

CHAPTER THREE

The Smithsonian in the Nineteenth Century: A Microcosm of Museum Problems

The dilemma of the rise of a great nineteenth-century museum is graphically illustrated in part of the development of the Smithsonian Institution. Founded finally by a somewhat reluctant United States Congress after eleven years of bickering over the purposes of the unexpected bequest of James Smithson, the Institution's subsequent growth under its first two Secretaries, Professors Henry and Baird, had somewhat the character of Dr. Doolittle's fabulous beast, the pushmepullyou. (Some of the early history of the Smithsonian, and what little is known of the life of James Smithson, was well told by Oehser in 1949,⁸ and again, recently, by Hellman in 1967).⁹

Joseph Henry, who was perhaps the best-known scientist of his time in the United States, had conceived a general plan of operation for the Institution. On this his acceptance of the post of its first Secretary was based. On the basis of his interpretation of the mysterious benefactor's enigmatic phrase of instruction, "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men," Henry's consistent plan was composed. In accordance with the "Will of Smithson," Henry wrote:

To Increase Knowledge. It is proposed—

1. To stimulate men of talent to make original re-

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searches, by offering suitable rewards for memoirs containing new truths; and,

2. To appropriate annually a portion of the income for particular researches, under the direction of suitable persons.

To Diffuse Knowledge. It is proposed—

1. To publish a series of periodical reports on the progress of the different branches of knowledge; and,
2. To publish occasionally separate treatises on subjects of general interest.¹⁰

The details of this plan were not only submitted to the Board of Regents of the Institution and approved by them (in 1847), but also to a number of scientific and literary societies where the program won universal approval. Henry thus had every right to expect that the Institution's purposes as an advanced research center would be understood, and would be capable of widening knowledge for the benefit of mankind. As he pointed out, "The Government of the United States is merely a trustee to carry out the design of the testator." He did acknowledge, of course, that the act of Congress establishing the Institution required that a library, a museum, and a gallery of art should be included in the design of the physical facilities. In this connection the Board of Regents resolved to divide the income of the Institution (\$30,910.14 in 1855) into two equal parts; one to undertake publications and research as outlined above, the other to pay for library, and museum and art gallery acquisitions. As Henry noted, these divisions were by no means incompatible (although the amount of money was too small by far even in 1855). As he reported, "A library will be required, consisting, 1st, of a complete collection of the transactions and proceedings of all the learned societies in the world; 2nd, of the more important current periodical publications, and other works necessary in preparing the periodi-

cal reports." In addition the Institution should make "special collections, particularly of objects to illustrate and verify its own publications," and "also, a collection of instruments of research in all branches of experimental science."

Henry felt that library catalogues of other libraries were of major importance for the Smithsonian library, as well as other materials, in order to make the Institution a great bibliographic center that would attract students. He felt that natural history collections would arrive under their own momentum without having to use precious purchase funds, and in many ways he was right. As Coleman pointed out, "The government became an ally of museums as the army, and to some extent the navy, got into exploring."¹¹ From the Wilkes Expedition collections of 1842, down through the Pacific Railroad Surveys of 1855 and subsequent years, through various State surveys, some of them dating as late as the WPA days of the 1930s, the Smithsonian's U. S. National Museum has received, and often has farmed out to other museums, a tremendous amount of freely acquired material.

As far as art was concerned, Henry was all for it. "Attempts should be made to procure for the gallery of art, casts of the most celebrated articles of ancient and modern sculpture. The arts may be encouraged by providing a room, free of expense, for the exhibition of the objects of the Art-Union and other similar societies." The latter project, which has survived in principle down to this day, although meritorious and public-spirited, has often been a sore subject with curators and exhibitors alike. But Henry was anxious to develop art collections. He was greatly taken with the Elgin marbles. In a little notebook of his *circa* 1848, Joseph Henry writes;

In 1847 I visited London and in company with Professor Bache made some attempts to procure for this country a set

of copies of the Elgin marbles. We were together one day in the British Museum when our attention was attracted by a number of men engaged in taking casts of some of the larger of the Elgin marbles. We asked for whom these were intended and were informed for a present to some foreign court. We asked why we could not get a set for our own government, the answer was that nothing would be easier all that was necessary would be to interest our Minister and a word from him would be sufficient. Mr. ———, our Minister, was not however impressed with the matter and declined to do anything.

Subsequent intercessions with Mr. N. Biddle, "then in the zenith of his influence," as well as J. C. Spencer, Secretary of the Treasury, "who called a Cabinet council"—all failed. So ended an effort at cultural exchange.

An important additional point made by the Professor was that "distinguished individuals should also be invited to give lectures on subjects of general interest." It seemed best to try to give courses of lectures on special subjects rather than to cover a whole topic in one lecture. Sometimes, however, a single lecture on some literary subject, or on the life of a distinguished individual, or the history of a discovery sufficed. These were very popular and the best of them were digested and reprinted in the *Annual Reports*. The nineteenth century was the era of lectures, personified by the Lowell Institute in Boston and the Atheneum in Richmond, and Henry managed to secure a tremendous variety of eminent personages as lecturers. It was planned that these should be given mostly when Congress was in session in order to afford an opportunity for members of the Congress to have illustrated to them new discoveries in science and new objects of art.

I wonder how many of the perennially busy members of the

Congress managed to get to these learned occasions? Perhaps the Professor had as little luck as he seems to have had with the special committee of the House of Representatives to whom his plan of organization and operations had been referred in 1855. As Henry reported, "The committee of the House had not time, before the close of the session, to visit the Institution, or to make such an examination of the management and the condition of its affairs as the importance of the matter referred to them would seem to demand."

In any case the lectures in any one year varied from "Grandeur and Fall of the French Bourbon Monarchy" and "History of the War Between Russia and Turkey" to "Vegetation," educational movements, China, electricity and the nature and cure of the bite of serpents. Lecturers ranged from men like the Sillimans, father and son, of Yale, and Professors Agassiz and Gray of Harvard, to Mark Hopkins, the President of Williams College, George P. Marsh, whilom Minister to the Sublime Porte—as the Sultanate of Turkey was known—and on to a miscellany of Alexanders from New Jersey, Channings from Massachusetts and Devereuxs from New York.

Joseph Henry's plans for the Institution were naturally dependent to a considerable degree on his choice of colleagues. The first and most important appointment made by him was that of Charles C. Jewett, named Assistant Secretary and Librarian in 1847, at the request of certain of the Regents who were determined to see the creation of a great national library under the aegis of the Smithsonian. The second was Spencer F. Baird, appointed Assistant Secretary for Publications, Exchanges and Natural History in 1850. Both were men of extraordinary ability and character. The library plans of Henry and Jewett seemed to coincide perfectly well at first. By 1853 Jewett, already a noted authority on libraries, was able to convene in New York the first international conference of librarians ever held. Jewett was

president of the conference, and among the resolutions passed at the meeting was one endorsing his far-reaching proposals for a central national catalogue of library holdings by book title. His plan, far ahead of its time, was eventually adopted in principle by the Library of Congress. It was a remarkable advance, and the pity was that Professor Jewett was perhaps too impatient for immediate results. His library at the Smithsonian remained of necessity small. Henry rightly questioned its becoming a major universal library, especially in what we would term the humanities, and recommended patience and fiscal austerity. Finally the men came to a parting of the ways, and the Smithsonian lost the most innovative librarian of his time.

In spite of the departure of Professor Jewett, the Smithsonian library by 1865 had become so crowded that Joseph Henry suggested that most of the books be deposited in the Library of Congress. The great increase in holdings was partly due to the admirable cultural exchange system worked out with foreign libraries and institutes as well as individuals, which gave the Smithsonian a steady and increasing volume of presentation and exchange serials and monographs. The matter at the time was most seriously considered and finally passed as a bill by Congress in 1866. Dr. Gill, then Smithsonian librarian, was transferred to the Library of Congress as an assistant librarian in charge of the Smithsonian deposit. As Adler said, "From this time on the Institution became, in a certain way, an office for receipt and record of publications. Exchanges were continued, but there was no other source of increase, while the entire care of the books was assumed by the Library of Congress."¹²

For better or worse, a change of direction had occurred. The Smithsonian lost one of its tripod legs of research. Techniques of research in bibliography, in iconography and in library study which might well have continued to make the Institution a pioneer in a much-needed field, were given up. The emphasis

began to shift in a small but significant way toward pure science on the one hand and museum stewardship on the other. In this last category Professor Baird was preeminent. Probably the most influential museum scientist of his time after Agassiz, Baird was first and last a museum collector, a man who left no stone unturned to amass collections for the U. S. National Museum—in Thomas Barbour's pithy phrase, "a pack rat."

The Nation's Cabinet of Curiosities so-called, the National Institute, housed in the U. S. Patent Office, was the original National Museum, which, having fallen on hard times as the collections increased, was judged to be the responsibility of the new Smithsonian. However, as noted earlier, Professor Henry, while accepting the idea of a museum, seems to have been more convinced, as time went on, that the slender funds of the private endowment should not be encumbered in administering the Government's collections. As he said, "the Smithsonian Institution will readily take the supervision of an establishment of this kind, and give plans for its organization and arrangement, provided it be requested to do so, and the means [the necessary money] for effecting the object be liberally supplied."

The arrival of Baird from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, complete with freight cars containing his own personal collections of bird skins and skeletons, eggs and nests, reptiles, fishes, amphibians and fossils, should have indicated that, in the sense at least of being a collector's collector, here was another sort of Agassiz. In ten years he had perfected a system of developing exchanges, stimulating government and private collectors and outfitting expeditions.

"No bride ever devoted more thought and attention to her trousseau than did my father to the fitting out of each of these explorers," wrote his daughter, Lucy Baird.

As Hellman has noted, the lists of donations accepted by Baird for the Museum do not suggest that the Institution in those days

had any medium for rejection—no rejection slips had been printed up. Such miscellanea were accepted as "Sealed Bottles Containing Water from the Dead Sea, Chicken with Four Legs, Insects from Catlett's, Va., Three Fish-Hooks from Thomas Day, Keeper of Seguin Light," implying a certain lack of discrimination. In 1858 the collections at the Patent Office, the old "Cabinet," were formally transferred to the Smithsonian, and in 1861 the Smithsonian bureau of the U. S. National Museum was formally instituted. Congress had been appropriating funds for the Institute all along, and these were transferred to be annually appropriated to the Smithsonian in 1858.

In order to exhibit the collections properly cases were set up and a formal museum setting was created. Baird, in a famous letter to the Honorable George P. Marsh in 1853, had expressed some of his philosophy as a collector and museum administrator:

"You ask who is to describe nondescripts and what is to be done with the things when they come in. That is not my particular business now; my duty is to see that no chances are lost of advancing science, leaving the future to take care of itself. And indeed I expect the accumulation of a mass of matter thus collected (which the Institution cannot or will not 'curate' efficiently) to have the effect of forcing our government into establishing a [separate] National Museum, of which (let me whisper it) I hope to be director. Still even if this argument don't weigh now, it will one of these days, and I am content to wait."

In effect, Baird did better for himself. He succeeded Henry as the second Secretary of an Institution which had incorporated his museum and which has been heavily involved in museum custodianship ever since. Baird's greatest coup came in 1876 with the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition. In connection with the Federal Government's participation, the Smithsonian was involved in the preparation of five exhibits, partly in cooperation with the Fish Commission and the Indian Bureau of the Depart-

ment of the Interior. These had to do with "Smithsonian Activities—Animal Resources—Fisheries—Mineral Resources—and Anthropology." In the plans for the Centennial it was quite clearly anticipated that a large number of exhibits would be left in the hands of the National Museum, and indeed this is what eventually happened. The exhibits of some thirty-four foreign governments as well as numerous states eventually descended on the Smithsonian in seventy-eight freight cars, including the things collected by Baird and his colleagues themselves. Some of Professor Henry's worst housekeeping fears must have been realized. A new building was essential. The original Tuscan castle was already crammed. As Henry wrote: "These questions [of space] will involve another—whether it is advisable to continue, at least without some modification, the connection which now exists between the Smithsonian Institution and the National Museum.

"The Museum is destined to an extension far beyond its present magnitude. It is an object of much interest to all who visit the National Capital, and is of great value as exhibiting the natural resources of the country, as well as a means of public education."

Again there is the feeling of a branching of interests, a certain dichotomy.

However much Professor Henry may have been concerned with his own research, his own interest in physics, and however parsimonious he may have felt in husbanding the slender income of the Smithson bequest and the slim allowances of Congressional appropriations, it can never be said that he was not broadly interested in science or failed to recognize the importance of museums. As a scientist he was not only broad but eminently sensible. Although so close to Agassiz, he nevertheless incisively took the other side in the dispute on Darwin's new theory on evolution, among the earliest American men of science

to do so. In 1864 he wrote to Asa Gray: "I have given the subject of evolution much thought, and have come to the conclusion that it is the best working hypothesis which you naturalists have got. It, in fact, gives you the first basis or real scientific foundation to stand upon which you have ever had."

It is worth noting his prophetic words as a museum administrator at the laying of the cornerstone of the American Museum of Natural History building in June, 1874 (here appear echoes of his original plan as well as premonitions for the future):

Modern civilization tends to congregate the population of countries into large cities . . . cities tend to increase more rapidly than the general population . . . [due to] the education of the working classes and the introduction of labor-saving machines . . . cities in proportion to their extent and rapidity of growth engender habits of thought and of action of a character the reverse of progress and which, if unrestrained, would tend to disintegrate society and resolve it into its primitive barbarous elements. . . . These principles are eminently applicable in New York."

It is therefore of the first importance that those who possess the intelligence, the influence, and the power, who from the experience of the past are impressed with the tendencies as to the future, should endeavor to provide all the means possible to avert evils similar to those with which this city has been afflicted, and which tend to afflict it in a still greater degree in the future.

His prescriptions included liberal support for religious activities to neutralize the selfishness engendered by the fierceness of human competition in a city, and in addition support for museums of art and of nature which can supply intellectual pleasure and instruction. The museum of natural history-to-be can be a

temple of nature. And what is Henry's temple? A temple of the muses. Collections in themselves, though valuable, are still wanting an essential element. In Henry's view the museum must have a professor who can give free lectures on the objects, on phenomena of nature, on the mysterious principles of life, on geology and the history of man's own evolution. He went on to speculate on the impact on New York City of another Agassiz, the lecturer par excellence, the man of wisdom at the zenith of his instructional powers.

The final leg of the tripod of Henry's museum, to make the temple complete, is to be his "college of discoverers," men capable not only of "expounding established truths but of interrogating nature and of discovering new facts, new phenomena, and new principles."

In Joseph Henry's view, then, a museum could indeed be a *thiasos*. Speaking of the Smithsonian he says that after twenty-five years of incessant effort the directors had at last persuaded Congress that this was the design of the Smithson bequest, and that the whole energy of the establishment should be devoted to "the advance of science." Henry's "first class scientist," like the poet a discoverer, is probably born, not made, is "liberally provided with means," with research tools and space, and is of course protected from the pressures or controls of public life by being in the "college," the museum.

Meanwhile the objects kept on pouring in. Fortunately Congress passed a bill in 1879 to give the Smithsonian \$250,000 for an exposition building to house the overflow of exhibits. By this time, too, Professor Henry was dead, and the new Secretary, Baird, and his assistant, Dr. George Brown Goode, set about the arrangement of the exhibits which were said to be a wonder of their time, exciting admiration here and abroad. Goode, who unfortunately died prematurely at the age of forty-five, was undoubtedly a preeminent museum man. His plan for the new

museum opened in 1881 was sound and advanced; the collections should in effect be *records* of scientific knowledge; the aims of the museum should be to make its contents serve as a stimulus to *research*, and lastly, by illustrating through exhibits, not only materials but the manifestation of man's thought and activity upon them, the museum should be for *education*.

But while Baird was a supreme administrator, a superb cataloguer and a meticulous collector, he seemed to be preoccupied with statistics, with the collecting of collections themselves, with the omnium-gatherum as a be-all and an end-all in itself. Perhaps the changes in the spirit of the *Annual Reports* signified a trend. As Hellman has noted, although Baird started a new taxonomic series, the *Proceedings of the United States National Museum*, he cut down on the publications for original research. The *Annual Reports* themselves became somewhat pedestrian. Plans for research were omitted or condensed. Notable events, such as the various special lectures or papers on different aspects of original research produced during a year, tended to be slurred over or omitted. Instead, by the 1880s the *Annual Report* itself became a catalogue, with its multiple curiosa in the form of acquisitions faithfully listed. The public image of the "Nation's Attic" was beginning to emerge.

In spite of this pedantic impression, a certain measure and balance persisted. Baird and his wife acted as hosts to men of science in somewhat the tradition of the Henrys. Younger, unmarried scientists or visitors, geologists, ethnologists and biologists lived as well as worked in the rooms of the Smithsonian building in the upper floors or towers. There is no doubt that the research aspects of the Institution continued, although the tone seems more muted. However, one of Baird's strong points in the decades of the sixties and early seventies was his support of expeditions. His influence as what today would be called a science administrator continued to increase. Called to testify before

Senate Committees, acting as advisor to Secretaries of State and the military, Professor Baird cut a notable figure in the promotion of Government interest in science. Perhaps his lasting memorial has been in the work he organized on fisheries and marine resources, precursors of the Government's present interest in oceanography and the biology of the sea.

Finally, in terms of research it should be said that Baird helped in the formation of the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian, the pioneer organization devoted to ethnology and linguistics in this country. This bureau had its origin in the first work of the Smithsonian, expeditions and publications relating to Indian archaeology and languages. It received its coordinating impetus from Major John Wesley Powell, the one-armed Civil War veteran, who in May 1869 started off on his third summer exploration, financed by a Federal grant to the Smithsonian. His jumping-off point was where the just-completed tracks of the Union Pacific Railroad crossed the Green River in southwestern Wyoming. This was the epoch-making first descent of the Colorado River. Powell became famous overnight. The resulting Congressional interest in his explorations as well as his activities in making known the ways and customs of the vanishing Indian tribes assured the success of the Bureau, which was officially founded under the Smithsonian in 1879 and of which he continued as Director until his death in 1902. Powell, in the multifaceted manner of the time, turned out to be a geologist and a pioneer in land use as well, and doubled as Director of the Department of the Interior's U. S. Geological Survey from 1881 until 1894.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of the Bureau of American Ethnology on the whole history of American anthropology. As Professor Claude Levi-Strauss testified in his remarks in 1965 at the Bicentennial Celebrations of Smithson's birth, no set of books had more affected his studies as a young man than

the volumes of the Bureau of American Ethnology. His first savings as a student were used to attempt to acquire a set for his own library. These publications have formed a living testimonial to Henry's plan to commemorate Smithson's name with research and publication. This was how the Professor urged his millionaire audience in New York in 1874 to believe, to do likewise, to create New York's own "College of Discoverers." Smithson's name is "a household word in every part of the civilized world," and as memorials, "what, in comparison to this, are local monuments, pyramids of flint, statues of brass or obelisks of marble"; echoes all—by comparison, echoes of "Ozymandias, king of kings."

Some of the millionaires at least reacted, although in different ways and somewhat later. Perhaps the Rockefeller Institute and the Carnegie Institution of Washington of the following years epitomized Henry's "College of Discoverers."

Baird died in office in 1887 and was succeeded, not by George Brown Goode, who had helped set up the new exhibits, but by Samuel Pierpont Langley, an astronomer and professor of physics at Western University at Pittsburgh. Self-taught, Langley had had a brilliant career as a young astronomer-inventor; he had perfected telescopes of his own, invented the bolometer and a flying machine. Langley was a research scientist and thus personified one aspect at least of Henry's tradition, but my own impression is that he did not relate museum activities with research and teaching in the manner of his predecessors. Except for the promotion of the zoo as an early form of conservation education, and except for his fondness for children, for whom he set up a children's room in the museum, he seems to have been dedicated primarily to his own brand of research.

The great apparent tragedy for the Smithsonian at this stage was the death, in 1896, of Goode, the one administrator in the Institution who had seemed to grasp the essential need of com-

binning the recording and documenting function of museum collections with original research and with public education. In his death at the age of forty-five the museums of the country lost a champion, the man whose *Principles of Museum Administration*, published in 1895, lived on as a standard for more than fifty years.

By the turn of the century, Langley was, at sixty-six, already rather an old man, withdrawn in his laboratory round which the grass was kept at knee height to discourage strangers. He was not to retire, however, but to continue as Secretary until his death seven years later. A certain sense of direction and, above all, a sense of élan, of flair, seemed to have departed from the Institution. There was a museum, a research laboratory and a zoo. There was, of course, the eternal public too. But the men involved seemed mostly to want to be left alone.

CHAPTER FOUR

Museums in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

The paradox of museums continues apace down to the present day. As Joseph Henry had stated it, "The tendency of an Institution in which collections form a prominent object, is constantly towards a stationary condition: with a given income, the time must inevitably come when the expenditures necessary to accommodate the articles with house room and attendance will just equal the receipts," and, warming to the subject, "There is indeed no plan by which the funds of the Institution may be more inefficiently expended, than that of filling a costly building with an indiscriminate collection of objects of curiosity, and giving these in charge to a set of inactive curators." ¹³

Through the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of this one museums seem to have drifted into two positions which gradually became separate, almost polarized. On the one hand certain museums came to exist purely as storehouses, as catch-alls, elegant as they might have been. The average historical society was a good, though often inelegant, example.

"Send grandmother's dresses there," said the desperate descendant as an alternative to sending everything to the public dump heap. "Maybe someone will cherish them."

Many art galleries in our cities suffered the same fate. Either the curator hoped for more and better quality in future by being

nice to the Joneses in their hour of need or he simply didn't know how to say no. Paintings and decorative objects poured in, usually without a coherent plan, and the common attic-for-all image was the result.

Science museums have had more luck in this respect. The miscellaneous rocks or butterflies, fruit of last year's nature class, have had a way of getting disposed of, and in general only material collected by expeditions or on organized field trips has been commonly retained.

But all museums have suffered from this image. By the mid-twentieth century the Smithsonian Institution itself had come to be thought of not as a sponsor of basic research, but as the "Nation's Attic." The Institution has somehow never received the credit that was its due. As Washburn said in his essay on Henry quoted above:

"By providing positive support to scholarly activity at a time when the universities were largely uninterested, [Joseph] Henry may have provided an all-important example and alternative which forced the more rapid evolution of this trend [toward research] in the somnolent centers of undergraduate instruction."

The other attitude, the contrast to the attic or genteel storehouse, was that a museum was indeed a practicing laboratory or an educational center. Indeed, the American Association of Museums coined the ringing phrase "the people's university." This contrasting attitude, while bravely maintained in a few institutions, continued to receive a diminishing measure of attention from the public as well as from scholars. The rise of university research automatically downgraded the role of the independent institution.

Certainly by the second decade of this century museums had developed into a far more limited set of centers, attic-like or not, than the promise of the nineteenth century seems to have foretold. In the sciences, laboratory and experimental research in

biology, chemistry and physics, especially under the impetus of the new teaching laboratories in western Europe, came to be the focal interest in the universities. In biology the developmentalists, working with a few simple laboratory animals, and largely trained in German universities, came to play the dominant role. Biomedicine and the birth of the massively supported campaigns against human disease attracted many of the foremost brains into physiology, embryology, genetics and organic chemistry. The school of descriptive biology became a byway except insofar as the needs of economic botany or medical research may have had peripheral concerns.

The school of evolutionary studies was to emerge only gradually, largely through the work of geologists or paleontologists at first, men like Henry Fairfield Osborn, W. D. Matthew, and later W. K. Gregory, who helped to create a bridge between the university and the museum. The American Museum of Natural History in New York pioneered in developing an understanding of the role a twentieth-century curator could play in university and teaching relations. It was that great institution which maintained a living link between its own paleontological curators and the faculty of Columbia University, so that during this transitional period of neglect there could still exist a viable relationship. Curators in New York's museum were first equated to faculty appointments at Columbia, not walled off, incarcerated in monasteries, as they had begun to be elsewhere. This was already an accomplishment, a reversal of the pendulum which had swung so dangerously away from recognition of the basic research role of a curator. Another museum which succeeded in developing a close university relationship was that at Berkeley—the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, which, as a developing department of the University of California, was able to inaugurate a whole school of ecological studies under Joseph Grinnell.

Only a hundred years before, as Conant has pointed out, "the

colleges viewed their professors primarily as teachers rather than as research men." ¹⁴ Again quoting the farsighted Joseph Henry in 1846 on the subject:

"We have in the United States upwards of a hundred colleges each one of which has a corps of Professors in the line of science and yet scarcely any one of them makes an attempt to enlarge the bounds of human knowledge. The truth is we are over-run in this country with charlatanism; our newspapers are filled with the puffs of quackery and every man who can burn phosphorous in oxygen and exhibit a few experiments to a class of young ladies is called a man of Science."

In geology, with its strong right arm of paleontology, this trend never seriously developed. The theoretical evolutionary work of paleontology continued to exert a powerful fascination on younger men. The field stayed open, as it were, available to new minds of a later day, who could draw upon the evidence slowly being brought to light by the zoogeographers and geneticists about the plasticity of the evolutionary material of animals and plants, genes and chromosomes, under conditions of geographical isolation. In oil geology, too, a whole new field of applied research based on museum collections began to develop, dependent on the identification of microfossils and brought into prominence by Professor Schuchert of Yale, his collections and his pupils.

In anthropology as well, the value of records of vanishing cultures, preserved largely through the efforts of museums or museum-related bureaus such as the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian, was always fully realized. The bridge between museum anthropologists and university anthropologists remained open, and has remained open thanks to the pioneering work of Kroeber, of Boas and his school and of the great university-sponsored museums of anthropology at Harvard, Pennsylvania and Michigan. There has never really been a pronounced

coolness between scholars working in anthropology in museums and those in universities.

Indeed, I am persuaded that museum training in anthropology is still vital, and that a social anthropologist of the stature of Margaret Mead, for example, could not have arisen outside of the context of a museum. But it is a truism that museum-based anthropology has declined in importance since the end of World War I, except for a brief flurry of applied interest in knowing about faraway places which came to the fore during World War II. The plain fact of the matter is that most anthropological museum collections of ethnographic material more than fifty years old are of relatively little interest except to connoisseurs or as typological examples. Largely collected in haphazard fashion, these old collections of striking or decorative objects tend to be preserved *con amore*, with little related supporting data. The modern ethnographer cannot tell the *meaning* of a Solomon Islands food vessel unless perchance he has been to the Solomon Islands or unless someone else of equal skill has, and, in the process, has lived with the owners, heard the chants, observed the rituals, and has discovered the magic significance of that particular piece of ritual or liturgy with which the bowl was associated. In many of these primitive cultures, enameled tin cups may already have replaced the old hand-hewn bowls with their special magic before ever the tale was told. The remaining old men who could describe a vanishing culture or reveal an all but unspoken language have died or are about to die.

The great storehouse concept of museum keeping was gradually refined over the last years of the nineteenth century. The consummate achievement of this concept has been the creation of the great *galleries* of our day, the art museums. The great art museums of our country were virtually all physically constructed during the last years of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth. Mostly fashioned in a *Prix de Rome*

tradition of pantheonic grandeur, these stone temples, harking back to a Roman rather than a Greek tradition of purpose, were created as storehouses for display and for the promotion of civic pride as well as the stimulation of a kind of ostentatious philanthropy. The timing was right. The new wealth of America had created a rash of collectors, the greatest among whom became patrons of the arts even before the days of income tax. These monolithic mausoleums were built to attract essentially successful people. As America was a success, it could only be assumed that all its citizens wished to become successful. The art museum managed therefore to become a symbol of the community's rise to prominence and sophistication. Only the largest and most successful of these art galleries have managed over the years to weed out and arrange the welter of objects with which they have been showered. Fortunately the dangers of the bequest requiring *everything* of the donor's to be shown at all times, a feature of the turn of the century, have now been thoroughly exposed, and the concept discredited.

But often, in all this chronicle of changing tastes and sentimental preservation the museum trustees or those individuals classified as pillars of the community have been aided and abetted by a small professional caste of pundits and aesthetes, the curators of the time, described by Francis Taylor as "those flattering High Priests of culture whose appetites are often larger than their stomachs and who persist in saddling future generations with irresponsible commitments in the elusive hope of richer and more immediate rewards." These genii, in alliance with their aspiring architect colleagues of the time, all admirers of the Corinthian column, created the temple storehouses which often today stand so aloof and cool, seemingly unrelated to the present. As César Graña has recently put it: "the Greco-Roman style which signals the presence of a civic sanctuary; in this, as in the untouchability of the objects and the hushed decorum

demanding of the visitors, there is much that is symbolically and behaviorally religious in nature . . . the work of art conceived as a sacred object . . . a storehouse for art *originals*,"¹⁵ whose contemplation is an inward, religious experience.

In this role, teaching or explaining such objects becomes a secular task, viewed by some curators as a descent from the sacred to the profane.

The art museums thus embarked on a course which tended to ally them with dominant forces in the community, the civic boosters and the wealthy who were philanthropically inclined. As a result, pursuing collections and funds, they had gradually alienated themselves from three important kinds of people. Among these were the historians of art who, as a vitally important source of scholarship and taste-making, tended to remain in self-perpetuating clusters in universities where they could teach, using plates from published books or color slides as illustrations in their classes rather than preferable museum objects. On the other hand there were the artists, who, unless they were copyists, tended to be rather "angry young men," hostile toward marble palaces, allied to the folk, and to a considerable extent uninterested in works of the past. Finally there were the people themselves who most needed stimulation and help, a sense of color and variety added to their lives. These were the poor people, products of a self-perpetuating disease found in our cities. Such people were neither objects of pride to our civic boosters nor particular objects of concern to our aggressive middle class who had responded to the urge to better themselves. If the art museum had become a symbol only to the community leaders and those conditioned to the concept of getting ahead, who realized that art was a subject of elitist veneration and that culture should be subscribed to and taken in doses like vitamin pills, then of course it had failed. If the wonders of a fantastic collection like that of the Metropolitan Museum in New York, which

demonstrates many of the stages in the cultural evolution of Western and Oriental man, cannot somehow be brought to the humblest among us, the agonistic slum dwellers, then the purposes of the organizing committee of the Metropolitan Museum of 1870, quoted earlier in these pages, have not been served.

The Metropolitan is the greatest among these treasure houses, but there are more than a score across the country of nearly equal merit. If art objects are only to remain on pedestals and never to be interpreted to the people who need the support of cultural relevance the most, then the process of polarization will have become complete.

Fortunately many museums, particularly those concerned with science, early embarked on another course. The words "public education" had begun to be taken seriously. The first school museum was established in St. Louis about 1903. The museum consisted of a traveling section and a display section. The traveling section, in six large rooms, contained some ten thousand boxes and packages of all sizes and shapes strapped and labeled, ready for delivery to classrooms. Each week some five hundred groups of museum materials were distributed to some one hundred and twenty-five schools, according to the selections made by the teachers from the museum catalogue, listing two thousand individual groups. At the end of the week the material had to be returned to the museum.

Four large display rooms on the second floor included a receiving station for donations and purchased material, as well as sample groups showing the types of exhibit materials on history, climate and customs of peoples and natural history throughout the world.¹⁶

Thus the concept of an alliance between a city school system and a public museum was made patent. Museums began training docents, men and women who could interpret exhibits, on the one hand, and relate them on the other to a syllabus being

taught in a grade-school curriculum. This was new, but a welcome outgrowth from the original concept of what a museum could do to counter the erosive influences of the city itself.

Curators, meanwhile, in the natural history museums became involved in an increasing evolution of educational exhibits. From the concept of dioramas it was only a step to the attempt to synthesize exhibits in such a way as to explain principles of biology or phenomena of nature. The original cabinet or "open storage" concept, where case after case would be filled with the museum's entire collection of minerals or mounted birds on wooden pedestals, birds in one hall, mammals in another, insects in a third, began gradually to be modified. At first it was selective. Half of the dusty bird specimens would be withdrawn from the wooden cases, to be demounted and placed in study collections in the research laboratory away from public exposure as well as the full sunlight from gallery windows. Then, often over the complaints of the curators themselves, exhibit departments or exhibit specialists began designing cases that told a story, using a variety of labels and perhaps blending several classes of objects, a mammal predator, for example, killing a bird, its prey; a fox with a ruffed grouse in its jaws. Photographs or other methods of reproduction began to be used to illustrate scenes or describe environments. Supplementary materials for the exhibits could be expertly prepared—dried grasses painted realistically or plastic molded leaves, colored to suit the season and attached to branches. The great era of taxidermy and the creation of related accessories had begun, stimulated by Rowland Ward in England and William Hornaday in the United States.

School classes could be brought into the museum and lectured about everything, from space, using meteorites or photographs of the stars, to the world of raw nature using polar bears and wolves, or the pastoral landscape of cows and domestic farm surroundings from which the children were separated in their

concrete jungles. For how many generations now of city children has the never-never land of the pastoral landscape of the nineteenth century poets and the Currier and Ives prints been evoked by visits to museums and farmyard zoos?

In Western Europe meanwhile, and eventually in the United States, the achievements of technology had stimulated the creation of museums of applied science. The Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace in London in 1851 and the Paris Exhibition of 1889 had dramatized the tremendous popular hunger for science and technological exhibits. The second applied-science museum as such was that in South Kensington in London, opened in 1853 and using some of the materials of the Crystal Palace. An earlier collection of scientific instruments in Paris had become a museum by 1814, but served essentially as a research center. The Moscow Polytechnical Museum, founded in 1872, and the Deutsches Museum of Munich, organized in 1903, as well as the Vienna Technical Industrial Museum of 1918, all antedated similar efforts to create science-educational museums in the United States. All of these attempted to portray the conquests of science using working models as well as a historical array of objects. When well planned, as these museums were, a whole new array of exhibits for public instruction could be presented. At every age level, from school child to adult, visitors could demonstrate the wonders of an internal combustion engine or the development of the principles of physics. It seems curious that the United States, most inventive of all, failed until recently to develop the applied-science museum concept. Most such science exhibits in this country have been created for fairs, for business conventions or other similar ephemeral uses. There has been far less public support for science museums, and virtually no governmental or business support on any continuing or permanent basis.

In contrast to the unequal progress of museums at the turn of

the century, libraries began to show a slow but steady progressive evolution. The same period that saw the ambitious development of art museums as objects of pride and cultural showcases saw a conscious development of private and public libraries. Benefactors like Andrew Carnegie symbolized the urge to spread library resources across the communities of the nation. Great private libraries collected by the turn of the century began to find their way by gift into the growing university libraries or the great city libraries or historical collections. The need for historical and bibliographic scholarship was apparent and recognized far more effectively than was the need for museum scholarship in the areas of the humanities.

The great exception to this appears to me to have been the field of classical archaeology, strongly supported at a few centers such as Chicago's Oriental Institute, the Boston Museum, Harvard, the Metropolitan in New York and the University Museum in Philadelphia. Aside from this field, there seems to have been little recognition of the constructive cultural-historical role which art museums could play. For some poorly defined reason, classical archaeology has always been firmly segregated in the United States from New World archaeology, which is pursued by anthropologists. Classical archaeology is conducted by linguists in the classical or Bible languages, papyrologists, epigraphers and the like, who are equated somehow with art historians, or other scholars of the humanities. Thus an art museum on one side of a public park in a large city might have a scholar working on early cultural man of the dynastic period of Egypt. This scholar might be the only member of the curatorial staff who could be described as a pure research scholar, or he might be part of a small department, perhaps the single department in the museum dedicated to research in the field and publication of research results.

On the other side of the park, in a natural history museum, a

THE SACRED GROVE

research-minded scholar among a rather large staff of scholars in the general field of natural history might be working on man of the early Maya period of Mexico. Curiously enough these two scholars might never meet, going, as they do, to separate professional meetings, publishing in separate journals, and, if posted to universities, continuing to teach and perform research in separate departments. Not only would two such scholars be using similar field techniques in excavation, but they would be concerned with the cultures of types of man at roughly similar stages of cultural evolution. To make the matter even less understandable, the New World archaeologist would have colleagues in his natural history museum working on the cultures of the East, Indonesia, southeast Asia, the Ainu of Japan or the Siberian tribes.

For support of his classical excavations sponsored by the Oriental Institute in the nineteen-twenties, Professor Breasted would turn to wealthy individuals interested in reconstructing the world of the Bible lands—individuals who would make winter excursions up the Nile on picturesque lateen-rigged yachts called dahabiahs, or ride donkeys in the Holy Land. Meanwhile Professor Kidder at Harvard during the same era would be appealing for expedition support for archaeological work in Middle America from foundations dedicated to the support of science and education like the Carnegie Corporation.

It had indeed become apparent by the beginning of the twentieth century that an unspoken schism existed in scholars' minds about the history of mankind. Art and culture were an obvious near-monopoly of the Western world and the highest civilizations from which our Western world derived—the Greeks, Egyptians, Jews and Babylonians. Of course, to the East one could not quite exclude the Indians, Chinese and Japanese. The artifacts of these peoples belonged in art museums, although they rested on a different plane of culture. Their civilizations had crossed

MUSEUMS IN FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

some invisible threshold, and objects from these cultures were revered as true art, to be cherished in some cases as part of our own true antecedent culture and in other cases to be admired as being worthy of the accolade of true aesthetic appraisal.

Objects which represented the culture of the primitive races of man were the specialty of the anthropologist, whose discipline, anthropology, rested on the uncomfortable assumption that the study of early man was somehow akin to biology. Anthropologists were not supposed to be interested in the Greeks or the Bible, but rather to concern themselves with Red Indians, noble savages, and, of course Stone Age man. Perhaps, although this was dangerous ground, they might even be concerned with missing links? Only in France, meanwhile, had a museum of man been created, the Musée de l'Homme, founded in 1877. Although called Museum of Man, it is sad that no decorative or folk art of Western man is included after Neolithic times. The arbitrary distinction is still maintained.

It has always seemed to me curiously undignified and rather unsophisticated as well that museum attitudes had become so polarized by the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. The crux of the matter in America seems to have stemmed from Americans' attitudes about themselves and their origins. It is not only an artificial segregation, but it is philosophically untrue, and therefore spiritually degrading to assume that Western man of Mediterranean origin, with a few selected Orientals thrown in, has the hegemony of all that is aesthetically true and beautiful, to which we reserve the special accolade accorded the highest expressions of man. The result of this mumbo-jumbo of ours is expressed in the reverence and worship accorded to art in its chaste temples. On the other hand, research, somehow rather cold and unaesthetic, is the preserve of the natural history or science museum. A mythical chasm has been created in a twinkling between these two concepts, be-

tween what was once unwisely described as these two cultures.

The answer is of course that it is all one, that art and beauty and aesthetic appreciation may be found in the objects of nature as well as those of man at whatever stage of culture he is passing through. It is quite unnecessary to assume that a truly subjective aesthetic experience is reserved only for those enlightened mortals confronted, having been prepared by a proper cultural background, no doubt, for the first time with a Leonardo or a Praxiteles. It is also abundantly true that the early artifacts of the cultures of the Western world deserve far more scientific scrutiny than they have been receiving. Our museums should not be encouraged to compound the errors of their founding fathers—that great art deserves only worship and the refinements of the higher custodianship, and that science on the other hand is somehow separate, different and removed.* It has been

* In this connection it is somewhat encouraging to read a review by the well-known art critic John Canaday, in *The New York Times*, Sunday, June 30, 1968, of a new permanent diorama installation, "Man in Africa," at the American Museum of Natural History. Canaday says, speaking of the exhibit of African masks and fetish figures, that they are usually shown in this country as "pure works of art, following the point of view of most museums . . . divorced from specific anthropological reference. It is an art curator's point of view that I have generally agreed with, but 'Man in Africa' changed my mind. . . . Great works of art are exhibited alongside objects that, esthetically, are nothing more than attractive artifacts and others that are only functional objects of little esthetic distinction. But I found that this identification of works of art with the educational, ritualistic, governmental, scientific and economic functions that required their creation, tremendously enriched them." Bravo for Mr. Canaday! Although, as he says, we are mostly habituated to looking at art for art's sake, African sculpture suddenly looks better in this setting, in context.

gradually emerging that the task of the mid-twentieth century and succeeding years must be to attempt to dissolve the schism, to remove the gap between museums, and to recreate public understanding of the role of these paradoxical institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

Museums of Today

The burden of my discourse so far has been to create a setting for the consideration of museums of today. What can museums do to emphasize to the public at large that they have a significant role to play in the community, and what can museums do to create a sense of unity of purpose among themselves? Parr, writing in 1950, expressed some of this concern in regard to natural history museums:

Human influence [has] extended everywhere, and man's greatest and most direct concerns about nature were in regard to the effects of that influence both upon nature and upon man himself. But the natural history museums generally took very little account of these growing problems of civilization, and continued their overwhelming, and often exclusive, emphasis upon nature undisturbed by man, upon the rare and peculiar, upon that most vaunted possession of all—the extinct species, which can no longer affect human life one way or another—and upon the many interesting subjects deriving their significance from the theory of evolution, such as comparative anatomy, classification, biogeography and other.¹⁷

That these subjects are technically essential for the progress of science and retain a high value for general education, we, as professionals, all know. And I wish to make it

perfectly clear that I am firmly convinced of the absolute need for continuing them in the programme of our museums. But I am equally convinced that they are far from constituting an adequate programme in the light of *modern* conditions, and far from fulfilling the *duties* which our opportunities give us to be of service to a troubled world. [Italics mine.]

It is only through our service to the world at large that we shall be able to earn the support we need for our continued existence and the further development of our functions. The world of science alone cannot provide it. And from a layman's point of view it is, perhaps, not unreasonable to feel that he has already paid a fairly generous bill for having had his unfortunate ancestry pointed out to him [by exhibits of physical anthropology] and to ask how the rare, peculiar, and undisturbed relates to his own hopes and aspirations in a very disturbed world. . . .

To re-establish our position we must find, and adopt, a new mission. . . . The side of nature which concerns society most of all is not undisturbed nature, but nature as the environment of man, and that is the field in which the educational efforts of the natural history museums could make their greatest contribution to human thought, welfare, and progress today.

To most curators of departments of natural history, Dr. Parr's words written in 1950 still have an alien ring. The average curator of a museum, like the average professor in a university, wishes to live in peace, content to conduct his own research, which tends to be in fields unconnected with the stresses and strains of the interplay between human society and the environment. It has really only been since World War II that it has

gradually become respectable for a natural history curator to speak of conservation problems or to be directly involved in causes and issues of the moment like environmental pollution. In this I side with Dr. Parr. I recall well, in my own case, being warned as a very junior professor in an academic department that my unexpected interest in conservation (and therefore in worldly problems) might reflect eventually on my own hopes for promotion up the faculty ladder. To be allied, however indirectly, with *publicists*, traitors to the groves of academe, could become a hazard. Latterly, Rachel Carson, with her influence in academic circles, has become a noted exception of course. Well, so be it. It has always seemed to me that a museum has an obligation to hold itself in readiness to prove the validity of its collections. Natural history collections serve inevitably as data banks, figures marked upon the clock face of environmental time. Interpretation of the data provided by collections can produce evidence of environmental change. It is like studying tree rings or interpreting pollen deposits in cores from lake bottoms. Specimens provide the sources for a kind of biological iconology in which their study allows one to extract conclusions about the populations of animal or plant species, their occurrence, distribution and fate.

What can museums do to create a sense of unity among themselves? In a discussion of the present-day role of museums, as understood by the International Council of Museums, W. Aubrey Cartwright (unpublished) states an egalitarian point of view.

"Museums, [the Council] believes, no longer exist to serve the cultural or social needs of a small elite. Instead, they have a dynamic educational function to fulfill. In the world's more prosperous societies, they exist to help man make better use of his leisure time. In the developing countries, they bring him face to face with the benefits of technology, the lessons and

example of history and the value of culture, his own or other people's. While catering to the needs of the profession, the International Council of Museums bears in mind both the museum-going public and that public that does not have or has yet to discover museums."

Museums, then, are the principal unrecognized arms of education. They are unrecognized because they are forms of open education, that is, the exhibits are there. They can be taken or left alone. No teacher will mark you or grade your paper as it were, for looking at them. Thus, museums have little direct relevance to schools or colleges who think of them as available public facilities, peripheral to the main issue, that do not have to be supported. Museums have no alumni associations and little if any organized constituency. How then can their work achieve recognition?

What do people say casually when they hear you work in a museum? "Oh, you work at the Smithsonian? How interesting. I went there once with my high school class. That's when I saw the *Spirit of St. Louis*"; or, "Oh, I love the Smithsonian. We try to take the kids there on a Sunday." All of us who work in museums know these sorts of reactions. We all know the crowds as we press through on our way to a meeting or another laboratory. We know what we think about museums as places to work, but we are endlessly in the dark about what everyone else thinks.

Public educational programs are an obvious enhancement of the casual visit, the occasional need to return to view splendid and challenging things. And museums in this country are fulfilling this role at an expanding rate. More than 60 percent of our museums have guided tours of some sort, about 45 percent have lectures, and about 35 percent have temporary or changing exhibitions. All of this is of great value in public education. Twenty percent of our museums have children's programs, and these too, as adjuncts to school education, are vital.

But beyond this museums must establish themselves as essential educational institutions equal to or supplementary (but still essential) to all levels of educational activities from pre-school to post-doctoral. They must make known that they supplement and enrich teaching at elementary and secondary levels in science, history and art. A conscious effort must be made to interrelate museum education programs with school and college programs of instruction. This effort is a considerable one for a variety of reasons. Education today is a highly organized phenomenon. More and more, departments of education at the city, state, and Federal level are organizing the accrediting of teachers, the teaching of teachers, and finally, the content of instruction. There is nothing wrong with setting standards for constantly improving the quality of education while trying to keep up with the boom, the crisis of quantity. But in this effort to give greater numbers of people some sort of "ticket of admission," some sort of diploma into a new, happy free world, a great society indeed, the values and the exposure that museums have to offer tend to get left out of the reckoning. There is an omission, a gap here, and it must be closed.

There are reasons for the existence of this gap. Museums themselves have been slow to attempt to close it. They have not tried to sell their wares to school supervisors. Individual museums have developed splendid areas of cooperation—the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, the Maryland Historical Society, the Peabody Museum at Yale. The Toledo Museum of Art has free art and music classes to which 2,500 children come every Saturday. Almost 400 classes from the schools come for a regular program of eight monthly museum visits each year, while about 1,000 adults attend regular college courses, and of these some 500 take the courses for university credit through the University of Toledo. Our National Gallery of Art in Washington provides films, film strips, and film lectures with recorded

texts to schools and circulates traveling exhibits. The statistics are impressive. In one year traveling exhibits were booked 1,299 times; 2,446 slide lecture sets were circulated in 9,487 bookings. The total audience reached is estimated at over 2,000,000 persons in twelve months; and in the period 1960–1966 these materials had reached 3,074 cities in fifty states. Three of the recorded lectures are in French and are used by language teachers.

Overall, however, programs of this sort have not caught on. One of the reasons I have suggested elsewhere is our general high rate of literacy. We assume today that one can read about objects. They can be illustrated in books. It is not, therefore, necessary to touch them. In order to be an educated person, in order to be granted that diploma, one doesn't have to savor tactilely the texture of objects, to read them manually, to hear records of the sounds of the audible world. And yet, many people are not really born only to be literate. Many people are born with "illiterate" talents to read with their hands and ears, to develop a comprehensive talent for living only with the whole of the senses. Many highly creative and inventive people, as we all know, are much less interested in reading than departments of education would have us believe. Much pioneering work in the preparation of our citizens for adult life remains to be done in these threshold areas where education has somehow left off. Philanthropic foundations are always said to be interested in innovation. If this is true, they should help the world of museums to study problems of the nonreader who is oriented to objects.

In the areas of graduate and post-doctoral education, by far too little attention has been given to the role of museums. In the universities, university museums have had a difficult role to play, attempting to make administrators, deans, and university presidents understand the reasons for their existence. Pictures on the wall of the university art gallery can be understood even if rele-

gated to a secondary level of importance—far less important than books. Art somehow is known to be respectable, certainly fashionable, and of course it is a way of attracting donors and art-minded trustees. But science—what do those old bones, those fossils convey? No, university administrators tend to have heard that electron microscopes are fashionable and money-attracting, not old bones.

And yet, as I once pointed out, in one university museum where I worked, 40 percent of all graduate degrees given in one department and 30 percent in another were solely due to the presence of a museum and museum collections at that university. Important areas of our Government responsibility in geology, vital areas of our teaching in anthropology were filled with people who had graduated through these museum-related departments, people who had used the objects, the collections, in a completely meaningful way which could never be assumed through or by books. The world of professionally organized learning must get the point. Graduate and post-doctoral work can center in museums. Museum-oriented programs must be not only tolerated but encouraged in the universities, and exchanges freely entered into at all levels. Here again, foundations should realize that museums as a whole have been languishing in starvation corner. While some of our greater museums, especially in the field of art, such as the wonderful Metropolitan Museum, have achieved a signal measure of support from private or foundation philanthropic aid, the vast field of museums across this nation has received an inconspicuous share of Government, foundation, or individual private aid—less than 10 percent of such financial help.

The study of education and communication by objects and exhibits should be of special interest in developing nations, where large populations are in the process of making lightning adjustments to technology and the world of science and modern-

day life. In certain areas in Africa, important strides in education and cultural development are being made through the institution of new museums and museum techniques. In India there should be an instant recognition of the value of exhibits, of the open-education techniques of museums, to education in that country. In his book, *The Museums of India*, written in 1936, S. F. Markham pointed out that a nation with one sixth of the world's population had only 105 museums. Then, in 1967, a register of museums in India and Pakistan, its combined population still representing about one sixth of the world's total, listed only 274 museums in the whole subcontinent. This is extraordinary. Museums could be the most important single educational tool in India today. With a population problem and a language problem combined, here is the perfect opportunity for the development of imaginative new techniques, using displays and objects, to communicate ideas and to teach.

Professor Levi-Strauss has recently pointed out that there is a particular problem in the developing nations. This is the question of the preservation and recording of vanishing cultures. The proper documentation of a human culture different from twentieth-century technocracy is as important as almost any human endeavor. Such cultures have been uniquely adapted to the natural environment. Their study may reveal hidden truths of human ecology. Yet the remnants of indigenous culture are vanishing like errant windblown dust devils over the prairie. An urgent activity for museum anthropologists would be the stimulation and training of indigenous linguists and cultural anthropologists from among the very tribal peoples who are vanishing. By creating a dignified aura of self-examination and self-research it might be possible to raise more rapidly the self-esteem and pride in individuality of these marvelous people before they trample the last remnants of their own uniqueness to death, rushing to be like everyone else.

In the United States alone, some eighty-eight Indian dialects or languages are still unknown to any but the remaining tribal people who speak them, and in most cases those who still do so are composed of less than ten individuals. So cultures vanish, each one fashioned by chance, adjusted by the keening winds of primitive life to an original identity, sharpened by the selective pressures of life at the limits of human tolerance. What a tragedy it is for man to have lost so many of the examples of human adaptability that were there to be studied. Man faces an uncertain future full of stresses beyond imagining. It would have been better if we could have documented more of man's compensatory emotional and psychological reactions to stress as demonstrated in so-called primitive cultures. There is a great task for museum anthropologists in the remainder of the twentieth century to marshal themselves in the cause of what has been called urgent anthropology, the sophisticated recording and documentation of vanishing cultures.

There is another realm in museums for anthropologists. This is in connection with folk life or folk culture. Social scientists have much in common with students of the problems of ethnography and urgent anthropology. All over the world non-Western cultures are coming under the influence of industrialization and urbanization. People adapted to peasant agrarian life are becoming constantly assimilated into cities. And yet even under modern urban conditions we know that dominant patterns of folk culture stay alive, creating small exile residual elements in ethnic subcommunities. No one has charted the course so far, but there is a need, and therefore a path will emerge. Some sort of alliance will have to be created between historians and collectors of folk life objects, ethnomusicologists, anthropologists and social scientists to study and eventually to understand the adaptive significance of these tribal and clan cultures and their persistence in the slums and under the pressures of urban life.

Surely there are lessons to be learned here of the greatest importance for the future of urban communities and indeed urban design. I would hope that eventually a new kind of museum could be created, a museum of man, to study the persistence of older cultures, folk life and folkways in the face of the pressures of increasing homogenization of life today.

In this connection art museums or art collections would have an important role to play. Attempting to classify art styles within measurable series (and therefore defying the academic humanist who pretends to despise measurements as smacking of the "scientific"), Professor George Kubler speaks to the history of transcultural diffusion in the colonial situation:

"Occasionally, as in the sixteenth-century Spanish conquest of Mexico and Peru, abrupt military action replaced these motions of commercial and missionary penetration. Conquest was followed at once by massive European substitutions of useful and symbolic behavior for native traditions. Only the useful items new and necessary to Europeans survived the wholesale destruction of the native American civilization (potatoes, tomatoes, chocolate, etc.)" ¹⁸

Not only did few art forms survive in this atmosphere of sudden cultural death, but a new arrested class of art forms proceeded to take its place in the colonial society. Kubler defines, in this sense, a colonial society as one "in which no major discoveries or inventions occur, where the principal initiative comes from outside rather than from within the society, until it either secedes from the parent-state or revolts." Of course many impoverished politically independent societies may remain for extended periods in a similar dilapidated condition because of economic limitations or cultural impoverishment. Beauty in form and creation may exist, but such beauty and charm, often described as primitive, exist architecturally, as in certain towns in Latin America such as Antigua in Guatemala or Taxco in

Mexico, because of an aptness for setting, because of a mellow, relaxed standard, lacking in invention, simplified, repeated over and over in an ancient way. Innovation is lacking, and we relish their repetition and their quaint flavor as we do peasant costumes in central Europe, which celebrate vanished court costumes.

Many art museums have important collections of so-called primitive art, or of colonial art, which deserve study in the context of the persistence of cultures and rates of duration as opposed to change. This is a kind of applied research in connection with art collections of which the general public must be totally unaware. Yet it is the development of relevance for which museums seek. How can museums play a significant role in the world today? How can they classify their holdings, how can they measure their true value? As Kubler points out, it can be done in a topological sense, where relationships rather than magnitudes are the measurements and create the parameters of research. In some ways the survival of ethnic subcommunities in urban cultures can be described as holdovers of tribal subcommunities in pockets in former colonial cultures.

In this sense works of art appear to me to be useful, perhaps a somewhat banal, or at least an overly exaggerated, statement. Kubler feels that:

"The main point is that works of art are not tools, although many tools may share qualities of fine design with works of art. We are in the presence of a work of art only when it has no preponderant instrumental use, and when its technical and rational foundations are not pre-eminent."

When the latter occurs, then the object is functional, therefore not an object of art. I cannot agree with this, in the sense that an object of art *can* contribute a message, and if so it immediately becomes susceptible to use as an object in the race against time in which each of us is involved, the race to understand the exist-

tence of consciousness. If a painting is a genuine expression and conveys something, no matter who painted it, then it has many subtle messages to convey about aesthetic significance. Self-expressive autotelic activity is a basic phenomenon not only in man but in many higher animals as well. No doubt, in time behaviorists will deduce evidence that this is an evolutionary phenomenon deriving from harmonics and symmetry in design in response to the environment. Professor Hutchinson in a penetrating essay on art forms and nature¹⁹ has expressed something of this sense of unity among museums:

Today we enter an art gallery expecting to be delighted by the beauty of certain works of man; we enter a natural history museum expecting to be instructed in the workings of nature. There are also museums in which archaeological or ethnographical material is displayed to illustrate something about man that is akin to natural history, and indeed the same point of view is apparent in the grouping of works of art in any modern art gallery, where the pictures are placed by schools and periods, *i.e.*, geographically and chronologically, just like fossils in a paleontological collection. What seems often to be lacking, at least explicitly on the part of the intelligent public, is the realization that a number of objects in the natural history museum are of extraordinary natural beauty and that they should be valued quite simply as such, as well as for their scientific connotations. The question however of the nature of the beauty of the natural world and its relation to human art deserves more consideration than it is customarily given, and deserves such consideration quite specifically in the context of the natural history museum.

If we inquire why we make a distinction between the work of art and the object of natural beauty, which inquiry

is a partial rephrasing of our original question, I suppose that at the present time the essential difference would usually be described in terms of communication or expression. What is valued in the work of art is supposedly not the sort of intrinsic beauty that we find in nature, but some evidence of a message from, or expression of, the personality of another human being, the artist who made the work. This concept however leads us into very considerable difficulties. The late Bernard Berenson said at the end of his life, of which seventy-odd years had been largely spent in problems of attribution, that it did not matter who painted a picture as long as it was a real picture. This obvious truth, coming from him, carries nonobvious overtones. In the more limited modern vocabulary that we are using, it may be rephrased that it does not matter who painted a picture as long as the picture is a genuine expression.

Although I think there are good reasons for separating art galleries and natural history museums, they still, even after more than a century and a half of autonomous development, may have much in common.

How true this is and how much more true it may be in the future. How then are museums to face up to the problem of a role of significance, and how are they to create unity, to close ranks? Currently there has been a good deal of debate among museum directors. Critics tend to deplore the advent of multimedia exhibits, of the overpopularizing effect on museums of the new mass culture. This is reflected in immense crowds, in exhibits of current fashionable art, in jam-packed social events, "openings," done with all the fanfare of a premiere at Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood.

Many artists continue to deplore having to go to any museums at all, reflecting the wave of hostility of the futurists of the turn

of the century. Museums then were condemned as "cemeteries," although the comparison hardly seems apt any more. The only present resemblance to cemeteries that I have found is in the world of demonology or witches' fantasy. An opening of an "op" or "pop" or psychedelic light and sound show in a modern art gallery today bears a strong resemblance to a witches' Sabbath. I recall the painting by Gustave Doré illustrated in Paul Christian's *Histoire de la Magie* showing Lucifer presiding over a midsummer night's orgy in a cemetery complete with capering warlocks, male and female werewolves and related pixies both baleful and benign. But this is a superficial impression perhaps. What is true and what does confuse the critics as well as the die-hards who merely wish the museums to remain cozy cemeteries of the past is that we are in a state of profound transition. If museums are to weather this transition then they must experiment and probe until they have found a new series of responses to the selective pressures shaping our culture.

There is a sadness in the presence of television in all our homes today. For the most part, what it depicts mistily is so pedestrian. That pale corneal eye, Cyclopean, staring, gray, in every living room, bedroom or kitchen has, however, one overwhelming advantage. Its signal advantage is that it is possessed individually by the viewer, to be all one's own, raising no sense of antagonism or fear-hostility in the young as parents often do.

In October 1967, in a rather odd confrontation between museum professionals and Marshall McLuhan²⁰ on the subject of the communications inherent in the encounter between museums and the visiting public, Dr. McLuhan, who in the manner of oracles of old tends to speak in riddles, made one or two very telling comments. Referring to television he said, "Today, people over twenty-one can't adjust. We're all a lost generation. In our sensory lives we will never make the switchover. Only those coming up through the nursery will."

Although I don't agree that it is impossible to learn a new language after one reaches the age of twenty-one, it may be harder. In any case it is worth realizing that virtually half of our population today, and the younger half at that, speak a slightly different language from the other half. To create a sense of harmony between the dialects is vital. By using open, non-didactic techniques museums can go far toward helping to solve this new communications gap.

The brilliant young director of the International Council of Museums, Huges de Varine Bohan, rightly warns us of the future of museums. Either the museums will transform themselves into an activist role or, as he writes, "either the mutation will take place or the museum as a living institution will disappear. Petrified into a state of passive conservation, it will be nothing but a static cultural archive centre, oblivious of its responsibilities and remote, if not entirely removed, from those who most require it."

For us there is much to learn and not much time in which to do so.

CHAPTER SIX

Museums and the Future

What shape or form will museums of the future represent? What could happen to bring museums together into a common understanding of their present difficulty? How will it be possible to create a state of opinion among them which will welcome change and evolution? As Robert Hutchins recently said in a convocation speech at the University of Chicago (in 1967), "The most obvious fact of contemporary life is the rapidity of change. . . . Since there is no such thing as instant education, the search must be for the means of coping with problems, issues and phenomena now totally unforeseen," and he goes on to say that we cannot educate by training and by transmitting information. To do so is to guarantee only the development of skills for acquiring prosperity and power, not for the creation of understanding, and, incidentally, to add to the sense of confusion and frustration possessed by many undergraduates today.

The average person, then, who comes to work in a museum is a product of our present-day educational system, a system which tends to teach complacency along with skills, which tends to close off inquiry as it may be related to one's specialty, and which has taught, as Hutchins calls them "the tricks of the trade," at the same time that premature sclerosis has set in.

If this dilemma faces the museum professional by the very fact of his having been educated, it is going to be difficult to

maintain a spirit of inquiry in a museum setting. But fortunately museum professionals are lucky, at least at present, in that a career in museums is still not greatly popular. It is not thought of as one of the more stereotyped roads to success. In Hutchins' words, then, a museum today has much more chance of behaving like a university than do many universities, which by trying to do the popular, accepted thing of training for skills and information transmission, have long since become multiversities, signing away their birthright in the process. The university, in theory at least, is a community of scholars, some older than others, more involved in teaching. In such a community everyone is prepared for independent study. The ability to think for oneself is paramount, and furthermore, no one is involved unless he has the interest and capacity to join in the work.

To my way of thinking, such a definition of a university more aptly fits a museum nowadays. Sometimes my only concern is that I may talk too loudly or write too boldly and so let the secret out. This would perhaps be a mistake, for any such environment is a somewhat exclusive one, and if it were to become fashionable, the law of diminishing returns would set in. To me one of the advantages of working in a museum is that it is an unfashionable environment. This, then, gives museum research workers the opportunity to work and think unconventionally.

Although the publicly accepted stereotype of a museum is a place for the preservation and conservation of objects, and although this is a highly valuable objective in itself, I have tried to point out that this is only a part of the whole. Of course, the obligation to preserve and protect objects, using techniques ranging from conservation methods to schemes for cataloguing so that the information involved in the object can itself be retrieved, is central to a museum. However, the object is merely a visible symbol of an intellectual process; the act of storage is a tangible form of banking information. The information may be

presented to the viewer by sight, contact via touch, sound perception, or other sensory means including smell or taste. Professor McLuhan feels that of the senses sight is the only civilized sense we possess because it provides detachment, while all the others create a sense of involvement. I do not agree with him. I think hearing does not necessarily create involvement, especially in present-day life, when the decibel rate of ambient noise is high and buffers us. The visitor to a museum with a transistor radio clamped to his ear is not involved in the sounds. The noise is merely part of his personal cocoon of withdrawal, of non-involvement. So all senses can really be taken or left; even the most intimate become numb from overuse, or can be "turned off," as it were, by an exercise of will.

My central conviction that a museum is indeed a university stems from the persuasion that objects which are maintained and preserved in such a setting are there for a reason. They are there to communicate to us, those of us who have bothered to preserve them at all. This is an age of communication. As it is then we must indeed experiment on how to bring these objects into communication with ourselves. The process involves all levels of research. Among research specialists in the history of art it is commonly accepted that perceptiveness based on experience and background knowledge is critical in the formation of judgments. Dr. Herbert Friedmann in an interesting essay,²¹ points out the close resemblance between the process of coming to a conclusion by an historian of art and this same process by a natural scientist—a comparison which should, I hope, both please and surprise the humanist. The art historian and the biologist go through similar processes of inductive reasoning based on training and experience. Friedmann shows that in the process of discovery and classification "a zoologist confronted with an unnamed and undocumented specimen, and an art historian called upon to identify a painting of unknown origin, provenance and

authorship . . . both [in the process are] being guided, almost without having to think about it, by [their] general knowledge and past experience . . . involving a vast and scattered literature, as well as the direct examination of specimens and the comparison with related ones."

He goes on to compare the intellectual process of the creations of synthetic imagination in the biologist and the art historian. In the case of a hypothetical missing link in the world of marine invertebrate classification, the discovery of *Neopilina*, an ancestral mollusk, vindicated the characterization of its "hypothetical ideation" by a biologist, Dr. Knight. In the case of Bernard Berenson's group of paintings of a mystery artist who fell between the works of other well-known painters and related in style to the Florentine master Ghirlandajo, time eventually proved him right. The work belonged to a single, previously unknown painter, Bartolommeo di Giovanni, its identification based on small, trifling characters of style, most of them of the least importance in the overall visual result.

These sorts of learning and skills must essentially be acquired in museums. The similarity of the intellectual processes involved is a reaffirmation of the similarities of museum research, whether performed in an art gallery or a natural history museum. The development of criteria, the sharpening of perceptive, yet subjective, modes of judgment, is often construed as unscientific by experimental scientists. It is merely that the process is different from theirs. Darwin put two and two together in an intuitive sense by field observation and reading, but without experimental proof. The end result was science even though experimental scientists remain dubious. Lasswell²² has described the fact that many specialists are apprehensive of their capacity to withstand the temptation to make biased or dishonest observations, to suppress unfavorable findings, or to neglect or distort theoretical points. It is comforting to specialists in art history and natural

history to find that the identity of their methods of appraisal is not a mere coincidence, but that the methods have reality and serve to corroborate the soundness of the techniques, each for the other.

If, then, the museum presents a special arena for research, one of the most cogent subjects for inquiry could be one that should concern social scientists and educators alike. That is the study of the awakening of interest. At the root of most of our troubles as human beings is the lack of any sort of interest at all except for self-preservation. Of what use are any of the proposed panaceas for the preservation of evolved civilization or the maintenance of cultures, if the majority of living people simply don't care? If the education industry does not create people who are interested in the world about them during their one single life, then education is, above all, a failure.

I would contend that museums are the greatest available laboratory for studying the problem of how to create interest, and that this problem is central to our quest for survival as people. Surely by now we should all realize that the perfection of mechanical techniques for living is not enough. What avails it to be surrounded as a race with all the wonders of technological wizardry, temporarily secure on our plundered planet, and simply not care?

Could it not also be added that by making people interested, aware therefore of the sum of their surroundings, we are doing something more? The creation of cultural interests may be a step on the eventual road to salvation. Culture begets aesthetics. Aesthetics involves preservation, and more, conservation. The scientists of the Plymouth Marine Laboratories, summing up the "Torrey Canyon" disaster,²³ say pungently: "We are progressively making a slum of nature and may eventually find that we are enjoying the benefit of science and industry under conditions which no civilized society should tolerate." If the voters

of the nations tend to lack interests, they can obviously only dimly perceive where their cars, refrigerators and television sets are taking them.

The great advantage of the museum, then, as a possible study laboratory for interest arousal is that the public visitor doesn't know he is being tested. Watch him enter—any one of the two hundred million people who annually enter a museum in the United States. Why has he come in? How can we find out? The museum is likely to be a large, strange building. Going into it therefore can be a different experience, reserved for some separate, some special time, almost an event. The process, except perhaps for coming in out of the rain, or looking for a handy washroom, is likely to involve curiosity, already an involvement. Having any curiosity at all already means something just a bit positive, favorable to the individual. This whole act is hard: it may involve putting on different clothes, being in different surroundings, getting onto a bus or into a car. Unfortunately for many people, especially poor or poorly educated people, or certainly incurious people who already have no or very few interests, this act involves crossing a threshold outside of ordinary life. The strain may be such that the most deprived will never come, and never be observed or tested.

But the sociologist must start somewhere in order to watch and try to test the museum visitors who do come. They are the best available raw material. It appears likely that the development of voluntary testing equipment for a museum lobby or gallery space is now possible. Some of this work has already been done recently in this country at the Milwaukee Public Museum by de Borhegyi, who has attempted through various exhibits to test public reactions.²⁴ Suppose we could go further and set up four or five consoles so that four or five people could step up casually on their own and manipulate the buttons of each console, independently, to solve a problem in aesthetics or science,

or to project the solution of a choice of some problem for the future. Using television screens, the museum visitor could select one of several options, watch the problem unfold on the screen in front of him, and volunteer his own suggested answer. In the Czech Pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal there was a combination movie-narrator performance called Kino-automat, in which the audience was presented with a simple choice by the narrator as the film progressed. Should the policeman's frantic signals be heeded or not as the car went rocketing past him on a crowded street? Two buttons on each chair arm gave everyone a chance to vote while the film was temporarily arrested. The majority vote was flashed on the screen, and in theory the driver of the runaway car stopped, or else went dashing on in pursuit of the other car. I suspect that the audience vote was always the same in this case, but in any case the audience received the impression of a choice having been made, and obviously was intrigued and dazzled by the novelty of the game.

In our proposed museum tests it should be possible to have several thousand persons a day make such individual choices by operating their own console buttons, then to have the information recorded and banked on tape. Novel programs of this sort could be arranged by social psychologists so as to acquire millions of responses voluntarily and without even the pressure of having to open a piece of fourth-class mail, or answer a telephoned pollster's questions. The contact would be far more random and involuntary.

Something along the way in such a study might give us a clue to why people in a museum liked round objects or square objects, stuffed elephants or steam engines, paneled rooms or Eskimo igloos complete with Eskimo manikins. We might find out not only why people react to things in a certain way, but what these reactions stem from, and if interest has been created or is capable of being created by the very reaction itself. We would of course

like to go further, find out who these people are, what schooling they have had, and so forth—but I am becoming greedy. It would be necessary to experiment all along the line so as to avoid tiring the player of the game or making him self-conscious.

Some psychologists will complain that our samples of people to be tested would be biased, that we have only the typical middle-class visitor to choose from, but I would dispute this claim. In the first place, we have had this past year over fourteen million "visits" to the Smithsonian buildings, whatever that figure means. Certainly not every one of the millions of visitors, and not even every visitor that might have played our games had we had the machines in operation, could be described as a sociologist's stereotype of a typical American middle-class citizen. And besides, we could, if we had them, set up such gaming and testing machines in one of our neighborhood museums.

One of the shapes and forms that will be discerned for museums of the future must certainly be a neighborhood museum, for at least in its initial development it seems to me that this is an experiment for which the Smithsonian Institution should take some measure of credit and pride. The concept of bringing a museum out of its stated setting, its museum building, is not new. A traveling exhibition is a projection of the museum itself. The school visit by a museum docent with sample exhibits is another. Museums have even pioneered the bookmobile or traveling-library principle. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has had a highly successful traveling program consisting of exhibits in trailer trucks traveling to rural areas or smaller towns in the State. The Bridgeport Museum of Science and Industry fitted up a trailer with a splendid exhibit on space which could be driven to one school parking lot after another and then used for a week or more by that school's science teacher.

But all of these programs overlooked rundown urban areas, areas of disadvantage and significant lack of opportunity. When

I was small these areas were always called slums, and their rows of poor, rundown houses, tenements. Now there are other sloganlike names for them such as "ghetto," which are trite from overuse and perhaps misapplied as well. Some of these rundown parts of cities are relatively pleasant quiet backwaters, some are merely gently dilapidated, while others, of course, are violent and, to us, jungly. The urban problem is upon us and beats on our ears or flashes out of the newsprint, or snarls at us from shattered shopfronts every day.

To a large extent, people from rundown neighborhoods tend to stay there. They tend not to be mobile, or to move much out of their district, except in a transient sense from slum to slum. Such people, referred to again by slogan phrases like "disadvantaged," are likely never to go into any museum at all. Here I agree wholeheartedly with the sociologists. Indeed such people may feel awkward going out of their district, badly dressed or ill at ease. They may easily feel lost as they wend their way along an unfamiliar sidewalk toward a vast monumental marble palace. They may even feel hostile. In Washington, D. C., a city where 262,000 people, or about one third of the total population (of the District), live just above subsistence level, it is hardly to be expected that large numbers of the poor can afford the bus fare for a trip to a museum, or the clothes either. In connection with a recent PTA program in Washington to sponsor trips for children and their parents to local attractions, a number of parents in one low-income neighborhood objected to the program. The parents, it was learned, felt that they did not have the proper clothing for such a venture; they preferred not taking part to the possible humiliation of conceivably being denied admission to places they might want to visit. If the above is true, then the only solution is to bring the museum to them. For of all our people, these are the ones who most deserve to have the fun of seeing, of being in a museum. Although private col-

lectors may wish to keep their collections private, the responsible person in charge of a museum, no matter how recondite, esoteric or aesthetically rarefied his collection, must occasionally have at least a twinge of educational esprit, the merest modicum of egalitarianism or desire to improve the lot of his fellow man.

However, it is obvious in the case of a museum in a rundown neighborhood that the bookmobile concept won't do. Involvement is what is wanted, and a bookmobile museum in a slum implies something for nothing from rich folks somewhere else, a kind of charity, a handout, largesse in white gloves. Involvement can only be created if it is *their* museum. It must be on the spot, participated in by the people who live there. This was our principle in 1966 when we in the Smithsonian started looking about for a neighborhood which might want a neighborhood museum. We looked for a site, perhaps an abandoned movie theater or a grocery store, given up because some new chain store had taken over the district. Our one guideline was that the area must have stability, not be too full of transients or migratory unemployed. Preferably we wanted a block that contained a laundromat, that symbol of daytime neighborhood involvement, rather than too many bars.

We found the district in Anacostia, one of the areas of Washington which has changed a good deal since the days of the distinguished Frederick Douglass. Consultations with the Southeast Neighborhood House in Anacostia revealed an instant enthusiasm on the part of the local residents. With their help we decided to try, and we set out to rent an unoccupied theater which by chance was on the same street as a local school, and in the same block as a laundromat.

The auguries seemed good. A community advisory council was formed early in 1967, chaired by Mr. Alton Jones, Chairman of the Greater Anacostia Peoples, Inc., Mr. Stanley Anderson, later to become one of the first members of the new City

Council of Washington, Mrs. Marion Hope, Mr. Ben Davis, and a good number of willing volunteers, including a sergeant of the 11th Police Precinct, Andrew Salvas. My colleague, Charles Blitzer, was active from the beginning, and we depended heavily on the advice of Mrs. Caryl Marsh, who had worked with neighborhood social problems in Washington. Our Smithsonian Exhibits department, led by John Anglim and Ben Lawless, was keen to rush in from the start to remodel the small 400-seat movie theater, and Robert Shelton was assigned by them to draw up a design. Long and prayerful meetings (most of them in a local church) with the advisory council ensued before they decided on the framework of the exhibits, their focus and the degree to which a variety of exhibits might appeal to local residents. By June 1967 we had selected a director, Mr. John Kinard, a thirty-year-old Washington-born youth worker who had worked in the Neighborhood Youth Corps and the Office of Economic Opportunity. Under Kinard, who is vigorous and decisive, the exhibit plans were finally completed and the work was begun. The seats were removed and a flat floor was installed with two single steps at intervals to take care of the slope. Six modules were constructed along the sides of the seating area, two to a section of the floor, so that each single step marked the partition between the modules. The exhibits resulted from a vast number of suggestions, primarily from the advisory council, but also from the Smithsonian staff curators. A complete general store, just as existed in Anacostia in the 1890s, occupies one corner. In it is a post office (which we hope to get a license to operate), old metal toys, a butter churn, an ice-cream maker, a coffee grinder and a water pump, all of which can work, and any number of objects of the period from kerosene lamps and flat-irons to posters and advertisements. There is another do-it-yourself area for plastic art, with, at present, volunteer class instruction. There are skeletons of various kinds, some of which can be

put together, some disassembled. There is space for temporary art shows. There is a TV monitor system on the stage. Occupying one of the modules is a live zoo with green monkeys, a parrot and a miscellany of animals on loan from the National Zoological Park. A great success was a shoebox museum in an A-frame structure, full of wooden shoeboxes containing bird skins (in celluloid tubes), mammal skins, shells, fossil specimens, pictures and slide projectors for intensive handling and study. A behind-the-scenes museum exhibit of leaf-making, silk-screen techniques, casting and modeling, gives an additional outlet for instruction. All of this, to the tune of crashing hammers, scraping saws and slapping paintbrushes, took form in two and a half months.

The grand opening, attended by an 84-piece band, two combos, and a block party with speeches and klieg lights, took place on September 15, 1967. A local group of Trail Blazers had painted the nearby fence separating the museum from the next property with a stylish "primitive" mural of life in Africa. The desolate surrounding lots were spruced up, and one of them decorated temporarily with Uncle Beazley the dinosaur, hero of the story *The Enormous Egg*. One of the striking byproducts of the opening was the improvement in the appearance of the block. Several storefronts and houses were newly painted. The local utility company branch, with friendly and unexpected solicitude was hastily painted and landscaped with shrubbery, greatly enhancing its previously dreary-looking brick premises. The whole place began to look almost as smart as the swagged bunting draped on the old theater marquee, now rechristened as the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum.

The financing for all of this had to be raised from private sources, for the Federal government is, presumably quite rightly, only rarely interested in innovations of a sociological nature.

This was an experimental project; for a museum, especially for the sedate Smithsonian, it could be described as "offbeat." We estimated that the first year we would need to raise between \$60,000 and \$75,000, and by the fall of 1967 we had about \$75,000 in hand, mostly from three foundations—the Carnegie Corporation, the Anne S. Richardson Fund and the Meyer Foundation. When in early 1968 we realized that all this would cost more, we received a challenge grant from the Irwin S. Miller Foundation, and small private contributions from interested citizens have been slowly but steadily coming in. At this juncture my colleagues and I estimate that a neighborhood museum can run on something under \$125,000 a year, once it is under way, with a flexible staff of four full-time employees as well as volunteers, and contract or volunteer work from exhibits specialists. Changing exhibits are of the first importance, for any new experience such as a new museum can of course pall in time.

The results so far in mid-1969 are hard to assess. Anacostia has a known population of nearly 200,000 persons, 41 percent under eighteen, 78 percent nonwhite. The median family income, compiled from census records, is \$3,430. In the first twenty-one months some 102,049 visits had been clocked in to the museum, a building about 100 feet long and 60 feet wide, with a tiny mezzanine floor for offices in the former projection-booth area. Obviously something is happening. School classes are being taught there. A local businessman has donated a school bus to drive children to the main Smithsonian buildings for our own Saturday-morning classes. These are, of course, children who would never otherwise enter the main marble mausoleums on the Mall.

There are no guards at the Anacostia Museum, and there has been no vandalism. Not a feather or a fossil has been stolen. What is the mystery of this equation: No guards = no losses

and no vandalism? The only valid answer of course is "because it is their museum, not ours, and they can be proud of it."

Curiously enough, many people who at the very least belong to the Book-of-the-Month Club find all this singularly uninteresting. "You have no business fooling around with all this stuff," one man told me. "I'd as soon burn them as lend you any of my masterpieces."

I was tongue-tied, as most people are when harangued suddenly, or perhaps the word hectored is a better one. But I did try to tell him one thing which pleased me about our experiment. I wanted to keep the Neighborhood Museum rather individual, just itself, different from the rest of the Smithsonian. It is *their* Museum in a real sense, not ours. However, after a while I had wanted to have a small discreet sign put up, saying in effect, "If you want more of this, take the such-and-such bus line over to central Washington and go to Constitution Avenue Northwest between Fifth and Fourteenth Streets and you can see more of it, on the Mall." I didn't know quite how to put it unobtrusively, but the idea haunted me. How to get people who never went anywhere to go to a museum where somehow change and evolution in their own lives might be set in train? Surely, if museums of the future are to be valid, they must be of use, must communicate to the very people who need them most.

One day I took Harold Howe II, then United States Commissioner of Education, to see the Anacostia Museum and then to have a sandwich in the little noisy restaurant next door. We entered the vestibule of the old theater, past the ticket booth, now gaily decorated with posters and exhibition news. Inside John Kinard was standing with a group of several men to whom we were introduced. Suddenly one of them, a giant of a man in a rough jacket, turned to me and said:

"You know, Mr. Ripley, I've lived my whole life right here. I drive a truck, see, and I go everywhere. I been up and down

that old Constitution Avenue all my life. I've never been in those big [accented] buildings. I'd be scared to. But now—you know, I'm going into that old Smithsonian of yours. Yes sir, you're getting me cultured before I know it."

And so I heard what I had come to hear.