

PUBLIC AND CORPORATE HISTORY MUSEUMS:
COMMON ATTRIBUTES AND
CRITICAL DIFFERENCES

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

Since the 1950s, the number of history museums within the United States has increased dramatically. Although many of these museums have been developed by government-sponsored entities, a considerable number have been initiated by private corporations. Public and corporate museums share the common goal of attempting to tell the story of a place, a person, an event, or an entity through the display of historical objects, accompanied by visuals and texts. Likewise, public and corporate museums utilize many of the same processes, resources, and techniques in planning, researching, presenting and protecting their collections. Nevertheless, even a casual visitor to a corporate museum may detect a different look and feel than what might be encountered from a visit to a typical public history museum. Besides these obvious contrasts, there also may be other less obvious differences in how the two types of institutions function.

Purpose of Study

This study provides an examination of the purposes, functions and operations of public and corporate history museums. While there is a large body of published work

devoted to the goals and typical activities of a public history museum, as well as a few sources which focus solely on corporate history museums, no study has provided a comparative view of both types of museums. The intent of this study is to compare and contrast the key similarities and differences of these two types of institutions, both of which are continuing to grow in number and popularity.

Significance of Study

Individuals wishing to enter in the museum field, as well as current museum professionals, will find this study a particularly useful tool for understanding the similarities and differences in the purposes and daily operations of public and corporate history museums. Specifically, this study should provide information for aspiring museum professionals considering employment within the corporate museum field. This study also can serve as a helpful guide for museum visitors by increasing their awareness of how the differing goals of corporate and public museums may influence the way information and objects are selected and presented. Finally, this study may be useful to teachers and other educators who incorporate museum visits into a regular part of their students' curriculum, encouraging them to look more critically at the content and presentation methods used in corporate vs. public history museums.

Method and Scope

The information used for this study was collected from various public and corporate museum books, articles from periodicals, oral interviews, and web searches and inquiries. In addition, the writer made use of knowledge gained from first-hand experience working in both public history museums and in corporate archives settings. In

particular, this study systematically compares the overall functions and daily operations of public and corporate history museums. Among some the comparative topics highlighted in the study include the missions and purposes, budgets and funding sources, presentation methods, and the evaluation processes of both types of museums. For the most part, the scope of this study was limited to history museums located in the United States. Among the more than three hundred corporate museums in the world, two-thirds are located in the United States.¹ The majority of these corporate museum facilities are dedicated primarily to company histories or have prominent elements devoted to the topic.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, a public history museum is defined as a museum which is funded primarily by public revenues such as city, state or federal tax monies, and which is typically associated with a government agency. Although operational costs of a public history museum may be supplemented by admission fees, gift shop revenues, paid memberships, and other sources, the principle funding source – public tax money – was used as the primary determinant in defining public history museums for this study. Although many privately funded history museums which are open to the public could be considered “public” facilities, their characteristics are beyond the scope of this study. Based on the most recent nationwide survey conducted by the American Association of Museums (AAM), of the two thousand–four hundred and one public and privately

¹ Victor J. Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

operated history museums in the United States, thirty-four percent were funded and operated by governments.²

Within this study, a corporate history museum is defined as a museum which is completely or primarily funded and operated by a corporate entity. Like its public counterpart, the corporate museum may supplement operational costs with admission fees and other sources. Both institutions are “public” in the sense that they are open to the public. However, a small number of corporate museums envision their principal audience as employees and customers, and therefore do not actively encourage visits by the public.

² *Museums Count, A Report by the American Association of Museums* (Washington DC: American Association of Museums, 1994), 47.

CHAPTER II

THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF HISTORY MUSEUMS

What is a Museum?

Museums are often associated by broad classifications. Institutions of art, history, science and technology, as well as nature sites and zoos, all fall under the categorization of a museum. The primary function of these establishments is to educate the public by collecting, preserving, and interpreting their collections. Douglas Allan, director of the Royal Scottish Museum in Edinburgh, Scotland, writes that a museum in its simplest form “. . . consists of a building to house collections of objects for inspection, study, and enjoyment.”³

Origins of Museums

To understand the significance of history museums today, it is important first to know how they evolved. From the beginning of time, human beings have had a deep desire to collect objects. As a result, they also possess the natural habit of showing off these personal collections to an interested audience. Americans, in particular, have

³Quoted in G. Ellis Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 2nd ed., rev. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 25.

always enjoyed displaying objects of material wealth. According to G. Ellis Burcaw, a senior examiner for the Accreditation Commission of the American Association of Museums, many individuals display their individual collections “. . . to seek approval and admiration, to gain prestige, by the respect and envy engendered by the ownership of interesting, beautiful, unusual, and commercially valuable objects.”⁴

Other reasons exist for collecting objects beyond the desire simply to show off and impress others. Alma Wittlin, author of *Museums: In Search of Useable Future*, states that the motivation for collecting objects as a hobby or other interest ultimately led to the creation of museums. Listed below are six kinds of collections Wittlin has identified as the various incentives for collecting objects:

Economic hoard collections; social prestige collections; magic collections (the bones of saints in churches); collections as expressions of group loyalty; collections as means of emotional experience; collections as means of stimulating curiosity and inquiry.⁵

The origin of museums dates back to ancient Greece, more than two thousand years ago. Wealthy Greeks began displaying their collections of prestigious artwork and valuable objects for those of high stature to enjoy. Edward Alexander, author of *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums*, states that “Though the Greeks . . . thought of the museum in different terms from those we use today, the ancient world did possess public collections of objects valued for their aesthetic, historic, religious, or magical importance.”⁶

⁴ Ibid, 15.

⁵ Alma S. Wittlin, *Museums: In Search of Useable Future* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T Press, 1970), 16.

⁶ Edward P. Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 5.

The first museum, a “center of learning dedicated to the muses”⁷, was established by Ptolemy I in Alexandria around 290 B.C. Regarded as a basic model for museums today, the ancient institute housed “. . . collections in all of the museum fields” as well as “. . . an astronomical observatory, and facilities for research and teaching.”⁸ According to Burcaw, a priest typically served as the director or the head of the museum, while the those who worked and researched at the institute were “. . . four groups of scholars: astronomers, writers, mathematicians, and physicians.”⁹ As the number of students increased over the years, many became lecturers, while the museum “. . . remained to the end an institute of advanced studies.”¹⁰

In Roman times, collections of art and objects of wealth were typically displayed in temples, a tradition carried forth into the Middle Ages, when stately churches accumulated vast collections of worldly treasures and religious relics. Beginning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, a transformation occurred in which affluent individuals began to establish their own private collections of worldly objects. Burcaw states that the “Private collections of curiosities of art and nature became widespread in Europe Called ‘cabinets’ or ‘Wunderkammers,’ they were a hobby of the wealthy.”¹¹

The objects collected by those with wealth and status during this time were reserved primarily for the enjoyment of the collectors and their circles of friends. The collections were seldom open for the public to view. The exclusivity of museums changed with the founding in 1753 of the British Museum, the first museum open to the

⁷ Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 2nd ed., rev., 25,

⁸ Ibid, 17.

⁹ Ibid, 17.

¹⁰ Ibid, 17.

¹¹ Ibid, 26.

public, but not without restrictions. The poor and working class were most likely denied entrance, as Burcaw acknowledges that those permitted inside the museum were “. . . surely not the dirty and ragged poor.”¹² Burcaw explains that during the museum’s first years of public viewing, those who wanted to visit the museum had to “. . . apply for admission well in advance.”¹³ Furthermore, by the turn of the nineteenth century, visitors “. . . had to present their credentials to the office; if acceptable, they had to wait two weeks for an admission ticket.”¹⁴

A main motive for the wealthy and prestigious to display their collections of objects was for entertainment value. Works of art, in particular, were exhibited to stir the emotions of the audience. As a result, art museums today continue to use this model of presenting works of art to generate both enjoyment and reaction from the public. Given that art museums strive to create emotional responses from the audience, a special committee of the American Association of Museums suggests that “An art museum ought to be a place where one goes to be refreshed.”¹⁵

In the later half of the nineteenth century, a “small minority”¹⁶ of Americans with high social prestige often spent their wealth on numerous works of art for the simple pleasure of showing it off to others. According to Wittlin, this conspicuous consumption movement by a marginal group of wealthy Americans led to lavish spending “. . . on collections which expressed a pecuniary philosophy of life of a new breed of Americans.

¹² Ibid, 19.

¹³ Ibid, 19.

¹⁴ Ibid, 19.

¹⁵ American Association of Museums, *America’s Museums: The Belmont Report*, (American Association of Museums, 1969), 1.

¹⁶ Wittlin, *Museums: In Search of Useable Future*, 15.

Each business boon propelled new multimillionaires to the markets of art and antiques, genuine or faked.”¹⁷

Those who had the wealth to purchase prominent artwork and expensive, exotic objects were typically businessmen and entrepreneurs who heavily benefited from the abundant opportunities of the Industrial Revolution. John Pierpont (J.P.) Morgan, a railroad tycoon, spent a portion of the profits from his railroad monopoly by allegedly spending nearly sixty million dollars on highly valuable artwork. However, Wittlin states the money Morgan spent on expanding his art collection was less significant than “. . . the excellence of most of his acquisitions. Prices on art markets zoomed under the impact of his competitive spirit . . .”¹⁸

While professionals in art museums continue to present exhibits which evoke emotion from an audience, a museum’s foremost duty in displaying an exhibit is to educate the public.¹⁹ Indeed, regardless of the classification, museums strive for visitors to learn something new that they otherwise would not have known or been aware of from viewing an exhibit. In *America’s Museums: The Belmont Report*, a committee of the AAM emphasizes that “In short, museums are so constituted that they can provide delight as well as education. When these two objectives merge into one, as they often do, so much the better.”²⁰

The Advent of the History Museum

While art museums evolved from the Greek and Roman times, the advent of history museums came much later, showing its first signs of progression in the eighteenth

¹⁷ Ibid, 15.

¹⁸ Ibid, 17.

¹⁹ *America’s Museums: A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 2.

²⁰ Ibid, 2.

century. Alexander suggests that the long process for history museums to become established was due to historians' preference of written material over material objects by which to understand the past. However, as history museums developed and began to collect tangible, three-dimensional objects, historians were able “. . . to convey historical perspective and inspiration as well as a sense of what it was like to live in other ages.”²¹

Some of the first history museums were established in Europe during the eighteenth century and were, in essence, offshoots of the art museums assembled by kings and nobles. Within these collections, the owners displayed representative artwork of everyday people in society as well as national events which held patriotic values. For example, the Historical Museum at Versailles which “. . . glorified the peasants . . . while the Hall of Crusades complimented the old aristocracyThe museum consciously sought to instill a love for glory in young Frenchmen.”²² Up until the end of the Cold War era, this tradition of celebrating a nation's political events continued in Europe, especially in eastern countries, where numerous history museums devoted sections of a museum to “. . . military history and the glories of communist uprisings with paintings, enlarged photographs, and newspaper clippings.”²³

In contrast, most history museums in the United States seldom devote exhibit space to glorified battle scenes or political movements.²⁴ Alexander explains that only a small percentage of U.S. history museums include battle galleries, primarily due to the inaccurate connotations associated with such galleries.

²¹ Alexander, *Museums in Motion*, 79.

²² *Ibid*, 81.

²³ *Ibid*, 81.

²⁴ Alexander indicates that the small numbers of museums which do in fact display symbols of national glory include the Battle Abbey of the Virginia Historical Society and the sculptural group of Lee and other Confederate generals at Stone Mountain, Georgia.

Other forerunners of the contemporary history museum were the large exhibitions of the 1800s which featured the industrial or decorative arts.²⁵ Alexander explains that collections of items displayed in the Crystal Palace of the Great Exhibition of 1851 led to the establishment of the South Kensington Museum in London following the exhibition's close. Alexander states that the "... exhibits were organized under the technical classification system, by which ceramics, glassware, metalwork, enamels, and the like were placed together, often in separate rooms, arranged chronologically or by patterns."²⁶ Although this type of exhibit display was typically well received by scholars who enjoyed examining a large number of objects, the general public found this static exhibit arrangement to be quite dull.²⁷

During this time period of the nineteenth century, a new system for organizing a museum's collections and displaying the objects had been established by a group of German curators at the Germanisches Museum at Nuremberg. According to Alexander, the curators had begun to display objects chronologically. These items were exhibited in separate rooms, depending on the cultural significance or the role an object had in a certain German time period. Alexander states that "By 1888 the museum had many such rooms following this culture history arrangement, so that one could imagine that he was walking through several centuries of German history."²⁸

Devoting certain rooms in a museum to a specific time period became an efficient way to explain visually significant historic events. Not surprisingly, as Alexander points out, this approach to displaying objects of cultural-historical value "placed too heavy a

²⁵ Ibid, 86.

²⁶ Ibid, 86.

²⁷ According to Alexander, this system of a museum displaying nearly its entire collection is typically called "visible storage".

²⁸ Ibid, 86.

burden on museum collections, which could not furnish all the materials needed and thus sometimes resorted to conjectural reproductions.”²⁹

By the 1920s, another approach to the history museum developed with the creation of the “outdoor museum” in America. This new approach, which attracted wide public attention, was initially employed in Colonial Williamsburg. Founded in 1926 as an arresting way to educate the public and preserve the history of the country’s past, Colonial Williamsburg became the most well-known outdoor museum in the United States. In an effort to “. . . bring the colonial capital back to life,”³⁰ the landscape of Colonial Williamsburg , which included buildings, was reconstructed based on the availability of substantial evidence conducted by historians, curators, architects, and archaeologists. As the project developed, great emphasis was given on the museum’s purpose to educate the public. The museum applied a new method of teaching history, particularly to school groups, by using the historical environment of Colonial Williamsburg. Alexander explains that part of the educational experience includes “. . . costumed guides, working craftsmen...while a varied list of publications and audiovisual production spread the Williamsburg story outside the restored city.”³¹

Clearly history museums have evolved out of the ancient form of art museums to develop into their own identity in the twenty-first century. Furthermore, it is likely that history museums will continue to evolve in response to public needs and preferences and ongoing critical evaluation by museum experts. For example, Alexander, as well as other museum scholars, criticize today’s history museums for continuing to focus too much on the “great-men, great-events approach to history instead of considering economic, social,

²⁹ Ibid, 87.

³⁰ Ibid, 92.

³¹ Ibid, 92.

and cultural factors.”³² Hence, museum professionals are frequently confronted with the continuous issue of whether history museums present a wholly accurate story. For example, Alexander argues that although outdoor museums allow visitors to compare and contrast the material culture of another age to the ones they presently live in, the majority of outdoor museums “. . . do not pay enough attention to the darker side of human existence – to poverty, disease, ignorance or slavery.”³³

Another issue which often plagues history museums is that, unlike outdoor history museums, many exhibits remain static. When groups of objects sit cluttered and motionless on display, the museum is not completely fulfilling its purpose of educating its audience. On the other hand, the museum can carry out its educational mission when it uses its collections and resources in a way that captures curiosity and provokes thought by relating the unfamiliar with the familiar.³⁴

Despite grievances which often afflict public history museums today, these institutes remain increasingly popular. With this rise in interest in history museums, there has also been a change in standards of how public history museums present their collections and subject material in a fair and balanced manner. In particular, the years following World War Two witnessed a tremendous growth in the establishment of history museums. According to the AAM, three-quarters of museums in the United States have “. . .been founded since 1950 and 40 percent since 1970, testifying to a great surge of

³² Ibid, 94.

³³ Ibid, 94.

³⁴ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 3rd ed., (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), 5.

public interest in museums . . .”³⁵ Given that fifty-six percent³⁶ have been established since 1965, history museums have also grown significantly in popularity.

The Rise of Corporate Museums

Although not necessarily considered recent, the rise of corporate history museums can be regarded as a more contemporary development compared with the ancient roots of traditional history museums. According to Victor J. Danilov, beginning in the nineteenth century, many businesses “. . . started to save their records, examples of their products, memorabilia, and other materials pertaining to their work and industry. This was occurring long before they thought of creating company museums.”³⁷

Problems and difficulties abound when attempting to define what a corporate museum is and the functions it serves. Due to the different purposes and varying organizational models, corporate history museums are often more different than similar to public history museums. For instance, Danilov argues that corporate museums do not fall into the AAM’s definition of a museum. The AAM classifies a museum as:

. . . an organized and permanent nonprofit institution, essentially educational or aesthetic in purpose, with professional staff, which owns and utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on some regular schedule.³⁸

Corporate museums are rarely organized as nonprofit entities, sometimes have overt commercial purposes, and occasionally are not accessible to the general public. For these and other reasons, Danilov argues that a corporate museum can be defined more properly as a:

³⁵ *Museums Count: A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 33.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 47.

³⁷ Danilov, *A Planning Guide For Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 5.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 4.

. . . corporate facility with tangible objects and/or exhibits, displayed in a museum-like setting, that communicates the history, operations, and/or interests of a company employees, guests, customers, and/or the public.³⁹

Corporate museums in the United States date to the late 1800s, when a few businesses started to display collections of their products and other corporate accomplishments to the general public. With a collection of historic locomotives and railway cars, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad “is believed to be the first company to assemble a collection specifically for public display”⁴⁰ in 1893. About the same time, the Rudolph Wurlitzer Company in Cincinnati opened the first museum-like corporate facility in the country where photographs and documents pertaining to the music field were displayed.

Another pioneer corporate museum in the United States is the Union Pacific Museum, established in 1921 in Omaha, Nebraska. With the distinction of having the longest continuous service, the museum completed a renovation project in 2003. According to David Lustig, writer for *Trains* magazine, visitors to the three-story museum will “. . . find a well-ordered, eclectic mixture of artifacts and displays explaining the company’s history from the mid-1800s to today.” Regarded as an American history museum, Lustwig describes how the Union Pacific Museum serves as a resource for the general public as well as for outside organizations such as the Public Broadcasting System. Since the 2003 renovation and relocation to Council Bluffs, Iowa, visitation has averaged 23,000 a year.⁴¹

³⁹ Ibid, 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁴¹ David Lustwig. “UPS’s Attic. . .Down in the Basement,” *Trains Magazine*. (February 2006), 35.

Because corporate museums are rarely listed in museum directories or similar publications, it is difficult to obtain an accurate figure on how many of them exist worldwide. Danilov points out that part of this problem lies within the fact that corporate museums:

. . . generally do not receive the visibility, publicity, and recognition accorded most nonprofit museums. Many are relatively unknown outside their companies because they are aimed primarily at employees, guests, customers, rather than the general public.⁴²

The first definitive tally of corporate museums in the United States appeared in the 1943 book *Company Museums*, written by Lawrence Vail Coleman, then president of the AAM. The majority of the eighty-three corporate museums described were historical in nature. By the early 1990s, only seventeen of the museums listed by Coleman had survived. Of the other sixty-six museums, a few were destroyed by fire but many were closed due to economic reasons, and thus, returned “. . . the artifacts and other materials to archives, putting them in storage, or dispersing them.”⁴³

The most recent comprehensive tally of corporate museums around the world was compiled by Danilov in *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, published in 1991. He lists three hundred and twenty-nine corporate museums, galleries, and visitor centers around the world. Of this number, approximately two-thirds are found within the United States. Furthermore, “. . . approximately two-thirds of the listings in this book are corporate museums or exhibits, with visitor centers placing second in number and art museums and galleries being the smallest category. It is clear to see that in general, a majority of corporate museums tend to focus on the

⁴² Victor Danilov. *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*. (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1991),1.

⁴³ Ibid, 4.

historical story of a company.⁴⁴ Visitor centers, meanwhile, concentrate on the history of the company, as well as its operations and products.

During the 1970s and 1980s, corporate museums experienced greatest growth in the United States as well as overseas. Danilov states that more than half of the corporate museums were founded during this time “. . . with an even greater percentage of the company galleries, sculpture gardens, and visitor information centers coming into being during the same period.”⁴⁵

The interest in and popularity of corporate museums continues into the twenty-first century. According to Karen Axelrod, co-author of *Watch It Made in the U.S.A.*, a guide to company-sponsored museums and attractions, visiting corporate museums has become a popular activity for individuals of all ages. Axelrod states that along with ninety-percent of admission being free of charge “. . . company museums remain the best vacation value in America.”⁴⁶

Carl Quintanilla, journalist for the *Wall Street Journal*, supports Axelrod's statements regarding the popularity of visiting corporate museums. Based on 1997 statistics, nine hundred and seventy-two thousand people visited the World of Coca-Cola Museum in Atlanta, an increase of five percent over the prior year. Another well-known corporation with a large museum has experienced similar popularity. According to Quintanilla, the Motorola Company Museum in Schaumburg, Illinois, was initially intended for the use of company employees and their families when it opened in 1991.

⁴⁴Danilov, 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁶ Karen Axelrod; Bruce Brumberg. *Watch It Made in the U.S.A.*, 3rd ed., (Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing, 2002), xix.

However “. . . so many tourists showed up seeking entry that the Schaumburg, Illinois, company relented – and has had to increase its museum staff to 31 workers from 12.”⁴⁷

History museums have clearly evolved from the ancient tradition of showing off prestigious collections for those of high social standing to an institution where the general public is educated in a certain area, person, or event in history through three- dimensional objects. It is evident to see that both public and corporate history museums have rapidly increased throughout the years, particularly within the last thirty-five years. With this background information of how museums have grown and developed, the following chapters shed light on the commonalities and distinct differences between public and corporate history museums in terms of funding, governance, and daily operations.

⁴⁷ Carl Quintanilla, “Planning a Vacation? Give Some Thought to Spamtown USA – Corporate Museums Attract Growing Crowds; Wow, Look at that Combine!” *Wall Street Journal*, 30 April 1998.

CHAPTER III

PUBLIC AND CORPORATE HISTORY MUSEUMS

Mission and Purposes

Regardless of the type or classification, it is essential that every museum has a statement of purpose. In the very broadest of terms, the statement of purpose indicates what the museum wishes to achieve as an establishment. According to Susan K. Nichols, author of *Organizing Your Museum: The Essentials*, the statement of purpose should reference how a museum's collection will be used, as well as recognize the roles the museum will serve as a public institute.⁴⁸ In the 2005 Annual Report of the AAM, the purpose of museums in the United States generally is to:

. . . help power our understanding of who and what we are . . . hold humanity's sometimes hidden treasures by stirring the heart and serving as a catalyst for imagination and life-long learning, leading to a broader view of the world and one's position in it.⁴⁹

Additionally, the Institute of Museum and Library Services Achievement Report of 2002 describes that the role of a museum's collection and the purpose it fulfills should allow

⁴⁸ Susan K. Nichols, *Organizing Your Museum: The Essentials*. (Washington DC: American Association of Museums, 1989).

⁴⁹ American Association of Museums, *Annual Report*, (Washington DC: American Association of Museums, 2005), 4.

visitors to connect with their “...heritage with a vividness and authenticity unsurpassed by any other medium.”⁵⁰

Neil Kotler and Philip Kotler, authors of *Museum Strategy and Marketing: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources*, suggest that given the multiple purposes both public and corporate history museums serve, creating a coherent mission statement can be a difficult task. They state that the generic mission statement for any type of museum typically defines the functions, roles, and the public services it carries out. The majority of, if not all, mission statements for museums include the duties “. . . to collect objects and interpret them, show them and educate the public about them. . .”⁵¹

Essentially, public history museums and corporate history museums share a general common purpose, which is to “educate” the visitor through the exhibition of historical objects. For example, a public history museum focusing on a geographic area strives to enlighten visitors by exhibiting and interpreting items that represent the history of the individuals and events that shaped that particular region. On the other hand, the items in a typical corporate history museum are selected to inform visitors about the experiences, achievements and employees that were influential in contributing to the company.

The differences between a corporate and public history museum go far beyond their dissimilar contents. For example, the common objectives for a corporate museum, not applicable for public history museums, include:

⁵⁰ *Sustaining Our Heritage: The IMLS Achievement*, The Institute of Museum and Library Services. (Washington DC: Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2002), 3.

⁵¹ Neil Kotler and Philip Kotler. *Museum Strategy and Marketing: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources*. (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 28.

. . . to develop employee pride and identification with the company, to inform guests and customers about the company and its product line and/or services, to influence the public opinion about the company and/or controversial issues, to serve as a showcase for the company's collections and/or products. . .⁵²

Because a corporate history museum tells the story of its parent organization, Bruce Weindruch, founder and Chief Executive Officer for the History Factory, a heritage management firm which works with corporations, states that a corporate history museum:

. . . can serve as a cultural center, a place for retirees to reconnect with your organization, or a sales showroom, depending on the audiences. . . they can also take the form of large-scale museums open to the public, or they can be small, highly-focused exhibits in employee-only areas.⁵³

Weindruch goes on to say that corporate history museums can remain permanent in a fixed location or “. . . they can be designed to travel from worksite to worksite, sharing the pride and inspiration of your organization's heritage along the way.”⁵⁴

Following is an example of the mission statement of a public history museum, Northern Kentucky Resource Center at Old Thyme, which will then be contrasted with the stated purposes of the Motorola Museum of Electronics, a well-known corporate-operated facility. The first statement reads:

The purpose of the Northern Kentucky Resource Center at Old Thyme is to educate and inform the general public about the culture, art and history of the region; to engage in research activities in these areas; to maintain archives for the deposit of materials relating to these areas; to gather, preserve, display and

⁵² Victor J. Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 5.

⁵³ *The Wall Street Transcript*. The History Factory: Company Interview (2005), 1. Available at <http://www.twst.com>. The History Factory is a heritage management firm. It advises organizations and businesses on how they can preserve and maintain the history and heritage of their group.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

make available for study materials relating to these subjects, to sponsor public programs; in order to study and preserve the region's heritage culture.⁵⁵

Robert W. Galvin, former board chairman and chairman of the executive committee of Motorola Incorporated, explained the purposes for establishing the Motorola Museum of Electronics in 1990 by stating:

Our industry has progressed in 60 years from the relatively simple radio business to high-technology electronics. We feel the electronics revolution is a subject worthy of a major industrial museum. It will grow as an educational institution for generations, alongside the company and the industry it serves. An important purpose is served by creating an institutional memory via this new museum.⁵⁶

While some corporations such as Motorola envision their museums as “educational institutions,” other companies extend the purposes of their museums to openly commercial objectives. For example, a primary goal for Ocean Spray Cranberries Incorporated to establish the Cranberry World Visitors Center in Plymouth, Massachusetts was “to enhance the understanding of the cranberry among current and potential consumers of the company's products . . .”⁵⁷ Some of the most popular corporate history museums (or visitor centers with major historical elements) have a strong product orientation. Examples include the Deere Pavilion in Moline, Illinois, the Kohler Design Center in Kohler, Wisconsin, and Coca Cola World in Atlanta, Georgia.

Some corporate museum mission statements make a point of noting the economic benefits to the community of museum visitation in terms of increased tourism. For example, a stated purpose of Cranberry World, according to its corporate sponsor, is “to

⁵⁵ Nichols, *Organizing Your Museum*, 80.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 90.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 90.

provide a community service to both residents of and visitors to the Plymouth area.”⁵⁸

This kind of community-boosting is seldom encountered in a public museum’s mission statement, although many museums stress their economic contributions to the local economy through other means.

Operating Budgets and Funding Sources

In a survey conducted by the AAM in 1989, the annual income for more than half of American museums was less than one hundred thousand dollars, and much less for history-related facilities. Since the preponderance of the two thousand-four hundred and one history museums and historical sites in the United States identified in this study are smaller facilities, the median operating income for these facilities was \$53, 266.”⁵⁹ Restated in 2006 dollars, this median income would be \$89,450.

Meanwhile, the annual costs of operating corporate museums tend to vary widely, and like public museums are directly related to the size of the facility, the type and complexity of exhibits, plus the cost of staffing. Based on his survey of corporate history museums published in 1991, Danilov concludes that the annual operating cost of a corporate museum “. . . ranges from less than \$50,000 to more than several million, with the average somewhere around \$250, 000.”⁶⁰ Restated in 2006 dollars, this average would be \$380,000. Although Danilov did not calculate a median operating cost figure, it appears that corporate museums, in general, have significantly larger operating budgets than their tax-supported counterparts.

⁵⁸Ibid, 90.

⁵⁹ *Museums Count: A Report By The American Association of Museums* (Washington DC: American Association of Museums, 1989), 83.

⁶⁰ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Center*, 123.

One of the most obvious differences between public and corporate museums is how they are funded. Although the operating income for public history museums comes primarily from public tax funds, their budgets are often supplemented with admission charges, paid memberships, and financial support from outside organizations and foundations. Federal and state grants as well as individual donations also contribute to a public history museum's income.

Unlike public museums, corporate museums are completely or almost entirely dependent on a single funding source – the parent company, either directly or indirectly. Danilov points out that when a corporate museum is a nonprofit facility operated by a company-established foundation, “. . . the corporate funding usually is provided annually and/or as an endowment at the time of the establishment of the museum or foundation.”⁶¹ He also acknowledges that from time to time, the operating costs at a corporate museum are covered partly by earned income, which accounts for “. . . admission charges, gift shop and food sales, membership fees.”⁶²

Intended Audience and Attendance

The intended audience for a public history museum is obviously the general public. Regardless of age, race, or gender, a public museum of any type is intended to educate the public. Likewise, the majority of corporate history museums are open for public use, although Danilov clarifies that some of these museums “. . . are aimed only at employees, guests, and customers, while others seek to serve the educational and cultural interests of the public.”⁶³ Some corporate museums are available to the public only by

⁶¹ Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, 108.

⁶² *Ibid*, 107.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 9.

scheduled appointment or upon special occasions. Others are reserved entirely for employees and retirees or for current and prospective customers.

Studies show that attendance rates for public history museums have increased through the years. In 1989, the National Museum Survey showed that from 1986-1989, visitation rates increased by five percent on a yearly basis.⁶⁴ Based on this most recent survey, the median annual attendance for history museums was 21, 857.⁶⁵

Although visitation rates have increased over the years for public museums, attendance at corporate history museums has grown more modestly due to the lack of aggressiveness in promoting these museums, along with the fact that there tends to be a limited interest in the collections of some companies. Moreover, according to Danilov, other corporate museums have a restricted audience, and therefore “. . . do not try to appeal to the general public.”⁶⁶ Because of these factors, Danilov estimates that the annual attendance number for a majority of corporate museums is less than ten thousand, with the exception of larger corporate facilities that typically promote themselves on a much broader scale and are nearly always open to the public. Based on Danilov’s data published in 1992, four corporate facilities in the United States recorded annual attendances of approximately 500,000 or more – Corning Glass Center (formerly Corning Glass Museum) in Corning, New York; Hershey Foods Corporation’s ZooAmerica North America Wildlife Park in Hershey, Pennsylvania; IBM Gallery of Science and Art in New York City; and The World of Coca-Cola in Atlanta.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ *Museums Count, A Report by the American Association of Museums* (Washington DC: American Association of Museums, 1994) 63.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 63.

⁶⁶ Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, 32.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 32.

Origins

Public and corporate history museums spring from different roots. In many cases, a public history museum begins with an existing collection from a collector or collectors who wish to share their unique objects with the public. The collection is then accommodated in either an existing or new facility funded by tax dollars. A prime example of a museum of this type is the J. M. Davis Arms and Historical Museum in Claremore, Oklahoma, which is funded by state taxes.

Another common trend in the origination of public museums is when an individual or organization that has a keen interest in local or regional history begins an effort to gather items and raise funds for a museum in the community. An example is the Hidalgo County Historical Museum in Edinburg, Texas, which opened in 1970. Gerald W. George and Cindy Sherrell-Leo, authors of *Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning*, state that this regional museum began through local citizens who "...donated bookkeeping services and other citizens gave landscaping, artifacts, display cases, and mannequins, as well as historical artifacts and library materials."⁶⁸

Public history museums also spring from national initiatives to recognize important and significant parts of the American experience. Donations of collections and individual objects as well as development funding can come from many sources, both public and private. A recent example would be the newly opened National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.

Unlike public history museums, corporate history museums begin internally with the collection of objects, often gathered over the years by an individual employee with an

⁶⁸ Gerald W. George and Cindy Sherrell-Leo, *Starting Right: A Basic Guide to Museum Planning*. (Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1986), 14.

appreciation of history. Over time, this type of collection continues to grow to the point where it is believed to have educational value for other employees and perhaps even to other outside audiences. Such was the origin of the now mothballed General Radio Museum in Westford, Massachusetts, which consisted of an extensive collection of beautifully preserved, neatly labeled General Radio instruments gathered over a period of many years by a company machinist.⁶⁹

In larger corporations, the initiative for a corporate history museum may come from the company's archives or corporate records unit, which often becomes the repository of corporate artifacts and miscellaneous items deemed too valuable to be discarded. These sort of initiatives are most successful if they have the support of the company's CEO or another "champion" in top management who recognizes the value of the corporate history. In addition, the support of the company's public relations and marketing departments can aid the creation of a corporate museum, as they may recognize sales and public influence opportunities in such an institution.

The typical corporate history museum frequently begins with just a few display cases, often located in a headquarter lobby or a "heritage room" adjacent to a public area. Some corporate history exhibits do not expand much beyond this point, while others can grow to be quite substantial. The Deere Pavilion in Moline, Illinois and the Corning Glass Center in Corning, New York, are examples of corporate history museums ". . . with substantial historical collections, beyond the typical corporate documents, photographs, and memorabilia . . ." ⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Richard Kremer, *What Happens to Corporate Museums when the Corporations Disappear?* Delivered at S.I.C. Utrecht Workshop 17 October 2005. Available at: <http://www.sic.ichps.org/conf2005/c2005abstracts.pdf>

⁷⁰ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 81.

Museum Planning and Development

Typically, larger public history museums seek the external expertise of architects, museum planners, and exhibit designers when planning and developing a facility. Often the planning body – typically the museum’s founding board of trustees or a related committee, possesses limited experience and skill in museum development. Although a museum director, if hired early in the planning process, can be helpful, the planning body will most likely seek a planning consultant and museum designer if finances allow.

Depending on its size, a corporate history museum may have a decided advantage over public history museums in terms of the amount of “in-house” resources available to both plan and execute the project. Many companies employ project managers whose planning and coordination skills are applicable to museum development. Likewise, some companies can draw on the help of their internal exhibit staff, whose normal responsibility is to design sales and marketing displays. The skills of these individuals may be useful in designing all or part of a new museum facility.

Even for companies that engage external design resources, other types of skills within the company can be helpful in executing the project. A common method of corporate museum planning typically involves the expertise of employees from other internal departments combined with the utilization of outside professionals. For example, historical information can be gathered by the company’s archives and furnished to writers in the company’s communications department, who can produce museum exhibit text. Meanwhile, external resources can be used to create the overall layout and look of the new facility and assist with the selection of appropriate display objects.

Governance and Oversight

The governance of public and corporate history museums varies in numerous ways. The oversight of public history museums is typically carried out by a board of directors, whereas corporate history museums may or may not utilize the board structure.

According to the Kotlers, members of a public museum board are accountable for setting policies and overseeing the museum management. However, a public museum board is not just limited to these duties. The Kotlers point out that, “. . . boards function in a variety of ways, depending on the particular characteristics of a given museum, its history, the type of community it serves, its scale, and other factors.”⁷¹ In the public museum setting, board members are drawn from many fields and are frequently patrons of the museum. Community leaders and other influential individuals may also serve as board members.

Within the corporate setting, the oversight role is often handled by the corporate affairs department or to whatever other department the museum director and staff report. The exception would be situations where the museum is funded and operated through a company-sponsored foundation, in which case governance falls to the foundation’s board of directors. Where corporate museum boards do exist, membership is usually comprised of company managers and employees from other departments, such as marketing and archives, who have a vested interest in the operation of the museum. These individuals, says Danilov, are especially “concerned with the corporate image, public opinion, and

⁷¹ Neil Kotler and Philip Kotler. *Museum Strategy and Marketing: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources*. (San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998), 62.

communications”⁷² surrounding the museum. Nevertheless, Danilov points out that “corporate facilities normally do not have a board of directors or trustees, although some make use of advisory committees.”⁷³

Members of advisory committees for a public history museum often are from external organizations and community groups. One purpose of these committees is to advise the museum director and employees on general institutional matters as well as specific exhibits and special programs. If a controversy in the museum should unfold, the Kotlers state that the advisory committee “. . . can help deflect pressures from a museum’s management and defuse controversies and missteps before they become too overwhelming.”⁷⁴

An advisory committee for a corporate history museum can be called upon by the museum board or staff regarding guidance in certain situations. For the most part, however, its role is much more passive than that of a public museum advisory committee. For the most part, a corporate history museum advisory committee is not directly involved in the initiation of changes or changes that occur within the museum. Rather, it is used as an informational resource during the planning period of special exhibits when precise knowledge of a specific issue is needed.

Staffing and Operational Responsibility

Staff size and the professional credentials provide two additional measures of comparing public and corporate museums. In the public history museum, staff size can vary depending on how the museum is organized, the duties required for the staff, and the

⁷² Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, 124.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 124.

⁷⁴ Kotler and Kotler. *Museum Strategy and Marketing: Designing Missions, Building Audiences, Generating Revenue and Resources*, 62.

amount of qualified volunteer talent available. According to a survey conducted by the AAM in 1989, the median of full-time staff for a public history museum was three employees.⁷⁵ Most museums place a high value on advanced degrees and professional experience for their employees, and the AAM accreditation program puts great emphasis on the professionalism of museum staff.

Staffing in a corporate history museum is generally small and is typically nonprofessionals. This is because many of these facilities draw on staff resources elsewhere in the company, particularly if the museum is a branch of a larger department such as marketing or public relations. Danilov states that the average size of a staff for a corporate history museum ranges from one to three full-time employees. Given that some companies hire internal employees to staff the museum, those appointed to work at a corporate history museum may or may not have appropriate qualifications or the professional background in museum training.

Use of Volunteers

Volunteers play an important role, regardless of the size, in public and corporate history museums. In the case of public museums, there is likely to be a considerable amount of volunteer involvement. Depending on the staff size and funding, a public museum may have a paid volunteer coordinator whose main duties are to recruit and train volunteers. Because volunteering is a useful bond to the community, Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine, authors of *Museum Basics*, suggest that volunteers at a museum should “. . . reflect the community, and do not come from just one group.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ *Museums Count, A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 81.

⁷⁶ Timothy Ambrose and Crispin Paine *Museum Basics* (London: Routledge Publishing, 1993), 252.

Volunteers are used in a number of ways in a public museum, including giving tours to organizations and groups of visitors, performing archival functions in a museum's workroom, and taking part in a museum's outreach programs by giving presentations to community groups. The AAM 1989 survey underscored how volunteers are a vital function in the day-to-day operations of a public history museum. Indeed, based on the survey's findings, the number of full-time paid staff of history museums totaled twelve thousand three-hundred, while thirteen thousand volunteers worked full-time at public history museums, and thousands of others served in part-time roles.⁷⁷

While volunteers can be important at corporate history museums, it appears that they are utilized to a lesser extent than by public history museums, in part because the pool of available assistance is smaller. The majority of volunteers at a corporate history museum are often retirees of the company who know a great deal about the company's history and also have a vested interest in the community. According to Danilov, depending on the number of volunteers, a corporate history museum will have a volunteer coordinator, or perhaps an actual volunteer will fill the role of the coordinator. In other instances, however, the recruitment and training of volunteers is the responsibility of the paid staff. Danilov states that a corporate museum's volunteer coordinator duties include supervising “. . . those people who agree to work at the facility for limited hours (often a day or half-day a week) and without pay.”⁷⁸ Volunteers at corporate history museums carry out comparable tasks to public museum volunteers, typically greeting and welcoming visitors, giving tours to different groups and making community presentations.

⁷⁷ *Museums Count: A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 47.

⁷⁸ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 180.

Nature of Collections

There is a multitude of collection types in a public history museum. Some museums focus on a single individual as is the case of the Jim Thorpe Home in Yale, Oklahoma, and the Frank Phillips Home in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Obviously, these museums house the tangible artifacts and objects which in some way pertain to the life of a single individual. The nature of a collection in a public history museum can also be a theme-centered “collection of collections.” An example of this category of history museum would be a western heritage museum where American Indian objects, cowboy artifacts, early ranching paraphernalia, firearm displays and similar items make up the composition of the collections. Finally, many public history museums tend to have a geographic focus, centered on a specific community or extending to a much larger area. Such museums may consist of an eclectic assortment of objects intended to represent the events, developments and people of the community and the surrounding area.

The nature of collections within a corporate history museum basically consists of two types. First, there are company-centered museums that focus on the company’s heritage and feature objects that represent the achievements and products of the enterprise. Examples of corporate museums of this type are the World of Coke in Atlanta, Georgia; Remington Arms Company in Ilion, New York; and the IBM Endicott History and Heritage Center in Endicott, New York.

Other corporate history museums tend to be industry-focused. In addition to telling the company story, they also display artifacts and present information to help place the company in context of the industry or American enterprise generally. Although now disbanded, a large museum created by the Xerox Corporation fits into this category.

Danilov writes that the Xerox’s “Ten Thousand Years of Recorded Information...traces the history of writing from prehistoric times through the present and includes approximately 100 artifacts, such as early manuscripts, clay tablets, papyrus scrolls, stamp seals, coins, tools, and early printed works.”⁷⁹ Other corporate history museums whose collections fall into this category include the Sterling Drug museum located in New York City and the American Security Bank museum in Washington D.C.

Table I provides a sampling of the types of objects or collections of objects currently found in corporate history museums around the United States.

TABLE I⁸⁰
EXAMPLES OF ITEMS DISPLAYED IN U.S. CORPORATE MUSEUMS

Historical objects/collections	Facility	Location
Agricultural equipment	John Deere Pavilion	Moline, IL
Post cards and greeting cards	Hallmark Visitor Center	Kansas City, MO
Glass objects of all kinds	Corning Glass Center	Corning, NY
Guitars	Martin Guitar	Nazareth, PA
Cigarette/cigar lighters	Zippo/Case Visitor Center	Bradford, PA
Air guns	Daisy Air Gun Museum	Rogers, AR
Eye glasses	Optical Heritage Museum	Southbridge, MA
Soup bowls, tureens, utensils	Campbell Museum	Camden, NJ
Plumbing and related items	Kohler Design Center	Kohler, WI
Canned meat containers	SPAM Museum	Austin, MN
Sound equipment	Peavy Electronics	Meridian, MS
Player-piano rolls	QRS Music Museum	Buffalo, NY
Communication technologies	Sony Wonder Technology Lab	New York, NY
Baseball bats	Louisville Slugger Museum	Louisville, KY
Electrical equipment	History Room – Southern California Edison Company	Rosemead, CA
Plates	Bradford Museum of Collector’s Plates	Niles, IL
Soft drink advertising	Hasting Museum of Natural and Cultural History (Kool-Aid)	Hastings, NE

⁷⁹Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, 7.

⁸⁰ Data collected in *Watch it Made in the U.S.A.*, 3rd., (Emeryville, CA: Avalon Travel Publishing, 2002).

Presentation Methods

Presentation methods for museums have changed from being static display cases filled with intangible objects and small reading labels to dynamic presentation methods featuring large graphics, lively color schemes, and interactive modules. These changes have influenced the presentation methods of public and corporate history museums.

While many public history museums wish to update their exhibits with interactive and audiovisual displays, the underlying motive of actually doing so depends on the museum's budget and whether the technological means are available. With sufficient resources, some museums can make use of "animatronics" when presenting an interactive exhibit. An interactive technique such as this allows models and mannequins to move. In *Museum Basics*, authors Ambrose and Paine also point out that "talking head" features are also common forms of interaction in public history museums. The intention of this interactive method is to "...make it look as much as possible like a real person talking. The technique is often used to enable a historic person to introduce a museum or exhibition or historic site to the public."⁸¹

A common, "low-tech" presentation technique used in public history museums is guided tours. While this is an inexpensive presentation form, it is important that individuals giving a guided tour are enthusiastic and have sound background knowledge in what it is they are presenting to visitors.

Many of the same presentation approaches used in public museums are employed within corporate settings. At one extreme, smaller corporate history museums may

⁸¹Ambrose and Paine *Museum Basics*, 76.

simply be lobby displays of artifacts in glass cabinets, in some cases merely open storage for items better cared for in corporate archives. As in many public museums, static displays tend to dominate the exhibition space in corporate museums. However, Danilov reports that a majority of corporate museums also make use of audiovisual techniques in some way or another, including participatory devices, animated figures, as well as live demonstrations. Large, commercially oriented facilities tend to be the most common users of high-technology tools, so much so that some exhibits could be classified as “edutainment.” Some of the most popular corporate museums, such as World of Coke and Hershey’s Chocolate World, feature the latest in presentation technologies including audio-visual and interactive displays, and Hollywood-style films or videos. Some corporations take a more balanced approach, presenting static items in interesting settings while also offering more dynamic learning opportunities. An example of this approach would be the Corning Glass Center in Corning, New York, whose collection is mostly artifact-based, but which makes use of “. . . hands-on and temporary exhibits to go with its extensive display of historical glass objects.”⁸²

Objectivity and Bias

One of the most critical differences between public and corporate history museums concerns the bias or “slant” that may be evident in the way information is presented and items displayed. In theory, public museums are ethically bound to be complete, objective, and balanced, while corporate history museums have the latitude to selectively present “the company story” in ways that reflect most favorably on the corporation.

⁸² Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 138.

Most public history museums, particularly those accredited by national or international museum bodies, recognize their public obligation to present exhibits in a way that is balanced, fair, and objective. According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), when presenting displays, exhibitions, and special activities, museums “should seek to ensure that information in displays and exhibitions is honest and objective and does not perpetuate myths or stereotypes.”⁸³ Furthermore, the staff of a public history museum has the duty to conduct themselves in a manner which is in adherence with “. . . the most stringent ethical principles as well as the highest standards of objectivity.”⁸⁴ Finally, under circumstances where a public history museum is commercially supported or sponsored, the ICOM contends that such a relationship must be well-defined and circumscribed, given that “Commercial support and sponsorship may involve ethical problems and the museum must ensure that the standards and objectives of the museum are not compromised by such a relationship.”⁸⁵

Corporate museums, on the other hand, are more intent and likely to show strong biases and present information in such a way as to lead the visitor toward conclusions favorable to the company. Some museum professionals are sharply critical of corporate history museums for their selected omission of objects and information that would present a more complete and perhaps more truthful picture. Typical of such criticism are the comments of Daniel J. Walkowitz, who assails the subjective narrative in the Wells Fargo History Museum in Sacramento, California, in which

. . . the telegraph, the stagecoach, and the Pony Express mail routes are celebrated as Well Fargo’s contribution to the ‘winning’ of the West, with

⁸³ Ambrose and Paine, *Museum Basics*, 300.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 305.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 300.

a discreet silence about government subsidies and campaigns for public ownership of utilities.⁸⁶

Danilov makes it clear that some displays in corporate museums are often designed to influence public opinion on controversial issues and present a favorable view to the company. He notes that a common objective of corporate history museums is to “develop pride and identification with the company . . . to influence public opinion about the company and/or controversial issues.”⁸⁷ For visitors as well as professionals, it is important to recognize that corporate history museums are not restricted to the same ethical boundaries that are applied to public history museums.

Collection Management

Since the majority of museums are based on collections, collection management is extremely important to both public and corporate museums. The preservation and special care needed for collections is carried out in similar ways by both public history museums and corporate history museums.

In general, collection management may be the duty of either a curator or registrar in these two types of museums. However, a corporate history museum may house its collections in the archives department, with the responsibility of recording and caring for the objects belonging to its employees.

Corporations also are increasingly making use of outside resources, such as the History Factory, to help manage, care for, and even appropriately store undisplayed items offsite. Due to the fact collections play a vital role in the corporate museum, Danilov

⁸⁶ Daniel J. Walkowitz, “Corporate History, or Giving History the Business” *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 228.

⁸⁷ Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, 5.

states that “The professional management of these collections must be an essential part of operating such company facilities.”⁸⁸

Research

An important aspect related to a public history museum’s purpose is the obligation it holds in making its collections and facilities open to public research. Likewise, the staff of a public history museum should be capable, within the confines of its own resources, of carrying out research requests and inquiries that come from the general public. According to Ambrose and Paine, because public museums are considered to be educational institutions, a museum staff should not only take part in the study of its collections, but it should have accessible research resources surrounding the subject matter of the museum available for public use. They state that public history museums “. . . have a vital role to play in research. Indeed one of the justifications of collecting material for museum collections is that it forms a permanent body of research material for future generations.”⁸⁹

Findings in Danilov’s corporate museum study in 1992 show that corporate history museums typically do not conduct research on their collections or the company’s history generally. When research is undertaken, the task is usually the responsibility of the corporate archives unit if one exists. However, such requests normally are specific to items already on display in the museum or being considered for display. Ongoing research comparable to what might be seen in a larger public museum is not viewed as a basic responsibility of corporate facilities.

⁸⁸ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 174.

⁸⁹ Ambrose and Paine, *Museum Basics*, 75.

Location and Space

The nature of a public and corporate history museum plays a large part in determining the location of the facility. In general, public history museums are often centrally located in the community or easily accessible locations. Corporate history museums, on the other hand, are typically located at a corporate headquarters, principal offices, or operating centers. Danilov explains that corporate museums that target the public audience are usually located on the first floor of the corporate headquarters, while corporate history museums “. . . designed primarily for company guests usually are located off the lobby of the corporate headquarters Museums and galleries developed largely for employees often are located on the upper floors of corporate buildings”⁹⁰

There is a significant range of space allocation for public history museums, depending on a museum’s collections and funding for the facility. According to G. Ellis Burcaw, a proper history museum should not only have adequate space to display its collections, but it should also have sufficient room appropriate for collection storage. In other words, a museum should have at least the same space for the collections as it does for the exhibits. He suggests, “. . . that for the total amount of space in the museum, 40 percent should be for collections, 40 percent for exhibits, and the remaining 20 percent for everything else”⁹¹ Additional data conducted by the AAM in 1989 shows that the median of interior square footage of a public history museum totaled seven thousand five-hundred square feet.⁹²

⁹⁰ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 94.

⁹¹ Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 102.

⁹² *Museums Count: A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 47.

Similar to public history museums, the size of a corporate history museum is frequently driven by the size of the core collection of objects. While both history museums take into account the factor of space needed for storage, offices, and other similar aspects, Danilov states that “In general, from 50 to 100 percent of the space is used for exhibition purposes.”⁹³ Most corporate history museums range in space from three thousand to ten thousand square feet, although a number of facilities are both larger and smaller than this. According to Danilov, the smaller corporate museums include the Campbell Museum in Camden, New Jersey, with 2,000 square feet (1,800 for exhibits) and the Crane Museum in Dalton, Massachusetts, with 1,500 square feet (all exhibit area). At the other end of the spectrum are the Motorola Museum of Electronics in Schaumburg, Illinois, with 85,000 square feet (20,000 for exhibits) and the Kohler Design Center in Kohler, Wisconsin, with 36,000 square feet (35,000 for exhibits).⁹⁴

Publicity and Promotion

Visible promotion is a central part in making the potential visitors aware of the public history museum. In order to attract visitors on a frequent basis, it is critical that a museum staff routinely publicize and promote its facility to the public. Some of the basic ways in which a public history museum can become more widely known among residents and area tourists is by advertising through the newspaper, radio, television, websites, and billboards.

While these forms of promotion can be effective in increasing visitation, it can be financially challenging for a museum where much of its budget must be devoted to the everyday cost of operations. Ylva French and Sue Runyard, authors of *The Marketing*

⁹³ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries and Visitor Centers*, 96.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 96.

and Public Relations Handbook for Museums, Galleries, and Heritage Attractions, state that public history museums in the United Kingdom “...spend less than 4% of their income on marketing.”⁹⁵

In general, corporate history museums tend to promote themselves even less than public history museums. Because many of these museums do not have their own public relations people, promotion of the facility falls upon the communications or marketing departments in the company. While having in-house professional communication capabilities would seem to be beneficial, Danilov cautions that there are negative factors as well:

Pluses usually include cost savings, a pool of talent, more professional work, and greater experience in media relations, printed materials, and advertising. The drawbacks normally are less control and less public relations/marketing activity, because of the many demands upon the corporate office and the lower priority often given a museum...⁹⁶

Admission and Membership Fees

Due to the high operational costs, some public museums rely on charging admission fees or requesting donations from visitors in order to keep the facility open. Museum memberships are another source of earned income. Still, many public museums acknowledge the fact that setting a price for admission can impact attendance levels. The 1989 AAM survey determined that sixty percent of history museums charged some sort of admission fee.⁹⁷ The survey further showed that public history museums had the

⁹⁵ Ylva French and Sue Runyard, *The Marketing and Public Relations Handbook for Museums, Galleries and Heritage Attractions* (London: The Stationary Office, 1999), 47.

⁹⁶ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries and Visitor Centers*, 177.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 89.

“ . . . lowest median membership fees – \$10 for individuals and \$15 for families.”⁹⁸

Adjusted for inflation, these fees would equate to about \$17 for individuals and about \$25 for families in today’s dollars.

Because a corporate history museum is supported by the parent company, these facilities are most often free of admission charge. While gift shop and food sales, education program fees, exhibit loan charges and membership fees to some extent cover the operating costs of corporate history museums, the bulk of these facilities offer free admission. Among those facilities which charge an entry fee include the Corning Glass Center in Corning, New York, with an adult admission charge of twelve dollars for adults and six dollars for youth, and the World of Coke in Atlanta, Georgia, with an adult entry fee of six dollars.⁹⁹

On the other hand, some of the corporate history museums that have no admission charge include: Marin French Cheese in Petaluma, California; Lionel Museum in Chesterfield, Michigan; and Goodyear World of Rubber in Akron, Ohio. Among the one hundred seventy corporate museums that exhibit historical aspects, fifty-three of them charged admission ranging from one dollar to fifteen dollars or more.¹⁰⁰

Educational and Outreach Programming

Public history museums are esteemed as educational institutions, and their role in this regard can take on many forms, including extensions of educational services beyond the museum premises. One of the most popular educational services offered by public museums is hosting museum visits for school-aged children. In *Museum Basics*,

⁹⁸ *Museums Count: A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 89.

⁹⁹ Data collected from *Watch it Made in the U.S.A.: A Visitor’s Guide to the Companies that Make Your Favorite Products*.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Ambrose and Paine suggest that a museum's education program should somehow correlate to what teachers are doing at school, so as "When the children get to the museum they will already have a good idea of what they are going to see and what work they are going to do."¹⁰¹ The 1989 AAM survey estimated that forty-nine million school groups benefit from some type of museum-based education effort, suggesting that "...a great many schoolchildren regularly benefit from class activities built around the educational resources for museums."¹⁰²

Another way in which museums provide educational services to the public is by presenting programs outside the museum and to the community. Sometimes museums loan objects from their collections to schools for teachers to use as part of a class lesson. According to Ambrose and Paine, this type of program can be beneficial for both the museum and school, given that the loaned objects "... are serving a real educational purpose in the hands of teachers and children, while using objects in schools encourages teachers and children alike to visit the museum itself."¹⁰³

Giving talks to schools and groups throughout the community is still another method by which museums can fulfill their educational purposes. Creating or participating in events throughout the community not only allows the museum to educate the public through an alternative means, but can help "... develop new audiences for the museum."¹⁰⁴

Similar to public history museums, many corporate history museums take part in educational programming through various forms. In the smaller corporate museums, the

¹⁰¹ Ambrose and Paine, *Museum Basics*, ,37.

¹⁰² *Museums Count: A Report by the American Association of Museum* , 69.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 42.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, 49.

director usually carries the responsibility of planning educational activities for schools and community groups, although “. . . part-time employees and volunteers frequently are involved in carrying out educational activities”¹⁰⁵ as well.

Furthermore, the educational programming of corporate history museums is similar to that of public history museums in terms of providing education to school groups as well as offering outreach programs targeted to children and other segments of the community. Some of the corporate history museums which provide such activities include:

- Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc.’s Cranberry World Visitors Center –teacher curriculum kits for use before and after museum visit.
- Georgia Power Company’s Shenandoah Environment and Education Center– classes to complement school environmental instruction.¹⁰⁶

In addition to offering various education programs throughout the year, public and corporate history museums provide education through their interpretation of exhibit labels and texts. Through these means, visitors are, in essence, educated by the ways in which the text provokes thought and stirs responses from visitors. Along these same lines, Freeman Tilden points out that in order to educate an audience, the interpretation of text should be all-encompassing and target both the children and adult audience. He states, “Interpretation addressed to children (say, up to the age of twelve) should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Danilov, *A Planning Guide for Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers*, 176.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 101.

¹⁰⁷ Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 3rd ed., (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press), 1977

Evaluation

Evaluating both public and corporate history museums can be a beneficial measure in determining the quality and value of the facility. In addition, ongoing museum evaluation can be a useful tool in enhancing exhibits, correcting weaknesses, and planning for future improvements.

In the public history museum, visitor surveys are commonly used to evaluate a museum. Such surveys ask visitors about their overall museum experience, with questions ranging from how helpful and accommodating the museum staff was to inquiries about what they enjoyed most about the museum. Other questions ask how the museum could be improved to make visits more informative and enjoyable.

Public history museums also can be evaluated through the accreditation program of the AAM. According to Burcaw, accreditation strengthens the practices and duties carried out by the museum staff. Although a rigorous program, Burcaw argues that the advantages of being an accredited museum is two-fold as it “. . . benefits the general public by raising the quality of museums in general Accreditation benefits the individual museum by giving it a yardstick for self-evaluation and improvement”¹⁰⁸

Many of the same evaluation methods available to public history museums are also applicable to corporate history museums. However, evaluation is not as thoroughly utilized in a corporate museum setting. Visitor surveys, in particular, are seldom used, and only a few corporate museums go through the meticulous accreditation program offered by the AAM. Despite this, Danilov notes that some corporate history museums do ask representative groups of visitors to be involved in evaluation of specific exhibits,

¹⁰⁸ Burcaw, *Introduction to Museum Work*, 201.

particularly exhibits that are still in the formative stage. Follow-up evaluation also may be used after the exhibit is completed. Similar evaluation approaches are employed by public museums in the development of new exhibits.

Not surprisingly, the most crucial evaluations of a corporate history museum's operation and value come not from visitors but from corporate management. Although visitor interest and attendance may be taken into account, often the subjective judgments of top management overrule more objective measures. Here, decisions may be made for reasons that are completely beyond the museum's ability to influence.

Longevity

The life of public history museums is typically long, despite inevitable controversies, leadership crises, funding uncertainties and changing economic conditions in the community. Indeed, several of America's most notable public history museums have been in existence for more than a century. The 1989 AAM survey shows that fifty-six percent of public history museums which were established in the mid- twentieth century remain in existence at that time.¹⁰⁹

The lifespan of corporate history museums, on the other hand, tends to be shorter and more tenuous. As indicated earlier, judgments about a corporate museum's importance and usefulness are generally tied to top management attitudes. Threats to the future of a corporate museum may arise when the museum's top management "champion" retires or otherwise leaves the company. A corporate history museum's usefulness may also come into question if the company falls on hard times and has to severely cut costs. In a lean-and-mean financial environment, a corporate museum is

¹⁰⁹ *Museums Count: A Report by the American Association of Museums*, 47.

tempting to criticize as a costly frill. A decision to move the corporate offices to another location might have a direct bearing on the company's museum, since management may not wish to make the investment required to set up the museum in a new location.

Finally, industry mergers often take their toll on corporate museums. Some of the notable corporate museums of the past, such as the Texaco museum in New York City, have disappeared as the result of two companies combining into one.

Among the eighty-three corporate museums listed in Lawrence Vail Coleman's *Company Museums* book published in 1943, seventeen were still in operation according to Danilov's study in 1992.¹¹⁰ Based on more recent research of sponsoring company websites, fifteen out of eighty-nine, or seventeen percent, of corporate history museums listed in Danilov's 1991 corporate museum directory have closed.¹¹¹ Among the more notable closures include the AT&T InfoQuest Center in New York; the Museum of Historical Food Containers, Tupperware Home Parties in Kissimmee, Florida; and the Xerox Corporation's "Ten Thousand Years of Recorded Fame" in Stamford, Connecticut.

¹¹⁰ Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*, 9.

¹¹¹ Web search by author using list of corporate history museums compiled by Victor J. Danilov, *Corporate Museums, Galleries, and Visitor Centers: A Directory*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991).

CHAPTER IV

CASE STUDY: A CORPORATE AND PUBLIC HISTORY MUSEUM

Background

Bartlesville, Oklahoma, will soon be the site of two high-quality, medium-sized history museums – an existing public history museum operated and funded by the City of Bartlesville, and a new corporate history museum being created by ConocoPhillips. Both facilities are located on the same block in the downtown area, and both are intended for the general public. In addition, these facilities have hired, or are preparing to hire, professional staffs as well as make considerable use of volunteers. Both facilities are, or will be, free to the public.

In order to gain a closer insight into the similarities and differences of public and corporate history museums, a case study of the Bartlesville Area History Museum, which has been at its current location since 2000, and the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum, slated for completion in May 2007 was conducted. From this study, the reader gains a more detailed understanding of the common attributes and important differences between these two representative institutions. The information for this case study was gathered through interviews, supplemented by written materials, furnished by Karen Smith

Woods, Director of the Bartlesville Area History Museum, and Lanny Seals, ConocoPhillips Project Manager for the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum.

Mission and Purpose

The mission of the Bartlesville Area History Museum (BAHM) is much like those of other location-focused public history museums. Its primary purpose is to collect, preserve, and present the history surrounding the Bartlesville area, which is defined as the area within Washington County, Oklahoma. Some of the ways in which the Bartlesville Area History Museum carries out its mission include: maintaining permanent exhibits; presenting periodic and topical exhibits and local history talks; providing students and teachers with access to a recreation of a one-room classroom on the museum premises; providing public access to the research room that contains books and other reference materials, videos, transcripts, and biography files of locally important individuals; fulfilling historical research requests, and publishing research conducted by the museum.

While the scope of the Bartlesville Area History Museum encompasses the groups, individuals, and events which shaped the history of the area, the mission of the Phillips Petroleum History Museum is more narrowly focused. Its purpose is to celebrate the heritage of the company that was founded in Bartlesville in 1917 and which ceased to exist as a separate company in 2002, when it merged with Conoco Incorporated. When the creation of the museum was announced in 2005, ConocoPhillips Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Jim Mulva explained that the mission of the new museum was intended to “capture the rich heritage of Phillips Petroleum Company and the people who

contributed to its success, long-term survival, enduring qualities, and pioneering spirit.”¹¹²

To achieve that mission, the museum will focus on telling the stories of employees involved in significant events throughout the company’s history, according to project manager Seals. He explains that:

By telling the stories of people who shaped the company, the audience most likely will be interested in and educated by the subject matter, rather than just having a corporate history museum where visitors walk through and simply read factoids about the company.¹¹³

Seals emphasizes that the Phillips museum, unlike some of the largest corporate museums in the United States, will not have commercial objectives. No attempt will be made to influence visitors to purchase company products. He acknowledges, however, that the museum can help present the company in a positive light to the public.

“Corporate museums can tell the company story in a manner that puts their best image forward,”¹¹⁴ he explains.

Funding Sources

Like the majority of public history museums, funding for the Bartlesville Area History Museum comes from area residents through their tax dollars. The day-to-day operations of the museum are fully covered by tax revenues. Money received from

¹¹² ConocoPhillips New Release. “ConocoPhillips Announces Museum Plans For Ponca City and Bartlesville.” 13 May 2005. Available at http://www.concophillips.com/about/Company+History/ConocoPhillips_Petroleum_Museum.htm

¹¹³ Lanny Seals, ConocoPhillips Project Manager for the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum, interview by Emily Droege, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 6 March 2006.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

memberships, donations, and gift shop earnings goes to the Friends of the BAHM, which uses its for special programming, advertising and outreach efforts.

Funding for the Phillips Petroleum Corporate Museum, on the other hand, will be one-hundred percent supported by ConocoPhillips through the nonprofit Phillips Petroleum Company Museum Foundation, a foundation established for the purpose of financing and overseeing museum operations. At this point, there are no plans to solicit donations or seek other supplemental methods of funding the facility, according to Seals. He contrasts the funding situation of the Phillips museum with that of many publicly supported museums. Because such museums are funded by the public dollars and are part of government bodies that report to elected officials, “that implies a lot of politics and asking. The corporate museum funded by the associated company can pretty much do what it wants.”¹¹⁵

Intended Audience and Attendance

The intended audience for the Bartlesville Area History Museum is the general public, including citizens of the community and tourists visiting the area. Furthermore, the museum typically targets specific audiences for special programs it hosts throughout the year. Examples include the children’s education program held each fall and spring for third and fourth graders, and monthly guest speakers geared to the adult audience. Although the museum is directed for all ages, the general age group which most often visits the museum is in the range of fifty to seventy years old.

Similarly, the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum also will welcome the general public. Nonetheless, the museum's target audience will be retirees of the

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

company and their families, current employees, and ConocoPhillips business visitors. Other audiences are expected to be individuals who have a special interest in the Phillips Petroleum Company and in the Phillips family, as well as school groups coming from primary and secondary schools in the area. Based on the results of a consultant's market survey, Seals estimates that annual visitation could range from nineteen-thousand five hundred to thirty-nine thousand visitors.¹¹⁶ Meanwhile, the Bartlesville Area History Museum receives approximately five-thousand visitors on an annual basis.¹¹⁷

Origins

The Bartlesville Area History Museum began in 1964 with collections of artifacts, historical objects, photographs, and documents that focused on the development of Bartlesville and surrounding communities. During this time, a History Room was established in the Bartlesville Public Library, where collections of the area's history were preserved and presented to the public. For several years, the History Room remained part of the Bartlesville Public Library until it eventually became its own institution in 1996. At that time, the City of Bartlesville formed a task force to look into founding a more substantial museum. The task force concluded that the museum needed to be given a sizeable location suitable for permanent and special exhibits. As a result, the fifth floor of a downtown building, which had been recently acquired as a new city headquarters building, was completely renovated through donations of community members and

¹¹⁶ *Haley Sharpe*, Evaluation of Potential Market Demand, (Phillips Petroleum Company Heritage Center), 2005.

¹¹⁷ Karen Smith Woods, Director for the Bartlesville Area History Museum, interview by Emily Droege, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 10 March 2006.

organizations, as well as outside contributors such as the Lyon Foundation. The refurbished facility for the Bartlesville Area History Museum opened in November 2000.

When Phillips Petroleum constructed the Phillips Building, a new downtown office, in 1962, the second floor of the new facility was set aside as the corporation's official Exhibit Hall. Although most of the exhibit area was devoted to accounts of current operations and petroleum industry activities, a historical section also was created. Eventually, this section grew to include several displays of artifacts and a small, full-sized recreation of a Phillips "cottage" station. However, in the mid-1990s, the entire Exhibit Hall was closed for economic reasons, and the artifacts were returned to the Phillips Archives unit, which continued to function normally.

The initiative for a new and much larger corporate history museum came from Jim Mulva, former Chief Executive Officer of Phillips and now Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of ConocoPhillips. He initiated the concept for the new Phillips museum in Bartlesville as well as a Conoco museum in Ponca City, Oklahoma, soon after the merger of Conoco and Phillips in 2002, which resulted in the consolidation of the new company's headquarters in Houston. Announced in May 2005, the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum is being constructed within an existing two-story glass-and-steel structure previously occupied by a major bank. The interior of the building is undergoing a complete transformation to accommodate its new use.

Location and Space

Both the Bartlesville Area History Museum and Phillips Petroleum Company Museum are located in the downtown community of Bartlesville, with the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum being in close vicinity of what was once the company's

main headquarters and now its global support and services center. The Bartlesville Area History Museum is approximately ten thousand square feet in size, with around five thousand of the square feet devoted to public exhibit space. In contrast, the size of the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum will be in the range of twenty-five thousand to thirty-thousand square feet. The museum plans to commit ten thousand square feet to exhibit space.

Museum Planning and Development

Both the Phillips facility as well as the BAHM were ambitious undertakings that required the help of professional museum exhibit designers, and others. In the case of the BAHM, these outside professionals worked closely with the museum director and the BAHM Trust Authority on identifying appropriate objects and graphics for display, presentation techniques, and exhibit texts.

The Phillips museum is being developed with the assistance of a well-recognized museum design firm, Haley Sharpe Design Ltd., the same company that designed the recently opened Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City. Since early 2005, a team of Haley Sharpe consultants has worked closely with project manager Seals, ConocoPhillips' two corporate archivists, and an advisory group of Phillips retirees. This collaboration covers both general themes for the new facility as well as specific content items.

Governance and Oversight

Primary oversight responsibilities for the Phillips museum falls to the board of directors of the Petroleum Company Museum Foundation, the nonprofit entity

established for the purpose of funding and governing operations. Although the board is responsible for financial matters of the museum, most of the discussion at this stage in the museum's development have involved reviewing the latest items donated for possible use in the museum. There are five members on the board of directors, all of which are employees or managers of the company, including Chief Executive Officer Mulva.

The Phillips museum also has assembled an advisory body of seven Phillips retirees to help give direction and confirm whether the museum planning team is taking the right approach to the museum's themes. This group also advises the team on whether the theme and scope of the museum is setting the appropriate tone and telling the story accurately.

Governance of the BAHM falls in part to the nine members on the Bartlesville Area History Museum Trust Authority board, with many of the members representing various businesses in the community. All members of the authority must be approved by the Bartlesville City Council as representatives of the citizens. The main topics discussed in a meeting include reviewing current and future museum needs, how museum funds are being spent, and how additional funds might be generated.

The Friends of the Bartlesville Area History Museum often plays a supporting role planning and implementing museum activities. Composed of six members, the Friends Board meets on a monthly basis to discuss topics ranging from the current events surrounding the museum, to how the board can support or be involved in the museum's future projects. Through paid memberships, donations, and funds from the gift shop, the board often purchases equipment and accommodations for special events and programs.

A distinguishing difference between this board and the advisory board for the Phillips museum is that the latter is made up of seven “content experts” from the Phillips Petroleum Company, who were selected based on their knowledge and personal experience in the company. Due to the fact that a corporate museum is funded directly by the company, the Phillips museum advisory group is not charged with fundraising, nor are they involved with programming or outreach efforts, as is the case with the Friends of BAHM board.

Staffing and Operational Responsibilities

The staffing size for the two museums differs somewhat. The BAHM, for example, currently has four staff members, two of which work full-time, with the other two in part-time positions. By contrast, staffing for the Phillips Museum will consist of two professional positions, a full-time director and a full-time curator. However, depending on workload and funding, a third employee may be added in the future. These employees will be paid by ConocoPhillips through the museum foundation.

Concerning the main functions for the paid staff at the Bartlesville Area History Museum, the director carries out all administrative duties, reports to the city manager, and sits in on meetings of the Bartlesville City Council. As the title suggests, the volunteer coordinator has the function of contacting and training volunteers. Furthermore, the registrar has the responsibility of documenting, recording, and preserving newly acquired objects into proper storage for museum collections. Finally, the education coordinator typically coordinates the museum’s education programs, geared mainly for the third and fourth grade school program, although it is hoped that the

museum will eventually become more involved in programs outside the museum, such as participating in history fairs at public schools.

Collection Management

In terms of collecting and acquiring newly donated objects, the Bartlesville Area History Museum functions in the same way as many other public history museums. The registrar carries out the duty of properly handling and appropriately storing objects in the museum's collections. Newly acquired objects for the Phillips Petroleum Museum will be either collected and cared for by its registrar, or if museum staff expertise is lacking, by the corporate archives unit. Objects in poor or deteriorating condition will be sent to a professional conservator for repair.

Before objects are accepted by BAHM, they are taken to the museum's governing body, the BAHM Trust Authority, where it is determined whether the item serves a purpose in the museum. If the object is approved, it officially becomes the property of the museum and information regarding it is recorded into the museum's collections database. The object is then given an accession number and is then appropriately preserved in the museum's collections storage room, with the possibility of display at a later time.

Regarding other types of preservation methods used to protect the collections, the BAHM's collection storage room, photograph area, and main exhibit section are all properly controlled with the appropriate temperature, light, and humidity levels required to safeguard the collections. In the museum's exhibit areas, tube lighting is used for all permanent exhibits, as it filters out harmful ultraviolet light. Furthermore, this source of lighting only remains on during the museum's visitor hours.

The Phillips Petroleum Company will have similar humidity and temperature controls for its exhibit and collection storage space. Mesh screens will be used to block out and control ultraviolet light. Theatrical lighting, which tempers the amount of light falling on objects, will be used in the museum's permanent exhibit.

Volunteers

In general, volunteers share similar responsibilities at both museums. Volunteers at the BAHM greet visitors and occasionally give tours to various individuals and groups. It is expected that volunteers at the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum will fulfill similar duties. Volunteers for the Bartlesville Area History Museum also give talks to groups outside the museum around six times a year. The majority of volunteers at the Bartlesville Area History Museum are retirees from the area, and it is anticipated that retirees from the company will volunteer at the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum. Currently BAHM volunteers provide about thirty hours of support per week, and volunteers at the new Phillips museum are expected to provide about the same level of assistance.

Given the close proximity of the two museums, both Seals and Smith Woods believe that the two museums will exist harmoniously together, rather than ultimately standing to compete with one another. In regard to the possible threat of losing volunteers to the new Phillips museum, Smith Woods points out that "Most volunteers work a few hours a month at one location, so they could work at another location too. Plus, they would most certainly have the interest to volunteer at another museum in the area."¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ Karen Smith Woods, Director for the Bartlesville Area History Museum, interview by Emily Droege, Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 10 March 2006.

Nature of Collections

Ninety-nine percent of the BAHM collection is derived from donated items, while less than one percent is purchased by the museum. Similarly, it is estimated that approximately one percent of the objects for the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum will be purchased by the museum. Furthermore, an estimated twenty percent of the museum's collections will be derived from donated items, whereas the rest of the museum's collection will be drawn from the company's archives.

Presentation Methods

Both history museums are, or will be, somewhat interactive in terms of presentation methods. With approximately five thousand square feet in exhibit space, the BAHM has several active features including a theater room, push-button panels, and a life-size animated figure which provides an intriguing introduction to the permanent exhibit area.

In contrast, the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum will hold ten thousand square feet of exhibit space. As a matter of policy, the company has chosen not to make the museum into a touch-and-feel science and technology museum, but rather a true historical experience. Therefore, Seals estimates that about fifteen percent of the total museum will be either interactive or involve audiovisual modules. The majority of dynamic displays will be flip-books, touch screens, and interactive timelines.

Both museums have areas for temporary exhibits. The BAHM runs an average of five temporary exhibits per year in this space, with each exhibit being up for six to eight weeks, and up to three months during the summer. Likewise, the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum facility will have a temporary exhibit space, but the duration of these

exhibits will be much longer, an estimated three to four months. If a temporary exhibit is not available to fill the designated space, the area will be closed off to the public. One of the first exhibits planned for this section is display of artifacts from the Phillips 66ers, the famous company basketball team that played from the early 1920s to the late 1960s.

Visitor Research

The Bartlesville Area History Museum is highly accommodating to individuals interested in research of the area, whereas only limited amounts of research material will be available for visitors of the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum. The BAHM research room is open to the public and includes documentation files and published works, as well as audio and visual resources on the area's history. Additionally, the staff of the museum accepts research requests for photo or historical information from the public. On average, the staff spends three hundred hours a month responding to research requests, with the majority of the inquiries typically being photo requests.

While the public also has open access to the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum research room, there will be limited amounts of material available. In contrast to the Bartlesville Area History Museum, the materials placed in the research room at the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum will be made available for the purpose of casual browsing versus detailed investigation. Individuals wishing to conduct company research will not find much to work with, and will have to seek other resources to fulfill special research requests.

Publicity and Promotion

The Bartlesville Area History Museum generally publicizes and promotes itself through newspaper, radio, television, and billboard advertisements. The Friends of the Bartlesville Area History Museum have established a fund to cover the costs of advertising. Another form of publicity the museum utilizes includes placing brochures at the Bartlesville Chamber of Commerce and at tourist information centers in the area.

During the initial months of its opening, the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum will heavily promote the museum using many of the same methods of advertising employed by the Bartlesville Area History Museum. Publicity will also be quite frequent when a special event is held or when a new exhibit is being showcased. The Phillips Petroleum Company also will work with other museums in the area, such as the Frank Phillips Home, Woolaroc, the Price Tower, and the BAHM to help promote attendance. Smith Woods also points out that visitors to the BAHM will be encouraged to visit the Phillips museum and that the two museums will work together, especially for group tour events at both facilities.

While word-of-mouth has shown to be the most effective means of publicity in drawing visitors to the Bartlesville Area History Museum, project manager Seals believes that along with casual verbal communication about the new museum, there also will be a significant amount of interest through the internet and the museum's website.

Education/Outreach Programs

The Bartlesville Area History Museum hosts a variety of education and outreach programs throughout a typical year. Along with having an education program for third and fourth graders each fall and spring, the museum also frequently conducts guest

speaker programs throughout the fall and spring, which typically coincide with the museum's temporary exhibits. The museum also participates externally by advertising during community events.

Similarly, the Phillips Petroleum Company Museum also will plan to have guest speakers and education programs throughout the year. Seals suggests that the majority of guest speakers would be retirees or current employees who hold special interests in specific aspects of the company's and the petroleum industry's history.

Evaluation

The Bartlesville Area History Museum has not yet conducted any self-evaluations through questionnaires or other means of visitor feedback, nor has it participated in the accreditation program of the AAM, which provides another means of third-party evaluation. Therefore, feedback of the museum is typically through verbal communication, which most often tends to be positive, according to museum director Woods.

Seals says that no formal feedback tools are planned for the Phillips museum at this time, but such techniques may be considered after the museum is well into operation and full-time staff is hired. In the meantime, Seals and the design consultants are utilizing the advisory board of retirees to evaluate the accuracy and appropriate treatment of planned exhibits.

CHAPTER V

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

With public funding support, governments have developed many of the history museums throughout America, while private corporations have initiated a smaller, yet still significant number of company-focused history museums. Numerous works have been published regarding the mission, goals, and operations of public history museums. Materials and resources regarding corporate history museums are available, but to a much lesser extent. Seldom are these two types of museums compared within a single study.

While public and corporate museums share significant similarities, they are clearly separated by important differences. It is hoped that the conclusions drawn from this study will be useful to individuals considering careers in the museum field, to current museum professionals and to visitors to museums generally. Principal conclusions are noted below and a more complete summary of findings is contained in Table II, beginning on page 67.

Common Attributes

- Educational purpose – All public and most corporate history museums see education of the general public as a key role of the institution. However,

corporate history museums may place more importance on employee and customer visits, and are less likely to be involved in community outreach than their public counterparts.

- Presentation methods – Both types of museums use similar exhibiting techniques, ranging from static displays of artifact to hands-on interactive devices.
- Collection management – Both institutions emphasize the importance of managing and preserving their collections. In the public museum, collection management is typically the responsibility of an employee, whereas in the corporate setting the function may be handled by staff, a separate archives unit, or an outside resource.
- Volunteer utilization – Volunteers are frequently involved at both types of museums, although the volunteer opportunities available within the public museum may be much wider than those offered in the corporate facility.

Critical Differences

- Mission – Although both public and corporate museums often share a stated mission of “education,” many corporate facilities have underlying commercial motives, sometimes subtle and other times quite obvious. For this reason, corporate museums place a great value to attracting visitors to the museum who are current or potential customers, clients, and business partners.
- Objectivity – Public history museums are bound by the public trust to present information in an objective, balanced and unbiased manner. Corporate history museums, however, are often designed to persuade visitors toward a positive viewpoint about the company and its products – an approach which typically

requires a more selective approach to historical facts and the avoidance of negative or controversial subject matter.

- Nature of Collections – While public museums focus on individuals, geographical areas, or topical interests, corporate history museums typically have a much more narrow focus, centering on “the company story” as shown through its employees and products. A few notable exceptions are those corporate museums that attempt to present the company within the larger setting of its industry or occasionally within the context of America’s economic history.
- Research – For public history museums, research is an essential task and is often continuous. Although corporate history museums conduct a considerable amount of research during exhibit preparation, there appears to be little ongoing research projects conducted by the museum staff.
- Funding and governance – Because corporate museums are not dependent on tax dollars for support, they do not face the same obligations for public input and public oversight that are virtually mandatory within public history museums. This provides corporate museums with great latitude in what they select to exhibit and how it is presented.
- Longevity – Despite financial challenges and perhaps even community grievances, public history museums are typically long-lived compared to corporate history museums. The fate of the corporate facility is much more vulnerable to changes in leadership, poor economic conditions and other factors beyond the museum’s control.

TABLE II
PUBLIC VS. CORPORATE HISTORY MUSEUMS

	Public History Museum	Corporate History Museum
Mission and Purposes	Further public education and an appreciation of history by gathering, exhibiting, interpreting, and protecting objects of an historical nature; make museum resources available for study by scholars and the general public; sponsor outreach educational programs; conduct research activities to enrich and expand the collection.	Inform employees, customers, and the public about the company's heritage and achievements; honor retirees; promote the company's image, stature, and products to customers and prospective customers; favorably influence opinion on public policy issues; promote understanding of the company's industry; help encourage area tourism.
Budget and Funding	Operating budgets vary widely, based on museum size, operating complexity and staffing requirements. Median budget: \$89,450 (adjusted to 2006 dollars). Funding comes primarily from tax revenues, although may be supplemented by admission fees, memberships, gift shop sales, donations, and grants.	Operating budgets vary widely, based on museum size, operating complexity, and staffing requirements. Estimated average budget: \$380,000 (adjusted to 2006 dollars). All or most funding comes from the sponsoring company directly or indirectly through a company-established foundation, occasionally supplemented by admission fees and gift shop sales.
Intended Audience and Attendance	Audience: General public. Attendance: Limited to very popular. Average attendance based on AAM survey was 21,850 visitors annually.	Audience: Employees, retirees, customers, corporate visitors, students and the general public. Attendance: Often modest because of modest promotion and limited interest of some collections. Majority have less than 10,000 visitors annually.

TABLE II (Cont.)

PUBLIC VS. CORPORATE HISTORY MUSEUMS

	Public History Museum	Corporate History Museum
Origins	Individuals or organizations with keen historical interest often launch museum initiatives, perhaps spurred by donation of a major collection.	Often initiated by a top management “champion” or by employees with collections; sometimes encouraged by public relations or sales staffs.
Planning and Development	Typically planning consultants and exhibit designers are used if finances allow.	Outside consultants and designers often used for larger facilities, but internal staff resources may be used for design, collection preparation, text writing, and other needs.
Governance and Oversight	Typically provided by a board of trustees drawn from a cross-section of the community with the help of advisory committees.	Typically provided by the corporate affairs or marketing department; if foundation operated, oversight provided by the foundation’s board of directors, often having corporate management representation; advisory committees also may be used, particularly during the establishment phase.
Staffing and Operational Responsibility	Size of staff varies from limited to large, based on museum size, complexity and budget. Median of three full-time staff members based on AAM survey data. Often museum professionals on staff.	Staff size averages from one to three full-time employees, depending on size of facility, complexity of exhibitry, extent of special programming, and amount of support from PR or other departments. Often staffed by non-professionals.
Volunteers	Frequently used for nonprofessional duties such as reception and tours and to assist professional staff with research.	Used to a lesser extent than in public museum, typically for reception, tours, and presentations; are often company retirees.

TABLE II (Cont.)

PUBLIC VS. CORPORATE HISTORY MUSEUMS

	Public History Museum	Corporate History Museum
Nature of Collections	May focus on an individual, geographic area or a general topic (a collection of collections); typical exhibit items include artifacts, photographs, and paper; oral and video recollections.	Most frequently focuses on company accomplishments, employees and products, occasionally in the context of the industry; typical exhibit items include artifacts, photographs and paper; oral and video recollections.
Presentation Methods	Open displays of artifacts and replicas, cases for smaller items, informational panels, large graphics, photographs, A/V, animated figures and hands-on/interactive exhibits.	Essentially, all the same presentation methods used in public museums; however, the largest museums may place more emphasis on interactive or “edutainment” activities.
Objectivity and Bias	Often strive to present “all sides” of the historical story, including controversial and negative aspects; seek balance and objectivity.	Stress the most positive aspects of company heritage, shying away from negative or controversial subject matter reflecting corporate missteps and failures.
Collection Management	In general, an emphasis on professional archiving and preservation, although practice varies depending on nature of collection, operating budget and staff resources.	Professional management of collection is viewed as important in most cases; function may be handled by an on-staff curator, by a separate corporate archives unit, or contracted to outside resources.
Research	Ongoing research to better understand and expand the collection often seen as an important museum responsibility.	Often significant research to initially develop exhibits, but little ongoing research effort by museum staff.

TABLE II (Cont.)

PUBLIC VS. CORPORATE HISTORY MUSEUMS

	Public History Museum	Corporate History Museum
Location and Space	Often centrally located in community; space allocated can vary from a few hundred square feet to large buildings; median size in AAM survey was 7,500 square feet.	Often located at corporate headquarters, principal office, or operating center; most range in size from 3,000 to 10,000 square feet with the majority being smaller facilities.
Publicity and Promotion	Promotion seen as a key museum function, although efforts often limited by budget restrictions.	Generally not promoted as extensively as public museums, with the exception of large product-oriented facilities.
Admission Fees	About 60 percent charge admission based on AAM survey data. Memberships (providing discounted admission) and donations are frequently encouraged.	Most often free; however, largest museums offering multiple interactive attractions may charge; recent research indicates about 17 percent of facilities have admission fees.
Educational and Outreach Programming	Tours, special programming, and outreach efforts frequently offered.	Tours and special programs (normally, guest speakers) frequently offered; less emphasis on outreach than in public museums.
Evaluation	Visitor surveys commonly used; exhibit-specific surveys also used during development of new exhibits; museums seeking AAM accreditation undergo rigorous evaluation.	Visitor surveys seldom used; however visitor or advisory board opinion may be solicited during formative stage of new exhibits; accreditation seldom sought.
Longevity	Typically long-lived, despite funding and leadership challenges, controversies, and changing community and economic conditions.	Longevity more tenuous than that of public counterparts; fate of corporate museums often tied to top management attitudes, changing business conditions, facility relocations, industry mergers, and other factors.

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VITA

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Master of Arts

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COMMON ATTRIBUTES AND CRITICAL DIFFERENCES

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Scope and Method of Study: This study provides an examination of the purposes, functions and operations of public and corporate history museums. While there is a large body of published work devoted to the goals and typical activities of a public history museum, as well as a few sources which focus solely on corporate history museums, no study has provided a side-by-side view of both types of museums. The intent of this study is to compare and contrast the key similarities and differences of these two types of institutions, both of which are continuing to grow in number and popularity. The information used for this study was collected from various public and corporate museum books, articles from periodicals, oral interviews, and web searches and inquiries. In addition, the writer made use of the knowledge gained from first-hand experience working in both public history museums and in corporate archives settings

Findings and Conclusions: Numerous government-sponsored entities have developed history museums in America, though private corporations have also initiated a significant number of these museums. Several published works exists regarding the mission, goals, and operations of public history museums. Materials and resources of these subject matters for corporate history museums are available, but to a much lesser extent compared to public history museum sources. Seldom have these two types of museums been compared in a single study.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: _____

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