

Reviewing a research policy

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Grants & Research Development

Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Museums Australia Conference

Melbourne 2010

Reviewing a research policy

+ Grants & Research Development 2010

Consolidation + building up the PHM Grant program
Raising the PHM profile in Research + Scholarship

Reviewing the PHM research policy:

- Issues common to all collecting institutions
- Relationship with research-intensive institutions

Work in progress – Powerhouse Museum – relevance to other collecting institutions.

3 key questions for contemporary museum research:

- + How does museum research fit into the broader research environment?
- + What are the changes/challenges for contemporary museum research?
- + What is the best contemporary model of museum research policy?

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+ Consultation

Universities

- Dr Jennifer Barrett a/Dean Faculty of Arts, Director Museum Studies, Sydney University
- Assoc Prof. Paula Hamilton, Director of Research, UTS Sydney
- Dr Gillian Fuller, Director DAAO project UNSW Sydney

PHM Staff

- Curators, Digital Technologies, Research Library, Conservation and Registration, Public program, Publishing staff, Regional Coordinator, Migration Heritage Centre, Sydney Observatory

Overseas

- V&A Deputy Head of Research Liz Miller

Research policy material

- Sydney University White Paper
- Research and Scholarship Policy of the National Museum of Australia
- Essays by Dr Jennifer Barrett
- Various current position descriptions of museum 'research' staff

Major Australian public museums' research as represented online

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+ **Museum research within the broader research environment**

Museum research – object based research – collection based research - conservation research – museum archive research

(support research)

- Museum audience research – Visitor research - Market research
- Museum's social role research
- Museum online development research - Statistics
- Social media and museums research
- e research

collection research = object investigation as the prime source of knowledge and evidence

- Scholarship building
- Key research outputs
 - collection development
 - exhibitions, publications, lecture/seminars, digital collections
 - *open* collection, place of enquiry and discovery

In the context of research beyond the museum -

- : museums encourage critical thinking and discovery
- : museums in general don't share the same public status as medicine, etc. research institutions
- : museums **emulate research** environment
- : in the context of academia, museums share an ongoing commitment to the process of learning and knowledge building.

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+ Object based research at the Powerhouse Museum

- 350 000+ objects across vast range of disciplines
- curatorial & conservation expertise

central shared + common purpose:

- the collection & looking after it
- the visitor & their experience

central shared responsibility:

- to be an *open* museum : accessible + transparent + connected + shared
- our status and accountability to the people of NSW

PHM Research & Publishing policy (2003).

PHM is a research-active museum

- incorporate scholarship in PHM brand
- develop a research culture in PHM
- more research presence on PHM website

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+ Major changes + challenges affecting museum research today

- Expectation of multidisciplinary expertise
 - Changes in the meaning of curatorial role and profession
 - Growing dominance of virtual research
 - Need for new partnerships and networks for museums to function
 - Economic factors
 - E research and data sharing
 - Digital collection
 - Research outcome dissemination
-
- New Museum studies curriculum development for building skills for future museum professionals
 - Australian public perception : Research = Science
 - Research in Arts, Design, Humanities, Conservation

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+ Building the museum research culture

Supporting museum research culture and building the staff scholarship profile:

- Postgraduate teaching/mentoring (Museum studies students)
- Postgraduate internship student supervision
- Doctoral thesis examining
- Publishing
- Research outcomes presentation
- Conference attendance, paper presentation
- participation in peer-review (in museum context)
- Research time : exhibition development
 - new acquisitions
 - public enquiries
 - cross-sector exchange and collaboration
- Media and Editorial activity
- Professional development
- Research code of conduct

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+ best model for a research policy in museums

a. Australian model

- to address the changes & internal/external challenges
- to firm up the role of research and develop an organizational research culture
- to articulate research activities in relation to our mission, brand and visitors and income.
- to develop an action plan - > business plan
- to articulate statement of purpose for research – its priorities - outcomes – measures – business model – opportunities

b. V&A museum research model

- V&A research culture
- research underpins everything the V&A does
- no research policy – V&A Strategic Plan

V&A Research department

- Dedicated team of researchers + academics and temporary exhibition & publication teams from other V&A depts.
- Research Dept's annual plan is developed in relation to SP and to a specific year (acquisition, discovery, exhibition).
- Collection-focussed staff present their research findings progressively as work in progress via fortnightly seminar program
- Encourage “Dialogue across departments, periods, cultures and materials”.
- External partnerships and funding grants

V&A research flexible strategies.

+ Conclusion

Ideas for the best contemporary model of museum research policy:

1. Shared Research policy for museums in Australia – via MA – with specific details for individual museum and collections.
2. V&A model
3. Each museum develops (or not) their own research policy or research statement
4. An action plan -- working towards the V&A model by 2015.
5. Combination

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+ Recommendations for PHM

- improve organizational structures to develop more dynamic research culture
- create physical space for researchers
- formalize museums' engagement with supportive network of researchers
- create interest-based research and discussion groups across the departments and museums and universities
- research community
- open PHM to universities as a training ground
 - for teaching material culture investigation
 - for cross-disciplinary , object-based research and enquiry; conservation research
 - for informing new curriculum subjects like museums & social media
- develop
 - more coordinated approach to research
 - opportunities and collaboration – effective partnerships & network
 - systematic record of research outputs
 - support to regional museums – mentoring program, internship research skills
 - measures and performance indicators
 - research plan 3 - 5 yr
- e research – online research communication
- museums as platform for research 'education'
- museums as a regular venue for research dissemination
- support scholarly investigation as an important ingredient to PHM success and brand.

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thank you.

questions?

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grants & research development

powerhouse museum

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