MUSEUMS IN INDIA
Towards Universal Access

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MUSEUMS IN INDIA- TOWARDS UNIVERSAL ACCESS

Overview

a. Museums in the Indian Context

b. Addressing Physical and Intellectual Access in Museums

c. Our Projects as Case Studies- Creating Museums in Heritage Structures

d. Challenges and Issues

Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal

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MUSEUMS IN INDIA
The Museum As A Public Space

a. 1814- Museum at the Asiatic Society of Bengal (now Indian Museum); opened up to the public in 1848
a. Eurocentric/ Western Museum Model- collection centric
b. Today, approx. 750 museums in India
c. New projects being commissioned around India
NEW MUSEOLOGY
Shift From Traditional Museology

GUWAHATI DECLARATION, 1988

Following the conference on ‘New Museology and Indian Museums’

- Advocates having museums as trusts, in the hands of ‘representatives of the concerned communities’
- Promotes a democratised approach to museums in India
- Promotes the opening up of ‘new channels of two-way communication with various sections of the community’
UNIVERSAL ACCESS IN MUSEUMS

Physical Access

Intellectual Access

Economic Access

INCLUSION

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CREATING INCLUSIVE MUSEUM EXPERIENCES
A Collaborative Effort

Client

Design Consultant

Curatorial Authorities

Conservators and Heritage Authorities

Project Consultants

Sensitisation and Training

Technology

Acquiring Resources

Room for Trial and Error

Legislation and Policy

MUSEUM PROJECTS

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ISSUES TO ADDRESS
Sensitisation and Training Requirements

GOVERNANCE
Government, Trusts,
Private Ownership,
Charitable Institutions

FUNCTIONING
Director
Curatorial, Administrative,
Events

FRONTLINE

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ISSUES TO ADDRESS
Sensitisation and Training Requirements

BARRIER FREE ACCESS AS A STARTING POINT

Need to:
• Promote an Intrinsic Understanding of Universal Design and Inclusion
• Progress Beyond only Considering Ramps and Lifts
LEGISLATION
National Level

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES, PROTECTION OF RIGHTS AND FULL PARTICIPATION) ACT, 1995
Recognises the rights of persons with disabilities in every sphere of activity and mandates barrier-free access in all public places and public transportation systems.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE: ASI POLICY TO MAKE ALL HERITAGE BUILDINGS ACCESSIBLE, 2001
(Archaeological Survey Of India (ASI), under the Ministry of Culture)

MINISTRY OF TOURISM: NATIONAL TOURISM POLICY, 2002
Does not address the issue of Accessibility and Barrier Free Environment.
LEGISLATION
International Level

UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS, 1948
Article 27- Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, 2006
Article 30- Recognises the rights of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life

ENAME CHARTER, 2009
(Issued by ICOMOS- International Council on Monuments and Sites)
Outlines the basic principles of Interpretation and Presentation as essential components of heritage conservation efforts and as a means to enhance public appreciation and understanding of cultural heritage sites
ISSUES TO ADDRESS
Introducing New Technology

- Requires Approvals
- Budgetary Constraints
- Contextual Adaptation
- Issues of Power Supply
- Maintenance and Upkeep
- Phase-Wise Approach
- Need for Trial And Error to develop Best Practice Solutions

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ISSUES TO ADDRESS
Introducing New Technology

Adapting Technology to Suit Local Contexts
MUSEUM PROJECTS
METHODOLOGY

1. Site Studies
2. Visitor Studies
3. Collection Analyses
4. Interpretation Strategies
5. Final Designs
6. Implementation
CREATING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE MUSEUM SITE

Universal Physical Access - Check List

a. Developing Elements of Building Access
b. Accessible Transportation To and From Sites of Interest
c. Facilitating Accessibility Within The Destination Site
d. Providing Navigation Aids
e. Providing Elevator Access Wherever Required
f. Creating Lifting Platforms
g. Creating Ramps
h. Accessible amenities and Services - Museum Shops, Toilets and Cafeterias
CREATING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE MUSEUM SITE
Gobindgarh Fort Museums, Amritsar

Site plan, Gobindgarh Fort
Source: CRCI report

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Creating Universal Access to the Museum Site

Arms and Armoury Museum, Amritsar

Museum displaying arms and armaments (dated 18\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th} century C.E.)

Centrally Located Bungalow, Gobindgarh Fort

- Grade 1 heritage building- Bungalow on a Circular Plinth
- Long flight of steps which do not present any landing space
**SOLUTION 01 : Circular elevator**

**Advantages:**
- It respects the bungalow’s profile.
- Cost of the glass panels.

**Disadvantages:**
- Because of many pieces of steel, the circular elevator will probably be less transparent.

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**SOLUTION 02 : Rectangular Elevator**

**Advantages:**
- Easy to build.
- Cheaper than the first solution.

**Disadvantages:**
- Does not respect the bungalow's curves.

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**BUNGALOW ON CIRCULAR PLINTH, GOBINDGARH FORT.**

Independent Glass Elevator Shaft
Stands alongside the Wall of the Raised Plinthisland
CREATING UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO THE MUSEUM SITE
Summer Palace Museum, Amritsar
Museum on the Life and Times of Sikh Ruler, Maharaja Ranjit Singh

South Façade of Summer Palace, Rambagh
Source: Matrika Design Collaborative

Ranjit Singh in his Darbar, miniature painting on paper

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• Proposed design for a ramp
• Shall lead people onto the outer plinth from the ground level to the main building entrance
• Palace has four levels- basement level, ground floor, first floor and terrace level; while an elevator is therefore a necessary requirement for inclusive internal access, the construction of an elevator or ramp inside the heritage building is not possible, and therefore presents itself as an example of design issues which can arise when developing inclusive solutions in heritage building structures.
CREATING INCLUSIVE MUSEUM EXPERIENCES
Visitor Studies - Observational, Statistical, Participatory

a. Findings from Observation Studies
   • Case studies at other museums around India
   • Gauging an understanding of visitor behaviour and experience in museums

b. Statistical Research and Secondary Data concerning Demographics (Disability, Education, Income, Age, Gender)

c. Participatory Research with Representatives of Visitor Group Demographic Categories

CSMVS (formerly Prince of Wales Museum), Mumbai
CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES

Striking a balance: To Touch or Not To Touch?

Need to facilitate Multi-Sensory and Immersive Visitor Experiences
DISPLAYING ORIGINAL ARTIFACTS
Case Displays with accompanying Graphic panels
CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES
Hands on Experiences with Original Artifacts

Guided Touch Tours
Visitors are invited to touch original artworks

Self-Guided Touch Tour
Touchable objects are identified by labels

Handling Sessions and Other Tactile Experiences

Source: Los Angeles Braille Institute

Self-Guided Touch Tour, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES
Hands on Experiences with Original Artifacts

• Certain Artefacts need not be encased owing to Size or Durability
• Therefore automatically presents opportunity for Tactile Experience

3 Headed Shiva, SPS Museum, Kashmir- 115 cm X 95 cm X 60 cm
CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES

Mediated experiences

Interactive Touch Screen- Van Gogh Painting

Ipad App

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CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES

Mediated experiences

Tactile Painting Created on Textile

Sarah Barker, Touchable Art Gallery

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CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES
Mediated experiences

Raised images

Terracotta Harwan Tiles, c. 3rd century C.E.

Raised Image of the Mona Lisa, DaVinci Museum

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CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES
Mediated experiences
Ipads to read Digitised Manuscripts

3D sketch: Interactive kiosk design, optimum height

Gulgashat-i-Punjab Manuscript, Punjab

Touch screen interactivity- Digitised manuscripts,
Source: Clay Interactive Ltd.

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CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES

Mediated experiences

Tactile Models, Replicas

Model of Capitol Monument, Visit the U.S. Capitol Exhibits

Rambagh, painting from Gulgashat-i-Punjab manuscript

Amritsar walled city map—early 19th century

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CREATING UNIVERSAL MUSEUM EXPERIENCES

Mediated experiences

Virtual Tours (other tours include Audio Guide/ Verbal Tours)

The Google Art Project

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TO SUM UP...

a. The Focus is on Visitor Experience

b. Universal Access should be Intrinsic to all Museum and Heritage Projects

c. Conservation and Heritage Experts need to understand the Essential value of Inclusion in order to Explore ways to create Universal Access

d. Need for Participatory Approach

e. Sensitisation and Training is necessary for all Stakeholders

f. Much study needs to be conducted on:
   • The Diverse Visitor Needs and Experiences in Indian Museums
   • The use of Technology in Indian Museums
   • Ways to create Universal Intellectual Access
THANK YOU!

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