

# Talking about accessibility, inclusion, usability: a discussion for a new International Committee

September 2nd, 2019

2:30 pm - 6:00 pm

Inamori Memorial Hall - Room 106



**ICOM** international  
council  
of museums  
**Italia**



## ICOM Italy Accessibility Commission: Past, present, future

Annamaria Ravagnan

# Why an International Commission dedicated to museum accessibility is necessary?

This was the fundamental question which Dario Scarpati (former chair of the Thematic Commission on Museum Accessibility) and I have been asking ourselves five years ago...

# Participation in cultural life and delight in the arts is a fundamental human right enshrined in Article 27 of the United Nations Declaration.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, G.A. res. 217A (III), U.N. Doc A/810 at 71 (1948).

## ***Article 27***

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author.

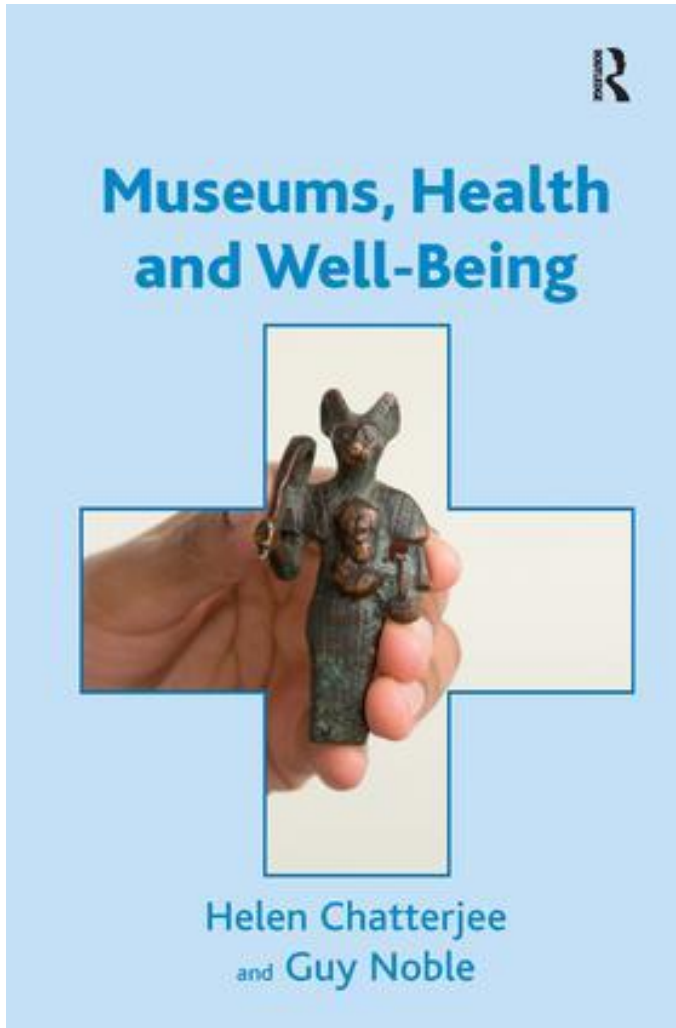
- The accessibility concept itself, in these last years, has had its natural evolution: we have gone from a focus almost exclusively on people with motor difficulties to understand the problem of people with all sorts of physical, social, cognitive and relational conditions.
- The experience carried out by ICOM Italia on this topic has brought many concrete results, better defining the concept of accessibility, inclusion, usability and recently users emancipation and equity.



*Talking about accessibility, inclusion, usability:  
a discussion for a new International Committee*  
Kyoto, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019



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*“Gone are the days when museums were viewed as static and inert”...More ‘contemporary perspective’ illuminates how museums offer ‘an interactive environment that can contribute positively to present day well-being’.”*

- The museum's functions have grown with the passage of time and is not out of place to define it, today, as a place of meeting and relationship, capable in many cases also of mitigating social tensions.
- It is in this meaning that the concept of museum accessibility must be interpreted.

## Short report

## Cultural engagement and cognitive reserve: museum attendance and dementia incidence over a 10-year period

Daisy Fancourt, Andrew Steptoe and Dorina Cadar

Using data from the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, this study shows that for adults aged 50 and older visiting museums every few months or more was associated with a lower incidence rate of dementia over a 10-year follow-up period compared with less-frequent visiting. This association was independent of demographics, socioeconomic status, health-related variables including sensory impairment, depression, vascular conditions and other forms of community engagement. Visiting museums may be a promising psychosocial activity to support the prevention of dementia



## The Italian thematic Commission on museum accessibility

- The Thematic Commission for Accessibility was established in Italy in 2007 under the direction of Dario Scarpati.
- No other ICOM National Committee was undertaking a similar action at that time.
- In 2014 began a discussion among the members of the Italian Commission in order to establish an International Committee for accessibility, inclusion and usability of Museums.
- During 2016 about sixty adherences from museums all over the world have been obtained to support the International Committee.



## **10 years of work by Italian Commission on Accessibility: Key factors**

- a) Work sharing with professionals from other sectors.
- b) Emotion and sensation as a tool of relationship and understanding.
- c) Building a common language.

## a) Work sharing with professionals from other sectors

Cooperation with sociologists, psychologists and other specialists, to explore from several points the relationship between the "person" (both the curator of the museum and the visitor), the "object on display", the "methods" of exposure.

## **b) Emotion and sensation as a tool of relationship and understanding**

A card/interview has been elaborated, built on the "feeling" of the museum, which can be used by any person who comes into contact with the museum, which focuses on "well-being" and "being-well" in the museum.

## c) Building a common language

Different professionals will use the terms of their discipline in a specific way. “Autism Spectrum Disorder” for example will be very clear for a psychologist but not so clear for museum professionals.

But if, together, they have to elaborate an "accessible" museum, they must share a common vocabulary.



## The project «Born with Culture»



**Museum for newborns and their family**



## Museum for persons affected by mental disorders Museo Teatrale Alla Scala - Milano



Visit and laboratory at La Scala Theatral Museum in the regular opening time of groups of persons affected by mental disorders.

We need to include people with special attention in the museums not only in the closing day to avoid ghettoisation!

## Museum for homeless persons Museo dei Cappuccini - Milano



Visiting museums is a way of  
restoring dignity.

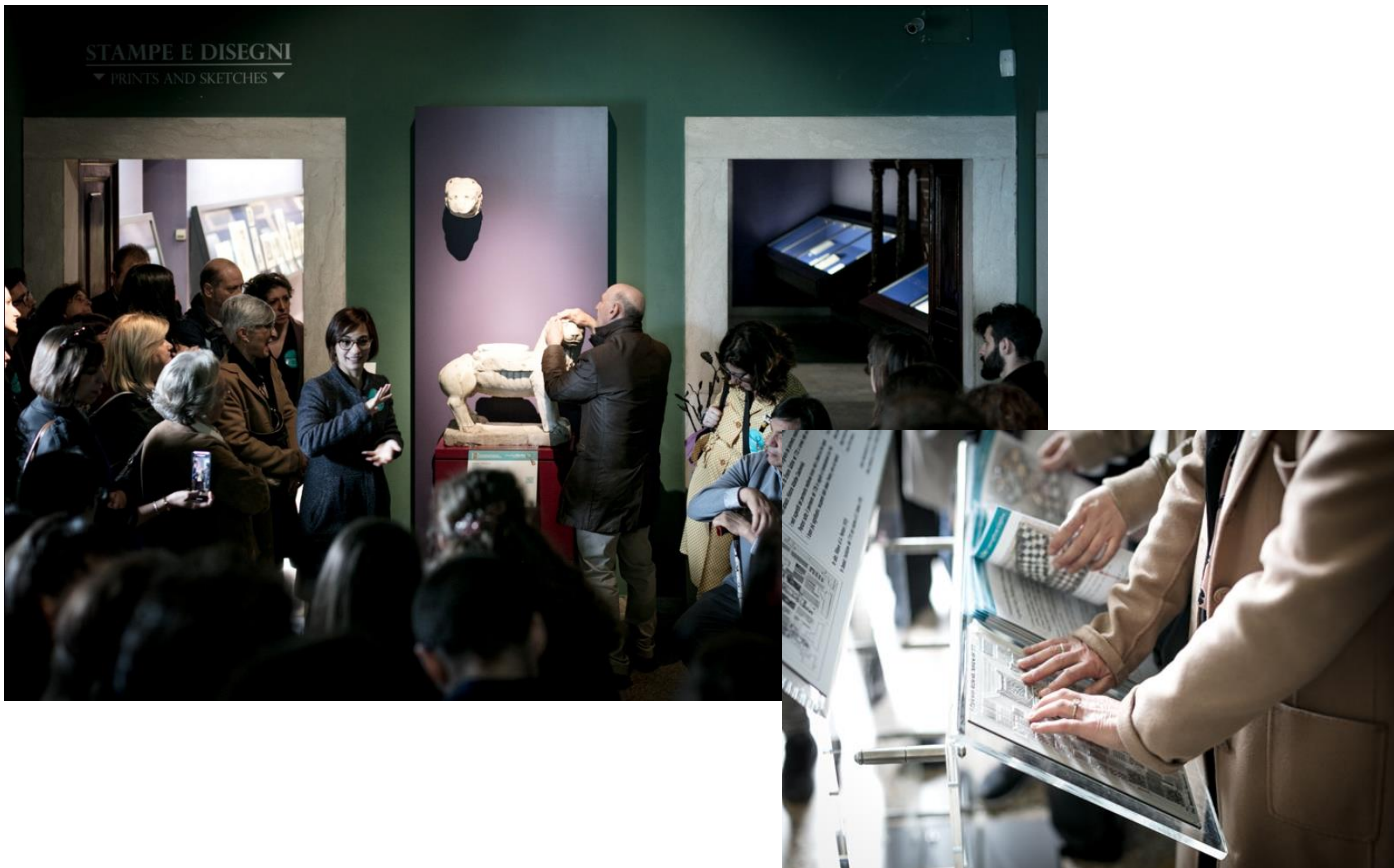
### ART NOURISHES THE SPIRIT AND THE BODY

Visit to the museum for the  
homeless.

People who come to the Opera San  
Francesco per Poveri onlus for lunch  
or to have a shower are invited to  
visit the nearby museum  
accompanied by the staff of the  
educational service.



## Inclusive experience in Montecassino Abbey Museum



An art historian - deaf - using Italian Sign Language (LIS) and an expert in museum accessibility - blind - using tactile exploration, have together guided visitors to the discovery of the Museum showing how all the senses are important and superfluous at the same time.

IVANA BRUNO - LUCA BIANCHI

## Outcome research: from a problem to an opportunity

Important efforts have been carried out in Italy in the last years to develop instruments able to measure the results obtained and to capture the outcomes of accessibility projects.



RILEVAZIONE GRADO DI BENESSERE

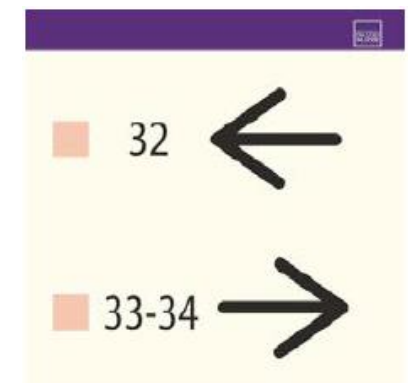
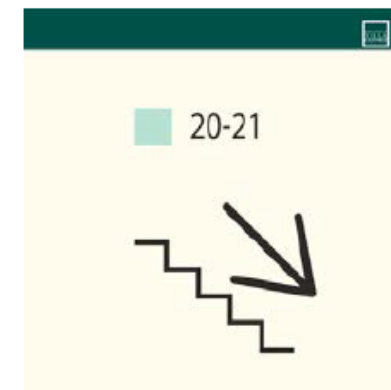
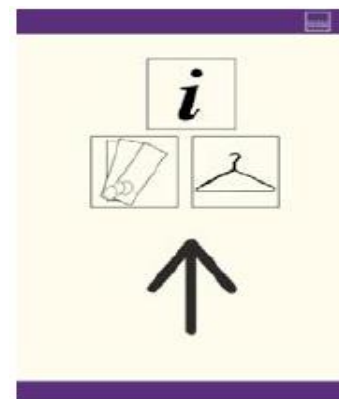
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5	27-03-2018	11.30	6,6
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# The importance of effective communication to improve accessibility



Special attention has been devoted, thanks also to Italian government endorsement, to establish rules for communication and guidelines for captions, signages and panels.



## The importance of a plan for accessibility - PEBA



Guidelines for the drafting of the strategic P.E.B.A  
Plan for accessibility in museums, monumental complexes,  
archaeological areas and parks (2018)

Web site:

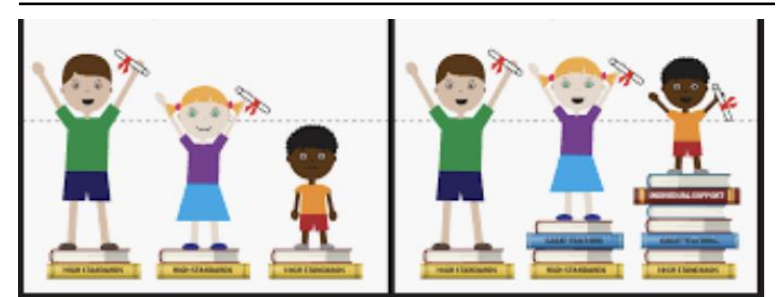
[www.accessibilitamusei.beniculturali.it](http://www.accessibilitamusei.beniculturali.it)



## An agenda for the future

A strong priority for the future success of ICOM is to establish the theme of accessibility as multidimensional and transversal one, expanding from the overcoming of architectural barriers to other museum scopes like communication, education, environmental psychology and new technologies.

The themes of accessibility and inclusion need to be expanded from people with motor and sensory disabilities to people with cognitive disabilities, not forgetting all people at risk of social fragility like prisoners, deprived, homeless, migrants and hospitalized patients.

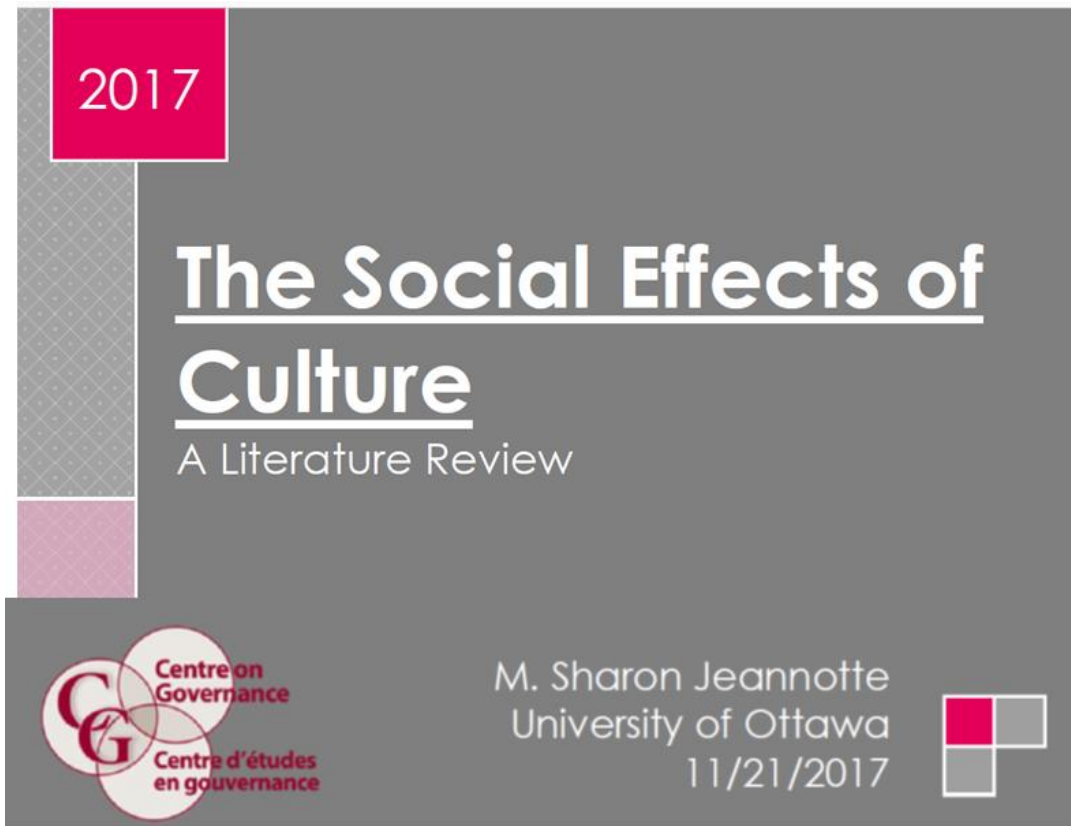


**EQUALITY**



**EQUITY**

## MUSEUMS AND SOCIAL WELLBEING



University of Pennsylvania  
Scholarly Commons

Culture and Social Wellbeing in New York City  
(2014-16)

Social Impact of the Arts Project

3-2017

### The Social Wellbeing of New York City's Neighborhoods: The Contribution of Culture and the Arts

Mark J. Stern  
University of Pennsylvania, stern@sp2.upenn.edu

Susan C. Seifert  
University of Pennsylvania, seiferts@upenn.edu

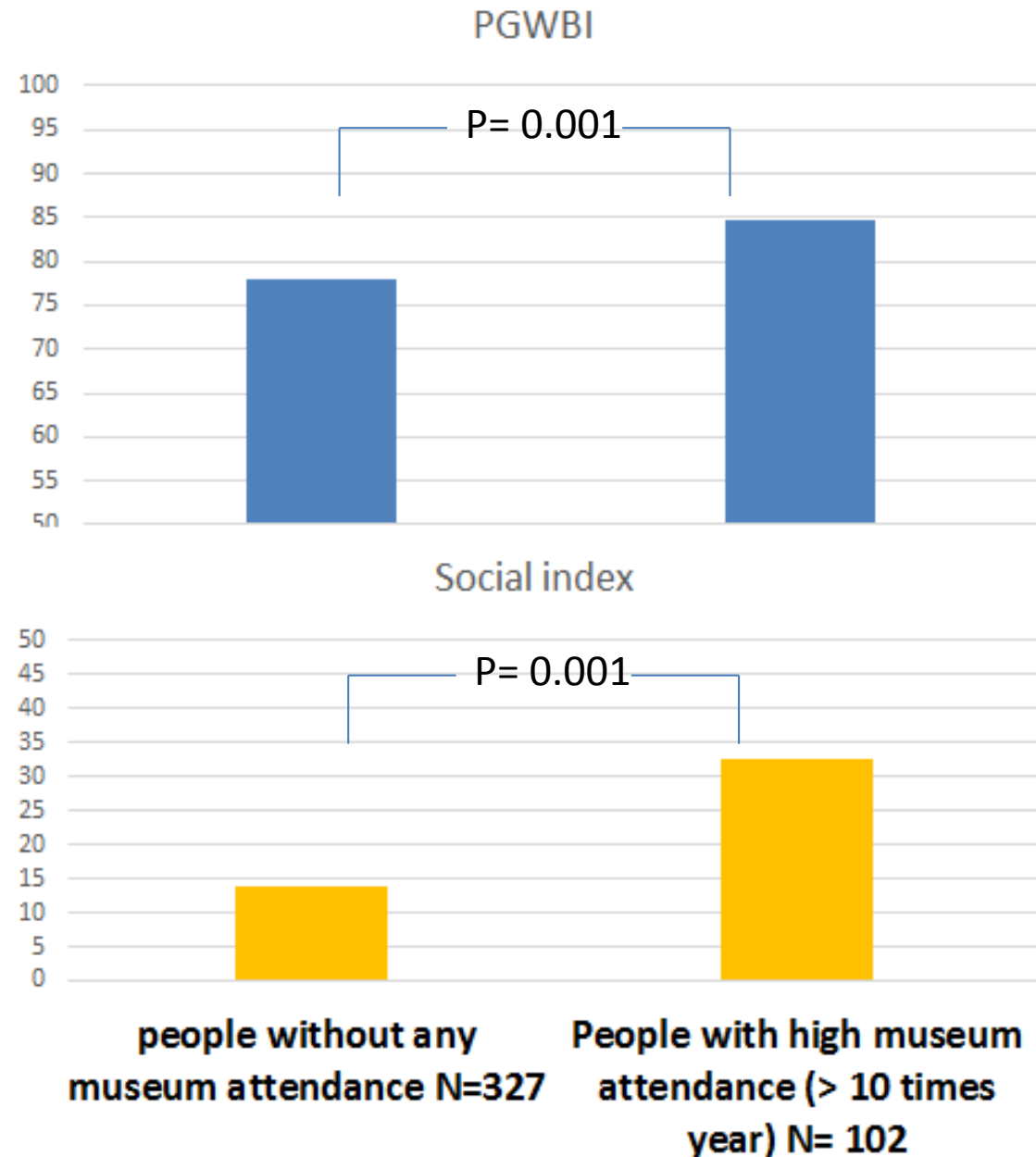
**The future of psychological wellbeing and social wellbeing goes through Museums attendance: a case study in Milano City**

**Annamaria Ravagnan, Enzo Grossi - 2018**



- Social index: intensity of community development and social volunteering activities.
- Psychological general well-being index (PGWBI): a measure of quality of life.

No other cultural activity gave better results in comparison with museums attendance.



## ICOM Italy proposal for the new Museum definition contains the concepts of inclusion and accessibility

*“The museum is a permanent, non-profit institution at the service of society and its development, open to the public, accessible and inclusive, which carries out research on the material and immaterial testimonies of man and his environment, acquires, preserves, and communicates them and specifically exposes them for the purposes of study, education, enjoyment and participation, through forms of shared planning of activities and overcome those barriers that still obstruct the full participation of citizens in culture”.*

# INCLUSION, ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY

PRESENT FOCUS



~~MENTAL RETARDATION~~

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY

FUTURE FOCUS



## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

- New terms have recently become part of the museum vocabulary: accessibility, inclusion, usability, equity and users emancipation.
- Recent studies have shown the importance of the social role of museums in the well-being of all categories of citizens, from people with motor and mental disabilities to homeless, hospitalized, poor persons, prisoners.
- Unlike accessibility for people with motor disabilities, good levels of accessibility for people with cognitive disabilities have not yet been achieved.
- We need to build a common language, spread the best practices models and share methodologies to assess results obtained.....**Let's not forget that the museum experience is also sharing!**
- In conclusion I hope I have convinced you that **an International Commission dedicated to museum accessibility is clearly necessary.**



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キョートもん  
天才アート KYOTO 品

Tensai Art KYOTO-GOODS  
by disabled person

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この商品は天才アート作品をデザインしたものです。  
“Tensai (genius) Art” means the creative art-  
work by the disabled person.  
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特定非営利活動法人 障害者芸術推進研究機構 (天才アート KYOTO)

I WISH TO THANK DARIO SCARPATI AND LUCILLA BOSCHI FOR  
THEIR COLLABORATION

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

ありがとうございます