

The museum may also serve as a focal point for the constructive use of leisure time. The shortened workweek and consequent increase in leisure time may well explain the increase in museum attendance during the last decade, which exceeds both the rate of establishment of museums and the rise in national population. Current annual attendance is estimated to be over 300 million a year.

Museums are responding to public interest in a number of ways. Many museums, particularly in urban centers, are extending their open hours to accommodate visitors whose leisure time is in the evenings, on weekends, and on holidays. They are also organizing and providing educational and cultural activities such as classes in subjects related to the work of the institution, lecture series, concert series, films, guided tours, and gallery talks, and in some case dramatic and dance presentations. In a survey of U.S. museums covering the year 1962, 80 percent of the respondents reported one or more such activities. Checkrooms, lounges, restaurants, information and sales desks are provided for the comfort and convenience of the visitor.

The museum's primary service to its specialized field is in preserving and documenting the materials in its collections for use by scholars in the field. The museum has the twofold responsibility of housing and maintaining research collections and of encouraging scholars to study the material. Museum research can be divided into two classes, technical research concerned with preserving and displaying the objects and artifacts, and subject field research, concerned with identifying, documenting, and interpreting the museum's collections. In addition, museums, particularly natural science and archaeology museums, send field trips to distant parts of the world to add to our knowledge of other areas and other people.

While intended primarily to add to the knowledge of the subject field, research sponsored by museum institutions may have immediate practical value as well. Archeological studies in the Middle East have been used by local governments to aid in planning irrigation systems; field studies of natural history museums have discovered plants of medicinal value; studies in invertebrate paleontology are important to the petroleum industry; the records preserved by the historical society may prove the citizen's right to a pension or solve a legal problem.

In a fully developed museum institution, the research function carried on behind the scenes is as important as the exhibit program apparent to all.

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Research on and exhibition of museum collections presumes the existence of such collections, which brings us to a third area of museum responsibility, that of maintaining adequate levels of protection against theft, fire and water damage, and deterioration from atmospheric exposure.

Security against theft and vandalism requires that secure locks and detection devices be placed on all exterior openings, and preferably that such entrances and exits be limited in number. High frequency sound or ultrasonic equipment is being used for area protection, and contactor devices and impact detectors protect the actual objects