

Statement

To overcome the crisis of museums



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Science Council of Japan

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for Scientific and Artistic Collections (Science Council of Japan)

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Summary

1. Background

Following the recent administrative reform, the institutional system of national and local governmental museums (including art galleries and science centers; including those established by national and local governments; the same shall apply hereinafter) has drastically changed. The partial revision of the *Local Autonomy Law* in 2003 (i.e. This revision introduced the Designated Manager's System) allowed the private sector to undertake the management of local governmental museums, and the Designated Manager's System (hereinafter "DMS") has since been introduced in an increasing number of local governmental museums (12 percent of local governmental museums had introduced DMS by 2004, and this rate increased to 29 percent in 2006, according to a survey by the Japanese Association of Museums). In 2006, the *Law Regarding the Reform of Public Services via the Introduction of Competition* was enacted, and national museums have now been faced with a similar situation. This series of administrative reforms, originating from the increase of national and local governmental budget deficits, aims to reduce expenditure and introduce funds and initiatives of the private sector for improvement of the public service.

Considering the above circumstances surrounding museums, the Science Council of Japan expresses its concern over the risk that national and local governmental museums, which should function as a mechanism for accumulating and disseminating scientific, artistic and cultural knowledge, would not be able to sufficiently perform their social roles, because of the reform prioritizing their financial and economic efficiency, instead of the enhancement of their functions.

Considering that it is essential for national and local governmental museums to cope with social and institutional changes in an independent and constructive manner, the Science Council of Japan makes proposals to this effect and presents tentative solutions with which museums would be able to improve their activities and operations.

2. Current status and problems

Museums are institutions that accumulate, store, study and exhibit collections relevant to various study fields including history, art, folklore, industry and natural sciences, and carry out activities to enrich civic and public culture, research activities and entertainment, for educational purposes. While there have been attempts made at local governmental museums to provide 'better and cheaper' services in the short run through the introduction of DMS, several problems and potential risks to the museum operation in the long run have also been identified during the same process.

A short-term commission of the museum management to the designated manager could lead to neglect of the acquisition, preservation and research of museum collections, although these should form the long-term base of museum activities. It could also undermine the procurement and training of museum curators who should be responsible for these long-term museum activities.

3. Statement

- (1) The social role and function of museums are to preserve, store and utilize collections of highly scientific, artistic and/or historic value, which museums accumulate over a long period of time. Museums are expected to exhibit these collections and explain their value to the wide public under the most appropriate conditions, in order to ensure that the citizens of the next generation will properly inherit them. While a mid-/long-term management plan is indispensable to this end, it is also necessary for museums to be flexible, so that they can carefully and appositely (re)adapt to changing social needs.

- (2) If DMS is to be applied to local governmental museums, not only the continuation of their social role and function, but also the consistency of their activities and the maintenance of the quality of their operations need to be guaranteed. A museum that has already decided to introduce DMS should take into consideration the following points:
 - In introducing DMS, it is important for the designator (i.e. local government, which is also called ‘the original establisher of the museum’) to present, clearly and in detail, the key character and the managerial principle of the museum concerned, so that there will be no discrepancy between the designator’s basic managerial policy and the designated manager’s managerial design.
 - In seeking a managerial consensus between the designator and the designated manager, it is desirable to utilize *the Advisable Standard for Establishment and Management of Local Governmental Museums* (notified by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology on 6 June 2003).
 - The designator should consider the period of designation to be approximately 10 years (for existing museums) to 15 years (for newly established museums). It is desirable that the designator considers the renewal of designation every 5 years through a performance evaluation.
 - In order to secure adequate human resources and ensure stable and long-term management, those organizations equipped with curators that have already acquired relevant experiences through public systems, such as the *Entrusted*

Management System, should be utilized.

- In order to establish a system that enables cost reductions and improved services, not only DMS but also a broad range of other options need to be considered. It is necessary to launch a public debate to explore a better system; such a debate should draw on public opinions as well as other systems operating in other countries.

(3) The Statement presents a tentative plan for a new public system of national museums and art galleries, which addresses the following points.

- It is essential that national museums and art galleries have organizational objectives and operational strategies that are stable over a long period of time and that they function efficiently. There is a need to establish an evaluation system that is able to assess national museums and art galleries in terms of their organizational stability and managerial efficiency in a balanced manner.
- Following the example of National Universities Corporate System, national museums and art galleries should be given a special corporate status (“*National Museums and Art Galleries Corporate System*” [tentative name]) that is geared to their specific characters.
- There is a need to introduce a national indemnity system for loaning collections of high value from overseas.

(4) The Statement presents a mid-term and long-term vision for future museums activities.

- It is necessary to explore the way to utilize the diversity of museums in order that they can meet a wide range of social needs.
- While it is important to make use of museum collections for the purpose of meeting already-identified social needs, it is also necessary to explore potentially new social needs and flexibly provide public services to fulfill them.
- In addition to the existing curator system, it should be considered establishing a new system to train competent curators who can adequately serve various social needs.
- It should be considered setting up a museum assessment body that inspects and evaluates museums according to their original establishment purposes.
- The network function between museums should be strengthened.
- Social systems supporting museum activities should be enhanced.

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Foreword: current problems and the aim of the statement

Since 1999, the Science Council of Japan has continuously discussed how to accumulate, store and utilize collections of scientific and artistic materials, and how to procure and train personnel specializing in the relevant expertise¹⁾. The museum²⁾ has always been the central topic in this discussion.

Following the recent administrative and financial reform, the institutional circumstances surrounding national and local governmental museums (including art galleries and museum archives; including those established by national and local governments; the same shall apply hereinafter) are currently undergoing drastic changes. Since the partial revision of the *Local Autonomy Law* in 2003 (i.e. This revision introduced the Designated Manager's System, hereinafter "DMS") in 2003, the management of local governmental museums has been opened to the private company (if successfully becoming the 'designated manager')³⁾. In 2006, the *Law Regarding the Reform of Public Services via the Introduction of Competition*⁴⁾ was enacted, and national museums have since also been faced with a similar situation. This series of reforms aim to improve the public service by utilizing the private sector's vitality and to reduce costs.

According to a questionnaire survey conducted by the Japanese Association of Museums, out of 479 local governmental museums that responded to the questionnaire, 12 percent had introduced DMS by 2004, and the same rate increased to 29 percent in 2006. Since local governmental museums account for approximately 70 percent of all 5614 museums in Japan⁵⁾, it is evident that the impact of this reform upon museums as a whole is considerable.

It would be necessary to understand the underlying trend of public-private partnership in local governmental museums. The management of not a few local governmental museums, established by local governments, had already been entrusted to external bodies such as semi-public foundations under the previous *Entrusted Management System*. The recent reform, therefore, is strengthening this trend. The fact that DMS established in 2004 allows the designated manager to manage the local governmental museum including its curatorial operations clearly attests to this trend.

In some cases, the management by the designated manager has opened local governmental museums more to the local community and the citizens, increased the efficiency of their management, and led to more effective utilization of their collections; in these cases, the short-term positive effect of the introduction of DMS should be acknowledged. However, the same system has also caused the following serious problems.

(A) Commissioning of museum management to the designated manager for a limited period of time makes it difficult to establish a long-term museum vision, although such a vision is essential in managing a museum. It also endangers the procurement and training of curators who should play a fundamental role in establishing the long-term vision. In addition, the managerial priority placed on the economic efficiency could stress too much the number of visitors and the revenue from the admission fee, which could result in hampering the accumulation, storage and study of museum collections, although these should be the fundamental activities of the museum.

(B) The basics of museum services lie in the preservation, storage and public presentation of museum collections, which demands high-quality work informed by a long-term vision of the museum. While economic efficiency should certainly be sought in this work, there should constantly be an appropriate balance between the quality of work and the economic efficiency. Too much pressure on the economic efficiency could tip this balance.

The Science Council of Japan expresses its concern over the risk that national and local governmental museums, which should function as a mechanism for accumulating and disseminating scientific, artistic and cultural knowledge, would not be able to sufficiently perform their social role, because of the reform that prioritizes their financial and economic efficiency, instead of the enhancement of their functions.

In order that national and local governmental museums can overcome the crisis they are currently faced with and achieve further development, the present statement:

- (1) Clarifies the social roles of national and local governmental museums and demonstrates the problem they are currently faced with;
- (2) Makes suggestions for effective application of DMS to a local governmental museum that has already decided to introduce it;
- (3) Presents a tentative plan for a new public system for national museums;
- (4) Presents a mid-term and long-term vision for future museum operations.

[Note]

- 1) “How should national museums (of art) and art galleries be? – more emphasis on the museum research function and the optimization of museum evaluation in relation to the institutionalization of Independent Administrative Agencies (the Committee for Coordination of Artistic Studies, Science Council of Japan; July 29, 1999)”, “Procurement of personnel specializing in management and conservation of scientific material collections and the establishment of a system to train personnel with regard to the administrative reform and the institutionalization of Independent Administrative Agencies (the Standing Committee for Fundamental Scientific Information, Science Council of

Japan; March 12, 2002)”, “Establishment of a system to manage, preserve and utilize scientific material collections and the procurement and training system of specialist personnel (the Committee for Fundamental Scientific Information, Science Council of Japan; June 24, 2003)” and “Upgrading of the system for collecting and preserving specimens in natural history museums (the Committee for Coordination of Animal and Botanical Scientific Research, Science Council of Japan; August 29, 2005).

- 2) In the present statement, the museum is defined as a public institution designated as a museum by the *Museum Law* and includes art galleries, zoos, botanic gardens and aquaria.
- 3) The revision (June 6, 2003) is concerned with the system for “public institutions” as defined in the *Local Autonomy Law* (Clause 244-2), namely the Designated Manager’s System (DMS). DMS prescribes for the commission of management of a public institution belonging to the local government to a manager designated by the same government. The designator (those who established the museum, namely the local government):
 - specifies the procedure of designation, the guideline of management, and the scope of activities to be commissioned to the designated manager;
 - determines the period of commissioned management;
 - decides whether the designated manager can receive the fee gained from visitors’ use of the museum.
- 4) “*The Law Regarding the Reform of Public Services via the Introduction of Competition* (also known as “*The Law for the Reform of Public Services*”)” was enacted on July 7, 2006. Aiming to attain “simple and efficient government”, this Law embodies the goal of the Government’s structural reform: “What the private can do must be entrusted to the private”. In other words, the objective of the law is to continuously review public services, enhance the quality of public services, and reduce costs entailed for providing public services.
- 5) According to a social-educational survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2005.

1. The role of national and local governmental museums and the challenge to them

(1) The role of the museum in civil society

Among various public cultural facilities, the museum has been implementing relatively stable activities over a long period of time, and its aim is clear. The main activities of the museum are: to exhibit material collections relating to various study fields including history, art, folklore, natural history, and science and technology within the space of its facility; to partially reconstruct history, culture, society and human activities the collections represent; to preserve and store its collections. The visitor to a museum exhibition can reflect on human activities, appreciate past cultures and artistic representations, compare the past with the present, understand the change, shift and development of human activities through different areas and periods, and get inspiration for creative activities. These are the primary activities and objectives of the museum for the public, who are to utilize them.

(2) Base of museum activities and services

In the interest of the citizens, it is desirable that different museums keep different collections so that each museum has a distinctive character. It is vital for national museums, for example, to play the role of 'national centers'. On the other hand, local governmental museums need to take into consideration locally specific demands and needs; private museums ought to fulfill their own specified establishment purposes.

If the museum is to enhance its role and improve its management, it would need to not only meet the above-mentioned primary objectives, but also implement various additional operations. For example, in order that visitors can understand exhibited collections and get empathetic and emotional impressions from them, the museum should not only display collections but also consider and plan for: the selection of exhibits; the order of displays; the circulation of visitors; the allocation of guards and guides; the preservation measures of exhibits; the security of exhibits; the adjustment of the light intensity; the preparation for explanatory panels; the production of exhibition catalogues; the collection and editing of pictures and video images relating to exhibits; the production of audio and/or visual guides and the arrangement for their provision to visitors; the arrangement for collection and sales of related books, catalogues and other 'museum goods'. Besides, it is important for the museum to constantly augment its collections. This means that the museum needs to not only secure funding for the purchase of new collections, but also keep in contact with external organizations and individuals and build trustful relationship with them. If

there is a trustful relationship, a possible seller/donor of new collections may understand the significance of the museum collection; thus, even if the museum does not have enough funds for purchasing new collections, the seller/donor may sell them at a reduced price, or, possibly donate them to the museum. In order that a possible seller/donor can understand the significance of museum collections, he/she needs to first appreciate the following: the museum has a good conservation system for its collections; the museum carries out research, cataloguing and evaluation of its collections; the museum adds to the value of its collections by presenting them in appropriate exhibitions.

A museum equipped with rich collections has various possibilities for implementing activities. If an exhibition based on its own collection is attractive, the museum can expect a large number of visitors, including those coming from afar. If collections are of good quality, other museums often ask to rent them, and this could lead to an establishment of a lender/borrower relationship with external museums. Through such a relationship, the lender museum would be able to borrow collections from the borrower museum to help organize, for example, a special exhibition on the next occasion. In order to establish such a lender/borrower relationship, it is necessary that the museum's own collections are rich or have a certain distinguishing character; this in turn requires the museum to have a mid-term and long-term plan and strategy to enrich its collections. The following example illustrates the advantage of establishing a lender/borrower relationship with other museums even more concretely. Today, because of some TV programs in which antiquities, ancient documents and art objects in private ownership are appraised just for fun, it has become increasingly difficult for universities and museums to purchase ancient documents as cheaply as in the past. Despite this trend, those museums having a trustful relationship with the owner of collections since before this temporary trend are less subject to the direct effect of the temporal rise of prices. In a similar vein, a long-term museum strategy could minimize even the effect of a considerable rise of prices of art objects in the art market. The increase of museum collections is a fundamental requisite for the improvement of museum services, which is, in the end, what the visitor, namely the citizens, gets. However, since its advantages are not always clearly understood by the visitor, public relation activities explaining them are highly important.

(3) Importance of a mid-/long-term vision

For the public, the merit of the preservation and restoration of collections is not always clearly understood either. Museums always need to cope with two contradictory requirements: preservation and public presentation. In order to preserve collections in a good physical state in the long term, there is a need to keep the

temperature, humidity and the light intensity constant, and, in addition, certain measures must be taken to decelerate the oxidization of collections. To meet all these conditions, the best solution would be to keep collections in a properly fitted storage room. However, keeping collections in storage would allow the museum to attain only half of its mission and goal. If the museum does not exhibit its collections to the public and the visitor cannot understand their value and information, these collections might be preserved but would be ‘frozen’. In order to exhibit valuable and fragile collections so that they can become ‘exhibit resources’ in the true sense - the museum must reproduce the same preservation conditions that the storage room has as much as possible in the exhibition space. This means to minimize the amount of infrared and ultraviolet rays even when the collection is exposed to bright light, and keep to the minimum the change of temperature and humidity, which is susceptible to the amount of visitors. It is only by ensuring optimal conditions for the storage room and the exhibition space that the museum can preserve its collections in the long term.

The merit of restoration cannot be fully understood by a short-term observation either. For example, when restoring cloth that is a valuable scientific material for the history of fashion, the choice between the use of modern thread similar to the original one and that of thread produced in contemporary times would make a big difference in term of the technical difficulty of restoration and the cost required. Using thread of the same period of the original cloth would require much more time and expertise, and the cost would therefore increase. However, if modern thread is used for restoration of the ancient cloth, the restored part and the original part might become appearing different in the course of time, because of the difference of strength of the two threads; in such a case, another restoration might eventually be required. Details of restoration work are often not understood by people except experts; efforts must therefore be made to make them clearly understood by the wider public.

Furthermore, there are cases in which a large gap can be noted between those who work for or are involved in museum activities and the rest of the public, in terms of the amount of information they have about museum activities in general; this gap occasionally results in an evaluation of museums being done ‘only’ according to the primary activities and objectives of the museum as explained in (1). Such an evaluation tends to focus on, for example, the exhibition, public outreach and educational activities, and the range of choices of museum goods. However, in order that a museum can carry out satisfactory activities in the true sense of the term in other words, a museum can fully perform its mission by undertaking both “preservation and public presentation” in a balanced manner each museum must make efforts at public relations to gain public support and understanding even for activities usually kept outside public knowledge. To put it differently, it is vital for the museum to seek to

gain a wider public support while establishing its mid-term and long-term vision.

(4) Challenges to museums

The institutional circumstances surrounding the museum are undergoing a drastic change due to several reasons including the recent administrative reform. The museum, today, needs to fully acknowledge these changes of the times, and cope with them in a careful and appropriate manner. In doing so, the following points must be taken into consideration.

Firstly, the museum must have a strategy based on its mid-term and long-term vision, in order to appropriately preserve and enhance the historic value of its collections. Interruption or arbitrary change of this strategy could result in diminishing the social role of the museum, and should therefore be strictly avoided.

Secondly, the museum should build a digital database of its collections, while keeping their value as original cultural resources. Although the construction of such digital database would entail a great expense, it should be considered as vital for the survival of the museum.

Thirdly, in order to create a system with which the museum can broaden the range of its activities and become widely open to society and the citizens, those who engage in museum research and management themselves need to change their way of thinking. Museums have thus far tended to give priority to their research activity, in a sense, monopolizing their collections; however, such an attitude is considered negative nowadays. Those who work for museums should never seek to monopolize their authority and access to museum collections in an attempt to save their own position or employment; such an act would only result in isolation of the museum in civil society.

Fourthly, it should be remembered that research into the human and natural sciences has considerably advanced recently, and art has also been undergoing a remarkable change. Those who in charge of research, survey, exhibition, education and public outreach in the museum must cope with these changes in a careful and appropriate manner. They should not stick to the old style of museum activities.

Bearing these points in mind, the museum should explore the right direction, in which it can properly adjust to the change of the times.

2. The current situation of the introduction of the Designated Manager's System (DMS) to museums and its problems

(1) The current situation of museums in Japan

According to a social educational survey conducted by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 2005, there are 5,614 museums in Japan, and 272,682,000 people visited them in 2004. Another survey carried out by the Japanese Association of Museums in 2004 reports that a museum on average has 39,004 objects relating to the human sciences, and 30,385 objects relating to the natural sciences, in addition to many books and visual materials.

These data clearly suggest that museums are locally-based cultural facilities familiar to many people, and function as a data bank of scientific and artistic collections as well as regional and environmental collections that constitute shared heritage of the citizens. In addition to publicly presenting and utilizing these collections, museums play a leading role in exploring still unidentified but potentially important material collections, classifying, storing and preserving the entirety of collections for future generations. This means that the museum, by definition, needs to constantly undertake two tasks that seem contradictory to each other: preservation and storage of collections on the one hand, and public presentation and utilization of collections on the other.

In order to properly execute these tasks, meet the public demands, and provide high-quality services to the visitor, the museum needs to have curators equipped with expertise and technique to make specialized judgment about the collections (See the specification of the curator in Clauses 4-3 and 12-1 of the *Museum Law*).

(2) DMS and museums

DMS came into force as a result of the partial revision of the *Local Autonomy Law* (promulgated on 13 June 2003). The key points of its Clause 244-2 in reference to DMS are summarized as follows.

1. The first selection must be made between direct management by the local government and the introduction of DMS.
2. The secondary selection (if the introduction of DMS is selected) is concerned with the following several managerial specifications:
 - (a) Procedure of designation, the guideline of management, and the scope of activities to be commissioned to the designated manager;
 - (b) Period of commissioned management;
 - (c) Whether the designated manager can receive the fee gained from visitors' use of the museum.

3. The above selections are to be made by the local government (Governor/Council).

The advice issued by the Local Administration Bureau of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (issued on 17 July 2003) states that the decision regarding the introduction of DMS should consider: “whether it will be guaranteed that the citizens can equally use the facility (i.e. the museum)”; “whether it will maximize the utility of the facility (i.e. the museum)”; “whether it will reduce costs”; “whether there will be material and human resources for stable management”. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology also published its view regarding the decision over the introduction DMS to the museum; according to this view, it is possible to make this decision and specify the conditions for management commission in consideration of the original establishment purposes of the museum concerned, as well as its local conditions [See “View regarding the introduction of the Designated Manager’s System to local governmental museums”, *Museum Journal (Hakubutsukan Kenkyu)* no.435]

As seen above, the opinion of the local government (original establisher of the museum/designator) regarding the original establishment purposes of the museum plays a decisive role in the decision of the introduction of DMS to the museum concerned as well as the specifications of the commission of its management to the designated manager.

(3) The current situation of the introduction of DMS

According to the report of the 13th National Conference of the Museum Directors held in June 2006, the current situation of the introduction of DMS can be summarized as in Table 1.

Table 1: Museums that have already introduced or currently considering/planning the introduction of DMS

Type of local government (i.e. original establisher of the museum/the designator)	Number of museums to which the questionnaire was sent	Number of museums that responded to the questionnaire	Before introduction / present					A DMS already introduced	B DMS will be introduced within several years	C Introduction of DMS has been decided, but it has not yet decided when it starts	D Decided not to introduce DMS	E Does not know yet whether to introduce DMS or not	F Others
			Directly managed by the local government	Management commissioned to a semi-public foundation		Others	No response						
				Full commission	Others								
Prefectures	172	136	66	33	2	4	31	43	2	2	27	56	6
Designated cities	65	46	18	16	3	0	9	22	1	0	6	16	1
Cities/wards	380	264	154	36	6	5	63	46	10	8	66	128	6
Towns/villages	92	33	18	1	0	14	0	1	1	2	9	20	0
Total	709	479	256	86	11	23	103	112	14	12	108	220	13

Out of 479 museums that responded to the questionnaire survey, [A] 112 museums (23.4%) have already introduced and [B+C] 26 museums (5.4%) have already decided to introduce DMS; these two groups [A+B+C] add up to 138 museums (28.8%). These figures can be compared with the those obtained in the same survey conducted in September 2004, according to which, [A] accounted for 2.0%, [B+C] accounted for 9.5%, and [A+B+C] accounted for 11.5% of the all museums that responded. This suggests that the introduction of DMS has since proceeded at a rapid pace.

Table 2 shows the type of management before the introduction of DMS and the category of the designated manager after the introduction of DMS.

Table 2: Type of management before the introduction of DMS, and the category of the designated manager after the introduction of DMS

Type of management before the introduction of DMS	Number of museums	Category of the designated manager after the introduction of DMS	Number of museums
Direct management of the local government	10	Corporations founded by the local government or public institutions	97
Managed by semi-public foundations	90	Private companies or Non-Profit Organizations	6
Others	8	Others	6
No response	4	No response	3
Total	112	Total	112

Table 2 shows that there were 90 museums (80.4%) managed by semi-public

foundations and 10 museums (8.9%) directly managed by the local government, prior to the introduction of DMS. After the introduction of DMS, at the time of the survey, 97 museums (86.6%) were managed by either corporations founded by the local government or public institutions, and 6 museums (5.4%) were managed by private companies or Non-Profit Organizations. The majority of the museums that introduced DMS had already been managed by external bodies (such as semi-public foundations) through the precedent *Entrusted Management System*; previously, approximately 24 percent of all museums had been managed through the *Entrusted Management System* (With the *Entrusted Management System*, the museum management had been entrusted only to semi-public foundations).

In this ‘first phase’ of the introduction of DMS, there have been many cases in which the previous ‘entrusted manager’ as stipulated by the *Entrusted Management System* has been converted to the ‘designated manager’ as defined in DMS. This is due to Clauses 1 and 2 of supplementary provisions of the *Local Autonomy Law*, which prescribes for the conversion of the management system (from the *Entrusted Management System* to DMS) within three years after the revision of the *Local Autonomy Law*. It should be remembered, however, that the policy of the *Entrusted Management System* – the policy that “the personnel can work on specialized operations over a long period of time” – is no longer in operation under DMS. Indeed, there have been some cases in which semi-public foundations that used to manage museums under the *Entrusted Management System* have now been dissolved, while in other cases previous museum staff members have been dismissed. In other cases, museums seek to avoid sudden institutional changes by taking several makeshift measures.

(4) Problems of the introduction of DMS

In the first phase of the introduction of DMS, both the original establisher of the museum (i.e. local government, which is also the designator) and the applicant for designation have appeared to have insufficient understanding of this system, and this has caused perplexity and delay in taking appropriate measures. It is expected that: in the second phase, several museums now directly managed by the local government will become managed by external bodies through the introduction of DMS; in the third phase, the management already commissioned to external bodies through DMS will be renewed. Given this prospect, several points are highlighted below which should be taken as advice to avoid the recurrence of problems already identified in the first phase.

a. Examination in light of the standard for local governmental museums

The Advisable Standard for Establishment and Management of Local Governmental Museums (notified by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology on 6 June 2003) can be useful. For example, its Article 4 states that “in displaying collections” “appropriate collections based on accurate information and reliable research should be used”. This suggests that the museum service must provide the visitor with “appropriate materials and accurate information” (guarantee the ‘reliability’) “so that every visitor can understand them” (guarantee the ‘fairness’). In selecting a manager to which the museum management is to be commissioned, these conditions must be met.

b. Examination in light of the primary tasks and social functions of museums

For a highly specialized museum to perform its tasks, there needs to be a management system with which “the same manager can operate under stable conditions for an appropriate length of time”. At present, the period of commissioned management in most cases of DMS is set to be 3 to 5 years, although there is no specific ground for this length of time. The above period is too short and could risk the museum’s primary tasks, namely, preservation, storage and utilization of its collections, as well as the procurement and training of curators. If such a risk materializes, the stability of museum operations and the effectiveness of museum functions would be seriously jeopardized: such a museum would be considered inefficient. The period of commissioned management must be set in full consideration of each museum’s tasks and functions.

c. Examination in light of the museum collections

In order that the museum can respond to the public demands and provide high-quality services to the visitor, it needs to carry out the following sequence of activities, namely, identification, acquisition, research, classification and preservation of collections, including not only those materials that have already been exhibited, but also all stored materials and even still unidentified but potentially important ones outside the museum. The museum should never neglect these fundamental activities by prioritizing its economic efficiency and putting too much emphasis on those activities that increase the revenue from the visitor’s use of the museum.

(5) Proposals regarding the introduction of DMS

A museum that has already decided to introduce DMS should take into consideration the following points.

In introducing DMS, it is important for the designator (i.e. local government, which is also the original establisher of the museum) to present, clearly and in detail, the key character and the managerial principle of the museum concerned, so that there will be no discrepancy between the designator's basic managerial policy and the designated manager's managerial design.

In seeking a managerial consensus between the designator and the designated manager, it is desirable to utilize *the Advisable Standard for Establishment and Management of Local Governmental Museums*. Following this Standard, the designator should present, clearly and in detail, the key character and the managerial principle of the museum concerned. The management proposal the applicant for designation makes must be in line with the key character and the managerial principle of the museum. The selection of the designated manager must also be made in accordance with them. The applicant should not make a management proposal that is incongruent with the original establishment purpose of the museum concerned or deviates from its actual functions, in an inappropriate attempt to enhance the target result of quantifiable elements, such as the short-term visitor number. The designator, namely the local government, must assess each management proposal carefully in view of the original establishment purpose of the museum.

The museum seeks to increase and stores its collections over a long period of time, according to its establishment purposes and principles. It is not unusual for the museum to spend 3 years or more to realise an exhibition if borrowing collections from other museums. For these reasons, the period of designation should be considered approximately 10 years (for existing museums) to 15 years (for newly established museums). It is advisable that the designator considers the renewal of designation every 5 years through a performance evaluation.

Although one can be qualified to become a curator after relevant undergraduate studies, in reality most museum curators have a master's degree. In order for them to be able to fully demonstrate their expertise as proper curators, they usually need to have additional several years of experience of working in the museum. In order to procure such proper human resources and operate a long-term stable management, the museum should utilize (i.e. consider commissioning its management to) those organizations (such as semi-public foundations) equipped with curators who have already acquired relevant experiences, for example, through the previous *Entrusted Management System* [If such an organization is designated as manager of a local governmental museum, it should demonstrate an effective managerial model such

as consortium, and the designator (i.e. local government, which is also the original establisher of the museum) should evaluate and assess its operations according to the managerial standard and/or through other evaluation systems; for example, see the *Special Agreement Bodies System* operating at Yokohama City]. If such an organization is designated to undertake the museum management (under DMS), and subsequently, operates stable management successfully, it might be an effective solution to renew the designation so that long-term management could be ensured.

Lastly, given that an important part of the museum management consists of qualitative performance, it must be fully discussed whether DMS is the only system that enables cost reductions and improved services. It is important to explore a broad range of options, even those other than DMS, to find one that fits the establishment purpose of the museum (For example, Osaka City is now considering setting up Municipal Independent Administrative Agencies for its museums). To this end, it is necessary to launch a public debate about DMS.

3. Toward a new public system for national museums

After examining the current situation and problems of national and local governmental museums in Japan, it has now become clear that there are concerns about their accumulation of scientific, artistic and cultural material collections, as well as their curator system. Given these concerns, what should be done to create a better system of museums and art galleries? A tentative plan for a new system of national museums and art galleries is given below.

(1) Establishment of the *National Museums and Art Galleries Corporate System* (tentative name)

Currently, national museums and art galleries function within the administrative framework of Independent Administrative Agencies (hereinafter “IAA”). Although operating in the same administrative framework of IAA, National University Corporations and Inter-University Research Institute Corporations have a special corporate status and are administratively distinguished from other IAA. Following this example, it is desirable to establish the *National Museums and Art Galleries Corporate System* (tentative name) and apply it to national museums and art galleries, so that they will be administratively distinguished from other IAA. Among all IAA, those of the following three groups – the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, the National Science Museum and the National Museums of Art – were established for the purpose of promoting scientific studies, culture and art, and therefore their management needs to ensure consistent operations based on a long-term vision and also consider several special measures such as the setting of special funds that enable acquisition of important collections. In designing the *National Museums and Art Galleries Corporate System*, it would be desirable to make reference to the system of those IAA providing administrative services and carrying out cutting-edge researches, and the system of those Inter-University Research Institute Corporations undertaking bottom-up researches and educational activities. The *National Museums and Art Galleries Corporate System* would need to be suitable for institutions operating to accumulate, store, research and exhibit collections relevant to various study fields including history, art, folklore, industry and natural sciences, and to enrich civic and public culture, research activities, and entertainment, for educational purposes.

Under such a corporate system, the above three IAA groups should undertake operations in accordance with their own mission and characters. This would be essential for the future development of national museums and art galleries. The reasons are the following.

- National museums and art galleries have a duty as ‘national centers’ to relate Japanese scientific research, art and culture to those of the rest of the world, through studies of their scientific, artistic and cultural collections and beyond.
- In order to enhance scientific, artistic and cultural material collections, the accumulation of collections must be done according to a mid-term and long-term plan of the museum; change of this plan must be preceded by careful consideration.
- The operations of the national museums and art galleries – acquisition of collections, exhibitions, education, public outreach, utilization of collections and so on – must be done in an innovative, exploratory and pioneering way, in different domains. The experience and information obtained from these activities should make a wider contribution, particularly to improve the operations of local governmental and private museums.
- The curators at national museums and art galleries should carry out their work – acquisition of collections, exhibitions, education, public outreach, utilization of collections and so on – in an innovative, exploratory and pioneering way, seek to invigorate and improve museum activities, and disseminate their experience and knowledge at outreach events such as seminars and conferences.
- For national museums and art galleries, the acquisition of collections not through purchase but by means of donation and deposit is important. To this end, it is necessary to win a constant trust of the collector and owner of collections, so that they consider national museums and art galleries as potential places for donation/deposition. It is desirable to increase the preferential tax measures to further encourage the donation and deposit of collections.

(2) Enhancement of the museum organization and the establishment of an evaluation system

For national museums to carry out their operations and tasks as ‘national centers’, it is necessary that the objective and procedure of their operations remain stable over a long period of time. It is also important that their operations function efficiently. In evaluating national museums, there should be an evaluation system that can assess both the stability of organization and the efficiency of operation in a balanced manner.

(3) Introduction of the national indemnity system

When borrowing scientific, art and cultural collections that are high-priced from overseas for the purpose of exhibition, insurance is indispensable. The national indemnity system ensures that such insurance is provided by the state, and is already

introduced in other developed countries. Since highly valuable collections can be borrowed only through a national indemnity system, Japan also needs to introduce it. For its introduction, there must be a museum evaluation system that reinforces the current one by further assessing the following points: the physical stability of the museum including its earthquake-proof property; the condition of the exhibition space including its temperature and humidity; the security of the exhibits; whether there is a policy regarding the preservation and restoration of exhibits, and whether the compliance with such a policy is properly monitored. With the introduction of the national indemnity system, the cost currently borne by each museum for insuring rented collections from overseas will be saved; part of this saved expense should be used to run an organization, such as a national council of museums, in order to improve the general quality of museum activities in Japan.

4. Mid-term and long-term vision for museums

If accepting that the history of the modern museum began with the establishment of the British Museum in the middle of 18th century, approximately 250 years have already passed since its start. Over the course of this history, the modern museum has changed its activities and characters many times. To mention a few examples of such changes: the modern museum has today valued the importance of preservation and restoration of its collections more than ever; its collections have now been rented out for further utilization; the user of the museum was initially limited to the noble and the intellectual, but it gradually began including a wider range of people, regardless of their classes, ages and genders, and today, with the active participation of volunteers, it has become increasingly difficult to clearly define even the museum personnel; what used to constitute collections of the contemporary period has today, after dozens of decades, become part of historical collections. In short, the social organization of the museum has changed, evolved and developed over the period of 250 years, and the museum has today acquired a strong social base.

It should be remembered that the development of the modern museum mentioned above was observed only in Western countries. Most museums in Japan, in contrast, were established after the WWII and have a history of less than 50 years. In this sense, while modern museums in Japan were still seeking to develop a strong social base, they were all of a sudden hit by the recent shock of the introduction of DMS. With such a historical awareness, one could say that the museum in Japan today finds itself at a turning point⁶⁾. It is therefore imperative to have a clear objective and strategy for the future of museums in Japan.

(1) Creation of the diversity by a variety of museums

National, local governmental, and private museums have different possibilities and restrictions for their activities, because of different specifications and different objectives of their establishment. Besides, each museum has its own characteristics according to: its specifications; its objectives; who manages it; how it is managed; its collections; category of museum; its function; its target audience; its exhibition space; its method of presentation; its outreach activities; its location. It is therefore important that these various museums create the diversity of museum activities so as to meet a variety of public needs.

(2) Flexible provision of public services

Although the original function of the museum is to store, preserve and exhibit

its material collections, it would be difficult for the museum to gain social support unless it utilizes these collections to explore and meet new social needs. It is therefore important for the museum to not only provide services utilizing its collections, but also explore new potential public needs and flexibly provide public services to fulfill them. In order to foster collection utilization, the museum also needs to more seriously consider the storage and preservation so as to prevent the deterioration of its collections. Therefore, for the museum to improve its provision of public services, it is requisite to taking all necessary measures for the preservation and restoration of collections.

(3) A new curator system

It is important to ensure the procurement and training of competent curators who can adequately fulfill various public needs. To this end, it is necessary to enhance the expertise of people working for curatorial operations of the museum and ensure the improved career path for them. This can be done, for example, by setting up the qualification system for senior curators, which will supplement the current curator system.

(4) Introduction of an evaluation system

Universities in Japan introduced first an internal inspection system, then an internal evaluation system, and finally an external evaluation system, and have thus succeeded in the university reform. Following this example, museums in Japan should inspect themselves to see if their activities meet their original establishment objectives, and, simultaneously, introduce an evaluation system by setting up a museum assessment body.

(5) Network function between museums

Museums should strengthen their internal network by taking advantage of: distinctive characters of collections at each museum; different categories of museums (national, local governmental, private); different regions in which different museums are located. At the same time, museums should establish a 'hub-function' which aims to enhance the function of the totality of museums, in order to upgrade activities carried out at different museums in a complementary manner. To this end, establishment of a museum liaison organization should be considered.

(6) Enhancement of social systems supporting museum activities

In order to improve the museum activity, social systems in general should be enhanced. For example, the following measures should be considered: more support

for volunteer activities; more tax privilege for the donation and deposit of collections to the museum; establishment of special cultural zones in which the museum activity is deregulated.

[Note]

6) The current institutional and managerial system of national and local governmental museums in major developed countries is summarized below. The United States is not included in this summary, as most of its museums are private, except the Smithsonian Institute.

1. United Kingdom

During the administrative reform of the Thatcher Administration, many public institutions were turned into independent administrative agencies (public corporations). However, 17 national museums and art galleries, including the British Museum, the National Gallery and Tate Gallery, were not subject to this reform. In recent years, an increasing number of museums own private companies that provide several services such as sales of museum gifts (For example, the British Museum has a private company called the British Museum Company Ltd.).

2. France

There are 33 national museums in France. Those national museums that earn enough revenues to be financially independent, such as the Louvre Museums and Orsay Museum, function as independent public corporations.

3. Germany

The majority of important museums in Germany are run by states. There are, however, 15 museums and art galleries established and managed by the Federal Government. These 15 museums are all incorporated institutions independent of the Federation (comparable to juridical foundations or limited private companies in Japan). Most of the administrative cost of these museums is funded by the subsidy from the Federal Government.

4. Netherland

There are 21 national museums and art galleries, which, in 1995, became a kind of juridical foundations having an independent administration system. They are managed by their boards of trustees, but most of their budget is financed by the national governmental subsidies.

5. Italy

There are 492 national museums and art galleries. Those in Rome, Naples, Florence and Venice constitute the Institution of the Poles of Museums, which is independent from the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities, in terms of its finance, research and organization.

Comparison between Japanese National Museums and major national museums overseas

	5 Japanese National Art Galleries	4 Japanese National Museums	The British Museum	The Louvre Museum
Number of staff members	135	245	1050	1300
Budget	cir. 6 billion yen	cir. 6 billion yen	cir. 12.4 billion yen	Cir. 16.4 billion yen
Annual number of visitors	5.03 million	3.12 million	4.7 million	5.7 million
Exhibition space (m ²)	20,631	33,958	56,600	30,000

(Source: Survey conducted by British National Museum Director's Conference and websites of each museum)

- The annual numbers of visitors to the 5 Japanese National Art Galleries and the 4 Japanese National Museums are based on the actual numbers of 2005 (Only the number of visitors to the National Art Center is based on an expected number of visitors to its special exhibitions in 2007).
- The budgets of the 5 Japanese National Art Galleries and the 4 Japanese National Museums are those actually provided by the national government in 2007.

Conclusion

In order to achieve a creative future, the museum needs to not only stimulate the creativity of our society but also become the source of such creativity by maintaining the diversity of museum activities. To this end, the museum needs to make more efforts to gain public support and understanding for its innovative activities.

< Reference 1 >

**Summary of the public lecture organized by the Science Council of Japan
“Museums in danger! Art galleries in danger! – pitfalls of the Designated
Manager’s System and the *Law for the Reform of Public Service*”**

1. Organizer: Science Council of Japan
2. With the support of: The Union of Japanese Societies for Natural History, Japanese Archaeological Association, Palaeontological Society of Japan, The Botanical Society of Japan, The Zoological Society of Japan, The Japanese Society of Systematic Zoology, Japanese Association of Museums, The Union of Japanese Societies for Systematic Biology, The Society of MINGU of Japan, The Folklore Society of Japan, The 21st Century Center of Excellence Program (Hokkaido University) “Creation of New Natural History”
3. Date: 4 November 2006 (Sat), From 13:00 to 17:00
4. Venue: Koshiba Hall [School of Science, University of Tokyo] (Capacity: 150 persons; Admission free) Hongo 7-3-1, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo, University of Tokyo, Hongo campus
5. Conference abstract:

With the nation-wide introduction of the Market Testing (competitive bidding system in which both public and private sectors participate) and the Designated Manager’s System that aim to attain “simple and efficient government”, museums in Japan are today in a big crisis. Should the museum be allowed to be managed for the purpose of simply providing efficient services? What does a “provision of high-quality and cheap services for the people” mean to national and local governmental museums, and, furthermore, to the citizens using these museums?

Collections of scientific and artistic materials contribute to both the creation of human culture and the development of scientific research, and, as such, are fundamental cultural resources and important heritage to be passed on to the next generation. The Science Council of Japan expresses its strong concern about the current system for preservation and management of these material collections, which is increasingly becoming the subject of reform in pursuit of economic efficiency. The Council organizes this public lecture to discuss the fundamental role of museums as public service institutions and explore their future vision.

6. Program
Opening speech: Ikuo Hirayama (Painter of Japanese Art)
Introductory talk: Masanori Aoyagi (Member of Science Council of Japan; Chair of the Committee for Consideration of Conservation Systems for Scientific and Artistic Collections; Director, National Museum of Western Art)
Lectures:
Kazuyuki Maezawa: “Museums and Designated Manager’s System: what can be seen at ‘the scene’”
Koichi Kabayama: “Museums and material data of the human sciences”
Shunsuke Mawatari: “We will pass on the “materials” to the next generation”
Yoichi Inoue: “The principle of museum service provision and the future vision of the museum”
Hiroyuki Shirafuji “The public nature of museums and art galleries and the scientific and cultural administration”
Discussion:
Chairs: Naoko Kinoshita (Member of Science Council of Japan; Professor, Faculty of Letters, Kumamoto University) and Fujio Maeda (Member of Science Council of Japan; Professor, Faculty of Letters, Keio University)
Discussants: Kazuyuki Maezawa, Koichi Kabayama, Shunsuke Mawatari, Yoichi Inoue, Hiroyuki Shirafuji
For the adoption of a statement and conclusive speech: Naoko Kinoshita

To see the documents distributed during the lecture, please visit the following website:

<http://www.scj.go.jp/ja/info/iinkai/gakujutu/siryō.pdf>

< Reference 2 >

Past discussions and activities of the Committee for Consideration of
Conservation Systems for Scientific and Artistic Collections

- 22 Dec 2005 Executive meeting of the Science Council of Japan (6th meeting)
■ Establishment of the Committee for Consideration of Conservation
Systems for Scientific and Artistic Collections (hereinafter “Committee”)
- 23 Jan 2006 Executive meeting of the Science Council of Japan (7th meeting)
■ Members of the Committee decided
- 6 Mar 2006 1st meeting of the Committee
■ Deciding on the agenda and how to proceed the discussion
- 15 May 2006 2nd meeting of the Committee
■ Discussion about the current situation of the Designated Manager’s
System
■ Discussion about the symposium
- 26 Jun 2006 3rd meeting of the Committee
■ Discussion about the organization and system of collection management
■ Discussion about the public lecture
- 4 Aug 2006 4th meeting of the Committee
■ Hearing (from libraries etc.)
■ Discussion about the public lecture
■ Discussion about the structure of the planned report
- 20 Sep 2006 5th meeting of the Committee
■ Discussion about the structure of the planned report
■ Discussion about the public lecture
- 23 Oct 2006 6th meeting of the Committee
■ Discussion about the table of contents of the planned report
■ Discussion about the public lecture
- 4 Nov 2006 Public lecture 2006 organized by the Science Council of Japan “Museums in
danger! Art galleries in danger! – pitfalls of the Designated Manager’s System
and the *Law for the Reform of Public Service*”
7th meeting of the Committee
■ Summary of the public lecture
- 6 Nov 2006 8th meeting of the Committee
■ Discussion about the table of contents of the planned report
- 20 Nov 2006 9th meeting of the Committee
■ Discussion about the Statement

The present statement was approved first by the Committee for Science and Society of the Science Council of Japan (9th meeting on 10 Dec 2006 and 13th meeting on 10 May 2007), and then by the executive meeting of the Science Council of Japan (38th meeting on 24 May 2007)