

GUIDELINES FOR ASI MUSEUMS

The Sarnath Initiative

Archaeological Survey of India, J Paul Getty Trust, U.S.A,
British Museum U.K. and National Culture Fund

2013

INTRODUCTION

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) is the largest government institution in-charge of monuments of national importance. These monuments and sites have vast quantities of antiquarian remains that were unearthed and collected at archaeological sites across India by ASI. The first ASI site museum was created in 1904 at Sarnath, Uttar Pradesh under the aegis of Sir John Marshall who was the first Director General of ASI. These were followed by site museums at Delhi Fort in 1909, Bijapur in 1912, Nalanda in 1917 and Sanchi in 1919.

'It has been the policy of the Government of India to keep the small and movable antiquities, recovered from the ancient sites, in close association with the remains to which they belong, so that they may be studied amid their natural surroundings and not lose focus by being transported'. A separate Museums Branch in ASI was created in 1946 by Mortimer Wheeler"

Harold Hargreaves, the third Director General of ASI
Excerpt from the Indian Archaeological Policy, 1915; Calcutta,
ASI Archives, New Delhi

In 2013-14 there are 44 site museums, with a proposal to add at least 9 more new museums at heritage sites across the country. Museums around the world are transforming and striving to innovate and remain socially relevant. ASI museums face a new challenge; while they must provide excellent facilities for safekeeping of the vast remains of excavated objects and fragments from the adjacent sites, they should also present collections to people in the context of the site and are interesting and engaging for visitors.

On the occasion of the 150 anniversary of the founding of ASI the NCF was requested to develop a collaborative programme for the up-gradation of its museums to meet the challenges of the 21st century. NCF met with different international agencies and on 25 September 2013 a historic MOA was signed between Archaeological Survey of India, J Paul Getty Trust, U.S.A, British Museum U.K. and National Culture Fund to collaborate on a capacity building programme for ASI professionals in the museum sector.

The first workshop on **'Best Practices for archaeological site-museums'** was held at Sarnath from 19-21st Nov, 2013. The Workshop was attended by 34 participants including all the partners and ASI staff representing ASI museums from across the country. At the workshop participants reviewed the ASI museum document of

1915 and had a series of presentations. In five working groups the participants best practices for ASI museums. They stated that museum must ensure the preservation and protection of the collections, develop best practices in documentation and interpretation of their collections and spread knowledge and understanding of the site and the museums to the public. During the workshop the participants debated and developed a Vision, Mission, and Guidelines for ASI museums in consultation with the experts from the J Paul Getty Trust, USA and the British Museum UK, National Culture Fund and ASI.

FOREWORD

1. The Draft of this document was developed through a rigorous consultative process at a two day long workshop on **Best Practices for archaeological site-museums'** in Sarnath, in November 2013 in consultation with J Paul Getty Trust, USA and the British Museum UK, National Culture Fund and ASI.
2. The purpose of this document is to empower and assist the ASI in establishing and nurturing a nation wide network of outstanding Site-museums.
3. The ASI Museum Guidelines will serve as a checklist for each museum to ensure that they observe minimum standards of excellence in professional practice.
4. The Guideline will assist museum managers in developing each year a priority list and annual action plan/calendars/management plan and create budgetary requirements for their museums.
5. ASI headquarters office may use the guidelines to monitor museum development and management in all its major spheres of activity and to fund research, conservation, interpretation, and visitor services and setting up of efficient management structures.
6. Six pillars of museum management identified offer a stable, long lasting framework to prepare the guidelines for ASI museum:
 1. **Research and Dissemination**
 2. **Preservation and Conservation**
 3. **Interpretation and Presentation**
 4. **Education and Outreach**
 5. **Visitor Services and Amenities**
 6. **Administration and Management**

The Vision for ASI museums: 2013

ASI museums will share India's heritage, through its unique sites and collections, with everyone.

The Mission for ASI museums: 2013

ASI museums will establish and implement best practices in research, conservation, interpretation, presentation and education to explore and disseminate the historical, archaeological, cultural, ecological and aesthetic significance of the site and its related collections, for local and global audiences.

ASI MUSEUM GUIDELINES

To create a stable framework, six pillars of museum management have been identified for the ASI Museum Guidelines and they are:

1. **Research and Dissemination**
2. **Preservation and Conservation**
3. **Interpretation and Presentation**
4. **Education and Outreach**
5. **Visitor Services and Amenities**
6. **Administration and Management**

1. **Research and Dissemination:** to establish the historic, archaeological, cultural, ecological and aesthetic value of the objects and the site.
 - 1.1 Collect and preserve data and archival material including, but not limited to, books, articles, plans, maps, manuscripts, photographs, epigraphic records, numismatic records, and travelogues relevant to each museum and site.
 - 1.2 Compile and collate all relevant archival material in the site resource centre in a standardized format
 - 1.3 Establish a research desk/ library/office in each site-museum for purposes of research and study of the site and museum collection
 - 1.4 Supervise the mapping of the present site and its landscape
 - 1.5 Encourage the link between research and education (see item 4 below) and provide access to the collection and data for purposes of study at all times
 - 1.6 Oversee research with suitable collaborators and ensure that one copy of all research documents are deposited in the museum library/office for public access
 - 1.7 Produce digitized documentation of museum collection for purposes of preservation, conservation, interpretation, design, publications and outreach programmes according to the standards set by ASI

- 1.8 Ensure that the future potential for excavations, discovery and interpretation of the site is preserved
- 1.9 Provide relevant and authentic data for publication
- 1.10 Involve and collaborate with stakeholders, community, scholars and experts, to develop a narrative for the museum, collections and the site
- 1.11 Select carefully objects that represent the overarching narrative of the museum and site
- 1.12 Organize seminars and workshops to enrich existing data about the site and create new knowledge
- 1.13 Create an ASI museums website with links to each site museum and its collections and run a newsletter on museum news
- 1.14 Create a network of subject experts for site-museums in India and other countries
- 1.15 Create an information and collections access policy for the entire collection

2. **Preservation and Conservation:** to conserve values and attributes of the site through the preservation of objects discovered from the site
- 2.1 Employ latest techniques to ensure security of museum premises, objects and storage
- 2.2 Employ best practices to conserve the site and museum collection and those in store to ensure long-term preservation and protection.
- 2.3 Conserve and develop the indigenous heritage components such the historic landscape, flora and fauna and protect the natural setting of the site
- 2.4 Create a study/visual store to facilitate research and further study. This will require good storage infrastructure and conditions.
- 2.5 Create documentation and digitization of collections; with a conservation assessment for each object.
- 2.6 Ensure national and international training in the latest techniques of conservation for ASI museum personnel
- 2.6 Create well equipped science laboratories, at the regional centre or circle, for analysis and *in-situ* conservation of objects
- 2.7 Utilize best practice in handling and moving of objects by the museum staff
- 2.8 Create a Collection Care Plan for bi-monthly monitoring of objects on display and storage.
- 2.9 Collection Care Plan to also include preventive conservation and constant monitoring to assess the impact of climatic conditions, light, micro-biological growth, etc., on objects particularly if they are fragile and vulnerable both on display and in the reserve collections
- 2.10 Collection Care Plan to also include regular fumigation, pest control, etc., in consultation with the Science Branch;
- 2.11 Prepare and provide standard manuals and training to ensure regular and appropriate cleaning and upkeep of the collection on display and in stores.

- 2.12 Create a disaster management plan (natural and human-induced) and institute appropriate provisions for the same.
- 2.13 Consider structural retrofitting of the museum building, if necessary
- 2.14 Prepare a post-disaster recovery plan
- 2.15 Involve art conservators, archaeological chemists, etc., for the preservation of art objects and to ensure best practices and professional inputs
- 2.16 Develop links with appropriate scientific and technical institutions both within and outside the country to adopt best practices in conservation and presentation practices and technologies
- 2.17 Involve the local community and stake-holders in preparing a development model for the conservation of the site and as volunteers for museums educational activities.
- 2.18 Develop design guidelines for safe and aesthetical display and illumination techniques; Museum interior to be minimalist and reflect the mood of the monument and in resonance with the objects on display
- 2.19 Developing linkages with the site to ensure that visitors engage with the site through the site museums
- 2.20 Creating an online database for the museum
- 2.21 Publish research on tried and tested conservation practices, case studies and treatments of collections for the conservation fraternity

3. **Interpretation and Presentation: to share the value of the site with everyone**
 - 3.1 Employ qualified designers (exhibition, lighting, graphics, risk analysis etc.) to work with scholars, ASI conservators & staff, to develop and render the narrative in the museums.
 - 3.2 Maintain the brand identity for ASI museums
 - 3.3 Follow design guidelines for all ASI museums- signage, showcase, lighting wall and floor finishes, placement of cameras/security devices etc.
 - 3.4 Develop a museum design and presentation system that ensures the protection and conservation of the objects on display
 - 3.5 Visitor mapping for each museum: find out who, where from, age groups, motivations and expectations to ascertain needs of visitors and develop amenities, presentation and publication
 - 3.6 Select a limited number of narratives and themes that will best communicate the significance of the site and the museum collections within the broader context of Indian history and heritage
 - 3.7 Develop a storyline of the history of the site: its discovery, personalities involved, its significance, the layers of history represented at the site, the stylistic relationship of the site and other related ones, the context of the site and collection in relation to Indian and world history, so visitors understand contents of the museum and the historical, contextual, cultural, architectural, geological value of the site
 - 3.7 Materials or objects that hold special significance to one or more communities may be displayed with professional standards and sensitivity
 - 3.8 Respect the integrity of the original when replicas, reproductions or copies of items in the collection are made. All copies and reproductions should be clearly, visibly and permanently marked as facsimiles

- 3.9 Use multi-media display and interactive technologies to communicate the museum's vision and narrative to all visitors
- 3.10 Create a calendar of events e.g. lectures, guided tours, children's activities, other allied events.
- 3.11 Physical Access: Easy access for all. Ensure everyone is able to experience and engage with the exhibition.
- 3.12 Make provisions for the differently-abled both for access to the museum, within galleries and visitor facilities
- 3.13 Ensure intellectual access to the collection for scholars, researchers, students and the interested person
- 3.14 Gather regular feedback from visitors (either on line or paper format): Have they understood the museum story and narrative, was there clarity in the museum message, what message did they take away, what was missing what more information or facilities can the museum provide, what was their level of their expectation and satisfaction
- 3.15 Develop temporary exhibition galleries/object of the month/one object displays in the museum to ensure regular interpretation of the museum narrative and the constant interest and participation of local visitors
- 3.16 Create guidelines for adaptive re-use of heritage buildings (ancillary buildings in the main monument complex) as a museum/gallery.

4. Education and Outreach: to encourage and nurture the visitors' interest in the museum and its collection

- 4.1 Assign educational duties to a qualified member of staff/appoint an education officer.
- 4.2 Develop museum website with basic information about museum opening hours, educational programs and the museum's unique collection.
- 4.3 Maintain the brand identity of the ASI museums
- 4.4 Provide a Welcome/ Information services for visitors so that they may be informed of all the facilities made available to them by the museum
- 4.5 Develop maps with contextual photographs of the site, including material about related sites so that visitors get an overview of the history and cultural significance of the site and museum collection
- 4.6 Develop gallery texts for groups of objects and individual captions for each object on display in Hindi, English, and local languages
- 4.7 Develop printed material and audio guides about the collection in Hindi, English, and local languages/multi-languages.
- 4.8 Develop printed material and audio guides about the collection for foreign visitors.
- 4.9 Develop electronic touch screen/interactive display panels with information related to the objects on view
- 4.10 Develop printed material in Braille and large print guides about the collection for the visually challenged and the differently abled
- 4.11 Publish general and sectional catalogues about the collection and the site
- 4.12 Develop an activity/ learning centre for children

- 4.13 Develop orientation programmes for volunteer museum guides to cater to language/age/interest variations of the visitors
- 4.14 Develop and distribute educational materials on CDs or through email to local schools and colleges.
- 4.15 Develop an annual program of lectures, workshops, and symposia on the collection and related subjects
- 4.16 Provide access to visitors to the museum library/ research desk and encourage them to look at books and archival materials related to the site and the collection
- 4.17 Develop a programme for school visits in coordination with local teachers who may be trained to serve as guides for their students
- 4.18 Create mobile exhibition to travel to local communities
- 4.19 Develop a Friends of Museum group within the local communities and abroad
- 4.20 Suggest to NCERT/state boards to include information about site museums in the textbooks they prepare.

5. **Visitor Services and Amenities: to provide facilities and access to all and to encourage more visitors to the site and the museum**
- 5.1 Carry out regular visitor studies to establish age group, size of groups, countries, languages and visitor behavior to facilitate access and develop strategies for communication and visitor amenities.
- 5.2 Publicize the site and the museum and reach out to wider and newer audiences.
- 5.3 Inculcate a spirit of enquiry and fascination for the narratives of India through outreach programmes, a calendar of events, and multi-platform access on and off-site.
- 5.4 Develop clear and standardized directional and informative signage for the museums and site, using materials that are in sympathy with the site
- 5.5 Offer climate-friendly amenities for visitor, shelter from heat and rain
- 5.6 Create adequate number of toilets for men women, children and the disabled
- 5.7 Provide clean drinking water facility at appropriate location
- 5.8 Provide lockers and storage area for visitor bags
- 5.9 Maintain a daily maintenance manual/check-list for up-keep of these amenities (water, electricity, access, signage etc)
- 5.10 Train gallery attendants and guards in visitor management and to monitor and guide visitor behavior
- 5.11 Create a Museum Shop with appropriate merchandise of local crafts items, products that serve as souvenirs of the museum's collections, publications, diaries, and calendars

- 5.12 Respect the integrity of the original when replicas, reproductions or copies of items in the collection are made. All copies and reproductions should be permanently marked as facsimiles
- 5.13 Conduct a survey of audiences to develop new products for the museum shop based on their needs and requirements
- 5.14 Develop a Museum cafeteria either as a community canteen (as in Sarnath or by tendering the contract) so that visitors come to the site and museum not only for knowledge and information but also for relaxation and enjoyment

6. **Administration and Management:** to ensure employment of professionals and the continuous upgradation of staff skills for efficient museum management and administration
- 6.1 All staff must remain loyal to the institution and dedicated to the profession and work towards implementing these guidelines
- 6.2 Staff of the museum should promote research, dissemination and conservation of collections and provide access to visitors.
- 6.3 Staff of museums must adhere to ASI norms and rules regarding theft and other threats to collections
- 6.4 Staff of museums must follow ASI management practices and regulations for regular reporting
- 6.5 Prepare a management plan for the site and the museum that links the site and the museum and maintains the authenticity and significance of the same.
- 6.6 Prepare a maintenance plan to ensure the upkeep of the museum and its facilities
- 6.7 Regular checks from Head quarters and circles to see that management and maintenance plans are being updated and adhered to
- 6.8 All site museums should have a transparent, administrative structure with defined, qualified personnel. The minimum required staff for each museum is:
 - a. ASA who will serve as the Curator, Financial and Administrative Head
 - b. 2 Asst Archeologists who will serve as the Assistant Curator and Education Officer of the museum
 - c. 2 LDC
 - d. Asst. Storekeeper
 - e. Permanent museum attendants as per requirement
 - f. Security personnel as per site requirement
 - g. One Computer operator/IT for website management, digitization and documentation and accounts

- 6.9 Sufficient administrative and financial autonomy should be vested in the Deputy SA / ASA / Curator to complete their obligations and manage the museums as per these guidelines
- 6.10 Each zonal office should have particular specialists to serve the need of all museums within the zone – in areas such as education and outreach, photography and digitization
- 6.11 Each Zonal office should have a well equipped Conservation Laboratory to serve the needs of the museums in their zones.
- 6.12 Each Zone should be headed by a Deputy SA, supported by 2 ASAs – one for administration, education and outreach each with sufficient support staff
- 6.13 Minimum tenure for ASA at site museums should be 5 years.
- 6.14 ASA should only be transferred to other museums and not to any other branch/circle so that they may specialize and gain experience in the museum sector
- 6.15 Mandatory - Continuously up-grade staff skills and build capacity to meet new challenges in the field.
- 6.16 Provide regular in-service training opportunities to staff in all aspects of museum management skills; visitor management skills, education and outreach, conservation and handling of objects, design and display.
- 6.17 Museum personnel undergoing specialized training must continue to serve with the museum for a minimum 3 years, irrespective of promotions.
- 6.18 Sufficient administrative arrangements to allow easy access and coordination for personnel across museums and sites

7. **ASI Headquarters: to establish and nurture a nationwide network of outstanding ASI museums**
- 7.1 Revive the specialized ASI museum branch coinciding with 5 zones (in tandem with the regional zones) and provide recognition and respect to museums and museology as a distinct and specialized discipline
- 7.2 Create an image and brand identity of ASI museums to make them recognizable to the public as institutions of excellence. Create Design guidelines for all ASI museums- signage, showcase, lighting wall and floor finishes, placement of cameras/security devices etc.
- 7.3 Develop clear and standardized signage for the museums and sites, lighting standards
- 7.4 Create and adopt a style-sheet for all ASI museum publications so that they are easily recognizable by the public
- 7.5 Create an online database on collection of museums for network of ASI museums
- 7.6 Create an ASI museums website with links to each site museum and its collections and run a newsletter on museum news
- 7.7 Ensure regular national and international training for the professional development of museum personnel in museum management skills
- 7.8 Develop a policy for public access, research and study of museum collection
- 7.9 Develop a policy to allow photography by visitors within the museum
- 7.10 Develop a exhibition/loan policy for ASI museums

ANNEXURE

The Archaeological Survey of India has several period museums which showcase collections from the 17th-19th centuries or are conceptual museums such as the Swatantrata Sangram Sangrahalaya at Red Fort which deals with India's Freedom Struggle and the Lucknow Residency museum showcasing the mutiny of 1857. Such museums may or may not have archaeological objects but are pertinent in terms of more recent collections that encapsulate the period and the lifestyle of people at the time.

While the overall guidelines for the archaeological site-museums will apply to the Period Museums as well, they will require specific additions and interpretations to aid the visitor's understanding of the period. In other words people should have an experiential visit to such museums which is evoked through good lighting, sound/music, recorded material, interactive spaces and audio-visual footage to enhance the ambiance.

1. The building's ambiance should be maintained as per the said period inside as well as outside. Furniture and its layout should be maintained. Landscaping around the building should be developed in a way that it complements the experience within the museum.
2. The display inside the museum should be arranged in the same manner as the part of the building was used in the past (i.e. Drawings room should be arranged as Drawing room Dining room like Dining room and so on)
3. If required dioramas, audio-visual footage, voice recordings, ambiance music etc may also be used for creating a complete experience.
4. Display material should also be used in tune with the original material
5. Display should be changed periodically and kept well maintained.