



B.S.LAB
Business Systems Laboratory



E-BOOK OF ABSTRACTS
FIFTH BUSINESS SYSTEMS LABORATORY
INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM

*COCREATING RESPONSIBLE FUTURES IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
EXPLORING NEW PATHS TOWARDS ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY*

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GANDOLFO DOMINICI

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Exploring new paths towards economic,
social and environmental Sustainability

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Open Innovation for Accessibility in Museum Organizations: The case of Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli

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ABSTRACT

The role of museums in the society has changed over the years. These organizations were initially created as a way for private collectors to store the various artifacts that they had previously gathered and they were not supposed to be visited by other people even if they, in some cases, came to occupy entire buildings (Simpson, 2007). Today these institutions are expected to be open to everyone and attract all sorts of people (Martins, 2012).

Actually the International Council of Museum (ICOM) defines a museum organization as a “non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment”.

Solima (1998, 2000) holds that the ICOM definition gives equal dignity to the various activities each museum have to carry on in order to fulfill their social function in the modern society, that is to contribute to the cultural development of the community as a whole creating and communicating a whole body of knowledge. Several authors (Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002; Ballantyne & Uzzel, 2011) have highlighted that these definition has just registered an evolution

in the museum social function. Today these organizations are moving away from the idea of an institution entrusted with the purpose of storing, caring for, and exhibiting heritages to reach a new function built around a broader concept as a non-formal educational institution engaging visitors with findings and experiences.

The direct consequence of giving an educational social function to museum is to acknowledge that they have to become attractive to a broader set of visitors (Hein, 2006). At the same time Walters (2009) hold that visitors in a museum can fully access the cultural heritage only if the management of the museum is able to become more accessible, i.e. they must be able to overcome some specific barriers limiting these institutions in fully accomplish their social functions.

Several authors consider the accessibility topic as one of the main concern museum management should be able to address in order to fully accomplish their educational function in the society (De Luca, 2007; Walters, 2009; Solima, 2012; Rappolt-Schlichtmann and Daley, 2013). The museum accessibility can be limited by a broad range of factors as the architectonic barriers (Vescovo, 2002); several other authors highlight more subtle accessibility barriers - those related to the visitor knowledge resources (Addis, 2002; Rovidotti, 2004) - that can be more relevant as their impacts cannot be easily solved.

In a more general approach the report from Dodd and Sandell (1998) was able to identify eight different classes of “access” that museum management should address in their path toward getting an accessible organization. They hold that a museum cannot be considered really accessible only when it tackle the physical access to the exhibition but, instead, it will become really accessible only if, leveraging the local area culture and improving its educational level, it is able to create stable relationships with its stakeholders and engage them in creating new, context-oriented, programs. For example, they urge managers to take into account the “sensorial” access as a way to help impaired visitors to get the full museum experience using a diverse set of media, such as hearing induction loops, audio guides, touch tours, information in Braille or large print, in organizing to have the audiovisual materials subtitled and/or using sign languages.

Solima (2012), identify four main dimensions of accessibility: physical, cognitive, economic, and digital accessibility.

The first dimension attains to all the physical barriers that can hinder some of the visitors from experiencing these organizations’ services. Some of these barriers are internal to the organization’s building (f.e. ramps) both some other are external ones (f.e. parking lots) and asks management to leverage a dense network of relationships in order to overcome them at the urban area level. The cognitive accessibility, ask the managers to design educational processes, to satisfy the various visitors with different set of knowledges engaging them in a learning process without making them feel ignorant as that would risk alienating them (Presta, 2010). It follows that the a museum not able to overcome the cognitive barriers will not be able to fulfill the educational function.

Third form of barriers are the economic ones. Museums should consider that the “ticket” is not the full visitor cost of attending an exhibition but they should take into consideration the opportunity costs, even those linked to the information gathering processes needed to fully understand the piece of arts that will be shown.

Finally the fourth dimension is the digital one needed to follow the evolution of the society and to increase the level of audience engagement (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

The many, different, types of accessibility that a museum organization has to tackle at the same time requires them to get access to a broad set of competences that they do not traditionally have but that they can reach, or develop, using their network of relationships with external stakeholders (Sciarelli & Tani, 2013). Leveraging their network of relationships the museum can attain the strategic ambidexterity needed to really innovate their services, using the external knowledge, while keeping the focus on their core competences (March, 1991; O’Reilly & Tushman, 2008). These processes can help them in becoming more effective at successfully innovate their services as, according to Sammara and Biggerio (2008), the effectiveness of an innovative process depends mostly on the heterogeneity of the knowledges and competences it can leverage. According to the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1984) the positive effect of enlarging the knowledge base of the organization using the relationship with external actors depends more on the knowledge complementarity rather than their similarity (Harrison *et al.*, 2001). It follows that the organizations should can enhance their innovations performance adopting an *open innovation model* (Chesbrough, 2003), leveraging inter-firm cooperation (Belussi *et al.*, 2010; Teirlinck and Spithoven, 2008) to create two processes: the “inbound, open innovation”, referring to the acquisition of and use of external knowledge internally; and “outbound innovation”, referring to the external use of internal knowledge (Huizingh, 2011; Dahlander and Gann, 2010).

In this paper we focus on a specific example of innovative process that the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (MANN) has carried on to answer the needs of a particular type of visitors: the children with autism.

Tackling this specific class of visitors can be seen as a daunting process for a museum organization as this visitors can fully enjoy the museum experience only when several accessibility barriers are overcome, both physical, economical and, above all, cognitive ones. (Langa, *et al.* 2013; Mulligan, *et al.*, 2013).

In particular, in order to help these young visitor affected by a neurobehavioral disorder, the museum organization must be able to provide a specific way to interact with the piece of art, they must be able to provide a specialized assistance to overcome the children issues with verbal and non/verbal communication and, above all, to prevent the negative effects linked by their problematic social interaction.

In order to offer this set of services the museum has to leverage a set of knowledges and competences that, often, its employees do not have. So the MANN management has chosen to

create a new relationship with a local association specialized in dealing with impaired children, and leverage it since the first stages of designing the activities in the project: Argo Association, one of the partners in the project of the FOQUS Charity.

Moreover the management has decided to turn this partnership in a real learning process targeted to increase the internal resource endowment of MANN while innovating the museum services in order to accommodate the specific needs of children with autism

In this paper we propose to analyze the first stages of these learning process in order to highlight how they have managed the knowledge flows between the two main partners and how the interaction between the two in the new project, a classic example of knowledge exploration, has helped them to become more effective in exploiting their main competences and, consequently, to adopt an ambidextrous strategy.

Keywords: Museum, Accessibility, Open Innovation, Autism, Learning.

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