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Communication & Education Review

Cultural Communication Strategies and Enlightenment of Overseas Museums under the COVID-19

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Abstract: *This article discusses the communication strategy of overseas museum culture under the influence of the epidemic, and aims to seek new ideas and new paths for the restoration and reconstruction of global museums, thereby helping to promote the optimization and innovation of the cultural communication mode of Chinese museums. Through the development strategies of overseas museums during the epidemic period and the practical cases of Chinese museums, the article constructs the future development direction of the museum from the three dimensions of "Digital Communication: The Museum's Innovative Approach", "Social Responsibility: The Museum's Historical Mission", and "Remote Educational Interaction: The Museum's Educational Communication Strategy".*

Keywords: *Museum; Digitalization; Social responsibility; Public education*

Introduction

Under the influence of COVID-19, the global Museum has undergone a great impact and test, and the cultural communication of museums has encountered bottlenecks. During this period, the International Council of museums (ICOM) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) released a survey report on the development of museums around the world. Meanwhile, the Museums Association (MA) and The American Alliance of museums (AAM) of the United States of America (UAM) launched a survey report on the development of museums around the world Museums, and other industry organizations have also published a number of museum development strategies, data statistics and theoretical and practical guides. Major museums around the world have also published response measures on their official websites and social media, and shared results. It is worth noting that the innovative cultural communication mode of some museums has made some achievements, but the overall development trend is still grim. At this stage, it is urgent to pay attention to the relevant practice cases and research results at home and abroad, summarize and draw on advanced and breakthrough communication strategies, and provide evidence-based experience and guidance for the restoration and reconstruction of museums around the world. In this paper, the cultural communication strategy of overseas museums under the COVID-19 is taken as the research object, and the digital communication, social responsibility and educational communication strategy of museums are deeply discussed, so as to provide reference for promoting the development of global museum communication.

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Digital Communication—The Innovative Way of Museums

With the rapid development of new technologies, the development of Internet +, Big Data, Cloud Computing, Internet of Things, Social Media, Artificial Intelligence and other information technologies have brought about profound changes in people's way of thinking, communication, information acquisition and content production. The new information technology has subverted the traditional way of cultural communication, showing a dynamic, non-linear, real-time, open new communication paradigm. This series of changes give the global museum cultural communication with a new concept of development and practice path.

Museums in developed countries in Europe and the United States took the lead in the innovation of digital communication mode in the 1990s, and built digital applications such as collection information database and virtual museum. With the development of the Internet, new media technologies continue to iterate, New media technologies such as social media, augmented reality, open content, digital publishing and location-based services are constantly developed and used. Digitalization has expanded to the field of interaction between exhibitions and public services. Nowadays, museums around the world have started the development mode of digital communication and are fully integrating into social changes at a high-speed, time-span and diversified pace.

During the COVID-19, some museums around the world took the integration of information technology, new media and museum culture as an important development strategy. According to the data statistics of ICOM International Association of Museum as of October 2020, the digitalization of global museums mainly focuses on online collection, cloud exhibition, live broadcast, teaching projects, podcasting, social media and other directions. Moreover, 15% of museums in the world have increased in these projects, and some museums have added new media channels. Overall, COVID-19 has accelerated the digital transformation of museums and made them realize the fundamental importance of digital technology and new media for future development.

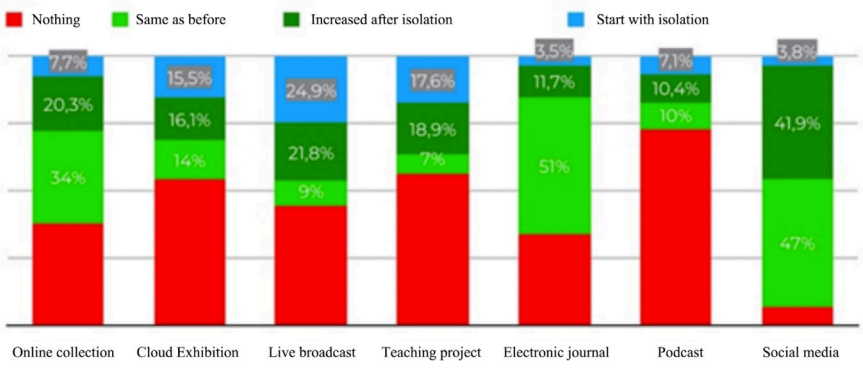

Figure 1. ICOM's data on digital service content of museums around the world as of October 2020

Some large-scale museums immediately updated their website construction when responding to sudden epidemics, such as adding virtual exhibition halls, open access to resources, and social media interaction to communicate and interact with people who are isolated at home. From the first day of closing, Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow has launched digital tour activities with the help of virtual reality

technology, and launched Facebook lectures, podcasts, live broadcast and social media newsletters to ensure the accessibility of current and permanent exhibitions such as "From Dürer to Matisse". Curators, restoration artists provide unique behind the scenes stories for the audience in the free online conference. These projects attract a large number of public participation, which not only improves the museum's popularity, but also increases the viscosity and number of Museum users (Kiseleva, 2020). By 2020, the Metropolitan Museum of Art has been established for 150 years, and under the influence of the epidemic, the 150th anniversary celebration will also be moved online. Mr. Hollein, the museum's director, advocates using digital systems and social media channels to "share the museum's story with more people." The official website of the Metropolitan Museum clearly states, "celebrate the 150th anniversary in 2020 with exhibitions, events and new ways to connect with the arts." Its interactive online exhibition projects include "5000 Years of Art", "Metropolitan 360° Project", "Explore Museum at Home" and audio guided Tours, etc., which have successfully created art stories that respond warmly online for the public. The Getty Museum Challenge, launched by the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, called on users quarantined at home to try to recreate the artwork and tweet about it. The move attracted legions of art lovers, and between March and May 2020, the topic on official social media was recreated about 100,000 times before growing too numerous to count and evolving into a global digital exhibition (Stephan & Waldorf, 2020). The British Museum's "Curator's Corner" YouTube channel, which regularly shares content from its collections in a personal and accessible way, is highly interactive with social media users. During the epidemic, the digital strategy enabled some overseas museums to continue to carry heavy burdens, keep open online, timely adjust the working mode of museums, and actively develop digital public services.



Figure 2. "Gatty Museum challenge" activity on twitter

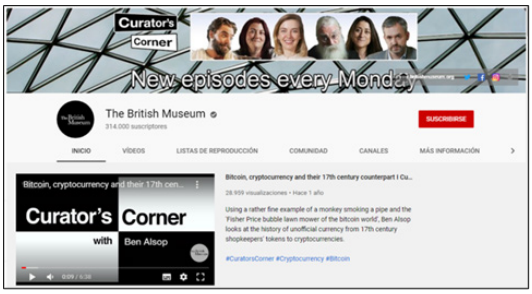

Figure 3. The "long corner" of the British Museum

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Although Western museums have made some achievements in the direction of digital communication, it is unavoidable that they need to reduce the survival crisis faced by museums by limiting funds and spending. At the beginning of the epidemic, China has given policy support to museums, that is, accelerating digital innovation and constantly trying new solutions. In February 2020, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage directed nine museums, including the National Museum of China and the Dunhuang Research Institute, to launch a live broadcast of “traveling to the museum at home”. Museums in Beijing, Shanghai, Jilin, Zhejiang and other regions have established big data cloud platforms, and the public can visit and enjoy exhibitions and collections directly online through mobile terminals. For example, the online exhibition of "Virtual Exhibition, Infinite Space and Time" launched by Shaanxi History Museum official website. In the "Household Exhibition", the Shaanxi History Museum has successively updated a number of digital exhibitions such as "Chang'an Silk Road". Visitors have viewed the exhibition online 100,000 times, among which 392,000 times of online sharing and reading of the fine cultural relics of the "Everlasting Like the Heavens" exhibition, and 244,000 times of the online exhibition promotion and sharing of the "Wandering Museum" (Wang, 2021). The Shanghai Museum also launched online activities during the epidemic, with 18 three-dimensional exhibitions, 25 online distance education courses, 3 online themed exhibitions, and 5 treasures themes set up around cultural relics. Compared with the digitization of museums in other countries, Chinese museums have huge resources, profound heritage, and have more national characteristics and development potential. Therefore, the digitization process needs to be explored in accurate data analysis and social research, which will be a long-term and arduous task.



Figure 4. The homepage of the virtual exhibition hall of Shaanxi History Museum

Social Responsibility—The Historical Mission of the Museums

The social responsibility of a museum refers to "the museum adopts ethical behaviors and is responsible for the impact of its decisions or activities on society and the environment." The social responsibility of the museum is mainly based on paying attention to global development, inheriting the national culture, and reflecting contemporary society. The social responsibility of a museum is closely related to the world, all mankind, the country, the public, and the museum itself. This is the historical mission given to the museum by the times.

“International Museum Day” shows that the responsibilities of museums are closely linked to the destiny of humanity and the common concerns of the world. From 2016 to 2021, the themes of "International Museum

Day" are: Museums and Cultural Landscapes; Museums and Contested Histories: Saying the Unspeakable in Museums; Hyperconnected Museum: New Approaches, New Publics; Museums as Cultural Hubs: The Future of Tradition; Museums for Equality: Diversity and Inclusion; The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine. It can be seen that museums should not only protect the national cultural heritage, but also keep up with the pace of the times, promote social change and development, and become messengers of cultural communication and practitioners of promoting social development.

At the beginning of the outbreak, the ICOM International Museum Association quickly established a "COVID-19" section on the official website, released the measures taken by some regional museums to respond to the epidemic, and shared the experience and achievements of the museum's innovative cultural dissemination model. For example, try to use different media and platforms to guide the public to scientifically understand and respond to the epidemic, and use social media to improve people's awareness of epidemic prevention measures and prevent false news. It calls on the museum to pay attention to the reality of the community and the living conditions of various groups, including homeless people, women who have been abused, people who have been subjected to racial discrimination, and medical workers who are under great psychological pressure. Listen to the public through a variety of media, respond positively and record. The Naturkunde Museum in Berlin has been monitoring the epidemic and providing effective information and links to the public through its website. After the explosion at the Beirut port in Lebanon in August 2020, ICOM and 26 other institutions in the international heritage community signed a declaration of solidarity with Lebanon, and provided cultural first aid and cultural assistance to the destroyed libraries, museums and historical buildings. Long-term recovery and intervention, and emergency protection and rescue of the collection. The theme of "International Museum Day" in 2021, "The Future of Museums: Recover and Reimagine", calls on museums around the world to share new practices and ideas in co-creating value, new business models and solutions, to address future challenges in the social, economic and environmental fields. During the epidemic, overseas museums are committed to domestic and international cultural exchanges and mutual support, fulfilling their social responsibilities through the mode of media integration, and enhancing their dissemination and influence.

With the support of national cultural policy and public finance, Chinese museums began to think more about the issue of spreading contemporary culture and undertaking social responsibility. In 2015, the "Regulations on Museums" issued by China pointed out: "Museums should adhere to the direction of serving the people and socialism, and the principle of being close to reality, life and the masses, so as to enrich the people's spiritual and cultural life." The micro video "Waiting for you in the Imperial Palace" released by the Palace Museum shows the work done by the palace museum staff in security inspections and epidemic prevention and control during the closed period. The official microblog of Tianjin Museum constantly updated the work dynamics related to the epidemic situation in real time, creatively used the collection to publicize the epidemic protection, planned the special episode of "Diversified Epidemic Prevention", creatively publicized the epidemic prevention knowledge through the expression package of cultural relics, and received extensive good comments from the public. Chinese museum collections are rich and profound. It is the topic of the times to let traditional culture into people's lives, pay attention to social reality, and enhance the effectiveness and credibility of cultural communication.

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Long-distance Missionary Interaction—The Museum's Public Education Communication Strategy

As the core function of museums, museum public education is "a kind of communication behavior, which is the exchange and dialogue of knowledge, emotion, attitude and concept based on the museum 'object' as the fundamental media to form mutual 'understanding' and non-forced 'consensus' behavior". ICOM International Association of Museums has revised the definition of museums in accordance with social development many times, all of which listed the educational function as an important content. Traditional museum missions, based on the theme of the exhibition, the physical space of the exhibition, and related activities, is a preaching teaching method that focuses on explanation. In the "Internet +" era, with the emergence of various new media, smart devices, and new technology platforms, museum education breaks through the limitations of physical space, narrows the distance with the public, and realizes remote education and diversification. People visit museums through mobile terminals and use technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, or other digital media to experience museum teaching that transcends time and space. The integration of new media and information technology has also made museum resource acquisition, learning interaction, and dissemination of teaching results more efficient and convenient.

Museums actively developed online distance teaching and interaction of museums, and deeply opened the exploration of diversified educational communication modes. The Open Access of collection resources has opened an educational window for the public to learn more about museums. The Smithsonian Institution publishes 2.8 million high-resolution, 2D and 3D images on an open online platform. Encouraging the public to browse and reuse these contents is a public education service mode for people to create and interact with the museum. In this way, people can not only appreciate the collections, but also carry out personal re-creation activities, which enhances the public's attention and interest in the cultural resources of the museum. During the epidemic, the Pushkin National Museum of Art organized public welfare webinars for parents, teachers and all interested people to learn how to browse the museum's media and virtual reality resources. This free educational conference aims to popularize the use of digital media and information technology in museums, and lays a technical foundation for further publicity of museums, promotion of museum education activities, and promotion of interaction between the public and museums. During the International Women's Day 2020 (IWD2020), ICOM International Museum Association organized a professional competition on social media in the Women in Museums event to encourage museums and professionals from all over the world to share information about women in museums and cultural contributions. It is gratifying that many museum staff around the world responded and participated in this competition. Different from the school's traditional subject competitions, the museum's social media competition advocates users' independent production of content, focusing on user-centricity, focusing on sharing and dissemination, so that participants and viewers feel relaxed and happy.

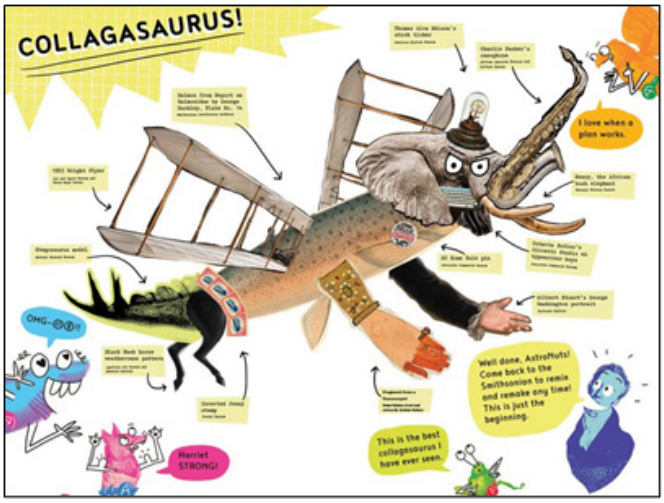

Figure 5. Open access to resources by Smithsonian society, public sharing of re created works

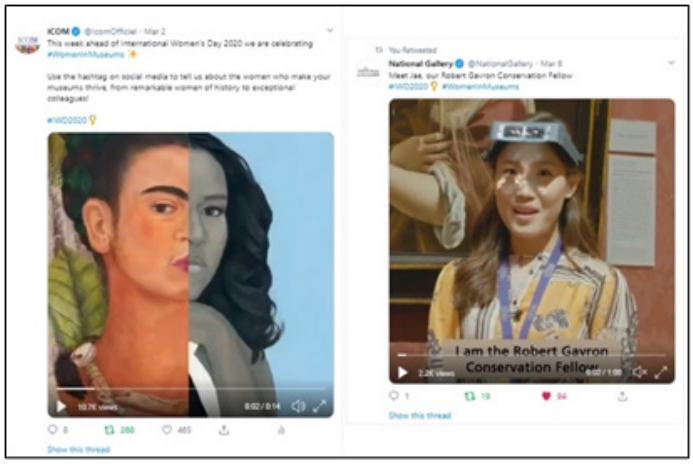

Figure 6. ICOM sponsored "women in museums" professional competition

With the prosperity and development of education in China, the publicity and education of museums are also on the rise. Influenced by the epidemic, some museums in China began to conduct in-depth exploration and detailed research. By giving full play to their own resources and regional advantages, they tried their best to create digital characteristic teaching. The Palace Museum worked with CITIC Publishing Group to produce a book entitled "I Want to Go to the Palace Museum" and a public benefit video course of the same name, offering a cultural feast combining online and offline for the public. According to statistics, the cumulative broadcast volume has reached 8,469 thousand, covering a very wide range of audiences, including domestic primary school students, junior high school students, adults and overseas Chinese, etc., which once became a successful promotion case of online teaching of Chinese museums (He, 2020). In the future, museum education should continue to integrate the cutting-edge information technology and school philosophy at home and abroad, so that the public can receive more intuitive and in-depth social public education beyond the traditional education mode.

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Conclusion

No matter the museums in any country or region, the virtual tour, open collection resources, social media and other digital media and high-tech will open new horizons and ways for the recovery and reconstruction of museums after the epidemic. For different museums in the world, digital strategies are not the same, and the future development of museums still needs open discussion and practice. There are obvious limitations in the study of communication strategies of international museums during the epidemic period. Future research needs to continue to focus on different countries, different regions, different types of museum development direction, in-depth exploration in the qualitative and quantitative research of cultural communication. Chinese Museum need to dialectically learn from and analyze the development mode of overseas museums, and open up a road of museum culture communication suitable for China's national conditions.

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