Volunteer Experts and Museum Documentation

Opportunities – Challenges – Limits
Outline

• Volunteers and the Museum
• Risks and Challenges
• Benefits and Opportunities
• Jobs for Volunteers
• Organizing Volunteers
Outline

- Volunteers and us
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- Benefits
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LUFTWAFFENMUSEUM

Amateur-run

Professional
Volunteers and the Museum

- **Legitimacy:** Most museums were established by enthusiastic museum amateurs
- **Networks:** Everybody needs friends - so do museums
- **Specialists:** The larger the collection, the greater the need for outside specialist knowledge
- **Manpower:** Sometimes you may simply need more staff
Risks and Challenges

- Volunteers think they know everything better
- Volunteers cost time
- Volunteers need emotional compensation
- Volunteers have no ideas of museum documentation
- Volunteers make mistakes and have accidents
- Qualified specialists are rare among volunteers
Benefits and Opportunities

- Volunteers are your most loyal visitors
- Volunteers advertise your museum
- Volunteers know your collection
  (sometimes better than yourself)
- Volunteers often have specialist knowledge you might need
- Volunteers are there because they love your museum
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Jobs for Volunteers
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- **Curatorial**: Consultants with specialist knowledge about your collection and available artifacts
- **Documentation**: Consultants providing information / assisting with research about your objects
- **Collections Management**: Consultants / Specialists for transports, installations, etc.
- **Exhibitions**: Guides and visitor service personnel (requires special training)
- **Restoration**: Specialists may assist in restoration projects or general duty works (e.g., if trained: cleansing etc.)
How to Organize Volunteers

Use your in-house information management to:

• **Identify:** find willing partners
• **Assess:** note what a person is good at
• **Train:** enable your volunteers to fulfill their tasks; keep track of your training efforts
• **Motivate:** display partnerships at artifacts (object/web); make efforts public; organize frequent meetings/trainings; put colleagues in charge of groups of volunteers
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Wir danken allen Freiwilligen, wie beim heutigen ersten Treffen der AG Exponatpflege mitgearbeitet und der MiG-29 zu altem Glanz verholfen haben. Das war allerfeinstes Hands-On-Museum!

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Thank you to all volunteers who helped make today's first Hands-On Museum event a success. We took care of the MiG-29.
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See you soon in Gatow!