

# **ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE ARTS: ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MUSEUMS**

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**by the**

**George Fairfax Fellow  
in Arts & Entertainment Management**

**DR DES GRIFFIN**

## **Abstract**

The ultimate goal of entrepreneurship in museums must be the enhancement of the visitors' experience of interaction with the authentic object and the increase in understanding and knowledge. The focus on long-term benefit to the visitor and cohesive leadership found in the best museums significantly assists productive change and entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship or innovation—new products for new audiences, customers or markets—flourishes where people of diverse skills and backgrounds communicate in a substantially autonomous environment, or at least one isolated from established bureaucratic processes and values. Long-term commitment, genuine interest and feedback on the part of leadership is essential. Preparedness to invest resources, considered judgement and the ability to cope with ambiguity assist substantially.

The continual encouragement of ideas is especially important. Values carefully developed within the museum and committed to by staff are productive. So is training of people to work in teams and communicate person to person. Attention to recruitment and development of leaders at all levels is especially critical.

Entertainment has been simplistically adopted as one of the means of gaining more visitors but there is less understanding of the learning experience in museums than is necessary for the pursuit of entrepreneurial approaches to improving the visitor experience. Many in the media have criticised museums for that yet confused populism and popularity, attributed high visitor numbers to dramatic buildings, free entry or the use of technology or asserted simply that the numbers are wrong.

Actual visits to the physical museum have increased at some museums although it was believed that visits would decline as people took advantage of the opportunities of cyberspace. Most museums have entered cyberspace but not all have exploited fully the opportunities to enhance intellectual and physical resources of the museum and learning. Access to collections has improved but genuine documentation needs attention.

The use of structure and downsizing to achieve change, short-term contracts for executives and other aspects of managerialism all stifle innovation and divert attention from the important. Arguments between professional groups about power and authority are generally unhelpful, but common in museums. Coercive approaches to change can be justified only in dysfunctional organisations.

Innovation contributes not just to coping with change but to influencing its direction—in a way that advances the organisation as well. To promote innovation we must encourage and trust people more, focus much more on serious thinking and understanding other people and seek and support cohesive leadership. Most of all we must recognise that museums can learn much from other people and organisations: museums are organisations like any other.

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George Fairfax and Kenneth Myer, commemorated by this lecture and fellowship, both knew how important it is to support bold ideas (see note 1). They epitomised the meaning of a statement so neatly capturing the essence of innovation, *'In business, as in art, what distinguishes leaders from laggards, and greatness from mediocrity, is the ability to uniquely imagine what could be'* (Hamel and Prahalad 1994).

Scientist and philosopher Jacob Bronowski (quoted in Mant 1997, p. 34) once said, 'Every act of imagination is the discovery of likenesses between two things which were thought unlike'. This is the fundamental of innovation. To the people profiled by Alistair Mant that is what intelligent leadership is about.

Some people consider entrepreneurship as making money out of innovation. Those who think that it means making a lot of money should recall tulip bulbs, Florida real estate, dot coms. The latest, mobile telephony, will allow you to do everything you ever wanted just by tapping a few keys on your mobile phone providing you have very small fingers, excellent eyesight and great patience. In the private sector a host of enterprises have simply moved money from one place to another whilst bankrupting the hapless investors. In the former public sector entrepreneurship has meant trains crashing off poorly maintained railway lines, excessive fees to members of the boards of public utilities, misuse of school funding and strange events in some universities. I would like to think of entrepreneurship and innovation as a way of giving people the opportunity to pursue their own goals, perhaps using some of the lessons in Michael Leunig's cartoons as a guide.

In talking about entrepreneurship and museums I will argue as follows:

First, entrepreneurship and innovation are the appropriate way to face the future simply because there is no certain way of preparing for the future other than learning how to cope with ambiguity. Understanding what kind of environment most favours innovation means considering those organisations that have been most effective over time.

Second, the effective museum understands the nature of the transactions with the public, especially the nature of effective learning, it talks to its visitors. It also understands how its collections management and scholarship contributes to that.

Third, effective enterprises learn from other organisations and seek understandings of success in places that others would not ordinarily look: they do not concentrate on being part of a unique category of enterprises but rather on being unique amongst a great diversity.

Fourth and last, the central focus of governance and management must be quality. We mightn't agree on what quality is but without engaging in a discussion of it, life will be no more than a jostling for influence based not on what we know but on what position power we can wield.

I do want to stress that I consider that much of business has a great deal to offer non-profits (and vice versa): it's just that the wrong examples have been used so far, mostly.

In relation to the third of the above points, although my references to specific organisations will for the most part be to museums, almost all I have to say is applicable to other arts and heritage organisations. Trite as it may seem, people are people, organisations are organisations and power and influence are much the same everywhere, it is a matter of how they are used. This is absolutely not to advocate managerialism and 'one size fits all' but a plea to look around and learn from others, even in that foreign country the past. It is a tragedy that for the most part important lessons are not learned

from history and from other places. Politics and all kinds of commentary provide hints and pointers of great value (see note 2). Many models for leadership are to be found in the arts. I particularly mention the Nederlands Dans Theater (NDT) in The Hague and its artistic director for 25 years, Jirí Kylián; orchestras and their conductors are always worthy of study.

So, to begin, with Museums.

When I talk about museums here I refer to organisations (including libraries, zoos and botanic gardens) that seek to extend people's understandings and knowledge by the use of real things, real objects. Science centres and aquaria seek to carry out their public role in essentially the same way as do those museums which maintain collections.

Museums are about ideas not things. Museum people have tended to see museums in terms of their function rather than their purpose, as Stephen Weil (1988) has pointed out: the issue, however, is how to make the underlying values of the objects manifest, how to bring them up to the consciousness of the visitor. (I will return to this in talking about learning.) Weil (1999) has recently observed that more and more museums have lately come to be *for* somebody rather than being *about* something. Louis B. Casagrande, Incoming Chair of the American Association of Museums and President/CEO of the Children's Museum of Boston said recently (in a notice to AAM members from outgoing Chair Freda Nicholson concerning the 2002 slate of candidates for the Board), 'museums have transformed themselves from mainly predictable, preachy, whited-walled, academic institutions into more engaging, educational and entrepreneurial organisations, committed to building audiences as well as collections'.

Applied to museums entrepreneurship sometimes means taking hold of a museum site and enhancing its real estate value when all that is needed is decent working capital. And there are always those who want to promote their new museum by asserting that all existing museums are failures: theirs will be different, even if it has to be imported from another country and city. Many recently opened museums are in fact neither different nor world class.

It is often asserted that museums, and indeed arts organisations, are different from businesses and that therefore management is somehow not relevant. I think this is because management has come to mean the way in which governments and some boards of directors or trustees have forced the practice of 'administration'. Governments emphasise form and process, practise tedious and obscure decision making rather than encouraging understanding complex issues and seldom trust the experience and knowledge of those in charge of agencies. (Former director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Hal Missingham, wrote about this in the book, *They Kill You in the End*, of which one senior bureaucrat said, 'I thought Hal was a bigger man'!) Museums closely associated with governments are less effective than independent ones (Griffin and Abraham 1999).

At this point it is essential to stress that for the most part the role of museums is to present the creative output of others: that the artist does not necessarily create for the consumption of others is thus relevant to a museum in a manner different from its significance to the artist.

When they deal with museums and the arts governments use words like entrepreneurship and innovation far too simplistically. The Australian Government's budget in 1988 reduced funding to the not yet opened National Maritime Museum: the Museum was exhorted to be more entrepreneurial but that meant just being more 'commercial' or costing government less. Kylie Winkworth (1989) observed: 'Museums have long been

instruments of government policy, but never have they been so vulnerable to short-term expediency'. New Zealand did it better as I will explain later.

The most entrepreneurial thing the Federal Government could have done concerning museums would have been to implement the important recommendations of the Pigott Report (Pigott *et al.* 1975). Yet it steadfastly refused to do so until the last moment when it provided basic funding for the National Museum's construction. And it deserves credit for that! However, rather than develop any national policy for museums, at the bureaucratic level museums were blamed for the Maritime Museum getting government funding before the National Museum. There has been an almost religious opposition at Commonwealth level to even a part museum-funded scaled down version of the Museums Commission—the Heritage Collections Council—despite its overwhelming endorsement by the States.



## WHAT IS ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

One of the most recent reviews of entrepreneurship (Hitt 2001) reminds us that British economist Edith Penrose—in the 1950s—first suggested ‘returns earned by firms could largely be attributed to the resources they held’, the ‘heterogeneous and idiosyncratic resources’ (including capabilities held by firms) are the basis of their strategies ... [and] ‘competitive advantages are achieved when the strategies are successful in leveraging these resources’. Entrepreneurial success, indeed all success, derives from the resources of its people.

Entrepreneurship is driven by recognisable market need. (This is a fundamental point: if we think this is being too commercial then let’s use a different word such as visitors or community, even curiosity. The key is interaction with and understanding of those who will benefit from the results.) It needs multiple, parallel and flexible responses. Experts are needed who can be brought together relatively easily (Quinn 1992). The process is not linear, continuous or very predictable and the source of ideas varies. The timeline to completion is long which means commitment is needed. More, the process needs trust since many of the ideas will initially seem crazy. Cohesive teams, not a single individual with a bright idea likely makes the difference (Reich 1987). Unnecessary hierarchies of control stifle innovation; autonomy, information exchange, nurturing of creative and educational opportunities all encourage it. Rewards help if they have meaning to the rewarded (Paolillo and Brown 1978). But how the organisation sees itself is critical: when Apple saw itself as a computer manufacturer rather than a producer of value-adding through intellectual processes it lost software pre-eminence to Microsoft (Quinn 1992).

Management guru Peter Drucker (1998) observes that like any other endeavour, innovation takes talent, ingenuity, and knowledge but that if a company is not diligent, persistent and committed, it is unlikely to succeed at the business of innovation. Enterprises successful in innovation seek to advance intellect by encouraging self-motivated creativity, recruiting the best people, supporting intensive early development and constantly increasing in challenges and ensuring evaluation (by peers and others) (Quinn, Anderson and Finkelstein 1996). Some entrepreneurial firms spend as much time recruiting staff as they do analysing projects; they place value on mentoring and increasing professional challenges.

The celebrated company 3M—featured in most books about the best companies—has grown from a somewhat muddled and shaky start to be highly successful: its R&D people must spend 15 per cent of their time on their own projects. There is a very clear perception of what they are about: they make two-dimensional things. So in presenting new CD technology you hold the CD so that its two dimensionality can be clearly seen. Post-It Notes are now as much a part of our lives as are mobile phones. The glue on the back of the notes was found by accident. In the film about Peters and Waterman’s ‘In Search of Excellence’ we see the CEO of a company calling up the 3M CEO, ‘what are these funny little yellow pieces of paper that my secretary keeps attaching to the papers that come into me?’ The 3M CEO’s secretary was sending packs of these Notes to her counterparts in other companies: secretaries are really the people that control the office and therefore the company. The discovery and marketing of Post-Its were serendipitous, innovative and outside any structure. Leadership allowed that everything didn’t have to be controlled. Perhaps a reflection of the way the company started anyway.

A company called IDEO epitomises the requirements for innovation. It emphasises smallness, flexibility, multiple disciplines and cross fertilisation, bans bureaucracy and

has an extremely flat structure; positions have no titles, operating units are small and staff move about between them. 'Infrastructure' is flexible, mobile trolleys being used for equipment. IDEO is multidisciplinary, emphasises being 'in touch' and so makes extensive use of e-mail. IDEO pursues its own innovation methods in a five-step process: understand, observe, visualise, implement, evaluate (Perry 1995).

Gary Hamel (2000) has championed the need to think of ways to improve the output by innovative means, 'growing' the numerator rather than cutting the denominator, which means doing better smarter instead of doing more with less.

The history of science and the arts is littered with discoveries seemingly made by chance. Many of the stories of Nobel Prize-winning physicist, curious character and genius, Richard Feynman, and how William Smith began the geological mapping of Britain illustrate this (endnote 3).

## EFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONS

Effectiveness has been asserted to be in the eye of the beholder but I think we can accept that it means 'meeting the constraints and meeting or exceeding the goals specified by the dominant coalition [of constituencies]' (Kahn in Goodman *et al.* 1981) and that the outcomes of such an organisation will relate to the policy framework in which it works and to the objectives it seeks to achieve (Osborne *et al.* 1995). Effective enterprises are characterised by high performance work practices: contingent compensation, highly selective recruitment, substantial investment in training, employee participation, higher wages and reduced status differences (Pfeffer 1996). Few disagree on this yet managing this way it falls outside the 'point of view' or 'focus of attention' of many organisations. Most managers are concerned with strategy and financial affairs and on trying to be the chief source of strategic vision and wisdom; the 'tough person' model of the CEO and the lower status and narrow career paths of human resource managers don't help either. Successful or 'visionary' companies are guided by a core ideology—core values and a sense of purpose beyond just making money—which gives them a strong sense of identity and holds them together in the face of change. They set 'big hairy audacious goals' (or BHAGs) and adopt all sorts of approaches to create an environment that encourages people to experiment, to try things and to keep what works (Collins and Porras 1996).

Successful organisations devote significant resources to training people in leadership and most importantly recruit leaders for their ability to lead and foster environments of innovation: they don't hand the whole task over to consultants and they do enquire about the views of staff (Fernandez-Araoz 1999; Bennis and O'Toole 2000; Kelloway, Barling and Helleur 2000; Brown and Posner 2001).

In Australia [it was said] 'first and principally innovation [in business] ... in the 1990s is about people and enterprises, not about science and technology ... the outcome of productive employee relations is higher performance standards by the enterprise, not lower wages'. Firms that take this perspective are often able to successfully outmanoeuvre and outperform their rivals (Carnegie *et al.* 1993).

Downsizing, restructuring and outsourcing (re-engineering) have been destructive (Right Associates 1992; Gittins 1999; also editorial in the *Economist*, 3 September 1994). Not only have such practices failed to achieve the anticipated results of greater profitability but the impact on staff has been severe: at middle and lower levels staff stress levels have increased leading to worsening health and more (Swan 1998; Merson 2001).

Effectiveness has merely become conflated with efficiency, the immediate has gained precedence over the important, as Barry Jones once said, and attempts at empowerment which were supposed to remedy the negative effects haven't worked.

Effective non-profits resemble effective for-profit organisations. Eight non-profit service organisations in the USA recognised as achieving excellence were found to have each created an employee-centred organisation that exhibited five characteristics: 1 high value placed on line staff; 2 two-way feedback; 3 teamwork; 4 high level of trust; and 5 celebration and rewards. They emphasized accountability and high standards. A high-functioning board of directors was a key to organisational excellence: board members were valued members of the organisational team and a variety of board-staff relationships existed. These organisations collaborated with others to better serve people (Carl and Stokes 1991). Innovation flourished where risks were shared and there was a relationship with clients in which blame was not attributed to them if problems arose.

In my recently completed study of effective museums around the world the best, as judged by experts, were found to be characterised by cohesive leadership and visitor-focussed public programming (Griffin and Abraham 2001). Effective leadership means developing a vision, working effectively as a top management team and modelling appropriate behaviour. Board members are active in fund-raising. Staff understand and support the museum's goals and objectives. There is a focus on quality as well as quantifiable outcomes. Effective change management involves giving time to explain what is intended to be achieved, providing resources for training and so on. Public programming means providing a variety of interpretive mechanisms and development among staff of a shared understanding of the criteria for public program choice and senior managers are frequently seen on the 'floor'.

## WHAT LEADERSHIP IS

If there is any common feature emerging from the last twenty or so years of actual research on leadership—as opposed to unsubstantiated assertion—it is that concern for people has come to the fore as the hallmark of the effective leader. Rather than being the architect of strategy the leader is a developer of people.

One of the larger streams of recent research, referred to sometimes as ‘new leadership theory’, has involved more than 100 projects in a variety of organisational settings—manufacturing, the military, educational and religious institutions—and at various levels from first line supervisors to senior managers. And in many different countries. Four particular factors emerge as significantly related to both employee attitudes and performance (Avolio and Bass 1999; Peterson and Hunt 1997):

- building of trust and respect by doing the right thing and by role modelling (referred to as *idealized influence*);
- encouraging achievement beyond one’s own expectations (*inspirational motivation*);
- engaging the rationality of followers and challenging assumptions (*intellectual stimulation*); and
- treating staff as individuals, recognising achievement and working continuously to get them to develop to their full potential (*individualized influence*).

Together these factors are referred to as transformational or charismatic leadership. Clarifying what is expected and what will be provided if expected levels of performance are met are also important. But monitoring task execution for any problems that might arise and correcting them to maintain current performance levels or reacting only after problems have become serious are not effective or are ineffective (Lowe and Galen Kroeck 1996).

Other studies have reached similar conclusions. Longitudinal studies of twenty transnational companies world-wide concluded that successful leaders in effective companies focus on aligning people with the company’s objectives (referred to as ‘discipline’), supporting people to achieve their potential (‘stretch’), trusting those with whom one works and being open to challenge and tolerating failure (‘support’). The central task of general managers is to shape the organisational context (Ghoshal and Bartlett 1997).

Studies in other domains supports relationships between leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence and effective leadership styles (Goleman 1998, 2000). Staff performance responds strongly to the signalled expectations of leaders (Livingston 1969) and is most significantly improved by ongoing discussions or formative evaluation (Black and Wiliam 1998): both relate to inspirational motivation and individualised consideration. Transformational/charismatic leaders are more likely to encourage innovation (Yukl and Howell 1999).

Specific enterprises illustrate this. A collapsed nuclear power plant was reformed through attention to the concerns of employees rather than costs: having been closed down by the regulator because of poor performance it recovered to be sold off at a profit (Carroll and Hatakenaka 2001). The successful US airline, Southwest Airlines, structures its workforce around small spans of control, managers helping and coaching rather than demanding reports (Gitell 2000). Specific unique capabilities in the areas of culture and leadership which cannot be imitated by its competitors advance Southwest’s success (Hitt *et al.* 2001) and drive its very targeted marketing at business travellers, families, and students. Southwest’s frequent departures and low fares attract price-sensitive

customers who otherwise would travel by bus or car through offering short-haul, low-cost, point-to-point service between midsize cities and secondary airports in large cities; it avoids large airports and does not fly great distances (Porter 1996).

Major department store chain Sears Roebuck reformed itself through extensive discussions with its employees about what the firm meant to employees and customers: the outcome was a statistical relationship between staff morale and turnover and eventual recovery! (Rucci, Kim and Quinn 1998). Meanwhile Marks & Spencers argued about who would sit at the head of the board table and whether that person should be both chair and CEO: market share declined and their European stores were closed (Fisher 1999; see also 'Debate over Practicality of Non-Executive Directors Continues' in *Sunday Business*, 11 November 2001).

## WHAT IS LEARNING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The ultimate goal of entrepreneurship in museums must be the enhancement of the visitors' experience of interaction with the authentic object and the increase in understanding and knowledge. This is communication and we all know what that is, we have done it all our lives. But unfortunately, people who should know better are mostly ignoring the recent findings about learning. Of greatest concern is that the views of learners (and teachers) are not usually listened to!

First, a broad general statement: Poverty is the single biggest issue facing us as civilised humans! (note 4).

The most significant correlate with educational attainment is socio-economic status. Not only are people at lower levels usually not well educated themselves, they struggle to earn enough money to make ends meet and have little time left over to complement the education of their children in the home. The early years of life are when the biggest difference is made: child care improves later educational attainment; it also improves health, including lowering stress levels, and leads to a significant reduction in juvenile and therefore adult crime (reported in Garrett 1999; McCain and Mustard 1999).

Providing more choice in what school is attended only emphasises the disparities that already exist (Lauder *et al.* 1999). Increasing attention to curricula standardised by not only topic but time spent and to testing ability to recall facts rather than exploring understanding is leading to no improvement in educational performance, especially at the lower end of the scale (Gardner 1999; Berliner 2000). And it is the lower end we have to worry about. The use of performance averages—test scores—over large populations masks areas of low achievement relating to both low socio-economic status and resourcing levels. Business might advocate performance-based pay for teachers and teamwork but they actually don't practise this themselves but argue for competitive education and skills enhancement (see note 5). Teachers are less well treated in terms of workplace conditions and support for training and development than almost any other sector of the workforce.

Far too little attention is given to what children actually can and do achieve. The behaviour and ability of children—even from lower socio-economic backgrounds—is actually astounding. Given the opportunity, teenagers demand better teaching standards and choose appropriate texts; far from finding performance art like drama and dance boring they discover opportunities for self-expression in their lives (as recounted by Professors Milbrey W. McLaughlin and Shirley Brice Heath of Stanford University at the American Association for Education Research [AERA] Conference in Seattle 2001). The BBC recently reported a story about illiterate street children quickly teaching themselves the rudiments of computers and the internet. Intrigued by the icons on the computer and without any help, kids from the slums of Indian cities were able to figure out how to use computers, browse the internet (within minutes), cut and paste copy, drag and drop items and create folders; they particularly liked using software to draw and paint. They moved on to downloading games and playing them. Within two months they had discovered MP3 music files and were downloading songs. All this happened from incidental learning and peer-to-peer learning.

These things matter: museums don't function in some isolated environment but are affected in their programs by what is going on in schools and the community. Socio-economic status is the principal determinant of museum visiting (and library use and attendance at cultural events). How people view museums derives from their socio-

economic status and their experience of museum visiting, both family and in school groups (Griffin and Symington 1997) as well as the views of peers and role models. It is good to take museums to the people: that will make some difference but it won't solve the difficulty many people have with museums.

How museums develop their programs depends a lot on: first, the level of support given to educators within the museum; second, the view held by executive management of the nature of the educational role and who the audience is—school children or everyone; and most importantly, what understanding there is at executive management level and in other parts of the museum as to what museum education is supposed to deliver and what learning is.

I fear that the huge literature on learning including learning in museums and how visitors behave is not known even generally to many professional people who have influence over public programming in museums, particularly those at the most senior levels. Many politicians and senior bureaucrats are similarly unaware, even uninterested. The views about learning we grew up with and its emphasis on knowing facts don't have the validity of the past: what counts is the ability to make connections between one situation and domain of knowledge and others.

Leading experts say, 'recent education theory acknowledges, even promotes, the object-based, experiential, thought-provoking, and problem-solving type of learning in which museums excel. The overriding conclusion is that museums offer visitors profound, long-lasting, and even life-changing experiences ... The challenge for museum educators is to convert the many 'lively, vivid and interesting' experiences into opportunities that promote learning' (Hein and Alexander 1998). Numerous other people make similar points. Rather than digesting facts, learning may be as much as sitting on the steps of the Orangerie in Paris contemplating Monet's water lilies and thinking how we react to art (Kindler 1997). And visitors don't equate learning with education or recreation with entertainment (Combs 1999).

Museums have long based their exhibition process on the notion that they can determine the visitor's knowledge through the content and form of the exhibition. But visitors don't come to the museum without knowledge. They construct their own knowledge through free-choice learning experiences. Learning is advanced most by control over our own learning journey and takes place within three contexts—personal, socio-cultural and physical—which interact *over time*. Eight key factors are influential including expectations and prior knowledge, choice and control, socio-cultural mediation and facilitation, orientation, design and later reinforcing experiences (Falk and Dierking 2000).

Rather than recognise the changing understanding of learning, however, many museum people have proclaimed entertainment as the missing factor, and solution! Meanwhile critics accuse museums of 'dumbing down', failing to lead, excessive use of technology and sacrificing their authority to political correctness and to democracy. These are propositions repeated in recent commentary and polemic (Kimmelman 2001; Kilian 2001; Appleton 2001). In fact the most popular exhibitions in London, New York and Chicago, and Australia in the last twenty years have not been like that and neither have the museums and exhibitions that have won American Association of Museums prizes or European Museum of the Year awards: I regard much of the criticism as extreme elitism or an attempt to rewrite history by those who accuse museums of doing just that. I return to this in discussing quality.

We are often told no-one is interested in science. Think about this: the last ten years have seen an extraordinary increase in interest in books about science: *Fermat's Last Theorem* by Simon Singh featured the solution of one of the most important challenges in

mathematics and was made into a TV series. (A film about maths?) As well, *Galileo's Daughter* (followed by a book of her letters), *Longitude* (also a film), *The Map that Changed the World*, *The Song of the Dodo*,  *$e=mc^2$ : The Story of an Equation* and much more. What can this mean? These stories focus on people and their experiences: they engage us in adventures of the mind and the physical and natural world. They are not simply exercises in entertainment any more than are the vast number of successful films and books by the BBC, the ABC and PBS dealing with the environment and with history. They aren't like the lessons we got at school, they aren't full of facts to learn!

## ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN MUSEUMS

I will give some examples of entrepreneurship in museums. I will then close with some commentary about quality and why consideration of it is amongst the most important things we do.

At the Art Gallery of Ontario, visitors to the Canadian Galleries are invited to set down their views and interpretations of the artworks and can explore how other visitors have reacted to the same pieces. Through this they are having a conversation, even an argument, with each other, sharing experiences (Worts 1993).

The Ohio Science Centre—COSI—which started in Columbus and is now part of several other Ohio cities, brought young people, generally from lower socio economic sections of society, into the Centre to tour exhibits in the evening with a member of the Board: they would tour the Centre and eat a meal together. The New England Aquarium also provides internships for children from less well-off sections of the Boston community. YouthALIVE, a major initiative in fifty-six cities in the United States, brought together over 7,000 young people and seventy-two museums of all kinds in educational enrichment and work-based learning programs between 1991 and 1999 (Beane 2000). More than 70 per cent of the participating adolescents were from low-income communities and 63 per cent were African American or Latino. One conclusion from this program is that 'ordinary people, given opportunities, will display extraordinary talents' (Baum, Hein and Solvay 2000).

The 'Please Touch' Museum, like the Boston Children's Museum and the Indianapolis Children's Museum, recognised that learning in early childhood is not achieved through encountering facts but experiencing the environment through all of their senses. The Australian Museum's Kidspace used these examples to provide an interactive space for children from three to seven years to learn with their parents. A notice at the front of Kidspace says, 'By pretending kids make sense of the world'.

The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa or 'Our Place' developed its marae—a place to stand in Maori society—as a central feature of the Museum: its carvings recognise the two strands of the New Zealand community: those who belong to the land as first discoverers and those belonging to the land by right of the Treaty of Waitangi. In 'Golden Days', Te Papa presents recent history in a kind of junk shop setting through video clips during the course of which various ornaments and attachments move, open, sound or whatever. This focus on local history known to everyone is an extraordinary emotional experience to many.

At the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art a computerised interactive video presentation complemented the exhibition 'Points of Departure' which presented contemporary art from a number of perspectives and allowed, for instance, the visitor to see Robert Rauschenberg wandering around junk shops in Los Angeles in search of items used in his sculpture in the exhibition and talking about what he was choosing.

The Western Australian Museum's new 'BiosphereWest' programs will profile contemporary and topical issues through small tourable exhibitions, seminars, performances and so on. An easy to erect display system will mean the displays can go anywhere including to schools, libraries, cinema foyers, etc. The hope is that 'breaking' issues and stories can be quickly dealt with and through a forum capacity the community can engage in dialogue on the issue in question (Gary Morgan, Executive Director, *personal communication*).

Public programming doesn't have a monopoly on innovation. When (then new) Executive Director Goery Delacôte of the Exploratorium in San Francisco articulated the

challenge to improve the public experiences without losing the organisation's essence, sophisticated thinking and deep values of the place, the response of the Director of Public Programs in guiding discussion was to provide room for succession as in a forest, to oversee restoration like the downtown of a city. Staff groups focused on original intentions and past experiences and explored understanding of the visitor experience and public spaces. Although criticised by some, this process helped determine what should be changed and, as well, highlighted the essential qualities of the Exploratorium (an exercise reminiscent of the Sears experience). The ultimate visiting experience was seen as a set of connections, space that couldn't be explored without understanding how the social environment of the visit worked and how knowledge was presented (McLean 1999).

In its planning for 1996 through 2000 the Australian Museum developed a process based on planning at a major computer company (EDS) in which middle-level executives saw a major need to change the focus of their business. We had learned about this from a presentation by Gary Hamel. In the process, ideas were developed and cascaded through three groups of more than fifty people in succession, helped by people who steered the discussions and others who linked the adjoining sessions. Presentations were written and sung and included poetry, pictures (and cartoons) and some theatre. A major outcome was the identification of the desired outcome of the museum visit as the 'excited mind' (depicted in a Venn diagram as the area of overlap of people [including visitors and staff], knowledge [and experiences] and research and collections [undertaken and managed by the museum]) in imitation of perfume companies that sell hope although they manufacture perfume and hardware stores that sell holes, not drills.

The next example is certainly relevant although it concerns a church, not a museum. Saint Peter in Chains (*Chiesa San Pietro in Vincoli*) in Rome, up the hill from the Coliseum, is restoring wonderful Michelangelo statues: the work, in both Rome and Florence, can be seen live on the web through web cams. You can also visit the restoration site physically.

There are many other examples. In almost all cases I have mentioned the museums are characterised by the kinds of qualities typifying effective organisations, although it is true that in some organisations success occurs despite constraints. It is interesting that outside the USA few museums approach sponsorship in the form of using specific skills and experience of a sponsor and few sponsors seem to leverage their support through partnering with other sponsors (see Porter 1999)

## QUALITY: THE PRINCIPAL CONCERN OF GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

What is good art? Often words that describe categories of activities or things are used as qualifiers in themselves: bad art isn't art at all. Think of that rather tired assertion that 'she doesn't know what is good art but she knows what she likes'. Much of history is nothing more than an argument about quality. Then there are the critics!

In ordinary life quality usually means what is safe, what one is comfortable with, what is known. If it isn't then it is what some trusted person has said is good. Discussions become an examination of the veracity of experts rather than of the thing or class of things to which a certain quality might be ascribed. These issues particularly invade the conversations of executive leadership and boardrooms; although 'considered' reports are supposedly the basis of decisions in fact information is always subjective and often used in a political manner (Davenport *et al.* 1992). Too little debate about quality sustains the practical work of the manager and trustee. Just as none of the conclusions about ethical behaviour of directors bothered corporations such as HIH or Enron.

Human judgements, especially those of experts and critics, are notoriously unreliable. JS Bach nearly didn't get appointed as Cantor at Leipzig, Albert Einstein was told he would never amount to anything, Fred Hoyle (who learned to read by following subtitles in the cinema) was hit on the head by his school teacher because he got the number of petals in a flower wrong, Bell Labs cancelled the project to develop what became the UNIX operating system because it was deemed not commercially viable and scientists studying the ozone hole failed to get funding through peer review! I won't mention the secret services of any country! There are scores more examples in every field of endeavour. I can only give one example in the time I have left of what I consider is high quality product in a field relevant to museums. Ken Burns series, 'The West' would surely have been thought too difficult to bring off. My comments earlier about science books and films are relevant.

Like all Burns' documentaries 'The West' comprises still photographs, talking heads and the occasional flyover of the scenery and truly outstanding commentary and storyline. (Still photographs and talking heads are supposedly not appropriate for movies!) Asked about his films Burns talks of the struggles of integrating the 'top down' and 'bottom up' views of history into a true and honest picture of our complicated past. He attempts to take advantage of the fact that:

the sources of memory lie in anecdote and story, those fragments of our past life that have an emotional coherence and stir an emotional response ... With archival photographs and artefacts, diaries, letters and news reports, with sound effects and songs, I have tried to restore the myriad of voices of the past that speak to us not only of generals and presidents, but also of ordinary people, like you and me, who form the real fabric of our history and society – voices that remind us who we are. (Walsh 1994)

And like all Burns' work, 'The West' is first and foremost about people; as is 'Jazz'!  
(Something some critics have not understood.)

## MUSEUMS AND QUALITY: A CHALLENGE TO OUR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

If we try to bring the consideration of productions like Burns' films to our examination of museums we confront the criticisms, and therefore what people really understand high quality to be.

Since Te Papa is on the other side of 'the ditch', I am relatively safe in dealing with it. One critic said, 'Much of this museum is keyed to the attention span of a nine-year old. Judgements of aesthetic taste merely support elitist class distinctions and have no place in the [museum's] ideology of mediocrity'. Another said, 'Somehow Te Papa has to be turned around to operate more like a museum and less like a theme park'. And others have asserted that the failures are due to the organisational structure: professional disciplines such as art are not to the fore.

Extraordinary planning involving very knowledgeable people went into the development of Te Papa and a very large amount of research was done by some of the best visitor studies professionals to try to understand the visiting experience. I think these are the kinds of things responsible for the visitor numbers and expressions of approval that make Te Papa rank amongst the best in the world.

So far as can be ascertained, much of the criticism of Te Papa benefits to no extent from any understanding of the visiting experience, even by the better educated people, or of learning. We have a good idea as to what frequent visitors to art museums, for instance, would like: text labels that are lucid, direct, enhancing the work; acceptance of where the visitor 'is at', not negated or downplayed; a variety of interpretive devices; the curator's judgements of quality explained (Grinstead and Ritchie 1990; Schloder *et al.* 1994). Visiting an art museum these days we can see just how intensely people are interested in what they are looking at: they aren't ignorant. Imposing a complex, authoritarian view on visitors is not appropriate!

Similar responses can be made to many (not all) of the criticisms of the Melbourne Museum and the National Museum of Australia. Comments that treat the equation (by then director George MacDonald) of the museum visiting experience and the experience of viewing a movie film as an equation with 'Hollywood flicks' don't advance anything. Claims that stories of massacres of Aborigines on the frontier are a sop to political correctness are themselves mired in myths that the first settlers were entirely civilised (Manne 2001).

The point I want to make is that if we enter into a discussion about what high quality is, what seems to characterise it and how it is achieved, we will be better prepared to deal with the reactions to the program when it opens, able to learn from the experience. More especially genuinely exercise the role and duty of leadership, governance and indeed professionalism. We will be recognising the features that characterise the effective organisation and that constitute genuine leadership. But it will take courage. It will be better than performance indicators which are often no more than a form of social control (Griffin 1996; Rounds 2001).

The confusion between popular and populist has resulted partly from a push by some for numbers irrespective of quality in all art form and cultural heritage. If we are to progress we need some rigorous and un-self-indulgent criticism and an avoidance of silly assertions like an art museum can only get quality exhibitions if art persons are represented at the highest level of management. That is simply asking for more fights over territory and professional knowledge while the public can get what we give them. Right now in most museums the assertion of authority by both museum curator and

board member has ended up with fruitless argument at best—often simply an abrogation of responsibility by allowing that experts' views have to be trusted—and distorted programming at worst as well as far too much time spent on financial matters and managerial issues. We need better management and leadership, better governance and better criticism; we need a focus on those we seek to communicate with and influence!

## CONCLUSIONS

It is difficult to forecast the future: we aren't even very good at forecasting the past. When the world wide web spread through the developed world and computers gained the capacity to manipulate large amounts of data and handle images, there were assertions that people would no longer need to visit museums in person. Wrong! Whilst some museums have lost audiences in certain years others have gained substantial audiences. Like cinemas: people didn't stop going to the movies when TV invaded the world, and not just because only the young know how to program a VCR. It was very much because of how movie theatres dealt with the challenge, increasing comfort and accessibility (Burton 2000). Large theatre audiences survived through the video recording revolution and now the cable TV invasion. These are lessons for museums.

Access to all the collections of every museum has not been gained and nor can we see the images of even a reasonable selection of objects. Other ways in which digital technology can enhance access are developing through hand-held devices which can make available both text and audio material relating to the objects on display (Schwarzer 2001).

Natural history museums are still working out how they can use the computerised data concerning their collections to advance conservation of the natural environment. The answer isn't in the data but in the political will (Griffin 1993). However, let us recall how Australian museums working together through the Australian Museums On-line (AMOL) project have advanced access beyond that found in almost all other countries in the world. The National Quilt Project, one of the features of the AMOL site, serves as an example of what can be achieved: it gives substantial context through the stories of ordinary people which are featured in the quilts; this was undertaken by the volunteer operated Pioneer Women's Hut and a network of volunteers. But museums still have a long way to go with this area.

Museums have not found it possible to gain great commercial advantage from use of the web. Then who has?

Innovation contributes not just to coping with change but to influencing its direction—in a way that advances the organisation and the industry as well. Most of all we must recognise that museums can learn much from other people and organisations. Those who make decisions about our museums should exhibit the same degree of rigour in their decision making and requirements for information on which to base decisions that they demand in their own disciplines and working lives, in some cases a great deal more.

They should not simply accept the often uninformed comments of those who seem to have most influence at the moment, no matter how their position has been legitimised. This will mean valuing doubt and its expression, as advocated by Francis Bacon (quoted in Sen 2001), as well as respect for the legitimate views of others. It means valuing ideas for their own sake, allowing that it may be more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true, as recognised by Alfred North Whitehead (note 6). And it means recognising that we have made many mistakes in our previous judgements.

Seeking genuine high standards of quality is something we have to do, especially if we are in charge, if we have substantial influence.

Thinking about entrepreneurship, and having listened recently to Michael Leunig and his commentary on how it's okay just to be yourself I am reminded of that film-producer and quiet achiever Arthur Freed (note 7) and what he once said. 'Don't try to be different. Just try to be good. To be good is different enough.'

Rather what George Fairfax and Ken Myer would say, I think.

## ENDNOTES

**1** George Fairfax was a patient man who could understand the need to believe. A colleague remembers seeing George looking out at the huge, rain sodden foundations from which would rise the Victorian Arts Centre, and listening as he painted an inspiring word picture of the great building which would be realised and how what took place within and around it would enrich the lives of many people for years to come. George also recognised that it was important to work to convince politicians and others of the importance of the arts: he was Chair of the Campaign for the Arts in the 1990s.

Kenneth Baillieu Myer, a man of considerable generosity of spirit and enthusiasm together with his wife Yasuko graced many research and arts establishments including the National Library of Australia and the Australian Museum with their philanthropy and genuine interest. Their tragic death in a plane crash in Alaska on 30 July 1992 took away two great friends and supporters of courage.

**2** Few references are made these days to the lessons from the Cuban missile crisis, now extraordinarily well-documented; President John F. Kennedy, on the other hand, learned much from study of the genesis of the First World War from reading amongst other things Barbara Tuchman's writings such as *August 1914*. In Robert Kennedy's account, *Thirteen Days* (New York: WW Norton 1999), Arthur Schlesinger Jr notes in his foreword, 'recent scholarship confirms the portrait of John F. Kennedy sketched by his brother in 'Thirteen Days': a remarkably cool, thoughtful, non-hysterical, self-possessed leader, aware of the weight of decision, incisive in his questions, firm in his judgement, always in charge, steering his advisers perseveringly in the direction he wanted to go.' A recent example of how much so called experts know is demonstrated by the success of the 2002 Sydney Festival: in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 31 January 2002 it is reported that, 'Brett Sheehy is the director who went unrecognised at his own festival ... the man who began the first of his three annual festivals as an unknown quantity can afford to smile. He has ended the three-week event having almost doubled the number of tickets sold last year, to 90,000. And he expects a \$500,000 surplus after a \$3.5million take at the box office. It has been a festival in which the nay-sayers were proved wrong. People said Fox Studios will not work as a venue, young people won't buy tickets, the [Opera House] forecourt idea is tired, Theatre du Soleil is too hard and too risky ... One by one, all those things were dismantled.' Most of the shows sold out and some had to be extended.

Donald McDonald's Australia Day address to the National Press Club on Wednesday, 30 January 2002 (go to <http://www.abc.net.au/public/austday2002/mcdonald.htm>) has some commentary relevant to creative organisations and performance measures: 'ratings provide a familiar and convenient measuring stick, but are not the best measure of our success. Not a measure of excellence or usefulness'. And, 'We can't just leave it to the market. There is so much less to the market than meets the eye. And it's not necessarily the best way of attaining important public goals.'

**3** To Los Alamos in the early days of the Manhattan Project were sent bright young army recruits with engineering ability. IBM machines that manipulated punch cards were used for to do the multitude of calculations of the energy generated by an imploding bomb. But nobody told the recruits what the numbers meant or what the purpose was. The work went slowly. Feynman became impatient.

Feynman (1985) tells it this way: ‘I said that the first thing there has to be is that these technical guys have to know what they were doing. Oppenheimer [head of the project] went and talked to security and got special permission so I could give a nice lecture about what we were doing, and they were all excited ... They knew what the numbers meant. They knew what they were doing! *Complete* transformation! *They* began to invent ways of doing it better. They improved the scheme. They worked at night; they didn’t need anything. They understood everything; they invented some of the programs that we used. So ... all that had to be done was tell them what it was. As a result, although it took them nine months to do three problems before, we did nine problems in *three* months, which is nearly ten times as fast.’

In ‘The Map that Changed the World’, Simon Winchester tells how William Smith, collecting fossil brachiopods as a boy, wondered how objects that look so much like marine shells, but had become petrified into minerals never secreted by organisms, could be found at such high elevations [halfway up a mountain]. Stephen Jay Gould (2001) notes:

Winchester asserts that before Smith’s time, only the most iconoclastic and courageous thinkers would have dared even to contemplate, against explicit theological directives, the proposition that these objects might be the remains of organisms’. Gould summarises the story thus, ‘In 1815, the self-trained engineer William Smith, who dug canals and drained swamps for his day job, published a geological map of complex and novel design, remarkable accuracy, and uncommon beauty (not to mention its ample size of eight by six feet)—the first ever completed for an entire nation ... [It] showed Britain’s geological strata—chronologically ordered layers of rock that he identified by the fossils peculiar to each interval of time based ... entirely upon his personal fieldwork and observations—all done by stagecoach and shank’s mare ... although Smith attracted significant patronage from high levels of Britain’s social and intellectual hierarchy, he came from ‘rude’ stock of rural heritage ... an almost, but obviously not absolutely, insurmountable obstacle in a nation with social stratification even more inflexible than the lithological layering of its geologic stratigraphy.

Gould carefully shows that there is some substantial mythmaking by Winchester in his story of Smith as well as scientific errors but does say, ‘Winchester tells his story both concisely and wonderfully well’. The review concludes, ‘So William Smith applied a cardinal principle of history to unlock the pageant of eons, and we continue to stumble, nearly two centuries later, over the facts of his personal story because we misdirect history into channels of our evolved mental preferences’.

**4** The US Congress recently approved the expenditure of \$40 billion to fight terrorism: George McGovern (*New York Times*, 1 January 2002) suggested that \$5 billion of it be used to reduce poverty. I believe the proportions must be reversed. And remember that global military expenditure is enough to supply health care, primary education, family planning, safe drinking water and sufficient nutrition for every person on the planet for one year.

**5** This point was made by Professor David Berliner of the University of Arizona in his John Dewey lecture at the 2001 Annual meeting of the American Association for Education Research; see the policies of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry on education and training—which focus on industry needs, competition, choice, standards, benchmarking, testing and basics (numeracy and literacy)—at [http://www.acci.asn.au/index\\_policypapers.htm](http://www.acci.asn.au/index_policypapers.htm).

**6** Speaking of the statement by the celebrated mathematician, philosopher and collaborator with Bertrand Russell, Professor Charles Birch addressing the NSW Premier’s Awards in 1996 commented, ‘Whitehead was not saying that truth was

unimportant, he was saying that the important thing was to be interesting and that would lead to truth'.

**7** Arthur Freed (1894–1973), songwriter, associate producer for *The Wizard of Oz*, and then producer for twenty years with MGM, was responsible for *Singing in the Rain* and many other outstanding films; he nurtured the careers of stars like Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, Cyd Charisse and June Allyson. Two of his films *An American in Paris* (1951) and *Gigi* (1958), won Oscars for Best Picture. He was decorated Chevalier of the French Legion d'Honneur in recognition of his outstanding contribution to cinema.

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Entrepreneurship. 2017 \$15K Creative Arts Competition Workshop. Credit Lenny Martinez. Shambhavi Kadam and Kim Gordon, winners of the 2013 Creative Arts Competition. Credit: L. Barry Hetherington. MIT is known as a place where innovative thinkers collaborate to turn big ideas born in the classroom, lab or studio into successful businesses in the outside world, and that reputation applies just as much to the arts as to any other field. There are a number of resources and programs on campus to help students turn their arts-focused idea into an enterprise. The Student Art Programs (START) Entrepreneurship Program offers interested students mentorship, work space, funding, workshops and a chance to find collaborators. Daily tips, tools, resources and inspiration for the aspiring arts entrepreneur from The Institute For Arts Entrepreneurship, a Chicago, IL based school that teaches artists how to turn their creativity into a sustainable business. The actual spirit of art prevails not only in the artists' workshop, art gallery, but is also to pervade every other individual attention and enterprise. By Guest Blogger. 5 days ago 5 days ago. Can I Require my Employees to Get Vaccinated against COVID-19? If you are planning on requiring your employees to get vaccinated, here are 3 major considerations: Know Your Industry Under the ADA, employers can only By Rafael Lazaro. 2 weeks ago 2 weeks ago. Entrepreneur the Arts. 365K likes. Enter to take your art- your creativity-your genius- someplace you want to go. See more of Entrepreneur the Arts on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Entrepreneur the Arts on Facebook. Log In. Forgot account? or. Create New Account. Not Now. Entrepreneur the Arts. Education. CommunitySee All. Abstract This research explores the function of entrepreneurship in nonprofit art museums. Traditionally, entrepreneurship literature features debates on customer orientation and innovation. This paper reviews a tension in entrepreneurship: the relationship between limited funding and the need to innovate in nonprofit art museums. The paper develops a construct by which to explain the structure of entrepreneurship in nonprofit art museums in Australia and New Zealand since 1975. From this discussion, different strategies and tensions are highlighted that nonprofit art museum directors have use