (Royce Sadler 1985, p. 149). However, with multiple case studies, the cases selected serve to enhance the overall scope of the study, are selected for predictable or similar results and to 'predict contrasting results but for predictable reasons' (Yin 2003, p. 47). Each individual case is understood before a cross-case report may be prepared. Typical situations, events and issues may be identified in the cases and generalisable findings identified.

Multiple case study analysis assists in pinpointing variables and illuminating problematic issues, while gaining a general picture of all cases. Multiple case studies help to provide a better understanding of the context in which an organisation operates the specific phenomena of individual cases, while making possible some overall conclusions. As Zach states (2006, p. 11), the strength of multiple case study design 'lies not only in its ability to demonstrate consistent patterns of behaviour but also, and perhaps more importantly, in its ability to uncover new and/or divergent themes'. Through collecting and analysing a range of different data for the case studies, evidence emerges that helps to provide a comprehensive understanding of the museums studied, as well as revealing new findings.

### **3.6 Interviews**

#### **3.6.1 Interview participants and questions**

A number of senior and executive staff, operational staff and board or Trust members were chosen to be interviewed at each of the three Australian state museums for this study. The museums are the Melbourne Museum (part of Museum Victoria), the South Australian Museum and the Australian Museum. At the Melbourne Museum, 12 senior executive staff and 5 board members were interviewed. In comparison, 13 senior managers and heads of museum sections were interviewed at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide. No board members at this museum were interviewed. This was due to the museum being unable to arrange for board members to be in Adelaide during the times planned for the interviews, as a number reside interstate. As the Australian Museum is governed by a Trust, two Trust members as well as 12 senior executive staff and head of sections or operations were interviewed. Data obtained from the interviews, in conjunction with information gleaned from archival material and primary and secondary sources, formed the basis of the multiple case studies prepared for this study.

The senior staff and board members interviewed at each of the three case study museums had different educational and professional backgrounds and varying degrees of experience in their respective positions at the museums. Access to those interviewed was obtained through either telephone contact or via email. All interviewees expressed a willing interest in participating in the interviews. They were selected not only because of their availability and willingness to participate but also for their seniority and executive positions within the museums. Staff working in senior positions in roles which involved the management of divisions and supervision of staff were frequently also involved in policy development and review, corporate planning and ensuring that organisational goals and outcomes were met. Museum board or Trust members were either contacted directly by telephone or with assistance from senior museum staff. Given their role in museum stewardship, oversight, governance and strategic direction, they were selected to provide additional perspectives on the management and changing roles and purposes of the museums selected for the study.

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For the purpose of this study, the interview questions were developed to achieve both factual and anecdotal information from the interviewees. The questions, which related to challenges and difficulties faced by staff and board members as a result of organisational changes revolved around the interviewees' personal observations and reflections on changes in management practice. The interviewees were asked eleven questions related to their views on how changes in management practice had affected their museum, their individual professional roles, and how the museum was responding to this at a program, organisational and management level. Combined, the questions asked were intended to elicit responses about the preferences and views of the interviewees, on an individual level, as well as the impact of these changes on their work practices at an organisation-wide level.

Although the researcher established the relevant topics to be covered in the interviews, the questions were open and the process of interviewing interactive. As Gillham (2005, p.4) notes, the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is 'responsive...allowing for a degree of 'adjustment'; clarification [and] exploration...there is structure and purpose on the part of the interviewer'. Each interview participant, whether a staff or board member, was asked the same eleven questions to obtain a sense of how the individual engaged with the organisation and the structural, program and management changes the organisations were undergoing.

### 3.6.2 The Interview process

As a qualitative method, interviews are a useful data gathering tool and when employed are 'usually attempting to add to the knowledge base either by questioning a new group of people about a topic, questioning people about a new topic or both' (Barbour 2008, p.114). While interviews are a useful method of gathering information, they are more frequently meaningful in obtaining the participants' viewpoints and gaining an understanding of their views of reality. As Marshall and Rossman (2006, p.11) argue, the 'most important aspect of the interviewer's approach is conveying the attitude that the participant's views are valuable and useful'. Much like a conversation, the interview, if conducted well, allows the participants to reveal data that is not based on a predetermined response, rather a response from consideration and reflection.

To supplement and contribute to the case studies, interviews were carried out with senior managers, directors, board members or staff, where possible, at the Melbourne Museum, South Australian Museum and Australian Museum. The majority of interviews were carried out face-to-face with the interviewees at their place of employment. However, due to the late unavailability of some staff on days allocated for their interviews, a small number of the interviews were conducted by telephone from the researcher's home in Canberra.

As Ibsen & Ballweg note (2003, p.101) interviewees have a lower refusal rate for telephone interviews, rapport is often more easily established over the telephone and 'while the telephone interview offers no panacea relative to these concerns, it harbours no special pitfalls'. As a form of data collection, the telephone interviews conducted with museum staff had a similar responses rate in terms of answers and openness to the questions that face-to-face interviews had. The lack of personal and visual contact between the interviewer and interviewee that occurred through the telephone interviews did not affect the quality or quantity of material gathered. Indeed, it may have contributed to greater freedom on the part of the respondents to determine the subject matter discussed in the interview, without the direct presence of the interviewer. Overall, the use of telephone interviews was an adequate substitute for face-to-face interviews with staff at the three case study museums during 2008 and 2009.

While interviews are undertaken to obtain a variety of information and descriptions of processes, behaviours, values, perceptions and attitudes, the type of interview chosen can influence the data provided. Types of interviews can range from highly structured with set questions to highly unstructured, with a conversational and open-ended style. With structured interviews, questions are simply read aloud by the interviewer and the interviewees' responses recorded (Lee 1999, p. 61). In this way, direction is provided through the questions focussing the content and data obtained through the interview. As Pawson (2003, p.154) states, structured interviews present a formal approach to gathering information, the researcher's 'conceptual system' is entirely imposed on the interviewee, and the 'rationale is to provide a simple, neutral stimulus in order to tap the true responses or true values of individual subjects'. They are most useful as an interview type to obtain standard, fixed responses.

Semi-structured interviews, in contrast, allow the respondents more freedom to elicit data that is of importance to them, rather than the researcher dictating the interview. The interviewee holds more control of the topics covered in the interview and their responses to questions during semi-structured interviews. As a major tool in qualitative research, interviews are a 'performance, involving a two-way encounter...it is essential that the researcher 'owns' the questions, which enables the interview to work in a way similar to a regular conversation' (Barbour 2008, p.120). Semi-structured interviews, therefore, are particularly useful when the researcher has questions to be asked in relation to themes and the intention is exploratory. What is being conveyed in the interview is important so that 'the purpose of most qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk' (Warren 2001, p. 83). The richness of the data obtained from semi-structured interviews and the 'thick descriptions of a given social world analysed for cultural patterns and themes' (Warren 2001, p. 85) derived from such an interview can help produce systematised knowledge and convey a variety of meanings. With unstructured interviews, the interviewer plays a minimal role in directing the content and flow of the interview. In this form of open-ended interviewing, the conversation is free-flowing and relies 'heavily on the quality of the social interaction between the investigator and the informant... conversation is minimally controlled' (Burns 1997, p. 331). While some factual detail may be revealed through this interview technique, more often interpretive detail is provided through this unstructured approach. The rationale of the unstructured interview is one in which the 'investigator offers minimal steerage of the research topic within broad areas of discussion as they seem appropriate to each respondent' (Pawson 2003, p. 154). Such a method allows the respondents to focus on issues and themes most important to them, rather than being strongly directed by the researcher's interests.

Interviews undertaken combined both 'structured' (to allow fixed, factual responses to be received) and 'unstructured' formats (permitting the interviewees greater freedom to determine the information they wished to provide in the interview). Analysis of the different interview types and their limitations (Whyte 2003, p. 2428) suggest that a combination of interview styles will allow a variety of different qualitative and quantitative data to be obtained from the participants.

### 3.6.3 Interviewing elites

As the staff interviewed at the three museums were in positions of influence, prominence and were well informed in relation to their institutions, the issue of interviewing 'elites' arose through this study. As Zuckerman states (2003, p. 373) 'elites' are defined as 'a typically thin layer of people who exhibit especially great influence, authority or power and who generally have the highest prestige within what is a prestigious collectivity to begin with'. Being well prepared, having a set of predetermined questions, legitimising the time required for the interviews, being mindful of confidentiality, and undertaking preliminary research on the senior staff, their educational and professional backgrounds facilitated the process of interviewing 'elite' staff and board members at the museums. Many of the interviewees spoke openly about their organisation's history and policies at an operational and conceptual level. In such an atypical social situation 'elites often respond well to inquiries about broad areas of content and to open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination' (Marshall & Rossman 2006, p.106).

Combined, the senior staff and museum board members were considered the 'target group' to be interviewed for this study. The intention was to collect as much data as possible to guide the development of the themes emerging in the case studies. Although the interviews took place in the museums where staff and board members were available, the issue of conducting interviews in these naturalistic settings did arise. The power, positions and interests of the interviewees were noted and consideration given to their question responses in relation to whether they were 'following the company line'. The staff and board members interviewed were, in many ways, instruments of the museum's corporate values.

As Gillham (2005, pp. 41- 42) acknowledges in interviews 'even if people know that you are a researcher, there are often limits to their willingness to answer questions...they may feel that beyond a certain point questioning is inappropriate...what you are told is not the whole story'. The researcher was aware of this dilemma and sought to interpret the data gathered through the interviews as a combination of factual information as well as opinions, attitudes, and narratives about the respondents' experiences and perspectives on changes in their museums' management. The limitations of the factual information that

could be gleaned from the interviewees were, wherever possible, supplemented by data gathered from published and archival sources.

### **3.7 Data collection and Analysis**

#### **3.7.1 Case studies**

The cases were developed from the information obtained from the in-depth interviews carried out with senior staff across all three museums. Data was collected over a 6-month period from museum staff at the Melbourne Museum in August 2008, from the South Australian Museum in September 2008 and from the Australian Museum in January 2009. The number of senior staff interviewed at each museum varied, according to the availability of staff to be interviewed and the size of the institution and hence the number of senior executive staff employed. Each of the interviewees, in a semi-structured interview, was asked eleven questions (see Appendix A -Interview questions and Appendix B - List of Interviewees).

The interview questions for this study were derived from issues identified within the literature. The theoretical frameworks surrounding the intersection of new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrids highlighted the gaps in knowledge about the management of Australian museums and informed the types of questions that were prepared for the interview. The interview questions were intended to be open-ended and elicit a sense of the organisational values and staff views on the directions of and changes to the museums in which they worked.

In most instances, the interviews were carried out in the work places of the interviewees. Transcripts of the interviews with museum staff were prepared. The date and time of the interview, staff member's name, institution and contact details, location of the interview, and whether it was face-to-face or a telephone interview were recorded. The data obtained from the interviews was analysed to create a hierarchy of issues that supported or expanded upon the research questions for this study. Given that this form of investigation was undertaken, the use of formal qualitative data analysis tools such as Nvivo was not considered necessary. The data contained in the interview transcripts was analysed to

highlight the themes which arose, supporting and expanding upon the thesis research, which in turn was used to develop the multiple case studies.

The main approach to data analysis for this study involved preparing typed transcripts from digital recordings and hand-written notes. Reviewing the interview content for emerging themes, issues and patterns related to the study's theoretical framework and research questions also assisted in the data analysis. From this systematic and thorough analysis the data gathered was used to support and construct plausible explanations for how and why changes in Australian museum management had occurred since the 1980s and the ongoing impact of these changes on today's museums. A number of key themes emerged from the data analyses that were pertinent to each of the three case study museums.

Although the purpose of this study was not to critique the organisational performance of each museum in relation to management changes, the key themes did reveal which of the museums had best adapted to and embraced the changes in a positive manner. In many instances, organisational changes had led to greater organisational effectiveness and performance, in terms of staffing, relationships with stakeholders, governance and leadership. How the management changes had been dealt with at a policy, resources and institutional level varied within each museum and was indicative of the strengths and weaknesses of current management practices in the museums.

### 3.7.2 Archival Research

For the development of the case studies, the researcher carried out on-site research in the archives at each of the three museums chosen for the study. Archival material examined at each of the three museums included Annual Reports from the 1970s onwards; documents related to the incorporation and/or establishment of the museums; mission statements; strategic management plans developed by the museums since the 1980s; current and future management plans for the museums including section or divisional plans and goals; museum marketing and development plans and documentation related to museum departments and their collections. In addition, correspondence and reports associated with

the museum's board or Trust and finally published secondary sources such as the history and development of the museum were consulted.

This material provided a means of expanding upon the information provided by the interview participants, allowing a more in-depth history of the development of the museums chosen for the study. Many of the secondary sources were invaluable in validating and supporting the data gathered from the interviews. They also allowed an overall sense of the economic, political and cultural context in which the organisation operates to be gained. As Zach has noted (2006, p.12) 'Conscientious application of ...techniques ensures that explanations for the phenomena under study developed from the data and verified during the course of the research process'. Through a constant process of gathering data from interviews, archival, primary and secondary sources, iterative analysis, comparison, and review, sufficient data was gathered to support the objectives and research questions of this study.

#### **3.8 Triangulation**

In order to strengthen the development of the case studies, interviews and data analysis were chosen as the research methodologies for this study, supported by triangulation. Achieved through the use of different data sources, triangulation (or multiple methods) helps to increase the scientific rigour of the case studies and increase their validity (Stoecker 1991, p. 92). As a result, data from a variety of sources was used to enhance the validity of the case studies and research findings. In this way, triangulation helped to ensure that key meanings or concepts were not overlooked or misinterpreted through the use of a single method or data source. Different ways in which the cases could be seen and multiple perspectives into the research data were obtainable through the use of multiple methods. As Stake notes (2006, p. 38) 'The qualitative researcher is interested in diversity of perception ...triangulation helps to identify these different realities'. Through triangulation, the questions can be confirmed or exclusions highlighted and further research undertaken to strengthen the study overall.

In addition, the use of triangulation allows strategies for integrated data analysis to be

developed. By not relying solely on the validity of one data type, triangulation's core premise is that inherent biases and limitations are present in all research methods (Greene, Caracelli & Graham 1989, p. 256). By using two or more methods, the results of these corroborate one another, enhancing and confirming the findings. As Greene, Caracelli and Graham state (1989, p. 256), triangulation refers to the 'designed use of multiple methods with offsetting or counteracting biases, in investigations of the same phenomena in order to strengthen the validity of inquiry results'.

Although triangulation is often used to describe a research strategy that combines both qualitative and quantitative methods in a complementary manner (Jick 1979, p. 602), it can also be used to mean 'within - method'. As Jick (1979, p.603) states 'multiple techniques within a given method [are used] to collect and interpret data...in short, 'within-method' triangulation essentially involves cross-checking for internal consistency or reliability while 'between - method' triangulation tests the degree of external validity'. Through the use of complementary data sources in this study, triangulation allows a complete, holistic, and contextual analysis of the case studies and research themes to emerge. For the purposes of this study, triangulation has been applied in relation to the use of a variety of information sources such as case studies, archival research and interviews, to increase the reliability, plausibility and convergence of results.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

This study, through the development of case studies, involved interviewing museum staff in senior management positions and board or trust members. These are positions of trust and responsibility. This potentially raised ethical issues associated with administrative and financial governance, confidentiality of the information provided and the need for informed consent from individuals to participate in the interviews.

The study did not attempt to critique the changes to museum management at the three chosen museums. The sense of whether or not the changes had been carried out successfully, or were necessarily the correct actions to have taken given the various contexts in which the museums were operating, was similarly not the focus of the study.

Instead, it seeks to provide an analysis of how and why these changes have occurred and their impact on the case study museums.

Ethical considerations also were required in relation to information provided by staff members through the interview process. Ensuring that the interviewees had access to the interview questions and transcripts through the course of the research, in order to alter or revise any of their responses to the questions, should this have been requested, was an important ethical consideration. Negotiation with participants through email and telephone communication was carried out prior, during and after the interviews to reassure them that sensitive areas of discussion, which may have been raised during the course of the interview, did not cause discomfort or offence.

The study's research themes were benign; the research methods proposed were not invasive (as they required the interviewee's written consent and they remain anonymous) and no obligation was placed on museum staff to participate in the interviews or reveal confidential, secure or personally sensitive information. An Ethics proposal for this research was prepared, completed and submitted in May 2008 to the University of Canberra Ethics Committee. Approval and ethical clearance for this research was obtained in May 2008.

#### **3.10 Limitations**

This study does not attempt to be a comprehensive assessment of all of the internal and external factors influencing changing management practices in Australian museums since the 1980s. The boundaries of the research methodology were limited to the in-depth analysis of the three case study museums. The study is not intended to make comparisons between all Australian museums at a local, state, or national level. Rather, it limits the study to the experiences of management and organisational change within the three specific organisations chosen the Melbourne Museum, the South Australian Museum and the Australian Museum during the period in which the fieldwork was undertaken (from August 2008 to January 2009). It similarly draws upon the information obtained from interviews conducted with senior executive staff and board or Trust members at the case study museums.

The number of interviews carried out with case study museums varied according to the numbers of staff and board members available to participate. Although it was initially anticipated to be approximately 15 per institution, there were 12 staff and two Trust members interviewed at the Australian Museum in Sydney, 12 staff and no board members interviewed at the South Australian Museum and 12 staff and five board members interviewed at the Melbourne Museum in Victoria. Overall, this does not represent a large number of participants and may not be reflective of the views of the museum staff as a whole. Strongly representative board views regarding their institutions' management changes and future challenges could not always be obtained. Instead, the data gathered from the interviewees is more representative of the values, opinions and experiences of executive level managers within museums. This may impose some limitations on the information able to be obtained from the interviews and hence, a degree of bias. Overall, however, the data gathered from the interviews and additional published sources made it possible to develop some overall comparisons, generalisations and particularities possible between the case studies.

The interdisciplinary nature of the study also posed some limitations on the usefulness of the research methodologies used. The lack of information available on the management of specific organisational types, such as museums, in the public sector management and hybrid literature, did not allow extensive background research to be carried out on these institutions from the perspectives represented in these disciplines. The museums studies literature, on the whole, lacked detailed analysis of museums from an organisational perspective and from their position within the public sector. As Helwig, Varela and Wilkerson (2010, p. 8) note 'because the academic field began as a response to the needs of practice (a reconfigured economic, social and political climate that required greater professionalization on the part of arts managers)...arts management inherits at least some of the traditions of business, public policy, the arts and humanities and international studies...because of its diverse origins [the field] remains more diffuse'.

Given this, the study has drawn upon relevant literature from both public sector management and the museum studies disciplines, as required. Further research is needed on the management of museums and their role within the public sector to provide a more comprehensive picture of their evolving roles in the current century.

This research does not attempt to be a comprehensive assessment of all of the internal and external factors influencing changing management practices in Australian museums since the 1980s. A selection of the most predominant, widespread and contemporary challenges to museums were chosen for the purposes of this research. The study is not intended to make generalisations about all Australian museums. However, some findings from the study, particularly those related to a greater emphasis on strategic planning, the increased role of marketing, audience development and education in these institutions, would be applicable to all museum types in Australia.

The boundaries of the research are limited to the in-depth analysis of three case study museums that are state government funded institutions with comparable collections, establishment history and organisational size. The Melbourne Museum, South Australian Museum and Australian Museum were just three state natural history museums chosen for the case studies in 2007. The study did not extend to incorporate other Australian state museums in Queensland, Tasmania, the Northern Territory and Western Australia or comparisons between Australian and international museums for practical, temporal, financial and relevance reasons. The emphasis in the case studies is on the characteristics and contexts of the particular cases. The important advantage and justification for utilising case studies in this study is the description, interpretation and analysis of the management changes and their ramifications upon a selection of Australian museums. This research limits itself to the experiences of management and organisational change within three specific, yet comparable, institutions.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter has covered the key elements in the research design and methodology chosen for this study. The study's central methodologies, the use of case studies, interviews and triangulation are outlined. Similarly, this chapter explains in detail the processes and methods used to gather and analyse data for the study and justifications for utilising these methods. The majority of the research is based on a combination of three case studies of Australian State museums. Selected additional information from archival sources on the three museums, institutional documentation, their institutional history and development and management in the current century is also included in this study in the following

chapters. Although the three case studies museums have similar organisational, program and management histories and are undergoing comparative organisational changes, they are treated as separate cases. This has been undertaken to allow the unique institutional circumstances and environmental context in which they operate to be analysed. At the same time, this enables similarities and differences between the case studies to be explored and comparisons made.

The following chapter begins the analysis of one of the key themes of the thesis; the confluence of museums, new museology and new public management. It provides a background against which this major theme is discussed and developed, with references to the findings and the research questions further explored. In addition, the museum case studies within the context of the history and development of Australian museums from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century are explored and introduced.

## **4 Museums, new Museology and new public management**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Following on from Chapter 3, which outlined the Methodology and Research Design for this study, this chapter seeks to provide a broad context for the analysis of management and organisational change in Australian museums during the 1980s. It covers the historical origins and legacy of museums in Australia, the rise of new museology and the development of new public management. In exploring the main bodies of literature, this chapter also seeks to explore where the literature converges and where gaps have been identified. The themes explored in this chapter have emerged through combining information from the semi-structured interviews undertaken for this study, the three case studies and primary and secondary literature searches.

As background to the main themes identified in the research, this chapter begins by introducing the case studies before exploring the historical context and development of early 19th century museums in Australia. The case studies are presented within the broader context of the history and development of Australian museums, and as vehicles for the exploration of currents and counter-currents that have shaped cultural institutions in this country during the current century. The case studies reveal the impact of these changes within the broader framework of the historical forces of new museology and new public management on museums and their role. Incorporated here is a discussion of the impact of the tenets of new museology on museum functions, in relation to the changing interpretation and use of collections, a growing focus on audiences and education, and the shifting roles of professional staff such as curators.

Following on from an outline of the case studies, is an analysis of the organisational priorities of early 19th century museums. They appealed to small, select audiences, before later in the century evolving to become institutions for public education. Australian museums in the 20th century are then discussed within the wider international context of increasing interest in museums and heritage post Second World War and changing concepts of museums in the 1960s.

Subsequent to this contextual overview of the history of Australian museums, there is analysis of museums, new museology and its application in Australian museums. How museums have responded to new museology, in particular through the three case studies incorporated into this study, are further analysed throughout the remaining thesis chapters.

## **4.2 Museum case studies**

As initially outlined in Chapter 3 Methodology and Research Design, the three case studies chosen for this research are all state museums established during the 19th century. These museums were established as natural history museums, along the lines of scientific principles of ordering and investigating knowledge in a new land. Funded by their respective state governments, the three museums chosen have comparable histories, collections, and organisational structures. The case studies have facilitated systematic investigations into the organisations chosen, and allow some generalisations and insights into the changing organisational focus and management practices to be drawn between them.

### **4.2.1 Australian Museum-Sydney**

The Australian Museum was Australia's first museum, established in 1827. Today it has a collection of some 16 million items, encompassing 'cultural artefacts' and 'scientific specimens' (Australian Museum 2008, p. 6). The origins of the museum, however, date back to 1821, when 'some gentlemen of Sydney gathered to form the colony's first scientific society, the Philosophical Society of Australasia' with one of their aims being the establishment of a museum (Strahan 1979, p. 3). Like many of the natural history museums established in Australia during the 19th century, the Australian Museum 'relied heavily on the transplantation of cultural ideals and, initially, on avocational naturalists well-acquainted with British colleagues and societies' (Kohlstedt 1983, p. 1). During the early 19th century, the study of natural history (encompassing geology, zoology, anthropology and palaeontology) was largely considered the pursuit of non-professional 'gentlemen'. The 'amassing of a collection was a status symbol. The Australian Museum had been fortunate in having the support of several colonial governors...senior administrators...and other influential citizens...most of whom were themselves ardent

collectors' (Strahan 1979, p.29). The museum was established with this culture of scientific enquiry, and the desire to display collections reflecting encyclopaedic knowledge.

A committee managed the Australian Museum until 1853, when it was incorporated by an Act of Parliament under a Board of Trustees. The museum's trustees were given 'power to appoint and dismiss all servants of the Museum and to make by-laws governing staff and visitors' (Strahan 1979, p. 21). It was not until the 20th century that the museum came to be governed by a Trust, established under the *Australian Museum Trust Act 1975* (Australian Museum 2008, p. 2). Today, the Australian Museum's designated purpose is to 'inspire the exploration of nature and cultures'. This represents the latest evolution of an institution that by the mid-1970s was recognised as one of the 'ten best natural history museums in the world' in terms of the size and diversity of its collections and the range of scientific, educational and exhibition programs it offered (Strahan 1979, p. 99).

By the mid 1970s, the Australian Museum Trust had adopted a Corporate Plan for the museum's development over the next 10 years (Strahan 1979, p. 109). The following decade, the then Director, Des Griffin, noted in the *Annual Report* that 'providing the public with meaningful, enjoyable and relevant opportunities to discover and understand more about the world around us will be of greater urgency than before...it is necessary to establish and regularly review clear objectives and measure achievements in reaching those objectives...' (Australian Museum 1980, p. 8). By this stage in the museum's history, the need to set objectives, review performances and develop strategic plans had become paramount. Despite this, in 1980 the Australian Museum in many ways still operated much like a traditional natural history museum, with a large number of curatorial departments, related to areas of specialisation. In the Australian Museum *Annual Report* (1980/81, p.4) the museum's departments are listed as follows; Anthropology, Arachnology, Entomology, Herpetology, Ichthyology, Malacology, Mammalogy, Marine Ecology, Marine Invertebrates, Mineralogy and Petrology, Ornithology, Palaeontology, Vertebrate Ecology, Administration & Services division, Office of Community relations, Education section, Exhibitions Department, Library, Materials Conservation, Photographs and Visual Aids, Liard Island Research Station and the Australian Museum Society. The museum was run by the Australian Museum Trust and Committee of Management, consisting of ten persons, eight appointed by the Governor of NSW, on 'recommendation

of Minister responsible for Cultural activities'. The remaining two were elected by the eight appointed Trustees (*Annual Report* 1980/81, p.7) .

The Australian Museum reviewed its purpose and role in light of changing museum sector trends during the late 1980s. It was noted that as a museum it existed to 'excite and to educate as well as to conserve collections...the revision of the museum's mission and philosophy and the introduction of a new program to monitor services to customers and visitors are thus vital' (Australian Museum 1987/88, p. 6). The *Annual Report* for 1989/90 emphasises that the museum had begun to shift towards a more strategic approach to its management across all sectors of the institution. It noted that 'The mission of the Australian Museum was amended this year as part of the completion of a new corporate strategic plan for the next five years. The plans for 1990-91 reflect new commitments to effective and efficient management, research and collections, public programs and financial viability' (Australian Museum 1989/90, p. 8). For the first time, Key Performance Indicators were introduced and planning documents, comprising of Corporate Strategic Plan for the Museum as a whole and Strategic Plans for each Division were introduced. The Australian Museum's Annual Report similarly stated that 'The new plan seeks to give greater attention to where in the 'market' the Museum wants to be, compared with the position of other organisations producing like products. The aim of the Plan is to set out a new agenda for the Museum: to focus on key result areas and objectives' (Australian Museum 1989/90, p. 14). Under a Liberal government, led by Premier Nick Greiner, this represented a greater awareness by the Australian Museum and interlinking of its economic and tourism role within the state, as well as the need to demonstrate greater accountability and corporate responsiveness, decision-making and management practices.

In 1989 the Australian Museum received \$10,518,414 in income from the State government of NSW (excluding capital works) for the year (Australian Museum 1989/90, p. 78) and employed 276 staff. A greater emphasis on audiences and visitors, organisational change and marketing dominated the Australian Museum's management during the mid-1990s. Throughout the 1990s the museum's budget and staff numbers varied, but by the year 2000 the museum employed 343 staff and had an income of \$20,574,000 from the state government of NSW (Australian Museum 2000/01, p. 27). At this time, the Australian Museum underwent a difficult period of institutional change, with a redundancy program resulting in the loss of 42 staff, due to the NSW Treasury's

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concern, under Labour Premier, Bob Carr, with lower than anticipated visitors numbers, a restricted budget and over-expenditure (Australian Museum 2000/01, p. 23). At a management level, the museum similarly implemented changes in the areas of leadership reform, planning and reporting reform and industrial and workplace reform.

By 2000, the Museum's organisational structure consisted of the following departments; Strategic Initiatives & Information Management; Public Programs; Corporate & Commercial Services; Science; Strategic Initiatives, Exhibitions; Financial Services; Earth & Environmental Science; Invertebrate Zoology; Information Management; Education Services; Organisational Development; Anthropology; Conservation; Audience Research Centre; House Services; Business Services; Publishing; Vertebrate Zoology; Science Communications; Marketing, PR & Sponsorship; Multimedia Unit; Geodiversity; Materials Conservation & Built Environment; Biodiversity & Conservation and People & Place (Australian Museum 2000/01, p. 10). The museum's management had similarly changed since the 1980s, with more specific requirements for the appointment of trustees, with the *Annual Report* (2000/01, p.4) noting 'The Australian Museum Trust consists of 9 trustees appointed by the Governor on the nomination of the Minister. The trustees must include at least 1 person who has a knowledge of, or experience in, science and at least 1 person who has a knowledge of, or experience in, education'.

How and why these changes have occurred at the Australian Museum, their impact on the management of the museum and the organisational responses to these changes are explored through the development of this case study. Comparisons and further analyses will be made between the three multi-case studies - the Australian Museum in Sydney, the Melbourne Museum in Victoria, and the South Australian Museum in Adelaide - throughout this study.

### 4.2.2 Museum of Victoria (Melbourne Museum)

Founded in 1854 as the National Museum of Victoria, it became the Museum of Victoria in 1983, with responsibilities to 'collect and exhibit aspects of Victorian history' (Rasmussen 2001, p.1). Created by an Act of State Parliament, the Museum of Victoria amalgamated the National Museum of Victoria and the Science Museum of Victoria under

the control of a single council within the Ministry for the Arts (Museum of Victoria 1984, n.p.). By 1984 the museum declared itself to be a ‘research and educational institution of enormous potential in the cultural life of the community...as in other progressive museums around the world, a new kind of museum service is emerging from the old’ (Museum of Victoria 1984, n.p.).

It was at this time that the Museum of Victoria began to consider redevelopment and expansion. An initial redevelopment scenario proposed in 1985 was to expand the existing site of the Museum and State Library of Victoria on Swanston Street, Melbourne as part of a ‘knowledge precinct’. This was proposed by the state Government on the basis of the ‘maximisation of private sector involvement’ (Victoria State Library and Museum Project 1987, p. 1). The proposed museum and library expansion was to reflect the newly developed ‘economic strategies and planning, social justice, culture, tourism...[and] policies relating to technology and education’ (Victoria State Library and Museum Project 1987, p.1). However, this proposal did not eventuate. Further options for the museum’s redevelopment at various sites around central Melbourne were developed, none of which were implemented.

The museum’s redevelopment was envisaged by the Victorian state government as part of a wider plan of economic, social and city renewal with forward-thinking policies related to education and technology. During the 1980s, Victoria entered the ‘worst recession for half a century’. Under a Labour government, there was criticism of ‘a catalogue of financial calamities... undermined by factional infighting and industrial militancy by public sector trade unions’ (National Times 2012, p.1). Against this background, the Liberal National Coalition of the Premier Jeff Kennett was voted into power in October 1992.

In its second term, the Kennett government emphasised metropolitan-focused infrastructure projects, with the participation of private enterprise. In 1993 the Victorian state government announced plans for a new museum. It initially committed \$250 million towards the project under the auspices of its *Arts 21* program, with a mandate to ‘develop a number of significant public buildings and institutions’ in the state (Museum of Victoria 1995, p. 3). Throughout the last decades of the 20th century, the museum became a multi campus organisation and experienced significant development, with Scienceworks

opening in 1992, the Immigration Museum in 1998, and finally the Melbourne Museum in 2000.

It saw itself very much in the role of a modern museum, whose purpose was ‘no longer merely the preservation of... heritage for future generations. We must promote and present public debate on the natural environment, the changing role of technology and other issues central to our society’ (Museum of Victoria 1995, p. 3). Closely related to this, the museum became more strategic in terms of its management, focussing on target audiences, while adopting a corporate business ethos for its operations.

During the 1990s in Victoria, the State government adopted a rigorous reform agenda which impacted significantly on the Melbourne Museum. In 1994 the government launched *Arts 21*, the ‘strategy for the arts, into the twenty-first century’. The strategy emphasised ‘Victoria’s role as an international centre for the arts, by developing our arts infrastructure’ (Arts Victoria 1994, p.3) and highlighted the arts as an ‘industry’ which would contribute to the ‘life’ and ‘economy’ of the state, a key contributor to tourism and assist in revitalising the ‘economic, social and cultural life of the State’ (Arts Victoria 1994, p.5). Under these auspices, the Melbourne Museum was re-positioned as one of a number of ‘world class facilities’ forming a major strategy of the *Arts 21* plan and designed to ‘provide maximum enjoyment for visitors and the ability to embrace the best practice in research and exhibition display. It will be Australia’s premier museum, offering the best museum experience anywhere in the country’ (Arts Victoria 1994, p.20). This strategy was further supported by the Victorian Office of Major Project’s *Building the Future: Melbourne’s cultural infrastructure* policy which sought to increase public access to Melbourne’s cultural institutions coupled with an extensive redevelopment and building program, aimed at ensuring that ‘Victoria retains its national arts leadership role’ (Arts Victoria 1998, p.1). This largesse resulted in the final \$263 million redevelopment of the Melbourne Museum, which as previously noted opened in 2000.

By the year 2000, the Melbourne Museum’s international, organisational structure had been re-developed to better reflect its new building and greater emphasis on corporate service provision, along with the more traditional areas of natural history collecting, exhibitions and research, reflected through thematic departments. The *Annual Report* (1999/2000, p.2) lists the museum’s departments and services as follows; Major Projects;

Outreach, Technology and Information Services; Regional Services; Programs, Research and Collections; Australian Society Program; Environment Program; Human Mind and Body Program; Indigenous Cultures Program; Science Program; Technology Program; Collection Management and Conservation; Production Services; Museum Development and Corporate Services.

In 2002, with *A new Arts Policy for Victoria* the emphasis on the role of Victoria's arts sector, including museums, within the State again changed. The Labour government, under Premier Steve Bracks, sought to improve the position of the arts within the broader government policy agenda. Attendances at arts and cultural venues in Victoria were declining in terms of proportion of the total population attending (Arts Victoria 2002, p.6). At the same time, there was pressure on cultural institutions, such as the Melbourne Museum, towards greater self-sustainability in light of stagnant budgets. Overall, this policy highlighted the need for museums in Victoria, including the Melbourne Museum, to expand their potential as resources for public display, tourism, education and engaging with communities to create 'social capital' and an 'innovative society' (Arts Victoria 2002, pp.2-3), factors seen to be critical dimensions of a successful modern economy and society.

How and why these changes have occurred at the Melbourne Museum, their impact on the management of the museum, and the organisational responses to these changes from the 1980s through to the 2000s are explored through the case studies.

#### 4.2.3 South Australian Museum -Adelaide

Established in 1856, the South Australian Museum began collecting natural history and anthropological specimens from its inception. Although the museum's origins can be traced back to 1838 when the Natural History Society of South Australia was formed with a mandate to collect 'specimens of the natural history of the Colonies' (Edwards 1981, p. 19), the museum itself came under the auspices of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery Act from 1883 (Edwards 1981, p. 20). It was not until 1940 that the South Australian Museum operated under its own Act. This coincided with a period of expansion and reorganisation of the collections.

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By 1979 the South Australian Museum was subject to a study, commissioned by the then South Australian Minister of Community Development, with the 'urgent objective of identifying the best means for the redevelopment of the museum which had fallen into a serious state of neglect' (Edwards 1981, p. 47). The *Museum Policy and Development in South Australia - Final Report* (Edwards 1981) produced as part of this study, concluded that the museum showed an ongoing pattern of neglect in relation to restrictive funding, lack of collections accommodation, low staffing levels, and poor State promotion and recognition. The Final Report noted that 'A cursory glance at its history shows that the Museum has been given a low priority for a century or more. There have been very few periods when a sympathetic government, a politically aware board or an inspired and talented director have been able to present the museum's case in a way which convinced those in authority to allocate adequate support' (Edwards 1981, p. xi). Despite a few periods of good management and strategic vision in the last decade, the South Australian Museum's challenges first documented in the 1980s have continued to wax and wane in the current century.

By the 1990s, the South Australian Museum began to focus on directing its attention to four 'key result areas' which were; collections, study and research, interpretation, and management. The *Annual Report* for 1990 stated that 'the museum's programs and Corporate Plan will be implemented and maintained through the divisions of Anthropology, Natural Science and Public Programs and a Senior Executive, all being supported by the Administration Section' (Caudell 1990, p. 5). It was at this time that the museum introduced corporate planning, performance indicators, and actions plans with the aim of describing and measuring the key functions of the organisation.

Under Labour Premier, John Bannon, the Museum received support and in 1991 the South Australian Museum received a budget of \$4,558, 000 for the provision of 'Museum Services' from the Department for the Arts and Cultural Heritage (Annual Report 1990/91 p.38). This represented 3.5% of the state government of South Australia's recurrent expenditure in 1991, in comparison to 15.3% for State Library services and 2.1% for the Art Gallery of South Australia (Annual Report 1990/91 p.38). The state government's recurrent expenditure on the South Australian Museum increased to 6.6% in 1992 (Annual Report 1991/92 p.42) and 7.65% by 1994 (Annual Report 1993/94 p.43). However, the museum's *Annual Reports* during the 1990s reveal a number of issues arising around

demands being placed on the museum for greater accessibility, public programs and increased pressure on available resources. The *Annual Report 1990/91* (p.7) noted that ‘...the demands on access and information continue to increase markedly, often at a disabling rate’.

The following year the museum reported that ‘The need for detailed knowledge of animal groups towards resolving environmental, agricultural, medical and health issues increased pressure on available resources’ and that its storage was inadequate for its Anthropology and Natural Sciences collections (*Annual Report 1992/93* p.27) . This concern had becoming more critical the following year when the *Annual Report* stated that ‘...there was a steady reduction in research activities in the division of Natural Science due to the non-replacement of scientific and curatorial staff ...Costs of collecting, conserving and studying collections are increasing. A compromise between collection/acquisition of significant items and the demands on storage and display created by acquisition will inevitably affect the Museum’s research capacity’ collections (*Annual Report 1993/94* p.31). In 1995 the Museum’s *Annual Report* revealed a changing organisational culture, with commercial partnerships being developed, improvements in its public program delivery and customer service and developments in corporate planning and performance management (*Annual Report 1994/95* p.15).

Since 2000, the museum has sought to increase and strengthen its scientific and research credentials. This has been achieved by building collaborative links between the organisation, universities and other institutions and applying for Australian Research Council grants to allow part funding of new research scientist appointments, particularly with the University of Adelaide and Flinders University (*South Australian Museum 2002*, p. 7). In 2003, the *Annual Report (2002/03)*, p.2) noted that the South Australian Museum was a ‘Division of Arts South Australia. There is a Board comprising eight persons appointed by the Minister. The Board functions as a body corporate’. As an organisation, the museum consisted of three departments; Sciences, Public Programs and Directorate, under which the following sections operated; Anthropology, Biological Sciences, Collections, Earth Sciences, Evolutionary Biology, History of Science and Information (Science); Development & Design, Education & Visitor Services, Indigenous Information and Travelling Exhibitions (Public Programs) and Administration, Marketing, Museum Shop, Sponsorship and Transport (Directorate). In comparison to the Australian Museum

and Melbourne Museum, the South Australian Museum's operations are smaller and its corporate structure less complex.

In comparison to the state museums in New South Wales and Victoria, the South Australian Museum continues to struggle with low staff numbers, poor collection storage facilities, lack of space, and at times, an antagonistic and unsupportive relationship between the organisation and the South Australian state government. More recently the South Australian government, under the Liberal Premier, John Olson, has developed an arts policy, *Arts+ Investing in the Arts & our Artists South Australia 2000-2005* which has sought to strengthen the links between the arts, the economy and cultural tourism throughout the state, increasing economic development, employment and 'therefore supported morally and financially by the community' (Arts South Australia 1999, n.p.). The large and representative collection of Aboriginal artefacts in the South Australian Museum's collection was acknowledged in this policy document, along with a need to develop the museum as a 'first class arts facility', with the aim of upgrading 'the profile of SA Museum's scientific work and collection' through opening up the collections and increasing the Museum's research capacities (Arts South Australia 1999, n.p.). How this was to be achieved, in real terms, by the South Australian Museum, without commensurate resource or staff increases was not outlined in the document. In light of this, how the South Australian Museum has operated as an institution, its management and the staff and organisational responses to changes in the museum's management since the 1980s through to the 2000s are explored through the case study.

### **4.3 'Scientific ventures and colonial beginnings': the historical context and development of museums in Australia**

An overview of the history of museums in Australia provides insights into the development of these cultural institutions since their establishment in the early 19th century. The emergence of museums in Australia paralleled the emergence of scientific endeavour in this country, reflecting a passion for collecting, exchange, classification, and ordering of knowledge in a newly settled land. The 19th century in Australia coincided with a period of museum expansion worldwide. Models of ideal museums were transplanted from Britain, reflecting deep cultural, economic and social ties between

antipodean endeavour and the 'home country' at this time. By the late 19th century Australian museums had become instruments of education and moral guidance, much as they were in Great Britain.

Australia's first State museum, the Australian Museum in Sydney, was inaugurated in 1827 (Rigg 1994, p.188). However, the first museum was founded as part of the Philosophical Society of Australasia, a small society of well-educated, middle class men who intended to collect information 'with respect to the natural state, capabilities, productions and resources of Australasia' (Gore 2001, p. 39). With this in mind, early 19th century Australian museums promoted science and its economic and pragmatic use as their aim. The earliest state museums became repositories of vast, predominantly natural history, science, and, to a lesser degree, technology collections.

As van Leeuwen has argued (1995, p. 64), the development of museums in Australia emerged within the severe limitations of colonial life; 'a lack of resources, distant from the main centres of Europe and the complete indifference of the great majority of colonists to such scientific and cultural initiatives...they also acted as a meeting place, a kind of 'scientific club', with no public role whatsoever'.

During the colonial period in Australia, 'museums relied heavily on the transplantation of cultural ideals and initially on...naturalists well-acquainted with British colleagues and societies' (Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983, p.1). Natural history museums particularly were physical manifestations of the legacy of 'enthusiasm for classification and encyclopaedic knowledge', which emerged in 18th century Europe (Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983, p.1). Collectors and curators amassed examples of 'anything unusual or novel, from flora to fauna to Aboriginal skulls' (Gore 2001, p. 39). The emergence of natural history museums at this time in Australia similarly coincided with 'mastering the environment and canvassing its economic potential' (Sheets-Pyneson 1988, p.15). As a result, interwoven within a museum's function were the values of economic utilitarianism, scientific endeavour and comprehending the new natural world.

For much of the 19th century until the mid-20th century the abovementioned values prevailed in museums. They were organisations in which notions of authority and authenticity presided over an ethos of classification, specialisation, taxonomy, and the

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ordering of knowledge. A strong critique of the role and purpose of museums began to emerge by the 1960s. In response to the social, political and economic reforms that emerged mid-century, museums, like many other public institutions, were subject to increased scrutiny. Specifically, questions related to institutional issues of ‘value, meaning, control [and] interpretation’ (Stam 1993, p. 267) were raised, leading to theoretical debate about the validity of existing internal and external operations within museums. By the 1980s this reassessment of the roles of museums and their relationship with the community to promote greater access, engagement and alternative interpretations of collections became known as new museology.

Museums in Australia during the early 19th century, however, were restricted to a select few, and appealed only to a small audience. They were established as research institutions and not as educational institutions. Colonial governments provided small grants for their upkeep and staff, but ‘virtually no money was available to supply the museums...their collections depended on the ad hoc donations from local naturalists, colonial officers and expedition leaders’ (Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983, p. 4). From the 1870s museums in Australia experienced a rise in government funding, were compelled to increase their popular appeal and, in doing so, became venues for the entertainment and education of citizens.

By the 1870s there were thirteen museums in Australia. In state museums, such as the National Museum of Victoria (established in 1854), concerns were emerging about inadequate spaces for collections and the need for a larger structure ‘to ease crowded conditions’ (Sheets- Pyneson 1988, p. 54). During this period, the role of museums in Australia changed markedly. No longer simply places filled with ‘curiosities’, museums became a ‘means of providing a sound intellectual and moral culture to the working classes’ (Gore 2001, p. 40). Museum materials were included in international and intercolonial displays, and this participation provided an impetus to change the roles of museums. Rigg (1994, p. 192) suggested that the rise of museums at this time, along with international exhibitions and department stores, each emerged ‘in the second half of the nineteenth century as centres of material or intellectual consumption’. Nineteenth century museums became key public institutions, establishing the character and amalgam of values evident in modern museums. As Healy (1994 , p. 37) notes, they contained ‘traces ranging from the preservation of religious relics and the collecting of valued objects, to the cabinets of dilettanti as well as popular culture forms such as fairs, freak shows, circuses,

wax works and exhibitions'. Australian museums came to be seen as 'essentially pragmatic educational fact-providers, where common people could receive instruction and benefit' (Mulvaney 1982/83, p. 40), through exhibitions of collections, talks and institutional promotion.

Museums were increasingly expected to fulfil broad educational aims. As organisations, they became public museums directed by trustees and supported by governments. In addition, 'earlier assumptions about the museums' 'practicality' for economic enterprises had eroded...a shifting rationale for museums placed them in the domain of public education and culture' (Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983, p. 9). This shift in the purpose of museums, along with increased prosperity due to strong financial support from state governments resulted in the growth of museum collections, an increase in publications, research and scholarship, building expansions, increased staffing and extended opening hours. In many ways, the period from 1870 to 1890 represented a high point in the prosperity and development of museums in Australia.

Australian museums during the late 19th century served an increasingly ideological function as institutions that 'proclaimed the colony's civilisation, wealth and material progress...the contents of the museum demonstrated the ability of the colonising power to collect, order and interpret the culture of the colonised' (Rigg 1994, p. 189). However, the expansion of Australian museums ceased and the financial support of colonial governments began to wane, such that by '1900 it was evident that the museums had not only survived but would be forced...regularly to re-evaluate their activities' (Gregory-Kohlstedt 1983, p. 17). Straitened economic circumstances, combined with a shift in the value of scientific collections, meant that museums in Australia in the early 20th century retained their institutional focus but became stagnant organisations.

#### ***4.4 Museums in Australia during the 20th century***

In many ways, the evolution of museums in Australia during the 20th century reflected broadly similar developments and philosophies evident in most Western nations. Museums were 'almost all in some form of public ownership, held their collections in trust for people, [and] placed great importance on the quality and comprehension of their

collections' (McMichael 1989, pp. 22-23). Throughout most of the 19th century, Australian museums continued to focus on the display and collection of natural history and science specimens. As Gore states (2001, p. 41) Australian museums of natural history, science and art continued to flourish up until the outbreak of the First World War, but 'no Australian museum held a significant historical collection representing the development of Australia'. The emphasis on Australian history evident in museums since the 1940s (the Australian War Memorial opened in 1941) reflected a growing social and cultural awareness of national identity, and the deliberate construction of an independent identity beyond Britain. In contrast to Australian colonial museums, whose intentions were 'not to establish any unique identity for Australia but rather to fix the country's place in the natural world order specifically that of the Empire' (Webber 1987, p. 155), the 20th century development of museums revealed a shift in both organisational focus and priorities.

An inquiry into museums and galleries in Australia sponsored by the American Carnegie Corporation in 1933, reported on the types of museums in Australia, their staffing, funding and the nature of their collections. It was the first international perspective on the development of museums in Australia. While praising the state galleries in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide for their collections, the report noted that many museums had 'overcrowded, badly selected and un-curated collections that fortunately do not attract the public' (Markham & Richards 1933, p. 2). These concerns over the lack of adequate housing, cataloguing and acquisition processes for Australian museum collections were again raised in the influential Pigott Report in 1975.

The Carnegie Corporation Report highlighted the economic effects of the First World War on Australian museums. It noted however that by the 1920s the situation had been largely rectified and state governments were again making funds available to science and art institutions. In addition, the report commented strongly on the unique financial situation of many Australian museums: '...the amazing feature of the Australian museum service [is] its almost entire reliance upon the government ... Probably in no other country in the world is there such an overwhelming proportion of government museums and probably in no other country in the world do cities do so little' (Markham & Richards 1933, p. 13). It also acknowledged that although museums had been established in the shadow of the

British system, they had begun to develop 'on lines distinctly Australian' (Markham & Richards 1933, p. 55).

There was a substantial increase in the number of museums established in Australia after the Second World War. The war itself had impacted on and restricted programs that could be provided by individual museums. In recording the history of one of the case study museums, the Australian Museum in Sydney, Whitely (1964, p. 4) noted that 'The outbreak of World War II created problems for the safe-keeping of collections and exhibits and schemes were formulated for safeguarding the museum in the event of a national emergency'. After this period of privation, there was a surge in public interest about heritage and the Australian past. As Gore argues (2001, p. 44) this was due to the modernisation that followed the war, the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, and 'suddenly there was a new interest in the past, in the sense that attitudes to it became nostalgic and sentimental. The past began to be looked upon as something reassuring and secure'. This resulted in the emergence of a wide range of cultural heritage movements, such as that which led to the establishment of the National Trust of Australia in 1945, initially in New South Wales, and the proliferation of regional and local history museums.

At the same time, the post-war period reflected a growing understanding of what constituted a museum, both physically and conceptually. New museum forms, such as folk museums, open-air museums and living history farms emerged in Britain, Europe and the United States, after the Second World War. The first open air museum and zoo, Skansen, however, was founded in Sweden in 1891. It highlighted ways of life in the nation, in the different parts of Sweden, before the industrial revolution. New museum forms were designed to appeal to a broader audience, and emphasised the shifting perceptions of the validity of researching and exhibiting a variety of social histories within the museum context. Overall, these new museum forms were 'orientated towards the collection, preservation and display of artefacts relating to the daily lives, customs, rituals and traditions of non-elite social strata' (Bennett 1988, p. 63). In Australia this new museum ideology and democratisation of the role of museums manifested itself in open-air museums such as Sovereign Hill, the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement in Victoria and the re-creation of Old Sydney Town in New South Wales.

Today these open air museums are subject to criticism ranging from the lack of historical

authenticity in their displays, to whether they are more entertaining theme parks than museums. By the 1970s, however, these new institutional forms had ushered in substantial changes in the development and role of museums. In Australia, 'cultural politics changed with remarkable speed, and museums - those citadels of colonialism - became battlegrounds' (Griffiths 1996, p. 94). Influenced by the Pigott Report, this decade witnessed major changes in Australian museums.

The Pigott Report released in 1975, prompted major changes in Australian museums. It was a 'catalyst for the reassessment of the role and construction of history in Australian museums' (Walliss 2004, p.105). Submitted in 1975, just after the fall of the Whitlam government, the Pigott Report and its recommendations were 'products of the cultural renaissance of the Whitlam era and a recognition that the federal government should play a leading role in the cultural life of the nation' (Foster 2004, p.2). The report, in conjunction with Federal government policy, combined to 'pressure museums to examine their traditional roles and methods...to become more professional, to incorporate different types of historical experience, and to become more representative of the nation as a whole' (Gore 2002, p. 101).

In particular, the report highlighted the need for more preservation of Australian museum collections, effective policy for acquisitions, regular funding, the need to undertake systematic research on the collections and recommendations for several new museums in Australia, including national maritime and aviation museums, with only the maritime museum being realised and for a national museum of Australian. The report noted the 'traditional separation of Aboriginal people and human history in museums and, secondly, the lack of history in museums relating to the history of Australia since the coming of the British' (Gore 2001, p. 46). Appearing at a time when there was an emerging interest in the representation of new social histories in museums, such as the stories of women, ethnic minorities, working class histories and indigenous people, the Pigott Report remained a catalyst for current approaches and directions in Australian museums. In many ways it foreshadowed the development of new museology and the impact of this on Australian museums.

#### **4.5 Museums and new museology - its application in Australian museums: findings**

During the 1980s new museology emerged in museums worldwide. The abovementioned case studies of state museums in Australia have embraced many of the practices theories associated with new museology. In many ways, new museology represented the changing values of museums, particularly in relation to having a social mission beyond their traditional functions of collection, conservation, research and display. It espoused an ‘increasing recourse to interdisciplinary, modern methods of communication used in all cultural action and modern management methods which involve the consumer’ (Mayrand 1985, p. 201). The museum became a ‘place to arouse the visitor and ...[generate] anxiety about the dissolution of the order of things’ (Healy 1994, pp. 34-35).

From the research undertaken for this study, interviews with senior staff and board members at the museums and the development of the case studies, the themes of museums and new museology and the impact of new public management on museums emerged to underpin the findings.

In Australian museums new museology has frequently resulted in new forms of collection interpretation, especially in relation to the display of indigenous material. As Dauber states (2005, p.113), indigenous material in Australian museums was ‘previously contextualised within natural history descriptions and their cultures were accorded a remote, static and near extinct status...’. The scientific and humanist principles that dominated museum ideology for much of the 19th and early 20th centuries were replaced by a post-modernist revision of these principles, and a ‘moral questioning of colonial history [and the] 19th century museological paradigm’ (Dauber 2005, p.116).

In addition, ‘postmodern pluralism, with its emphasis on difference and contestation has raised concerns with foundational narratives [in museums] to a far more self-conscious level’ (Morton 2004, p. 54). As a result, museums today operate within a more politicised climate in relation to issues of Australian social and cultural history. In pragmatic terms, the application of new museology theories in museums has manifested itself in new forms of interpretation and display, ‘especially through its presentation of artefacts without a historical context or framework’ (Gore 2002, p. 102).

## Chapter 4: The New Museology

During the 1980s, authors such as Crimp (1980, p. 50) pessimistically claimed that new museology reflected a crisis of identity in museums, post-modernism's impact on, and undermining of, the notion of the museum and the subsequent loss of originality and authenticity in these institutions. Yet others (Burlington 1989, p. 683) acknowledged new museology as a means of improving museum accessibility for the general public, while remaining sceptical of replacing 'notions of aesthetic excellence with cultural relativism'. Vergo (1989, p. 3) defined new museology as a 'state of dissatisfaction with the 'old' museology, both within and outside the museum profession... what is wrong with the 'old' museology is that it is too much about museum methods, and too little about the purposes of museums'.

Although new museology concentrated on redefining, both theoretically and in practice, the relationship between museums and their social, economic and political environments to increase meaning and relevance, it has been noted that its origins lie 'in theoretical developments in other fields, most notably the social sciences' (Stam 1993, p. 269). This represented a new phase in thinking about the museum's role with regard to society. Theories derived from psychology, political science, communication and philosophy, only loosely connected with the study of museums or museology, were drawn upon to influence the development of new museology during the 1980s (Stam 1993, p. 274).

Despite the impact of new museology in the last few decades of the 20th century, the changing role and purpose of museums has its antecedents earlier in the century. Schubert (2000, p. 55) notes that since the 1950s in Europe, the 'future of the museum looked bleak; it appeared increasingly marginal to cultural discourse, outdated and ideologically suspect'. Similarly, in the United States during the 1960s, museums were under pressure to justify their relationship with, and responsibilities towards, the public. Many were 'accused of deliberately perpetuating Euro-Western culture, promoting oppression and misinformation, alienating minority involvement and omitting accurate representation of cultural diversity' (Williams 2001, p. 318). In Europe and in Canada this resulted in the development of a number of ecomuseums (Hauenschild 1988, p.5); neighbourhood museums sprang up in the United States during the 1970s and open-air or folklore museums developed in Europe. The emphasis on greater pluralism in the programs offered by these museums, in interpreting their collections in new and enlightened ways, in

broadening their relationship with the public, and allowing minority voices to be given greater prominence in developing content have become the prominent legacies of the new museology. This is evident in international as well as Australian museums today.

During the last few decades Australian museums have witnessed transitions that have fundamentally altered their purposes beyond traditional colonial museum practices. Staff interviewed at the Melbourne Museum for the case study were aware of the many changes that had occurred in museums and the difficulties faced by museums in reinventing themselves. As one staff member noted;

‘ museums need to understand that they are not the ‘arts’, when people engage with museum experiences, they are engaging with bodies of knowledge, history, science, indigenous cultures...we have a community agenda, social capital, cohesion and dialogue, museums have this’ [Transcript no.18, Museum of Victoria staff member - LS -18 August 2008]

Other museum staff at the Australian Museum in Sydney expressed the view that changes to their museum over the last twenty years or so were part of the larger evolution of museums, with these being dictated both by internal pressures and government requirements; ‘We are on the edge of a paradigm shift, some museums will close possibly... museums are a 19th century concept, it doesn’t represent what society is like in the 21st century, we need to be able to provide information to kids as well as a more educated audience’ [Transcript no.7, Australia Museum staff member -N L - 21 January 2009]

The role of museums in the current century was a similarly vexing issue for staff interviewed at the South Australian Museum. In addition to the influences of internal change and government requirements, there was an awareness of a new museological focus, new forms of interpretation and display:

‘Real objects still have to be the primary focus, museums are a 19th century idea, a bit of a curio...the mammals display is like a 60s style gallery, the Aboriginal Cultures Gallery, it was 2000 when it opened, it is a product of a new era, of the new museology, more

objects, little information...’ [Transcript no.2, SA Museum staff member - MJ - 22 September 2008]

As a museum with its beginnings in natural history, the South Australian Museum features a number of prominent and world - renowned collections in this area. By the 1950s the museum’s Australian ethnographic collection (Aboriginal collection) was described as ‘probably the largest and most representative in existence today’ (Hale 1956, p. vii). As part of the South Australian Museum Act 1976 the museum has the ‘legal responsibility to the people of South Australia to acquire, preserve and study specimens or items of significant biological, geological, archaeological, anthropological and historical interest and to disseminate knowledge arising from their study’ (Ling 1982, p.5).

During the 1990s, the research staff in specialist areas of the South Australian Museum developed Collection Management Plans for the first time. A sample of these plans reveals insights into the complexity of the collections and issues surrounding their curation, display and storage. The *Collection Management Plan - Ornithology* (1998) for example, notes that despite the collection and acquisition of bird specimens since the 1850s, systematic registration of the specimens did not occur until 1911 (Collection Management Plan 1998, p.1). Much of this knowledge was stored in the heads of specialist curatorial staff, rather than being formally documented. The Ornithology Section acquires an average of 660 specimens per annum, being the ‘only comprehensive collection of South Australian avian material... include[ing] eggs and skeletons’, with 57,000 specimens in the collection, 10,000 of which are not registered or catalogued (Collection Management Plan 1998, p. 2). While this is likely to be due to inadequate staffing, resources, and poor documentation, for these reasons the museum now utilises a more contemporary approach by digitising the collections and placing them on publicly accessible on-line databases. This, however, remains a low priority at the museum. A number of staff interviewed in September 2008 commented on the museum’s priority, above all else, to focus on the collections:

‘The role and purpose of the South Australian Museum - we should steadfastly look after the collections, this is part of the museum’s *raison d’etre* but also from the knowledge point of view to present objects and specimens for the public, the heart and importance of the institution’ [Transcript no.12, SA Museum staff member - DK- 29 September 2008]

This emphasis on the collections defines the unique nature of this museum, with another staff member interviewed noting:

‘The collections are relevant to South Australia...[and] we deliver something that is unique...the purpose of the museum is research and collections...real objects still have to be the primary focus...’ [Transcript no.2, SA Museum staff member - MJ - 22 September 2008]

Issues surrounding the use of technologies in the museum, the nature of the museum’s audiences and its marketing and promotion, are often seen as peripheral to the ‘real’ purpose of the museum, which remains its collections. Whether this is a reflection of the state of the museum’s funding, a desire for pragmatic and realistic endeavours, an inherent conservatism and aversion to risk taking and innovative programming, or a valid understanding of the distinctive role and purpose of the museum, is uncertain. At the heart of this museum’s purpose, however, remain the collection, display, and interpretation of the collections.

#### **4.6 *Museums and new museology: discussion***

Research on museums over the last 20 years suggests that there has been a significant change in the roles of museums. During this period, museums have increasingly attempted to aim for greater ‘democracy’ and social agency in both their role and purpose. In many ways new museology represented a philosophical shift in thinking about the museum’s relationship to society. As Hauenschild (1988, p. 5) argued, new museology sought to alter the ‘working methods, content and structures of an institution that some thought outdated. The purpose was to help museums achieve social meaning ...in regard to the museums’ concrete contribution to everyday life’. New museology represented an all-encompassing analysis, re-consideration and re-evaluation of the validity of existing educational, structural, and curatorial practices within museums.

The implications of new museology for museum management in Australia are, in many ways, still being felt within the institutions. Although new museology did not represent a

definitive break with the past, it did represent a shift in priorities within institutions. In particular, it had a significant impact on management and business practices within museums. Museums are encouraged, and indeed often required, for their economic and political survival, to follow the same organisational, funding and market driven focus as corporate businesses. This is to ensure that they remain visitor-centred and fiscally responsible public sector institutions. The impact of new museology on both internal and external aspects of museum operations and management has been significant. As Williams states (2001, p.316) the ‘dominant philosophies of museums can most often be detected through their operations and programs rather than by their written treaties’. The new organisational structures and management practices which have developed since the advent of new museology continue to have ramifications for museums today.

While it may be argued that the replacement of previous forms of interpretation, programming and philosophy in museums with a new commitment to social issues, audiences, and education has led to a renewed legitimacy, it is questionable whether museums can effectively act as positive forces for social change at a fundamental level within communities. Criticism of the new museology is levelled at whether museums can indeed become more egalitarian, and whether or not their role is to become more politically and socially orientated. As Munson (2000, p. 53) states ‘the ‘new museology’ has converted them [museums] to ‘revisionist’ institutions...dedicated more to altering visitors’ beliefs than to providing the opportunity to learn through looking’. The author further suggests that today’s museums assume that we visit them to ‘affirm and to promote the interest of our group identity. Visiting the museum is not an intellectual act, but a political one’ (Munson 2000, p. 55).

The seemingly intrinsic political nature of museums received increased scrutiny under new museology. As a storehouse of historical and cultural knowledge, the ‘knowledge museums purport[ed] to disseminate [was] not neutral; knowledge is not discovered, but is socially produced and reflective of the power relations of the society within which it is situated’ (Duclos 1994, p. 5). Influenced by this, museums began to work with and expand their associations with disenfranchised communities (most often in Australia with indigenous groups) to reduce a sense of exclusion, to allow new voices of authority beyond the dominant elite to participate in museum programs, and to offer multiple interpretations of collections. Most often, it was new interpretations and the changing

values ascribed to museum objects that arose out of new museology that has had a significant impact on the changing roles and purposes of museums since the 1980s.

During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the collection, conservation, ordering and preservation of objects was of prime importance to museums. They had intrinsic value and often defined the status of museums, their authority and reputation. In contrast, it has been argued that new museology changed the importance and significance of objects within museum collections so that today they only serve 'to illustrate themes. They have no value in themselves for 'new' museums, but simply help tell the story' (Hauenschild 1988, p.117). While it is doubtful that museum objects have regressed to being only used as props, in many contemporary institutions the 'focus on objects has...come to be seen as both traditional and conservative...To become more democratic...the museum must contextualize, interpret...and to some extent displace the object from the centre of attention' (Witcomb 1997, p. 383). The shift has been towards using objects and collections to educate visitors. This is ironic, however, given that the call of new museology was to de-centre the authority of interpretation in museums.

Under new museology the displaced object has been replaced with new forms of technology, such as interactive exhibits, audio-visual film, sound and oral recordings, in order to present a variety of interpretive mediums that claim greater 'objectivity' than material items. As a result, the traditional approach to displaying objects chronologically, geographically, or as part of a large narrative in museums has, on the whole, been replaced. The subjectivity that was previously believed to be associated with objects when they were made to 'stand for wider social characteristics such as morality, degree of technological advancement, quality of culture and ...categories such as taste' (Witcomb 1997, p. 396) has been dispensed with. As a result, new museology has had an important impact on modes of display in museums.

Changing notions of interpretation have meant that past displays of static objects are no longer the norm in many museums. In particular, indigenous objects and ethnographic and anthropological collections in many national, natural history and science museums have received significant attention in light of these concerns. During the 19th century, the curatorial methodology emphasised an evolutionary approach, such that indigenous objects were viewed as 'fetishes or emblems of a supposedly vanishing culture' (Neill

2004, p.180). Today these displays have undergone a complete revision, with new museology encouraging museums to be more inclusive and more representative of diverse communities, irrespective of their race, culture, ethnicity or nationality (Krouse 2006, p. 170). In countries with heterogeneous populations and multiple ethnic groups, such as Australia, Canada, and the United States, new museology may be able to assist in achieving these aims within museums. However, the degree to which new museology can contribute to social development and cultural integration, and how this can be effectively and sustainably achieved within museums remains open to conjecture.

Whether or not they include indigenous collections, museum displays change more frequently now than in the past. Schubert (2000, p.135) argues that this organisational and program transition has ‘marked the greatest revolution the museum concept has undergone in its entire history. Curatorial displays were no longer writ in stone as in the past but subject to continuous revision and turnover’. Museums now strive to achieve a dynamic dialogue with their audiences through the contextualisation and re-contextualisation of museum objects, to allow the presentation of multiple meanings, narratives and styles. Since the rise of new museology museums rely ‘more on interpretation and less on absolute truth. The new...museum reflects the dynamics and multicultural nature of late twentieth-century society, with its questioning approach and insatiable appetite for novelty’ (Schubert 2000, p. 135). The changing nature of the relationship between museums and their audiences represents an important tenet in new museology, one that continues to have an impact on museum practice today. An understanding of the evolution of the development of museums and the changing nature of their relationships with the public since the 19th century helps to further illuminate the organisational transitions that have taken place during the last few decades.

### **4.7 *Museums, new museology and communities: findings***

During the 1980s a growing interest developed in museum audiences. Weil (1989, p. 32) proposed that fundamental to the existence of museums was the public. He noted that ‘central to museums should be the notion that the primary...relationship of museology is between the museum and its visitors and other clients - not between the museum and its collections’. A prominent theme to emerge from interviews with Melbourne Museum staff

and board members was the recurring importance that the museum placed on its audiences. In addition, the museum was seen as a 'community asset' and an organisation that added value to the community, whether on-line or through its physical presence. Staff members felt that community engagement and participation would play an increasingly prominent role in the museum's future;

'I do think our core business is to collect the material culture and to carry it forward...I think [our] role though is really about providing access to the world way beyond the exhibitions and it is about being part of the community, linking in with the community' [Transcript no.16, Melbourne Museum staff member - RH- 16 August 2008]

Closely related to the interest in refocusing the museum as a community and educational asset was the ongoing challenge of encouraging visitors and retaining museum audiences. The increasing emphasis on attracting larger and more diverse audiences was seen to have a great impact on transforming the museum into a more populist institution. A board member interviewed stated:

'It was more elitist then [in the past] and I think you can't be elitist now and the importance of attracting people from lower socio-economic groups is important for their benefit and ultimately the community's benefit' [Transcript no.6, Melbourne Museum Board member – MP - 14 August 2008]

This focus on the public is not, however, new. Despite new museology contesting 'progressive narratives of nationhood...[it] renews the eighteenth-century effort to make museums into popular, rather than elite institutions' (Neill 2004, p.183). The emphasis on popularity and attracting ever larger, broader and more diverse audiences to museums since the 1980s has been underlined by fiscal and economic concerns. Museums, like many other publicly supported institutions, have increasingly been expected to 'justify their activities and effectiveness' (Karp & Levine 1993, p. 44). By making their collections more accessible to the public, museums are increasingly engaging in mass education and learning.

For many museums, their survival (and continual funding) is often linked to becoming more visitor centred, interactive, and entertaining institutions. As van den Bosch notes

(2005, p. 82) new museology has produced major changes in organisational practice so that today, 'Like a shopping mall, museums are seeking to attract a broad range of visitors who will stay as long as possible and who are less interested in originality...than in the additional opportunities for consumption and interaction'. The shift away from objects and artefacts within museums in favour of the visitor, is 'as much about the revenue making customer focus of contemporary museum practice as about the democratisation of the learning environment' (Neill 2004, p.187). Similarly, in transforming themselves into more engaging and educational organisations, museums have undertaken to increase their community relevance and civic responsibility. The museum audience and its needs have, in many ways, become key to a museum's success, and have resulted in changing organisational practices and policies.

Museum marketing has increasingly focused on attracting new audiences. As Schubert emphasises (2000, p. 80) 'social and political shifts [of] the 1980s brought the discovery of the museum audience...how best to serve these visitors and retain their attention and loyalty has become the museum's greatest challenge'. Similarly, understanding the 'visitor experience and the nature of self-directed learning in informal settings' (Griffin 2004, p. 3) such as museums, represents a major organisational transition since the development of new museology in the 1980s. The emphasis on audiences and the increasing activities of museum education remain a large part of today's relationship between museums and their public.

### **4.8 Museums, the new museology and communities: discussion**

The impact that new museology has had on museum practice and management remains ongoing and evolving. Of significance is the changing role of some museum staff, particularly those previously associated with traditional forms of expertise and specialisation. The focus on research, scholarship, connoisseurship and acquisitions - traditionally the preserve of curators and scientists - has been considerably challenged by the development of new museology. The incursion of market, social, political and economic forces into museums since the 1980s has resulted, to a degree, in the declining value and significance of specialised staff roles. In relation to curators, 'an internal focus on research and collection development was no longer sufficient. Instead, curators were

being asked to become expert popular communicators' (Witcomb 2003, p. 75). During the 19th century it has been argued that curators were 'truly secure in their own expertise and seasoned judgement...there was little tension between professional autonomy and organisation needs' (Mayer 1991, p.34). The same cannot be said today.

Since the 1980s in many United States museums, the role of education staff has been relegated to that of public communicator and distinguished from the content expert - a title reserved for the curator' (Williams 2001, p. 318). Increasingly diverse, technologically driven, non-hierarchical and readily accessible sources of information provided through the Internet have similarly challenged the authority and centrality of museum knowledge in the public mind. While some authors (Mayer 1991, p. 37) present a bleak and somewhat narrow, mechanistic view of the future of specialised knowledge in museums, suggesting that '[it] holds little for scholarship and acquisition...[being] one of building, refurbishment, public relations, commercial endeavour, marketing, fundraising, business management and audience research', others see the shift away from specialisation as an opportunity for greater popularity, commitment and dynamism within museums (Schouten 1993, p. 385). Whatever the outcome of this change in staff roles, museums are increasingly presenting themselves as educational and cultural facilities. Their orientation is more than ever focused on the perceived needs of visitors.

Museums are encouraged, and indeed often required, for their economic, social and political survival, to follow the same organisational, funding, and market driven focus as businesses. As Stam (1993, p. 280) contends 'implications of the new museology for both internal and external aspects of museum operations involve the integration of things formerly seen as separate; internally, compartmentalisation is challenged and external isolation from the larger society is criticised'. Since the advent of new museology, new organisational structures and management practices, together with changes to the management of public sector organisations, continue to have ramifications for museums today. Policy changes arising from economic rationalism and new public management continue to impact on the contemporary role of museums.

In light of criticisms raised by new museology, museums have increasingly attempted, through exhibitions, research, and public programs, to increase collaboration with community groups, be more responsive to diverse audiences and allow multi-voiced

interpretations of objects and collections. This has been undertaken in museums while aiming for greater democracy and social agency in both their methodological approach and theoretical orientation. As a result of these more contemporary approaches to the interpretation of objects, museums in Australia continue to wrestle with the value, integrity and importance of collections and how best to display them.

#### **4.9 Museums, the public sector and new public management: findings**

The implications of changes wrought by new public management on Australian museums are multiple. In particular, it has led to requirements for greater financial accountability, strategic and corporate planning, performance and organisational evaluation and an increasing concern with governance. Uppermost in the challenges and difficulties faced by Australian museums today is the ever-present concern with funding. While museums earlier last century were comparatively well funded by governments, today there has been a decline in operational funding, due to state government reductions in annual budgets, the increased cost of utilities, and the need to increasingly source non-government revenue through philanthropy, commercial sources, bequests, and collaborative projects. The case study research at the Melbourne Museum revealed that the increasing reliance on external funding sources and the museum's varied commercial operations (such as the shop, café, IMAX cinema and paid car parking) was often seen as problematic by the museum staff. Not only did the commercial funding sources potentially compromise the integrity, role, and function of the museum, but it was also revealed that the new reliance on alternative revenue sources might result in less regular government funding in the long term. As one interviewee stated of the museum;

'Governments never have enough for all of their cultural needs and they see us now as being popular, successful, hosting a range of, you might call them, commercial partners and they think that success means we can fund ourselves better so success doesn't breed success. Success breeds minginess' [Transcript no.17, Museum of Victoria Board member - S O'S - 21 August 2008]

Of primary concern amongst the museum staff, however, was the concept of sustainable funding; funding which would cover operational and staff costs yet provide adequate

resources for one-off project work, often of an innovative nature.

Since the early 1980s, there have been a number of changes in the public sector, particularly the management of public sector organisations and government departments. In Australia, museums form part of the public sector, often as statutory authorities as previously discussed in the Introduction. Faced with the economic downturn of the 1970's, Western governments reversed the expansionism that had characterised post-war spending and introduced sweeping economic and structural reforms under the broad policy of 'modernising government'. These reforms altered the basis for public funding and the relationship between governments and service providers, such as museums. The traditional model of the public sector valued administration. However, this system 'tended to be rigid and bureaucratic based on process instead of outcomes and on setting procedures to follow instead of focussing on results' (Hughes 1998, p. 22). Drawn from both economics literature and from management theory, the new public management sought to improve organisational performance whilst giving 'expression to particular political values about the size and role of government' (Stewart 1997, p. 7). The management of the public sector shifted towards a greater emphasis on efficiency, accountability and strategy, frequently adapting theories and models from the private sector. Corporate planning became prevalent during the 1980s in the public sector, with whole organisations 'subject to clear, goal driven priorities' (Considine 1994, p. 237).

Government departments and public sector organisations were required to be more responsive to the needs of citizens, to be more customer focussed and to view users of government services as consumers from the 1980s. In addition, financial, economic, and commercial trends significantly impacted upon the public sector such that the 'globalisation of capital markets and commerce... fundamentally changed the role of governments and bureaucracies' (James 1997, p. 74). The adoption of new public management meant that the public sector aimed to become a 'flexible, market-based form of public management' (Hughes 1998, p.1). As the public sector adapted to these requirements, consequent changes also occurred in the areas of accountability, external relations, internal systems, and processes in relation to the government itself (Hughes 1998, p.6).

Advocates of new public management hailed the reforms that ensued in public sector

institutions, but their introduction was not without controversy. New public management arose as part of the broader development of theories of economic rationalism and private vs. public good. The economic downturn in the late 1970s ‘provided the ... Australian governments with a very powerful incentive to rein in public expenditure and maximise public sector productivity. Economic thinkers advocated market solutions to national economic problems...[the] primary purpose was to make government smaller, leaner and more efficient’ (Zifcak 1994, p. 26). There has been criticism that the management methods adapted from the private sector for the public sector were not appropriate and applied without ‘due regard for the essential differences between the private and public sectors’ (Corbett 1996, p. 247). At the same time, the managerialist approach has been seen to have provided much needed improvement to the efficiency of the public sector.

The varied goals, awareness of complex political and social circumstances and ‘multiplicity of stakeholders’ provides a complex context in which public sector managers operate. This makes the task of managing public sector organisations particularly demanding. Overall, the large scale change to the management of the public sector since the 1980s emphasises ‘changing the organisational culture to better reflect that of private sector companies operating in a commercial environment’ (Bradley & Parker 2001, p. 349). In addition, as Halligan (2009, p.139) notes, ‘the reform era elevated “management” as a core concept of public sectors, a centrality reflected in the reform slogans of managerialism and new public management (NPM)’. These changes have continued to impact on the evolving role of museums.

### ***4.10 Museums, the public sector and new public management: discussion***

The public sector, which carries out the business of governments and their policies, came under attack for its bureaucratic nature during the last decades of the 20th century. As Stewart notes (2002, p. 71), by the 1980s the Australian public sector was considered to be ‘too large for the work they were required to perform...did not account adequately for the resources they used...[and] there was considerable dissatisfaction with both the performance, and to some extent, the ethos of traditional public administration’. The management and efficiency of the public sector was questioned, giving rise to a new emphasis on results, strategy, flexibility and accountability.

A new model of management and bureaucracy developed within the public sector, focussing on ‘results [rather] than process, on responsibility [rather] than its evasion and on management [rather] than administration’ (Hughes 1998, p. 51). This broad rationale for change within the public sector, which began in the 1980s, affected museums not only in the ways in which they were managed, but also their organisational structures. Both external pressures from governments and internal pressures for more business-like processes resulted in a more instrumental view being taken of museum agendas. Within museums, new priorities arose in relation to the evaluation and value of visitors, moves to measure ‘outputs’, and the use of performance indicators for internally driven goals. Much of this was derived from new public management, which presented a new concept of management: one in which changes to accountability, external relations, internal systems and to the government itself dominated (Hughes 1998, p. 6). As Considine states (1994, p. 224) ‘pressures on organisations have changed...complex environments and political issues have invaded the domains of public...organisations, management science has attempted to shift attention from operations to strategy’. As a result, new public management ideology came to dominate thinking about the role of the public sector. Ambitious, clear, goal driven priorities were considered the overriding organisational priority, including those of museums.

The temporal convergence during the 1980s of new museology and new public management forced a fundamental shift in defining the role and purpose of museums; where their organisational focus now lay, and how they operated in society. The requirements for museums to provide a greater number of services developed in light of external public demand, coupled with the requirements of new public management and internal pressures within organisations to operate in a more business-like manner. An analysis of these issues and their impact on three Australian museums is discussed through the case studies in this thesis. The resulting organisational and managerial changes to museums are discussed further throughout the thesis.

#### ***4.11 Museums- accountability and measuring performance: findings***

The evaluation of programs, exhibitions, audiences and management of museums is a process that has only been developed and undertaken in a systematic manner within the

last 15 to 20 years. In comparison to other public sector organisations, the evaluation of museums and their programs has, in the past, been sporadic and piecemeal. The increasing competitiveness of museums in the leisure sector has accentuated the need to focus on customer satisfaction and this is the area most often evaluated in cultural institutions. Much of the current internal evaluation undertaken by museums focuses on visitor behaviour, primarily examining satisfaction or dissatisfaction with exhibitions, programs and information provision.

There are concerns regarding the ways in which museums are operating and how their outputs are measured. This has led to a large number of museums using performance indicators; a form of internal evaluation that frequently provides quantitative and qualitative data in relation to set organisational objectives, progress measurements, and resource allocation. One of the most common forms of evaluation in museums is the measuring of customer satisfaction or visitor experiences. Recently there has been debate within museums about how collections are displayed and whose stories (or voices) are represented in these institutions. This has 'not only impacted upon the nature of customer experiences that museums have to offer, but has also influenced customer expectations. There is a tension between the emphasis on creating a pleasurable experience and the preservation of significant objects' (Rowley 1999, p.304). This tension may relate to the allocation of funding within museums, and whether it should be used for more traditional museum functions such as object preservation and display, or more contemporary concerns with entertainment, public programs, and learning.

Data on levels of satisfaction by the public with museum programs and services, audience surveys, audits, interviews, and observational studies are carried out to better understand the range of visitor experiences within a museum. How the visitor experiences a museum underpins much contemporary visitor evaluation research. This has been supported by studies about who/ who does not visit museums and why, the rise of audience segmentation studies and their application within the museum context and marketing. Together these factors have had a significant influence on the management of museums in Australia during the last few decades.

Visitor evaluation studies reveal 'visitor characteristics, reactions and behaviours in recreational settings' (Pearce & Moscardo 1985, p. 281) so that demographic and

psychological profiles of audiences may be developed. Much of this information is of increasing importance to museum managers. However, visitor evaluation techniques used often do not 'allow for problem-orientated recommendations to be made to management. At best, they can indicate general trends in satisfaction. What is necessary in this area is better definition of goals, attention to questionnaire construction, improved sampling techniques and more insightful statistical analysis' (Pearce & Moscardo 1985, pp. 298-299). Visitor evaluation information is used by museums for satisfaction surveys and in the development of education programs. Operationally they are used to determine where managerial and program emphasis should lie and to obtain a greater understanding of museum audience demographics and social trends. On the whole, audience and visitor evaluation increasingly provides museums with a form of data which allows a wide range of information to be gleaned regarding visitors and non-visitors, bridging the 'gap between visitor's expectations and needs and the museum's goals' (Borun & Korn 1999, p. vii).

Of equal importance in today's museums is evaluation in the form of performance measurement and performance indicators. Although performance measures often rely on assessing quantitative data related to a museum's mission, goals and achievements over a particular time span, many non-economic factors are becoming important measures in museum evaluation. As Sukel (1994, p. 263) notes 'The goals of museums may seem intangible but they are very real. They are cultural, rather than economic, and therefore evaluations of museums should be tendered with an understanding of the correct goals, correctly defined'. Despite this, the evaluation of museums is often difficult to undertake across the whole cultural sector and meaningful comparisons are not possible, or are not undertaken, in light of the many variables that occur between museums in terms of their size, type, collections, function, funding and resources. In addition, museum staff interviewed expressed concerns that constant measuring and evaluation within their organisations was often counterproductive and questioned whether it added value to museum programming. As a senior staff member at the Melbourne Museum noted;

'I think what happens now is that the process of approving things becomes more complicated and there are so many more hoops that have to be jumped through. It does mean that we're more conservative. It means that we tend to try and minimise risks...people are watching us and being assessed by all sorts of criteria so it does strangle

some creativity and potential' [Transcript no. 9, Museum of Victoria staff member – L D-H - 15 August 2008]

Despite museums being subject to, and embracing a wider array of forms of evaluation and assessment, the increasing reliance on this practice for management decision-making is not without its critics. Museums, like many other organisations are today 'under pressure to provide a greater quantity of hard data about the ways in which their resources are being used and in what measure their stated program goals are actually being met' (Weil 1994, p. 342). The use of performance indicators is an essential tool in Australian museums today to justify their survival. Opposing this however is the idea that the 'values with which museums deal are essentially intangible and...to try to use performance indicators in such a setting is a futile effort to measure the immeasurable' (Weil 1994, p. 342).

While many performance measures used in museums are generated internally - such as collection documentation numbers - others are externally driven standards developed by governments, funding bodies or broader economic policy imperatives. As institutions museums do 'require robust statements reporting the economic, social, cultural and environmental impacts and benefits that they provide and explaining the methodologies used for evaluating those impacts and benefits' (Ambrose & Paine 2006, p. 253). Given this, the use of evaluation by museums remains a contentious issue, and the forms of evaluation and performance measurement, used to quantify and analyse the organisations, their functions, programs, audiences and outputs continue to develop. The ramifications of this on the current and future role of Australian museums will be further analysed in the following chapter on museums as organisations.

### **4.12 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has highlighted the elements and circumstances which have underpinned the changing nature and function of museums in Australia over the last few decades. A range of external factors, such as new museology and new public management have combined to impact on the social, economic, and political nature of museums, challenging their organisational identities, and providing a catalyst for institutional

transformation. As Ross (2004, p. 84) states in relation to the impact of new museology on museums; ‘a critical stance is being taken towards old assumptions and ways of working...older narratives of empire, class, race and science are seen by professionals as inappropriate to the requirements of a pluralistic, multicultural society’. Similarly, this chapter has provided a historical context for the development of museums in Australia since the 19th century and how this preceded the changes in museums and their role which occurred late in the 20th century.

The chapter has explored the forces of change and reform that have impacted on museums as part of the public sector in Australia. The major trend of a market orientated ideology in public sector management, in which concepts from the private sector have been integrated, and notions of public good questioned, have similarly impacted on organisational structure and purpose in museums. These changes, as McPherson (2006, p. 52) states, have resulted in a ‘concomitant reconfiguration of the visitor from public spectator to private consumer ...[and] have, inevitably, brought about significant changes in the internal power structure of the museum’. How these changes impacted on Australian museums was evident in data gathered from museum staff interviews. This broad discussion places these findings amongst the current research and literature, enhancing our understanding of current management challenges facing Australian museums. The impact of the confluence of new museology and new public management on museums will be further analysed in the following chapter.

## **5 Museums as Organisations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter highlighted the relationship between museums, new museology and new public management, with the development of museums as hybrids. This leads to a consideration of the nature of museums as organisations and the issues that have emerged in relation to the role key internal and external factors have had in shaping changes in museum management over the last few decades. The first section of the chapter looks at museums as organisations and the ways in which they can be regarded as hybrids, while still operating as part of the public sector in Australia. In particular, this section analyses the tensions created within museums associated with the need to seek diversified funding sources; the rising economic basis for the provision of cultural services and the increasing reliance on commercial ventures to supplement government funding. These factors are examined in relation to the evolving roles and management of museums as a result of these changes.

The second part of the chapter discusses the application of governance to museums, from the perspective of internal changes related to best practice, greater accountability, and the adoption of commercial management practices. In addition shifting external expectations in relation to the board, stakeholders and state governments are also examined. These factors are considered in relation to the three case study museums and the Australian museums sector in general.

The following section considers the relationship between Australian museums and state governments. Specifically, the three case study museums are analysed to provide insights into how management staff deal with the enculturation of government processes within their organisations, while still searching for a successful language with which to articulate and promote the values of museums to state governments.

The chapter then concludes by examining a number of ways in which museums are being incorporated into wider social and economic agendas at state government level, including cultural policy. Why this is occurring and the ramifications of this for museums as

organisations, is similarly discussed through the three case study museums. This chapter relates to the key, guiding research questions of how and why museums as public sector organisations have adapted and changed their management practices since the 1980s.

## **5.2 Museums as hybrids? : findings**

When fieldwork was undertaken at the three case study museums - the Australian Museum in Sydney, the South Australian Museum in Adelaide and the Melbourne Museum in Victoria very few of the staff or board members interviewed mentioned their respective museums within the context of them being hybrid organisations. This may simply be a matter of terminology. While there were no specific questions asked regarding changes in organisational management practice in the museums, it was revealing that the interviewees often did not conceptualise their museums from an organisational perspective in this way. However, many of the museum staff were aware of the dominating relationship their organisations had with the respective state governments, due to financial, human resource and service provision within the organisation. Interviewees were often more aware of the relationship between the museum, the state governments and the need for change in management practices, rather than how the museum operated as hybrid organisations. As a board member at the Melbourne Museum noted:

‘How to run a museum...there has to be better processes for project management and risk assessment...it is now about being a good ‘business’...public sector management and corporate management practices need to be adapted to the museum...there is awareness that corporate management principles can be applied at the Melbourne Museum’

[Transcript no.1, Melbourne Museum Board member - S H - 12 August 2008]

Similarly, the need to increase commercial revenue, to realign the museums’ operations, processes and structures to incorporate new funding sources through sponsorship and fund raising were seen by many interviewed as prominent concerns. Few questioned this new reality for museums, or mentioned this is in relation to the organisations operating as hybrids. As DiMaggio (1986, p. 9) has noted when referring to American museums, the ‘combination of tensions and constraints [are] peculiar to our mixed system of public subsidy, private patronage and earned income’. The situation in Australia is comparable.

The need for ongoing funding and additional revenue, sourced from a variety of sources, was seen by those interviewed as crucial, and in many ways inevitable to the ongoing function of Australian state museums. Weisbrod (1997, p. 543) has acknowledged that museums face enormous obstacles when they are confronted with increased service demands but do not have adequate resources to meet those demands. He notes that ‘the result is that... [museums] search for new sources of revenue, and this brings them into increasingly complex relationships with the rest of the economy’ (Weisbrod 1997, p. 543). For museums, this is most evident in increased competition for the public’s leisure time, the provision of educational and entertainment programs, and the emergence of cultural tourism.

Museum staff and board members interviewed often expressed a strong sense of the need to secure more diverse funding sources, operate in a more business-like manner and align themselves with extrinsically generated requirements, most frequently from state governments. As a senior staff member at the Australian Museum noted:

‘The challenges are adapting to the changes...an overhaul of the entire senior management system...the museum was in crisis, the government replaced the senior management team to align it better with the NSW public service, prior to this there was a sense that it was not part of the public service, [that] we should be doing our own things. Overall the Director’s agenda is to maintain identity and independence but align with the state government’ [Transcript no. 11, Australian Museum staff member -L C - 30 January 2009]

In the Australian Museum’s *Corporate Strategic Plan* from 2008-09 to 2012-13, cited in the *Annual Report 2007-2008*, mention is made of the political context in which the museum operates and the need to view the museum’s goals in relation to the state’s broader agendas. It notes that for the organisation there are a ‘range of challenges and opportunities that inform the Australian Museum’s direction. These include; the goals and objectives of the NSW State Plan, the need to remain relevant in a rapidly changing world...[and] maintaining and building corporate capabilities in the face of declining government funding’ (Annual Report 2008, p.22). However, in *Investing in a Better Future: NSW State Plan* (2009, p. 44) the only relevant objective to the Australian Museum (and to all other cultural institutions in the state) is a priority to ‘Increase the

number of people participating in the arts and cultural activity increase visitation and participation in the arts and cultural activity by 10% by 2016'. Given this, the contribution of the Australian Museum to the New South Wales' State agenda is couched only in economic and utilitarian terms.

While a portion of each state government's funding budget supports large facilities such as art galleries, museums and libraries, there has been a 'discernible shift from a 'supply' side approach to arts support to one that emphasizes demand, audience development and the arts as an 'industry' (Stevenson 2000, p. 71). While it can be argued that museums and galleries exist for cultural and social reasons, and are no longer viewed by governments purely as benevolent organisations for the public good, it can also be seen that 'economic impact analysis promote[s] an instrumental attitude to the arts. The arts become an instrument for creating jobs and economic development. Culture is used as a means of achieving other goals and not as a goal in itself...' (Hansen 1995, p. 315). Being hybrid organisations provides Australian museums with little protection from state government priorities that stress the economic basis for the provision of cultural services. As DiMaggio (1986, p.12) states in relation to museums in the United States (but equally applicable to Australian state museums); 'If non-profit cultural organizations are to continue to provide alternatives...in the face of economic constraint ... policy makers must nurture fiscal environments that enable such organizations to pursue missions that are distinctive in substance as well as rhetoric'. The need to raise non-government revenue in addition to state funding remains a pertinent issue for Australian museums.

However, few of the staff or board members interviewed during fieldwork necessarily felt that this was negative; they simply accepted that it was inevitable, given the changes in government funding for state museums and the need to increasingly align the role of museums with larger State economic, social and tourism policies. The impact of this increasing reliance on external funding sources was viewed by staff through a lens that equated compromising institutional goals with concerns about the lack of innovation and an aversion to risk taking at the institution. As a senior staff member at the South Australian Museum stated:

'...there has been a lot of pressure put on the organization, we are more performance geared, [there is a sense] of doing more with less, a sense of being scientifically correct,

but also pressure to be populist, innovative ideas are not taken up, there is now a sense that if it's not popular and not making money it won't happen; money is being dragged away from some of the disciplines to fund others...[it] has become much more corporatised' [Transcript no. 2, South Australian Museum staff member - M J - 22 September 2008] This highlights the increasing emphasis placed on the commercial viability of museums as organisations. The longer term ramifications of this for the changing roles and purpose of these institutions in the future remains to be seen.

### **5.3 *Museums as hybrids? The ambiguity of new public management, commercial and not-for-profit practices: discussion***

The organisational restructuring in the cultural sector, of which museums are a part, developed through the new public management, has created tensions between the areas of public and private operation within museums. Increasingly, museums are operating in a more commercially focused manner, through incorporating shops, cafes, licensing and fee for service programs, into their day to day activities. The external environment in which many museums in Australia now operate has created pressure to deliver a greater and ever increasing array of services. Budgets and recurring funding for state museums does not remain static and is subject to increase or decreases on an annual basis. At the same time, museums themselves are expected to respond to requirements for greater financial and community accountability, increased governance, and significance placed on the role of stakeholders, organisational performance and evaluation.

A recent publication, *Cultural Funding by Government, Australia, 2010-11* (ABS 2012, n.p.) reveals that over the last few years, spending by all levels of government in Australia (local, state and national) on cultural activities has remained relatively consistent since 2008. Of this spending, \$3,118.8m (47%) is from state and territory governments, in comparison to 34% federal spending and 19% from local government (ABS 2012, n.p.). The second largest category with the highest expenditure funded by the Australian Government in 2010-11 was museums and cultural heritage (\$219.3m). In addition, the second highest expenditure funded by state and territory governments in 2010-11 was museums and cultural heritage (\$482.9m). Despite this, funding on a state-by-state level remains in a state of flux. In New South Wales, the estimate of cultural expenditure by the

state Government was \$835.4m or 27% of the cultural expenditure by state governments in 2010-11. This represents a decrease of 3% from \$862.4m in 2009-10 (ABS 2012, n.p.). By comparison, the estimate of cultural expenditure by the Victorian Government rose 8% to \$580.4m in 2010-11, yet this estimate was lower than New South Wales, at 19% of the total estimate of state government cultural expenditure. In South Australia, the total estimate of state government expenditure by the Government was only \$296.3m or 10% of the total estimate of expenditure by the state government. However, this represents a rise of 6% in 2010-11 following a 1% fall in 2009-10 (ABS 2012, n.p.). The figures for New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia reveal that fluctuations in budgets and spending on the state's cultural activities, including museums, vary greatly. In some instances, the state museums are delivering more services on a decreasing funding base. Changes in funding for the case study museums, the Australian Museum, Sydney, Melbourne Museum, Melbourne and South Australian Museum in Adelaide are subject to variables such as growing awareness, value and importance placed on cultural economics by state governments which impact on State priorities, and cultural tourism and cultural policy in relation to museums by state and federal governments.

Hand - in - hand with this emphasis on the economic value of museums has been an increase in the popularity of cultural attractions. As DiMaggio notes (1986, p.4), there has been a marked increase in the number and scale of cultural institutions since the end of the Second World War, both in the United States and elsewhere, coupled with an increase in cultural consumption. In Australia, however, museums are just one of a number of institutions that exist as a 'mixture of government, third sector and for-profit organizations' (Lyons 2001, p.60). Similarly, government controlled and funded museums in Australia 'behave very like the non-profits and actively seek donations and sponsorship' (Lyons 2001, p. 62). The impact of new public management along with the increased need by museums to seek external funding sources has, according to a number of authors, been either devastating or particularly useful. As Hughes (2009, p. 48) somewhat pessimistically concludes 'managerialism - in public, private and community sectors - is the prevailing ideology of our time. It has...perverted notions of service in the public sector. A deathly silence in the public arena has accompanied this clean and quiet strangulation'. The uniqueness of museums' organisational role and mode of operating as

hybrids is poorly understood. The ramifications of this for the changing role and purpose of Australian state museums remains unresolved yet continues to develop.

The rising number of museums has coincided with an increase in the number of studies on accountability and management in cultural organisations. In the United States, Peterson (1986, pp. 167-168) attributes the rise of administration, management and growing professionalisation within cultural organisations to a growth in their size, structural complexity and need to cater for new, larger and more socially diverse audiences. Similarly, Hughes and Luksetich (2004, pp. 203-204) state that the changing nature of funding for cultural organisations has the ability to ‘compromise organisational goals’, and in turn force such institutions to place more reliance on commercial ventures. This is a path now being taken by state museums in Australia.

In response to these growing internal and external factors, the administrative structure of museums has begun to change. Museums in Australia are increasingly operating as hybrids, combining aspects of public sector organisations with areas of private enterprise, yet ‘the central decisions continue to be state controlled’ (Schuster 1998, p. 128). At an organisational level there is an increasing overlap between areas of non-profit and for-profit management. As Oster indicates (1995, p. 4), the lines between ‘nonprofits, business and the public sector have been, from the beginning, somewhat blurry. Non-profits have historically shared territory with public organisations and been funded and influenced by for-profit businesses’. Due to the essential character, complexity, and often intangible goals of museums, it has been suggested that they are a ‘hybrid phenomenon for which existing models in the private or public sector may not be appropriate’ (Sukel 1978, p. 348).

Museums are often compared to other ‘service industries’ such as universities and hospitals (Weisbrod 1997, p. 541). The investigation of these organisations, their role and their socio-political behaviour is a relatively recent phenomenon. This field of study has only been in existence as an academic research area since the late 1970s. However, as the field of research has evolved, more recent publications have been produced in Europe and Australia (Lyons 2001). Studies of not-for-profit organisations have tended to concentrate on either a microeconomic or organisational analysis (Seibel & Anheier 1990, p. 9), rather than the types of organisations that constitute the not-for-profit sector. Current research in

the field of not-for-profit organisations, however, has started analysing them from a variety of different perspectives. These have included an analysis of their characteristics related to ‘management, resources, competence, professional staff, effectiveness, accountability and participation’ (Bauer 1990, p. 274). The operation of museums in Australia may be understood in this way.

As significant not-for-profit forms, cultural institutions such as museums have received relatively little attention in this field. As Lehman (2008, p. 43) indicates ‘The organisational goals in relation to revenue for not for profit organisations are inherently different to profit-making organisations, no more so than in museums’. The conceptual adequacy of defining museums simply as part of the public sector, without taking into consideration their more recent commercial ventures, is essentially restrictive, and does not reflect the complexity of the operation and management of these institutions today. In discussing the three sectors of modern society, Alessandrini (2009, p. 125) states that ‘The conceptual three pillars of government..., commerce...and civil society have historically been assumed to be a comprehensive structure of society’. However, organisations such as museums increasingly do not fall neatly within the traditional and distinct conceptions of government, market and community sectors. Instead, they are more likely to operate as hybrids, combining elements from the public and private sectors. Overall, museums do not aim to make a profit and as Weil (2000, np) states: ‘no matter how ‘business-like’ a fashion a museum may legitimately be called upon to operate - it is still not a business, and to produce a positive financial outcome is not its goal...in a museum, money is not an end in itself - it is only a means’. The implications of this for the management of museums in Australia are complex.

For the purpose of this thesis, museums have been explored from the perspective of them being hybrids. As organisational types, hybrids are distinct from the government, the private or the mainstream business sector, but share some characteristics of all of these sectors. Often they are driven by their missions or ideas of the organisations as ‘social enterprises’. As Boyd, Henning, Reyna, Wang and Welch note (2008, p.2) hybrids integrate ‘business practices that enable ...[them] to meet both mission and market goals, such as employing innovative products in niche markets...and encouraging shared authority rather than top-down leadership styles’. The South Australian Museum, Melbourne Museum and Australian Museum since the 1980s have incorporated strategic

planning goals into their management practices, rigorous financial management systems and greater governance, elements derived from the corporate sector. At the same time, however, the museums operate as not-for-profit organisations with a focus on mission statements and stakeholder engagement. In addition, hybrid organisations are very much a recent organisational phenomenon, reflecting a ‘mix [of] characteristics of state, market and civil society and cannot easily be classified in terms of these categories.... Their growth has been spurred by political trends and fashions like the privatisation, decentralisation and deregulation of public services’ (Brandsen and Karre 2008, p.2). Museums in Australia have not been immune from these changes and, by these definitions reveal a mix of the characteristics of public and of private sector organisations and are hence defined as hybrids.

The growing interest in not-for-profits and hybrid organisations has emerged in a number of academic disciplines, including sociology, economics, political science, and ‘legal and social welfare studies’ (McCarthy 1998, p. 7). Much of this research concentrates on not-for-profit organisations in the areas of health, community, and human services. In addition, a large proportion of research into not-for-profit organizations focuses on their ‘social capital’, ‘service and development activities’ and government relations (Earles, Brown, Kenny 2003, p. 5). While this does provide many insights into the general nature of the sector, specific aspects such as museums have not been explored in this way. What is unique about their services, how the growing not-for-profit sector and increased competition between the not-for-profit and private sectors has affected the way in which museums are managed, is something that is beginning to be discussed within museums themselves.

### **5.4 Museums and Governance: findings**

Many of the museum staff and board members interviewed in Australian state museums revealed a strong understanding of the need for increased internal accountability and scrutiny. On the whole, this shift was viewed positively. As a senior staff member at the South Australian museum noted;

‘Over the last 5-10 years there have been management changes...there is now much more

emphasis on stakeholders, the Directorate is now stronger...it has more of a business focus than in the past. The Board is involved in the day to day running but interested in the big picture' [Transcript no.2, South Australian Museum staff member - M J - 22 September 2008]

The management changes in Australian state museums have meant that a much more corporate approach has been taken towards running the organisations. This, in turn, has meant a breaking down of internal divisions, 'silos' and the need for greater cohesion and teamwork. At the South Australian Museum, for example, the previous 'curatorial driven' culture has been modified, such that the 'back of house' (scientific research) and 'front of house' (education and public programs) roles have been increasingly drawn together to work collaboratively on exhibitions, public programs, publications and visitor services. Staff commented on improvements to the way in which the museum was run as a result of these changes. There was a greater internal emphasis on strategy and a flattening of bureaucratic management models;

'The museum has learned that it is a single organisation, more transparent from the top down, less smoke and mirrors, there has been a trickle down, more open and more discussions, less stress in the workplace, staff have their point of view listened to. We are being more strategic and now have a 5 year rolling strategic plan, updated on an annual basis...running alongside the strategic plan is the 'blue skies' vision of off the wall ideas...?' [Transcript no.3, South Australian Museum staff member - S M - 22 September 2008]

The changing emphasis on ensuring that a state museum is effectively and properly managed and that its internal governance is continually monitored has occurred most dramatically at the Melbourne Museum. Since the 1990s the museum has had three directors and under the two most recent directors the management structure, staff roles and organisational priorities have radically changed.

Many staff and board members interviewed at the Melbourne Museum commented favourably on the greater strategic direction, planning and governance now evident in their organisation. This was revealed at both a micro and macro level, ranging from issues associated with work flow for staff, broader and more integrated collaboration between museum sections on projects and project planning, the removal of a culture of excessive

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bureaucracy, and devolved decision making through an Executive Management Team. In many ways these changes are reflective of a broader shift in work culture within museums towards networking, entrepreneurial relationships and the internalising of work performance. The shifts in work practices are similarly related to increasing concerns in relation to organisational governance. Changing work practices have been achieved through extensive staff training, performance management, increased staff professionalisation, structural review, a streamlining of processes across the museum's campuses and more internal accountability. This was attributed by staff to the recent appointment of a new CEO, collegial relations between the museum's senior managers and board and efficient board governance. In particular, the museum's move towards a 'networked organisation' was frequently noted by interviewed staff:

'Management changes have changed radically and fundamentally, they have moved from a hierarchical approach to a networked organisation...moved from a top down organisation, with unclear practices...we now have a good CEO with good leadership skills' [Transcript no.3, Melbourne Museum staff member - R H - 12 August 2008].

However, staff interviewed were not unanimous in their praise for management changes at the museum. In contradiction to the majority of voices, a few expressed concern that the management changes and greater emphasis on internal governance had added unnecessary complexity to their day to day tasks and had in fact not enhanced internal processes:

'With management changes...the museum has become increasingly hierarchical, there is a more layered management structure, it felt flatter when I first started, but a bigger institution requires more complex management organisation. It is a process driven heavy organisation' [Transcript no. 15, Melbourne Museum staff member - M McF - 20 August 2008]

The extensive management changes at the museum and governance requirements were seen to have the most benefit for, and embraced philosophically, by the Executive Management Team. As one staff member noted:

'With the leadership teams there are peer networking teams, there is self-directed learning...at middle management level there is a greater sense of being involved. At the

lower levels this may not be the case, depends on the willingness of the manager to enculturate their staff into the new museum culture' [Transcript no. 4, Melbourne Museum staff member - R G - 13 August 2008].

In addition to this, a few staff acknowledged that the Melbourne Museum's successful changes in management, shift towards importance placed on internal processes, accountability and governance, had raised some unexpected and unaccounted for issues. Most evident were those surrounding innovation and organisational risk-taking. At the same time, tensions between advocating for individual museum divisions and the organisation as a whole in relation to management tasks had arisen. At issue was the development of an organisational culture in which paradoxically the rhetoric of internal accountability, compliance and project management had become more highly valued than operational processes. With such focused emphasis on the 'networked organisation' and its strategically set goals, a staff member noted;

'What is starting to be seen is...beyond the layer of management...projects have begun to happen outside of management structure- skunkworks. These happen because staff want it to happen ; time and effort put into something that doesn't have an official sanction, people are beginning to do projects of their own...these will go against the grain, the general work is still done. With new managerialism, people react against this by their everyday work becoming part of this, they want recognition for their everyday work because now only projects are getting recognition' [Transcript no. 7, Melbourne Museum staff member - E W - 14 August 2008] .

As this quote indicates, the process of management change at the Melbourne Museum has raised the issue of unexpected changes in organisational culture occurring as a result of the increasing organisational emphasis on strategic planning and a project-driven culture. The changes in management culture at this State museum have raised often-contradictory issues associated with leadership, change management and organisational culture that the museum continues to come to terms with and yet remain unresolved.

Many of the changes in museum management that have occurred in Australian state museums have been associated with internal organisational changes, most frequently with new financial accountabilities and a strategic planning emphasis. While it is acknowledged

that commercial organisations have financial objectives, ‘for many public sector institutions, such as museums, art galleries, libraries and public records offices, an entirely different scenario prevails. While there is a financial aspect to ensuring the proper accountability of such non-profit entities...the purposes and objectives of these organisations are social in orientation and multifaceted’ (Carnegie & West 2003, p. 84). Given this, heightened emphasis has been placed on public accountability and external governance in Australian museums since the 1980s.

The shift in museums to a focus on external governance issues and the increasing relevance of the board can be attributed to changing environmental contexts and notions of how museums relate to a wider public. As Ryder (2002, p. 1) notes ‘public accountability...is one of the most important aspects of modern governance in any organisation...it is driven by a recognition of the need to change the way in which government, organisations and citizens relate to each other’. Governance is no longer simply the conventional need for greater accountability and transparency in a financial sense. Instead external governance and the role of the museum board in representing the many constituencies which have a stake in the organisation has become of prime importance.

### **5.5 *Museums and Governance -internal changes***

Governance and its application in cultural organisations such as museums, is a relatively new field. Most research has been conducted on for-profit organisations, with ‘little robust empirical research having been conducted on non-profit governance’ (Rentschler, 2004, p. 30). With museums, the notion of governance is applicable in two forms; internal and external. Internal is overseeing the internal, organisational processes, accountability and staff performance. External relationships are those in which the board ensures that the organisation is properly run, including responsibility for strategy, executive performance, community and stakeholder relationships. However, contemporary governance has become a significant social and economic policy issue for governments. As organisations museums have moved away from being simply ‘functional’ - object based, collecting, preserving and displaying objects, to places that ‘now relate to the intent, vision or mission of the museum where the focus is on leadership and visitor services to serve

society and its development by means of study, education and enjoyment' (Rentschler 2004, p. 33).

In addition, changes in museum management brought about by the requirements of new public management have ensured, as Babbidge notes (2002, p. 1), 'a new emphasis on accountability, a separation of strategy from delivery, a focus on management rather than policy and a high responsiveness to customer preferences'. Increasingly, this has impacted on the changing roles and purposes of museums, such that today they have to operate in a sustainable manner, behaving in a more business-like manner, adopting commercial management practices and ensuring greater corporate and public responsibility.

While an increasing emphasis in museums on the need for governance has developed, the complexities of the relationship between the museum director, board of trustees and governments funding museums remain particularly problematic. As Adams states (2002, np) 'commentators have noted that the museum community's understanding of the non-profit sector and museum's place in that sector is limited'. However, since the 1990s, the nature of museum governance has been subject to increasing scrutiny, with a greater emphasis placed on 'due process in accounting and accountability, organisational restructuring, [and] changes in leadership, strategy and structure' (Rentschler 2004, p. 30).

## **5.6 *Museum governance: findings***

With the three case study museums, there was a marked variance in understanding by staff and board members of their own roles on the board and of museum governance. Although the Australian Museum in Sydney is governed by a trust established under the Australian Museum Trust Act 1975, interviews with the museum's staff revealed differing degrees of support for, and understanding of, the Trust and its role in relation to the museum's management. Some felt that the Trust's contribution to the museum was perfunctory and could have been stronger. As one interviewee noted;

'...we are administered by a Trust...it doesn't add much to the museum, but it is a structural thing...it sometimes becomes involved in management issues, but they don't

advocate strongly enough for the museum' [Transcript no. 8, Australian Museum staff member - KP 22 January 2009]

Members of the Australian Museum Trust, however, had a clear mandate in relation to their role and the museum, especially in the areas of strategic planning, advocacy and an understanding of the wider social and economic context in which the museum operates. This knowledge came from a combination of formal documents produced by the Australian Museum outlining the roles of Board members in relation to the Museum, providing them with a clear mandate as to their responsibilities. Trust members interviewed astutely acknowledged that part of their task was to help define the current role of the museum and persuade the New South Wales government of the museum's relevance. As one trust member stated;

'...management attempts to meet requirements of the stakeholders. The Trust sets the agenda/strategy/etc for management which is created together, the Trustees have an obligation to work with the management to do more, make management more accountable, also to empower them to change and evolve. This involves a time commitment by the Trustees to represent the government's interest (representing the people of New South Wales), we have an obligation to meet the needs of the community' [Transcript no. 10, Australian Museum Trust member - MA- 23 January 2009]

While all boards are responsible for solvency and organisational sustainability, tension between the role of management and the role of the trust at the Australian Museum occasionally emerged and this was acknowledged in interviews with some of the trust members. As Dickenson has noted (1991, p. 292) the board-management relationship can be a source of conflict as 'museum directors complain that board members are either uninformed or uninterested, or interfering or amateurish. Board members, for their part, feel that museum directors...[have] little or no management skill'. At the Australian Museum there was evidence of this, with a trust member revealing that the potential for a blurring of roles did occur;

'...the role of the Trust is to advise the management of the museum; strategic planning, risk and ethics. Funding has a governance role, [and the] line between management and the Trust role can be murky. With the committee we have developed a strategic plan...but

[we] cannot go too far down this line as it overlaps with management.’ [Transcript no.6, Australian Museum Trust member - RH - 20 January 2009]

A similar understanding of the role of the board in relation to management was evident at the Melbourne Museum. Board members were aware of their responsibility toward setting the agenda for institutional policy and evaluating the museum’s goals, while utilising skills derived from the ‘outside world’, for the sake of the museum. As one board member observed;

‘...there was a board that was previously fairly controlled, a board that got involved with management issues and had a couple of CEOs in a short period of time. Now the board acts in a strategic capacity and management manage and the board don’t interfere, which is the way it should be...I also think the board’s been... pretty supportive of management too. You can get organisations where the Board don’t necessarily trust or aren’t as comfortable with management whereas I think we are as a general comment’ [Transcript no. 6, Melbourne Museum Board member - MP - 14 August 2008]

Despite the many examples of effective board- management relationships in Australia’s state museums, the presence of third parties, (such as the government) and increasingly, stakeholders, make the governance of museums an often difficult task. Effective governance ‘no less than any other part of a museum’s operations, requires care, trouble and application. Good trustees are a victory, not a gift (Pybus 2002, p. 31). However, the setting of organisational goals and plans in museums is often contextual and subject to shifting government priorities. Added to this, deciding on and implementing strategic direction in museums is, like many other not-for-profit organisations, ‘often highly politicised since external non-members of the organisation exert pressure on the goal setting process in this environment’ (McGill & Wooton 1975, p. 448).

### **5.7 Museum governance -boards and accountability**

The boards of museums bear the final responsibility and accountability for the organisation’s programs and achievements. The governing board of the museum is ‘as high in the structure as one can go and still be within the organisational framework. Its

total authority is matched by its total accountability for all corporate activity' (Carver 1997, p. 2). Unlike the boards of commercial organisations, however, museum boards tend to be larger in size than the boards of businesses and 'besides including a range of relevant skills, they frequently feel the need to represent the many constituencies that have a stake in the organisation - benefactors, funding bodies, support groups, learned societies, education bodies and...government' (Babbidge 2002, pp.2-3). The Boards of the case study museums- the Melbourne Museum, South Australian Museum and Australian Museum – varied in size and composition. They ranged from a relatively large board at the Melbourne Museum of 12 with a diversity of members with skills and experience in finance, academia and marketing to a smaller and more scientist –based Board at the South Australia Museum of 8 people. Such a diversity of perspectives often means that museum boards can ably fulfil their public missions and support institutional goals. In addition, as non-profit organisations, museums often 'foster volunteerism and philanthropy, practices that permit direct citizen involvement in the betterment of society' (Adams 2002, np). Determining how museums should be governed and what role the board of trustees should play in the organisation's governance in relation to day to day operations can be problematic. The role of the board may be categorised into two main areas; museum policy formation and specifying institutional objectives and reviewing the 'performance of the organisation's executive' (Griffin 1991, p. 300). In this way, oversight of the purpose and performance of the organisation becomes the main aspect of museum governance.

The exact nature of museum governance, when profit making and the 'bottom line' are not the main criteria in running a cultural organisation, adds to its complexity. As Malero expresses (1994, p. 21) 'The non-profit sector is fragile. Government, of course, is essential and as a capitalistic society the for-profit sector is secure. But the third sector, the non-profit sector, is not understood by most and thus it is vulnerable to hasty attack and pragmatic solutions'. Often museum boards have to examine the sustainability of their organisations, and this adds to the weight of issues which the trustees' face. In addition, the many different types of museums (for example, art museums, science museums, natural history museums, university museums and so on) the variation in funding, government support and programs means that good practice in museum governance is not universal across the sector.

Museums are increasingly expected to sustain corporate responsibility and incorporate commercial management practices. Trustees on museum boards often have expertise in the areas of business, finance and marketing and while these skills are paramount to the running of the organisation, they often lack specific knowledge of museums and the not-for-profit sector. Museums have to juggle the requirements of financial and performance governance (which is largely internal) with political and ideological governance (which largely relates to their external relationships with stakeholders, the public and the state). It could similarly be argued that museums themselves often lack an understanding of where they fit, as organisations, within the not-for-profit sector and as hybrids and the implications of this for their governance.

In relation to museum governance, there is often a bias 'towards the portion of the sector that includes organisations that ameliorate a social condition over those that provide a life-enhancing public service (such as museums)' (Adams 2002, np). This lack of understanding of museums' place in the not-for-profit sector may also contribute to the lack of appropriate models suitable for their governance. Overall, performance and success are not as easily measured in museums as in the corporate sector. The setting of institutional goals and policy around intangible, qualitative aspects, adds to the difficulties surrounding museum governance. None of the staff interviewed at the case study museums commented on the suitability or otherwise of their organisation's governance. This may be due to the interview questions asked, which did not relate specifically to issues of governance or for the staff interviewed it was not considered of concern or beyond the scope of their work roles. However, the development of best practice in museum governance and the role of museum boards in relation to governance remains unresolved and ongoing.

### **5.8 *Museum governance-the board and external relations : discussion***

Museum governance encompasses the work of the institution's executive officer (or Director), the performance of board members or trustees, policy development and decision making, community relations, and dealing with the needs and requirements of stakeholders and governments. In the not-for-profit arena, little attention has been paid to governance theory in relation to museums (Rentschler 2004, p. 35). The role of

governance in relation to museums encompasses strategic direction, the relationship between the board or trustees and the executive officer and often most importantly, community relations. While museums have organisational structures that increasingly mimic corporations, they have a number of unique features, particularly in relation to their staffing. In most instances, museum staff consist of ‘professionals - more than in business firms - volunteers and para-professionals’ (Sukel 1994, p. 263). Given this, it is important for governing bodies to broadly understand the responsibilities of museum staff without interfering in the day-to-day conduct or management of the staff. The complexity of requirements placed on museums today, however, means that governance is just one part of the jigsaw required to successfully manage cultural organisations. As Regev (1998, np) states, the management of museums today is ‘to be shared by the Board of Trustees, and the director, each having distinct responsibilities. Together they can embark on strategic thinking, policy making, resource development and fund raising’. How this relationship is negotiated and the increasing role the board plays in the management of Australian state museums since the 1980s is further explored in this study.

As Sukel notes (1994, p.264) ‘Boards of trustees oversee the functioning of the museum, and when they misunderstand the goals of the museum and expect that it will run like a business instead of a ...cultural institution, there can be significant conflict between the board and the staff’. Members of museum boards (trustees) are generally unpaid volunteers who are appointed because of their perceived value, expertise, or potential contribution to the museum. The role of the board is often poorly defined in legislation. However, they hold the ultimate responsibility for the effective running of the museum, and are often expected to be strong advocates and lobbyists for the institution within the community and in relation to governments.

### **5.9 Museums and cultural policy: findings**

While museum staff interviewed at the Australian Museum, Melbourne Museum and South Australian Museum were aware of the need for greater economic and social indicators of their organisation’s success, most revealed ambivalence about which museum ‘values’ were the most important and what the roles of museums should be today. As a Trust member at the Australian Museum revealed;

‘...the museum is a difficult beast to manage, difficult to decide which are the priorities, what are the clear goals we want to be achieved, what are the special interest groups, we are struggling to be everything’ [Transcript no. 10, Australian Museum Trust member - M A - 23 January 2009]

Moreover, over the last few decades in Australia, the definition of what constitutes the value of ‘culture’ has changed significantly. No longer seen as merely a marginal or elite activity, ‘culture’ has been embraced by local, state and federal governments as ‘necessary and integral to the vitality and diversity of contemporary Australian society’ (Bennett & Carter 2001, p. 2). Culture and cultural organisations are increasingly viewed as an important sector of the Australian economy. There has been a significant shift in the emphasis of culture being couched in terms of, and constrained by, economic and social imperatives. As Bereson notes (2005, p.56) ‘by describing the arts as an industry, the arts are being relegated to the status of a commodity and ‘creativity’ becomes just one aspect of wealth creation’. Although this is referring to the Arts, the sentiments are equally valid when applied to museums. Some staff interviewed questioned whether museums should be funded by state governments through their Arts portfolios, and many believed that their organisations should focus on their value to the local community, rather than the economic value. As a staff member noted;

‘...museums need to understand that they are not ‘arts’, when people engage with museum experiences, they are engaging with bodies of knowledge, history, science, indigenous cultures...we have a community agenda, social capital, cohesion and dialogue’ [Transcript no.11, Melbourne Museum staff member -L S - 18 August 2008]

Despite this questioning about where state museums’ responsibilities should lie, museums in Australia are under pressure to be able to quantitatively and qualitatively justify their services, with an emphasis on ‘outcomes’ from museum visits and programs. While not-for-profit organisations, museums are increasingly being operated along business lines, adapting to management changes which are the result of diverse economic, institutional and technological changes.

## Chapter 5: Museums as Organisations

Although cultural policy in Australia took on an increasingly important aura during the 1990s in relation to economic benefits, national prestige and identity, the role played by museums within this has remained ill-defined. The field of cultural policy studies has sought to ‘engage critically with the policy apparatus of the Australian government’ (Sterne 2002, p. 62) yet cultural institutions such as museums are harder to contain and define than cultural industries. Although there is no agreed definition of cultural industries as such, they encompass various activities and terms associated with ‘creative industries’ and the ‘creative economy’. Overall, ‘cultural industries refer to a range of organisations and economic activities associated with the generation or exploitation of knowledge and information. Given this, museums are only occasionally referred to within this context, or more broadly within the area of cultural policy.

Museums in Australia are not the only institutions subject to changes in their management and role within the current cultural policy framework. Cultural institutions in a number of Western countries are undergoing similar changes. In New Zealand, arts and culture, traditionally understood to be a public good have been ‘fundamentally re-imagined as contributing to a cohesive society through the fostering of “national identity” and also to a dynamic economy through the creation of jobs’ (Skilling 2005, p. 20). In Australia there has been a similar move towards the idea of a ‘clever country’ with the consequent expansion of education and a shift to a service economy. In addition, museums have become more aware of representing social and cultural shifts, such a new relations with indigenous groups and their material culture as well as the representation of multiculturalism through exhibitions and public programs. On the whole, however, for museums, there has been little association with national cultural concepts, an area that remains limited.

While the contribution of the arts and cultural organisations to the promotion and creation of a dynamic economy has many benefits, this may also represent a ‘significant narrowing of arts possible functions’ (Skilling 2005, p. 20). In this respect, cultural policy cannot be seen as separate to economic growth, progress and social inclusion. Given that museums operate within this context, a number of questions are raised in relation to the new purposes ascribed to such organisations. The changing functions attributed to culture are already evident in Australian museums, where contentious, yet innovative, exhibitions

appealing to a small section of the population may be dismissed in favour of those which have a much broader, popular appeal, attracting large audiences.

Museum staff interviewed often commented on the possibility of declining innovative programming and exhibitions at their respective museums. This was seen to be due to greater financial and management constraints. At the Melbourne Museum, for example, there was a view that;

‘...there is a degree of uncertainty re: ‘externals’ [government funding]. Internally, trying to maintain levels of excellence, despite external factors, staff struggle to deliver in these circumstances, museums are creative and innovative...’ [Transcript no. 1, Melbourne Museum Board member - SH -12 August 2008]

At the South Australian Museum, however, there was greater concern about how innovative programming could be incorporated and prioritised in planning;

‘...there has been a lot of pressure put on the organisation, we are more performance geared, [a] sense of doing more with less a sense of being scientifically correct, but also pressure to be populist. Innovative ideas are not taken up, there is now a sense that if it’s not popular and not making money it won’t happen...’ [Transcript no. 2, South Australian Museum staff member- MJ - 22 September 2008]

The shift towards a greater emphasis on commercialisation and social and economic accountability in Australian state museums is impacting upon the role and purpose of these museums. A possible side effect of this, in general, is that ‘cultural organisations [are] relying too heavily on earned income [and] might be enticed to shift from mainly educational or artistic to more entertainment orientated offerings in order to stay financially afloat’ (Toepler 2006, p. 60).

In relation to museums, innovation often relates to programming that presents new exhibitions or exhibition themes, new services, collaborative ideas, new research undertaken on collections, and so on. However, it is more common for museums today to give priority to the economic and social value of their organisations and demonstrate relevance to other major policy areas at a state level.

Often governments themselves are in internal conflict about what they expect of museums, just as museums struggle to define themselves for governments. The impact of new public management has compounded this by creating a culture within museums that values advocacy, entrepreneurialism and accountability above the more traditional priorities of collection development, exhibitions and preservation. In Australia since the 1990s with the inception of a number of discussion papers focussing on the 'price' and 'value' of museums and the release of *Creative Nation* in 1994, there has similarly been a hardening around the parameters of cultural policy. This, in turn, reflects 'increasing signs of a government wanting to make the arts and cultural sector subject to market principles' (Bennett & Carter 2001, p.13).

Although the Australian federal government policy *Creative Nation* (1994) heralded a new entrepreneurial era for cultural institutions in general, the direction of museums and their strategic planning is more likely to be influenced by state policy, their location and stakeholders. By adhering too rigorously to prescribed federal and state cultural policy, some have suggested that there is a 'real danger that this approach will lead to the production of safe, consumer-orientated arts products which, in the end, may not be what the audience either wants or needs' (Caust 2003, p. 58). This presents a particular dilemma for museums who try to strike a balance between innovative programming and popular appeal.

### **5.10 Museums and cultural policy -governments and museums**

The development of cultural services in Australia has, since the mid 20th century, essentially been dependant on government support. Unlike the significant government financing of the arts and museums in Europe or the strong tradition of philanthropic support for the arts in the United States, 'art patronage as practised by the institutions...was slow to develop in Australia' (Battersby 1980, p.12). However, Australia's post-war economic, political and social growth, coupled with 'improved overall education standards, increased affluence and greater exposure to international ideas and events [were] powerful factors in ...changes in Australian cultural values' (Battersby 1980, p. 13). Despite this, governments supporting political and economic

agendas concerning the nature, sustainability and management of museums in Australia did not appear until the 1970s. The most influential of these, *Museums in Australia 1975* (known as the Piggott Report) presented a thorough collation of statistical and qualitative data concerning the accommodation, conservation, staffing and collection needs of Australian museums at a local and state level.

More recently, reports related to the value and worth of museums have been published which present these organisations within the broader context of material culture and heritage collections, legislation and fiscal concerns. The discussions paper *What Price Heritage? The Museums Review and the measurement of Museum Performance* (1989) prepared by the Department of Finance, was important in that it presented, for the first time, a financial analysis of the value of Australia state and federal museums to the community. It introduced amendments to the ways in which museums could be analysed from the perspective of their use as a public good. Although the paper grappled with ways to explore how museum performance might be measured through indicators relating to museum programs and processes, it also revealed the impact of new public management. The Review of Commonwealth Involvement in the Development of Museums and Similar Collecting and Exhibition Institutions established in July 1986 formed the basis of the *What Price Heritage?* paper, emphasising a much more entrepreneurial approach by museums towards external revenue raising. At the same time, the paper sought to suggest ways to improve heritage value for the taxpayer dollar. This was symptomatic of a changed attitude towards the funding of museums at Commonwealth and state level, coupled with greater concerns about efficiency and value for money within these institutions.

As Anderson and Oakley (2008, p. 5) note, ‘the articulation of an economic basis for arts policy in terms of public good provision during the 1980s was given an added dimension by the climate of economic liberalisation and microeconomic reform prevailing at that time’. Hand-in-hand with the new economic analysis of museums was, for the first time, a breakdown of entrenched concepts about the elite worth and organisational sanctity of museums. Although this was somewhat awkwardly articulated, *What Price Heritage?* (1989, p.28) stated that;

‘A combination of increased interest in cultural heritage and the institutions which preserve and exhibit it, and of tighter budgetary constraints, seems to have led to some demystification of cultural heritage. As a result, cultural heritage, which previously enjoyed something of a special position remote from the scrutiny of economic analysis, is now considered in many ways to be no different from other activities of government and consequently should be subject to the same rigour of assessment of benefits and costs’.

The ongoing and unexamined financial support by governments of Australian state museums was severely challenged. However, a subsequent report, *What Value Heritage?* prepared by the Department of Arts, Heritage and Environment countered this. The push towards an economic valuation of museums was contested even within the Australian government during this time. As Stevenson (2000, p. 24) explains, ‘Australian federal government assumed responsibility for arts funding and support in response to compelling paternalistic arguments about standards...however, since the 1980s, such arguments have lost some of their moral force’.

The ongoing role of the Commonwealth in Australia’s cultural growth and the formulation of explicit policy goals in this area were broadened to include arts, cultural heritage and film in the discussion paper *The Role of the Commonwealth in Australia’s Cultural Development: A Discussion Paper* (1992). Culminating in *Creative Nation* (1994) Australia’s first national cultural policy, the focus shifted towards developing ‘excellence’ in Australian museums as a result of national strategies. Valuing the cultural, heritage and economic significance of museum collections and persuading museums to reassess their practices and roles was a major tenet of this paper. Referring to Australian museums in these discussion papers, the abovementioned policies positioned them within broader governmental political, social and economic agendas and their value has increasingly been viewed solely within the confines of this framework. The cultural policy context in Australia in which museums operate raises a number of questions regarding their position as organisations.

### **5.11 Museums, culture and the state -the organisation and government interaction**

The constant requirement to raise sufficient funding for programming, exhibitions and research in Australian State museums has intensified since the 1980s. As Johnson and Thomas (1998, p. 78) note ‘museums are not immune from the forces of competition. On the finance side, they compete for the limited public funding and private benefactions that are available’. What has changed, however, is the notion that museums (and other cultural organisations) are now part of an emerging rationale in which culture and the economy are intertwined closely with each other. How state museums in Australia are negotiating and managing their relationships with their respective governments is subject to a number of historical, political and environmental factors.

Beyond the often-contested relationship between museums and governments in relation to funding, the link between cultural services and economic impact is a recent development in which governments are taking an ever-increasing interest. Uppermost in the challenges and difficulties faced by museum staff and board members interviewed for the three case study museums, was funding and the respective museums’ relationship with state governments. Of primary concern amongst staff was the concept of ‘sustainable funding’: sufficient funding which would cover operational and staff costs, yet provide adequate resources for one-off project work, often of an innovative nature. The link between funding and state government efficiency gains was similarly raised. Many staff noted that they had a much greater understanding of the political entity of the state government, their museum and their funding relationship to it, than had occurred in the past.

This was particularly evident at the Australian Museum in Sydney and at the South Australian Museum in Adelaide, but from vastly different perspectives. Staff interviewed at the Australian Museum often mentioned issues of the museum’s relevance, organisational position and funding in relation to the New South Wales government. It was felt that under the museum’s current Director, relations between the museum and the state government had improved (in comparison to the previous Director) and the museum’s current management teams were politically aware. However, the situation was very different for the museum’s previous Director. When interviewed, this Director noted that he had experienced an ‘unhealthy relationship’ between the museum and state government under the (then) Premier, Bob Carr. Accordingly, difficulties at the Australian Museum revolved around the state government ‘not seeing the point of the museum’. Its role in systematic scientific and natural history research was not well understood by the

government and although the museum was established under an Act of Parliament it was, the Director believed, ‘grey in political eyes’ [Transcript, Former Australian Museum Director interview, 3 December 2007, p. 2].

The former Director of the museum found great difficulty in communicating the importance of science and science-based collections to politicians in the state government due to their emphasis on fiscal matters only. As Scott (2006, p. 45) notes, ‘successive iterations of public sector reform have progressively required museums to prove that they are worthy of public support...notions of ‘worth’ have increasingly been tied to the achievement of government policy and enforced through making attainment of key policy directions a condition of funding agreements’. However, under the current Director at the Australian Museum, staff interviewed acknowledged that the museum had become more responsive to state government requests related to funding and accountability. As one interviewee commented;

‘...we have moved the museum from the 1980s to the 21st century. We are bringing in charters of action, made people more accountable for their behaviour and actions, we are better engaged with the state government, we now have a reputation for being one of the better run agencies, the reputation of the museum has been enhanced’ [Transcript no.11, Australian Museum staff member -L C - 30 January 2009]

Despite the emerging sense of alignment between the state government and the museum’s priorities and a resulting sense of increased organisational reputation other staff were more ambivalent. Some felt that the state’s role bordered on ‘interference’ and this meant a lack of organisational autonomy at the Australian museum. This was most evident amongst the museum’s longer serving staff, indicating a significant change in management practices, as well as their nostalgia for the ‘golden age’ of the museum (during the late 1970s through to the late 1990s). During these decades it was seen to be more independent of the state government, and seemingly a place of greater staff creativity, freedom and passion for the organisation and its values. Sentiment was expressed that the museum had come to operate in a dual manner; more structured, forward-thinking and professional, yet increasingly bureaucratic, an early adopter of the philosophies of new museology but now going back to management basics. One of the museum’s two assistant directors noted this and stated that;

‘Management practices have changed... there used to be a sense of the museum holding the state government back... here in Australia we are subject to more interference from the state government. We need to be seen to follow the rules, there is a perception that there has been more independence in the past, these were the management practices in the past but no longer possible’ [Transcript no.5, Australian Museum staff member - J C - 20 January 2009]

Relating to the museum’s ongoing relevance, relationship with the state government and importance within the current economic climate, another interviewee declared that;

‘...there is now a lot of emphasis on corporate planning, there is a strong morale problem in the science area. The Director is wisely on the ball and how is the museum going to makes its case [to the government]...how can the museum address the big societal issues?’ [Transcript no. 6, Australian Museum Trust member - RH - 20 January 2009]

The role of the museum, the Director and the state government is becoming increasingly externally focused. Maintaining, managing and further developing a positive, mutually beneficial and co-operative museum-state government relationship remains a continuing issue for the Australian Museum.

In contrast, the South Australian Museum operates within a much narrower and more restricted state government-museum relationship. Staff members interviewed stated that the lack of operational funding received by the museum had flow on effects to other areas of the institution’s purpose and responsibilities. The inadequate funding was felt (accurately or inaccurately) to be very much a reflection of the relationship between the museum and the South Australian government, through Arts SA:

‘Operational funding and the state government grants only keep the doors open, there is no funding for acquisitions, no funding for public programs...there is centralized control from Arts SA, facilities and maintenance. [This is] nearly 20% of the budget, there is this absurdity, the whole of government, for example, the way IT is funded, how you can purchase and from whom...the Board has no control over any direct expenditure’ [Transcript no. 9, South Australian Museum staff member - S R- 24 September 2008]

## Chapter 5: Museums as Organisations

Many of the staff interviewed at the South Australian Museum noted that the relationship between the museum and the state government was a difficult one. There had been little improvement or change in the nature of this relationship for decades. As Evans indicates (2001, p. 149), in today's cities and states 'the political economy of the arts [are] inseparable from modern society and therefore from urban, economic and social policy spheres'. However, at the South Australian Museum there was little sense of the museum being embraced by the state government and its role, therefore, was undervalued. It was felt that this relationship resulted from a lack of understanding on both sides; the State government was seen by the museum staff to severely undervalue its significance, collections and value to South Australia, yet repeated attempts by the museum to improve this situation with Arts SA were not reciprocated by the government. Some attributed this to lack of internal skills and remote interest within the museum's executive in lobbying, negotiating and working effectively with the state government;

'...we have been smarter in how to manage the media but not smarter in managing the museum's relationship with government. [I] don't think there has been wisdom in programming, we need to go back to the drawing board and ask what the museum does well' [Transcript no. 12, South Australian Museum staff member - DK- 29 September 2008]

Yet other staff attributed internal management problems to an unsympathetic state government with little interest in cultural institutions, an entrenched historical bias against the museum, and parochialism:

'North Terrace [in Adelaide] is a showcase at government level, they do not want to hear what the South Australian museum is doing, the Art Gallery takes precedent over others, has old family history associated with it, the Museum is the least appreciated. [There is] a sense that the state government doesn't appreciate what is going on at the SA Museum...this creates tensions internally, it is being deflected downwards through the organisation' [Transcript no. 6, South Australian Museum staff member - KW- 24 September 2009]

In comparison to the South Australian Museum, the state government-museum relationship at the Melbourne Museum in Victoria was very different. Staff interviewed

often cited the close alignment between the Melbourne Museum and large cultural, social and economic agendas managed by the state which resulted in mutually beneficial outcomes. As a staff member noted;

‘we have learnt the process of government better, have learnt to better deal with the expenditure review committee, with Museum of Victoria we are looking at what other government agendas are about and match to this’ [Transcript no. 11, Melbourne Museum staff member-L S - 18 August 2008]

Even more pertinently an additional staff member at the Melbourne Museum noted the need for the museum to dovetail their programs and goals with long term state plans;

‘The [museum] is discussing what it means to be innovative. What processes can be put in place to allow the organisation (and individuals) to be more innovative? The Museum wants to align themselves with the language used by the government re: innovation’ [Transcript no.5, Melbourne Museum staff member- M V- 13 August 2008]

While state governments have a role to play in fostering the arts and managing ‘flagship’ organisations such as museums, since the 1980s the economic value of cultural organisations has taken precedence over many other values. State governments have ‘re-evaluated their role in nurturing creative practice and moved to adopt a more entrepreneurial approach to arts funding’ (Stevenson 2000, p. 71). In part this has led to an increased emphasis on cultural tourism, and a re-thinking of the role and purpose of museums.

Although the Australian federal government policy *Creative Nation* (1994) heralded a new era for the arts and cultural institutions in general, the direction of museums and their strategic planning has been more influenced by state policies that revolve around economic and social issues, their location and the requirements of stakeholders. As Radbourne (1997, p. 273) observes the museums’ sector is often critical of federal policy and each institution expresses ‘an independence of policy, a notion of framing each organisation’s priorities in the context of policy but not influenced by this policy’.

This presents a dilemma for Australia's state museums, which today face demands for balancing fiscal accountability, implementing corporate-style business practices while operating as hybrid organisations. Close ties to state governments demand improved management practices and processes while museums attempt to maintain the intrinsic worth and uniqueness of their organisations for the public good. The cultural policy context in Australia in which museums operate, and the development of cultural tourism, raise a number of questions regarding their position, roles and purposes in the current century.

### **5.12 Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter has examined a number of factors influencing current museum practice. It has sought to analyse the organisational context in which museums now operate as hybrid organisations. In addition, the chapter aimed to provide insights into the way in which museums and their functions are increasingly incorporated into broader cultural policies in Australia. It also examined the ways in which this raises a number of questions for museums in relation to their relationship with the state, strategic management and greater focus on issues of internal and external governance.

While it can be argued that museums have long served a purpose in relation to local, state and federal agendas, currently they are expected to make a serious contribution to objectives associated with social and economic reform. Initially the chapter discussed the evolving status of museums towards being defined as hybrids, combining public services with commercial initiatives. The implications of this for museums in terms of their management and strategic direction for the organisation were also included here. The discussion of museums as organisations was further extended through an exploration of the changes in internal governance requirements and how these new requirements associated with accountability and a greater emphasis on strategic planning have been manifested within museums.

Changes in museums' external environments and a greater need to operate in a business-like manner, while delivering audience focussed programs, was similarly analysed in the

chapter's section related to museum governance, the board and external relations. The concluding part of the chapter moved away from a specific discussion of museums and governance towards the interrelated factors of museums and their relationship with state governments. For museums, this represents a move in strategic direction, and a greater expansion of their public roles into new realms. In Australia, museums 'make important contributions towards defining the nation-culturally, socially, economically and politically' (McIntyre 2006, p. 14). Whether museums in Australia will evolve to facilitate these contributions through a wider vision or continue to be steered in the direction of focussing narrowly on economic and social ends and the ensuing ramifications of this remains a matter of contention.

One of the most prominent areas in which museums are expanding their public role into new realms is through the possibilities for greater access, community participation and enhanced interaction via new communication technologies. The implementation of new technologies, while enhancing services and information provision, has had a significant impact on museum roles, processes across occupational boundaries, and organisation wide processes. The relationship between new technologies, museums, modifications in their organisational processes and the implications of this for their role is analysed in the following chapter.

## **6 Museums, technology, information and access**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter considers how changes wrought in museums by new museology and new public management have intersected with the rise of digital technologies and the concept of an information society. It outlines a number of factors related to the uptake of new technologies by museums in Australia and analyses some of the impacts the use of these new technologies have had in relation to collections, public access, changing staff roles and new ways to attract audiences. The uptake of new technologies in museums has led to changes in organisational processes that have impacted on institutional roles and purposes.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the uptake of new technologies by museums within a broad social and economic context, before examining museum informatics and its relationship with collections, data, access, and the public. The second part of the chapter moves on to an analysis of the impact of new technologies in relation to notions of authority within museums and incorporates findings from the three case studies. The case studies further analyse museological changes brought about by technology with evidence of organisational and management changes at three Australian state museums.

The following section of the chapter expands upon the theme of examining the growing role and use of new technologies in relation to education and life-long learning in museums. The need for contemporary museums to juggle the demands of education, attracting diverse audiences while maintaining scholarship and research, is discussed in relation to the use of new technologies, their institutional impact and examples from the case studies. To conclude, the chapter provides a discussion of the development and use of on-line networks and Web 2.0. The implications of social media in museums and the institutional ramifications of this are also analysed. This is examined particularly in relation to new forms of public and organisational interaction arising out of new technologies. The variances created between Web discourses on freedom of expression and the museum's need to balance the relationships between the real, the virtual, and notions of authority in the on-line context are examined. This exploration illuminates further the research question of which external forces have impacted on Australian

museums over the last few decades and what the ramifications are of these for contemporary management practices.

## **6.2 *Museum Informatics: Collections, Data, People and Access -findings***

The desire for scholarly documentation, cataloguing and interpretation drives the uptake of today's museum collections on-line. Providing greater public access and educational value is also increasingly seen to be desirable by museums. The digitisation of museum collections offers knowledge in a format that 'present[s] digital content in an appealing, accessible and understandable form...developing its educational and economic potential' (Maier 1999, p. 333). Many museums are converting large portions of their collections to digital form, involving text, images, and in some instances, sound. As Mortensen notes (1995, p. 110), 'As more and more museums convert to digital and go online, they will increasingly function as a virtual repository of cultural information - society's memory - accessible to anyone who can plug in'. At the same time, it has become imperative for museums to be seen as relevant; this is not necessarily driven by need or convention. Museums need to be seen to be digital, as well as being digital. The provision of access to museum collections, the potential use of technologies to enable this, and the need to be relevant to communities was often raised by staff interviewed at the case study museums.

The need for Melbourne Museum to keep pace with technological changes and the uses of technology within the museum context, (including the provision of on-line services and the digitisation of collections), was a prominent theme discussed in staff and board member interviews. It was felt that it was essential for the museum to have an on-line presence to meet community expectations about information accessibility. However, the museum's on-line presence raised challenges about the new roles of the museum, and its transformation from the physical to a blended physical and virtual site. As one staff member noted;

'the museum has an on-line presence. We are constantly looking at ways of matching what people are doing out in the real world with what museums can offer on-line...the challenge [is] of overcoming the old, really entrenched ideas about museums as physical

places you visit' [Transcript no. 7, Melbourne Museum staff member - EW - 14 August 2008]

The increasing use of technology to deliver online information, public programs, and education services, as well as collection access, raised a number of ethical and resource concerns at the Melbourne Museum. These are associated with issues of authenticity, 'authority', quality control and the museum's relationship with the public via technologies. The desire to digitise the museum's collections and place these online and the data and documentation enhancement required to make this possible meant that resources and staff time were increasingly devoted to these tasks, leaving other tasks deferred. Money which would previously have been used for exhibitions was being moved into online programs, as a new form of access. Pressure to put collection information online exposed weaknesses in existing museum documentation procedures and lack of available information on the collection items. It was noted by a curatorial staff member that;

'[There are] different assumptions about what the public wants, this is not crystallised. [We] need to set up on-line information in a customised way for the public or we are doomed to failure...less than half of the collection has no online presence whatsoever – not well documented, work practices need to shift to accommodate this' [Transcript no.10, Melbourne Museum staff member - M McC - 18 August 2008].

While the use of technologies enables museum collections to be placed online, opening up museum objects to diverse audiences, this challenges the quintessential definition of museums as a physical place in which to experience the authentic object. The shift from the physical space of the museum to the museum as a virtual space has many implications for the museum concept. While notions of authenticity and 'trustworthiness' are closely associated with museums in relation to the quality of the experience and information provided during visits, this is still being redefined in the online environment.

The push to place museum collections on-line has resulted in a fascination with the instantaneous retrieval of copious amounts of information about objects. This is often done with little context or sense of how individual objects relate to other collection items, their history, or institutional provenance. In the past, these factors frequently underpinned

the concept of museum connoisseurship, collecting histories and the institutional ideology as a whole. As Henning notes (2006, p. 308) ‘a “strange mania” marks the early years of new media, like the early years of the modern museum. Anything that can be collected, digitised, and stored is regardless of the amount of time it would take anyone to view or read every item in the archive’. The fascination with and ability of, technology to systematically allow museums to place collections online is both a valuable and a fraught area of contemporary museum practice.

The need to merge information from various internal departments within museums curatorial, conservation, registration and research - in order to place collections on-line and the associated tensions and expectations this creates has substantially changed museum culture and management. The impact on structure, allocation of responsibility, supervision, human resource strategies, decision-making processes and leadership have all arisen in museums from this shift towards greater reliance on, uptake and use of technologies. As financial and staff resources are being diverted into technology-based projects that require lengthy development time and new organisational processes, museums are questioning the impact of new technologies on their programming, visitor experience and organisations as a whole. The need to use new technologies to provide information to the public was seen as a pressing concern at the Melbourne Museum, generated by external demands, rather than internal forces;

‘I think the external forces are really about the overwhelming need to provide access to all of our information or as much as we possibly can and the Web is really it...the rise and rise of the Web in terms of access to information means we do have to...put more and more resources into that form of access rather than traditional exhibitions’ [Transcript no. 16, Melbourne Museum staff member- R H - 16 August 2008]

By comparison, at the Australian Museum issues associated with new technologies were not so much concentrated on the need to put the collections online, but more related to the relevant skills, expertise and resources amongst the museum’s staff required to facilitate this. In addition, placing collections online was seen to be part of the larger organisational goals and tasks of science communication and showcasing the museum’s collections. As a staff member noted;

‘[The] issue of getting collections online, this is one of the museum’s top priorities. We are well advanced with databasing of the collection [but] there is the issue of technology, how do you employ people who will bring in grants....what sort of scientific grants do we need?’ [Transcript no.1, Australian Museum staff member - P B- 19 January 2009]

For the South Australian Museum the impact of new technologies on organisational practices was often linked to financial considerations. While acknowledging that technologies offered the possibility to engage with audiences in new ways, practical considerations dominated discussions of access to museum collections and information;

‘Museums have to be up there in terms of IT, but this has to be replaced every 3 years, we do not get a budget to maintain this. There is a need for better IT systems, we have had bad experiences in the past, but this appeals to kids, but can look dated quickly...we need to think of security issues and challenges’ [Transcript no. 5, South Australian Museum staff member- T K- 23 September 2008]

In addition to these pragmatic concerns regarding the use of new technologies in Australian museums, changes in funding and financial pressures have impacted upon notions of equality and access in the online world. As Lang Rottenberg states (2002, p. 25) ‘...museums have increasingly looked to a paying public to generate revenue. This trend can be seen in museums’ approach to digital information where early expectations of financial returns, coupled with the high costs of creating and maintaining digital resources, resulted in a tendency to view information as a commodity rather than as a public good’. Today, however, opportunities presented by digital technologies allow museums to redefine their role, providing new experiences for visitors or enhancing existing ones.

Despite Australian museums placing their collections online, a number of them question the hyperbole surrounding new media technologies. As a museum with its beginnings in natural history, the South Australian Museum features a number of prominent and world-renowned collections in this area. During the 1950s the Australian ethnographic collection (Aboriginal collection) was described as ‘probably the largest and most representative in existence today’ (Hale 1956, p. vii). As part of the South Australian Museum Act 1976, the museum has ‘legal responsibility to the people of South Australia to acquire, preserve or study specimens or items of significant biological, geological, archaeological,

anthropological and historical interest and to disseminate knowledge arising from their study' (Ling 1982, p. 5). The museum's diverse natural history collection, much of which remains inadequately documented and conserved, is particularly problematic.

In spite of this, contemporary approaches to digitising collections, using electronic collection management systems and the potential for the museum's collections to be placed online remains a low priority at the South Australian Museum. A number of staff interviewed commented on the priority focus of the value, integrity and importance of the collections above all else;

'The role and purpose of the South Australian Museum - we should steadfastly look after the collections- this is part of the museum's *raison d'être* but also from the knowledge point of view, to present objects and specimens for the public, the heart and importance of the institution' [Transcript no.12, South Australian Museum staff member - DK- 29 September 2008]

At the South Australian Museum issues surrounding the use of technologies in the museum, the nature of the museum's audiences, its marketing and promotion are often seen as peripheral to the 'real' purpose of the museum, which remains its collections. As the South Australian Museum's Director noted;

'Museums in the 19th century were social places, they should be about public socialising...[this is] one of the functions of museums. Technology is a means, but there is little interest in content being delivered, people don't come to museums to see technology, but collections, the interaction with the real' [Transcript no.3, South Australian Museum staff member - SM - 22 September 2008]

Whether this is a reflection of the state of the museum's funding, a desire for pragmatic and realistic endeavours in the face of a difficult financial situation, or an inherent conservatism and aversion to changing programs is uncertain. It may also reveal the museum's difference in perceived social priorities, compared to the other case study museums. The need for a museum space may be of more importance than the provision of digital information. A number of senior museum staff interviewed commented on the lack of specialist IT infrastructure at the South Australian Museum. In addition, they alluded to

the tension between the museum's traditional role in maintaining and researching its collections, and acknowledging the need for, and use of, more contemporary technologies to make their collections more accessible to audiences. As one executive staff member explained;

'Another external challenge is this state, the priorities of health, education and police,...[not] museums and technology...the digitisation of the collections and the role of new media and IT, giving people access to the collections, [but] there is a strong tradition here, staying with the object-rich displays' [Transcript no.9, South Australian Museum staff member- SR - 24 September 2008]

In this way, the South Australian Museum equates a museum experience with viewing and interacting with objects in the museum building itself. An over-emphasis on technology is seen to distract the museum goer from the more authentic and 'real' experience of the traditional museum. As Levin states (2006, p. 183) 'new media reduces objects to the status of 'mere' origins of information about them that can be communicated using various media, undermining the authority of objects and the absolutist claims to the meaning of the material world that are associated with them'. The re-interpretation of objects - from their material value to their information value- that took place in museums from the 1980s, represents a fundamental shift in the way in which museums see their role and purpose today. Witcomb (1997, p. 146) states that this shift is 'symptomatic of the re-organisation of the museum's social function, in line with the shift from an industrial to an information society'. Having members of the public accessing museum databases and images online has raised many questions about individual museum's authority in this medium, as well as the ability to present accurate, objective, and credible information.

### **6.3 *Museum Informatics: the challenge to the real? : discussion***

Attempting to reflect the diverse needs of heterogeneous communities and audiences has become one of the hallmarks of contemporary museum practice in Australian museums. Due to the impact of new museology and new public management, greater emphasis has been placed on making diverse museum collections available to the public, particularly through electronic means such as the Internet and on-line collection databases. For

contemporary museums the challenge of using new tools and providing images on on-line covers both digitally crated images and digital representations of actual artefacts in museum collections. Through access to images on-line on museum websites, members of the public are able to create new relationships between objects via web technology.

In many ways the tenets of new museology and new public management have sought to increase both public appeal and accountability to the public. The rise of personal computing technologies today has made it possible for museums to increase their popular appeal through making accessible digital information on their collections. Objects can now be viewed online and documentation and images combined with interactive multimedia. As a result, the pre-eminence of real artefacts has been challenged both within museums and by the public. A questioning and concern about notions of authenticity and authority has arisen within museums and ‘tension between mission and market in the past decade has been apparent in the museum’s approach to new technology’ (Lang Rottenberg 2002, p. 22).

The development of the World Wide Web during the 1990s further expanded the possibilities for museums in relation to collection access, marketing, promotion, and educational programs. At the same time, computer technologies were expeditiously seen to offer museums endless opportunities to move away from the physical constraints of their buildings. As Sumption notes (2006, p. 25) ‘museums embraced the Web and strove to reach beyond their walls, to infiltrate our homes, classrooms and workplaces. In part, museums’ willingness to embrace the Web was driven by the tantalising opportunity it held out to expand scholarly outreach...’. The use of computer technologies has made possible many of the activities with which museums are now identified. The use of these technologies has become a precondition for the core missions and legitimacy of many museums.

The uptake of technology by museums has occurred within a broad social and economic context. Museums are not exempt from the current information age and this is altering their everyday practices, management, and role within society. The relatively new use of technologies, while offering the possibility of improving services and generating income, are challenging long-held perceptions of the roles of museums. Internet and web technologies create the potential for the public, rather than in-house specialised staff such

as curators, to create new relationships, connections and meanings between museum objects.

Despite this rapid uptake of technology and the overwhelmingly positive response by the public, there is unease about the ultimate purpose and use of technologies within museums. As Lang Rottenberg states (2002, p. 22) 'in the rush to adopt the Internet in the 1990s, practical issues tended to overshadow the more philosophical. Little was known of the ultimate impact of this technology on our institutions and, indeed, on our society'. In many museums, information and communications technology is seen as a 'medium for service delivery and as an agent for social development' (Dawson 2002, p.59). Hand in hand with this belief is the idea that technology is crucial in turning museums from repositories into information resources. There has been a significant shift in museum function from storage to access, information to knowledge, and looking to interaction. This has allowed an increased democratisation in museums.

While museums in the past claimed authority and power through their comprehensive collections and taxonomic systems of knowledge, today technology, through virtual reality 'represents a more democratic and immaterial space' (Witcomb 1997, p. 148). The power of the consumer in increasingly competitive environments, where consumers are better educated and more demanding has had an influence on how museums can respond. However, it is questionable whether the changed relationship between the museum and visitors has been purely the result of consumer pressures enabled by technology.

Since the 1980s, political and economic changes have significantly affected the role and purpose of museums. Structural and managerial changes which were often introduced in response to changes in funding and a sense that museums were becoming outmoded, have altered the connections between these institutions and their visitors. Technology has inspired this democratisation in museums, but it is neither sufficient nor requisite for the change.

Users value museums for meeting their information needs. A recent study conducted in the United States reveals (and this would equally apply in Australia) that 'Libraries and museums rated higher than other sources. Information obtained during in-person visits to museums and libraries was consistently more trusted than information obtained online

from museums and libraries' (Griffiths, King, et.al 2008, p.7). This raises questions related to access, participation, interaction and democratisation in museums.

While new technologies are being used to 'customise and personalise the museum experience to visitor's interests, to take visitors to places and engage them in ways not otherwise possible...and to better understand how visitors use the museum' (Witschey, Parry, et.al 2006, p. 3) technology is a means, not an end, for museums. High levels of customisation offered by technology, while allowing individuals to 'utterly saturate their information space exclusively with information and sources that reinforce existing world-views' (Witschey, Parry, et.al 2006, p. 25) do not introduce new ideas or perspectives. Technology can provide museum content beyond institutional walls, transforming where, when and what is received.

However, an over-reliance on technology to accomplish goals, the compensation for lack of face-to-face contact with staff and collections, the realities of the digital divide in terms of access and understanding of technologies by different socioeconomic groups and need for significant resources means that technologies are frequently a mixed blessing for museums. The potential of technologies are similarly being viewed today by museums as 'marketing terminology overlaid on another discourse of profitability, cost, customer satisfaction' (Henning 2006, p. 314). The positive voices promising technocratic progress vie with negative predictions of overt commercialisation, loss of universality, and the decline of public good in museums.

Museums have increasingly become associated with education and learning. A growing interest in museum audiences developed during the 1980s. Weil (1990, p. 32) proposed that fundamental to the existence of museums was the public. The emphasis on popularity and attracting ever-larger, broader and more diverse audiences to museums has been underlined by fiscal and economic concerns. Like other publicly supported and authorised institutions, museums have increasingly been expected to justify their effectiveness and purpose. Along with making their collections, exhibitions and public programs more accessible to the public, museums are increasingly engaging in learning programs. Although there has been a rise in discourses about learning in museums, this is not necessarily associated with the push towards accessibility, but is closely tied to instrumental arguments about the social value of museums. Information technology and

particularly the Web have been linked to this, as ideas about education shift towards self-directed learning. For many museums, their survival (and continual funding) is often linked to them becoming more visitor-centred, interactive and learning focussed institutions.

The move away from the object towards the visitor in many institutions combines the twin concerns of revenue raising and a democratisation of learning within museums. While the emphasis is on learning, in many ways museums are simultaneously engaging in a democratisation of high culture. As organisations, they struggle with identity issues which result from being required to shift from the arbiters of culture (high culture) to institutions that promote more accessible, commercial and democratised culture (popular culture). However, popular culture and accessibility are not the same thing. Museums have endeavoured to make their programs more accessible. This has occurred both through making high culture more accessible and through the creation of exhibitions which focus on ideas and topics prevalent in popular culture. This has resulted in on-going institutional and managerial transformations that are still underway.

In transforming themselves into more engaging and educationally focussed organisations, museums are intent on increasing their community relevance, audience and civic responsibilities. The audience and its perceived needs have changed organisational practices within museums. As Roberts (1996, p. 10) acknowledges, ‘broadened notions of learning, growing knowledge about visitors, new complexities in interpretation and expanded responsibilities all continue to influence the role educators are expected to play [in museums]’.

Today education in museums is sophisticated. Learning is seen as a form of active participation between the learner and the museum environment, rather than passive absorption of information. The changing educational roles of museums, often facilitated through the use of on-line technologies, similarly reveals a return ‘to the theme of community service as essential to museum practice’ (Hein 1998, p. 8). The emphasis on visitors and the provision of museum education, often through technologies, remains a dominant challenge in today’s more complex relationship between the museum and its public. The focus on education, along with technology, has become the norm of cultural practice in many of today’s museums.

#### **6.4 Museums and new technologies: findings**

In many cases, museums have perhaps underestimated the resources and skills required to place their collections online. Having to balance this against public, state government and internal pressures to embrace new technologies has created many managerial and organisational changes.

One of the most prominent issues facing the South Australian Museum is the constant concern about raising sufficient funding for its programs, exhibitions, research and information technology requirements. Staff members interviewed stated that the lack of operational funding received by the museum from the state government had flow on effects to other areas of the institution's responsibilities. As a result, it was evident that the museum had adopted a culture of selecting a few core, fundamental roles, rarely deviating from this and begrudgingly accepting the difficult financial constraints under which it operates. This was particularly problematic in relation to the use of, and sourcing of, funds for technologies in the museum. As one staff interviewee noted;

'We have a reduction in operational funding, everything has to be gotten externally, and this is the only paradigm now.' [Transcript no. 11, South Australian Museum staff member - S D 29 September 2008]

Other staff members, however, were more direct about their concerns in relation to lack of funding and the use of technologies within the museum;

'We have always been the poor cousin of the cultural institutions in Adelaide. We are limited by technology and our website, scanning [of images] for preservation, funding for technology, promoting the collections on the Web is not occurring' [Transcript no.4, South Australian Museum staff member - F Z - 23 September 2008]

The concerns about lack of resources to place the museum's collections on-line were matched by disquiet about the extent and nature of the impact of new technologies on the museum. As Parry notes (2007, p. 64), debate about what constitutes authenticity in light of digital objects is of concern to museums; '...questioning of what [is] authentic and whether the 'aura' could (or should) be preserved within a digital surrogate appear[s] to

bring into question all that [is] genuine, trustworthy, reliable and valid about the museum experience'. The use of new technologies in museums underpins this tension between the promise of greater consumer access to collections while maintaining authority and a tight link with curatorial knowledge about tangible artefacts.

The notion that museums have a high public standing, in that they are considered sources of reliable, honest and credible information about the natural and cultural world, is frequently felt to be threatened by the use of new technologies. This was again evident at the South Australian Museum, where staff members interviewed expressed the view that some of the most pressing internal and external forces impacting on the museum and its management related to technology. The need to combine elements of the perceived old museum with the new museum was prominent;

'The external forces challenge [us] to make the collections more accessible, approx. 5% of the collections are on display, they could be displayed through a website and better Internet webpage. There is an expectation that the museum will grow and change and offer more, a better balance between online presence and staying true to the museum's core, the collections here' [Transcript no. 1, South Australian Museum staff member - CS - 22 September 2008]

That this staff member at the South Australian Museum saw staying 'true to the museum's core, the collections...' is revealing. The most important objective of the museum is not to make its collections more accessible through the use of technology; rather it remains responsible for the care and preservation of the collection. While this is not necessarily a constant source of tension within the museum, it does suggest that the museum is still grappling with changes wrought by technology in relation to organisational goals. As Trant (2008, p. 275) indicates, moving collections into digital space represents an important shift in the fundamental purpose of museums, and a 'key, collection related resource that forms an integral part of the value and appreciation of collections themselves and supports the ability of the museum to fulfil its mission'. An online presence for collections is not possible without a well-documented, conserved and photographed physical collection. Increasingly, however, Australian state museums are realising the value of Internet technologies and seeing this potential for promoting their collections and giving them a competitive edge in attracting visitors.

In contrast to the South Australian Museum, the Australian Museum in Sydney viewed the use of technologies and their potential to increase public access as an institutional strength. The Australian Museum's Corporate Strategic Plan 2005-08, notes that an important strategic priority during this period was to enhance visitor experiences. While the museum received 332,000 onsite visitors during the year, the museum's website '...served almost 22 million virtual visitors...[and] development has progressed significantly with the Museum's website - with emphasis on engagement and accessibility' (Annual Report 2007-2008, p.17). Technologies make possible the activities with which today's museums are identified. However, the almost universal uptake of technologies has occurred because museums are highly responsive to external social pressures and as such 'social expectations are the foremost determinant of the internal structure of an organisation like a museum, not the organisations technical needs' (Rowland & Rojas 2006, p. 87). This pressure to be responsive to public needs in relation to technological access was evident in interviews with Australian Museum staff members. As one staff member stated;

'...pressures are the world of the Internet and the Web. This is changing not only the online relationship, but also in the real world changing the relationship to the type of information available, accessing the balance between curatorial information and knowledge. Our authority will need to be continually negotiated...[we will] become facilitators for assisting people to do this' [Transcript no. 5, Australian Museum staff member - JC - 20 January 2009]

The issue of the museums' authority in relation to the information placed on line was a continuing and vexed issue for Australian Museum staff. In relation to the challenges and difficulties currently facing the museum an interviewee acknowledged;

'We have an incredibly high Web visitation, where do you pitch yourself in these times? Internet use is high, but there is the issue of the authoritative voice of the museum, this has not come up, but the name of the institution is important, we have a strong scientific reputation' [Transcript no.6, Australian Museum Trust member - R H - 20 January 2009]

Museums have a high public standing and are mindful of the way in which information they provide on collections or programs is interpreted, assessed, and taken as factually correct. Placing this information into cyberspace risks the potential for distortion,

inaccuracies, and a questioning of the museum's credibility and public respect. As Nash notes (1992, p.184) museums have, in the past, and today, continue to provide 'things that are not easily 'commodified'- knowledge, understanding, enlightenment, social and cultural development'. Integrating and maintaining these values and outcomes in light of technologies is increasingly problematic for museums. In particular, new technologies conflate existing notions in museums of both authorship and of authority. The online poses a challenge for museums because it potentially democratises who creates knowledge about the collections. While this increases the museum's capacity to appear (and be) open and inclusive, it also creates greater possibilities for the museum's scholarship to be called into question (usually when the museum's authorship is confused with a member of the public). This tension has been evident since new museology was embraced with its questioning of hierarchies of value and knowledge and opening up of institutions to community participation.

While the use of new technologies in museums has contributed to this uncertainty surrounding authority, it has simultaneously provided the 'equivalent of power steering for educators and museum professionals. It can dramatically extend the reach of our professionals and their capacity to serve more people effectively. In this manner, technology becomes a 'creativity amplifier' (Ferren 1997, p.7). While many interviewed staff at the Australian Museum viewed the embrace of technologies positively, others questioned the hyperbole surrounding technology and its organisational emphasis. Concerns were raised that new technologies used in museums for multi-media displays meant that interpretation was displaced and the public fascination often lay with the technology itself, rather than the content. At the same time, the use of technologies was seen to contribute to the trivialising of the museum experience. The use of technologies for multi-media displays in galleries in museums often further exacerbated the issue of education vs. entertainment within these organisations. As Templar (2009, p. 172) states; '...technologies [are] seen as a means towards democratisation of knowledge, [but] there still exists the tension between "moral and social uplift" and the "sensationalist dime museum"'.

In some instances, the need to incorporate new technologies in museums was questioned by the staff. As an interviewee at the Australian Museum expressed;

‘The moment people become engrossed in technology...we need to be able to critique it without being ostracised. We are in danger of too much emphasis on technology. We need to ask questions and decide, rather than running down a path feeling we are being left behind. The Web is an area where the museum can change its approach and reach audiences. What creative and new ways can we develop to engage audiences?’ [Transcript no. 4, Australian Museum staff member- J G - 20 January 2009]

In this way, the museum was seen to be incorporating technologies into exhibitions, multimedia displays and digital access to collections, without rationalising why, and if it was necessary. At the same time, the museum’s voice of authority is potentially dispersed, demystified and de-valued within the public mind. To a large extent this loss of authority within museums remains unresolved. Anxieties about authorship and a relativising of exclusive knowledge which was once the domain of specialist staff such as curators and research scientists is now being faced by Australian museums.

The need to make available large quantities of information to the public has challenged existing organisational and management structures that guarded specialist knowledge, and created and reinforced silos in museums. This has led to a broadening of institutional and structural changes. The use of the Internet and World Wide Web ‘destabilises the museum’s traditional information management practices by positing the user rather than the object as the focus of our practice...our information policies, procedures and systems need to be designed and geared to meet the needs of somebody...beyond the museum’ (Peacock 2008, p.71). While the impact of technological change on the internal processes and structures was not something that was mentioned by staff and trust members interviewed at the Australian Museum, it was evident at the Melbourne Museum.

Staff discussed the integration of information technology into their day-to-day tasks, resourcing issues associated with this and the impact of technologies on changing work practices. As a senior curatorial staff member stated;

‘I should mention one of the things that has been a significant change in the organisation in this period...[it] has been IT and the way IT has shaped how we work. It is a facility that has been a fabulous investment that this organisation has made...it does shape the way we work and what sorts of outcomes we can aspire to achieve, especially in terms of

engagement with the community' [Transcript no.9, Melbourne Museum staff member - LDH - 15 August 2008]

Along with changing work practices, the influence of information technology systems raises issues of the changing roles of museums in Australia. As a staff member at the Melbourne Museum remarked;

'Those museums that adequately resource their IT departments are able to play in the big spaces...we are lucky here at the Museum of Victoria. We are well resourced. How do we balance putting objects on the floor with digitisation? We want to participate and be a player...but are we an agency that just builds websites? But in day to day work, it is a conundrum...' [Transcript no. 7, Melbourne Museum staff member - EW-14 August 2008]

In light of this, institutions with adequate budgets and staff for new technologies have become leaders in the fields with on-line data bases, websites and collaborative projects. While this is positive, questions remain regarding how the use of new technologies may lead to significant public participation in museums, and whether the information accessible remains a public good.

Despite these philosophical and social concerns, Australian museums continue to grapple with the pragmatic considerations of changing work practices, public expectations and organisational debates about the benefits and disadvantages of new technologies. Repeatedly expressed by Melbourne Museum staff was the need for discussion about its potential uses and how best to serve audiences;

'There are also online expectations, internal dialogue and debate about the use of collections and technology... different assumptions about what the public wants, this is not crystallised. [We] need to set up on-line information in a customised way - for the public - or we are doomed to failure' [Transcript no.10, Melbourne Museum staff member - MMc - 18 August 2008]

While offering the possibility of improving services, the current use of new technologies challenges public perceptions of museums. The potential for the public, rather than

curatorial staff, to create new relationships between museum objects questions notions of authority. This fundamental shift has altered the everyday practices of museums, their positions within society and revolutionised public information provision and access. The educational potential of this information and the provision of learning services through new technologies remain crucial to the success and livelihood of many of today's museums.

### **6.5 Museums -audiences, technology and lifelong learning : discussion**

The rise of education in museums, the potential of education as a new institutional function and changing definitions of what constitutes learning are often priorities in museums today. The increased emphasis on learning in these institutions has affected the practice of museum management. Similarly, as hybrid organisations, museums are increasingly being expected to fulfil governmental and economic agendas beyond a cultural or aesthetic experience. As Falk and Dierking (2000, p.18) discuss, learning is seen as the main reason people visit museums today. The increased emphasis on learning in museums is taking place within a broad context of changes in museum culture, museums and leisure and the commodification of learning within museums. In addition, the changing status of learning reflects the increasing number and power of educators within museums.

As Roberts (1997, p. 1) states, the growing emphasis in museums on education is due to a number of factors, particularly 'growing professionalism... accountability, customer service and educational reform...[which] has made education a serious and central function in museums'. Education in museums takes on many forms: informal learning as visitors move through exhibitions and displays, public programs and increasingly formal, structured programs for school groups, frequently tied to educational curricula. While in many ways the increased emphasis on education in museums harks back to the late 18th and early 19th centuries, today learning in museums is increasingly associated with lifelong programs and community engagement. Using Nordic countries as examples, Illeris (2006, p.16) argues that there is a significant expectation today that museum visitors be motivated in relation to their own learning, and are involved in a never-ending developmental process, a form of social engineering, reflective of the changing needs of

the market. Many museums today undertake sophisticated studies of their various audiences to try and ascertain the educational needs of the public. What was previously an undifferentiated public visiting the museum has today become the study of audience segments that could be attracted to museums.

Learning in museums has become concerned with the requirements of different learners, based on their age, gender, educational backgrounds, and creating programs specifically tailored to these audiences. The concept of the museum as a 'learning environment' is 'currently at the top of the political agenda for museums across Western society' (Black 2005, p. 5). Much of the emphasis in museums on life-long learning, however, is related to broader social and economic agendas. Where learning was once a 'preparation for life', today it has been displaced by learning as a continuous need to update and build upon existing forms of knowledge. In order to accommodate this change, many Australian museums have become education and audience-centred in their organisational focus.

As museums today attempt to justify their public service and the validity of their funding, they seek to demonstrate their educational value. While this is in many ways a positive aspect of contemporary museum management, it is 'not enough now for museums to provide an aesthetic or inspiring experience... audiences must be encouraged to come to learn and...the nature of that learning must be measurable in some shape or form' (Black 2005, p.128). Similarly, it is questionable whether education and access, as they are currently envisaged by museums, are fulfilling organisational and public expectations or premising a move towards greater commodification of museum services. With their emphasis on accessibility and educational inclusiveness, Barr (2005, p. 101) argues that today's museums are 'part of a new political agenda that has come to dominate museum policy...[it] makes museums seek their rationale in something external to themselves – "The People"... as a result museums have abandoned scholarship and rigour'. The need for museums to cater to audiences and maintain an educational mission, while also undertaking scholarship and research, was raised in a number of interviews. As a staff member at the South Australian Museum explained;

'...we need to be contemporary, finding a mix of approaches, we do need to be mindful of our educational role in the community, but can still be provocative. Education and lifelong learning, from cradle to grave, not just the national curricula, it is really important...[and]

pure research needs to be done, [the] ongoing use of the collections' [Transcript no.7, South Australian Museum staff member - R M - 24 September 2008]

The rise of education and life-long learning in museums has been informed by a number of learning theories, particularly those associated with informal learning. As Marsick and Watkins (2001, p. 25) note, informal learning is usually intentional, but not formal education and 'may occur in institutions, but it is not typically classroom-based or highly structured, and control of learning rests primarily in the hands of the learner'. Research on learning styles in museums has explored connections between museums and classroom learning (Borun, Chambers & Cleghorn, 1996; Falk & Dierking, 2000) as well as the types of learning, such as experiential and discovery learning that take place when people visit museums. In addition, objects in museums allow learning to occur through story telling and curatorial narratives. As Leinhardt and Crowley note (2001, p. 11) museums are 'places where systems of objects exist that support learning conversations...objects are best thought of as examples that create nodes around which existing knowledge can be restructured and into which new knowledge can be integrated'. Informal learning, for children and adults alike, has become a driving function of Australian museums today.

The rise of education and life-long learning has occurred simultaneously with the rise of the use of new technologies. Until recently, museums expected their visitors to learn through passive means; to 'look, think, compare and classify' (Cassels 1996, p. 41). However, attention directed towards learners and their needs has been altered in museums over the last few decades. Learner participation and input, often through electronic means such as interactive displays, hands-on collections, educational websites and touch screens, has become the norm. Since the 1990s a large number of museums, including state museums in Australia, have installed interactive displays in exhibitions. Interactives are intended to be inspirational and encourage visitors, especially children, to follow their interests and self-direct their learning within the museum context. It can be argued that with interactives the 'emphasis is on enjoyment biased towards technology...[and] also intended to be subtly educational' (Stevenson 1996, p. 231).

The use of interactives, new technologies and museum education was a topic often discussed by Australian museum staff and board members when interviewed.

Views on the use of interactives and new technologies were mixed and often discussed in relation to the changing roles of Australian museums. As a South Australian Museum staff member said;

‘The role of the museum is about public knowledge, there is a great want by the public about Australian history...[but] people still like to come and see real objects. People don’t need interactive devices, what captures the imagination of people [is] a little bit of knowledge about the world they don’t know...’ [Transcript no.6, South Australian Museum staff member - K W- 24 September 2008]

### **6.6 *Museums, communities and technology: findings***

The recurring interest in the importance of the museum as a community asset and an organisation that added value to the community, whether online or through its physical presence emerged through interviews conducted at the Melbourne Museum. A number of staff felt that the uppermost purpose of the museum was not so much its collections, but to be a venue where ideas could be discussed and explored, ranging from indigenous issues and the environment, to climate change and sustainability. While museum staff interviewed for the case studies acknowledged museums as a place where visitors came to see real objects, they also discussed the growing presence of museums in the digital world of information provision. Social interaction, education and community access were being facilitated by museums in the physical realm, but questions arose about how exactly this was occurring in cyberspace. Through the use of new technologies, museums were seen to be attracting wider audiences as cultural organisations for the 21st century. As a staff member stated;

‘There is stewardship of the museum to be [a] public place; threads of continuity... museums are great places to address questions of access and engagement. There is an intercultural agenda and social cohesion [here]’ [Transcript no. 11, Melbourne Museum staff member - LS -18 August 2008]

Other staff members felt that community engagement and participation, often enhanced

through the use of new technologies, played an increasingly prominent role in the future of the museum and would become its primary objective. This was often couched in terms of the museum's core business:

'I do think our core business is to collect the material culture and to carry it forward...I think the role now though is really about providing access to the world way beyond the exhibitions and it is about being part of the community, linking in with the community' [Transcript no. 16, Melbourne Museum board member - RH - 16 August 2008]

Closely related to the interest in reinventing and refocusing the museum as a community asset through the use of new technologies, was interest in attracting and inspiring museum audiences. The organisational emphasis on attracting larger and more diverse audiences, through on-site visitors and web usage, particularly at the Melbourne and Australian museums was seen to have an impact on transforming the museums into more populist institutions.

Museums today have embraced new technologies enthusiastically, in the hope that they will allow a greater number of people access and provide marketing tools that don't feel like marketing tools promoting the museum and its collections. As Mason and McCarthy (2008, p. 63) state, technologies offer museums a 'promise to modernise, popularise, and increase the efficiency of a rather staid or old fashioned institution'. However, the long term implications and potential scope of technology use in museums in relation to education, collections and management remains unknown. The impact of new technologies on the organisational structure of museums, internal processes and knowledge management is in its infancy. In summarising this, Peacock (2008, p. 76) asserts that 'established paradigms of information management and their associated technologies may blind us to the changing functions of information. The collection-centred model of information that was the foundation of museum information practice is no longer adequate in the networked digital age'. Reconfiguring their management practices to accommodate this while continuing to attract new and more diverse audiences, often through the use of new technologies, remains paramount in Australian museums.

While visitor numbers are often seen as an indication of performance in contemporary

museums, the reasons why people visit museums, and what they hope to gain through their visits is subject to greater scrutiny and analysis than ever before. Visits to museums are characterised as ‘a synthesis of leisure and consumption’ (Goulding 2006, p. 264). The requirements, wants and needs of audiences have become an organisational focus, impacting upon management processes. Australian museums now include sections or individual staff who study patterns of audience attendance and visitor types. They seek to develop programs tailored to perceived audience needs in terms of engagement, information and programs. This has resulted in a much more externally focussed organisational culture; one where attracting audiences and competitive marketing has taken primacy over more internal functions such as research and collections development.

Museums are seen to act as enablers to the past, with programs, exhibitions and services offered that are ‘intellectually accessible and culturally relevant to their audience, despite social or ethnic background’ (Goulding 2006, p. 261). Customer expectations and levels of satisfaction today measure the quality of the museum visit. As Rowley states (1999, p. 306) ‘customers [at museums] seek a total experience that may embrace leisure and recreation, culture, education, space and social interaction’. Utilising communications, marketing and collection interpretation today ensures that museum visitors are catered for in many ways, that visitors’ interests are paramount and that visitors will make repeat visits.

Knowing audiences ‘is [the] key to identify different needs but also to develop niche markets and convince more visitors to become regular museum goers’ (Waltl 2006, p. 3). The need to attract new audiences and retain existing audiences was a concern raised by Australian Museum staff when interviewed. As a long-standing staff member, with much knowledge of institutional history noted;

‘...we have moved somewhat away from an organisation that tells facts to an organisation that tells stories. In the last few years, we have had high visitation, enormous successes have been made, particularly in understanding audiences; there’s a shifting emphasis on audiences’ [Transcript no. 2, Australian Museum staff member - GF - 19 January 2009]

While understanding audiences was seen by some staff as the key to the museum’s

contemporary success, others felt that audiences had come to define not only the museum's success, but had shaped its position and function;

'The role and purpose of museums in the current century...I would define museums in terms of the audience, we are a resource for audiences in New South Wales, access and history here. We need to be at the behest of our audiences, we need to forge connections with the community to maintain relevance, this needs to be taken to a new level'  
[Transcript no. 5, Australian Museum staff member - JC - 20 January 2009].

Maintaining visitor numbers, increasing audience access and being relevant to their communities, remains an ongoing dilemma for Australian state museums.

The relationship between a museum and its public has been altered, and, in many ways, enhanced through the use of new technologies. As Pitman states (1999, p. 13) 'the recognition that the educational mission is part of every museum activity has dramatically affected the ways museums involve and support their communities. Today museums are considered significant community assets, stimulating curiosity and enriching creativity through learning experiences'. Despite this commitment to education, there remains a lack of consensus about what constitutes learning in museums. Educators often lack an intellectual basis or theoretical foundation for learning in museums, and have little training in evaluation or research methods relevant to learning assessment within the museum context. Added to this, the 'absence of a "philosophical framework" for museum learning theory [creates] a conflict of values within museums' (Pitman 1999, p. 53).

The ambivalence about successful and measurable learning within museums is compounded by the challenge of meeting increasing audience expectations about museums. How best to cater to audience demands, and even scepticism in some instances about the emphasis being placed on the value of large audiences by museums, was revealed in a number of interviews. The Immigration Museum, a part of Museum Victoria, and issues associated with managing audience expectations brought about through greater access, was commonly referred to by Melbourne Museum staff who were interviewed;

'Other challenges are audience expectations at the Immigration Museum. The challenge is for it to be an inclusive experience for all people. Everyone wants to see themselves

represented, more democratic, but also greater expectations about their own representations and stories and this is an outcome from access' [Transcript no.15, Melbourne Museum staff member - MMcF - 20 August 2008]

The balance between providing for audiences and managing expectations as to what the Melbourne Museum could actually achieve (in terms of exhibitions, public programs and online access) was problematic. For a number of staff, particularly in the curatorial and collections areas, the shifting focus towards audiences was of similar concern;

'The earlier focus [at the museum] was on managing projects, the development of public programs (exhibitions). Especially in the last 10 years or so, changes across a lot of museums, with audience evaluation, there is great scepticism about this, a disconnection between what the museum thinks the public wants and what the public wants' [Transcript no.10, Melbourne Museum staff member - M McC - 18 August 2008]

### **6.7 *Museums, communities and technology: discussion***

The complexity of what museums think the public wants versus what the public actually does want has been a long-standing issue in museums, along with thinking of the 'public' as a coherent and homogenous mass. This sentiment has been complicated in recent decades by the introduction of new technologies. Although the use of new technologies does create the potential for greater public interaction, learning opportunities, community engagement and attracting diverse audiences, this is not achieved without changes in the existing roles and purposes of Australian museums. As Henning (2006, p. 315) argues 'far from democratising, increasing access and otherwise progressively changing the museum, new media is caught up in "power plays", furthering the museum's role in the production of an acquiescent citizenry who are now positioned as consumers of the museum experience'. Increasing access has become necessary in order to give museums a compelling and competitive way to attract visitors, whilst also developing their economic, educational and social roles. The question remains, however, what the public wants versus what the museum thinks the public wants and whether, ultimately, it is the museum's job to simply provide the public with its wants. The developing use of online social networks

represents the newest chapter in this dilemma and the most recent exploration of the potential of new technologies by museums.

### **6.8 Museums, social media and the new interaction? : findings**

Although museums have always engaged with their communities and audiences through their collections, new technologies such as Web 2.0 represent a fundamental shift in the way in which cultural institutions are re-defining their roles and purposes. Through social media such as blogs and wikis, museums are seeking to offer audiences new interactive experiences. A number of museums are beginning to experiment with Web 2.0 technology, exploring its potential to increase, modify, and redefine visitor participation. In the past, a museum's connection with its community was determined and contextualised by its collections and research. Traditional visitor interaction was 'formed through a one-way relationship solely based on curatorial and institutional authority' (Shahani, Nickonanou & Economou 2008, p.59). Similarly, since the advent of new museology the use of technologies has become increasingly embedded in not only museum processes, but in museum products, such as exhibitions, public programs, education, online databases and websites. As Parry notes (2007, p. 81) this has resulted in a pronounced shift in the value and mission of many museums; 'digitality...helped to support a realignment of museography that was taking place, from object-centred to experience-centred'. Similarly, the uptake of social media and the 'dot.com boom of the late 1990s and bust of the early 2000s has given rise to a new manifestation of the Web-focused far less on commerce and far more on user participation and personal expression' (Witschey and Parry 2006, p.15). The impact of new technologies such as Web 2.0 are currently being explored in Australian museums.

Many museums grapple with the long-term impact, resourcing, policy and management implications associated with Web 2.0. As a staff member at the Australian Museum noted;

'How do you make [use of] contemporary collections...[and] how do you make meaning of objects in new contexts? We need to be bridging the gap between history of the past and now. The other challenge - the uniqueness of the objects is not a foregone conclusion -

we are challenged by digital technologies and replicating 3D objects...virtual objects'  
[Transcript no. 2, Australian Museum staff member -GF- 19 January 2009]

Not only are museums challenged by digital technologies in relation to reproducing collections on-line, but Web 2.0 and other forms of social media similarly question the distribution of community knowledge. As 'products of social media are readily available online, their existence within museum communication programs presents debate around an institution's investment in its own continuing cultural authority' (Russo, Watkins, Kelly & Chan 2006, p. 1). Where authority on museum collections once lay in the realm of a curator's or collection manager's specialist knowledge, the possibility that members of the public may produce 'user generated content' in relation to museum objects raises a number of questions. Museums in the current century have sought to move away from being branded elitist, and new technologies have enabled them to become popular, achieving greater accessibility. This has, however, been at the loss of some authority.

The use of social media has the potential to expand the popular appeal of museums further; 'At the centre of Web 2.0 is the promise of richer, more relevant, more personal content; content which can make a difference to users...this is a Web where the "reactive consumer" becomes "public producers"' (Kelly and Ellis 2007, p. 2). Web 2.0 allows museum visitors online to share content, comment, collaborate and add information. However, the flexibility and democracy of information that flows through Web 2.0 is highly problematic for museums. Organisations have little control over the quality or accuracy of community content for the online sphere; however they are able to monitor the content that does go on-line on museum databases, blogs and websites through museum policies, review and management of on-line content. In many ways, however, the 'strength of the [on-line] tools is also a source of contention because anybody and everybody can create and publish content, with no regard to quality or accuracy...we strive to ensure that the quality of the virtual presence reflects the quality, mission and goals of the practical environments' (Greenfield 2008, pp.1-2). The need for museums to maintain a sense of authority, while also opening up their collections and making them accessible to the public via the Internet and Web 2.0, was often discussed in interviews conducted with Australian Museum staff and trust members. As one Museum trust member revealed;

‘We have an incredibly high Web visitation, [but] where do you pitch yourself in these times? Internet use is high, but there is the issue of the authoritative voice of the museum, this has not come up, but the name of the institution is important’ [Transcript no. 6, Australian Museum Trust member - RH - 20 January 2009]

Within museums, sections such as Educational, Marketing and Curatorial find the development of Web 2.0 problematic. How can the potential of the technology be used, how can agreed standards and ways of measuring the success of Web 2.0 be defined, and what does it mean for the mandate of museum specialists? For today’s curator, in particular, there is a tension between author and facilitator; a continuum which shifts according to the project on which these staff work. Although it can be argued that the roles of author and facilitator are ends of a continuum, they are also different roles, requiring different sets of skills. The use of social media such as Web 2.0 further erodes the barriers between these two roles in the position of curator, with as yet unknown outcomes for the long-term evolution of the role of curators in Australia’s museums.

Many organisational, cultural and political barriers within museums continue to make the uptake and utilisation of Web 2.0 difficult. As Kelly and Ellis (2007, p. 4) state, museums ‘find the concept of an external party editing content on the site difficult from both a brand and a “trusted organisation” perspective. Curatorial staff have additional, deep-seated concerns about authority once user content is brought into the mix’. A number of staff at the Australian Museum believed that the Internet and Web 2.0 presented possibilities as well as difficulties for the future of their museum;

‘...We are coming to terms with the museum and the Web world, the possibilities of using it, but of course resourcing this too. How is it going to change access to the museum, what to put on-line, tapping expertise in the community, huge potential and what is actually possible?’ [Transcript no. 13, Australian Museum staff member - RS - 27 January 2009]

Similarly, other staff commented on the potential of the Web to reach new audiences;

‘[we] are developing ways to engage more seriously with the over 50s, we have programs for this, and for technology and audiences using technology for outreach, eg. the extended classroom, possibly into nursing homes, to disabled groups, etc. What can the museum do

to go out to them? All of this is via the Web, an area where the museum can change its approach to reach audiences' [Transcript no. 4, Australian Museum staff member - JG - 20 January 2009]

While the use of the Web has led to higher expectations of accessibility by the public, of equal concern for museums is how the new technologies have affected the management of these organisations. While museums that have 'built their procedures on the management and display of physical objects have found that the relationship between an object and its observer changes' (Middleton 2007, p. 17) in the online world, keeping pace with new technologies has placed pressure on museums to be more structured and systematic at a departmental level in terms of knowledge sharing and information management. Bringing 'user-generated content into the institutional framework presents challenges to many aspects of an organisation including information quality, software maintenance, education, marketing and management structure' (Middleton 2007, p.19). The ways in which Australian museums are responding to changes as a result of new technologies, at the program, organisational and management level, were discussed in a number of interviews. At the Melbourne Museum there were mixed views regarding how the institution was dealing with the potential and pitfalls of new technologies. A senior staff member stated;

'I think where we haven't done as well, I think, is dealing with the online world, marrying the technical side with the curatorial aspirations and we've been at it for a while. We need big solutions...you do need to look at some largish solutions' [Transcript no. 16, Melbourne Museum staff member - RH -16 August 2008]

Yet other staff acknowledged the impact of new technologies organisation-wide;

'Working with technology, we need to be flexible, have a framework of planning in the organisation at department level; this occurs together, it is deeply embedded...[we have] discussions about what sort of management is needed in the museum, changes in delegations and approaches. The museum is now a more complex environment' [Transcript no. 2, Melbourne Museum staff member - TH - 12 August 2008].

In order to make the best use of new technologies, museums in Australia at a management level are beginning to acknowledge the institutional changes, additional skills and new

work processes required to integrate the Internet and Web 2.0 into daily museum practices.

In many museums, information is 'now recognised as an asset of value equal to or greater than their more tangible assets' (Peacock 2008, p. 59). Information generated by museums and accessible to the public is today seen as a service requirement by the organisations themselves. However, many museum staff do not possess the training and knowledge required to effectively manage or understand new technologies within the institutional framework. As Middleton (2007, p. 3) states, 'cultural institutions must address the skills base required for effective progression within the evolving Web environment...it may be preferred to bring together people with project management, software development, information organisation and subject specialisation skills'. As the phenomenon of Web 2.0 grows, museum communities continue to strengthen their understanding of it and its possible applications. As a way of providing content and attracting new audiences, new technologies continue to shape and define the role and purpose of Australian museums today.

The increasing emphasis on community relevance, civic responsibility and social inclusion that has been facilitated through greater access, the use of new technologies and changing political and economic agendas for museums, represents the newest demand on their management. There is a growing interest in, and attention given to, the social role and impact of museums in Australia. Engagement with ideas of social inclusion requires 'museums and the profession and sector as a whole to radically rethink their purposes and goals and to renegotiate their relationship to, and role within, society' (Sandell 2003, p. 45). With the requirement for museums to be ever more accountable to the public, they are increasingly being seen as agents for social inclusion, offering a sphere between the state and the economy. Understanding that they have 'shifting roles, responsibilities and realms of action invokes the idea that the museum might be able to provide a kind of mediation between the government and the public' (Message 2007, p. 7). In areas related to education, outreach, collections and information provision, the new social responsibility role of museums has implications for their evolving role which will be discussed in the following chapter.

### **6.9 Museums online: a question of authority? : discussion**

While the use of technology in museums allows many possibilities in relation to viewing collections online, obtaining a range of information, and accessing this in a novel way, it also raises questions regarding the authority of museum information and the changing nature of encounters with authentic objects. At the same time, many museums are 'reluctant to distribute their documents and images in public networked environments because of the ease of intercepting, copying and redistributing electronic data in their exact original form' (Maier 1999, p. 331). Previously visitors to Australia's state museums anticipated that their access to information about collections would arise through encounters with the original objects.

While visitors to museums, both physically and online, now expect to be able to view collection images and educational material instantly, there are many issues associated with this retrieval. One significant issue is being able to 'discriminate between what information [people] want and can assimilate and what they should decline to access' (Nash 1992, p. 176). This is compounded by many museums having insufficient resources for the establishment, renewal and maintenance of on-line data bases and websites, poor long-term planning in relation to information and communication technologies within their institutions, and inadequate or irregular resource allocation to online programs, digitisation of collections and the documentation and management of their collections. As Parry (2007, p. 27) discusses, the desire to place museum collections on line has revealed problems with mechanisms and systems in place for managing and retrieving information; 'many museums had scanty documentation and, with the lack of any enforced standards, a great deal of trust was bestowed upon the conscientiousness of individual curators'. Increased use of technologies in museums has not alleviated this problem. In many ways it has exacerbated it.

### **6.10 Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter has examined a number of changes in museums in relation to the uptake of new technologies for work practices, collection access, new media technologies in galleries, and most recently Web 2.0. It has incorporated discussion of the growing

relationship between new technologies and evolving education services in museums. The chapter has also sought to analyse the impact of new technologies on museums, both in terms of the organisational structure of museums and changing management and staff practices. In the second section of the chapter, discussion centred on the shifts in thinking surrounding notions of authority in relation to digitising collections, collections access, and public interaction with collections within the case study museums. The quality of a museum's expertise and curatorial knowledge has been queried and to some extent eroded by new technologies, such as the Internet and Web 2.0. However, the technologies have also allowed museums to move towards an information and educational focus within organisations.

Audiences too have been re-conceptualised as participants rather than observers within museums. The use of new technologies has not only enabled this, but acted as a conduit for the greater democratisation of museum services and programs. The increased use of new technologies over the last few decades has raised issues associated with the administration, management and integration of these and their organisational impact in Australian state museums. The potential of new technologies has in many ways come up against the traditional role of the museum; the objects and the physical building housing and displaying the collections. New technologies continue to shape museums and the ways in which they define, promote, and market themselves. The ongoing impact of such technologies remains unknown. The potential for museums and their audiences has not yet been harnessed, and their ability to act as institutional change agents is still unmeasured.

The disruption caused by new technologies to occupational roles within professional bureaucracies and the resulting new interactions and cross-functional relationships created are being felt in contemporary museums. Technological change in museums has, over the last few decades, been interwoven with the impacts of new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrids, leading to significant organisational, structural and management changes.

The chapter concludes by noting that new technologies continue to define the role and purpose of museums today. Due to insufficient government funding, museums are expected to seek alternative revenue streams and expand commercial opportunities, while engaging in wider relations with the community and the state through links into social and

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economic agendas. How these new ideals are shaping museums as organisations, their structure, staff roles and the ramifications for wider institutional purpose are analysed in the next chapter.



## **7 Museums- changing organisations and a changing focus?**

### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines a number of aspects of museums as organisations, and explores how and why museums have changed their organisational strategies and processes, over the last few decades. Overall, the chapter explores a range of organisational modes for understanding museums, and the changes occurring within them. Specifically, it begins by examining museums as bureaucracies and their evolution, into professional bureaucracies through internal and external changes since the 1980s. This section of the chapter analyses the contributing factors to the changing organisational structures and focus of museums as professional bureaucracies. Similarly, the rising significance of the specialisation of professional knowledge in museums and growing business ethos in many institutions is also explored in this chapter.

The tension between curatorial and managerial staff in Australian museums and the consequent shifting institutional focus is considered in the second part of the chapter. The rise of the professional in museums, the growing emphasis on communications, education, and audience development which has resulted in the modification of the role of the curator and a general move from the scholarly to the managerial are examined here. The move in museums away from internally driven research, connoisseurship and the ordering of knowledge according to 19th century ideals towards broader, more readily accessible knowledge, and the implications of this for the evolving role of the curator are explored in a later part of the chapter. The chapter concludes by looking at the emphasis on the relationship between the museum, the market, the physical site, and the cultural experience. Insights are provided into the factors that are shaping the roles of museums as professional bureaucracies and the organisational strategies adopted as a result.

### **7.2 Museums as bureaucracies: findings**

Where once specialist, professional staff such as curators undertook research through the study of collections and individual artefacts in an autonomous manner, today there is a

‘diminution of the importance of curatorial knowledge and skills’ (Anderson 1990, p. 200). State museums in Australia operated for much of the 20th century as large specialised bureaucratic structures. Today, however, they have undergone much organisational and management change. As a result, these structures have been ‘replaced in industry by smaller more highly skilled units, able to respond and adapt to rapid changes in demand from the public’ (Anderson 1990, p. 199). In a professional bureaucracy, the emphasis is on the authority of professionals. They often have control over their work and may work independently of colleagues. In organisations such as museums there is overlap and integration between professional expertise and general management skills and tasks amongst staff.

Australian state museums can today be classified as professional bureaucracies. Staff and Board members interviewed at the three case-study museums often noted their museum’s management transition over the last few decades and the move towards greater professionalisation. The organisations had begun to value transparency, greater strategic planning, and the use of project based teams, as a way of achieving more workplace flexibility. As a senior staff member at the South Australian Museum noted;

‘[We are] responding to change...the programs, organisation and management...[we have] moved away from a hierarchical structure. This has given people a feeling of confidence, an ‘open door’ policy with staff. [We have] moved away from the hierarchical line’ [Transcript no. 9, South Australian Museum staff member - SR- 24 September 2008]

At the Melbourne Museum staff interviewed similarly discussed the move away from a hierarchical, bureaucratic structure. In light of changing management practices, the museum was viewed as developing new organisational forms, as well as staff responsibilities;

‘The biggest change is the flattening of the organisation- there are many voices, not one- multiple expertise, previously [it] was much more hierarchical. [The] previous structure was more associated with power and roles could be more sharply defined, roles are now more clearly articulated’ [Transcript no.11, Melbourne Museum staff member - LS - 18 August 2008]

The evolution of staff roles, combined with the impact of management changes and emerging notions of professionalism, was also expressed by staff at the Australian Museum in Sydney;

‘[With] changes to the museum as an organisation... we are in a much stronger position to state the case for professionalism. [We] are now in a position of strength, [our] political masters are appreciating the museums’ competency in management and professionalism’ [Transcript no. 12, Australian Museum staff member - BL - 30 January 2009]

This final comment reveals the importance being placed by museum staff on how their organisations and staff are being viewed by external bodies, such as state governments. While governments are increasingly expecting higher standards and greater efficiency and effectiveness from museums as organisations, staff within museums are themselves highlighting the need for greater professionalism within their ranks. Despite this quest for greater organisational competency, the question of how to manage professionals within museums remains vexed. As Watkins, Drury and Preddy (1992, p. 86) assert, ‘organizations both large and small are faced with new problems with regard to the management, evaluation, motivation and reward of the professional... the dilemma faced by many senior managers is how to direct, control and co-ordinate the work of professionals without damaging the trust relationship, insulting their integrity and reducing their autonomy’.

Although there is a belief that ‘professionals are... managed by non-professional administrators or bureaucrats and subordinated to an authority system that is bureaucratically driven, rather than professionally driven’ (Wallace 1995, p. 229) this implies sharply delineated and incompatible divisions between professionals and administrators in bureaucracies. Moreover, within professional bureaucracies, including museums, ‘work is centred to the mission of the organisation and the goals of the organisation are largely consistent with those of the professionals it employs’ (Wallace 1995, p. 229). This suggests a greater cohesion, shared values and work practices between the various types of staff in professional bureaucracies. As such, more so than in traditional bureaucracies, professional bureaucracies require ‘an effort on the part of the administration to blend the organisation’s need with staff preferences’ (Brewer 1996, p. 26). The drive for productivity and control which tends to characterise bureaucracies,

remains a potential source of conflict, especially in relation to innovation and risk-taking within organisations such as museums.

Of increasing concern within professional bureaucracies is the nature of, and ability to, nurture innovation and change. As Jackall (1984, p.20) argues, 'the hallmarks of the emerging modern production and distribution systems were administrative hierarchies, standardized work procedures, regularized timetables, uniform policies and centralized control- in a word-the bureaucratization of the economy'. Today, however, it is questionable whether such rigid systems are always appropriate in the shifting social, economic, and technological climate in which professional bureaucracies, such as museums, find themselves. Instead, it has been argued that traditional bureaucracies are no longer an adequate form of governmental organisation, and new models need to be developed which 'create a different and more flexible model of governing that comprises responsiveness, collaboration and the ideal type of citizen's ownership' (Vigoda 2002, p. 537).

In such a situation Adler contends (1999, pp. 44-45) 'whether organizations need more rather than less bureaucracy is a function of the degree of routiness of the key tasks of the organization'. The need for productivity, efficiency and control in bureaucracies is often an inappropriate setting for creativity. Creative problem solving, diffusion of new and untested ideas and dealing with uncertainty are not frequently associated with bureaucratic organisations. As Thompson states (1965, p. 7) 'the bureaucratic orientation is conservative...those having a more bureaucratic orientation are more concerned with the internal distribution of power and status than with organizational goal accomplishment'. In less bureaucratic organisations 'satisfactions come from the search process, professional growth and the esteem of knowledgeable peers' (Thompson 1965, p. 12). The organisational structures that characterise bureaucracies - such as chain of command, breadth of management control, specialisation by expertise and routinisation of tasks (Garston 1993, p. 91) - need to be maintained while also being subject to ongoing change. As professional bureaucracies, museums differ in their structure, organisation, administration and orientation to more traditional forms of bureaucracy. However, it is important to distinguish between a professional bureaucracy and professional management. An organisation of professionals (with specialised training and tasks) which is structured as a bureaucracy differs from professionalism (suggesting higher quality than

amateurism) within the bureaucracy. Changes in the management of organisations, such as museums, have begun to privilege the role of the professional at the same time these organisations have begun to evolve into professional bureaucracies.

### **7.3 Museums as professional bureaucracies: discussion**

Bureaucracies have long provided a means to deliver social and governmental resources through a system of stable, clear hierarchies of authority, prescribed work methods, formal structures and compliance with strict rules and regulations. Defined as the administrative structure of large organisations, bureaucracies incorporate clearly defined divisions of labour, hierarchies amongst staff and flows of information along lines that are characterised by stability and structure. Examples of bureaucracies include government departments, hospitals and universities. They ‘play a key role in the pursuit of the public interest’ (Recasino Wise 2004, p. 670) and often function as a link between governments and the people, allowing for the distribution of services, resources and programs, ideally in an efficient and rational manner.

The classic model of this type of organisation, proposed by Max Weber (1864-1920) a social theorist and political economist, initially identified bureaucracy as the ‘most rational form of administration’ (Adler 1999, p. 37). The desire for productivity and control in bureaucracies has ensured that they remain ‘stable, steadfast and predictable’ (Perrow 2007, p. 26) both in terms of their organisational structure and the delivery of services. This predictability and conformity, however, has ensured that bureaucracies have become a means ‘both in capitalist and non-capitalist countries of centralizing power in society and legitimizing or disguising that centralization’ (Perrow 2007, p. 26). Whether or not the bureaucratic model today provides the most efficient means of managing and distributing services is open to debate. Changes in public management have ‘increased pressure on state bureaucracies to become more responsive to citizens as clients’ (Vigoda 1993, p. 527). The need for increasing collaboration between government institutions, professional organisations and the public has impacted on bureaucracies in a number of ways.

With increasing heterogeneity in society and the need for greater organisational flexibility, innovation and adaptability in response to changing economic conditions, the bureaucratic

model has been questioned. Although the classic bureaucratic model 'not only represented real administrative and managerial progress in most instances...and advanced several significant democratic ideals' (Wriston 1980, pp. 179-180), criticisms have been levelled at the conservatism, lack of competence, concentration of power, and rigidity of bureaucracies. As Encel notes (1978, p. 33) for many the term bureaucracy conjures up 'a mixture of inefficiency, waste and red tape'. In addition, bureaucracies have been interpreted as a 'form of organisation [which] stifles creativity, fosters dissatisfaction and demotivates employees' (Adler and Borys 1996, p. 61).

On the other hand, bureaucracies, through their hierarchies, staff specialisation and tight formalisation of work roles provide 'needed guidance and clarifies responsibilities, thereby easing role stress and helping individuals be and feel more effective' (Adler & Borys 1996, p. 61). The probability is that bureaucracies do both simultaneously. As organisations established to deal with stable, routine tasks, much of the criticism of bureaucracies concentrates on their perceived lack of efficiency, both within the organisation and externally by the public. As Recascino Wise (2004, p. 671) states 'tensions between self-serving interests and interests that serve the public good may exist in the daily performance of a bureaucrat's work'. The complexity of serving dual masters - the workplace and the public are inherent within bureaucracies.

While traditional (or procedural) bureaucracy was an effective and efficient system until the 1970s, changes wrought by new public management in the following decade had a significant impact on this organisational form. By the 1980s, 'many of these systems [became] inadequate in a more dynamic public sector environment' (Considine and Lewis 1999, p. 469). More recently, bureaucracies have been influenced by trends in corporate management, resulting in 'a recognised attempt to subordinate the whole of public administration to specific strategic plans and policy targets of a greatly empowered executive arm' (Considine and Lewis 1999, p. 470). Many bureaucracies today have evolved into market bureaucracies, where internal elements of the organisations are subject to 'real or hypothetical tests of consumer demand' (Considine and Lewis 1999, p. 470). This is particularly evident in relation to health, welfare and educational services. As museum's administration and management relies on systems of hierarchical supervision, consistent and routine rules and procedures, and divisions of labour according to authority and specialisation, they can be readily classified as bureaucracies. As professional

bureaucracies and part of the public sector, museums have been influenced by trends in new public management.

Much has been written about professionals employed in bureaucracies and how professional bureaucracies function (Toren 1976; Brewer 1996; Sorensen and Sorensen 1974; Cheng 1990; Currie and Proctor 2005; Wallace 1995). Professional bureaucracies differ from traditional bureaucracies in that the employees are ‘professionals...who have some control over task performance, task review and production planning’ (Leitko and Szczerbacki 1987, p. 52). Similarly, Sorensen and Sorensen (1974, p.99) identified common criteria associated with professional bureaucracies that distinguish them from other forms of bureaucracy. These include a theoretical body of knowledge, set of professional norms, careers supported by an association of colleagues, and community recognition. These classifications are most applicable to defining professional bureaucracies that exist in human, welfare and education services, such as hospitals, medical practices and universities. However, with curators, research scientists, technicians and conservators frequently performing non-standard and non-routine tasks, museums employ professionals who typically operate with a degree of autonomy, possess specialist knowledge and focus on a service orientation. As Cheng notes (1990, p.184), professional bureaucracies are ‘a form of organizational design characterised by... professionals whose skills were acquired through extensive training and who function independently, thereby leading to extensive decentralization’. With the multitude of tasks undertaken and use of specialist staff, Australian state museums can be defined as professional bureaucracies.

Increasing professionalism within bureaucracies over the last few decades has led to a greater organisational responsiveness. As Kearney and Sinha note (1988, p. 575), ‘professions make public bureaucracy more democratic...they create a dual system of authority in bureaucracies, with allegiances both to the organizations and to the profession’. Much of the debate about the nature of professional bureaucracies has centred on whether staff are loyal to their professions or their employers. As Leitko and Szczerbacki (1987, p. 54) suggest ‘professionals identify more with their occupations than with their organizations, because they often control their own certification and performance standards...because they have separate sources of legitimacy within their organizations... [and] often have functioned somewhat autonomously from and at odds

with administrators'. This suggests that professional bureaucracies are more multi-faceted than traditional bureaucracies and are increasingly becoming the norm. While in traditional bureaucracies power and influence is concentrated in the higher echelons of the hierarchy, within professional bureaucracies it can be argued that the key group of employees 'with whom middle managers need to interact are the professional operating core of the organisation' (Currie and Proctor 2005, p. 1330). The potential tension between the work methods, processes, and values of professionals and administrators within bureaucracies is evident in Australia's state museums.

#### **7.4 Museums as bureaucracies -innovation & change: findings**

The difficulty of reconciling the need for organisational renewal and innovation with the requirements of a bureaucracy was frequently mentioned by staff interviewed at all three of the case study museums. As Kitchener notes (2002, p. 391) bureaucracies often 'display high levels of structural inertia, change may occur in response to alterations in the way that their 'cultural support', or legitimacy, is assessed'. Since the 1980s, museums in Australia, with the advent of new museology, have sought increasingly to democratise and make more accessible to a diverse public their collections, programs, visitor experiences and rationale. The legitimacy, roles and purpose of museums have been recently challenged, most frequently by the 'hard realities of museum funding and governmental control' (Jenkinson 1994, p. 51). As professional bureaucracies, museums have become adept at adjusting to continual changes in the economic and political context in which they operate. Despite this, the need to support and allow innovative and creative programs, exhibitions and processes within museums was cited by staff at the case study museums as a prominent concern. A staff member at the South Australian Museum expressed the view that as an organisation the museum needed to;

'Be contemporary, but also [strike] a balance between new areas...innovative programs, finding a mix of approaches, we do need to be mindful of our role in the community, but can still be provocative' [Transcript no.7, South Australian Museum staff member- R M - 24 September 2008]

In many Australian state and national museums, changes in management and approaches to innovation focus very much around the personal vision, personalities and leadership style of museum directors. Prior to the high profile directorship at the South Australian Museum by a world-renowned scientist and author, the museum management structure was very flat, with problem solving and decision making delegated to staff throughout the organisation. More recently, and with a new director, the museum has developed a more strategic and corporate approach to its management, despite still operating as a bureaucracy. The previous curatorial driven culture has been modified, such that ‘back of house’ (scientific research) and ‘front of house’ (education and public programs) roles have been drawn to work together collaboratively on exhibitions, publications, and visitor programs. Overall, there is a greater sense of convergence between professionalism, corporate efficiency and vision at the museum. In spite of this, a declining emphasis is placed on the value of specialist staff roles. As a long-term staff member interviewed stated;

‘the [previous] Director turned a curator-driven museum into a modern museum. Curators are no longer the ‘lords’, he wanted to make the museum more cutting edge...[today] it has a more business focus than in the past...this has impacted on how the Directorate is run’ [Transcript no. 2, South Australian Museum staff member - MJ - 22 September 2008]

Museums, such as the South Australian Museum, and other state museums in Australia face growing difficulties in relation to the changing nature of professional identity within their organisations, human resource and staffing issues. These factors continue to impact on the changing roles and purposes of Australian museums today.

### **7.5 Museums and the changing role of the curator: findings**

Staff interviewed at the three case study museums recognised the changing nature of the role of curator within their organisations. As one interviewee noted, changes to the curatorial role were reflective of larger changes in institutional priorities and practices;

‘The changes have been quite substantial; most of the things now done are multidisciplinary. This has changed the role of the Curator; now there are different sets of

expertise...this has been a significant and substantial change. [The] staffing structure has changed...but not at the cost of curatorial positions. There is a clear understanding that all areas of the museum are interdependent' [Transcript no. 10, Melbourne Museum staff member - MMc - 18 August 2008]

The notion of curators being the keepers of specialist knowledge about museum collections is being eroded. This is occurring not only through management changes, but also through changes wrought by the use of new technologies, the rise of other staff such as educators and marketers and new responsibilities towards audiences, the public, and accessibility. While curators are still the producers of knowledge about collections, changes have occurred in the creation and professionalisation of communication industries and roles, such that marketing, education and design staff have increased in organisational importance and power. As a result, curatorial knowledge, at least rhetorically, has been re-located and re-valued within museum management priorities. Combined, these factors have led to the perception of an erosion of the value of the professional practice and skills of curators. However, as Miller notes (1994, p.138) the assault on curatorial roles has not been externally driven but 'The havoc is wrought by museum administrators...in counterproductive efforts to be managerially efficient... curatorial posts are eliminated, redefined, truncated or repositioned in operational hierarchies'. In many ways, the public still looks to museums for authoritative knowledge in relation to curatorial, exhibition and collection information. Confusion arises in other areas of museum services, such as education, audience development, and visitor services, in terms of exactly what the public is perceived to want from museums.

The 'relatively privileged status and economic position and...the legitimacy of their claims to expertise based on exclusive possession of specialised knowledge' (Beck and Young 2005, p. 183) once claimed by curators as distinctively their own has been further eroded by market forces and the greater commodification of knowledge in the post-modern world. As Beck and Young (2005, p. 195) state, the whole notion of a professional is hostile to consumerism, such that 'in some respects it is modern global markets that are undermining the conditions for professionalism, it is equally true that in many areas those same markets require an ever widening and deepening range of professional expertise if new products and services are to be developed'. The need for professionals within museums, the evolving role of the curator, and the tension between managerial and

professional responsibilities remain unresolved. This has ramifications for the ongoing evolution of organisational forms and priorities, as professional specialists and institutional managers vie for dominance and shape the purpose of museums in contemporary society.

The changing role of the curator can be viewed through the lens of institutionalism. As institutions can influence ‘preference formation, identity construction, strategic action and decision making’ (Harty 2005, p. 52) in relation to individual roles, they also operate as a resource for actors seeking incremental or innovative change. Historically, institutionalism has treated organisations as ‘determining, ordering or modifying individual motives and as acting autonomously in terms of institutional needs’ (Mark and Olsen 1984, p. 735). In relation to curators, the past needs associated with their - scholar, connoisseur, researcher, collection manager - have been modified to better reflect contemporary institutional needs. Although order is imposed on institutions by the external environment (in the case of museums, state governments, funding agencies, the needs of the public and stakeholders) there are many ways in which ‘internal institutional processes affect things like power distribution, the distribution of preferences or the management of control’ (Mark and Olsen 1984, p. 744). Individuals working within institutions such as museums internalise the values of the organisation’s culture and take this for granted.

In relation to museum curators, this change has been compelling, and echoes larger changes within the external and internal environment of the organisation. In adopting new structures, processes and roles that are institutionally desirable and essential to the ongoing viability of Australia’s state museums, the position of the curator has been modified somewhat. It is unclear whether changing the role of the curator does have any long term economic benefits to museums or somehow makes them competitively more advantageous. However, mythology surrounding the importance of the curator within the museum hierarchy persists. The curatorial profession represent just one of the ‘many elements of formal structure [that] are highly institutionalized and function as myths’ (Meyer and Rowan 2007, p. 70) within organisations. Within Australian state museums there is an understanding of the changes imposed on curators and their responsibilities. This change in their role reflects the way in which internal processes, decisions and priorities have altered since the 1980s in Australian museums. As a staff member at the Melbourne Museum noted;

‘The process of developing exhibitions has fundamentally changed...previously an exhibition idea was submitted, usually through conversation with the curators involved... I suppose content has usually come under the curatorial area, but content is no longer the province of curators. That’s been the biggest change, so what’s happened is it now gets impacted by other interests like marketing, predominantly marketing and PR and public programs. The problem with that is that those individuals, while they might have the interests of popularity in mind, don’t necessarily serve the organisation to the best...they are also fearful about anything that might be new or untested or that might be controversial’ [Transcript no.9, Melbourne Museum staff member - L D-H - 15 August 2008]

The long term ramifications of these modifications to the curatorial role, repositioning of their powers and influence within the museum continues to impact upon the changing purpose of Australia’s state museums.

### **7.6 Museums -human resources and staffing: findings**

The changing role of curators represents just part of the much larger issue facing Australia state museums, that of human resources and staffing more generally. While concerns relating to staffing are evident in a number of public sector organisations, those associated with museums are specific and unique. In analysing the special problems of staffing and recruitment in cultural organisations, Friedman (1994, p.126) states that ‘museums and historical agencies must face the challenge of personnel management. Young professionals, a larger public, shrinking federal sources and entrenched and outmoded management attitudes do not make for a healthy mix’. The nature of museum professionals as ‘highly individualistic, imaginative, articulate and achievement-orientated’ (Friedman 1994, p.126) presents additional concerns for staff training, recruitment, retention, and workplace satisfaction. However, despite these concerns, a number of Australian Museum staff interviewed commented on the forthcoming loss of the museum’s ageing and experienced workforce. It was felt that replacing senior staff (particularly research scientists) would be difficult, and the organisation lacked any formal succession plan to attract new staff or develop existing museum staff. As one interviewee stated;

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‘Many of the staff have been here a long time, the museum has difficulty in finding the right people, the salaries are paltry, we are trying to recruit people who can obtain large grants, it is difficult to bring people to Sydney because of the cost. There is a sense that the workforce is winding down’ [Transcript no.1, Australian Museum staff member - PB - 19 January 2009]

In addition, the low turnover of staff, a number of whom had worked at the museum for over thirty years, was raised within the context of organisational and management change. A number of interviewees at the Australian Museum, particularly those in senior executive roles, indicated that older staff members were considered less adaptable in relation to strategic and structural changes that had occurred at the museum since the 1980s. Whether such staff had indeed actually adapted to these changes was not mentioned, but research scientists, respected for their knowledge and often international reputations, were frequently singled out as being the least likely to change working styles. Added to this, there had not been a lot of opportunity to change staff teams, due to the specialist nature of some roles. Work practices and perspectives were entrenched, and it was difficult to offer long-term staff fresh opportunities and incentives. This directly affected workplace morale. An interviewee expressed this concern as;

‘...for long periods of time there is the aggressive assertion that staff who have been here a long time are not valued, the museum is a way of life. The current Director doesn’t value the passion of the museum staff, he is trying to get new, younger staff, there is an obsession with youth, how does this advantage the organisation? People are now fearful’. [Transcript no.2, Australian Museum staff member -GF- 19 January 2009]

As the Australian Museum’s research scientists were often singled out for criticism in relation to staffing issues, professionalism and organisational change, this revealed wider concerns the museum currently faced in relation to curatorial roles. The declining prominence and value ascribed to museum research (by the museum itself) and a grappling with the place of museum scholarship within the organisation’s strategic priorities underpinned this concern. As a staff member directly involved in supervising the museum’s research programs indicated;

‘It is an ageing workforce, used to working in a certain way. To a lot of people the research is not seen as sexy, the sort of research that is pure, fundamental research on the biological side, taxonomy... we could find it difficult to get substantial funding, research needs to be put into a better context’ [Transcript no.12, Australian Museum staff member - BL- 30 January 2009]

Similarly, another interviewee noted;

‘the museum should be an advocate for issues. The museum should be seen to be a place of friendly scientists, better engagement between scientists and the public, better advocacy on social and biological issues. We need to recruit for staff that are better science communicators, we need to entice and recruit the highest flyers, this is a challenge for management’ [Transcript no.11, Australian Museum staff member - LC- 30 January 2009]

To combat perceptions of elitism, curators are now expected to be professional communicators in public. As the Australian Museum staff member above indicated, there has been a professionalisation of science communication within museums, and an externalisation of this communication to the public. However, an equally important issue within museums remains attracting and retaining relevant staff, with the multiple skills required to work in contemporary museums. Few state museums in Australia are putting in place policies or structures to encourage succession planning. In many museums it is ‘difficult to discuss [the] next generation of leaders without touching on questions of recruitment, retention and professional development, not to mention the merits of graduate versus on-the-job-training’ (Baldwin and Ackerson 2006, p. 350). Of particular concern is the issue of the suitability of staff for the role of museum Director. It is rare for museum staff, such as curators, to have gained experience in specialist fields other than that of their own museum. Traditionally they have moved through the ranks of senior curatorial positions within institutions to become directors. Historically, museums expected curators, with subject-based specialties, to take on management roles. Since the 1980s, however, museum management and directorship has changed substantially. Today, the status of museums as professional bureaucracies means that as organisations ‘pursuing standards set outside the organisation and [in] demanding high levels of autonomy present a substantial leadership challenge’ (Griffin 2008, p. 50). In addition, today’s museum director is expected to be both an effective manager and a leader.

The director of a contemporary museum requires not only leadership and management skills, but increasingly the ability to respond to public needs. As Shestack notes (1978, p. 27) the museum director is ‘...master of many skills and talents. He must function as ...connoisseur, businessperson and fundraiser, diplomat, politician, lobbyist, personnel manager, publisher, architectural consultant...educator, after-dinner speaker...’. The rise of new public management within the Australian public sector and its emphasis on accountability, efficiency and effectiveness has added to the list of a museum director’s role and responsibilities. Given this, museum directors are now expected to combine the contemporary skills of financial management, business acumen and promotion, with more traditional roles of collection knowledge and education. There has been a commensurate rise of public relations as the judge of a museum director’s influence with the public, stakeholders and sponsors. At the same time, museum directors seek to influence governments in the public arena. Museum directors have ‘had to learn how to combine scientific knowledge with management know how, accepting the changes and constraints without sacrificing their mission as a public service, all the while ensuring that their institution retains its integrity as a cultural organization’ (Chatelain-Ponroy 2001, p. 38). Notions of what constitute good leadership, direction and teamwork, were often expressed by museum staff interviewed. At the Melbourne Museum, a board member noted the professional, intellectual and strategic skills needed in managing the museum;

‘How to run a museum...public sector management and corporate management practices need to be adapted to the museum. There is a need to meet stakeholder obligations...there is awareness that corporate management principles can be applied at the Melbourne Museum’ [Transcript no.1, Melbourne Museum board member - SH - 12 August 2008]

However, staff interviewed at the Australian Museum in Sydney were more critical of senior management practices, yet praised the Director;

‘over the last 3 years there have been changes in management practices, there is a genuine willingness on the part of the Director to engage with museum staff...[however]...the style here is to go up the line, bottlenecks up staff and causes problems. The Director is approachable, [but] current management is too process driven, it stifles the process of creativity, [and] there is a tendency to be too involved in detail’ [Transcript no. 4, Australian Museum staff member - J G- 20 January 2009]

In addition, staff interviewed at the South Australian museum commented on their Director's talents. They also mentioned the gaps in staff aptitude for new tasks that had become part of their workload with broader managerial changes;

‘we are now successful in having a Director here full-time, she is concerned with issues straight away. The current Director is hands-on; she walks around and has an open-door policy...staff are being promoted to positions, but are not able to manage budgets. Projects are not coming in within budget...this has resulted in more work and in-house demands. We would like to do less and do these really well’ [Transcript no. 5, South Australian Museum staff member - TK- 23 September 2008]

With contemporary museum directors, the combination of knowledge, creativity and business management expertise required presents an unusual and often conflicting skills set. As Fopp (1997, p. 32) observes ‘it would be wrong to assume that such a subtle, delicate and elusive subject as the management of museums can be equated with business management. The final picture must be a mix of approaches. Museums are a developing complexity, an enigmatic network of disciplines with a diffusion of authority and administrative function’. How to recruit and retain highly skilled and experienced directors, who have multiple talents, the ability to attract external funding, undertake high quality research, and have effective skills in communication, remains a problematic issue for many Australian state museums.

### ***7.7 Museums, staffing and the rise of the new professional: discussion***

In addition to the need to balance bureaucratic requirements with organisational innovation, evolving identity and professionalism remain pertinent issues in Australia's state museums. While professional bureaucracies such as museums ‘accommodate high levels of professional power and autonomy’ (Kitchener 2002, p. 392) amongst their staff, the introduction of new public management has radically altered the role and status of professionals within public sector organisations. As Kitchener notes (2002, p. 400), ‘the legitimacy of professional bureaucracies has shifted in emphasis from technical to managerial bases’. While in the past, professional bureaucracies were valued for the prestige and status of their professional staff, the impact of managerialism has shifted the

emphasis away from these values to task-based efficiency and rationalised control. As a result, the power and prestige within many public sector organisations, including museums, which lay with the self-regulation, autonomy and knowledge of professional staff, has been transferred to managers. Despite this, these organisations still constitute professional bureaucracies with dual hierarchies; professionals and institutional managers overlapping and integrating their tasks and expertise.

Within museums the issue of managing professionals has been compounded by the crisis of institutional identity and concept (Sola 1992, p.102). Whereas in the 19th century museological positions such as curators and conservators enjoyed the prestige of being well regarded experts, in museums today there is a trend towards ‘increased diversity and specialization’ (Boylan 2006, p. 420) while paradoxically many staff employed are generalists, rather than specialists. There is also the increasing importance of management and administrative skills within museums.

Despite this, the number of curators within museums has, on the whole, remained static. As Boylan notes (2006, pp. 420-421), ‘while professional jobs...have more than doubled in the past quarter of a century, the total number of curators has hardly increased at all...virtually all this doubling...[is] in the rapidly growing areas of managerial, financial and administrative support, such as marketing and fund-raising’. This may be reflective of wider changes within museums, including the shift in focus away from the internal dominance of certain professionals towards a more external, outwardly-facing organisation requiring a new set of staffing skills. Likewise, the growing number of museums in Australia has not necessarily equated with an increase in the number of curatorial roles.

Statistical overviews of the number and types of people employed in museums in Australia reveal a fluctuating picture. In 1996 census, 5,256 people listed their occupation as being employed in museums (ABS 2007, p.35). In addition, 42% of people employed in cultural industries in Australia in 1996 had a ‘cultural occupation’ (which includes curators) (ABS 2007, p.35). At the 2001 census, however, the total number of people employed in museums had increased to 5,422 yet the number of people who deemed their occupation to be a ‘cultural occupation’ (which includes curators) had declined to 34% (ABS 2007, p.37). This figure increased again with 41% of museum employees working

in 'cultural occupations' in 2006 (ABS 2008, p.2) and the remaining 59% in non-cultural occupations such as specialist managers and project and team administrators. More recently, information has been gathered on persons employed in the museums industry by particular occupation. In 2006 589 people listed their occupation as 'museum or gallery curators' (9.2%) (ABS 2009, p.2), while in 2011 this had increased to 686 but the overall percentage of people employed as museum or gallery curators had dropped marginally to 9.1%. (ABS 2012, p. 2). In comparison, the percentage of people employed as administrators or managers in both 2006 and 2011 remained static at 4.6% (ABS 2012, p.2). The largest area of growth in museum related occupations had been in the category 'Gallery or museum guide' which had reached 13.8% by 2011 (ABS 2012, p.2). These statistics reveal that despite an increase in the size of the numbers of staff in museums overall, the number of curators has remained static or decreased.

In addition, many of the roles frequently undertaken by curators in the past are now seen as dispensable or have, alternatively, been transferred to the roles of designers, collection managers and education staff. Whether this can be interpreted as 'defeat' or 'departure' (Sola 1992, p. 105) in relation to the role of the curator within museums, is open to debate. However, as Sola argues, 'As a growing number of museums is not a guarantee of their [curators] monopolistic position, the... number of curators working in them does not guarantee the continuation of their professional identity either'. In recent decades curators have faced many threats to their roles, responsibilities and their autonomy. There is an ongoing questioning of the importance of these positions, linked to wider concerns about the changing roles and purposes of museums, which remains unresolved.

With the broadening of museum programs and a greater emphasis on education, the traditional role of the curator has been called into question. At the same time, the 'balance of staffing has moved towards generalist administrators and away from specialist curators' (Anderson 2005, p. 307). Throughout much of the 19th and into the mid 20th century, the role of the curator was primarily associated with conducting research, cataloguing, acquiring and studying artefacts. The curator was the key individual within the museum and was valued for their scholarly rigor, ability to conduct research and knowledge of the collections.

While authors such as Anderson (1990, p. 199) propose that current changes in the role of the curator and the rise of other specialist staff, marketers and managers represent a ‘fundamental threat to curatorial knowledge’, others argue that changes to this role are necessary for museums to survive and flourish in the current century. As Strong (1988, p.17) notes, ‘it has been hugely beneficial to a profession often noted for its inertia, its hide-bound practices and its misplaced superiority of attitude about both itself and what it does...every single activity now has to be scrutinized’. A position once venerated for its scholarship and prominent role within the museum hierarchy is today just one of a number of roles of equal importance within a complex organization. From a hierarchical perspective, the basis of power within museums has shifted. Whereas curators were once prominent within museums due to their collection knowledge, today there is a managerial, education, communications and administrative dominance within museums over a specialist base.

While the professionalism and specialisation of the curatorial role was much valued during the 19th and early 20th centuries, today the emphasis on education has shifted museum priorities away from scholarship towards audiences. Even though education has always been a major consideration for state museums in Australia, as Anderson discusses (2005, p. 306) ‘it is now taken for granted that today museums must provide adequate provision for education...and education departments have thrived. However, their existence has tended to distance curators from the interface with the public’. Similarly Weil (1986, p.27) argues that ‘the premise that professionalism ought to be the dominant principle in the operation of museums is, at best, too narrow. Professionalism is mostly about people who work in museums. Service is about other people. It is for their collections and for other people, not just the people who work in them that museums exist’. While museums have responded to the joint influences of new museology and new public management through a greater emphasis on public programs, education and accessibility, the position and importance of professionals, such as curators, remains unstable.

### **7.8 *Museums and Research: findings***

As a museum with its beginnings in natural history, the South Australian Museum features a number of prominent and world-renowned collections in this area. The diverse nature of

the museum's natural history collections is problematic. Although the museum closed temporarily and re-opened in March 2000 after a \$20 million redevelopment which culminated with the new Australian Aboriginal Cultures Gallery, much of the collection has been inadequately stored, documented, and conserved. Given this, little methodical research is conducted on the collections, whether for exhibitions, publications, or online access. Of all museum types undertaking research, natural history museums are the most prolific. Leavitt (1984, p. 28) notes that few curators undertake substantial research and of those 'most...are in natural history museums; some are employed by art museums and only a handful work in history museums'.

During the 1990s research staff in specialist areas at the South Australian Museum developed Collection Management Plans for the first time. Regardless of this, more contemporary approaches to digitising collections using electronic collection management systems, and undertaking research on the collections, remain low priorities at the museum. Furthermore, the museum's collections were seen as the fundamental basis for the organisation's purpose and function;

'The collections are relevant to South Australia...[and] we deliver something that is unique. The purpose of the museum is research and collections...real objects still have to be the primary focus.' [Transcript no. 2, South Australian Museum staff member - MJ - 22 September 2008]

Although this focus on the museum's collections and research as its core purpose is admirable, issues surrounding the nature of the museum's audiences and its marketing and promotion were often seen as secondary and peripheral to the real purpose of the museum which remains its collections. In many ways there is a lack of adequate language about why collections are so important in museums and in externalising this to the public.

In comparison to the South Australian Museum, the Australian Museum in Sydney has actively promoted, planned and maintained its research through the Research and Collections Division, which is responsible for generating and communicating scientific knowledge, and managing the museum's collections. While one of the Museum's strategic corporate goals is to 'unlock and share the knowledge in our natural and cultural collections' (Australian Museum 2008, p. 16) it has also built a number of strategic

alliances and partnerships to expand collaborative opportunities in research. These include the establishment of a postdoctoral research position at the museum, funded by the museum and the Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS) within the Commonwealth government department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts; the CReefs program, an international program to increase ‘tropical marine taxonomic expertise’, and participation in the International Barcode of Life project to create ‘an online DNA barcode register of 500,000 species worldwide’ (Australian Museum 2008, p. 43). The Australian Museum also attracts research funding from state, federal and international sources. For the year 2007-08, it obtained \$2.7 million from external research funding sources (Australian Museum 2008, p. 43). It is evident that research, both at a managerial level and at an individual staff level, is viewed as a necessary and considerable aspect of the museum’s day to day existence. As a staff member at the museum put it;

‘The role and purpose, from a research perspective, is our incredible capacity to do original research that contributes to the public good. Researchers are in a relatively unique position, can focus almost exclusively on their area of research, [but] there is a gap in the external appreciation of the museum’s research capacity. We have a stronger role to play in areas of expertise, eg. Biodiversity and conservation, more influence in policy areas within the public sector; a way to go before finally achieving this’ [Transcript no. 12, Australian Museum staff member -BL- 30 January 2009]

This is particularly revealing of the perceived lack of understanding and interest in the importance of research undertaken in museums by state and federal funding agencies, and how the research may contribute to other areas of government service, programs, or expertise. While there are pressures on museums against research claiming a high priority, this decline may be structural, and the result of changing environmental and political contexts rather than antipathy towards the inherent value of collections research. As Anderson notes (2005, p. 298) ‘if research has reduced in importance over the past few years, this may be by unthinking attrition or changes in priorities, rather than because of hostile attitudes’. In addition this relates to changed funding for science generally, with more emphasis on science with a commercial application and less on pure science.

Changes to the prime purpose of museums and ordering of internal and external priorities since the 1980s have relegated research to a lesser position within some museums.

However, the strength of the Australian Museum's research programs was evident in interviews;

'The role of the museum should still be about dispensing and generating new knowledge to audiences. There are lots of layers - there is a whole lot of research only museums do - which is collections based. We have a critical role in understanding the world around us.'

[Transcript no. 1, Australian Museum staff member - PB - 19 January 2009]

While the function of curators, the research and scholarship carried out within the institutions and priority given to collections -based research varies from organisation to organisation, it is likely that state museums in Australia will continue to grapple with these shifting roles and priorities into the future. As a senior executive at the Melbourne Museum summed up, in relation to curators and museum scholarship;

'It's getting people to work in new ways...at least our research information is carried somewhere other than in curator's heads. They are always the gatekeepers, but now the role is completely reversed where we just have to keep the gate open the whole time.'

[Transcript no. 16, Melbourne Museum staff member - M McF- 16 August 2008]

The need to 'keep the gate open the whole time' through increasing audiences, developing educational programs, marketing and branding, while maintaining research, has created an ongoing dichotomy between scholarship and populism in Australian museums. Within museums there has been a shift from deep, specialised curatorial research to broader, more popular research. This is related to new skills in sourcing knowledge from on-line sources, such as the Internet, and packaging it for wide public dissemination. The tension, as Ballard (2002, p.1) suggests, is between 'the essential role of careful, rigorous scholarship in a populist organization rather than to imply any tension between the two concepts. It appears that the tension, where it exists, is between populism and elitism'. Visits to a museum have become 'cultural leisure pursuits that demand time, require contemplation and offer an educational or intellectual perspective' (Burton 2003, p.186). How museums market this product has become increasingly complex. Over the last few decades, museums have gradually become aware of the importance of marketing, branding, and the museum itself as a cultural tourism destination. Museums have also used social enterprise and for-profit activities to support their not-for-profit goals. As Sheppard indicates (2000,

p.63), museums are increasingly seen as venues which take the lead in dialogue on contemporary social, cultural and environmental issues, addressing these issues through their programs and exhibitions, such that ‘At the core of this activity is a bold conviction that museums can be meaningful agents for social change’. These changes and the role of marketing, social enterprise programs and for-profit activities continue to have consequences for the evolving roles and purposes of Australian museums.

### ***7.9 Museums, Research and the public brand: a changing focus? : discussion***

While there is an emphasis on recruiting staff who have skills in communication and an ability to work collaboratively across disciplines’, museums are increasingly employing those who can actively participate in community engagement, public programs, education, and customer service. As a result, some of the more traditional roles associated with museums, such as undertaking collections research, have diminished in importance. Although research is a task carried out by a number of museum staff, including curators, little has been published on research in museums (Anderson 2005, p. 297). Within the museum context, research is primarily concerned with ‘the production of new knowledge based on the use of artefacts or natural objects as evidence’ (Anderson 2005, p. 298). As institutional priorities have moved towards education, audiences and public programs, this type of research has often become marginalised.

In addition, the forms of knowledge held in museums, particularly natural history museums, which relate to taxonomy and species classification, are frequently not applicable to current museum displays. Interpretation and meaning making has changed since the advent of new museology in the 1980s and changes to science, especially more broadly biology, over the last few decades have also occurred. Relating to objects and narrative constructions, Reid and Naylor (2005, p. 360) declare that museum research faces the challenge of relevance; ‘How do we get to useful, dependable knowledge and how do we make that knowledge available to the larger community’. At the same time, changing external pressures mean that funding bodies, such as state governments, may be reluctant to fund and promote research in museums, in favour of other priorities such as education. The undervaluing of museum research may similarly be internally generated, as

‘museums have been all too effective at failing to market their research activity to a wider public...public interest in scholarly achievement needs to be promoted more vigorously’ (Anderson 2005, p. 311). The nature of a museum’s collections, and its collections management and documentation may hinder the organisation’s ability to fully utilise, display and promote the collections. Given this, the marketing of museums, their collections and public programs, including research, remains problematic.

### **7.10 Museums and Marketing: findings**

As organisations museums can potentially offer the public a range of products and services. Museums are increasingly expected to raise funds from commercial revenue sources- such as shops and cafes- and these too offer potential marketing opportunities. The apprehension between the need to promote and market these commercial enterprises, while also promoting more traditional aspects of museum roles such as exhibitions, was expressed in a number of interviews conducted in 2008 and 2009. At the Melbourne Museum staff acknowledged that the marketing of commercial enterprises had become integral to the museum’s character;

‘The business development side of the museum, the commercial parking, the shop...[is] much better organised, much better planned. They [the public] are responding to those, there is a way to go with some of those...but this is underpinning corporate identity and moving forward.’ [Transcript no. 14, Melbourne Museum Board member - DA - 10 August 2008]

How to effectively promote and market the museum and its various attractions was also highlighted as an important management concern at the Melbourne Museum;

‘ I think the key challenges are financial, ensuring sufficient financial resources for operations and making sure the Museum of Victoria is competitive as a leisure attraction, offering the best experience and to be savvy from a marketing perspective. We also need to remain competitive in a changing communications landscape’ [Transcript no. 3, Melbourne Museum staff member - RH- 12 August 2008]

It is evident here that the Melbourne Museum envisages itself increasingly as a leisure attraction rather than a cultural organisation. In this sense, the museum has come to rely on its reputation with the public as a form of educational entertainment. As Rentschler (2002, p. 12) notes, museums are today marketing themselves as ‘multifaceted destinations’, while developing strategies to gain and maintain relationships with their audiences. This rise in the importance of museum marketing can be attributed to a number of factors. While Tobelem (1997, p. 343) argues that the rise ‘revolves around the competitive environment into which the proliferation of cultural institutions and the increased range of leisure time activities has propelled...museums’, the incorporation of marketing strategies into museum management practices has had an equal impact.

While staff interviewed at the Melbourne Museum were aware of the strategies used to market and promote their organisation as part of contemporary management practice, this often raised ethical considerations. Many questioned the direction their museum was taking towards moneymaking activities. As a senior manager acknowledged;

‘...We have to be partially self-funded these days, there are always commercial pressures and commercial imperatives. Sometimes the commercial imperatives bump up against the museum priorities...commercial operations have priorities’ [Transcript no. 7, Melbourne Museum staff member - EW- 14 August 2008]

The main types of commercial revenue for state museums in Australia includes admission fees, shops sales, food services, cafes and in some instances, such as the Melbourne Museum, parking operations. The long-term management implications for financing public-sector organisations through earned income in this way remain unknown. As museums operate as hybrid organisations, the view that ‘commercialization is a strategy of last resort that may have unintended consequences for non-profit institutions’ (Toepler and Dewees 2005, p.134), needs consideration. As it has been argued that hybrid organisations have emerged as a result of ‘sectoral tension’ between government and business operations (Ferlie, Ashburner, et.al 1996, p. 239) and in light of public sector reforms, the consequences for museums in operating in this manner are still being incorporated in to their strategic plans and business models. In addition museums occupy an uncertain place between their own public sector professional bureaucracies and the market. It is questionable whether this organisational model can be sustained in the current century.

Ferlie, Ashburner et.al (1996, p. 239) argue that hybrids are not stable or coherent organisational forms; rather they operate 'on a dual logic, driven by quasi-market pressures on the tax supported side and by private market pressures elsewhere'. It remains to be seen whether Australian state museums continue to pursue this institutional form, or evolve into a myriad of alternative organisational types as public and private concerns compete to shape their roles and purpose.

While museum staff interviewed for the case studies revealed concerns about commercial interests becoming a high organisational priority others commented on the need for strategic museum marketing in a competitive leisure market. This was evident at the Australian Museum where a senior staff member noted;

'We need to continue to be relevant in a changing society, the leisure dollar, we have competition with home entertainment. The reality is the museum has to compete in the market place, [to be] relevant to culturally astute adults, families, ageing demographics...we need people through the door' [Transcript no. 4, Australian Museum staff member - JG - 20 January 2009]

While the need to market themselves strongly has become an important aspect of museum management, museums have begun to acknowledge that 'the public has changed, that the main driver of change for museums in the last twenty-five years has been their audience' (Lehman 2009, p. 95). In order to continue to attract more educated audiences museums have developed an understanding and application of concepts associated with branding. Positioning museums in the 21st century requires a brand that is 'an engineered perception made up of the name of an organisation and the personality that goes with it. The personality is a combination of the organisation's products, services and perceived attributes' (McNichol 2005, p. 243). With many museums, aspects of branding, such as 'dominant name recognition and positive associations to that name' are capitalised on, to attract visitors and highlight the quality of the institutions and the unique products they offer.

As Caldwell and Coshall (2002, p. 383) state 'one of the undisputed achievements of marketing has been the extent to which brands have become an indelible part of the landscape of consumption'. While most brands in the market place have emotional,

symbolic or psychological meanings, the development of museum brands and identities in Australia is still evolving. If branding is associated with both product and company loyalty, it is likely that these associations with museums will relate both to ‘the museum as a brand name and to the experience of visiting the collections housed in a specific place’ (Caldwell and Coshall 2002, p. 384). The promotion of a museum as a brand remains unparalleled in the realm of other consumer goods, products and services offered in the marketplace. Given this, in ‘no other context does one have to be so sensitive to the need to preserve the essence of what is being marketed’ (Sargeant 2005, p. 251), particularly in relation to museums. Acknowledging this, an interviewee at the Australian Museum discussed the importance of raising the community’s recognition of their museum’s brand;

‘Changes that have affected the museum...the whole branding has changed. Prior to this there was a hodgepodge approach. There has been an effort to remove the old and dusty look, most people like the new approach...the overall approach to the museum and how the museum is perceived has changed’ [Transcript no.3, Australian Museum staff member- F P 20 January 2009]

At the Melbourne Museum a similar sentiment was expressed regarding the importance of the museum’s brand;

‘[our] brand and reputation are taken seriously...we have done lots of work on building brand, a consistent message in the market place. Each museum was competitive with each other’ [Transcript no. 3, Melbourne Museum staff member - R H- 12 August 2008].

At the South Australian Museum, however, the need to market the museum and attract audiences remained a lower priority. Staff interviewed at the museum acknowledged this, attributing their organisation’s lack of promotion and audience research to financial constraints;

‘We have opened up science to the public, done really well, what can be done for free [the] marketing is a bit ad hoc. The [marketing manager] doesn’t get a general budget...it is low compared to other institutions.’ [Transcript no. 5, South Australian Museum staff member - T K- 23 September 2008]

Although marketing through brand association is a new and developing form in state museums, the concept of promoting the museum's architecture as a means of enhancing visitation has taken precedence over the last few decades, not just in Australia, but internationally. In discussing a number of Australian museum building redevelopments, the architect Leon van Schaik noted (2001, p. 46) 'the impact of the new, market-championing experts on museums has had more consequences for the shape and form of these institutions than has any emerging understanding of how to engage the spatial/architectural knowledge of individuals into a procurement process'. The view of the 'museum as a playground for the artist-architect' reached its climax in the 1980s (Lampugnani 2006, p. 253). Today's new museums continue to be expressive, monumental buildings and catalysts for urban and social development.

While new museum architecture is often distinctive, museums are 'increasingly losing their own special physiognomy and turning into the non-places of global mass society' (Lampugnani 2006, p. 251). Adjusting to architects' and visitors' tastes and demands, museums today incorporate complex public and private spaces. The museum's architecture increasingly embodies its public face, defining the institution's relationship with its site or setting. As Sirefman notes (1999, p. 97) 'no other building typology represents such intricate complexities or a multiplicity of functions as does that of the museum. Cultural repository, dynamic civic space, popular entertainment centre, tool for urban revitalization - much is asked of contemporary museum architecture'. Contemporary museums and the buildings themselves have, in many ways, become marketable commodities.

Although the three case study museums were established in the 19th century, the South Australian Museum and the Australian Museum retain much of their original distinctive architecture. In contrast, the Melbourne Museum which opened at its present site in 2000, has been reinvented as an interactive, multi-sensory experience, with new galleries, an indoor forest, and the Aboriginal gallery, Bunjilaka. While some are critical of the new museums' architecture, suggesting that the design is 'guaranteed to attract numbers with pre-packaged and themed presentations of market-driven selections from collections that are no longer accessible' (Schaik 2001, p.48), others speak more pragmatically of the need to see present day museum architecture as an audience drawcard.

In this way, the ‘museum building has become an integral part of what the museum has to offer; it is the ultimate object on display’ (Sirefman 1999, p. 298). Whereas museums established in the 19th century provided the public with a point of moral and educational reference, museums in the 21st century have evolved into places of ‘confrontation, experimentation and debate... a place of encounter and interrelationship between the visitors themselves, not simply between the visitors and the collections’ (Melhuish 1997, p. 23). Marketing and branding museums in order to expand audiences and increase cultural tourism has required a ‘revolutionary change in mentalities, involving a new policy for welcoming visitors, better media relations, and the development of additional programmes’ (Tobelem 1997, p. 348). Added to this, museums have become flagship destinations integrated into the culture of a city. Many contemporary museums, such as the Melbourne Museum, function as tourist attractions in their own right, and the marketing departments within the organisation capitalise on this. Staff at the Melbourne Museum recognised the importance of how to best position the museum within the many other cultural attractions on offer in the city and state;

‘I would say ...that we are in a very complex and crowded market in terms of competing with other leisure and information options...perhaps certain museums actually stand out as being remarkable discoveries. So I think we’re in a difficult market to compete for spare time and leisure time’ [Transcript no. 9, Melbourne Museum staff member - LDH -15 August 2008]

While an in-depth analysis of the significance of new museum architecture and urban redevelopment is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to recognise the transition in, and rise of, museum marketing and branding, which today frequently incorporates the museum building itself. Visiting museums has become a ‘mass consumption activity for many urban tourists’ (Hammnett and Shoal 2003, p. 223). The three case study museums have, to varying degrees, begun to promote themselves as cultural and leisure destinations within their respective states. As architectural spectacles reflective of civic pride and symbolic of a city’s cultural ethos, museums often function as tourist attractions in their own right. Overall, today’s museums ‘provide a bridge between the need of city governments for high visibility, prestige cultural projects and the needs of museums to generate a greater public awareness and attendance’ (Hammnett and Shoal 2003, p.228).

With an eye towards continuously adapting and adjusting to requirements from external forces, such as governments, funding bodies, and the expectations of the public, museum management practices have changed to reflect the future of the institution while being beholden to mission statements, outcomes and goals. Adapting their strategic management style from the private sector, Australian state museums continue to take on new social and economic responsibilities.

The public value of the museum and its ability to become a force for social good represents one of the most important concerns facing museums today. Being ‘transformed...into a community service vehicle’ (Falk and Shepphard 2006, p. 138) and becoming an organisation that reaches out to visitors in order to build long-term relationships are complex challenges for today’s museums.

### ***7.11 Museums, architecture and marketing: public service or spectacle?***

The changing focus in museums from a custodial role to an educational role has moved towards a greater emphasis on learning and customer service. At the same time, the move towards museums as professional bureaucracies has meant that public communication and relations, along with marketing and branding, have gained a new importance. In conjunction with this shift has been the ‘increased focus on identifying the nature of the relationship between the visitor, the museum and the market’ (Rentschler and Hede 2007, p. 16). In order to be successful in the marketplace museums are using marketing in diverse ways, not only to enhance their financial viability but also to target and enhance audience growth. As Lockstone (2007, p. 63) notes, the ‘market responsibility towards an entertainment experience has been suggested as a deliberate strategy museums can use to build audiences and improve the museum going experience’. In many ways this reflects a fundamental shift in museums in relation to visitors; they have moved from ‘the periphery to the centre of museum practice’ (Lehman 2009, p. 87).

While today the emphasis is on attracting ever-expanding audiences, previously the ‘market for museums was limited to individuals from the same social class as the owners of the institutions. In the sense that we know it today, there was no segmentation of the market’ (Lehman 2009, p. 88). Providing services and education was already an important

tenet of museums during the 19th century. Although discussing the impact of marketing on museums in Europe, Tobelem's statement (1997, p. 337) is equally applicable to the situation in Australia; 'museums and monuments have been propelled into a world of economics which is fundamentally foreign to them...in the company of the entire cultural sector [museums] have therefore become progressively preoccupied with business concerns about costs, financing, evaluation, development and profitability'. As Lehman (2009, p. 89) similarly notes, marketing was not a term that appeared in the museum sector until the late 1980s. Today, however, museums are 'aware of how marketing can perform a vital role in their organizational strategies'. Marketing, publicity and communications have become an important way for museums to raise their public profiles, compete with other leisure industries, and promote their unique attributes. An analysis of this development, and the ramifications for the changing management of Australia's state museums will be discussed in the conclusion.

### **7.12 Conclusion**

This chapter has analysed a number of factors that have shaped the evolution of museums as organisations, their management practices and processes in the past few decades. These have been examined within the context of contemporary museum practice. The chapter has outlined developments in museums as institutions, and their move away from classic bureaucratic forms to professional bureaucracies. This has occurred with the concomitant rise of specialist staff and an institutional focus on management, along with greater emphasis on the marketing mission of museums.

Within museums there has been growth in generalised skills and administration, hand-in-hand with a proliferation of specialisations across a diverse range of areas. The last section of this chapter noted the growing importance and value attributed to marketing, branding and promotion of museums as destinations, through a theoretical analysis of the case study museums.

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, these aspects of the ongoing development of management practices continue to impact on the roles and purposes of museums in the current century. The concluding chapter which follows presents a synthesis and summing

up of these themes within a context of reiterating the key research questions. Further areas of research to be explored, and the implications of this study for management theory and practice in Australian state museums are addressed in the final chapter.

## **8 Conclusion**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study has been to investigate the changing management of Australian state museums since the 1980s, within the context of the confluence of the new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrid organisations. The thesis has taken a thematic approach to analysing and exploring these factors as they relate to museum management. It has also analysed the changing nature of education, learning and access, the impact and influence of new technologies and the evolving nature of museums as organisations, particularly as professional bureaucracies. This has also been achieved through the examination of three case studies of state museums in Australia; the Melbourne Museum, the Australian Museum and South Australian museum. The significance of these factors has shaped the development of the museums sector in the last few decades in Australia. In addition, these factors are linked with the changing economic and political context in which these institutions now operate, changes in museums' external environment.

The chapters in this thesis have each explored the factors that have impacted on the evolution of Australian museums over the last few decades. They have been structured to provide insights into the changing nature of museums as organisations, how and why these changes have occurred, and the ramifications of these changes for museum management practice.

This chapter begins by reviewing the research rationale for the thesis before discussing the research implications of the study. The limitations of the study and areas for further research and development are then examined, with general recommendations and suggested topics related to this research for further analysis. In subsequent sections, the chapter considers the importance of this research for museum practice.

## **8.2 Research rationale**

The study of Australian museums, and in particular how they are managed as part of the public sector and as hybrids, has received little attention in either the museum studies or public sector management literature. While the museum literature is under-theorised in relation to organisational management, empirical studies have been written on the practice of museum management and administration which tend to be process-focused guidelines. They incorporate techniques and principles on how to improve museum management, concentrating on recommendations for ethical and professional conduct, strategic planning, marketing and public relations, increasing visitor numbers and audience development and increasingly the role of boards and governance.

The desire to be responsive to the market, to operate commercial ventures such as shops and cafes yet retain their identity as organisations focused on the public good, has raised many issues regarding these competing requirements and the complex environments in which Australian museums currently operate. The ramifications of this shift in terms of the management of museums as public entities, as professional bureaucracies and within the market economy has therefore been analysed in this study. It has provided a new opportunity for the exploration of museums as organisations within these frameworks.

How and why changes in the roles and purpose of museums since the 1980s have occurred, and the impact these have had on their management, has been examined in the research. This multidisciplinary approach offers a new perspective and opportunities for understanding and interpreting the changing functions of museums. The evolving organisational structures, management practices and interrelationships between museums and governments have similarly been supported through the application of theories from the public sector management and museum studies disciplines.

Given this, the guiding research question which has underpinned this study and been comprehensively analysed throughout the thesis was;

- How and why have museums, as public sector organisations, adapted and changed their management practices since the 1980s?

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

Derived from this, the sub questions, which were similarly explored in the study, were;

- What have been the impacts on Australian museum management since the introduction of new museology and new public management during the 1980s?
- How and why museums are responding to these changes through new organisational strategies, processes and a redefinition of their roles and purposes?
- What internal and external forces have impacted on Australian museums over the last few decades and what are the ramifications of these for management practice?
- What are the management implications for museums as hybrid organisations as they adapt to these challenges?

In answering these questions, despite the relative lack of comprehensive studies of the organisational and management impact of new museology and the shift in the public sector towards new public management in Australian museums new knowledge, for both theory and museum practice, has been generated. The theory of new museology is often dealt with quite separately from its impact on museums and how it has affected their management, role, organisational processes and services.

This study has similarly addressed a number of these issues through a select analysis of how museums have responded to these challenges. Through greater access and information provision, attracting new and diverse audiences, emphasis on education and lifelong learning; new interpretations of collections; the changing role of scholarship; evolving business models; the rise of professional bureaucracies and greater community engagement, museums have changed their strategies and roles over the last few decades. This has occurred through a combination of changes in management and evolving museological practices, particularly in relation to changes in professional practice.

Case studies of the Melbourne Museum, the Australian Museum in Sydney and South Australian Museum in Adelaide were used to drive the research and offer new insights into the management of Australian museums. This has been achieved through the

combined analysis of the impact of new museology and new public management on these institutions and their management as hybrid organisations.

### **8.3 Summary of findings and research implications**

Since the 1980s Australian State museums have undergone extensive organisational change. While attempts to enlarge museum audiences have been couched in terms of accessibility and the need for greater diversity in the museum going public, many of these changes have been market driven. The new museology has signalled a shift in museological philosophy; a moving away from traditional notions of museums as places of preservation, collections and exhibitions, towards a market-driven and audience centred approach to museum management.

The shift away from a focus on collections and exhibitions towards the public has resulted in placing the audiences first. While this is ensuring the ongoing success and funding of many contemporary museums, it has meant changing museum practices to enhance their public appeal and popularism. Echoing this, many museums now place a premium on high-profile exhibitions to attract visitors and raise revenues. Where previously the public viewed museums as elite institutions, yet intrinsically valuable, the new emphasis on democracy and audiences within museums has paradoxically brought with it the need to measure, quantify, monitor and set performance targets in relation to these values. As a result, there is now a need to market the attractiveness and worthiness of museums as cultural and educational resources to the public. This raises many issues surrounding the roles of museums in contemporary Australian society.

The thesis, through an analysis of three case studies, undertaken between 2008 and 2009, of the Australian Museum in Sydney, Melbourne Museum and South Australian Museum in Adelaide, has illustrated the many changes occurring in the management of Australian state museums. The case studies were chosen from within the Australian context of state-government funded museums. They are institutions that have evolved from their 19th century origins as natural history museums to contemporary museums facing a number of organisational, management and strategic dilemmas related to their changing roles and purposes.

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While a number of published sources have highlighted changing areas of museum practice and focus emerging in the late twentieth century, these changes have been subject to little scrutiny in terms of examining how and why they have occurred. An examination of the how and why these changes are impacting on museum management practices in the current century underpins the thesis. In addition, the thesis analyses the confluence of trajectories derived from new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrids impacting significantly on the management of museums as organisations. In particular, the thesis shows how museums, as public sector organisations, have adapted and changed their management practices in light of these theories and developments in the internal and external environments in which they now operate. Museums have adapted and changed their management practices, with a greater focus now evident on incorporating management theories from the corporate sector into organisational practice and strategic programming, increased professionalisation of staff and a move towards operating as professional bureaucracies. In addition, there is a new emphasis on education and the perceived needs of audiences as an institutional focus, along with the increasing use of technology for information provision, community participation and delivery of museum programs and exhibitions.

Evolving out of environments in which museums operate today are notions of greater access and social inclusion which presents ever more complex roles for museums. While a shift towards social responsibilities at the expense of cultural and educational responsibilities may challenge traditional notions of the museum, it represents a possible way forward for the development, change, community relevance and worthiness of museums in the current century.

Efficiency, effectiveness and economy in relation to the roles of museums have been enshrined in new management policy and practices. Many of these changes have been positive for museums, allowing them to reflect upon and communicate their mission and roles with renewed focus and vigour. As the thesis has shown through the case studies and interviews with senior museum staff, the focus on organisational planning, strategic management and increasing professionalisation of museums and their staff is an important development to emerge in the current century. The implications of these changes in terms of museum practice and institutional focus underpin our current understanding of museums today.

The need for greater community engagement today has required museums in Australia to extend their services and resources into new programs and partnerships. This has required greater scrutiny of and apportioning museum resources for community programs. The new museology, in particular, raises the museum's relationship with the community to a new prominence. These new services, and the provision of them, has led to changes in management and curatorial practice, most obviously in relation to who museums now represent, who they engage with, what this engagement means and which resources are diverted towards such programs.

Whether museums are appropriate and effective organisations to deliver such programs remains contested. As this thesis has revealed, museums in Australia today are still grappling with organisational and managerial challenges presented by the need for adequate resources, enhancing staff skills, technical infrastructure, and evolving community and stakeholder expectations of their services. Social inclusion programs remain a new area of purpose for Australian State museums. In many ways, however, they represent the latest manifestation of the continuing emphasis on audiences as consumers and the visitor-orientated focus within organisations.

The emphasis on service and community programs is also evident in the rise of education as a prominent tenet in contemporary museums. Seeking audience growth through new learning initiatives, museums are increasingly emphasising the value and importance of lifelong learning. While museums have always engaged in education in the broadest sense, today lifelong learning is actively pursued. Whether museums can realistically provide continuous lifelong learning programs, what these will achieve, and the resources, skills, staff and technology-based practices this will require in the current information age, is open to question.

While museums have proclaimed themselves to be knowledge-based institutions, the use and transmission of this knowledge is taking on a new variety of forms within a market and technology saturated context. Increasingly physical growth of the institution, revenues raised and audience numbers increased have become the measure of a successful museum. The pervasiveness of technology and its social, political, and organisational ramifications similarly presents many museums with a variety of resourcing, staff and program dilemmas. Integrating technology and social media in to museums raises many

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institutional and management questions. The thesis has illustrated that the impact of the digital age is still being integrated into museum practices, presenting both opportunities to enrich visitor experiences and a challenge to traditional notions of museum authority, audiences' physical presence and knowledge bases. Balancing and integrating new media with the more conventional roles of museums has required not only a reassessment of their purposes, but of the systems, resources and administrative procedures within these organisations. The potential, impact and longevity of social media and new technologies within museums remain unknown at this stage. The future responsibilities for museums regarding technology lie as much in realigning management and interdepartmental resources to embrace these changes, as it does in harnessing the benefits of new technology for audiences and growing online communities.

While today's museums seek increasing relevance through their communities, whether through actual visitation or an online presence, this has coincided with a commensurate expansion of public expectations about museums. Along with audience growth, widening access to collections and programs, financial support from non-government sources, collaborative partnerships, and opportunities for expansion in programs and buildings, museums now add social inclusion to their repertoire. Many of these changes have arisen since the emergence of new museology in the 1980s. Of equal importance, however, has been the impact of new public management on the public sector. As this thesis has illustrated, through the case studies, Australian State museums have been subject to the wider impacts of public sector reform with the adoption of managerial theories related to accountability, market principles and a greater service culture. While this has been positive in many respects, the focus on strategic planning, customer service, performance management, efficiency and outcomes in museums is still being integrated into day-to-day processes and organisational practices.

As part of the public sector, museums are subject to the vagaries of political control, changes in government, fluctuating resources, and shifting management processes. Given this, the adoption of private sector managerialist values may not always be in the best interests of museums; 'private-sector decision making, ...is difficult to replicate in the public sector...because authority in the public sector is much more dispersed, reflecting pluralistic, stakeholder constituencies' (Dixon, Kouzmin and Korac-Kakabadse 1998, p.169). This study highlighted the movement over the past 30 years in Australian

museums towards a hybrid organisational model, one which combines elements of the public sector with a market focus, incorporating commercial operations such as shops and cafes, in order to deliver effective services.

It is likely that the management of museums in Australia will continue to incorporate aspects of private sector management practices. In an era of political, economic, cultural, and technological change in public sector management, we may be ‘witnessing a supposed paradigm shift in public administration from bureaucracy to post-bureaucracy which stresses managerial rather than administrative values’ (Common 1998, p.440). Despite the difficulties of implementing private sector managerial practices in museums, often operating within specific cultural and contextual circumstances, this will remain uppermost in the management of Australian State museums today.

#### ***8.4 Suggestions for further research and development***

Many of the areas covered in this research in relation to how museums are responding to changes associated with greater access and information provision, attracting new audiences, increased organisational emphasis on learning, new interpretations of collections and scholarship, changing professional roles within museums, evolving business models, and closer social and economic roles for museums within communities could be explored through additional theoretical or practical research. How museums function as organisations within the public sector and combine this role with the development of commercial enterprises as hybrids would be suitable for further detailed study.

The research has highlighted and unveiled new problems in understanding the complexities of managing museums in the current century. In particular, analysing Australian state museums through the multi-disciplinary lenses of new museology, new public management and the development of museums as hybrids, has revealed the multiple ways in which museums have undergone organisational change, how and why these changes have occurred, the impact of these changes on museum management and the ongoing importance of these changes to museum roles and purposes in the current century. Few studies of contemporary museum management have combined these perspectives to

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provide insights into the way museums currently operate, the issues faced by museums as a result of recent organisational changes and the implications of this not only for museums, but for the public, communities and stakeholders.

The analysis of museums as organisational types within the public sector could be further tested and researched through additional case studies. Although this research has focused on state museums, interesting parallels and new insights into the relationship between museums, governments and their communities could be gained through the study of comparative local government or national museums as case studies. To gain further knowledge about the evolution of museums as public sector organisations, additional research could be undertaken on more extensive histories of Australian museums as part of the public sector during the 20th century. Furthermore, future research could be undertaken on the analysis of Australian museums as statutory bodies, executive agencies, and their governance by boards and trusts to understand their organisational, legal and statutory makeup, gaining further insights into managing such organisations.

Although much research has been undertaken in the United States on museums as not-for-profit organisations, very few studies have thoroughly analysed and explored Australian museums from this perspective. This represents a new area through which Australian museums could be studied, adding significantly to the scope and content of material available on the management of museums and organisational studies. The analysis of museums as organisational or institutional types rarely features in the public sector management, public policy, or museum studies disciplines. This additional research would add significantly to the understanding of the history of museums as organisations and their current roles.

Organisational change management research frequently features examples or case studies from the private sector. Few detailed case studies exist of public sector organisations, such as museums, which have undergone substantial institutional and management changes over the last few decades. A set of case studies from across the museums sector exploring how organisations have adapted to and encompassed these changes, along with the implications of these changes for the future mission of museums, could provide guidelines for other cultural organisations undergoing such changes.

Finally, the field of research on museum management, and more broadly, arts management, remains diffuse and scattered amongst a number of disciplines. As Helwig, Varela and Wilkerson (2010, pp.11-12) note '[cultural] management is not pushing against, or measuring itself according to, a standard set by a single discipline. To have too many standards is to have, perhaps, too much academic diversity, and not enough focus'. Given this, the possibilities for additional projects related to museum management are extensive, and offer an important and growing area for future research in the areas of organisational change, public sector management and hybrid studies.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

To the researcher's knowledge, few studies have investigated the factors that have influenced the evolving role of contemporary Australian museums which combine an exploration of the internal, organisational factors that have shaped museum processes and strategy along with external, philosophical and ideological changes brought about by new museology and new public management within the public sector of which museums are a part. In addition, the study of hybrid organisations has received scant attention in published literature and is a little used framework for understanding museums as organisations.

The multi-disciplinary approach used in this thesis has also highlighted implications for new research and theory in relation to museums as organisations, museum management, and for the study of museums as public sector organisations. As a result, the study provides original insights and perspectives into Australian museums infrequently considered in either discipline. The thesis has covered many factors influencing the changing roles of museums in pursuit of attempting to answer the initial research question and the overall research aim. In doing so, the study has sought to contribute to the body of knowledge in the fields of museum studies, public sector management and organisational studies.

It has been demonstrated throughout the thesis that the complexity of issues faced by museums in the current century has had a great impact on the ways in which museums in

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Australia are managed and changes in managerial processes and organisational focus. The central and novel contribution this thesis makes is to our understanding of how and why museum management practices in Australia since the 1980s have arisen out of the intersection between theories of new museology, new public management and the evolution of museums as hybrids. It has been found that many of the changes occurring in museum management are the result of the confluence of these disparate factors which have impacted upon the role and mission of museums in Australia over the last few decades.

The research has provided some insights into the managerial changes that have occurred in Australian state museums, as well as an analysis of factors that have led to these changes. Within the literature on Australian museums, there are surprisingly few studies on the changing management of organisations since the 1980s. This study has integrated knowledge related to selected changes in museum practices and functions over the last few decades, through empirical investigation and multi-disciplinary research, filling a gap in this knowledge. The descriptive and analytical case studies, along with the study itself, provides theoretical and practical knowledge which is of benefit to researchers in the fields of museum studies and public sector management, as well as policy makers, stakeholders, and senior museum staff.

It is worth concluding with a reflection on the emerging role of museums and what the changes wrought by new museology and new public management have now achieved for these institutions;

‘ At the very heart of the new museum lies a promise to visitors that they can emerge quite changed from the museum experience. This transformation can be located ...between those who argue that museums need to become active cultural agents and those who defend their traditional practices. This debate has been ongoing and persistent in influencing the museum’s content and style, function and form’ (Cleary 2008, p.184).

This study has brought into focus the inherent tensions in contemporary museum management, conceptualised, articulated and therefore addressed these concerns. The use of multiple lenses; new public management, new museology and hybridity, in particular, has been helpful here. These perspectives and disciplines help museums to understand

themselves as distinct institutions that have developed unique organisational identities and processes. The forces that shape museum practice in Australia continue to present problems and opportunities for the evolution of museum management and organisational change in the current century.

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## 10 Appendices

### 10.1 Appendix A – Fieldwork Interview Questions

The set of questions asked of each senior manager and Board or Trust member at the three case study museums interviewed;

- ❖ Australian Museum, Sydney
- ❖ Melbourne Museum (Museum Victoria), Melbourne
- ❖ South Australian Museum, Adelaide

Q1 How long have you worked at the museum and in what role(s)?

Q2 What challenges and difficulties do you believe your museum currently faces?

Q3 How do you think management practices have changed in your museum over the last 5-10 years or so? What changes have you observed?

Q4 How and in what ways do you believe these changes have affected the museum?

Q5 What do you believe are currently the most pressing (internal and external) forces impacting on your museum and its management?

Q6 What have been the major management and professional challenges for you in your role at the museum?

Q7 What changes to your museum's management have been successful and why? Which have not worked-what has gone wrong?

Q8 What has your museum learned as a result of these changes?

Q9 What do you think about these changes to your museum? Have they impacted on your professional role and values?

Q10 What are the ways in which your museum is responding to these changes, at the program, organisational and management level?

Q11 What role(s) and purpose do you believe your museum should fulfil in the current century? Why?

## **10.2 Appendix B – List of Interviewees**

### 10.2.1 Australian Museum, Sydney

1 Dr. Penny Berents Head, Natural Sciences Collection, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 19/1/2009

2 Mr. Glenn Ferguson, Exhibitions Manager, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 19/1/2009

3 Ms. Fara Pelarek A/g Head, Visitor Programs & Services, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 20/1/2009

4 Ms. Julie Garrard Head, Exhibitions & Creative Services, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 20/1/2009

5 Ms. Janet Carding Assistant Director, Public Programs & Operations, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 20/1/2009

6 Dr. Ronnie Harding Trust Member, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 20/1/2009

7 Ms. Noella Lopez Head of Commercial Services, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 21/1/2009

8 Mr. Ken Pope Head of Corporate & Knowledge Services, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 22/1/2009

9 Dr. Lynda Kelly Manager, Audience Research, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 23/1/2009

10 Mr. Michael Alscher , Trust member, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 23/1/2009

11 Dr. Les Christidis Assistant Director, Research & Collections, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 30/1/2009

12. Mr. Brian Lassig Head, Research, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 30/1/2009

13 Ms. Rosemary Swift Development Manager, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 27/1/2009

14 Mr. Vinod Daniel Head, Collections & Research Resources, Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 5/2/2009

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### 10.2.2 Melbourne Museum (Museum Victoria) Melbourne

1 Ms. Susan Heron, Board Member, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 12/8/2008

2 Mr. Tim Hart Director, Information, Multimedia & Technology, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 12/8/2008

3 Ms. Rose Hiscock, Manager, Marketing, Communications & Commercial Operations,  
Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 12/8/2008

4 Mr. Richard Gillespie , Head of History & Technology, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 13/8/2008

5 Ms. Melinda Viksne Manager, Planning & Policy, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 13/8/2008

6 Mr. Michael Perry Board Member, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 14/8/2008

7 Ms. Ely Wallis Manager of Information Services, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 14/8/2008

8 Mr. Ross Harrison-Snow, Archives & Records Manager, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 14/8/2008

9 Ms. Liza Dale-Hallett, Senior Curator, Sustainable Futures, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 15/8/2008

10 Ms. Maryanne McCubbin , Head, Strategic Collection Management, Melbourne  
Museum  
Interviewed: 18/8/2008

11 Ms. Linda Sproul Head, Public Programs, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 18/8/2008

12 Ms. Grace D'Agostino, Organisation Capability Manager, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 18/8/2008

13. Dr. Janet McCalman, Board Member, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 19/8/2008

14. Prof. Daine Alcorn , Board Member, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 20/8/2008

15 Ms. Moya McFadzean, Senior Curator, Migration, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 20/8/2008

16 Dr. Robin Hirst Head, Collections, Research & Exhibitions, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 20/8/2008

17 Ms. Sheila O'Sullivan, Board Member, Melbourne Museum  
Interviewed: 21/8/2008

### 10.2.3 South Australian Museum, Adelaide

1 Mr. Crispin Savage Publicity & Promotions Officer, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 22/9/2008

2 Mr. Mark Judd Head, Public Programs Development, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 22/9/2008

3 Dr. Suzanne Miller Director, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 22/9/2008

4 Ms. Fran Zilio Manager, Archives & Information Services, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 23/9/2008

5 Ms. Tricia Kidd Business Manager, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 23/8/2008

6 Dr. Keryn Walshe Senior Collection Manager, Aboriginal Collections & Archaeology,  
South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 24/9/2008

7 Mr. Robert Morris Head of Collections, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 24/9/2008

8 Ms. Leisel Underwood Manager, Public Programs & Outreach Services, South  
Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 24/9/2008

9 Ms. Sharon Morris Education Officer, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 24/9/2008

10 Mr. Steven Riley General Manager, South Australian Museum  
Interviewed: 24/9/2008

11 Dr. Philip Clarke Head of Anthropology & Manager of Sciences, South Australian  
Museum  
Interviewed: 26/9/2008

12 Dr Steve Donellan, Principal Research Scientist, Evolutionary Biology, South  
Australian Museum.

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Interviewed: 29/9/2008

13 Mr David Kerr, Manager Development and Design, South Australian Museum.

Interviewed: 29/9/2008