Professional Ethics and the Caring Museum

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Research at the Institute of Cultural Capital

- Launched as a collaboration between University of Liverpool and Liverpool John Moores University following joint evaluation of Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture 2008

- 'Cultural Value and Public Policy' research theme:
  - Concerned with the cross-sector instrumental value of arts and culture and role and value of cultural organisations in responding and contributing to public policy agendas in the UK.

- Research has primarily explored impact and value for *collaborating* organisations and services:
  - Health and wellbeing outcomes and social value of arts on prescription programmes;
  - Research on efficacy of social prescribing as a cultural commissioning model;
  - Long-term research on impact and social value of a museums-led dementia awareness training programme, including professional development outcomes for health and social care workers.

- What impact does cross-sector collaboration and the 'instrumentalisation' of cultural work have on the cultural sector itself?

Instrumental Values research project

- '[Instrumental Values: Professional ethics in collaborative cultural work](#)' 2017-19

- Mid-career AHRC Leadership Fellowship award

- Study of ethical dimensions of collaborative practice between museum and library sectors and partner agencies working in two priority public policy areas, focusing on museums working in health care settings and prison library services.

- Three case studies per sector using ethnographic [qualitative] approach.

- Funded under Public Policy highlight notice

- Motivated by previous research on cross-sector [instrumental] value of arts and culture and perceived gap concerning implications for professional identities, values and practices in cultural work. Professional ethics used as a lens through which to develop these ideas and questions.

Communities of Practice research framework

- Considering sites of multidisciplinary collaborative cultural work as communities of practice (CoPs), defined as vehicles for situated learning, generating knowledge and sharing practices within and across a range of work-based and organisational spatial settings (Brown and Duguid, 1991; Gherardi et al, 1998; Amin and Roberts, 2008).

- Research questions include:

  - The extent of work assimilation across professional boundaries;
  - Identification of shared repertoires, artefacts and symbols of collaborative professional learning;
  - The social construction of embodied professional knowledge and skills;
  - The articulation and representation of unique professional identities in creating collaborative 'added value';
  - The reciprocal value of defined codes of ethics to collaborating professional communities;
  - Each set within the context of public policy agendas and their influence upon developing cross-sector professional communities.

Museums working in health care settings: case studies

- Three selected museum case studies, as microcosms of situated, truly integrated cultural work, both from a physical perspective and in their representation of a cross-policy function for arts and culture.
- All 'reputable' services (e.g. award-winning projects and programmes; a known reputation for excellent work in the health and social care field).

  - A national group of museums and galleries based in the North West of England, comprising seven venues and in receipt of direct funding from central government (Department of Digital, Culture Media and Sport).
  - A regional museum, art gallery and archives service based in the North East of England, comprising nine venues and supported by five local authorities, a higher education institution and Arts Council England.
  - A city-based museum and gallery partnership in the North West of England, dedicated to creative arts for health programmes, supported by a higher education institution, the city council and Arts Council England.

Public policy contexts: The arts and health movement

- From a cultural policy perspective, research informed by growing momentum in the culture and health movement, backed by strategic interventions such the all party parliamentary group (APPG) on Arts, Health and Wellbeing.

- Now starting to see similar traction regarding arts in the criminal justice system.

- Current prison education reform agendas providing a policy platform for libraries and literacy.

- Aligned with **public health strategies** and policies to support more preventive, community-based care agendas:
  - Public health emphasis on the social determinants of health and wellbeing;
  - Strategies to encourage preventative, asset-based approaches to healthier communities;
  - Drivers to include integrated policy-making including health in all policies.

- Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock advocating arts-based social prescribing in recent speech.

- Increasing pressures on health services and governments on personal choice in healthcare provide 'potential opportunities for museums to use their collections in a more altruistic way' (Chatterjee and Noble, 2013).

Public policy contexts: Austerity and the integrated public sphere

- Health and social care services have also experienced increasing pressures as a direct result of austerity-driven fiscal policy in the UK.

- Budget cuts being acutely felt by local government with real implications for public services (Hitchen, 2019).

- Evolving 'practices of care' in museum sector through a greater sense of networked allegiance with wider social care services, with an emphasis on cultural organisations providing an alternative to gaps in provision created by austerity measures (Morse and Munro, 2018) .

Public policy contexts: Devolution and the brave new world of regional politics

- In 2017, power was devolved from central government to seven English regions, each led by directly elected metro mayors.

- Specific devolution agreements have been drawn up for each combined authority, covering expenditure areas including:
  - local transport plans;
  - adult education;
  - planning of health and social care services;
  - policing and crime;
  - and housing investment.

- Two case study museums based in 'devolved' regions.

- Cultural practice that responds to policy climate requires a "sophisticated degree of integration and collaboration across multiple layers of policy-making, sector governance, administration and professional practice" (APPGAHW, 2017).

- Implications for cultural work on a *micro-meso-macro* continuum.

Emotional labour and the ethical self in the caring museum

- Programme co-designed and produced with a local group of people with dementia (PWD) and their carers.

- Originally designed to support people to live well with dementia, the CoP developed around the programme now also supports its members through the grieving process and continues to offer a social support network to bereaved family and friends.

- Professional practice therefore becomes a reflexive process that combines embodied experience with consciously moderated professional behaviour in supporting PWD and their carers.

- This can take its emotional toll on museum professionals, ranging from feelings of immense sadness to stress-related illness.

- the 'situatedness' of integrated cultural work is important, linked to enhanced experiences of emotional labour in CoPs. Emotional labour becomes the "collective management of the situation in which people become affected, rather than the management of emotion as an individual act" (Burkitt, 2014).

Collaborative complexity in the cultural community of practice

- Much more complex than originally anticipated in terms of:
  - Range and volume of collaborating organisations;
  - Integral supporting role of third sector and voluntary organisations;
  - Range of 'life-course' professional skills and experiences held by cultural CoP members;
  - For example, Cognitive Stimulation Therapy group for prisoners with dementia.
- Extra layer of collaborative complexity – ethically speaking – in co-produced ways of working.
- Research has been steered towards a virtues-based approach to understanding ethics in integrated professional environments. As cultural work across both museum and prison library case studies is more discernibly informed by:
  - Personally held moral values;
  - political ideology and orientation;
  - other professional training and development;
  - faith and religious beliefs;
  - and 'life-course' values connected with formative social and cultural experiences.

# Ideological challenges and the virtuous cultural leader

- Museum professionals would mostly recognise and comment on the enabling function of relevant policy agendas – 'strategic space'.

- Especially true in the devolved region with a commitment to advancing health and social care services, which was described as an 'open door' for museums as recognisable health and wellbeing assets.

- Policy discourse in this context is beneficial in giving museums and health care partners a 'shared language'.

- But not without some moral concerns e.g. guilt associated with 'professional appropriation'.

- The ideological dilemma of austerity:
  - Regarded as a right-wing ideological choice rather than a rational policy response to the UK's financial crisis;
  - resistant to condone by 'buying into' the rhetoric of enforced localism;
  - museum sector itself has suffered at the hands of local authority budget cuts, with a "creeping trend" of closures, reduced hours and introduction of charges (Brown, 2016);
  - considerable moral burden therefore for cultural professionals working in challenging social contexts borne of unethical political intervention.

Codes of [professional] ethics in collaborative cultural work

- Professional ethics in practice are 'the norms of right action, good qualities of character and values aspired to, espoused and enacted by professional practitioners in the context of their work' (Banks and Gallaher, 2009).

- Professional ethics differentiated from other codes of civic morals through the legitimacy, autonomy and regulation of collective power… [and] are subsequently 'more developed, and the more advanced in their operation, the greater the stability and the better the organization of the professional groups themselves' (Durkheim, 1957).

- Call for a 'transformation in the understanding of professional ethics', paying greater attention to a 'third order' of public accountability and greater responsibility towards the wider public good (Lane, 2017).

Professional ethics in museums

- the Museums Association (UK) published a revised Code of Ethics in 2015.The code is structured around public engagement and public benefit; stewardship of collections; and individual and institutional integrity.

- the International Council of Museums (ICOM) published a revised Code of Ethics in 2004, with eight guiding principles, including for example 'holding collections in trust for the benefit of society and its development' and 'operating in a legal manner'.
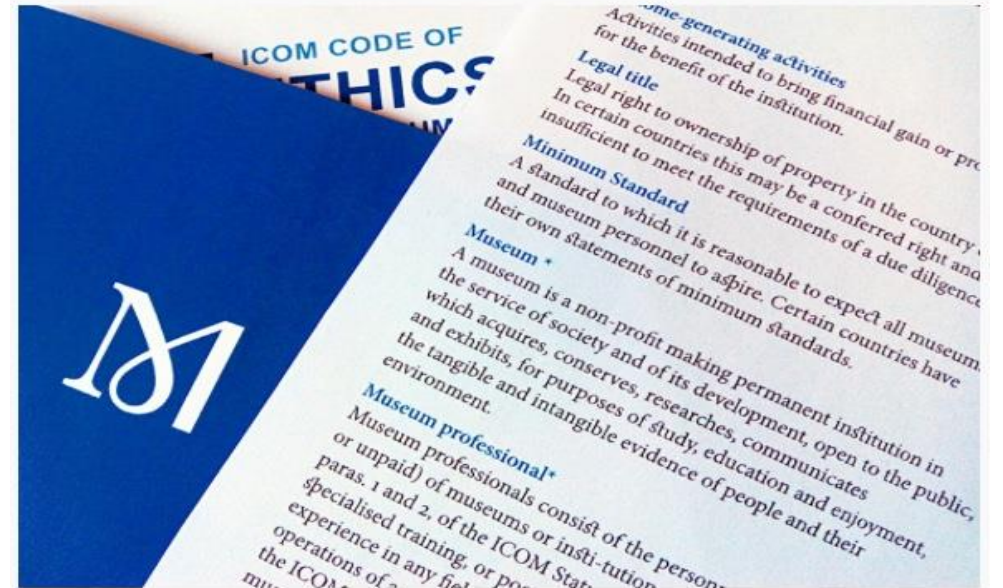
Organizational values, institutional memory and the museum mission

- Value and importance of organisational values and the stated 'mission' of their museum service, as a legitimizing framework for their work with other relevant organisations and services.

- Effective and consistent leadership is integral to the development and commitment of organisational ideals.

- Equal gravitas given to institutional memory in adhering to established values and organisational reputation.
  - creates another layer of ethical responsibility, both in terms of upholding the relevant values of own organisation and remaining responsible and responsive to the networks that underpin and support their work.

- In growing their interprofessional practice, museums, health, and social care can 'model the very capacities they seek to foster for all people' (Silverman, 2010).

Museums, activism and social justice

Dr Adele Chynoweth

Centre for Heritage and Museum Studies, ANU

Panel response

Panel discussion prompts:

- **Alex Marsden**, National Director, Museums Galleries Australia

- **Uncle Eric Law AM/Mark Newman**, Cherbourg Historical Precinct Group

- **Dr Joanna Besley**, Curator, Coffs Harbour City Council Museum and Gallery

- What are your own experiences of 'collaborative complexity' in cultural work?

- What are the ethical implications of positioning cultural work as public service?

- How can we ensure appropriate standards of care in socially engaged cultural work?

Thanks and contact details

Thank You for joining us today – if you would like to continue the discussion or have any other questions, please get in touch:

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