Collection Management Policy at Abdeen Palace Museums

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Abstract

This research aims to study the collection management policy of historical museums in Egypt; As the Egyptian museums are in urgent need of the collection management policy in this historical period by setting this policy in line with the Egyptian regulations and laws of the Abdeen Palace museums as a great model for historical museums in Egypt. How to secure and protect museum collections in general and how to manage them through the collection management policy. The research also tries to develop the mission, vision and role of the museum through the management of international and historical collections and recommendations regarding museums.

Keywords: Museum, Abdeen Palace, Historical Museum, Historical House Museum, Collections, Collections Management.

Introduction

The researcher discovered through his work in the Egyptian museums sector that there is no policy for collections management in any of the historical Egyptian museums, and that Egyptian museums are in urgent need of the policy of collections management. It was his duty as a specialist in this period obliging him to set this policy for the Abdeen Palace Museum as a model for historical museums in Egypt.

The museum under study in this research, to be the nucleus which can be developed and modified later by museum staff according to muse logical order, of “Historic House Museums Developing a certain policy or system, can make us keep up with the progress of international museums that have preceded us in developing global fundamentals and policies for each museum. These policies do not depend on certain persons or administrations of a certain museum; however, it must be determined by the museum experts a vision, mission, objectives and value for the museum with clear concepts to the visitors, the public and the working staff; so that the museum could have its own management system and policy.

The policy is not just a set of rules, basics or slogans and clichés for public address or to be published on the websites, but it is of a considerable value for administration and working staff. All have to believe in this system and policy in order to deliver them to the public. This will confer a special character to the museum and make it distinguishable from all museums. The researcher lists the steps to develop general and particular policy for the Abdeen palace museum.

'Abdeen Palace is one of the most important and famous palaces constructed during the reign of the family of Muhammad Ali Pasha of Egypt. Khedive Isma’iil started to build this palace immediately after his ascendance of the throne in 1279 A.H / 1863 A.D and took it as his official residence in 1291 A.H / 1874 A.D. It was mainly built to transfer the official royal residence from the citadel to the city center of Cairo.

It was called 'Abdeen Palace because it was built on the ruins of a house owned by "Abdeen Bik "a Turkish prince whose position was "Amir al-liwa al-Sultani". Khedive Isma’iil bought the house from him and also expropriated hundreds of other buildings and routes around them to increase the whole area to 24 acres. The palace took ten years to build, and was carried out by Engineer De Corel wel Rousseou, and a huge number of Egyptian, Italian, French and Turkish painters. The palace building cost 700,000 pounds, while the furniture cost 2,000,000 Egyptian pounds.

The palace was given several names, the most important of which; the Jewel of palaces, the lost Paradise, as well as the beacon of the royal palaces(2) Although the Khedive lived in the palace and transferred the official royal location to it, the palace kept its old name 'Abdeen, which included also the square and the entire quarter.

The sons and grandsons of Khedive Isma’iil who succeeded him as rulers of Egypt were fond of adding their own touches to ‘Abdeen palace to reflect the taste and the spirit of the era. For instance, King Fouad I, Isma’il's son, who ruled Egypt from 1917 to 1936, assigned some of the Palace's rooms as a museum for the Royal Family's possessions, including weapons, ammunitions, decorations, orders and medals. His son Faruk I, who succeeded in ruling between 1936 and 1952, completed the museum, adding many possessions, in particular all kinds of weapons. He also annexed to the museum a library with references specialized in weaponry.

In the wake of the July 1952 Revolution, management of ‘Abdeen Palace museum was assigned to the Museums Department in the Citadel. Afterwards, President Sadat assigned the museum management to the Presidency of the Republic and ordered to restore and renovate the palace and its museum. At the time of President Mubarak, the Palace regained attention. It was fully refurbished including updating and developing the arms museum. The displayed items were re arranged using advanced techniques.
The Arms museum, due to the outstanding collection coupled with the style of development, stands as one of few specialized museums in this field on the international level. Two other specialized museums have been created.

One for gifts received by Presidents of Republic on various national occasions or during their worldwide tours, the other for Muhammad ‘Ali Pasha's possessions including utensils and vessels made of silver, crystal and colored glass, as well as other unique artifacts. It was established under the name "Abdeen Palace Museums" and re-inaugurated by President Mubarak on October 17, 1998.5

What is the collection policy?

A collection policy is a public document that guides the development and management of a museum’s collection. It specifies why, what, where, how and when a museum collects, and how and why items may be deaccessioned from the collection. The collection policy includes a range of reference points that provide a framework for making sound decisions about the development and use of the collection. Museums hold collections in trust for the community, for their benefit and enjoyment today and in the future.6

The collection policy establishes an ethical framework for the museum’s work with the collection. The contents of a collection policy will vary depending on the type of museum. Some museums, such as those with an in-situ collection in a heritage building, may have a new acquisition, but these museums still need closed collection with policies that specify no a collection policy to manage the collection. Preparing a collection policy is an opportunity to take stock of the collection, understand its scope and needs and consider opportunities for future development. Developing or reviewing the collection policy is an opportunity to put the collection back into focus and to plan for its future.7 This will be a case study at the 'Abdeen Palace Museum.

-Why have special policies for museums?

Policies are set to provide long-term frameworks and guidelines for decision making and to help to ensure that, consistent with the International Council of Museums (ICOM) definition, museums remain permanent institutions in the service of society. Above all else they are established to foster the longevity of collections that are exposed to sufficient challenges due to the forces of decay without being further compromised by human whim.

7. Article Thinking about collection policy MUSEUMS & GALLERIES OF NSW / EMAIL info@mgnsw.org.au.p.3 Seen:15-8-2016.
Collection policies - MGNSW - Museums & Galleries of NSW
-What sorts of policies are essential?

Each museum needs to develop its own policies - there are no universal Templates that can be applied to all museums. All policies need to be developed to be consistent with the museum’s mission and organizational environment. In the case of museums that are operating units within a parent organization the policies adopted also need to be consistent with the mission, vision and objectives of the parent body. There are three broad groups of policies that the Museum Assistance Program recommends should be included in any museum policy framework.  

Collections Management

Collections are the lifeblood of a museum and are absolutely connected with the museum’s mission. Museum’s collections are the basic components of a museum’s very existence. The distinguishing feature of museums is generally their use of original objects or specimens and all museum programs ultimately have the collections at their core. Their management encompasses all aspects to ensure their proper care, documentation and access. The areas of collections management include public services, which are mainly acquisition, conservation, documentation procedures, research, communication and exhibition or other purposes.  

“A policy is useless if it is outdated, ignored, too complex to be followed, too simplistic to be useful, or does not serve the museum’s mission. … Good policies help the museum achieve its mission and demonstrate its commitment to professional standards and best.

Anatomy of a Collections Management Policy? A strong policy is consistent in the day-to-day handling of an institution’s collections and is written to meet the specific needs of the museum and its collection. It is important to take the necessary time and resources to think through and develop a realistic and usable document.

Establishing policies that are not eventually followed is detrimental to the museum and the community it serves. There is no one, perfect template for any document. Since the museum field is so diverse, each of the museum’s documents should be influenced by its history, community, collections and governance. Interrelated policies and plans contribute to a cohesive vision and mission. While collections management policies vary in organization and in content listed below are some elements commonly found in these policies:

http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/sector_info_item/3 Collections Australia
Network, recollections: Caring for Collections Across Australia


Mission

Vision

Categories of Collections

Acquisitions/Accessioning

Deaccessioning/Disposal

Loans

Objects in Custody

Collection Care

Risk Management

Documentation, Collections Records and Inventories

Access

Legal and Ethical Considerations

Intellectual Property

Through studying the collection management policy that should be followed in the museums and through reading all its items, the researcher chooses some of these items that may be implemented successfully in the 'Abdeen Palace Museums. The remaining items cannot be applied, implemented or discussed by the researcher, because the Egyptian laws, especially protection of Egyptian monuments act, is not in line with these articles like other countries abroad which have their own suitable rules and laws; these laws, on the other hand, are unconstitutional in Egypt. The researcher hopes the policy will be enforced in the museum under study and each museum will have its own clear and fulfilled policy.

Collection Management Policy of Abdeen Palace Museums

• Mission

ICOM’s Missions: The International Council of Museums works for society and its development. It is committed to ensuring the conservation, and protection of cultural goods.12

Mission of 'Abdeen Palace Museums:

1- Acquisitions for the 19th and 20th century in new Islamic art.

2- A fundamental cultural center for modern era

12 - The International Council of Museums- ICOM” ICOM Missions”
**Vision**

ICOM’s vision is a world where the importance of natural and cultural heritage is universally valued. Museums play a key role in development through education and democratization, while also serving as witnesses of the past and guardians of humanity’s treasures for future generations.\(^{13}\)

Vision of ’Abdeen Palace Museums: to be one of the best Historical Museums and a place where all the different Islamic schools of art meet. The ’Abdeen Palace Museums aims to be an open platform that fosters interest and promotes an understanding of history by providing visitors with inspiring museum experiences.

**Categories of Collection**

These are the names and definitions of different categories of collections the museum cares for, documents and uses. Some common collections categories include: archives or library, education, exhibition, permanent, research or collections held under a repository or management agreement. In this section, museums might explain how collections in that category are used, acquired, cared for and deaccessioned.\(^{14}\) In this paper, the researcher represents the Vision of ’Abdeen Palace Museums: to be one of the best Historical Museums and a place where all the different Islamic schools of art meet. The ’Abdeen Palace Museums aims to be an open platform that fosters interest and promotes an understanding of history by providing visitors with inspiring museum experiences.\(^{15}\)

While developing the policy of the museum, the researcher declares that all the acquisitions belong to the museum are stored in the store room of the palace. This is due to the lack of financial resources and the decrease in tourist visits rate to the museum, especially that the ministry of antiquities is a self-financing ministry, that is, it relies on tourism income to the museums and the touristic landmarks. Unfortunately, the ministry is unable to withstand the high costs of collection exhibition in museums, particularly providing showcases and good lighting in order to cope with the international standard of museum shows; especially because the museum has very large spaces and various collections which need huge funding for the display to come out in an optimum way.

\(^{13}\) The International Council of Museums- ICOM" ICOM Vision"

www.ICOM- The International Council of Museums\ ICOM.museum

\(^{14}\) Developing collection management policy, American Alliance of museums 2012, p.5.

\(^{15}\) Developing collection management policy.p.4
Acquisitions/Accessioning

The Reasons for the Acquisition of Artifacts

It is not necessary that all acquisitions are added to the permanent collections in the museums; some acquisitions are used for the purpose of study use, loaning them to students and researchers. However, the purpose of loan/accessioning should be written down in the registration application. Researcher has a great difficulty in studying artifacts because of its supervision by the Presidency. The museum should prove the title deed of the acquisitions that are in position of the museum, which means documenting any conveys of acquisitions. As the documentation of acquisitions is the process whereby the pieces become officially listed in the museum.\textsuperscript{16} Information should be documented as much as possible for any collection taken in or out the museum. Upon delivering any pieces to the museum as a gift or for second mint, all related documents of the pieces should be submitted. Through continuing discussions with colleagues and professors, the researcher discusses and defines the acquisitions/accessioning in Egypt and he wonders if it can be understood and applied here as in America and Europe. As it is codified in Europe that museums may buy or exchange pieces to enhance and increase the number of acquisitions. There are also halls of auctions to sell acquisitions and monuments that have been brought from their countries legally or illegally.

The Egyptian laws (Protection of Egyptian Antiquities Law no. 117 of 1983), as amended instead, forbids and denies that, because Egypt has a great civilization which cannot be manipulated or violated.\textsuperscript{17} It is also forbidden to trade on the history and civilizations of other countries and to put in museums the monuments of those countries that steal ours to put in their museums claiming that they protect them. So, we can explain the concept of acquisition/accessioning in Egypt in the following points:

- Confiscated objects: are the pieces confiscated before being smuggled to abroad whether through ports or airlines. The museum keeps these objects that are settled their cases, and then they are put in display in the museum if they belong to modern ages and they are exhibited in temporary or permanent exhibitions. They are also documented and given a code in the archives.

- Repatriation objects: they are objects which are illegally exported and they are registered in the official archives. The international law guarantees our right to retrieve these monuments. There is a department in the ministry of antiquities responsible for the regained monuments, “called Repatriation department” pursuing all auctions and the objects which are up for sale to get them back to our country according to laws.


\textsuperscript{17} Protection of Egyptian Antiquities Law no. 117 of 1983
Donors: persons who donated some objects from their own collections that they have got by acquisition or inheritance before passing the law no. 117 of 1983. As the valuable historical, heritage archeological antiquities trade was very popular.  

**Deaccessioning**

The term "deaccession" means that a work is removed from the collection and considered for disposal by sale, exchange or other means. Any deaccession of a work should be solely for the advancement of the Museum's mission.

Deaccessioning is the opposite of accessioning. It is the permanent removal of an object from a museum’s collections. There are many reasons for deaccessioning an object, several of them being controversial, but the practice is a typical part of collections stewardship and a way for the museum to refine its collection. It is important that the museum understand the legal and ethical implications of deaccessioning and write a policy that helps the museum be transparent and accountable with the public.

**Disposal**

Dealing with Unwanted Objects: Occasionally a museum will want to dispose of an object. This is usually because it no longer fits in with the museum’s collecting policy or because it would be better to transfer it to another museum.

The actual exit of the object should be recorded on an Exit form. Agreed disposal procedures should also be documented. The following Options range from most to least preferred:

1. Return to the donor or family
2. Transfer to another appropriate institution
3. Sell by public auction where appropriate
4. use as an interpretive or educative aid
5. Destroy or recycle.

The disposing process in 'Abdeen Palace Museums has only one procedure by transferring objects to another museum. Basically, this museum needs these objects which relate to the same historical period to be displayed. The process happens under legal procedures and these objects should be recorded on an exit form inside the museum archive.
Loans

Loans help museums share information with each other and the communities they serve. This section delineates the conditions covering the temporary transfer of collection objects (not their ownership) from or to the museum. In this section, museums typically include information about loan approval and acceptance, loan fees, documentation, insurance and monitoring. If relevant, museums can include sections about old loans and restricted works objects not permitted to leave the museum except under special circumstances. Museums that do not own collections but which borrow and use objects owned by others should have policies in place regarding these items. Through this study, the researcher indicates that the borrowing policy in the Egyptian museums can be seen from two perspectives: Firstly, importing collections to other countries to be presented there; and this is more important in the light of intercultural exchange between different countries of different civilizations. A number of foreign fairs are always organized to fulfill this mission. The administration in the museum provides enough information about each piece such as, measurements, dimensions, together with a detailed status report prepared by the restorers to indicate whether these collections are in a good condition to be exhibited in the abroad fairs or there would be any harm, damages or side effects by natural or unnatural factors to the collections; because these are our heritage and it is so important to protect and preserve them. For the Egyptian museums sector, "Without Abdeen Palace museums, because it does not follow it administratively ", the subject and the theme of the travel exhibitions are usually suggested by the Ministry of Antiquities and the museums department which is responsible for acquisitions, organizing travel exhibitions, and contracting exhibitions with foreign exhibitions committee that is mandated to the organization from all things. The museum, instead, has nothing to do but choosing the ideas and subjects to be under discussion in the exhibition and choosing the collections to be presented according to that. It is also committed to prepare a detailed report to the committee declaring the current status of each collection and providing the required information for the acquisitions. The financial contract, the financial value, and the insurance value of the exhibits (in case of, god forbids, damages or natural disasters when travelling) are determined by the legal counsel and the exhibitions committee in the ministry. It is identified also the duration of each exhibition and whether it will be in only one country or it may be moved to other locations. Each exhibition has its own staff from tour guides, restorers, police officers are committed to organize and follow up the exhibition rotationally between each other’s that is, they are divided into groups and each one will stay in the exhibition for 30 days.

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23 - Developing collection management policy, American Alliance of museums 2012, p.5
24 - No collections have been lent yet from the "Abdeen Palace Museums to any travel exhibition.
Objects in Custody

In this point, the researcher declares what actions are always taken towards neglected or unidentified collections in custody. An archeological committee is formed under supervision of the Museum Department to register and document these acquisitions officially in the archives of the museum. Then these collections are submitted to the museum and received by the curators. Another committee is formed from the curators of the museum in cooperation with the restorers to detect the current status of these collections and whether they are suitable for the presentations in the exhibitions or they can just be used for study purposes after being restored. Thereupon, some identified documents are found in one of the museum's store rooms, it turned out that these papers have not been documented for a very long time. Thus, the administration embarked on documenting these papers in the archives of the museum as aforementioned. Upon documenting the papers, they discovered that these documents represent an important period related to the palace, so they treated the documents in a professional way that approves the awareness of the administration and the experienced staff.

After registering these papers as museum collections, it will be display in the museum to be available to the visitors. The Museum is first and foremost a repository of works of art, and its mission requires the care of works of art in its collection. The Museum shall conserve works of art in accordance with the highest standards. The Museum shall provide a safe and appropriate environment for the collections, with effective security and environmental control, for the benefit of present and future generations.25

Risk management

Insurance and Risk Management is a major part of the museum’s responsibility to minimize any potential problems or dangers to the collections. This section is an overview of the museum’s approach to safeguarding the collection (e.g., fire detection and suppression, security) and the types of insurance coverage provided. A more in-depth disaster plan accompanies the collections management policy.26

The researcher emphasizes that the priority in the museum is people's safety

All the working staffs in all museums put in mind the security and safety, both their personal safety and safety of museums' buildings and acquisitions. Upon following-up the procedures carried out in the museum after it re-opened, the researcher asserts that the museum is in safe. As there are clear risk management plans to face any disasters erupt in the museum, and it is safe at the highest level.

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Documentation, Collections Records and Inventories

Why documentation is important. Documentation is the process of recording information about the collections for which a museum or cultural institution is responsible. Objects should be documented consistently using recognized standards. These have been developed by national and international organizations, including ICOM and UNESCO.27

Describing and Cataloguing Objects

It is a good idea to have an accurate and detailed description of your object in case it is lost or stolen. It will also help you to recognize it and distinguish it from other similar objects if found. Documentation can be defined as a process of recording and documenting the inventories in a certain museum or a certain cultural institution. The acquisitions must be documented on an ongoing basis according to the generally accepted standards. These standards have been updated and redeveloped by national and international organizations, namely, the UNESCO and the international museums council. So, proper and correct documentation of acquisitions in museums.28

Records and Inventories

The Museum, through its curatorial, registrar and conservation departments must maintain accurate up-to-date records on the identification, location and condition of all objects in the collection, as well as of ongoing activities such as exhibitions, loans, research and correspondence with donors, artists and scholars. The records must be recorded in the Museum's collections management database any original paper files regarding the acquisition of objects should also be retained. Each curatorial department maintains coherent, organized records on accessioned, non-accessioned and deaccessioned works of art, departmental loans, exhibition loans, and works of art brought into the Museum for possible purchase or gift. Curatorial Departments are responsible for updating and maintaining records for their collections and for administering rights to ensure limited and appropriate access to confidential records. All records created or received in the transaction of the Museum's proper business is the property of the Museum and must not be dispersed or destroyed except in accordance with its record retention policy.29

27 - UNESCO, Documentation of Artefacts 'Collections, United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Printed in 2007, p. 2
28 - UNESCO, Documentation of Artefacts 'Collections, United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Printed in 2007, p. 4
Storage

The study discusses that store rooms are more vital and pivotal places in a museum, as they contain the biggest part of acquisitions and inventories that are in position of the museum. These stores mainly contribute to the development of the museum and its programs, due to its close linkage with other activities and programs such as archeological study and research, temporary outdoor or travel exhibitions, and acquisition maintenance, preservation and borrowing. The store rooms keep inside all the accessible acquisitions, therefore appropriate acquisition care and management is a big challenge for all museums as long as they wanted to maintain their positions as centers of knowledge, research and inspiration.

The researcher also refers to the necessity for all the working staff to be more organized and to cooperate with one another, to work in groups and always to be in contact with each other for the success of the storage process.

He believes that the appropriate care and management of store rooms is an integral part of the preventive conservation of the museum's inventories. The preventive conservation is related to measures and activities that aim at avoid degradation, damages and losses in the future and rather to reduce them as much as possible. So, the strong management of the store rooms is the best way to conserve inventories from being deteriorated. Without organized stores and an efficient management, especially before restoration, the acquisitions may not be kept safe as they are now. Thus, providing adaptable environment would slow down the damages or avoid them completely. Using expensive and complicated means to conserve inventories does not work if they are enclosed in and inappropriate stock rooms and if they receive no care.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and Recommendations Worldwide, historic house museums have been the subject of a wide interest, based on their position as centers of cultural radiation, and their educational role in reviving the legacy of historical figures and the periods in which they lived and contributed to shape its events. Especially since it is considered the Abdeen Palace museums the best model in Egypt.

This educational role is what makes these museums the most effective non-traditional tool to teach history. Egyptian historic house museums although they possess all potentials and cultural assets that make them favorable milieus for presenting a whole and inclusive account of historical figures, as it belongs to one of the sovereign bodies, "the Presidency of the Republic."
“Unfortunately biographies did not enjoy any level of governmental or non-governmental attention for Interpretation and explanation of the Egyptian cultural heritage, especially to the family of Muhammad Ali Pasha. Accordingly, they fell short of being effective tools to teach history. So, must:

1- Reviving these wonderful Abdeen Palace museums and increasing the number of its visitors who would come to hear a new explanation of historical figures, biographies, which have never been, tackled this way before.

2- Enhancing people to re-read history in a more profound way in order to learn from the lessons of the past and use them to understand the present and shape the future.

3- There should be a link between studying curricula and Abdeen Palace museums' exhibits, also through organizing constant visits for students to the museums.

4- Support and advocating the use of modern technology in Abdeen Palace museums, such as computers, new technical methods of exhibition and storage and new audio and visual techniques.

5- The need to create a database of the number and names of historic houses museums in Egypt, as well as the ministries and responsible bodies for the management of these museums.

6- Professionalism in the workplace (ethics, teamwork, collaboration, interpersonal relationships, communication, evaluation, data collection, analysis, report writing).

7- Collection management digitization (online systems, reproductions, copyright, worldwide web).

8- Allocating sufficient budget to sponsor specialized training programs for curators and interpreters especially on the tour guiding methods as well as the development of individual and communicative skills. Academic experts from the tour-guiding department of the Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management must implement these programs in order to achieve the maximum benefit from these training programs.

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سياسة إدارة المقتنيات المتحفية بمتاحف قصر عابدين

ولاء الدين بدو مديولي
وزارة السياحة والإثار

الملخص العربي

هدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة سياسة إدارة المقتنيات المتحفية المتاحف التاريخية في مصر؛ حيث أن المتاحف المصرية في حاجة ماسة لسياسة إدارة المقتنيات في هذه الفترة التاريخية وضع هذه السياسة بما يتطلب من اللوائح والقوانين المصرية لمتاحف قصر عابدين كنموذج رائعاً للمتاحف التاريخية في مصر. وكانت النقطة الرئيسية في البحث تعرف على طرق جلب هذه المقتنيات إلى المتاحف وماهي سياسة الاستحواذ وكذلك كيفية تأمين وحماية المجموعات المتحفية بشكل عام وكيفية إدارتها من خلال سياسة إدارة المجموعات، وكذلك يحاول البحث تطوير رسالة ورؤية لدور المتحف من خلال إدارة المجموعات الدولية والتاريخية والوصايا فيما يتعلق بالمتاحف.

الكلمات الدالة: المتاحف، قصر عابدين، المتاحف التاريخي، متحف البيت التاريخي، علم المتاحف، مقتنيات، إدارة المقتنيات.

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