

REINVENTING THE MUSEUM TOOL

This tool is an excerpt from *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*, edited by Gail Anderson of Gail Anderson & Associates, and published by AltaMira Press in 2011. It is a dramatically revised version from the first edition of *Reinventing the Museum*, originally published in 2004.

The **Reinventing the Museum Tool** captures the essence of the paradigm shift occurring in museums. These lists of terms were developed over more than three decades of working with museum leaders and listening to conversations about the changing role of museums. The terms on the left depict the assumptions and values that capture traditional museums. The terms on the right illustrate the characteristics typical of the reinvented museum. Please note that the term *traditional* is not intended to be pejorative but is rather a term for reference in this particular dialogue to illustrate one viewpoint around the museum as institution and concept.

Within an institution, a useful dialogue can unfold using the **Reinventing the Museum Tool** to discuss where a museum currently stands in the continuum between the traditional museum and the reinvented museum and where it wishes to be. This can help trigger discussions about relevancy, institutional vitality, and alignment with contemporary museum practice. Such a dialogue may point to a need to revisit the mission or shape a new vision in order to embrace the institution's greatest potential within today's complex environment. In the process of self-examination, the reinvented museum is likely to modify some traditions and retire others. In its most dramatic iteration, the conversation may cause a museum to overhaul the institution systematically at all levels of operation, including organizational restructuring. Each museum will determine which aspects of its operation to retain and which new strategies to adopt, while charting a path that is realistic and appropriate. Further, some institutions may decide that their desired position on the continuum is mid-way or at a place that represents compromise. Regardless of the position, the point is to be deliberate and honest.

TRADITIONAL MUSEUM

Institutional Values

REINVENTED MUSEUM

Values as ancillary	.....	Values as core tenets
Institutional viewpoint	.....	Global perspective
Insular society	.....	Civic engagement
Social activity	.....	Social responsibility
Collection driven	.....	Audience focused
Limited representation	.....	Broad representation
Internal perspective	.....	Community participant
Business as usual	.....	Reflective practice
Accepted realities	.....	Culture of inquiry
Voice of authority	.....	Multiple viewpoints
Information provider	.....	Knowledge facilitator
Individual roles	.....	Collective accountability
Focused on past	.....	Relevant and forward looking
Reserved	.....	Compassionate

TRADITIONAL MUSEUM

REINVENTED MUSEUM

Governance

Mission as document
 Exclusive
 Reactive
 Ethnocentric
 Internal focus
 Individual vision
 Single visionary leader
 Obligatory oversight
 Assumed value
 Good intentions
 Private
 Venerability
 Caretaker
 Managing
 Stability

Mission driven
 Inclusive
 Proactive
 Multicultural
 Expansive perspective
 Institutional vision
 Shared leadership
 Inspired investment
 Earned value
 Public accountability
 Transparent
 Humility
 Steward
 Governing
 Sustainability

Management Strategies

Inwardly driven
 Various activities
 Selling
 Assumptions about audiences
 Hierarchical structure
 Unilateral decision-making
 Limited access
 Segregated functions
 Compartmentalized goals
 Status quo
 Fund development
 Individual work
 Static role

Responsive to stakeholders
 Strategic priorities
 Marketing
 Knowledge about audiences
 Learning organization
 Collective decision-making
 Open access
 Integrated operations
 Holistic, shared goals
 Informed risk-taking
 Entrepreneurial
 Collaboration
 Strategic positioning

Communication Ideology

Privileged information
 Suppressed differences
 Debate/discussion
 Enforced directives
 One-way communication
 Keeper of knowledge
 Presenting
 Two-dimensional
 Analog
 Protective

Accessible information
 Welcomed differences
 Dialogue
 Interactive choices
 Two-way communication
 Exchange of knowledge
 Facilitating
 Multi-dimensional
 Virtual
 Welcoming