

Windsor Historical Society:  
How it Supports the Mission of Museums  
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### Concept Explanation

The main work of museums is to educate people and preserve collections (Glaser & Zenetou, 1996). Glaser & Zenetou wrote that, “While most people felt that research should play a prominent role, it has been argued over these many years that a balance with education should prevail, as museums have increasingly become major learning-resources for their communities” (1996, p. 15). Museums preserve their collections by taking care to minimize the deterioration of objects. They also organize the collections so that items can be accessed more easily for research and display purposes. Museums help to educate their audience through the construction of exhibits and the development of programs for the public and schoolchildren. Museums obtain their collections through donations and purchase. They must follow collection guidelines that are put in place by their organization. The arrangement and descriptions of items in museums is intended to guide the visitors in learning about the collection (Glaser & Zenetou, 1996).

### Exposition of the Main Argument

The Windsor Historical Society carries out the work of a museum through its exhibits and programming. Also, it provides suitable storage for its collections and continues to research the collection. The selection of items for inclusion in the museum collection follows set guidelines. Donations of objects for the collection must be approved before they are accepted (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011). It is important for the Windsor Historical Society to carry out this work, because if a museum cannot show its worth to the community then it will no longer be valued and may not continue receiving funding (Glaser & Zenetou, 1996).

Through several different activities, the Windsor Historical Society demonstrates that it is carrying out the mission of a museum. The curator does research on items in the archive. For example she transcribes inventories. This gives her a better understanding of how people lived in

the past (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011). What she learns can then be applied while she is educating the public or planning for new exhibits. Twice a month, the museum offers programs outside of normal business hours (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011). As part of their outreach to the public, The Windsor Historical Society works closely with the Windsor Public Library. They check to see if the library has books related to current exhibits. The public library would have more general books, while the library at the Historical Society would purchase more specific books to elaborate on exhibits (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

The museum educates the community through its exhibits. In the meeting room, there are objects that children can touch and play with during their visit. For example there is a toy wall where children can add more toy bricks to the top. The same room can be used to educate adults because it has temporary exhibits along the walls. Chairs can be set up this room for meetings or presentations (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

Two rooms containing the museum's permanent exhibit also support education. The exhibits are hands-on using touch screens and recordings of oral histories. Activities are included in the exhibit. A matching exercise is mounted on boards that can be picked up for use with school groups or left on a ledge for use by others visiting the museum (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

The permanent exhibit also allows the museum to share its collection with the public. Pieces such as two bible boxes and a larger chest were on display. Also, there are drawers with tops made of Plexi glass allowing visitors to see smaller pieces tags and foam core boards with text and images present various aspect of past life to visitors.

The Windsor Historical Society also owns two historical houses that visitors can see with a guide. Currently the staff is working on a new layout for furniture in one of the houses. They are considering getting reproduction furniture for the house so that visitors can touch it and use it (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

The Windsor Historical Society shows that it supports the principles and standards of museums though how it maintains its collection. Visitors handle reproductions and other parts of exhibits (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011). Those items were built to be touched. Museum pieces are set back in the display or placed under Plexi glass so that visitors cannot touch them.

In addition to display areas that are open to the public, there are also archives and objects storage areas. The stored items are kept four inches off the ground and the heat and humidity is controlled. They are labeled (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

The Windsor Historical Society has a specific protocol to follow regarding donations of objects. When a prospective object for the collection arrives at the museum a TCR or temporary custody receipt is created. Not all of these objects become part of the collection. The collections committee meets quarterly to decide which items it will accept as donations. The collection contains only items that relate to Windsor. Deeds of gift are created after a donation is accepted, then the item is entered into the catalog. Photographs do not have to be considered by the collections committee, because they are small and now mostly digital. Purchases go through a different process (C. Vida, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

Records of the museum pieces are stored and created using a program called PastPerfect. It is an affordable program for small museums that keeps track of the collection, the library and

membership all in one place (C. Vida and Barbara, personal communication, December 23, 2011).

### Analysis

The topic covered in this paper is important because museums today must know their audience and work to provide education for that group. Another important part of the mission of museums is preservation and organization of collections, which is necessary so that people can continue to examine these pieces in the future. Research allows the staff to better understand materials and bring new information to the attention of the public.

The information about the exhibits included in this paper is sufficient to demonstrate how the museum educates the public. It would be a stronger argument if the author had included information about the museum's programs for the public and school education programs. To demonstrate how collections are organized, it would have also been useful to include information about how the museum catalogs new items and labels them when they become part of the collection. This information was not included because the author was already aware of the cataloging practices at another museum so she did not pose specific questions.

References

Glaser, J. R. & Zenetou, A. A. (1996). *Museums: A place to work: Planning museum careers*.  
New York, NY: Routledge.