

The Context of Curator in the 21st Century: A Study at Museums in Bangkok Area

Anantachai Aeka, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand
Wimonchat Lerdkochasri, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Thailand

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to study the context and progression of curator in the 21st century. Since the millenium, the flood of technology and economy growth significantly affected the context of curator. The curator is not only a keeper or collector of digital data cultural heritage as before, but must also be a marketer and organizer as well. The research instrument is the in-depth interview with curators from 4 museums located in Bangkok: 1) Museum Siam 2) Rattanakosin Exhibition Hall 3) Suan Pakkad Palace Museum 4) Sai Suddha Nobhadol Building Museum. The result are that 3 out of 4 (75%) agreed that the stream of technology and economic is the main factor affecting the curator context. All about 100% agreed that marketing and coordinative skills are required as a context of the 21century curator. In conclusion, the context of curator is not a curator literally, but additionally business knowledge especially marketing and coordinative skill must be cultivated.

Keywords: the 21Century Curator, Museum, Museums in Bangkok

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Introduction

Since the millennium, the flood of technology and economy growth significantly affected the context of curator. The curator is not only a keeper or collector of digital data cultural heritage as before, but must also be a marketer and organizer as well. Curator now can't be only experts in their own field, but curator need to be tech operator, researcher, statistic planner, marketer, project manager, and more with underpaid salary. (Museum association, 2004) This situation decrease work concentration of curator in general.

Technology plays the important role in the world society now, especially computer-mediated technology and taking time to develop overtime. "A good number of technologies now coming into use will take years or even decades to reach the point of significant consequence for society. On the other hand, the history of technology in the industrial era tells us that it is usually fifteen to forty years from the time of a fundamental scientific discovery to its effective application in society" (Coates, Joseph & Jarratt, 1998). Curating context also change over time in term of character and data collecting. Curator context of 21 century might be affected by stream of technology and economic. It is important to know what is particularly the main factor that cause significant change.

The Visitor

Museum visitor is also changing attitude or purpose of museum visiting over the time. Each visitor has individual reason that incurs them to visit the museum, which mean different ages or gender is part of individual decision making.

Katie Gillespie and Dr. John H. Falk analysis from 22 museum visitors revealed that four factors seemed to influence the memories of all 22 of these visitors are things or activities that interests and support their needs, things that were novel, things that had high individual emotional content, things that were supported by later experiences (John H. Falk, 109)

Knowing what the museum visitor needs is meaning the same thing that knowing what is your customer needs.

Digital Museology

Data collecting and searching of museum now is digital, which mean most of museum now need to compete in term of data collection standard. In term of economy, the growth of computer media makes a change in economic system too. "Museums are an enlightenment dream that has prospered in the face of capitalism and globalization, and now needs to find a new way to prosper in the age of digital economics" (Chris Michaels, 2017). Curator is really important part of building the core and develops data collection system, which is different from curator context in the past. The result from interview specialties and expert curator in Bangkok will be valuable.

The purpose of this research is to study the context and progression of curator in the 21st century. And by in-depth interviewing with curators from 4 museums in Bangkok, will indicate better and deeper understanding to 21 century curator in real

time. What curator needs to develop or manipulate in the future. Nowadays, curator is not only a keeper or collector of digital data cultural heritage as before, but must also be a marketer and organizer as well. The museum itself is a business company. Curators need to adapt the different role depend on the situation. Sometime, they need to be organizer, marketer, or even the dealer of the event or activities, or even many others. (Museum association, 2004) Curator now need to develop knowledge in this research to give most direct solution for both develop curating society and be satisfied the future visitor as well.

Methodology

The reach out the most accurate information in-depth interview with specialty. The research instrument is in-depth interview with curators from 4 museums located in Bangkok:

1) Museum Siam, this museum was found in 2007 by Thai government. The concept of this museum are play and learn philosophy. The exhibition in this museum is all about Thailand social history. "The Museum has also presented a series of temporary exhibitions, ranging from "Beads of Southeast Asia," "The Portugese: At World's End," to the recent "The Body Project: Rethinking the Concepts of Beauty". It has also created a large museum network in Thailand to help each other in many aspects" (Asemus, n.d.).

2) Rattanakosin Exhibition Hall is a museum that collects the history of Rattanakosin era and also represent in many different type of exhibitions. On March 9, 2010, the museum had been launched officially and represent cultural legacy and Rattanakosin resources for the first time.

3) Suan Pakkad Palace Museum, this museum represents the royal highnesses prince and princess Chombhot of Nagara Svaga private residences. There are 4 Thai tradition houses collect historical Thai Traditional items, such as BanChiang and Marsi gallery.

4) Sai Suddha Nobhadol Building Museum is the resident of royal family. The museum is the building itself that represent beautiful architect. Highlight of this museum is Duriya Kastr exhibition. All of the museum have its their own identity and qualify for being parts of the interviews.

The question of the interview is about the personal opinion on curator context of 21 centuries. The discussion questions divide into 3 different categories, personal information, experiences and proficiency, and context of curator in 21 centuries.

For personal information, the question will discuss on different background of interviewed participants to get point of view on how to become a curator. The experiences will be also discussed with most following questions. It really important to understand participants because It will be used in case of comparing. By comparing, we will eventually get the best result out from the interview. The final category remains most important interview section because this section experienced curators will represent their opinion on context of curator in 21 centuries.

This is the part of interviewed questions: 1) what is your definition of Curator? 2) What you need to do as a curator in your museum intuition, and Global context is continued changing? 3) How is it affect the contextualization of the curator? 4)The result will indicate the skill that curator in 21 century need from experience curator perspective? The results will indicate the skill that curator in 21 century need from experience curator perspective.

Result

The result are that 3 out of 4 (75%) agreed that the stream of technology and economic is the main factor affecting the curator context (Figure 1). Participants strongly agree that those skills are needed. Nowadays, technology and online communication are become everything. One of interviewed participants mentions that “to work in 21 centuries, you need to know staffs online.” By this statement, it means curators also need to know at least some aspect of technology. Technology topic that will be discussing in this paragraph are marketing and coordinating. In one section of the interview is about working as business people. All of interview participants has experience in the world of business. Museum is now a business, and need to promote for getting more visitors. (Chris Michaels, 2017)

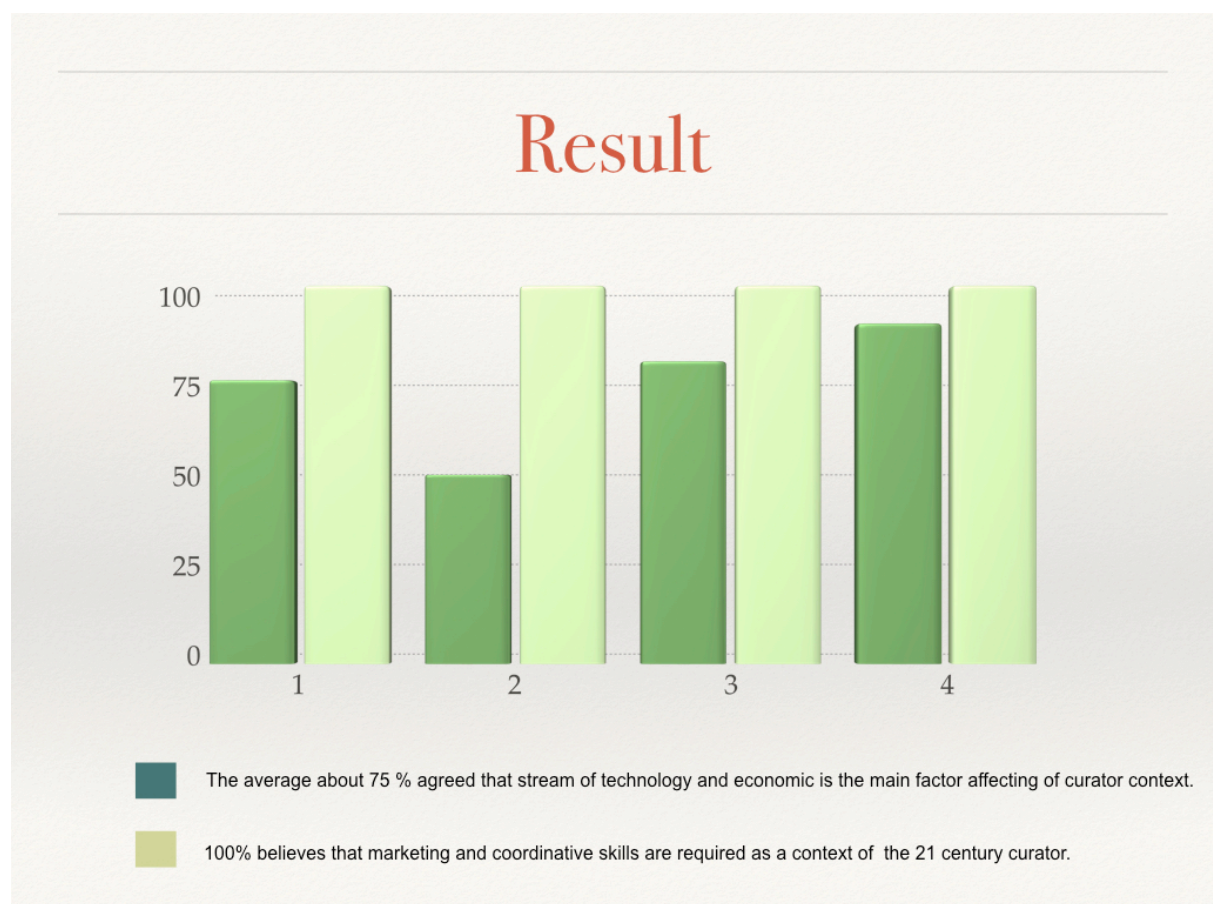


Figure 1: Result from curator in-depth interview

Curator need to have that skill in order to maintain the growth of the audience. Moreover, curator now need to organize the event, so coordinative skill is required too. One curators from the interview section mention interesting opinion, “Curator is not a curator anymore. We are an entrepreneur” The tone of the opinion

set really strong emotion on work responsibility. “Curator responsibility is not to run the business or sells like an entrepreneur” said interviewed curator”. It means curator contexts from what we know need to change now.

Some of interviewed participants still not think that telecommunication or technology growth is not the main cause of curator context change. Those don't need to be change just need to be improve to be more conservative. 25% still think that curator context should remain the same as before because others category of technology and economy jobs in the museum require specific skill. When curators can focus on their tradition contexts, they are likely to work professionally. If curator took many part of it. It might have negative effect on the main character of context.

In question no. 3 of the interview most of interview participants suggest that marketing and collaborating skill are important context of 21 century curator. And, the result are about 100% participants agreed that marketing and coordinative skills are required as a context of 21 century curator.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the context of curator is not a curator literally, but additionally business knowledge especially marketing and coordinative skill must be cultivated. The result make researcher understand that future curator need to be multi skills based. They need to do those in order to maintain the condition of museum in general. Although, many curators disagree on doing others tasks that they aren't related to traditional curator context. Those others skills include IT operator or accouter require specific skill sets. So, those skills need some experts to be in charge. In further research, one of participants suggest that researching on museum visitor behavior pattern is might be another great topic to touch on. We understood how curator thinks now. It times to understand your future visitor.

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