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Efficiency and Social Inclusion:
Implications for the Museum Profession

Introduction
In the late 1980s Stephen Weil (1990) raised the question of the extent to which museum work could be considered a profession, the extent to which it had been professionalized, and in what ways this professionalization was facilitated or impeded by the changing circumstances of museum work, its organizational and governance context and its already multiplying roles vis-à-vis public culture and society at large. Although Weil's thoughts were situated in the American museum context of the mid-1980s, many of his thoughts apply to contexts beyond the US, and some of the questions he raised about the potential for professionalising museum work still resonate with the current situation of museum work. This paper tries to pose and approach a host of questions that, whilst in the main echoing Stephen Weil's mid-1980s reflections, are reconfigured in light of some sweeping changes in the nature of museum work, its mode of governance and its governing norms and values.

Museum work has received very little attention as a 'professional project' (Larson 1977), i.e. as an occupational field that seeks to acquire professional status and recognition of its work as a well-bounded occupation with recognizably well-justified boundaries and entry thresholds, autonomous jurisdiction and a certain legitimate monopoly over a range of tasks/services oriented towards the public interest (on behalf of the public; for the public, and thus adequate to the public trust). This contrasts with the many studies and approaches pertaining to the sociological study of other occupational contexts and groups with a claim to professional status (medicine, nursing, teaching, architecture, law, accountancy, etc.). The lack of

attention to the professional dimension of museum work is partly due to the fact that the cultural and educational functions of the museum have taken the lion's share of research attention, thus to a great extent overshadowing the governance, organisational and micro-political realities that bear on the professional dimension of museum work. My take on the museum profession and its current configuration in the UK builds on insights and concepts drawn from pioneering pieces of work on the professional status of museum work (Boylan 2006a; Boylan 2006b; Weil 1990; Weil 2002), as well as from mainstream sociology of the professions to help highlight the unique case of museum work.

I will first outline the policy context in the UK that has been reconfiguring museum work as well as the organisational set-up within which it is embedded. Two major policy planks will be unpacked and discussed: namely, social inclusion and managerialism in the UK publicly funded museum sector. This will be combined with an analysis of museum professionals' experiences, accounts and views with a view to mapping out the ways in which their occupation is being mediated and reshaped by policy-driven governance and regulation. I will then move on to discuss the nature of museum professional knowledge and the ways in which it is and can be transmitted within pre- and post-entry professional education and development settings. This focus is premised on the fact that many of the issues facing the museum profession are in some way related to professional education and training – broadly understood as involving pre-entry, post-entry and mid-career training, university-based and work-based, off and on the job. In discussing these various aspects that can have some significant implications for the professionalization of museum work, the aim is not to provide a clear-cut final set of answers to the question of the degree to which museums have been professionalized, based on the UK case; but the aim is to map out some key developments and features of museum work in the UK that can help prompt thinking around questions of broader relevance for all people involved, professionals, users, researchers and policymakers.[1]

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[1] The analysis is underpinned by preliminary findings from an ongoing research project examining the current changes in the professional and organisational cultures in publicly funded museums. The study involves a

The Policy/Governance Framework of the UK Publicly Funded Museums

There have been a number of recent policy moves have aimed to transform the museum sector in the UK, broaden out its role in society and restructure its mode of governance (DCMS 1999a; DCMS 1999b; DCMS 2000a; DCMS 2001; DCMS 2005; DCMS 2006; Hooper-Greenhill et al. 2004; MLA 2001; MLA 2005a). As a result, museums now are expected to accommodate and mainstream new public-oriented and even social policy roles and objectives. In parallel, museums are expected to develop an organisational culture of business-type performance management (DCMS 1999a), compete for some of the government's funding, and seek and attract alternative sources of funding (Parker et al. 2001). Responding to these demands necessitates a) developing new work techniques that had until very recently been alien to the conduct and organisation of museum work; b) a restructuring of the museum labour force and its division of labour (more workforce flexibility, more voluntary employees, more externally regulated and monitored work process); c) reconfiguring the stakes, interests and drivers that operate inside and across institutions at sector level; and d) a reframing of what it means to work in a museum, and the requisite qualities for museum work. Before I proceed to discuss the implications of this new policy framework for the museum profession, I will first try to unpack the two driving principles of the new museum policy framework: namely, social inclusion and managerialism.

Social Inclusion in UK Museums

The way the concept of social inclusion is understood in the UK museum context refers to programmes and actions aiming to a) break down the barriers that prevent or discourage people from underrepresented groups from accessing and making use of the museum, and b) to go beyond barriers to contribute to tackling social

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sample of six publicly funded museums in England, selected based on size, location and the disciplinary nature of exhibits. The methodology includes interviews with museum staff drawn from a cross-section of roles and divisions, as well interviews with representatives of professional organisations and local authorities (departments of culture), in addition to analysis of policies and other documents (e.g. job ads) and an examination of existing quantitative data on the UK museum workforce.

exclusion in a broader sense. This push for social inclusion is expected to reshape the whole gamut of functions and multiple facets of museum work, ranging from collecting, curation and education to the governance of museums (Tlili 2008; Tlili et al. 2007).

The UK Government's expectation about social inclusion started with what can be described, in retrospect, as a limited and modest target: namely, to widen access to museums' collections and exhibitions. This was based on the rationale that 'the underlying objective for all museums and galleries should be to strive to offer the widest possible access to their collections and to the knowledge and expertise of their staff' (DCMS 1999b). This set in motion a process whereby the public, especially non-visiting sections of the public, have been placed right at the centre of what museums are expected to do. This early policy version of social inclusion in museums revolved around the task of tackling the multi-form barriers to access as cultural and educational resources that should be made more readily accessible to 'untraditional' audiences. These access barriers, it was emphasized, could take multiple forms. These barriers could be physical and sensory barriers (disadvantaging people with disabilities), cultural barriers (due to the mono-cultural Eurocentric worldview underpinning the exhibitions and the failure to reflect cultural diversity); attitudinal barriers (on the part of staff when they do not do enough to make visitors feel comfortable in a welcoming environment) as well as communicative barriers (when messages and information presuppose a certain level of education and prior knowledge) (Dodd and Sandell 1998). This approach to social inclusion – centred around widening access – remained largely within the parameters of the politics of representation and audience development.

The Government's museum policies was soon to take what can be described as a social policy turn whereby museums came to be expected to act as 'agents of social change' whose ultimate aim was to contribute to improving 'the quality of life' of the excluded and those at risk of social exclusion (DCMS 2001). The underlying logic seems to suggest that since the socially excluded are *inter alia* culturally excluded, inclusion in and through museums should aim higher than just simply attracting these populations to the museum; it should aim at improving the quality of their lives through a social

policy role, rather than simply attracting them into the museum as an end in itself. The areas that museums are thought to be able to make an input into include lifelong learning (DCMS 2000b; MLA 2002a), community development and empowerment (DCMS 2000a; MLA 2005b), urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal (DCMS 2004; MLA 2002b), rehabilitation, health promotion and health care (MLA 2005c).

Managerialism in UK Museums
The cultural sector, including museums, have witnessed over the last decade or so a series of related policy-driven changes in line with broader changes in the mode of coordinating public sector organsiations in the UK. This new mode of governance in the public sector as a whole has been aptly described as new managerialism, or managerialism for short (Clarke et al. 2000; Clarke and Newman 1997; Deem 2004; Shore and Wright 2004). Managerialism can best be described as an assemblage of regulatory and organisational ideas, values, discourses and practices that coalesce around the following defining features:

- Remodelling public service providers on the private for-profit sector
- Redefining the relationship between public service organizations and users as one between (competing) providers and customers
- Instituting an external regime of audit, accountability and quality assurance to measure short-term outcomes based on easily measurable performance indicators (usually quantitative/numerical), coupled with internal performance management mechanisms
- Introducing competition between public service providers and fostering entrepreneurialism (e.g. via competitive tendering)
- Contractual and contract-like relationship between government and public service organizations, and low-trust relationships between the public, politicians/policymakers and public sector organisations
- Centralised, external regulation weakening the autonomy and jurisdiction of professionals
over their occupational domains

These new dynamics, introduced into the public sector since the early 1980s in the UK and reinforced and generalised with the New Labour Government from 1997 on, are justified on the ground that they will help 'modernise' the public sector, improve public sector organisations' efficiency (i.e. doing more for less), effectiveness (i.e. having a concrete impact) and service quality standards within a rationalised system of accountability that will ensure that the taxpaying public are getting 'value-for-money' services for their taxes. Social inclusion and access targets became part of the contract-like funding agreement between the Department of Media, Culture and Sport (DCMS) and the publicly funded museums (known as PSAs, Public Service Agreements, and they usually cover a period of three years) (DCMS 1999b). DCMS is thus trying to drive and shape this cultural change in museums through user- and visitor-focused standard performance indicators, both national and local, which, it is argued, 'could be the most potent way of shifting the focus of services away from professional values and objectives and towards user-based values and objectives' (MLA 2001, 64). This requires a 'change [in] the professional culture within the museums and galleries themselves' (MLA 2001, 44), as 'focusing on professional interests leads to a lack of focus on the user and on audience development' (ibid., 38).

Thus it is that with the new museum policy framework in the UK, museums have been redefined as a public service, rather than fulfilling a cultural and historic service, a mandate-based mission, on behalf of and for the public whereby artefacts, objects and specimens of historical value are 'held … on behalf of the public in "trust" for future generations' (MMC 2000). It is emphasised that museums are no different, and are part and parcel of public services, to the extent that they owe their existence to the tax-paying public of citizen-consumers. Two managerialist principles are brought to bear on publicly funded museums: a) the museum, as a public service, has to be responsive primarily to service users (i.e. customers and investors in public services), rather than some professional, scientific, aesthetic, cultural or even educational criteria; and b) as a public service it can and should become auditable and accountable based on user needs and wants (as defined by Government). The primary question becomes not how well conserved, cared for and

studied the objects are within museums, but what public uses are made out of these objects, and what the taxpaying public is getting out of the museum as a publicly funded organisation. These managerialist measures, it is argued, will cohere into 'a mechanism for raising standards of efficiency and quality in the sector' (DCMS 1999a). This vision of the museum as a public service, and its bracketing with other public services, layers yet another aspect onto the museum frictions that Kratz and Karp have mapped out (Kratz and Karp 2006). This one is about the uneasy co-existence of two 'value spheres' (Weber 2004) that place present-day museums in a tricky double bind: namely, the cultural value sphere and the managerialist/consumerist value sphere.

How Performance Management Works Out on the Ground
Against the background of these policy-driven attempts to reconfigure the museum profession, the next question I will try to address is: what are the implications of this regime of measurable accountability coupled with the social inclusion agenda for museum work on the ground. I will outline the main preliminary findings in this respect from my ongoing research into changes in the professional and organisational culture in UK publicly funded museums:

- The situation varies between large national museums and small local museums in terms of how strictly they need to align their work with set performance indicators and targets. In small museums the performance management regime tends to steer organisational strategy and professional practice in a way that leaves little professional autonomy, in contrast to the 'light-touch' governance of large national museums that allows them to retain a great deal of autonomy.
- Some form of evaluating performance is seen as both legitimate and necessary, with the potential to serve as an incentive for museums to act in a more socially conscious way. However, the emerging performance management culture, coupled with inclusion targets, can be in tension with professional autonomy, values and identity.
- Managerialism could work against the organisational integration and coordination of the various divisions and roles within the museum, and thus could create internal

management problems. It could create competition, rather than synergy and collaboration, between the various divisions within the organisation.

- The performance agenda can be experienced as a bit too overloaded and pulling in different directions. Policy-based KPIs (key performance indicators) can be interpreted differently as each department tends to read its favourable self-centred meaning into the types of work and strategy required by the KPIs.

- However much people approve of the performance management regime, and even of the necessity for an expanded social role for museums, there is still a conviction that the primacy of the collections should be taken as the key to giving a coherent direction to museum work. Re-affirming the primacy of the collections does not sit very comfortably with recent museum policies that seek to place the public as the primary target of museum work, and as 'the measure of all things' done by the museum, irrespective of where that would leave the collections.

- The bidding culture works in such a way as to broaden out the scope of the cross-cutting, generic skills expected and increasingly required of museum professionals, especially in medium to small museums – it now necessitates multi-faceted fund-raising skills as a key aspect of all museum professionals' expertise profile.

- In smaller museums staff are expected to work across the board and act as generalists rather than specialists, and participate in practically all the activities of the museum, and they are likely to find themselves in situations where they have to perform tasks for which they are not well-equipped, and which stand at several removes from what they can do best (e.g. curators doing PR and heavily involved in applications to potential funders).

- Attracting funding is very time-consuming and can divert resources into putting together strong fundable bids; but however strong these might be, they may not be successful in attracting funding and committing external funders as success depends on so many other variables beyond the museum's control.

- The current governance regime and the bidding culture tend

to favour visitor-oriented activities and programmes. Two consequences are likely to follow: a) museums can have a very vibrant and well-resourced education, communication and community relations departments, in contrast to the work of collection-focused departments that can remain under-resourced; b) there can be a recognition and career progression problem arising from the unequal visibility of roles in cross-team projects.

- The type of programmes that external funders are usually keen to support are for the most part short-term programmes aimed at producing quantifiable outcomes in the short term. This is not likely to chime with museum professionals' timescale for what they see as the types of sustained work and impact they deem most worthwhile.

- A culture of branding is taking root in the museum sector and its benefits are expected to be both short term and long term and can benefit the core activities of the museum. Commercial brands would want to ride the museum brand, and the museum thus becomes a brand acting as a vehicle to lend some kudos to commercial brands. And the money obtained could have indirect benefits on several other fronts beyond the programmes that have been funded, as it can raise the public profile and visibility of the museum, and successful funding will be very likely to attract further funding from old and new funders. This of course favours the big museums with big iconic names that can carry a brand, and looks set to create or reinforce a two-tier museum sector, with the upper tier of big names enjoying a virtuous circle of being successful brands that relay commercial brands.

- However, insofar as it is dependent on what one respondent aptly described as private 'funding with strings', the underside of this museological entrepreneurialism is threefold. First, it can create some dependence on funders' priorities and agendas and thus can undermine the professional autonomy of museums. Second, amidst these funder-driven activities, the collections are likely to get sidelined and lost in publicity and activities that do not link back sufficiently to the collections. Third, private funding adds yet another layer onto the managerialist culture as funders want to see quantifiable outcomes that can be cited

to enhance their own PR.
- Museums are now learning and consciously borrowing from the leisure and entertainment industry. Many museums consciously attempt to model themselves on amusement arcades, theme parks and other visitor attractions where fun is sought as an end in itself. The leisure and entertainment industry is seen both as a source of good models and as a rival over people's free time and attention.
- The paradoxical effect of free entry (in place since 2001), combined with the entrepreneurial culture in museums, is that whilst free entry was presumably a move towards de-commercialisation of publicly funded museums, the unintended effect of this policy is that commercialisation is sneaking back through the back door in the form of commercialising and marketing temporary blockbuster exhibitions – for which museums charge entry free – whilst the permanent free-entry collection can get taken for granted and thus receive little investment – resources, planning, maintenance and conservation, activities around them, publicity, scholarship etc.

Museum Education and Training in the UK: An Overview
A profession needs a knowledge base as well as a value base to be acquired through sustained, systematic period of training on and off the job. In the case of most professions this knowledge base is provided mainly, albeit not exclusively, through university-based courses (at least within the UK context). Museum work in the UK over the last couple of decades or so has moved towards the model of a postgraduate degree based profession, with museum studies courses designed specifically to feed graduates into the museum labour market. Many challenges facing the professionalization of museum work are bound up with the existing provisions for professional education and training: these pertain mainly to conditions of employment, career promotion and progression structures, pattern of entry pathways into museum work, oversupply of museum studies graduates in search of their first entry-level museum job, the ever increasing importance of volunteering both for

museums and for potential entrants into museum work, and some skills gaps.[2]

At present there are 13 museum studies courses in the UK recognised by the Museums Association (MA). There is, however, a great degree of variation across these 13 courses with respect to the taught content, pedagogy, the degree and type of input into the course from museums, as well as the nature of work placements for would-be graduates. Another significant aspect of variability consists of the institutional location where museum studies are hosted: the hosting academic unit can vary in terms of its disciplinary focus (cultural studies, sociology, management, etc.), which can have implications for curriculum and pedagogy of the museum studies courses. I will home in on two foci in particular, namely: a) the nature and work-relevance of the skills and competencies that graduates are expected to acquire through pre-entry postgraduate courses against the backdrop of the perceived skills needs and shortages in the sector; and b) the implications of the organisational culture of UK academia for pre-entry professional education and for the types of expertise that feed into the museum workforce.

A) Relevance to the museum workplace/labour market
Generally, it is not easy to establish a straightforward causal link between the profile of educational provision of a given course and the overall quality of performance by recent graduates/professionals that have come through that course. This is so because the world of work is shaped by so many variables that can make the affordances of university-based professional education no more than loose parameters open to multiple and even unpredictable applications; further, in more problematic scenarios the practicalities of the workplace can render academic knowledge largely irrelevant and

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[2] In addition to some documents that have been consulted and data emerging from my ongoing ESRC-funded research, my analysis is informed by conversational interviews with six former students on UK museum studies courses as well as my occasional discussions with Chris Fardon from the Museums Libraries & Archives Council (MLA) and Maurice Davies from the Museums Association (MA). Maurice Davies' 2007 Report is a most valuable study on pre-entry training and related issues facing new entrants and the sector as a whole, and a great deal of my discussion is based on Davies' findings and insights.

even an obstacle or distraction to efficient problem-solving judgment, decision-making and action. This is particularly true of the situation of museum courses vis-à-vis the quality of museum work performed by museum studies graduates. One aspect of the problem is that there is no neat one-to-one relations between the theoretical and practical competencies provided by the courses, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, work techniques, skills, aptitudes and forms of knowledge required on the ground by different tasks and roles situated in different museums, with different sizes, different disciplinary foci, different corporate missions and governance structures.

Following Davies' Report (2007), it is now common knowledge within the sector that pre-entry postgraduate courses in museum studies in the UK are oversubscribed in terms of student numbers, and so is the museum job market in terms of the number of graduates with postgraduate degrees in museum studies aspiring to land their first entry-level posts. However, despite the oversupply of graduates and potential entrants, museum studies courses in the UK have been unable to fill some gaps in the professional competencies/skills map of the museum sector. Some skills gaps still persist and some are becoming more salient as museums are increasingly taking on new social roles and experimenting with new work techniques necessitated by the policy-driven imperatives of social inclusion, performance management and entrepreneurialism. Based on Davies' Report (2007) and preliminary findings from my ongoing research, the main current skills gaps could be identified as follows:

- The combination of object-relevant disciplinary knowledge with practical pedagogic skills (and the pedagogy we are talking about here is of a unique type that cannot be transferred from formal teaching pedagogy, given the nature of the museum's informal educational context and its multiple audiences;
- Working with local communities in effective, engaging and sustained ways;
- Practical management and project management skills;
- Object-based and subject-specific specialisms;

- Expertise in science and technology that can feed into science museums and science centres;[3]
- Imaginative, public-sensitive marketing and public relations skills (although the situation seems to be improving considerably on this front).

The massive number of applications for entry-level jobs contrasts with the shortage of applications for middle and top-managerial positions, specialist curatorial positions, and more generally posts that require object-based and subject-specific specialisms. Museum studies courses tend to supply graduates with generic across-the-board theoretical and to some degree professional knowledge that by and large suits museum generalists – as opposed to specialists – who could be trained into specialists of various sorts at the post-entry stage (Tran and King 2007). However, more needs to be done on the part of museums to put in place sound and sustained strategies for post-entry and mid-career training for staff. As Davies (2007) notes, generally post-entry entrants are not adequately inducted, trained and developed. As a 2005 DCMS document noted: 'The [museum] sector is underinvesting in new recruits and in CPD (continuing professional development)' (DCMS 2005). There seems to be an implicit assumption that people learn best when they are left to confront and tackle problem-solving tasks of their everyday professional lives. Whilst there is some truth in this assumption to the extent that there is always some implicit tacit learning that accrues as one goes along, structured well-financed post-entry internships could provide valuable practical experience for new entrants that can complement their university-based training. However, unlike the US and perhaps other countries with more museum involvement in pre-entry and post-entry training and more diverse entry routes, structured internships are very rare in the UK (Holmes 2006) given the general withdrawal of museums from the provision of pre- and post-entry training. Where training is provided for staff in middle managerial positions, there is a tendency for it to be repetitive and not of much added value (although these training opportunities for

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[3] To some extent this reflects a broader trend in the UK and other Western countries: namely, the very low number of students who go down mathematics and science study and career pathways, and as a result the serious shortage of mathematics and science educators in general.

experienced staff could be more valuable as networking occasions rather than as training opportunities *per se*).

Nonetheless, there are some good, if limited, examples of museum involvement in the design and delivery of museum studies programmes whereby practice-based and practice-oriented components are embedded in the course. Attempts to embed the museum contribution include having a module on the programme designed and taught by experienced museum practitioners, and/or organising regular independent lectures given by experienced museum professionals. Another way of embedding the input of museums is through having museum involved in the assessment and the maintenance of quality from the practice perspective (mainly as external examiners or co-supervisors). This component of the course, many respondents noted, was very engaging, and proved to be very useful later at work. The museum input into the course helps gradually initiate graduates and prospective museum entrants into a practical 'feel' for museum work and its complexities, and dovetails with the more theoretically oriented aspects of the course. However, it seems that museum involvement in the design and delivery of museum studies courses is not sufficiently mainstreamed across the 13 courses, and museum input and pedagogic involvement vary a great deal across the 13 courses both in terms of degree, quality and type of input.

Museum studies students' actual sustained contact with the museum world takes place mainly through the placements that students in most courses are required to go on prior to graduation. The quality and expectations about students' placements again vary from course to course, and vary, too, depending on the museum that hosts the placements. However, the obvious issues with the prevalent pattern of placements in the UK are its insufficient length (generally 4 to 8 weeks), the relative lack of coordination between university and museum as well as lack of clarity regarding a set of mutual expectations, insufficient supervision of the placements by universities (Davies 2007), as well as lack of enthusiasm for hosting and supporting these placements on the part of some museums.

Impact of Academic Organisational Culture on Museum Studies

I now turn to the question of the ways in which the organisational culture of academia, and UK academia more specifically, colours many aspects of university-based pre-entry professional education in museum studies. I will discuss three aspects in particular where the impact of academic organisational culture is most salient: a) student recruitment, b) the nature of educational provision as well as research associated with these courses, and c) the types of knowledge and expertise that can be afforded through university-based museum studies courses.

In terms of student recruitment, the first thing to note is that student intake is not linked to the needs of the sector and, on the flipside, the employability prospects of graduates. Located within a university organisational context, student recruitment by museum studies courses is conducted primarily in accord with their respective universities' strategic plans for student recruitment, and not based on the objective of answering the needs of the sector. Davies (2007: 29-30) found that of the 13 courses only 3 had a policy of placing restrictions on the size of student intake per year to avoid contributing to the oversupply of museum studies graduates, whilst most courses did not have a specified cap on the number of students to be recruited, and will thus take on as many students who would meet certain criteria as they could. Related to that is the fact that most of these courses, as Davies (2007) noted, do not seem to be doing enough to be selective about the students who apply. This is because museum studies courses operate in a marketised higher education environment where they have to demonstrate – internally to the managerialist powers that be within universities – that they are recruiting enough students to go on the course. Under the current financially stringent circumstances, recruiting as many students as possible can serve as a strategy to pre-empt possible 'efficiency cuts' in academic posts and the possible whittling down or dismantling of academic units – what is known as 'restructuring' in management speak.[4]

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[4] Generally, humanities and social sciences departments are particularly prone to this type of so-called restructuring, but there have been many cases where even science (especially chemistry) and mathematics departments have been shut down because they were deemed unable to attract enough students. Universities in the UK receive from the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) financial support to cover educational provisions in

The disproportionately large number of museum courses – i.e. relative to the needs of the museum labour market – follows not from the demand from employers (i.e. museums) and the sector as a whole, but from the policy-driven push for expanding higher education in the UK. Related to that, it also follows in part from the competition between higher education institutions to increase student numbers and to diversify and expand their overall institution-wide curriculum mix. Thus, the oversupply of museum studies graduates should be seen, at least in one important dimension, as a reflection of the policy-driven expansion in student numbers in the UK in the context of what is known as the New Labour Government's widening participation programme. This oversupply of museum studies graduates, and the inability of the museum labour market to absorb them, is bound to create what Pierre Bourdieu calls the 'inflation of qualifications'. This is arguably one of the factors that stand behind the notoriously low pay in the UK museum profession, especially at entry-level and junior posts level. On the other hand, the overreliance on the postgraduate degree as a mode of pre-entry professional education has become so standardised and taken for granted that a certain climate of complacency has developed regarding the professional training of would-be museum practitioners. More importantly, it seems to have caused museums to withdraw from or minimise their input into pre-entry training. The apprenticeship/traineeship mode of entry into the profession has all but disappeared, and the large number of museum courses seems to have caused museums to withdraw from playing a significant and proactive role in driving, designing and delivering pre-entry, employer-driven professional education/training for new entrants.

The other equally important factor that has shaped the content of museum studies courses is related to research. The nature of the research conducted and produced from within a given academic unit is very likely to have a spill-over effect on the type of teaching

proportion to the number of home students recruited, and based on the unit of funding per student – also known as the unit of public resource per student (whilst international students pay exorbitant full tuition fees). The other justification for closures or retrenchments of academic units is to do with what the universities' senior management teams would deem to be low ratings in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).

provided; in fact, it should have this spill-over effect into what becomes a form of research-led teaching. Teaching expertise should, ideally, be informed by actual research expertise (Deem and Lucas 2006; Lucas 2007). This is especially the case with a professional course where research-validated knowledge taught to students is a key feature as it allows (researched) practice to inform teaching, and teaching in turn to feed grounded expertise into the practice field, thus ideally creating a feedback loop involving practice, research and teaching.

Museum studies courses are generally located in research-active academic divisions, and many of the staff involved in teaching are very distinguished researchers who have been making significant contributions to understanding various aspects of the work of museums, and have had an impact on museum scholarship and policy within and beyond the UK. The research associated with museum studies courses in the UK played a pioneering role in not only providing a grounded understanding of the various aspects of museum work past and present, but also in stimulating and informing avant-garde thinking and action in museology and museum practice in the 1980s and 1990s that helped bring about a whole paradigm shift in the role and function of museums (in relation to formal education, multiple constituencies, the public sphere, cultural difference, alternative approaches to interpretation and communication, new work techniques, etc.). However, there seemed to be more of a synergy between these courses, the research associated with them and the world of museum practice. The expansion in these courses and their embeddedness in the organisational set-up and culture of their higher education institutions seem to have in some ways worked against this synergy.

The research that has been coming out of the academic units where the courses are located over the last decade or so has been shaped primarily by two imperatives, both of which have serious funding implications: a) the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and b) the funding/commissioning by government or government-related sources of funding. The first factor affects all research-active academic divisions and is not thus in any way peculiar to the academic units where museum studies courses are located, but its effect on what is presumably an advanced professional course

should be noted. One of the key expectations about research submitted to the RAE is that it should meet certain criteria of theoretical and methodological rigour and originality, and meet what can be described as peer-oriented criteria – as opposed to practice-oriented criteria. In other words, what drives RAE-oriented research in the first place is peer recognition, not its impact or usefulness with regard to for the practice field. On the other hand, commissioned research whose funding comes from government or government-related sources is often confined within the policy's terms of reference. Its focus and take on issues thus tend to be pre-set by the government policy agenda and, as was noted in the responses gathered, tends to lack the independence to go beyond the policy brief and provide insights that can further critical understanding in general or inform imaginative practice independently of what the (party-political) policies want and expect. Outputs of this type of research are usually reports to government or government-related bodies. What tends to happen is that the RAE weights research towards theory, and the commissioning mode of funding weights research towards advocacy, or in any case towards pre-determined terms of reference. As research is predominantly either RAE-driven or policy- and advocacy-driven (and thus either peer- or policy-oriented), what gets deprioritised is research derived from practice problems on the ground; research that is the product of practice problems, rather than policy problems and objectives, and oriented towards formulating research-based answers or at least broad approaches to practice problems that can feed into the professional knowledge underpinning museum practice more generally.

Museum Professional Knowledge: knowing (to do?) what and how?
Some criticisms of the museum studies courses are typical of the ways in which university-based courses are perceived by practitioners on the ground in various fields. It is a very common criticism of various professional courses that they are out of touch with the complex realities of practice. Museum studies courses are no exception in this regard; and perhaps museum studies courses are particularly open to this type of criticism because, unlike other professional courses (law, nursing, medicine, accountancy, etc.), there is likely to be much more disagreement about a) what constitutes profession-specific knowledge and competence for

museum work, and b) how best to frame and teach profession-specific practical knowledge. This is especially the case with the recent differentiation of museum work that I have pointed out above. The museum sector is a loosely structured professional field (as opposed to the more established professions). As a result, the nature of the professional knowledge and skills required will vary from job to job and from task to task within the same job, and in parallel depends on the nature of the museum and the local circumstances under which it operates.

This raises a problem and challenge for university-based museum studies programmes, a problem that is not just simply due to the ways in which museum studies courses are designed and delivered, but are to a great extent due to the unique characteristics of museum practice (especially at the current juncture) as well as the nature and limits of university-based professional courses in general. In fact, the challenge or criticism of the disjuncture and distance between theory and practice is a common criticism and in many cases a valid one at that, but can become a clichéd stereotype that does not move our thinking much further forward. Rather than put it all down to failings in the design and delivery of the course, there needs to be a realistic balanced understanding of what a university-based professional course can do within the existing range of possibilities and constraints that govern the academic field, including the production and transmission of knowledge. My view is that that type of criticism is both fair and accurate but at the same time in some way misplaced. We are talking here about two separate domains, governed by two separate logics that need to be recognized. I do not happen to be involved in any teaching on anything related to a museum studies course, but partly based on my teaching experience on a professional doctorate designed for students drawn from a range of other professions (mainly teaching, social work and nursing), I would argue that two different things often tend to be conflated, two different languages. It is in some sense inevitable that museum studies courses will be limited in terms of how much they can prepare the student to anticipate and handle practical situations. At this point, I need to make some useful distinctions to unpack what we mean by and expect of museum professional knowledge. A useful starting point would be to distinguish between three distinct

types, or dimensions, of professional knowledge which I would characterise as follows:

a) to *know about* museums through accounts – sociological, historical, educational, economic, etc. – of the phenomenon of the museum as an institution of display (this is what is known in epistemology as propositional knowledge (Winch 2004) – or knowing-that); in this case the type of knowledge provided is disciplinary knowledge and strictly speaking not professional knowledge *per se*, although it can underpin professional knowledge

b) to *know how* to do museum work, usually by being immersed in the actual setting of professional practice, and usually under the guidance and supervision of an experienced practitioner, in the context of an apprenticeship, traineeship, internship or learning on the job of some kind. Know-how is generally used interchangeably with the concept of practical knowledge, and in English-speaking contexts know-how can be equated with skills (Clarke and Winch 2006)

c) To *know about how* to do museum work: this third dimension of museum professional knowledge can be found in museum studies courses where propositional knowledge is presented to students about a) how particular problems, issues and dilemmas – as a matter of general rule guiding practice – ought to be dealt with and addressed in the practice setting as well as the types of rationale for possible alternative courses of action; and b) how particular *instances* of practice problems arose and the types of problem-solving skills, judgement and action that were applied to address these problems, developing thereby students' case knowledge (Hoyle and John 1995).[5]

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[5] There is another variation of professional knowledge which sits between know-how and propositional knowledge about know-how. I am thinking of cases of simulated or virtual practice, for example, that are used as pedagogical tools in museum studies courses with a view to developing the know-how aspect of professional knowledge. It can be counter-argued, however, that insofar as simulated practice based knowledge takes place outside the contingent complex reality of the practice setting (including the reality of the consequences of each judgment and action pursued), it is always based on partial, edited and constructed version of the actual

The lack of symmetry and straightforward transferability between the types of knowledge and expertise afforded by the courses and the practical knowledge/skills required by the problem-solving tasks on the ground is, arguably, to some degree inevitable in any case. We need to recognize, I believe, that a university-based course has to operate within certain parameters – logistical and organizational constraints, limitations and possibilities – that do not map onto the practice situations that new entrants find themselves in. Perhaps the most important thing that needs to be borne in mind is the fact that a museum course can offer only exposure to a finite and limited number of practical situations, all too often presented from the perspective of a scholarly *habitus* (Bourdieu 1993) oriented towards understanding and explanation rather than action; thus they are not framed from the point of view of the practitioner involved in the situation who tries to apply embedded problem-solving skills that have been acquired on the job, most often in implicit subtle ways, and in response to singular situations that cannot be exhausted in advance through propositional knowledge. In other words, a university-based museum course is bound to be both oriented towards understanding/explanation and limited in its scope and coverage of actual practical cases that will inform students' case knowledge. It will also inevitably be very limited in terms of its coverage of theories and approaches to understanding and explaining the multi-faceted work of museums located in heterogeneous and in some cases incomparable national and local contexts. In contrast, practice on the ground is *infinite* in terms of its variations; always unpredictable, always throwing up unique cases that cannot be solved either by reference to existing theories or even by reference to knowledge of cases however exhaustive these were. Hence, I would argue, the importance of recognising that what museum practitioners need to develop, and what they need to apply in any event, is a certain professional jurisprudence coupled with critical reflexive practice (Teather 2007) that can bridge the discrepant logics between theoretical knowledge and practical skills/competencies. This professional jurisprudence, whilst it can be loosely informed and facilitated through academic and practical

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practice setting, and thus all it can aim to do is develop knowledge about know-how, including virtual case knowledge, with a certain degree of empathy with those engaged in the problem-solving tasks on the ground.

training, both university-based and the on the job, can be acquired only *in actu*. It is irreducibly context-sensitive, and the contexts within which museum professionals need to use and apply their professional jurisprudence are infinitely singular, varying and changing all the time, with every new work situation that involves yet another unique encounter between museum professionals, users, objects and specific logistical and organisational constraints and possibilities. This is the type of generative and adaptive aptitude that museum courses should give more attention to, certainly in collaboration with museums as active contributors.

Developing Alternative Routes into the Museum Profession
One aspect of the occupations' push for professionalization is through regulating and tightening up the entry routes into the profession via more or less standardised pre-entry routes. Entry routes into professions, however, do not necessarily have to be centred around university-based courses at the end of which successful graduates will obtain certified expertise; entry routes could take the form of work-based apprenticeships or traineeships. The more important thing for the 'professional project' of a given occupation is that entry-level training and qualifications are sufficiently standardised, recognised and accredited, usually under the aegis of the relevant professional organisation that represents the occupation.

In an attempt to respond to gaps in the pre-entry professional education and training and, concomitantly, to the existing skills gaps, there is now a serious attempt in the UK to create and support alternative routes into museum work that could co-exist with the postgraduate degree route. This is happening in the context of the Creative Apprenticeships scheme, an imaginative programme designed and run jointly by the Creative and Cultural Skills Council and the MLA (already piloted with several museums, and scheduled to be launched in September 2008). The rationale for this educational venture is the fact that the postgraduate museum studies degree is a) not readily accessible to all those aspiring to get into a museum career; and b) not responsive enough to existing skills gaps, especially museum skills of a more practical nature.

Given their location within higher education, and their position in the sequenced arrangement of academic degrees, museum studies courses are in effect inaccessible to all those who have not taken the traditional academic route and who are unable to pay big amounts of money in tuition fees and then volunteer for years to get a foothold on the lower rungs of the profession. Getting a foothold in a museum career is thus practically beyond the reach of many young people with a great deal of potential in the field, due to the unequal access to higher education. And then what further exacerbates this situation of inaccessibility is the fact that a significant period of unpaid work has become the norm as a pre-entry training experience, something that not many young people are able to afford. In fact, volunteering as pre-entry training usually amounts to a couple of years before the trainee/volunteer can feel they have something to put on their CV to stake their claim to their first museum post with some realistic prospects. The increasing importance of volunteering as a standard pre-entry route thus works to perpetuate the socio-economic and ethnic profile of the museum workforce as those young graduates who have the enabling means to volunteer are most likely to come from 'traditional' backgrounds. The other implication of this situation is that volunteering came to be viewed as *de facto* on-the-job training, which has further disincentivised the museum sector to make some coherent and sustained investments in traineeships. In fact, in the absence of sponsored traineeships in UK museums, many volunteers hoping to get into a museum career relate to volunteering as self-funded traineeships.

The Creative Apprenticeship scheme aims to go some way towards remedying what is described as 'the culture of unpaid work experience' – i.e. volunteering – that dominates the museum sector. It is also meant to begin to counter the museums' near complete withdrawal from pre-entry training as a result of the big number of museum courses and the fact that a postgraduate degree route has become practically the only option. The second reason for devising this alternative entry-level training is the idea that these apprenticeships can be more flexible than academic programmes that are rooted in academic disciplines and, in some cases, some rather rigid disciplinary traditions. These apprenticeships thus have the potential to be more responsive to the changing circumstances and needs of museum practice and the sector; it is also argued that

these apprenticeships have the potential to meet employer needs and demands to fill certain skills gaps as well as answer their search for people with practical skills that cannot conceivably be acquired outside some form of sustained work-based training (as opposed to off-the-job university-based education). These apprenticeships are aimed at combining both targeted, focused vocational/professional training with pre-entry work experience within an employer-driven framework because, as the Creative and Cultural Skills Council puts it, 'for employers, someone with relevant on-the-job experience is more valuable than an untested graduate' (Creative and Cultural Skills 2008).

Recommendations
Now I would like to draw out some conclusions and lessons from the UK experience, put forward less as recipes for action than as possible directions to stimulate debate and thinking around these issues:

- Evaluating the work of museums and its impact is in principle a very good thing, and can help inform museum reflexive practice in substantial ways. However, more consideration needs to be given to how performance measurement is organised, based on what type of criteria, values and visions, and what the intended and unintended effects of this system are on various types of museums and various professional roles involved in museum work. The uniqueness of museum work needs to receive more recognition, so that museums can do their work on various fronts better. Whilst a museum is at the service of the public, it cannot be easily equated with other public services, and accordingly be expected to deliver outcomes comparable to other public services, and subject to the same criteria. The outcomes and impacts of museum work are most likely to come about in highly mediated, delayed and dispersed forms which will be difficult to identify, let alone capture in a measurable way, not least because even the beneficiaries may not be aware of the outcome and impacts of their encounter with museum work. Further, museums have many publics and should respond to many publics and constituencies, and not just to an undifferentiated public as is

the case with the health service for example (where everybody has the same expectation, i.e. good health care).

• Overstretching museums with too many tasks and expectations is very likely to create a sustainability issue for museums; a sustainability deficit that, in turn, is very likely to have a negative knock-on effect on the quality of what museums do on all fronts, collection- and audience-related (Davies 2008). Expectations about what the museum can do need to be constantly grounded in realistic assessments and hopes.

• The social inclusion museum policy framework in the UK appears to rest on the premise that the agendas of social inclusion and managerialism in museums are compatible and can reinforce each other. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the principles of managerialist efficiency and social inclusion are distinct; and arguably they ought to remain and be treated as different as they can potentially pull in different, competing directions. Managerialist efficiency is rooted in an instrumentalist type of reasoning that aims to extract value-for-money out of museums for all segments of the taxpaying public. Social inclusion, on the other hand, arises from what is essentially an ethical concern/imperative in response to the exclusion and underrepresentation of some social and cultural groups with respect to museums' visitors, workforce, cultural artefacts, interpretations, activities and even governance structures.

• A good degree of professional autonomy is necessary for the development and enactment of professional reflexive practice and embedded jurisprudence as a grounded and creative problem-solving framework.

• There should be some balance between evaluating and assessing quantitative and qualitative aspects of museum performance. Demonstrating quantity could obscure quality: as the social inclusion agenda is now inextricably wedded to the supervisory mechanisms of performance management, this can cause museums to scramble for increased visitor numbers at any rate, irrespective of the quality and substance of the experience their visitors and users – whether 'traditional' or 'untraditional' – are taking away. This is already happening

in other areas of the public sector that have been at the forefront of the managerialisation ethos (notably health and education).

• To counter the oversupply of graduates, the inflation of qualifications and the consequently bad employment conditions at entry-level and junior posts, restrictions should be placed on the number of students each course can recruit per year, carefully determined within something like a quota system. Professional organisations are perhaps in a good position to work out some arrangement along these lines, in consultation with the courses themselves. And then subscribing to this quota system could be incorporated into the validation/accreditation criteria used by professional organizations for these courses.

• Compared to other aspects of museum work and training, there is clearly a paucity of knowledge and research around pre-entry professional education. Research-based knowledge about the various aspects of postgraduate museum studies education and how it relates to museum work is critical to any attempt to enhance the added value of these courses in terms of content, pedagogy and synergy with the changing map of museum work.

• Unlike other professions, there does not seem to be a clear and coherent conception – shared by practitioners, policymakers, researchers and professional organisations, etc. – of what constitutes museum professional knowledge. This calls for more research around museum professional knowledge and a debate, involving all stakeholders, around what can be seen as the core elements to professional knowledge that have to be acquired at the pre-entry stage.

• Given the 'generalist' training provided by pre-entry academic courses, consideration should be given to the possibility of building a significant specialist dimension into museum studies courses (e.g. social history education, science education, curation, etc.). In parallel, object-specific training would still need to be provided post-entry: museums should take more responsibility for on-the-job training and professional development.

• The work placement should be more standardised and tightened up in terms of how it is organised and what is

expected of it. Perhaps a good starting point is to try to learn from the way work placements are designed and delivered in other professional domains. The PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) placement could perhaps offer a different model that could inspire rethinking some aspects of the museum studies work placement. Another move that could enhance the work placement and its added value is to make it subject to some form of assessment of a work-based project or set of tasks.

- Criteria for recruiting students should be made a little more selective and should in parallel seek to attract applicants with science and science education backgrounds (acquired through university first degrees).

Acknowledgements

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