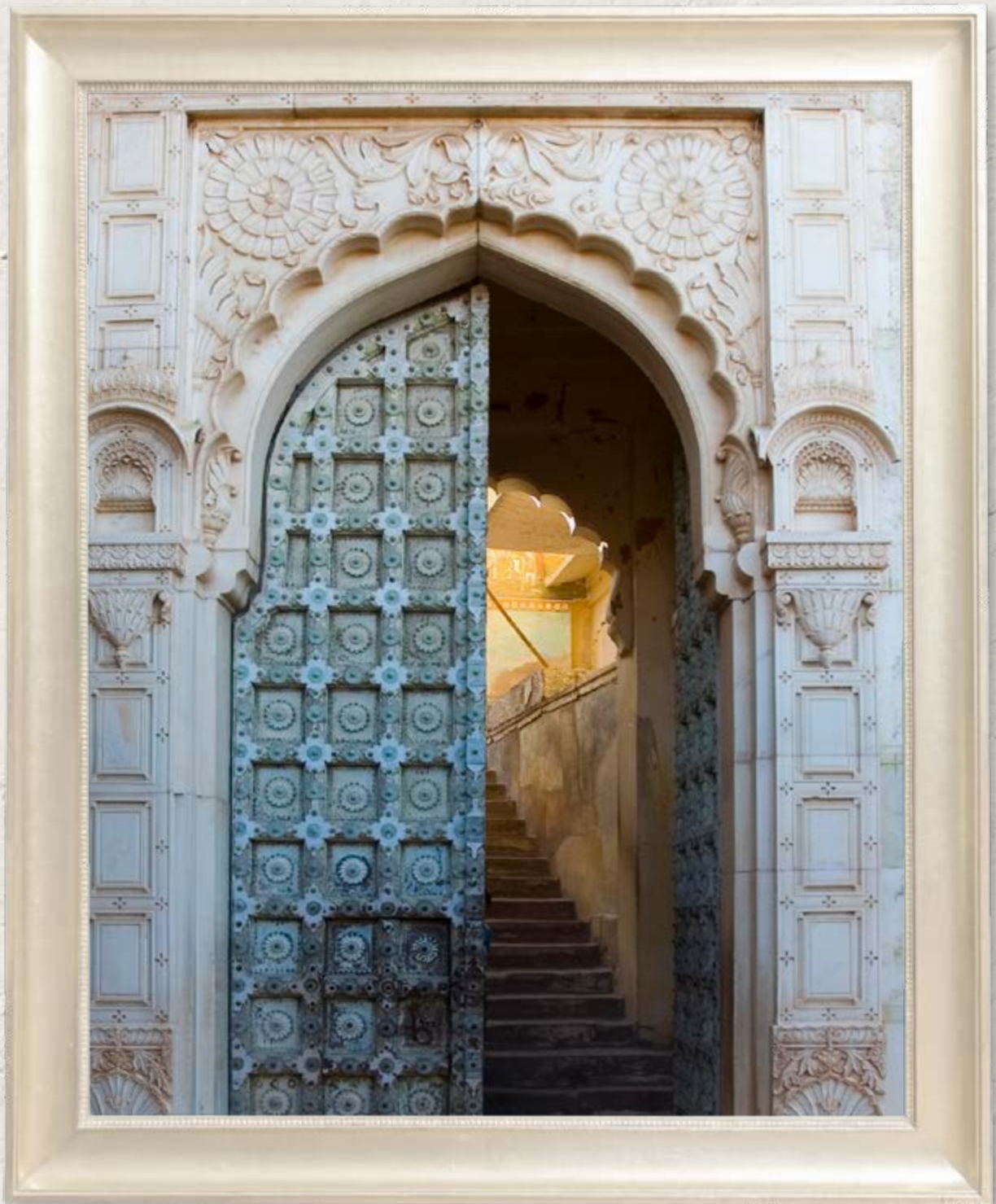


Access and Inclusion in South and South East Asian Museums



LEARNING FROM THE COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION
OF MUSEUMS' REGIONAL WORKSHOP 2019, IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH THE MEHRANGARH MUSEUM TRUST

Access and Inclusion

in South and South East Asian Museums

EDITORS

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An Unforgettable Journey

My journey with disability started in 1985 when I helped found Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Centre (SMRC). It was the first disability organisation in Odisha, and one of the first in India. It has been a long and exciting journey to see the changes that have taken place not only in the town in which I live, but across India and the globe.

In 1986 we went global ourselves, when the International Commission on Technology and Accessibility (ICTA) organised a meeting in Mumbai. ICTA was a part of Rehabilitation International, which was the oldest such organisation in the world, founded in 1922. It had members across a hundred countries, and had also designed the access symbol in 1968.

One of the biggest problems for persons with disabilities was that they were not able to go out of their homes, since nothing was accessible... It was the invisibility of people with disabilities that led us at SMRC, along with organizations across the globe, to advocate for accessibility worldwide.

When SMRC started you could barely see a wheelchair on the street, whether it was Bhubaneswar, Delhi, or New York. One of the biggest problems for persons with disabilities was that they were not able to go out of their homes, since nothing was accessible. No trains, buses or taxis were accessible; no shops or schools catered to the needs of persons with disabilities. It was the invisibility of people with

disabilities that led us at SMRC, along with organizations across the globe, to advocate for accessibility worldwide. Despite these efforts we have moved very slowly, and many people are still confined to their homes and beds.

It was obvious that there was a gap in our rights in India. In 1984, while I was in the United States, I met people who introduced me to what became the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1990. On my return home, we at SMRC discussed the need for a law for India with many like-minded organizations across the country. Through our joint efforts, the Government of India agreed to the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, which came into force on 7 February 1996. Implementation was slow and we needed to push, but disability was not a well-funded sector, and we were all volunteers. With every little change and every step we take, we are up against barriers that seem unbreakable. The stigma of disability and superstitions related to it still do not go away.

In 2004, advocacy picked up as disabled people across the world started to negotiate for a UN Convention. We participated in the negotiations together with about four hundred disabled people and their organizations. For the first time in the UN, guide dogs were allowed, and braille was used for everyday proceedings even though the UN initially said it was too expensive. The barriers kept falling, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities became the fastest adopted treaty on 13 December 2006. It was a tremendously exciting time as we waited in the General Assembly Hall with all countries for the announcement to be made. It finally

happened at midnight. India became one of the first countries to sign the Convention and committed to a new law in consonance with the treaty requirements. It took exactly a decade to get it done.

Accessibility has many facets and is needed in every aspect of our life. In 1999, a super cyclone hit Odisha. Ten thousand people died, many of them with disabilities. Funding agencies came to Bhubaneswar in the hundreds to provide support. However, no one wanted to provide for the disabled, including UN agencies and governments. Finally, with help from local persons with disabilities, we went to the field to help other persons with disabilities. NDTV came and shot a film about this work. There were patients admitted to the rehab centre whose skin was peeling off, and people who were newly paralysed, who did not know what to do. We worked until 2004 in the field as Odisha is a cyclone and flood prone area, and what became clear was the need to create awareness and institute supporting policy frameworks. Since then we have continued to advocate for accessibility and conducted research on disasters and disability, which became a major part of our work. We kept working on accessibility of cyclone shelters (which was not easy), and ramps were built; but toilets remained inaccessible. When the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction came up in 2015 for global consultation, at the pre-discussions stage we found that disability was not included. In response, Rehabilitation International's Task Force on DiDRR (of which I was a founding member) collaborated with UN agencies, and governments to organise a pre-Sendai meeting in 2014 to make the Sendai Framework inclusive. In India we have just prepared the National Guidelines on DiDRR.

Though there is an Accessible India Campaign, museums are still not an important part of it, even if some museums have made special arrangements, such as providing for children with autism who are sensitive to sound. But it is not just physical accessibility, but also communication accessibility for all that matters. By law, there are 21 identified disabilities in India. Among the new ones are thalassemia, sickle cell anaemia, acid attack victims and people with Parkinsons. Any accessibility standard for museums must take into account all disabilities, and moreover, access for older people too. The whole environment needs to be also made accessible-friendly, including staff and decision makers.

The time is right as there is interest in the issue. This workshop could be a step towards building a campaign.

To create an inclusive environment, we can set up a campaign in the countries we work in, and follow it up with the government for implementation. Besides physical accessibility, museums would need closed captioning, sign language, interactive maps, large print, accessible web sites, and specific apps. Much of this may be well-known, but we need to dream, and we need to get there. We can work out a strategy for our countries, and globally too. We would need an advocacy platform in India, and internationally. The time is right as there is interest in the issue. This workshop could be a step towards building a campaign.

To do this we would have to raise the profile of the issue both in the disability, and art and

PROF ASHA HANS



culture sectors. What if we set up a group of disabled people's organisations and activists (especially youth) interested in the issue of accessibility in museums in our countries? With them, could we get a group of sensitive and interested experts to collaborate on making art events and museums and galleries accessible?

Advocacy is not easy but there are enough people with disabilities across the globe who would go to governments and say: this is what needs to be done; it is our right. There is a media universe out there interested in projecting issues to the public. There are also sensitive government officials. We need to bring them together on a platform to enable each person with a disability who would like to enter a museum to do so. Engaging with civil society in an age of social media cascades our thoughts from international to the local and vice versa. There are new disability organisations with technology, waiting for people to use their technology, and also waiting for new ideas to

Engaging with civil society in an age of social media cascades our thoughts from international to the local and vice versa. There are new disability organizations with technology, waiting for people to use their technology, and also waiting for new ideas to inspire them.

inspire them. For those used to international advocacy, it is not a difficult task to take the first steps to make the art and cultural arena open to a child with autism, or a woman who is blind. A full-fledged programme led by the Commonwealth Association of Museums and its members in different countries would be a good foundation for a movement. It will break another barrier in the field of disability. When the UN Convention was being negotiated, people wanted to define disability. But the consensus that emerged was that it is not disability that

needs defining but the barriers which create disability. Together, let us break these barriers.

I end my discussion with the problems faced by women with disabilities, the issue that is closest to my heart. I have been involved with it both academically and as an activist. Though all our programs have mainstreamed women, in the 1990s we started a specific programme for women with disabilities by inviting emerging women leaders to a meeting. The proceedings were turned into a book published by Sage in 2003. It took time to develop it into a major initiative, as no one was interested in sponsoring programs on women with disabilities, though my writing on the subject, and conferences to highlight the issue continued. From 2008 onwards, we gained support from Rehabilitation International, which helped us move forward and establish the Women with Disabilities India Network in 2012. It was not easy, as many men did not want women to initiate their own work outside existing disability networks. In 2015-16 when the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act was being negotiated, we found to our horror that women were missing. On meeting the relevant government official, I was told that the Constitution provides for gender equality, and that Article 3.2.2 in the new law was specifically meant for women. It was discouraging that senior officers confined women to one part of an Article. Finally, the Women with Disabilities Network I had founded met the President, negotiated with civil society and stopped the Bill from being passed. The new law as of 2016 finally includes the rights of women.

We are using Human Rights mechanisms to push for inclusion. We have reported to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and now the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) on women's inclusion. The work is not confined to the urban elite but promotes emerging leadership in rural India. Issues of violence are at the core, as they are numerous. Visualising women with disabilities as asexual and at the same time over-sexual, results in the forced

The work is not confined to the urban elite but new emerging leadership building in rural India. Issues of violence are at the core, as they are numerous.

sterilisation of young girls, or forced abortion, as motherhood might produce another disabled child. Education and employment among disabled women are low, and marriage for most, a distant dream. Under such circumstances, most women are kept inside the house, their mobility is restricted, and they are often abused within the home by their carers, relatives, neighbours and people they come in contact with. Violence is part of their lives and sexual abuse is common. Despite this many women are emerging to become leaders in their own right.

I am thankful for the opportunity to share my experiences with colleagues from the museum sector from South and South East Asia, and other countries of the Commonwealth. I hope this is the beginning of another journey, which will be full of joy and productivity for all of us.



Introduction

The Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM) has been pleased to collaborate with ICOM ICTOP and ICOM India, the Mehrangarh Museum Trust in Jodhpur and the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust in Jaipur to organise our second workshop on accessibility, *Access and Inclusion in South and Southeast Asian Museums*. Our first workshop *Access in Museums in South Asia* held at the City Palace Museum in Jaipur in 2016, also resulted in a publication available through the CAM website at <http://www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam/publications/access-museums-south-asia.html>.

The Jaipur workshop focused on physical accessibility, especially access for people with limited visual and/or physical ability. It included a number of simulation exercises that helped museum colleagues to understand the perspectives of their visitors. At the end of the workshop, together, we drafted The Jaipur Declaration (included in the 2016 publication), which functions as both an aspiration and guide for cultural institutions in the region and beyond, and for all of us in the profession. It is not only curators and conservators who constitute the profession, but designers, architects, administrators, and consultants with a variety of specialist expertise. It is a 'live' declaration and we encourage colleagues to read, reflect and adapt it in whatever ways empower and improve one's practice.

At Jodhpur, the workshop took a broader view of access and inclusion, and also had a wider range of participants from across the Commonwealth: Bangladesh, Canada, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. Some participants were unable to travel to Jodhpur and

joined us via Skype. Politics is often a barrier to access and inclusion, but technology provides a means to overcome it if we (both individuals and institutions) have the will. Museums and culture remain powerful reminders of shared regional histories, and provide platforms for dialogue and connection. Professor Asha Hans, Executive Vice President of the Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Centre delivered the keynote address (the Preface in this publication). For over thirty years, Prof Hans and her organisation have worked for the rights of people with disabilities in India, especially in rural areas. She has a particular interest in the challenges disabled women face, and is the founder of the Women with Disabilities Network. Her keynote was a reminder that although museums have become more inclusive in many respects over the twentieth century – from their definition of culture, to asserting the rights of all people to access it – what ought to be a right remains an aspiration for us to deliver. But it is one that is achievable.

Workshop sessions addressed national policies and legislation in the region, highlighting the fact that the enabling framework does exist; and that regional practitioners must learn to harness these provisions to implement the changes we want to see. We explored the integration of different people in museum research and collections development (i.e., through oral history) and people with dementia and mental illness in exhibitions and programmes. In recent decades, museums have begun to seriously address questions of access and inclusion, working to improve physical and intellectual access to sites, collections and programmes, and to engage previously marginalised audiences. Yet, museums that are historic sites and former royal residences, like the Mehrangarh Fort in Jodhpur face particular challenges: structural

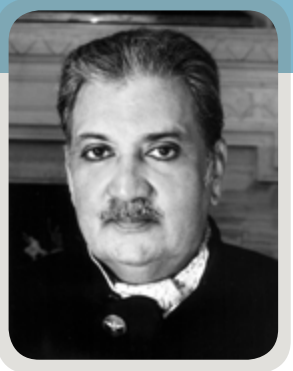


Participants on a pre-workshop tour of Mehrangarh fort

modifications risk the integrity of the site, and their perceived elite status can prove a barrier to some audiences. These should not, however, come in the way of conducting an accessibility audit, or reconceptualising signage so that literacy does not determine one's ability to access a site.

We hope that the new perspectives and insights will foster greater access and inclusion in all participants' work. By acting as a record of our sessions, this publication allows us to share experiences and learning with colleagues in the region and globally. It may prompt you to try something similar; you could improve on our efforts; or be inspired to develop something new.

CAM is an international civil society organisation based in Canada and operating in the 53 nations of the Commonwealth. It is a network of postcolonial museums and museum professionals that reflects on colonial legacies and develops new international relationships and working practices. CAM administers a distance learning programme; develops international internships for recent Canadian graduates (with the support of the Young Canada Works Building Careers in Heritage programme) as well as leads or participates in projects with partners. Current projects include Human Remains Management in Southern Africa (with ICOM ICME, the Iziko Museum of South Africa, the Museums Association of Namibia, the University of



From our Collaborators

Botswana and ICOM National Committees in the region); Migration: Cities I (Im)migration and Arrival Cities (in collaboration with ICOM CAMOC and ICOM ICR and ICOM National Committees in Greece, Mexico and Germany); and a 2020 Caribbean-Canadian museum exchange programme in collaboration with Edmonton, Canada's Caribbean diaspora community, the Museums Association of the Caribbean and ICOM Barbados. CAM organises international conferences and workshops and implements demonstration projects that empower museums to use their resources to address the SGDs.

We express our deep appreciation to ICOM, ICTOP and the Commonwealth Secretariat through the Commonwealth@70 programme for their support of the workshop and this publication, to our hosts Maharaja H. H. Gaj Singh and the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur, for their very generous hospitality throughout the workshop, and the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust, Jaipur, for sponsoring the farewell dinner.

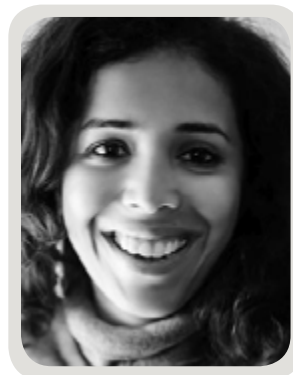
CATHERINE C. COLE
MRINALINI VENKATESWARAN
POULOMI DAS

H. H. GAJ SINGH OF JODHPUR
Managing Trustee, Mehrangarh Museum Trust

I am extremely happy that the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur, and Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, Jaipur, have collaborated with the Commonwealth Association of Museums, International Committee for Training of Personnel and ICOM India, for the two-day workshop on access and inclusion in South and Southeast Asian Museums. On behalf of the Trustees of Mehrangarh Museum Trust, I was pleased to welcome professionals from across the Commonwealth, who travelled to Jodhpur to attend this workshop for a special cause. It is heartening to see that it has resulted in this important publication, that we are proud to have supported. It is very important for the cultural institutions we represent to create an attitudinal shift in the way people think about disability,

equality, and inclusion. The workshop sought to advance our understanding of this issue, and this publication will achieve the valuable task of sharing deliberations at Jodhpur with colleagues in the region. I hope that the discussions at Jodhpur will go a long way in shaping policy frameworks in different institutions.

Mehrangarh Museum Trust has been continuously upgrading its facilities. We have recently embarked upon a new master plan, which includes a new visitor centre, state of the art conservation and archival facility and a gallery redesign plan. All these projects will have Access and Inclusion central to their planning and execution.



HH Gaj Singh opening the workshop (left) and cutting a 'Commonwealth@70' cake to commemorate 70 years of the founding of the modern Commonwealth (right)



KARNI SINGH JASOL
Director, Mehrangarh Museum Trust

We have been delighted to collaborate with CAM and our friends at Jaipur on this workshop. We have been working to make our museum – which is in a fort and therefore not built to be accessible – more welcoming to people of all abilities. We have made some beginnings – some after attending the last CAM workshop – such as installing ramps and initiating projects for braille guides,

web access, teacher training, and resources for the hearing impaired. But it is always good to have a refresher course, and to do it along with colleagues from other institutions, and, even better, from across the wider region. By disseminating what we did and what we learnt, I hope this publication contributes to the ongoing learning efforts of the museum community to become more inclusive in our practice.



NEIL GREENTREE © MEHRANGARH MUSEUM TRUST



DARKO BABIĆ / LEENA TOKILA
ICOM-ICTOP immediate past & acting chairs
REGIONAL ROUNDTABLE ON ACCESS AND INCLUSION



ICOM-ICTOP (ICOM's International Committee for the Training of Personnel) was established over 50 years ago (in 1968) to provide direction in museum professional training when the field was just beginning to professionalise. From that moment it has been ICTOP's goal to contribute to the professional development of colleagues working in museums all around the world. ICTOP's overall mission is to encourage and promote varied training programmes, be it at university level, or further on. Short or mid-range training workshops, seminars, and conferences in all regions of the world are equally important, as part of museum workers' life-long education and professional development. In this effort ICTOP collaborates with diverse partners: other ICOM national and international committees, museum & heritage associations, institutions or other delivery agencies. We strive to develop professional standards which will prepare museum workers for today's and future institutional challenges, since we believe education and training are the precondition of good practice and professional action for our sector.

"Access and Inclusion in Museums in South and Southeast Asian Museums" was a workshop we organised in November 2019 in collaboration with the Commonwealth Association of Museums (CAM), ICOM India, the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur, and the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust, Jaipur. It perfectly fits all ICTOP's goals, and its mission, as mentioned above. This workshop was the second on the topic (the first was held in Jaipur in 2016, at the City Palace Museum) and importantly focused on national policies and legislation in represented countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Singapore,

Canada, and the UK). Diverse topics, ideas and practices concerning access and inclusion within different kinds of museum work were shared and discussed, including benchmarking with best practice in Canada and the United Kingdom. The workshop was organised in keeping with the theme – in a dynamic, inclusive and participative way, experts and participants exchanged ideas, their knowledge, best practices, challenges and solutions, which could be adapted on the one hand in their home institutions, but also beyond.

Accordingly, we invite you to read this publication which is one of the workshop's tangible results. We do believe it could inspire you; if you have or share similar challenges, maybe it will offer you some answers and solutions, no matter where you live and work. Issues of access and inclusion are basically the same all around the world.

We would like to end by expressing our thanks to ICOM Headquarters in Paris for supporting the workshop through its Special Projects Programme, the Commonwealth Association of Museums (including the Commonwealth@70 programme for their support) as well as ICOM India, the Mehrangarh Museum Trust (for overall support and hospitality) and the Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust (sponsor of the farewell dinner) for hosting and supporting us in, indeed, incredible parts of India.

Regional Roundtable

on Access and Inclusion



The Status of Accessibility and Inclusion in Museums of Bangladesh

MD. SERAJUL ISLAM, BANGLADESH

Deputy Keeper, Department of Ethnography and Decorative Art, Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka

The British brought the concept of the museum to Bengal. The Varendra Research Museum is considered the oldest in Bangladesh, and was established in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in 1910. Although Dhaka Museum, the precursor of the Bangladesh National Museum, was formally established in 1913, after the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, the new-born nation state considered it a prime necessity to upgrade the Dhaka Museum. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the Nation, wanted his countrymen to know the true history of Bangladesh's struggle. In his address he declared, "The time has come when our younger generation should know the actual history of the past sacrifices and resistance movements." He appealed to his compatriots to donate all objects connected in any way with the struggle for freedom, to establish museums.

There are about two hundred museums and four hundred and seventy different heritage sites in Bangladesh. They record local and foreign visitors in different ways, but no record for disabled visitors exists. The Bangladesh National Museum, Varendra Research Museum and Taka Museum record average daily visitor numbers as 3500-4000, 400-500 and 200-300 respectively. Some provide different facilities to disabled persons, but none have facilities for visually impaired persons.

Some reasons for the prevalence of disability in Bangladesh are overpopulation, extreme, poverty, illiteracy, lack of awareness, and lack of medical care and services. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), the prevalence rate of disability was 0.82, 0.47, and 0.60 in 1981, 1991, and 2001 respectively.

According to the 2001 Disability Welfare Act, the disability types are defined as follows: persons with visual impairment, physical disabilities, hearing impairment, speech impairment, mental disability and multiple disabilities. Beyond this characterisation of disabilities, another form known as autistic disability has been used in the literature (The National Autistic Society 2015). The Bangladesh Constitution states that 'no citizen shall, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, be subjected to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to access to any place of public entertainment, or resort, or admission to any educational institution'. In 1995 the First National Policy for the Disabled was approved by the Government. The policy mainstreamed disability into the country's development agenda. An action plan to operationalize this policy was approved in 1996. The Disability Welfare Act was enacted in the National Parliament in 2001. The Rules for its implementation were finally published in the form of a gazette notification in 2008. Bangladesh introduced a Cultural Policy in 2006. One of the main objectives of the policy is: To protect and promote all cultural expressions in Bangladesh regardless of caste, class, religion, origin etc.

For Bangladesh's museums, the challenge to give access to all disabled people and the communities-not-coming-to-museums and to include them in all activities are due to the lack of awareness among the concerned museum personnel and policy makers. However, the opportunity to deliver this goal exists because the policy frameworks have already been formulated and approved.



Wheelchair Service of BNM



Ramp of BNM



PROGRESS OF BANGLADESHI MUSEUMS IN POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO VISITORS

TYPE OF ACCESS	SOME ISSUES TO CONSIDER	SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT	SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO VISITOR DEVELOPMENT
PHYSICAL ACCESS	<i>Is our museum building physically accessible?</i>	<i>Install ramps, handrails and seats</i>	<i>Most museums are accessible</i>
SENSORY ACCESS	<i>Can our exhibitions, events and facilities be used by people with hearing or sight impairments?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offer objects that can be touched - Use varied means of interpretation such as taped guides, subtitled audiovisual presentations etc. - Use hearing enhancement systems 	<i>Almost not accessible; but sometimes arranged</i>
INTELLECTUAL ACCESS	<i>Do our exhibitions exclude people with background knowledge?</i> <i>Can people with learning disabilities access our services?</i>	<i>Consult and involve new audiences limited in the production of exhibitions</i> <i>Evaluate levels of our understanding amongst a range of audiences when developing exhibitions</i>	<i>Not accessible</i>
FINANCIAL ACCESS	<i>Does our admission charge deter people on low incomes?</i> <i>Do our shop and cafe into sell items which families can afford?</i>	<i>Offer free admission on certain days and publicize it widely</i> <i>Take the museum the community provided free transport</i>	<i>Financially accessible; sometimes on special days free access provided and publicized</i>
EMOTIONAL/ ATTITUDINAL ACCESS	<i>Is our museum environment welcoming to new visitors?</i> <i>Do our staff have an open attitude to diversity?</i>	<i>Train staff</i> <i>Organize special events and activities</i>	<i>Almost not accessible; but large museums like National Museum do something</i>
ACCESS TO DECISION-MAKING	<i>Does our museum consult potential new audiences and value the input of external stakeholders?</i>	<i>Develop projects in partnership with audiences</i> <i>Establish a consultative panel</i>	<i>Major big museums do; but small museums do not</i>
ACCESS TO INFORMATION	<i>Does our publicity effectively reach, and communicate with new audiences?</i>	<i>Develop new, accessible marketing networks and methods of communication</i> <i>Produce publicity and orientation in large print, tape, braille, different languages etc.</i>	<i>Major big museums do; but small museums do not</i>
CULTURAL ACCESS	<i>Do our collections, displays and events reflect the interests and life experiences of our target audience?</i>	<i>Implement new collecting policy</i> <i>Undertake re-displays with appropriate interpretation</i>	<i>Trying to do the best; still needs more initiatives</i>

Table: Adaptation of Jocelyn Dodd and Richard Sandell Model for Bangladeshi Museums



Interpreting Objects and building Partnerships for Inclusion: Theory and Practice

PROF AMBIKA PATEL, INDIA

Head, Department of Museology, M.S. University of Baroda

My presentation at the CAM workshop at Mehrangarh focused on how to blend interpretation of museum objects effectively with building partnerships to enable museums to embrace visitors of various segments. Integrating inclusion and accessibility as part of taught courses in museology at higher education institutions, and in museum training programmes, is the need of the hour. Museums in India need to establish education and outreach departments that prioritise inclusion and access too. And it is essential that they develop close collaborations and partnerships with local organisations, other museums, and cultural and social organisations operating at different levels, to make inclusion and accessibility a wide reality.

The Department of Museology at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda has been partnering and collaborating with local organisations working for specially abled and visually impaired children. We have made every effort to enable museology students to understand the realities of access and inclusion, by conducting workshops. In recent years, the Department has also successfully developed strong collaborations with museums, cultural and non-governmental organisations to meet the demands of access and inclusion.

We have continuously and consistently taken initiatives at the Department Museum for access and inclusion, contributing to experiential learning for museology postgraduate students so that they understand both the theory and practice of inclusion and access through extension activities. The activities we conducted for our students as part of their learning, generated confidence in them for conducting similar programs in museum contexts wherever they get an opportunity.

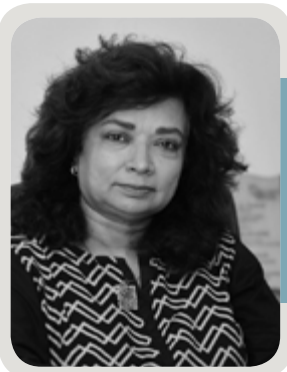
Over the last few years, our initiatives have placed us in the position of being one of the few higher educational institutions that put effort into training future museum professionals for access and inclusion. In partnership with Disha Foundation, Vadodara, the Department conducts workshops for children suffering from Down's Syndrome and other disabilities in the Department Museum. We are also working on developing a braille book for our display and are on a mission to develop networks and to act as a resource point for regional and national level museums for tactile initiatives. Trained museum professionals with administrative and leadership abilities to work well in groups, communicate productively and engage the community, with a clear understanding of access and inclusion could definitely result in a radical change in the museum profession.



Touch and feel activity for children with Downs Syndrome



Art activity for children with Downs Syndrome



Access and inclusion in Pakistan: following on from the 2016 CAM workshop

DR ASMA IBRAHIM, PAKISTAN

Director, Museum, Archives & Art Gallery Department, State Bank of Pakistan, Karachi

The first workshop on accessibility in heritage buildings, was held in February 2016 in Jaipur, India, which I was able to attend. Following that, we started several projects to improve accessibility in our Museum.

First, we began a joint venture between Siddhant Shah and the State Bank Museum. He had worked on a braille guidebook for the City Palace when he was interning there, which I saw at the workshop, and we decided to make one for ours too. It was an uphill task due to the political situation between two countries, but the persistence between the two partners made it possible, and the first ever brochure in braille for any museum of Pakistan was published. It was well received by local blind schools. We also added an audio component in Urdu and English for these special visitors.

We held workshops with several schools and training institutions for the visually impaired, to share various techniques of photography that I learnt in Jaipur. The photographs were

then developed, made tactile, and framed by State Bank of Pakistan Museum as a way to generate income for these students. Because embossed printing is not available in Pakistan, we worked with a chemist who developed another way of making the photographs tactile, by using glass lead paint. Although it was a difficult task, we trained a few young officers to help and that is how we made the images tactile, along with captions in braille. Several schools, interns and volunteers showed interest in learning the photography technique, and we arranged training for them. These people are now teaching this technique further. Now we have included this in our Museum internship program as a permanent feature.

We also converted one of our publications, titled 'Currency of Pakistan', into braille and printed complimentary copies for the blind schools we worked with. The Ministry of Literature and History has a braille printing press; the Museum is now collaborating with them to convert other publications into braille.



Towards Accessibility and Inclusivity: Singapore's Heritage Institutions in Action

JAMAL MOHAMAD, SINGAPORE

Senior Manager (Programmes), Malay Heritage Centre, Heritage Institutions, Singapore

In 2018, the National Heritage Board (NHB) of Singapore launched *Our SG Heritage Plan*: a master plan that outlines broad strategies and initiatives for Singapore's heritage and museum sector over the following five years. The strategies and initiatives aim to raise awareness and pride in Singapore's heritage and to strengthen our identity, improve our quality of life and foster our sense of belonging. *Our Sg Heritage Plan* is divided into four pillars, each converging on an aspect of Singapore's heritage: Our Places, Our Cultures, Our Treasures and Our Communities.

One of the main objectives of the plan is to make museums more accessible and inclusive. What this means is for museums to consider how their architecture and exhibition designs can cater to the underserved within our society.

This includes the elderly, those with learning difficulties or the physically challenged, and those from lower economic strata. To kick off the plan, each NHB institution was assigned an area of focus. The Heritage Institutions (HI), which are focal points of Singapore's different ethnic communities (Chinese, Malay, Indian), were designated as Silver Hubs.

The NHB's Silver Hub goal is to position our Museums and HIs as community spaces which offer meaningful and enriching arts and heritage experiences for the silver community. To achieve this goal, 4 strategic thrusts were developed:

- *Strategy 1: Promote the use of our museums and HIs as platforms to enhance and celebrate the silver community's well-being*
- *Strategy 2: Develop age-friendly programmes*



Group photo of artist with seniors



(Left) Health & Social Care Workshops in Liverpool in July 2018

(Below) Proud participants and their completed works



targeted at the silver community at our Museums and HIs

- Strategy 3: Create opportunities for the silver community to give back to the museums and HIs and to society
- Strategy 4: Conduct research and build capabilities for effective programme delivery and sustainable engagement

Acknowledging that NHB institutions do not necessarily have the requisite expertise in creating content for the silver community, it was necessary for officers working on the Silver Hub programme to explore strategic partnerships with health organisations as well as social service organisations.

Promote the use of our museums and HIs as platforms to enhance and celebrate the silver community's well-being

A primary driving factor for introducing the Silver Hub programme is the increase of senior visitors over the past decade. Like many developed countries, Singapore has an ageing population, with many of its elderly living in homes. As the number of elderly residences grow, homes are pressured to identify suitable activities for them. As a result, museums have seen more regular requests from homes to provide suitable activities for elderly visitors. At the same time, as museums receive more elderly visitors, it is imperative that their infrastructure supports the needs of the elderly. Issues of mobility and accessibility are a real concern. To

meet this demand, in 2019, NHB embarked on an accessibility audit to review all aspects of accessibility from infrastructure (e.g. how elder friendly are our museums and heritage institutions etc.) to content (e.g. how elderly friendly are our programmes or the presentation of our content etc.).

Through the accessibility audit and its findings, NHB hopes to develop solutions which will include infrastructural enhancements, the use of assistive technologies as well as the redesign of existing programmes (or the development of new programmes) to more effectively engage the silver generation.

Develop signature age-friendly programmes targeted at the silver community at our Museums and HIs

Since 2018, the HIs have delved into more programmes that are suitable for elderly visitors under the Silver Hub banner. Some of the Silver Hub programmes include exhibition-related craft activities, the 'Heritage Trunks' programme, 'House of Memories Project', 'Reminiscence Walk @ HIs' and the 'Be My Robo Date' Programme.

Some of these programmes were designed in partnership with artists, social service organisations, hospitals and elderly homes. It was necessary to trial these programmes to cater to elderly people of different physical capabilities and interest. To ensure the success

and positive impact of the programmes, an impact assessment component was included to measure how participants felt before, during, and after the programme.

Create opportunities for silver community to give back to the museums and HIs and to society

The HIs have also created platforms for the elderly to 'give back' to society with their wealth of knowledge and experience. Even before the launch of Our SG Heritage Plan, the HIs have been collaborating with the National Arts Council and individual veteran artists to perform as part of the HIs respective programmes and festivals. These platforms have also allowed for the exchange of knowledge across generations of artists, with many opportunities for the young to learn from veteran performers who are considered experts in their field.

Conduct research and build capabilities for effective programme delivery and sustainable engagement

Finally, NHB has embarked on several research projects that focus on i) impact of arts, heritage and culture participation on persons with

dementia, their carers and society, and ii) outcome of programmes on person-centred care in a multi-cultural society. Conducted in partnership with Singapore's Alzheimer's Disease Association, Asian Women's Welfare Association, Empower Ageing Limited, and Khoo Teck Phuat Hospital, these studies are scheduled to conclude by the end of 2022.

At the same time NHB is also actively training its staff, programme partners and volunteers to be better equipped in creating content for the silver hub programme. To date, up to 230 staff, programme partners and volunteers have been trained.

Conclusion

NHB's Silver Hub programme hopes to reach up to 6,000 elderly persons, train 250 elderly guides, gallery attendants and programme facilitators, and train up to 2,000 persons by 2022 to oversee the management of the various Silver Hub initiatives.

As of July 2019, NHB has already surpassed this target and is set to expand its goal in making its museums and heritage institutions more accessible to everyone, everywhere, every day.



(Left and Above) Heritage Trunks and the selected items for the themes of Lifestyle & Entertainment and Dressing Up



Reinventing Museums in Sri Lanka

HASINI HAPUTHANTHRI, SRI LANKA
Consultant

Sri Lanka has over 100 museums, spread all over the island. They are mostly located in cities and places of tourist interest, and are also highly visited by schools and the local public.

In Sri Lanka, the evolution of museums must essentially be understood against the backdrop of colonialism and the struggle for independence. Though popular, Sri Lankan museums still seem saddled with the nationalist rhetoric, ironically rooted in colonial wonderment, displaying an outdated, and often exclusionary curatorial vision. The public perception of a museum is as a bastion of essentialised 'culture', leading the museums to be archaic, aloof, less interactive and disconnected from the day-to-day cultural realities of the people. 87% of the museums are run by the government and there are very few private/public museums. This means that museums exude an ethos of state bureaucracy which makes them slow in reinventing themselves and answering to the present and the future requirements of Sri Lankan society.

Few Sri Lankan museums contextualise the island in a larger regional or global context,

creating the impression that museums are solely to represent 'national' culture and nothing beyond the island's boundaries. Thus, there is an urgent need to reinvent the museums in the island to be more relevant, inclusive, futuristic, and global in their outlook. In terms of interactivity and education, there is much scope for improvement. Not even the national museum offers an audio tour, and few museums have educators who actually guide the public. A discussion on accessibility is slowly starting.

There is a dearth of trained museum professionals who are well versed in museum management. Most of the training received by museum professionals is in the field of conservation.

The post-war economic boom saw Sri Lanka topping travel destination lists, and tourism is on the rise. Museums are under pressure to deliver a more qualitative experience to visitors and there are new museums opening around the country. This presents an opportunity for us to do something new.

Workshop Sessions



Getting the Objects to Talk: Working with Oral Histories in Museums

HASINI HAPUTHANTHRI, SRI LANKA
Consultant

Oral history has become popular in museums in the recent years as their personal and aural nature appeals to audiences of all ages, abilities, and interest levels. It makes content more readily accessible to the public. It has become a successful way in 'bringing lifeless objects to talk'. However, oral history is not only a tool to create powerful experiences for visitors but also a methodology to engage communities which are often distant from museum practice. Furthermore, oral history is at the heart of emerging practices of acknowledging conflicted histories of cultural ownership and the need for inclusion – 'whose stories are these?' 'who is telling them?' 'who is presenting them and how?' This is of particular relevance in Sri Lanka, where recent ethnic conflict and its fallout has overshadowed all other discussions. Access and inclusion here mean bringing together diverse communities, often affected by conflict.

Activity

1. Introduction of participants (10 - 15 minutes):

I am

I joined this session because
(motivation i.e., I am currently working on an oral history project and would like to explore; or expectation i.e., I want to know more about....)
Or - Their own experience of a successful use of oral history in an exhibition, why did it work?

2. Group activity with oral history material

(45 min: 15 min familiarisation with oral history material, 15 min for curatorial statement, 15 min for questions)

Objectives

The 2 hour session explored ways in which museums can work with oral history material and oral history projects to increase accessibility and inclusion by connecting communities, curators and museum visitors. It explored these ideas by working on oral history material already gathered to create exhibitions in India and Sri Lanka and available online.

Participants worked with oral history material and worked out recommendations for presenting them to different audiences in temporary/permanent exhibition pieces.

Participants discussed challenges related to collection, custodianship, ownership and cultural appropriation related to use of oral history within museums.

Participants formed 2 groups and worked on already collected oral histories. The aim was to evolve a curatorial framework for an exhibition, but the approach was to ask a series of questions and exchange responses and diverse views.

Group 1 Source Material

Archive of Memory: Reflections of 70 years of Independence in Sri Lanka
<https://www.archiveofmemory.lk/>

The group was given about 5-6 stories based on everyday objects like spectacles, water jug, pencil, saree etc. familiar to rural audiences in Sri Lanka

Group 2 Source Material

Indian Memory Project
<https://www.indianmemoryproject.com/>

The group was given about 6 stories of partition and migration in India. In these groups, participants discussed the following questions:

- What are the main considerations in presenting oral histories?
- What is the emerging narrative? Is there one, or are there many? How do we deal with that?
- Ideas to engage/connect narrators, curators and audiences

General Reflections and Conclusions

Why Oral History?

Participants felt that oral history's main contribution is in opening up new ways in understanding the past – and human experience in general. Most participants found an emotional connection with the stories and valued the emotional depth of lived memories often lacking in impersonal/objective history lessons.

Oral history enables 'history from below', bringing out hitherto hidden or silent voices. This facilitates the inclusion of various groups of people who are regularly missing from official records, and thus official histories.

It also focuses our attention on many truths captured in many voices (polyvocality) instead of one, singular truth often defined by an official narrative.

Objects and Oral History

Participants emphasised that object-based oral histories had immense potential to be included in exhibitions. Objects' materiality harnesses the elusiveness of memory and helps both the storyteller and the visitor to focus. The methodology empowers individuals through the process of remembering, recalling and even reinterpreting the past.

3. Plenary discussion and reflections (20 min)

Apart from the above questions the group also reflected on the following:

- Who are the story tellers, who are the curators, who are the audiences?
- What are the value additions? What are the limitations/challenges?
- How can a similar oral history project add value to your museum?

Oral History in Museums

Oral history can benefit museums and especially museum education in many ways. Participants reflected on some possibilities within their own contexts:

- Inclusion of oral history in exhibits can engage diverse audiences and help them relate to the objects on display – oral history can enhance narrative authenticity, by giving it additional layers of emotional, social and historical meaning
- Oral history can make the story presented more interesting, enriching it by adding many perspectives instead of one, and lead audiences
- Oral history projects can bring communities closer to the museum
- Oral history projects make excellent museum education initiatives
- Including oral history can facilitate a new understanding of museums as dynamic agents in empowering people and increase their sense of identity and belonging





Access and Inclusion: Making museums more dementia-friendly and accessible to the mental health community

CHARLOTTE SPINK
Access and Community Engagement Officer, Durham University Library and Collections, UK

Aims

- To understand why engaging with museums and heritage can be beneficial to people living with dementia and mental health challenges
- To understand the hallmarks of high-quality engagement with these audiences
- To recognise that museums are spaces for participation
- To recognise that our practices in this area should be holistic, dialogical and sustainable
- To explore some simple, low-cost creative activities for engaging people living with dementia

Guidelines

Museums are social spaces. Museums can facilitate positive social experiences which can reduce feelings of loneliness and social isolation. Museums can facilitate opportunities for learning and acquiring new skills, thus promoting increased self-esteem, confidence, curiosity and meaning making.

Museums are places of creativity and self-expression and this can be a positive distraction from medical or home environments, reducing anxiety and fostering positive emotions like optimism, hope and enjoyment. Engaging regularly with a group of people can help build a renewed sense of identity and community, and contribute to breaking down the social stigma and out-dated attitudes that still surround mental health and dementia to build a more inclusive society. In practical terms, this means a lot more than opening the museum door and waiting for this audience to find us. As museum and heritage professionals, we need to actively build partnerships with people, organisations and communities to create opportunities for people to participate in the life of the museum.

High-quality engagement must be beneficial for everyone involved; participants first and foremost, but also us as museum professionals in terms our building experience and capacity.



It must also benefit the institutions we work for, for example by helping to meet a strategic goal or attract funding. Work on access, inclusion and participation must be based on open, honest dialogue with the people you work with. Dialogue starts with understanding, so start by developing knowledge and training around dementia and mental health awareness. Find a local charity, speak to a clinician, or social worker who has specialist expertise in this area. There are also a wealth of resources online.

Have a conversation with the people you would like to work with. Museum budgets and resources are finite, so do not over-promise what you can deliver. Start small and build trust before attempting a large project.

It is important that all members of museum staff, from cleaners, gallery attendants and security guards to curators and managers understand why you are working with this community, and why it is beneficial for those involved. The whole museum team should work together to make people living with dementia or mental health difficulties feel welcome, respected and valued. Every area of the museum should be geared towards being accessible, including the toilets.

Working sustainably and planning for long term engagement where possible is preferable. Once your initial funding has ended, how could this work continue? What other sources of funding are available locally? What charities or partner organisations could help share costs? Could the work generate income to reinvest and become self-sustaining?

Carrying out a dementia-audit of your museum or workplace

First, consider the potential barriers that prevent people with dementia and their families from engaging with museums and heritage sites. Barriers can take many forms, including physical, sensory, financial, technological, attitudinal/ social, intellectual and cultural. Then identify potential solutions to reduce or remove the barriers.

Engaging with people living with dementia or mental health problems can seem daunting at first. Below are some low-cost, low-resource, flexible activities suitable for this audience. These are designed to be creative, fun, inclusive and help build trust and confidence without intimidating. Thy could be adapted to different settings and the needs of your participants.

Activity

1. Consider your own museum or heritage site

What are the barriers that prevent people living with dementia or mental health difficulties from engaging and participating?
Use the headings to help you identify the barriers and potential solutions.

TYPE OF BARRIER	BARRIER	SOLUTION
Physical		
Sensory		
Intellectual		
Cultural		
Attitudinal		
Financial		
Technological		
Geographical		

2. Taking a pencil for a walk...

We used a twentieth century abstract print by artist Paul Klee as stimulus for discussion (but this could be any object you have in your collection that is safe to handle). Avoid bombarding people with questions about what they think of the object or what they can see. Give people time to look and respond to the piece in their own way. They may have questions, comments or thoughts. Their responses may be non-verbal and people may trace their fingers over the marks the artist has made.

Paul Klee famously said, “A drawing is simply a line going for a walk.” We used that quote as the inspiration for a creative activity in which participants choose a pencil or other mark-making tool and together move around a central table on which a giant paper has been laid. The result is a large-scale artwork to which the whole group has contributed. Close the session by reflecting on the finished piece. The finished artwork can be displayed or used to create other artworks.

3. Consequences

This is a creative game that can use a variety of media: paper and pen, modelling clay or whatever is available.

Participants are asked to take a piece of clay and make a head. It could be big, it could be small, it could be the head of a dragon, a monster etc. Everyone then passes their head to the person on their left. Then everyone makes a body to join the head. Everyone then passes this head and body to the person on their left. Then everyone makes some eyes for the head. Continue in this way for as many rounds as desired. You can be as creative as you like, adding ears, mouths, noses, jewellery, hats, glasses, tails, wings and more.

The end result is range of curious, funny creatures that all look very different, but that everyone has contributed to without any pressure of making something ‘perfect’ or feelings of ‘I’m not good at art’.



Print: Young Moe (1938), by Paul Klee. Image courtesy of the Oriental Museum, Durham University.



Welcome Disability Welcome This-ability: An incremental approach to museum access and inclusion

SIDDHANT SHAH, INDIA

Museum Access Consultant, Founder, Access For ALL

Introduction

Accessibility is a multi-faceted word and all its aspects need equal attention. Accessibility is not just limited to wheelchair-accessible bathrooms or having one or two braille signs. It is more than that. Physical access is definitely a part of it, but one also needs to focus on intellectual and social access. The presentation focused on the importance of a step-by-step approach towards accessibility, supported by case studies of our projects. We talked of Comprehensive Access versus Focused Access. We have found that when the museums or heritage sites begin with a comprehensive access audit, they get so bogged down by the negative, inaccessible features of the site, that they give up. So, we discussed:

- *The need to strike a balance and find the starting point – incorporating accessibility in the museum management plan*
- *Immediate, small steps that museums can take towards access and inclusion*

Activity

This was based on step one of an access audit: Audience Assessment. Participants had to develop a visitor map to easily navigate the labyrinth-like Mehrangarh Fort. The idea was to develop a map that addressed multiple needs ranging from age to literacy.

Method

The method was simple: to observe how visitors moved around the fort, identify a visitor category to address (such as elderly or families), and try to design a visitors' map for easy access and an enhanced experience. Participants were divided into teams and asked to go around the museum to cover as wide an area as possible. For instance, there is also a temple within the fort,

which attracts a different category of visitors from the regular museum-going public. After that, teams were asked to sketch, draw, stick or even write out an idea for an ideal visitor map.

Outcomes and reflection

Everyone had a different approach. One group focused on developing a set of maps rather than making a single map, as they felt that the monument was too big, with multiple vantage points, and small stories to explore as one walks or takes the lift to reach different levels. The focus for this team was young adults and young families. They felt visitors are more invested in seeing a place if they are served bite-sized pieces of information. This is an important takeaway, because information can overwhelm visitors – especially those with intellectual disabilities – if not done thoughtfully. Design, layout, size and the font used for communication material are equally important for those with low vision or no vision at all.





A second group focused on local travellers from the hinterlands and on language-based barriers, for those who may not read or understand English. They created a map that could be navigated based on colour, which is a universal language of communication. Of course, one can play devil's advocate and ask: what about those who are colour blind? Hence it is important to understand that providing accessibility does not have a single solution. It is an incremental plan to achieve maximum access using the available resources. Some tips for easy and accessible visual designs are:

- Use clear icons.
- Use colour to highlight or complement what is already visible
- Use a sans-serif font. Minimum size – 18 pts
- Maintain adequate contrast between text and its background
- Be careful with forms. Use universal internationally approved icons. For example, sign language has an established icon to use

Another group observed that (almost) all visitors – old, young, from the city or abroad – were on their phones, clicking pictures. So, they took a digital, app-based approach. They wanted to design an app that could be coded with easy screen access, language options and augmented reality pop-ups whilst enjoying the monument, as per the definition of digital accessibility: 'the ability of a website, mobile application or

electronic document to be easily navigated and understood by a wide range of users, including those users who have visual, auditory, motor or cognitive disabilities.'

Conclusion

The activity helped us reiterate the value of a step-by-step approach. The first stage of achieving access is an Accessibility Assessment and Audit Report for your museum. It is an important tool to identify barriers within the building and displays, as well as external areas such as cafes, museums shops, car parking etc. The audit provides a "base-line" assessment against which initial recommendations can be made. With the results of the access report, your museum will be better equipped to make short and long-term access improvement action plans. However, implementing that plan should not become overwhelming, and that is where small exercises like designing a better visitor map can contribute towards an incremental, but important change.



How many levels of inclusion can you think?

TEJSHVI JAIN, INDIA

Founding Director, ReReeti Foundation for Museums, Galleries and Heritage Sites

How do we make our exhibitions inclusive? What are the different aspects of being inclusive? How can we engage with different audiences during the life cycle of an exhibition? Though most of us want an increase in footfalls and impact, how innovative are we in achieving this? While many external factors influence footfalls and impact, can thinking of inclusiveness at every stage affect the numbers? If so, how?

Aim

True to the spirit of the workshop, the session was designed to facilitate dialogue and communication amongst participants; to hear the different voices and collectively evolve solutions to roadblocks museums face in their efforts to be inclusive.

Activity

The workshop comprised of 4 activities which were done in groups. This was followed by a few examples of case studies from India. The workshop ended with participants inspired by the discussion to reflect on their own practice and work within their organisations, and what they would do once back home.

Activity 1

Participants were asked to make a list of all that makes life worth living.

The list was interesting as the group comprised of professionals of different generations. There were a few common things that made life worth living: family, friends, love, food, pursuit of knowledge, nature, music, arts, freedom, helping other people and making a difference in people's life. There were a few things which the younger professionals

listed like adventure, travelling to new places, money, work, Netflix and social media.

The list made by the participants fell under the 5 heads of John O'Brien's Five Dimensions of Inclusion:

- Being someone
- Belonging
- Contributing
- Sharing ordinary spaces
- Choice and control

This could also be the scaffolding museums/ heritage sites can use to engage with their target community.

Activity 2

Participants were asked to list the 3 most popular audience types and 3 underrepresented communities in their museums/ heritage sites.

The most common were local city folks, school groups, tourists (Indian and international), subject lovers, and in certain cases the rural population (based on the location of the heritage site).

The underrepresented communities, or those the participants would like to see in their spaces, were senior citizens, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, underprivileged people or people living below the poverty line, young adults and children between the age of 0 to 5 years.

There were a few that fitted in both the categories based on the geographical location of the museum/ heritage site like artists, researchers, people from the creative industries and corporate sector. While the underrepresented communities

are no surprise, the question is how many of these can be engaged within one single exhibition?

Activity 3

Participants were asked to outline the process of setting up an exhibition from ideation to the final report, resulting in the following broad stages:

- *Brainstorming/ concept/ proposal*
- *Planning / budget and fundraising*
- *Research/ curation/ selection*
- *Acquisition*
- *Conservation*
- *Exhibition design*
- *Text*
- *Fabrication*
- *Marketing and promotion*
- *Outreach and programming*
- *Instillation and de-instillation*
- *Evaluation*

Within this process how or where do we involve our communities?

Activity 4

Based on what makes one feel inclusive, and the community one wishes to engage with in the lifecycle of an exhibition, the groups had to brainstorm possible scenarios and solutions. Based on the group discussions each participant was then asked to fill a form where they had to pen down one objective they would like to work on. This was further broken down into actions to be taken, how it would be measured, outcomes and budget. This was something that the participants took back with them.

Some suggestions for being inclusive were:

- *A session with a few members of the target*

audience to understand their views, requirements and beliefs on the proposed exhibition

- *Creating focus groups whose feedback is taken at critical stages during the exhibition*
- *Creating collaborative partners at different stages like fundraising, themes, curation, restoration, documentation and of course, programming*

While many of us know these approaches, where we get stuck is how to do it. A few examples of community engagement within India were shared to inspire and answer the question of 'how'.

Arna-Jharna, Jodhpur, Rajasthan

It is best known for its broom project, which links a range of examples of brooms from the region (collected in collaboration with the communities that produce and use them) with contextual issues. For example, the stigmatisation through caste, the poverty that broom-makers experience, and the perception that other communities have of them. The museum also was able to develop an understanding of the relationship between the biodiversity of the desert and the lives of people inhabiting and surviving its harsh, yet nurturing, environment. The challenge addressed here is how do museums make themselves relevant for their audiences? How can the collection go beyond preserving objects to addressing present day issues? How does one bridge the gap between academia, research and community engagement? Arna-Jharna is not just a museum of objects displayed but an innovative lab addressing issues faced in the region.

Living and Learning Design Centre, Kutch, Gujarat

The Living and Learning Design Centre (LLDC) is a place for preserving, promoting and celebrating crafts. It is also a place where the skill and potential of practising and aspiring kaarigars (craftspeople) are enhanced to enable them to earn a dignified and prosperous living. Co-curation and a sense of ownership have become an integral part of the museum's agenda and one of the possible ways for survival and staying relevant for the future. The LLDC has

not only set up a museum to display the rich embroidery traditions of Kutch for outsiders to see, but also given the communities a voice and a place they can call their own. From 'a museum' for them it became 'their museum'; a sense of ownership was established, a challenge that many museums across the globe face today.

Achi Association of India (AAI)

Shared responsibility and ownership are also seen in the conservation projects undertaken by the AAI, a private not-for-profit organisation, which works towards the preservation of cultural heritage in the early art and architecture of the Western Himalayas. They believe that involving local people is crucial for sustainable preservation. Their Pilot Youth Training Programme, a three-year programme funded by the Getty Foundation, trains locals in documentation techniques and conservation issues. They are now equipped with the skills necessary to actively participate in the protection and promotion of their local culture. They are now in positions where they can take informed decisions affecting built heritage and the local culture of the community as a whole.

ReReeti

To recognize, acknowledge and appreciate India's contribution to the Great War, ReReeti conceptualised, curated and executed a unique project in Bangalore, during the Centenary Year (2018). The project, White Pepper Black Pepper, comprised of the following outcomes:

- *A heritage treasure hunt game that could be played on mobile phones*
- *Six-week engagement with students of partner schools*
- *A travelling exhibition*

The project in its different stages collaborated with different groups. The general public of Bangalore was involved through a crowd funding campaign. In addition to direct financial contributions, people raised funds for the project as ambassadors. The students of partner schools were involved in curating content, installation, and as guides; it was designed by art and design students. Families of the armed forces actively



RUPAYAN SANSTHAN

contributed to collecting the stories of those who fought in the war. The project was hence inclusive in not just the content and physical space but went beyond that, engaging numerous sections of the local community.

Outcomes

Participants' wish list of projects following the session:

- *Engage low income households*
- *Plan proposals that reach out to the underrepresented and seek funding*
- *Increase engagement with older audience groups*
- *Reach out to local craftsmen whose ancestors worked on royal collections*
- *Improve engagement with teenagers*
- *Research to understand what museums mean to communities with various special abilities*
- *Look for opportunities for co-curation*
- *Identify and focus on means to increase accessibility*
- *Engage with schools to use various collections as teaching tools*
- *Compensate artists, curators, community contributors for their engagement*
- *Engage members of the Somali community*
- *Curate an exhibition for dementia patients*

The list presents diverse activities, target communities and methods through which a museum/ heritage site can be inclusive. The potential to teach, learn, and support the arts, culture, and history is largely untapped. This is the tip of the iceberg; we can do a lot more. By thinking of the various stakeholders that we want to engage and connect with at the design stage, we can be consciously inclusive, rather than it being an after-thought. This not only helps in community building but makes the audience an active contributor to the purpose and cause of the museum.



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Stories for Children with Visual Impairment

TACTOPUS LEARNING SOLUTIONS, INDIA

What?
The museum's stories.

For whom?

Most children. Accessible, and especially helpful for children with blindness and intellectual disabilities.

How?

Multisensory storytelling.

Museums are defined by the stories they tell. These stories are often what stay with children from their experience of a museum. Stories are easy to consume and remember. Especially for children, stories, more than facts help understand and make sense of the history of the space they are in. Stories are full of detail, but leave space for us to insert our own thoughts, feelings and memories. They feel familiar, yet enable us to step into the shoes of others.

Multi-sensory storytelling

This is an approach to storytelling in which the stories are not communicated only verbally, but experienced with all our senses. For children with vision loss, blindness and intellectual disabilities, multi-sensorial and multi-modal narration not only makes consuming information possible, but also engages them better, making the experience more enjoyable and effective for the child.

Activity

1. Split into pairs

Ideally each team should have one participant who is familiar with the fort, and one who is not.

2. Choose a story

Pick your favourite anecdote from the fort's history.

If you do not already know a story, find one from the many information panels around the fort.
OR Start with an artefact. What is its story?

Finding a story

Finding potential stories is not usually a problem. There are stories everywhere. Look around and you will find stories about the foundation of the institution, the history of the building, the collection, individual objects, and the people who made, used, sold or owned them. Museums are also full of people, who bring their own stories with them, from researchers and other visitors to staff and volunteers.

3. Map out the details of this story

People: *Who is this story about?*

Events: *What happened? Why? In what chronology?*

Objects: *Is there a key artefact (or two)?*

Place & Space: *Where did the story happen?*

Which room?

Details & fun facts: *Something unusual, small numbers, etc.*

Closure: *How does the story end?*

Relation to the present: *Related traditions/ impact that continues till date*

Relation to me: *How does it impact my present? What are its associations with me?*

4. Record and tell the story

Think about how a child would consume this story.

Record a narration of the story you will tell. Elevate the story with touchable/ explorable artefacts where you can, chosen for their sensory qualities (e.g. feel, smell, sound, weight, temperature) and for their appeal and relevance to those experiencing the story.

These stories are best implemented in the space where the original event took place. Make it available using wall panels, or a book attached to a reading station. Ensure the location is accessible to a child – consider height, stability of the structure, high contrast colours and large print/ braille.

How will they know where the stories are?

You can use tactile floor-tiles, or audio-navigation to direct the child to where these experience zones have been built. A single story could take the child through a journey through multiple such spaces and zones as well, to more deeply engage with the story of the museum. You may also use your current audio-guide system along with tactile floor markers to enable this.

For example, audio-tactile stories of cannonball attacks are best positioned near an outer wall, preferably with accessible copies of what a cannonball looks like, and a wall hole at a height a child can reach. One step further would be to have scale model boxes or tactile pictures in books that tell the story. These can also be simple talking-tactile postcards that the kids can take home with them.

Relate with the present & with self

Does this story explain a current tradition, or popular myth? Ideally these should be examples that the child has experienced. It could also be interesting facts that are teaching moments.

Example: Did you know? Ceiling fans used to be large pieces of reinforced cloth that were pulled manually using a pulley mechanism by a helper? Much like a hand fan. (If possible, allow the child to try out a ceiling fan. If not, insert a small manual ceiling fan model/ or a hand fan to experience this.) Do you have a fan in your house? How does that work? What would you do if you lived in a time when there was no electricity?

Note: This session was cancelled at the last minute due to a family emergency. We are grateful to Tactopus for sharing the session details so that it can become a resource for others.



Reflections

I am really happy to be in the round table virtually. The experience of virtually attending the round table on the status of accessibility and inclusion in Museums of Bangladesh was a great opportunity for me. Such a discussion is urgently needed for the inclusion of the deprived segments of people in the age of digital endeavours all over the world. The discussion will influence the policy makers and museum personnel to take effective measures in this regard. I salute all the organisers for having come forward with such a mission.



Md. Serajul Islam

Deputy Keeper, Department of Ethnography and Decorative Art, Bangladesh National Museum

On a personal note, the workshop made me realise how as individuals, we tend to paint a rosy picture, working within our definitions of ‘comfort’, often failing to ‘empathise.’ Access and inclusion aid not just in understanding the audience better, but also our spaces and collections. Over the years, our Museum has made several provisions to enable accessibility; including installing ramps, railings, accessible toilet, childcare room, providing free access to the lift facility on requirement, creating a braille guidebook on the Museum, etc. with many more in the pipeline. Our efforts will now be towards inclusion and in enhancing visitor participation.



Chelsea Alannah Santos

Assistant Curator, The City Palace Museum, Udaipur

As Mehrangarh Museum Trust embarks on a large-scale project to refresh the museum narrative and upgrade public facilities, this workshop was timely. In the twenty-first century, museums housed within forts face a common challenge: to increase accessibility in a structure designed to be inaccessible. The rich discussions distilled into a key realisation that a range of possibilities exist between “total accessibility” and “nothing”. This fresh approach flips attitudes and encourages affirmative action, a step at a time. Mehrangarh has already introduced a braille guidebook and ramps to facilitate not just the physically disabled but also to include infant-bearing parents and the elderly in our museum audience. Towards a more qualitative inclusion, the upcoming museum narrative strives to rescue and engage social histories of the subaltern. Our constant effort is to diversify the role of Mehrangarh for our audience and increase its relevance. We hope to incorporate some of the following simple but vital learnings to enhance our friendliness:



- 1. Pictorial signage for universal accessibility and to address our diverse audience*
- 2. Staff training to induce knowledge sharing and implementation at every level*
- 3. Making available pre-downloadable material for easier access, particularly for the disabled, the elderly, children and large groups.*
- 4. Upgrading facilities for independent navigation, particularly by the disabled and the elderly.*
- 5. Including dying arts & crafts into the museum narrative at each stage.*

Krishna Shekhawat

Assistant Curator, Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur



My takeaway from the workshop was the use of oral histories, narrative and stories on migration and contested histories which could be effectively used for making museums inclusive and a welcoming place for sharing and showcasing stories; a place for community dialogues to place the objects within meaningful cultural rubric.

Prof Ambika Patel

Head, Department of Museology, M. S. University of Baroda



Passion and enthusiasm are contagious, and so it was tremendous to see how passionate the conference participants were about access and inclusion. In a world of tight budgets and cumbersome bureaucracy it is the passion of young museum professionals that can help to drive longer term change within museums and heritage intuitions and inspire others. The workshop concluded with a sense of renewed hope and optimism. The future is out there. It is up to us all, both inside and outside museums to shape it and ensure our museums are relevant and useful to everyone in society.

Charlotte Spink

Access and Community Engagement officer, Durham University Library and Collections, UK



Accessibility has to be implemented at the design stage of any organisation or structure. As Mehrangarh is working on redesigning the museum and the visitor experience as a whole, this was the right time to host this conference at the fort. This conference was a huge help to understand what accessibility and inclusion meant in real terms. The interactive sessions and discussions led to a better understanding of integrated facilities and services which are more affordable and reliable. Achievement of a truly inclusive museum, where no one is left behind, cannot be accomplished unless it responds to the need of one and all and we look forward to incorporating many ideas learnt from this conference.

Dr Sunayana Rathore

Deputy Curator, Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur



The workshop touched upon ways to make museum displays accessible and inclusive for all types of audiences, and especially for visitors with disabilities. The ideas could be implemented in most museums since they are educational institutes open for all. The workshop was also helpful for evaluating facilities which museums provide and understanding the need to come up with innovative display strategies and clear signages in and outside galleries. Our key takeaways were:



1. Potential for oral histories to be incorporated in museum narratives as a way of balancing the dominant role played by traditional academia and historiography
2. Accessibility: broadening the scope of the word to include under-represented sections of museum goers apart from persons with disabilities
3. Developing activities to engage with disabled audiences, such as a photo project with blind students, which could in turn generate income to support them, or just provide encouragement
4. Maps to navigate museum spaces are a fundamental way of increasing “access” to audiences from various national, linguistic and literacy backgrounds

Shubham Biswas and Indira Vats

Assistant Curators, Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum Trust, Jaipur

I appreciate the opportunity to network with museum professionals from India. Their challenges seem parallel to ours in Sri Lanka. There was lots to learn from one another.

Hasini Haputhanthri

Consultant, Sri Lanka



The Access and Inclusion workshop held in Mehrangarh in December 2019 opened my eyes to the rapid development of professional engagement on matters of accessibility in museums in South Asia. When we convened the first workshop on this topic in 2016, my colleagues and I felt like pioneers. Less than three years later I was surprised and delighted to find a larger number and broader range of museum employees and consultants engaged on matters of inclusivity, from diverse perspectives. Topics considered in the second workshop went beyond access for wheelchair users and the partially sighted to include issues of mental health and post-war reconciliation. I found it helpful not just to update my own understanding, but to inform new members of our curatorial staff who had not attended the first workshop. And beyond the main areas of our discussion, it is always useful to visit sites and other museums in our region, to enrich our understanding of the cultural context of our own museum's collections, and to compare notes on conservation and curatorial strategies. Altogether, from a few short days, the learning outcomes were immense.

Dr Giles Tillotson

Consultant Director (Research, Publications & Exhibitions), Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, City Palace, Jaipur

I was fortunate last year to participate in the CAM Access and Inclusion workshop in South and Southeast Asian Museums. Access and inclusion are universal issues for museums, and I gained valuable knowledge from both presenters and discussions amongst attendees. Meeting Professor Asha Hans and listening to her keynote address on her work with disabled women was inspirational. On a personal note, as caregiver to a family member with dementia, the presentation and discussions around making museums more accessible to audiences suffering from dementia was very useful to my professional and personal practice. The workshop offered many opportunities to network and exchange with colleagues from the Commonwealth. I am very grateful to CAM for organising this event.

Elisabeth Joy

Conservator, Canada



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“When the UN Convention was being negotiated, people wanted to define disability. But the consensus that emerged was that it is not disability that needs defining but the barriers which create disability. Together, let us break these barriers.”

PROF ASHA HANS

**FOUNDER, SHANTA MEMORIAL REHABILITATION
CENTRE, AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES NETWORK**

