

METODICKÉ A INFORMAČNÍ TEXTY/ METHODICAL AND INFORMATIVE TEXTS

VOLUNTEER IN A NEW ZEALAND MUSEUM

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To become a volunteer in a New Zealand museum is not as complicated as it might originally seem. But since the Czech Republic has only a little information about the overall structure of museum network in this country, it is quite difficult to obtain the necessary information. However, the number of young people who travel to New Zealand is increasing and it is nothing exceptional to work as a volunteer in various fields of activity. The aim of our article is to familiarize readers in general with “museum life” in this country, to inform on the possibilities of voluntary work in museums, and to give examples from the practice in a regional museum. We also provide important links at the end.

Museums in New Zealand

Despite its relatively short history, New Zealand has an immense number of museums (around 500).¹ Of these 60 % are museums run by volunteers, 25 % are small, 7 % are medium-sized, 4 % are large museums and 4 % are institutions oriented to the care of heritage properties. Learning about the history of New Zealand is very easy – you can either visit large museums with huge-collections or undertake an adventurous search for small museums in remote parts of the country. Museums are **often managed only by enthusiastic volunteers!**

A great deal of support to the sphere of museums is granted by the state organisation **National**

¹ *Museums Aotearoa: Museums, Galleries and Heritage Properties – a local government perspective.* June 2017.

Services Te Paerangi which is part of the national museum **Te Papa** in the capital of New Zealand – Wellington. This organisation is primarily oriented towards practical support of museums by providing training, publications and subsidies.

A professional non-profit organisation in the sphere of museums is “**MUSEUMS AOTEAROA**”.² Membership of this organisation provides information on museums, offers of jobs, professional support in museum practice and the organisation of an annual museum conference. Close cooperation between museums gradually gave rise to specific groups:

- **Kahui Kaitiaki** – a group supporting the Maori minority working in museums and dissemination of Te Reo Maori (Maori language)
- **Emerging Museum Professionals NZ** – forum for young people beginning to work in the museum sector
- **Museum Education Association of NZ** – a group oriented on museum pedagogy
- **Touring Exhibition Network NZ** – oriented mainly on touring exhibitions

² Aotearoa is the Maori word for New Zealand and it means “long white cloud”. Official website of the organisation: *Museums Aotearoa* [online]. Museums Aotearoa, Te Tari o Ngā Whare Taonga o Te Motu/The Museums of New Zealand [cit. 2017-09-10]. Available from www: <<http://www.museumsaotearoa.org.nz/>>.

- **Directors of Small Museums** – the group was founded to support directors and managers in small museums with a maximum of eight permanent workers.

Disciplines concerning the museum sphere can be studied in several universities in New Zealand. Among them are for example: Victory University of Wellington (Postgraduate Certificate in Museum and Heritage Practice & Masters of Museum and Heritage Practice), Auckland University (Postgraduate Study in Museums and Cultural Heritage, Bachelor of Arts in Museums and Cultural Heritage & Masters of Arts in Museums and Cultural Heritage) or Massey University (Postgraduate Diploma in Museum Studies & Masters of Arts in Museum Studies). The Service IQ organisation provides educational courses with National Certificate in Museum Practice.

Voluntary work (not only) in New Zealand museums

Voluntary work in New Zealand plays an important role in the structure of social sphere. Voluntary activity represents an integral part of New Zealand’s population which is related not only to museums and galleries. Volunteers can be parents who help schools to maintain playgrounds or raising money for running of the schools, they are members of local clubs, either sporting or cultural, participating in maintenance of sports grounds, theatres or churches. Volunteers may be local firemen, policemen or social workers. Most of the New Zealand



organisations would not have any chance to carry out their activities without volunteers.

Volunteers in museums fall within the category of local community who wants to participate in local events and at the same time wants to be responsible for these activities. Local people in New Zealand strive to work as volunteers because it minimises their general isolation caused by low population size and by the geographic location of their country.

Volunteers are very important for each museum because they enable to undertake projects which cannot be funded from the budgets of individual museums.³ Museum volunteers are not only enthusiasts who want to help with museum exhibitions or collection items, but also people who manage the whole running of a museum, including the budget. The vast majority of small museums are non-profit organisations. Their operation is fully secured by a Board of

volunteers who observe exact and strict rules.

CHB Settlers Museum and volunteers

CHB Settlers Museum is a small regional museum in the Central Hawke's Bay District, situated in the town of Waipawa. This region has a very rich history from the time of arrival of the first immigrants from England, who began to establish huge farms for sheep breeding. Waipawa, one of the oldest inland towns in New Zealand, was founded in 1860. The descendants of these first colonists live in this area to this day.

Even though the museum is quite large as regards the extent of its museum collections, including a huge photo archive, it is basically operated by only a single employee (curator/manager). The curator is employed by the Museum Board composed of ten local volunteers, and is partly funded by the District Council. The remaining part of financial means must be secured by the museum itself.

The volunteers from the Museum Board are joined regularly once

a week by another ten volunteers who help to install temporary exhibitions and participate in the build-up of permanent exhibitions. They act as museum pedagogues, designers, guides. The museum organises for the volunteers special Christmas parties, the names of volunteers are mentioned in all annual reports, regular newsletters, newspaper articles and in social media. All the volunteers are proud to work in a museum and contribute to something valuable within the scope of their local community.

Example from volunteer practice – creation of an educational programme in CHB Settlers Museum for the exhibition „Waipukurau 150 Years Celebration 1867–2017“

The temporary exhibition „Waipukurau 150 Years Celebration 1867–2017“⁴ provides information about the founding Waipukurau town, its significant personalities, the first colonists and the emerging infrastructure of the town.

In the exhibition there are six large Forex boards with information and photos, which are logically arranged to make the exhibition topics well understandable. The exhibition also comprises separate photos and three-dimensional objects. An interesting element of the installation is a didactic model of the main street in the town with house models represented by wooden blocks (80 blocks). An exceptional feature of the exhibition is a painting of Henry Robert Russell by the Czech painter Gottfried Lindauer.⁵

⁴ Waipukurau 150 Years Celebration 1867–2017: Major Exhibition at CHB Settlers Museum Celebrating 150 years since the founding of Waipukurau. 19th March–31st October 2017. In *Central Hawke Bay Settlers Museum* [online]. Waipawa: CHB Settlers Museum, 2014 [cit. 2017-09-10]. Available from [www: <http://www.chbsettlersmuseum.co.nz/?q=Waipuk-150years>](http://www.chbsettlersmuseum.co.nz/?q=Waipuk-150years).

⁵ Gottfried Lindauer was born 1839 in Pilsen and died 1926 in Woodville, New Zealand. He

³ WILSON, Lorraine Margaret. *For love not money: volunteers in New Zealand museum*. Palmerston North: Massey University, 1999, p. 9. Thesis.



- creation of a guideline with a self-service worksheet,
- creation of a self-service worksheet,
- establishing a working corner and space for worksheets, pencils, writing pads,
- remake of the didactic model.

The starting point of the whole project was the translation of English-written information on the Forex boards into Czech language for a better understanding of the context. Afterwards, consultations were held with a professional worker about the accuracy of information. The self-service worksheet began to be made up, incorporating information from the exhibition. An important point in creation of the self-service worksheet was a targeted elaboration of knowledge which a pupil should take away from the exhibition together with the worksheet. The resulting worksheet is thus a fully-fledged didactic material which can be used in further schoolwork. The worksheet contains ten questions which create the general story of the exhibition. For the purpose of better orientation in the exhibition and after trial versions, it was decided to equip the exhibition with a guideline represented by orientation points in pink colour. The absence of this guideline caused considerable disorientation in the worksheet.



For the needs of the worksheet a working corner was established where the visitors can collect the worksheet and go through the exhibition without any further instructions. There also are writing utensils, basic information on “what to do”, writing pads, and of course a completed worksheet where visitors can read the correct answers.

School groups, who always book the museum visit in advance,

get the worksheets, pencils and writing pads separately for each visit. Since the exhibition area is relatively small, the educational programme is designed for two groups of approx. 15–20 pupils fully independently, only under the supervision of a teacher (who is informed in advance). The total time intended for one group is 30 minutes. Meanwhile the other group visits the permanent museum exhibition and afterwards both groups switch places. The educational activity in the exhibition thus takes 60 minutes for the whole class.

The worksheet also contains a game which is working with the didactic model in the exhibition. The basic idea was to create a model with depiction of street plan as in 1933 and to this street plan then individual houses were made in the form of wooden blocks. The exhibited model was equipped with information on how to use this didactic tool. The information is thus present not only in the worksheet but also separately. Visitors thus have the possibility to work with this educational tool with or without the worksheet.

After creation of the worksheet, guideline, working corner and improvement of the didactic model, a test was carried out with other volunteers about the overall operation and setting of the new educational tool. Volunteers were given a worksheet and the set-up parameters were evaluated. The evaluation process did not detect any distinct errors so that the setting of the didactic tool was closed and prepared for a school group or an ordinary visitor. For the school needs an information leaflet was created, which was distributed to schools. It contained the basic information on what the pupils would learn at the exhibition, using the worksheet and the didactic tool. The leaflet

also contained information about duration of the exhibition, entrance fees and time allowance.

Conclusion

After elaboration of educational changes and distribution of the information to schools, the exhibition was visited by 350 pupils. From the reactions of schools we can infer positive response. The programme operates independently, without presence of any professional guide. Teachers evaluate very well the work with the didactic model, which is placed at the end of the worksheet and can be also used separately.

In general we can see a positive impact of the educational programme with regard to the primary goal – to familiarize schools with the exhibition.

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