UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AS A STRUCTURAL ELEMENT OF THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

The article deals with the phenomenon of the University Museum as an important structural element of the socio-cultural environment of the University. The results of research aimed at understanding the structure, functions and main characteristics of the University Museum are presented. To achieve the objectives of the study, a qualitative research strategy was used, including both hermeneutic method and descriptive-interpretative analysis. It is shown that the development of museums of Russian universities is characterized by the desire for consistency. Consistency is manifested in the work to ensure the completeness of collections, in the search for optimal forms and methods of stock and exhibition work. The authors analyze the role in the development of University museums of major research scientists-founders of scientific schools, some of which, in addition to the main activity, headed the University museums. Museum collections and the Museum space itself served as the basis for scientific research, in which students participated. The features of functioning of the University Museum as a special Institute of social memory are analyzed and its differences from the state Museum are shown. The feature of special methods of scientific and cultural information transfer in the context of Museum space is considered. The analysis and interpretation of the research material showed that many museums of universities, preserving educational and scientific functions, have become a repository of historical information about the history of the University, recorded in documentary and material sources. The involvement of students in Museum activities gives young people the opportunity to form a sense of spiritual involvement in the "Alma mater", continuity in relation to previous generations and responsibility for future generations. The results of the study can be recommended as practical Museum workers and scientists studying museology.

Keywords: university museum, sociocultural environment, museum communication, university, museum object.

1 INTRODUCTION

Student years are not only the time of becoming a specialist and acquiring higher education, it is also the time of personal formation, self-discovery and search for oneself. Under the influence of a huge number of internal and external factors one shapes their individual subjective position. In the process of learning, communication and performing of social roles the need for self-development is being formed, implementing the realization of life orientations. This is why the socio-cultural environment of a university plays an important role in the upbringing of a student, and the impact of this environment is connected with the involvement of a student in various spheres of the university life. On the other hand, the socio-cultural environment of a university is a space of personal development which is also characterized by the optimal organization of the system of links between all elements of this environment which provides a set of opportunities of personal self-development for all subjects of the educational process [1], [2], [3]. It should be noted that this is a space of integral, common, joint life of students, teachers, employees of a university, and the organization and structure of this space is determined by the characteristics of a particular university, its history and specifics of its formation. As Pchelintseva wrote in her thesis, “The space of a contemporary university recognizes the cultural distinctiveness of every person as valuable and meaningful, it offers access to all the world's civilizations including its native one, it removes external constraints to other educational systems” [4]. It means that the modern educational process as a whole implies the creation of such a space which would be aimed at providing conditions for the development of the student's personality, his or her professional development as a commencing specialist.
2 METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using applied museological methods. Museology as a young science studies the emergence of "museum needs" of society, the origin and causes of special institutions that arise to satisfy these needs. The article examines the emergence and functioning of museums of different types, their functioning in different conditions and the organization of their activities. This museological method is tightly connected with applied cultural studies methods and also with the history of several scientific disciplines presented in museums which determine their types. Hence, in relation to the RUDN Museum it is primarily a cultural method and the whole complex of special and additional aspects of theoretical and applied cultural studies, as well as special fields of science: history of culture, history of education. At the same time, culturological scientific methods are being transformed into museology according to the peculiarities of the subject of research.

This study also implements field research methods used in the study of living, operating systems. The method of direct observation of the functioning of the object of study was also implemented. All this creates a basis for solving theoretical and applied problems related to the study of the phenomenon of the university museum.

3 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

The interest towards university museums is growing due to the increasing requirements for modern universities, which should improve the quality of education, the level of qualification of both graduates and lecturers, make the university infrastructure available for local communities as well as attract additional financial investments for the implementation of their own educational projects, which will help universities to take higher positions in university rankings. Under these conditions, the university museum, performing a pure museum function - to preserve and promote the cultural heritage, being part of a university, reflects in its space the environment of a university, the history of its scientific schools, the features of teaching in this university and the features of the student community. Therefore, modern university museums represent specific university values, because university museums not only collect and store their collections: they are also constantly involved in the educational and scientific processes of a university, experiencing all the transformations of a university, including the optimization of cultural and educational resources.

4 UNIVERSITY MUSEUM AS A PART OF SOCIO-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT OF A UNIVERSITY

The socio-cultural environment as a complex system integrates a number of functional components which have their own specific structure and which selectively interact with the external environment. Since inception, universities as social institutions united the ideas of education, research and upbringing [5]. The shattering of this unity proved to be harmful for universities themselves as well as for society and culture in general. The socio-cultural environment of a university is a self-developing and dynamic system, but, on the other hand, it takes time for their structural elements to reach distinctive heights of internal development and cultural experience.

One of the important structural elements of the socio-cultural environment of a university is the university museum. From the very beginning of their history, museums of universities were characterized by a high scientific level, the desire for consistency and completeness of their collections, the search for optimal forms, methods of stock and exhibition work. Significant progress in their development was achieved by the efforts of outstanding scientists, the creators of scientific schools and areas who run university museums and on the basis of museum collections carried out scientific research in which scientists as well as students took part [6]. Any university museum is a kind of chronicle which depicts the history of a higher education institution. While it’s being written, this chronicle records the facts of the formation, development and various activities of a university, the emergence and formation of scientific areas and scientific schools. They are unwritten annals of cultural, educational, sports, leisure and creative activities of a university. The gathered corpus is then preserved and transmitted to subsequent generations of teachers and students and forms a sense of continuity, involvement in their alma mater. Of course, the role of the university library in this context also should not be underestimated: in addition to everyday activities connected with the information support of the educational process which is obviously aimed at solving present-day problems, the library of university, especially of a university with a rich history, also stores materials related to both the history of the university and the personalities connected with it, personalities who made it famous.
This can be exemplified by the collection of materials stored in the library in the sector of rare editions at the National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute", Ukraine. This is a collection of books, brochures, drawings, maps, etc. made by the Nosov brothers, mining engineers. This collection served as a source for interesting research the results of which were published and entered scientific circulation [6],[7],[8]. The artifacts that make up this collection are museum objects illustrating the history of the national industrial heritage which can serve not only as sources for research but also as museum showpieces.

5 THE RUDN MUSEUM AS AN EXAMPLE OF A UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Today, in the very beginning of the third millennium, a modern university museum, besides its documenting functions, should actively work with professional communities as a unifying cultural and scientific center, implementing communicative functions. After all, the Museum in this context acts as a structural component of the socio-cultural environment, which, in turn, is a part of university environment, providing a humanistic orientation during formation of the spiritual worldview of an individual and basing on the socio-cultural infrastructure of a university.

University museums today should use innovative approaches to its activities. Continuing acquisition of new materials, forming personal funds of university professors, collecting complexes of original artifacts of history and culture, university museums today have to find new forms of participation in educational process and also to look for innovative ways of formation of university identity, involving in the process of communication maximum numbers of representatives of academic community. Activities of this kind in the museum space will have a good impact on the formation of the image of a university and the formation of a positive socio-cultural environment of a university. At the RUDN (People’s Friendship University of Russia) such problems are being solved by the Museology workshop, established in 2007 on the basis of the Department of Theory and History of Culture of the RUDN. The activity of the Museum Studio includes two main directions. The first direction – topical issues of museology and cultural heritage (studying and understanding of key museological issues and trends, and adapting them to a particular professional field). The second direction of work is the laboratory of museum design (initiation, creation, implementation, promotion, curatorship of particular museum projects). In the process of fulfilling of corresponding tasks, the Museum of RUDN becomes a specific creative platform which attracts students and teachers of the university who set and solve problems in the field of applied and theoretical museology by museum methods and means. The cycle of integrated studies in the field of museology forms competences for museum work organization, their types, methods of search and research; it includes not only theoretical but also practical forms. During the work in the workshop students get acquainted with the history of collecting and museums, kinds and types of modern museums, the theory and practice of museum work, they get basic skills of modern museum technologies, develop practical skills of museum work which encourage them to creative activities and contribute to the expansion of their personal horizons and their socialization. All these factors are aimed at the implementation of the main directions of development of Russian education and will contribute to the transition of a unified and unitary education to the open and diverse one; from knowledge solely – to activity, from the ineffective – to the life-oriented: and the museum space can be the testing ground of a kind for the implementation of these positions.

Performing these professional museological, cultural, educational and upbringing activities at the museum with the involvement of students and employees of the RUDN as well as the professional community is very important: a university museum should be democratic in nature and educational in its orientation today – keeping in mind the internationalization mission of the RUDN.

Therefore, the Museology workshop as a part of the Department of Theory and History of Culture helps the Museum to become a unique point of blending of culture and education, and most importantly – the education of young people, because the Museum has such qualitative and quantitative parameters of openness, which determine its uniqueness in comparison with other university departments.

6 FUNCTIONS OF UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS

Many universities appeared at the same time as universities themselves: they are obvious transformations from collections used in training to displays available for everyone. It is believed that the functions of university museums in different countries are basically the same. The first group of functions is common for all museums. This is the identification of objects and acquisition of collections,
as well as systematization, accounting, storing and, of course, the study of collected museum objects. The second group of functions is the use of a museum's potential to train specialists: familiarity with the history of sciences, scientific schools, industrial achievements, outstanding professionals - graduates of a university. These are different laboratory practices with museum objects, as well as research activities related to the processing of collections. The third group of functions is related to museum communication, which takes university museums outside, establishing links with the local community. This creates a positive image of a university which attracts new enrollees and performs creative educational work among the population. Different museums of different universities implement these functions with different success rates. Various factors: the demand for a particular university and the level of its prestige, the economic viability of a particular industry, the wisdom of management, finances available for a university museum, qualification of its staff, the interest of teachers and the traditions established in this university to integrate the museum into the educational process.

Sometimes, the lack of premises in Russian museums leads to the use of corridors as exhibition halls. Low salaries cause constant staff turnover, which leads to poor organization of accounting of museum objects and their loss. Currently, it is important to attract volunteers to university museums because of personnel restrictions and small financial resources. There is a growing role of directors of the university museums. A university museum should constantly demonstrate the leadership of a university to the local community.

7 RESULTS

As a result of the study we conclude that a modern university should play a social role to carry out cultural events of various kinds: various exhibitions of different projects, the organization of training programs and training seminars, including those for socially vulnerable groups.

Therefore, a university museum can serve as a part of the infrastructure for the urban community, which will ensure the transformation of a university into a center of public communications and public events, its inclusion in the urban media sphere as an active and authoritative subject of information activities.

8 CONCLUSIONS

All activities of university museums contribute to the solution of the main tasks of the university – to prepare highly cultural, creative, qualified specialists of the new generation, actively adapting to the rapidly changing world, capable of self-development. With proper organization, university museums can become a modern developing innovative unit of universities, which has a wide range of promising opportunities.

This is becoming a general trend: at the beginning of the XXI century the interest towards university museums has increased, museums draw attention to the ways of representation of collections and their involvement in the educational process, and university museums, in turn, become an influential and visible structure, they ennoble, expand and decorate the overall socio-cultural environment of universities.

REFERENCES
