

B. A .SEMESTER 4 History General Study Material

SEC-B-1 Museum and Archives in India

Discuss the exhibition policy of a museum

Exhibitions are continuous process of museums and they help people enrich knowledge. From the visitor's perspective, it is the exhibition which makes the first imprint as they get into the museum. As an expert on museology F. Wasserman has stated, "the interaction between the museum and the community occurs through exhibitions. Exhibition is a means of communication by which information can be conveyed to the public."

The fundamental task of exhibition is the comprehension of museum objects from the standpoint of scientific and historic values, fulfilling the educational, emotional and intellectual requirements of the public at large. This is achieved in two ways-one is by the object itself with its inherent values and the other by exhibition preparation and prosecution techniques. Object oriented exhibition is the characteristic feature of art and archaeological museums.

After entering the museums , generally visitors are interested to view the exhibition. So an efficient curator should simplify and make interesting information about exhibits. As the fundamental mode of communication is visual, so the curator always emphasizes on the theme of exhibition, background of exhibit cases, arrangement of exhibits, lighting, sound system etc. Thus a museum exhibition is concerned with visual arrangement of things for enhancement of knowledge and enjoyment.

In art and archaeological museums, museum exhibitions are arranged typologically .It means an object-oriented exhibition in which the emphasis is given on direct and convenient classification. This type of exhibition mostly presents art objects having aesthetic value. Science museums follow thematic presentation. In this kind of concept –oriented exhibition emphasis is given on a specific subject and the exhibition aims at communicating a message. Exhibits are arranged according to a theme and so it is known as thematic presentation. The exhibition is primarily supported by text, photographs and models etc.

Another type of exhibition namely reconstruction exhibition tries to restore an original context as far as practicable with the aid of models ,dioramas, audio-visual aids etc. Dioramas are a kind of in-built showcase with its front exposed and protected by a glass. Now a days natural history museums are using fullside dioramas to present animals, birds and plants in their natural environments. The history museums such as the palace museums, fort museums, biographical museum etc make the period alive to the visitors by exhibiting the remnants preserved as had been in the past. These are known as period room presentation.

Participatory presentations which are usually found in science museums have a great communication value and can add a new dimension to the educational potential of museum exhibition . This kind of "touch me" exhibition offers the visitors a chance for interaction and work through the exhibits ,thereby assuming the role of active participant.

The effectiveness of an exhibition also follows its ability to attract viewers. There must be a balance in exhibition planning and an important aspect of planning is budget and designing of an exhibition. The showcases are one of the essential items of museum equipments. There are numerous types of showcases-wall showcase, tabletop showcase, room divider showcase ,pillar showcase etc. The background colour of showcases should be pleasant so as to enhance the aesthetic quality of the exhibition.

Illumination or lighting of the exhibition gallery is an important aspect of exhibition policy. Museums make use of both sunlight and artificial lights. The method of using sunlight or daylight is known as natural lighting. There are two methods of museum lighting. Science museums favour entire artificial lighting, while art and history museums generally choose natural lighting.

Besides museum labels constitute principle part of a museum's communication method. Museum labels are written in local language, national language or Hindi and English to bridge the gap of knowledge about the objects and visitors .Labels supply first hand information to the visitors and arouse interest in them to know more. There are different types of labels such as caption labels, introductory labels, descriptive labels, pictorial labels etc.

Advancement of technology has paved the way for massive use of audio –visual aids, multimedia information system to explain any theme of an exhibition, thereby providing information about the museum in a more attractive manner to the visitors. Besides, models, photographs, etc are widely used in museum exhibits to make the subject interesting.

In conclusion it may be stated that in this technology dominated modern world, the museums are in competition with other amusements like cinema and sports. So in order to survive in this highly competitive world, they are applying new methods for exhibition and communication to develop a more effective public interaction.