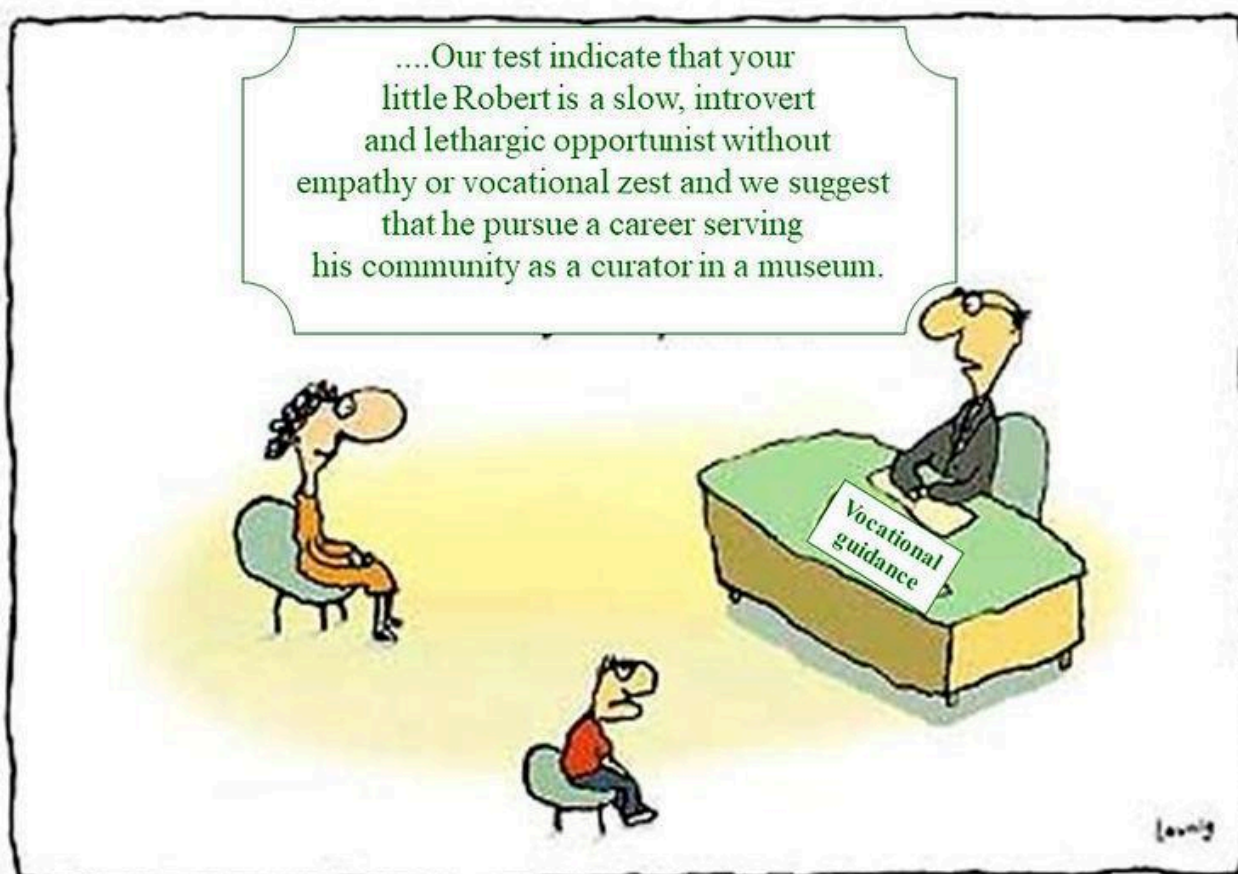


Cybernetic Declaration on Curators

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This caricature I liked so much that I hope the author will see the unauthorised use and mutation of it as well intentioned, internal and non-profit. As you might guess, it was originally directed against politicians. In order to provoke and awake my listeners internationally I occasionally used the slide as introduction to some critical theses upon curatorship. Like most texts here, it is based on the notes sometimes complete and often just fragmentary.



"We are here to do good to others. What others are doing here, I do not know"

(Wystan Hugh Auden, English poet)

Future or current curators and other workers in the field of heritage should be taught to become true stewards of the knowledge and experience of their predecessors, in their community or culture, to scientifically recognize this experience, systematically collect it, responsibly research it, generously document it, carefully preserve it, and effectively interpret it for users, guided by social conscience and moral responsibility.

Such heritage workers, proactive and counter-active when it comes to fighting for quality professional actions, for the mission of their institutions and their profession, always act for progress and humanistic ethics, for a civilized, civic, open and cooperative community through their expertise.

Heritage curators need to serve society in constant change, capable of understanding the times, making adjustments, and when necessary, opposing them, they need to understand and document, and preserve community's/society's values as the substance of quality balanced development. When they have mastered their basic academic discipline or the number of multidisciplinary knowledge and experiences that interest them, everyone can feel the need to ground them in deep human experience and to apply them to understanding and communicating the specifics of the identity they serve and for which they were established.

Heritage institutions and curators are instruments of the common good. They can define their tasks at the level of production and distribution of knowledge, but this is not enough. Although they do not have direct responsibilities for the quality of life of citizens in their community, any deeper interpretation of their mission only leads to this. Consequently, the fact that they preserve unimaginable amounts of knowledge and condensed human experience makes them at least indirectly involved in social, economic and political life. If it were not so, their knowledge would only serve to write new books, and the exhibition spaces could once again become, in form and purpose, modest, full depots.

Therefore, the meaning of their professional excellence is never to tolerate injustice, wickedness or corruption, to always oppose all kinds of demagogues, to never subordinate their heritage calling to the interests of any party or social group, to always oppose privileges by advocating for equal rights for all citizens, to defend the right to diversity, to be ruthless towards plunderers of the public good, to never run out of affection for the poor, to always remain faithful to the public good, not to be satisfied with merely publishing news but to give it context and discover meaning, to remain completely independent and never be afraid to attack everything wrong, whether it is the plunder and arbitrariness of the rich or the vices of poverty. (This passage is inspired and paraphrased from Pulitzer's message to journalists, 1907)

Heritage care and communication professionals need to be taught the importance of knowledge, the responsibility of research, the need to respect privacy and cultural, religious, sexual or political diversity, the understanding of the public good, the importance of every identity and the creative role of culture

in the development of contemporary society, and especially their responsibility for a prosperous, high-quality future of the environment in which they operate.

The text that now follows, with this line, is new, contemporary, added to support and extend what was, as said at the beginning, just a note attached to a slide in a lecture; this is a freshly added note. At the time the theme was in various ways part of my lectures internationally, I used to joke with the audience firstly by provoking them to admit that they are badly paid and then by claiming that this was justly so. The reason for the injustice was simply explained or elaborated, depending upon the circumstances and the theme. But, basically, I argued that they are not part of any substantive process of decision-making in development of a community or society where they do their job. Therefore, they are being perceived as less relevant than others we know as well paid. Even if enraged by their irrelevance or lack of ability, we have to admit that these are, even if self-declared, the decision makers, - whatever we may think of that. To further tease the fellow curators I would often add comments on the apparent lack of their professionalism. Due to many reasons most are not educated to work in any public memory institution, but usually for some established science, therefore to be researchers or lecturers at best. No museology, let alone heritology or mnemosophy! The latter two I have invented first out of frustration and then continued to elaborate as my own creative, however utopian project, - something like deciding to exercise thoroughly the scientific liberty of professorship. (That, I guess, will not be as easy in the transhumanist liberal “democracy” we are increasingly enjoying). Finding themselves in an institution that is supposed to care for the quality transfer of memory, turning knowledge into applicable wisdom for the community they serve, they may fall victim to defeatist resignation often demonstrated as lack of interest and uselessness. They can also fall prey to architects, designers, IT gurus, corporations and

politicians and rather follow their agenda while having none of their own. I rarely dared to talk about the comfort of some induced laziness. I did dare to write (in a book mentioned below and often elsewhere) that there are lazy and stupid institutions. How unscientific of me!

Turning sometimes the note into a more elaborated form I have put the attribute “cybernetic” into the title. But that now needs to be explained more than before. Cybernetics is a science on its own invented to establish an understanding of guiding the systems (be it a torpedo, as it started, or a society, as it should have legitimately spread) before being hijacked as term (and a chance) by the Leviathan of the virtual information sector. It meant “the science of communications and automatic control systems in both machines and living things” (as smart lookup correctly suggests). Much on humanist norms and this corrective and social guidance role of curators has been said in my books, among them, “Eternity does not live here anymore” and, especially in “Mnemosophy – an Essay on the Science of Public Memory, - both freely accessible [here](http://www.mnemosophy.com/the-vault) (www.mnemosophy.com/the-vault).