Documentation Standards Working Group

In CIDOC 2017 in Tbilisi, Georgia, 26th September 2017

Maija Ekosaari and Rupert Shepherd

Programme

- Short Introduction to previous work
  - Maija Ekosaari

- Exchanging data between different systems
  - Rupert Shepherd

- Preparing for Wednesday: Encyclopaedia of Museum Practice
  - Rupert Shepherd and Jan Behrendt

CIDOC 2017 in Tbilisi, September 2017
The CIDOC Principles of museum documentation

მუზეუმის დოკუმენტაციის
CIDOC პრინციპები

Maija Ekosaari
Co chair of Documentation Standards WG

Overview

- Introduction
- Motivation behind the document
- Background to its production
- Contents
- Practical benefits
- Conclusion

The starting point : common concerns

- What is the status of documentation in your institution?
  - Adequate staff?
  - Physical location?
  - Head of documentation?
  - Backlog?
  - Recent collections audit?

ICOM's code of ethics

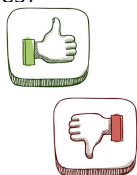**2.20 Documentation of Collections**

Museum collections should be documented according to accepted professional standards. Such documentation should include a full identification and description of each item, its associations, provenance, condition, treatment and present location. Such data should be kept in a secure environment and be supported by retrieval systems providing access to the information by the museum personnel and other legitimate users.
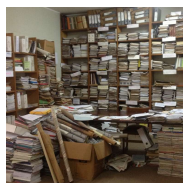
ICOM code of ethics for museums, 2006

Pros and cons
(of having ICOM's code of ethics)

- Obligatory for ICOM members
- Does *mention* documentation
- *What*, but not *why or how*
- Limits scope to collections
- Implicitly restricts public access
- No mention of adequate means…
- Critical choices with limited budgets?

Process of writing the Principles

- Documentation Standards WG
- Richard Light, chair
- First release 2006
- Adopted CIDOC 2012
- Adopted ICOM 2013
  General Assembly Rio
- English, French, Spanish…

The Principles document

- Four page policy statement
- 1 page executive summary
- Refers to ICOM code of Ethics
- Contents
  - Policy
  - Staffing and systems
  - Standards
  - Information access and user needs
  - Information procedures
  - Security, sustainability and preservation
  - Bibliography

The need for documentation

CIDOC მიიჩნევს, რომ კოლექციების გარეშე ადეკვატური დოკუმენტაცია არ შეიძლება ჩაითვალოს ნამდვილი მუზეუმის კოლექციები.

CIDOC believes that collections without adequate documentation cannot be considered to be true museum collections.
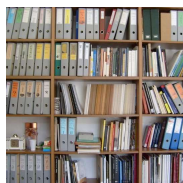
If museums do not document
* they cannot be adequately safeguarded and cared for
* the museum cannot demonstrate legal accountability
* their value for research and interpretation is greatly reduced

CIDOC Principles of Documentation Executive Summary, 2013

Aims of museum documentation

* Accountability
  * Identification
  * Localisation
* Security
  * Proof of ownership
  * Care & Conservation
* History
  * Contextualisation
* Access
  * Physical and intellectual

CIDOC Guidelines for museum documentation, 1995

Practical benefits of good documentation

* Evidence of ownership
* Information about each object's history
* Unique identification of each object
* Ease of location
* Access to descriptions which help with the recovery of stolen objects
* Control over intellectual property rights issues
* Access to research and publications relating to the collection
* Supporting information about themes of relevance to the collection
* Material for educational purposes and exhibitions
* Guidance on procedures and decision-making
* A full audit trail of work done on the collections
* Information about alienated objects

prac·ti·cal
/ˈpraktikəl/ ◀))

Conclusion

- Extends the code of ethics, soft law
- Obligatory for ICOM members
- Practical necessity
- "Heuristic punch" …
  - comprehensible
  - persuasive

Reading

- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, 2013
  http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf
- Statement of principles of museum documentation, ICOM CIDOC, 2006
  http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/cidoc/DocStandards/Statement6v2EN.pdf
- Executive summary
  http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/cidoc/DocStandards/principles_exec_summary_6_2.pdf
- International Guidelines for Museum Object Information: The CIDOC Information Categories, 1995
  http://network.icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/minisites/cidoc/DocStandards/guidelines1995.pdf
- Object ID
  http://archives.icom.museum/object-id/

გმადლობთ! Thank you !

- Special thanks to Dr. Nicholas Crofts, Previous Chair of CIDOC, Chair of CIDOC Training Association, for sharing with us his original presentation

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