

The Marketization of Museum Discourse?

A Case Study of the Auckland Museum
1978–2006

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.



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Abstract

The question of whether 'culture' should be subjected to the 'whims' of the free market is not new. It is, however, relatively recent within the museum sector. In addition, associated debates typically frame marketization and commodification as polar opposites to more traditional notions of what a public museum should be. This dissertation seeks to deconstruct such discourse by using a loose framework of marketization and promotional culture to discuss the changing identity of the public museum. From a critical case study of New Zealand's Auckland War Memorial Museum—an institution with a long history of traditional public-sector values—a hybrid discourse analytic approach is utilised with a sample of four Annual Reports. Analysed thematically to compare various elements of traditional and contemporary museology, these Reports reveal quite clearly that multiple elements of both perspectives can be incorporated into a museum's identity. Thus the idea of a radical 'break' between the old and the new is rather more rhetorical than is often suggested.

Introduction

Since the 1980s, the increasing commercialisation of museums and subsequent effects upon the sector's 'public' role have intensified a divide between what is considered the 'old' way of doing things and that which is progressive and 'new'. Each camp certainly has its critics: the traditional public museum has been accused of being too paternalist and too dependent upon public subsidy (Barry, 1998); whilst more contemporary museums and heritage parks have for many become synonymous with the free market's tightening grip over the sphere of public culture. But irrespective of the merits of each philosophy, museum discourse has largely embraced contemporary museology as an 'either—or' dichotomy, with the new predicted to eventually replace the old.

The Marketization of Museum Discourse? A Case Study of the Auckland Museum 1978–2006 instead problematises this rhetoric to ask whether such linear change is, in fact, inevitable. In drawing upon diverse perspectives from museum and cultural studies, marketing, discourse analysis and communication studies, this dissertation aims to avoid an interpretation of the current moment as a radical break from the past, and instead acknowledge continuities in museum philosophy both historically and in the present. It was also my aim to apply this thinking to a local context, which I have achieved by way of a strategic case study. This research focuses specifically on the Auckland War Memorial Museum, as one pertinent local example of complex museology in practice.

Chapter One thus provides a broad background to the changing nature of the public museum. It begins with a historical narrative of the origins of traditional museology, moving forward into a more analytical literature review as the literature itself develops over time. The Auckland Museum is then introduced, followed by a critical delineation of several key themes which, it is argued, provide important points of reference for the comparison of different museum identities.

Chapter Two sets out the discursive approach which has been utilised in this dissertation. It looks fundamentally at the socially constructed nature of 'discourse', before formulating a hybrid thematic methodology to enable detailed museum texts to be read in meaningful ways. The data sampled here is a selection of Annual Reports spanning 1978–2006, chosen for their publicly accessible and historical nature.

Chapter Three records the detailed text analytic work, comparing and contrasting each individual Report across various markers of traditional and contemporary identity. These markers are drawn from discussion central to the literature review, allowing the key themes of commodification, market-orientation, and promotion to act as 'lenses' through which the raw data is read.

Finally, Chapter Four refines this thorough analysis to draw the overall conclusion that our current definition of 'museum' can be—at least in the New Zealand context—pluralistic. Rather than subscribe to simplistic notions of what a museum is and what it will be, it is argued that the traditional/contemporary distinction is not simply binary, but rather more of a continuous scale—along which cultural organisations could hypothetically be placed.

Chapter 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

“The forbidding monumentality of the traditional museum has no place in the life of a modern Pacific nation.”

Te Papa Project Development Team (1985, p.11)

This chapter provides a broad background to the changing role and identity of the public museum, which is achieved primarily through an historical narrative. This narrative tracks changes in the meaning of ‘museum’ from its earliest European beginnings to post-1984 and beyond, drawing upon multiple academic traditions spanning museum, cultural and communications studies, politics, and marketing. It then introduces the Auckland War Memorial Museum (‘AWMM’) as a critical case study, accompanied by a justification for this institution as a site worthy of study. Finally, specific elements of museum identity are discussed via a thematic theoretical approach, and these themes, or frameworks—commodification, marketization, and promotion—in turn directly inform the analysis discussed in Chapters Two and Three.

1.1 From the Traditional to the Contemporary

What is a museum, and what should it be? This question has been asked repeatedly worldwide, by a variety of people spanning museum professionals, those connected to the cultural artefacts held by museums, politicians, and most recently, members of the business community. It is not, however, a question with any fixed answer. Private museums date back at least to classical times, however these pre-modern forerunners bear little resemblance to the public museum we know today. Indeed, Glasgow lawyer and antiquarian David Murray noted that early European museums were “chaotic” and primarily disposed to “create surprise rather than afford instruction” (1904, p.208). In existence

before scientific classification systems, at times they even fabricated and displayed mythical creatures such as mermen and the 'basilisk', a legendary dragon (Murray, 1904, p.204).

On the other hand, the traditional, modern understanding of what constitutes a public museum has always been couched in "functional" terms (Harrison, 2005, p.38). Since their inception, modern museums have been perceived primarily as sites of material display, but simultaneously as places of research (Vergo 1989). At their core is a fundamental reverence for the museum collection, which is amassed empirically by experts on behalf of the public and future generations. Hence the central "material evidence" (Weil, 1990, p.46) is not simply exhibited but also collected, preserved, studied, and interpreted. In the process, the museum becomes an esteemed cultural authority, a repository of 'authentic' knowledge, or indeed, a "truth-purveyor" (Harrison, 2005, p.39).

As a result, museums have long epitomised a producer-driven philosophy (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). They have traditionally viewed their collections of art, cultural relics, and scientific specimens as unique assets of cultural value; a framework which justified and conditioned all approaches to their presentation. This particular identity, borne of a relatively recent history, is founded in the Enlightenment thinking of late eighteenth-century Europe—or as Bella Dicks has termed it, the "age of exhibition" (2003a, p.3). According to Dicks (2003a), it is no coincidence that the museum flourished at a time when monarchical power was dissolving to make way for the democratic nation-state. Whereas during the Renaissance private collections were displayed only to a wealthy and aristocratic élite, the political climate of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries required a bourgeois and working-class population to feel "included in the nation's culture so they could see it as part of their own inheritance" (Dicks, 2003a, p.5). For a public reconceived as a national citizenry rather than a subject people, the resulting legacy has been the release of this 'culture' into the public domain via visitable institutions. Thus in addition to museums, this period also saw the unprecedented advent of other, related, architectures of cultural display: dioramas, panoramas, national and

international expositions, arcades, and department stores¹ (Bennett, 1995; Witcomb, 2003).

This historical interpretation is also shared by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, who claims that the French Revolution² created the “conditions of emergence for a new ‘truth’, a new rationality, out of which came a new functionality for a new institution” (1989, p.63). However in attempting to reach a newly-liberated citizenry, museums were not simply benign or apolitical: even the act of collecting has a political or ideological dimension. During the second half of the nineteenth century—the period in which many of today’s major metropolitan museums were initially established—a further rationale was attached to the museum: that of public education. Museums of science, archeology, and natural history in particular espoused a responsibility to create and disseminate knowledge through the development and display of their collections (Harrison, 2005). While ostensibly embodying democratic concerns, it has been widely accepted within museological writings that notions of public ‘education’ and individual improvement were tied to the exercise of state control. Many critics have come to regard the traditional museum as another institution of modern government: a site infused with bourgeois values, shaped increasingly to promote civic reform (cf. Hooper-Greenhill, 1989; Bennett, 1995). In this way it would act not through direct control, but rather by enlisting public support for liberal values and objectives.

Tony Bennett espouses this thesis most comprehensively in his influential treatise *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995). For Bennett, the history of museums is one entirely of ‘political rationality’; or the view that museums developed as pedagogical institutions, akin to other disciplinary sites such as the prison, the police force, and the asylum. Thus the aim of nineteenth-century museums was to instill a sense of morality and good behaviour in the hearts and minds of citizens, as much as it was to reflect and inform their lived

¹ Some examples: The first Great International Exhibition in London, 1851 (and subsequent World’s Fair Expos); the Eiffel Tower, built for the Paris Exposition (and centennial of the French Revolution) of 1889; The Passage, an elite department store in St Petersburg (built 1848); the Westminster Arcade in Providence, Rhode Island (built 1828); and Castres’ *Bourbaki* Panorama, first displayed in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1881.

² 1789–1799

experiences. This particular formulation appeals to the work of French post-structuralist Michel Foucault, blending his interest in forms of institutional discipline with his later writings on governmentality³. It also incorporates a strong Gramscian sense of cultural hegemony, in that museums are seen as always reinforcing dominant social structures (of class, gender, race, and other relations of power). In later work, Bennett (1998) adds an argument around the 'bureaucratization' of culture. If the public were in need of moral regulation, museums managed this by actively producing culture as an instrument of reform.

While some criticise such a strong Foucauldian position—Andrea Witcomb (2003) in particular claims it ignores both a popular pleasure and an economic history of the museum—most writers do recognise the influence of this civic role upon the early twentieth-century museum. However, most also recognise that nineteenth-century rationales were fundamentally contradictory, or indeed, “uneasy bedfellows” (Vergo, 1989, p.2). While a mission of public enlightenment was required to temper the problematic role of cultural display (to some the rather more unbalanced display of wealth, power, and privilege), it has functioned more as a dominant rhetorical gesture than as a description of social reality. In fact, modern museums rarely lived up to this egalitarian mission and instead catered predominantly to a small, already well-educated sample of the population. By 1900, the middle-classes had come to view self-improvement via ‘culture’—the fine and decorative arts, biological sciences, and technological innovation—as a kind of duty, whereas the working-classes were more likely to subscribe to burgeoning forms of entertainment found at the fair and amusement park (Greenhalgh, 1998). By offering a minimum of public information or labelling, in addition to sanctioning only “docile” (Bennett, 1995, p.89) behaviour within their interiors, museums effectively produced an environment where “culture on display for the public also demonstrated its stratification” (Dicks, 2003a, p.6).

It was not until the late twentieth century that another shift in the meaning of ‘museum’ occurred—a shift that also coincided with the emergence of a new

³ See for example Foucault (1977, 1986).

body of literature concerned with museum and museological studies. From the early 1980s onwards, these writings devoted much debate to the idea of a radical break from old practices and ways of thinking (Witcomb, 2003). Alternative and postmodernist thinking also became increasingly influential for museums at this time, particularly in England and Europe. Hence the first critical anthology of this era, *The Museum Time Machine* (edited by Robert Lumley, 1988), was an attempt to examine bias in the various constructions which museum display places upon history and social markers such as gender, race, and class. This was soon followed by landmark collection *The New Museology* (edited by Peter Vergo, 1989), which heralded a call by writers and practitioners for “change, relevance, curatorial reorientation and redistribution of power” (Stam, 2005, p.54) within the museum world. The very title was a palpable suggestion that the conventional museum approach, made seemingly inevitable by scientific and rationalist discourse, was not the *only* way of creating cultural display. New museologists sought to highlight the purposes and political dimensions of museums, in opposition to the traditionally narrow focus on simple method and practice. In this way they aimed to locate museums within place-based communities, replacing the ‘object’ with the social ‘subject’; a paradigm best exemplified by the ecomuseum movement which originated in France in the late 1970s (Harrison, 2005).

New museological musings did not, however, occur within a vacuum. The 1980s also saw the effects of post-industrial capitalism, as the Western world struggled to adjust to a new economic future. It was a decade of recession coupled with urban entrepreneurialism and privatisation in local economic development (Harvey, 1989). As a result, museums worldwide—heavily dependent on public subsidies—found themselves under severe financial constraints as neoliberal policy agendas proliferated. In the USA for example, museums had business and market-determined models forced upon them by legislation which required new accountability for the use of federal funds (Harrison, 2005). Here in New Zealand, the fourth Labour government of 1984–90 implemented an economic policy agenda which had similar effects on the public sector. Commonly referred to as the “New Zealand experiment” (Kelsey, 1997, p.1), this period of structural re-adjustment produced a radically deregulated, market-driven economy. Its

architects⁴ commercialised state-owned enterprises, altered tax structures, and considerably reduced social spending in an attempt to encourage higher levels of economic growth (Roper, 2006).

The impact of this ideological break from Keynesian welfarism⁵ was to force public cultural institutions in New Zealand into the private sphere in search of alternative sources of funding. Such commercialisation meant the adoption of business management models, which in turn brought new attention to marketing and promotional discourse, and the latter-day political doctrines of place-promotion and tourism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998). Museums (within local government jurisdiction) were certainly not alone in losing subsidies. Media, tertiary providers, sporting organisations and arts producers generally were expected to operate commercially as well as contribute to the wider economy: in this regard, both the privatisation of broadcasting and the consolidation of the New Zealand film industry provide pertinent parallels (cf. Neill & Shanahan, 2005; Waller, 1996).

As a result, and perhaps more so than in some other areas of cultural production, these pressures contributed significantly to an international diversification of the traditional museum 'product'. No longer confined simply to ethnographic and historical artefacts, the late twentieth century saw yet another proliferation of new kinds of cultural display: the "1980s heritage boom" (Dicks, 2003b, p.32) of visitable, living-history sites exploded alongside a rapidly expanding theme park industry, in which the Disney Corporation epitomised a model of free-enterprise and business management (Harrison, 2005). On a slightly lesser scale, leisure-entertainment complexes such as IMAX theatres and the modern shopping mall multiplied during this period, as did hybrid, experiential "discovery" centres (Dicks, 2003a, p.6) fusing the traditional museum with technology and interactive display. Paris' famous

⁴ Key Members of Parliament at this time were Prime Minister David Lange, Finance Minister Roger Douglas, and Minister of Trade and Industry (later Finance) David Caygill (Kelsey, 1997).

⁵ The ideas of British economist John Maynard Keynes formed the basis of New Zealand economic policy between 1935 and 1974. This was the period of the great 'welfare state', in which prosperity and a high standard of living was coupled with a highly regulated, interventionist economy (Roper, 2006). Keynes also laid the foundations for the British Arts Council, a model of state patronage which became the prototype for arts and culture funding in the United States and many Commonwealth countries, including New Zealand (Upchurch, 2004).

modern art complex the Centre Pompidou (also known as the 'Beaubourg', established in 1977) was one of the first sites worldwide to do this; while closer to home, Sydney's Powerhouse Museum (established in 1988) combined a historic collection of post-industrial technologies with new display formats. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa ('Te Papa', opened in 1998) is the leading local example, and may even be a more salient one than the Powerhouse given its iconic status nationally.

What has united these new forms is thus a progression towards commodification and market-orientation. The legacy of this era has been a global reinvigoration of the sector, whereby the museum collection itself has given way at least in part to a focus on consumer relationships and methods of communication. The most obvious manifestation of this is the way in which marketers, educators and public programmes staff have wrested considerable authority from the traditional museum curator (Witcomb, 2003). It is also evident in exhibitionary approaches that seek to combine recreation and education, in recognition that the medium of display must also 'be' the message. Thus a museum may still be a benevolent site of instruction and scholarship, but this is less likely to be its only, or even its primary, *raison d'être*. Instead of 'collecting', 'interpreting' and 'exhibiting', museums are now more likely to use words and phrases like 'access', 'social responsibility' and 'community involvement' (Witcomb, 2003, p.59).

To date, current museological thinking on the shift towards commercialisation has ranged from the staunchest of critics (for example Watkins, 1994; Dutton, 1998; Appleton, 2001), to those who champion its democratising potential (for example Tobelem, 1997; Prentice, 2001; Black, 2005). But regardless of individual preferences, the consensus about which is actually dominant seems to be much more united: critics may disagree with the effects of private funding models but for the most part are resigned to their practical inevitabilities, no doubt lending weight to the perception that a complete paradigm shift has already occurred in the museum sector. It is important to remember however that change is not simply 'inevitable'. As Andrea Witcomb (2003) points out, this is not the first time in the public museum's short history that there have

been opposing discourses surrounding its proper role. The geographical juxtaposition of newly built museums beside their more established predecessors means that conflicting understandings of 'museum' do continue to persist: the old has not yet been entirely replaced by the new. In fact, the contemporary proliferation of display sites could be interpreted as a sign that 'museum' is profoundly pluralistic in and of itself, not simply in the process of evolving from one singular meaning to another. Caution must then be aimed at the extremes of this polarised debate if discussion is to avoid hyperbole and simplistic opposition.

It is this desire for caution which provides an impetus for the present study. The aim is to examine an existing museum with a traditional history, and ask: do traditional museums still co-exist with their commercialised counterparts? Can they continue to privilege their own collections, or are they now chiefly responsible to a public body? How have these perspectives changed in New Zealand over time?

1.2 The New Zealand Experience: AWMM as a Critical Case Study

If the broad aim is to investigate the changing nature of the museum, a more pragmatic goal was to apply this investigation to a real and local example of museology in practice. What follows then, is a case study of one of New Zealand's most established and recognised museums: the AWMM. Although obviously a specific single case, it is also a critical (and manageable) one, occupying a strategic position in relation to the context-independent knowledge discussed thus far (Flyvbjerg, 2001). As a result it is assumed that any findings, while not necessarily generalisable in the quantitative sense, will nonetheless have implications for other comparable 'cases' both within New Zealand and abroad.

New Zealand certainly provides a fertile environment for research, given that museums have become a growth 'industry' here as they have overseas. For example, between 1981 and 2001 the number of museums in New Zealand with

professional staff increased from 23 to 40 (Tramposch, 1998)⁶. Professional, postgraduate qualifications in museum studies have been available in New Zealand since the late 1980s (at Massey and Victoria Universities); and new and established museums alike have adopted business partners, performance evaluation schemes, and public relations campaigns. Yet despite this growth there has been little if any sustained academic dialogue in this country about museum roles and function (Williams, 2001). Moreover, there has been a particular lack of attention paid to the dynamics of regional museums.

This is surprising, given that the AWMM provides an obvious point of comparison with the national museum, Te Papa Tongarewa. Te Papa, as it currently sits in a purpose-built site on Wellington's waterfront, is a very clear example of a relationship-oriented, commercialised museology. Created from an amalgam of the former National Museum and National Art Gallery (two traditionally subsidised institutions), Te Papa opened its doors in February 1998 after 13 years of planning and over NZ\$300million in construction costs (Cottrell & Preston, 1999). It was one of the world's largest museum projects of the time, and undoubtedly "the most significant event in the nation's cultural sector for decades" (Williams, 2001, p.1).

It was also one of the most controversial. Of the criticism that Te Papa faced in its first few years, the most voracious regarded its dedication to the twin corporate principles of "customer focus" and "commercial positivity" (Te Papa, 1999, p.1). In practice, this meant that the museum product encompassed interactive exhibits, friendly 'hosts' in place of security guards, semi-educational 'fun' rides and entertaining, popular culture-based exhibitions (Williams, 2005; Cottrell & Preston, 1999). As a result, Te Papa was quickly vilified in both public and academic commentary—most famously by arch-sceptic Dennis Dutton as a "national embarrassment" with an "ideology of mediocrity" and a "dumbed-down conception of public taste" (Dutton, 1998, p.6-7). Yet it simultaneously captured a popular, touristic imagination. Explicitly *not* boring, dusty, or a fossilised "space of death" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 1998, p.139), the Te Papa

⁶ The total number of museums in New Zealand (including those without professional staff) exceeds 400 (Museums Aotearoa, 2007).

experience was well-received by a visiting public. Indeed, said one columnist: “That’s the trouble with Te Papa. Everybody hates it except the public” (cited in Tramposch, 1998, p.339).

In contrast, the AWMM was aligned very much to an ‘old’ museology, as were its smaller regional counterparts such as the Canterbury Museum and the Otago Settler’s Museum. Having occupied its present site in the Auckland Domain since 1929, the heritage building that housed it and even the institution’s title bore the imprint of an era quite removed from contemporary discourse. Unlike Te Papa, which must raise one-third of its operating costs per year through corporate sponsorship (Cottrell & Preston, 1999); the AWMM was almost entirely funded by Auckland’s seven local councils, supplemented by support from charitable trusts, foundations, membership, and private bequests. However as is often the case, this structure had become increasingly inadequate over time, leaving the AWMM in a state of under-funding and neglect for several decades (Auckland Museum, n. d.).

During the early 1990s, the AWMM responded to these pressures by implementing changes in legislation, governance and curatorial policy. The Auckland War Memorial Museum Act of 1996 transferred governance to a Trust Board, whilst capital was raised and expended upon refurbishment and development of the museum interior (Auckland Museum, n. d.). Then in January 1999 the controversial ‘Admission Donation’ scheme was introduced (Auckland Museum, 1999), where for the first time in New Zealand history the public were expected to pay a fee upon general entry. Although not technically compulsory, this ‘user-pays’ system was administered as such via the issue of tickets and receipts. More recent developments include further architectural expansion, the staging of international and ‘blockbuster’ exhibitions (most recently *Darwin* from the American Museum of Natural History⁷) coupled with extensive public programmes, and strategic moves towards creating a corporate sponsorship council in 2007 (Auckland Museum, n. d.).

⁷ *Darwin* was the major, paid-entry exhibition which ran from September 29, 2007 until January 13, 2008 (replacing *Egypt: Beyond the Tomb* which ran between May and August 2007).

From an historical perspective, the AWMM cannot therefore be clearly delineated along public-private or product-market lines. Its history incorporates elements and values from both perspectives, which makes it vulnerable to claims of inevitable reform and progression. This is admittedly also the case for several other New Zealand museums, each of which produces a host of texts within various genres where multiple images and definitions of 'museum' are constructed. However, as noted, it can be regarded as a strategic site, akin to the theoretical sampling approach for which "research sites are chosen based on the likelihood that they will provide theoretically relevant results" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.68). In addition, a major assumption of this dissertation is that the traditional museum identity has been subject to a number of political, economic, social and cultural pressures. Thus for these reasons (argued in Section 1.1) it was reasonable to expect that changes within the wider environment of the AWMM would increase the chances of encountering "obvious discursive struggle" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.67). Any data it produces are also likely to bear the mark of "powerful actors" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.75)—that is, recognised personnel—within the New Zealand museum sector.

1.3 Themes

Of course, the AWMM is an institution best understood not only in terms of historical narratives and governance structures, but also in terms of its policy statements and participation in broader discourses of culture and capitalism. Such discourses cannot be separated from the AWMM's identity, as each influences—to greater or lesser degree—those elements which can be considered 'traditional' versus what can be called 'contemporary'. Commercialisation is both the product and the producer of a number of associated trends, each of which have implications for the extent to which the AWMM can resist change.

However, to make such a project both feasible and meaningful, it is first necessary to explore these broader discourses. In what follows, I introduce three interconnected 'themes', or discursive issues, that will later provide various

lenses through which the data can be read (see Chapter Three). Although the “condition of postmodernity” (Harvey, 1989b, p.5) is an expansive and controversial terrain, spanning processes that at times seem indistinguishable from one another, these themes have nonetheless arisen as key trends within museum literature and contemporary cultural theory. They therefore provide interesting reference points for the core comparison of traditional with contemporary museology.

1.3.1 Culture and Commodification

At the heart of museum commercialisation lies the fluid term ‘culture’ and how it is defined. After all, if museums are now in the *business* of cultural display (Dicks, 2003a), their very existence is susceptible to change and interpretation just as culture is.

In the tradition of Raymond Williams (1983), it is therefore useful to consider the various meanings that culture has acquired in contemporary usage. The first is the hierarchical notion of culture as ‘excellence’, attributable to an Enlightenment-era uni-linear drive towards civilisation. Under this definition, culture becomes “the best that has been known and said in the world” (Arnold, 1867; cited in Bennett, 2005, p.64); promoting the ‘high’ arts, literature, and intellectualism to a monopoly of cultural value, whilst excluding popular or mass culture. Or as Wallerstein (1990) conceptualises, culture is used to specify the distribution of certain characteristics *within* social groups.

The majority of public art museums arguably still orient themselves thus: as Bella Dicks points out, “art is art, not life” (2003a, p.154). The collection and display of works of art even now remain largely governed by creative ability and principles of aesthetic form, or culture in the hierarchical sense—leaving galleries with the (less politically contentious) task of merely defining what qualifies as ‘art’. The traditional museum however has always dealt with artefacts of human life, which over the twentieth century have been claimed by an ethnographic discourse, concerned with the differences or homology

between social groups (Wallerstein, 1990). This relativist, anthropological definition has widened the scope of culture to include the institutions, everyday behaviour, myths, meanings and values of all groups—whether they be nations, classes, or sub-cultures. So despite widespread criticisms of elitism (Barry, 1988), traditional museums do in some ways challenge stereotypes of class and privilege. However it is widely noted that in the search for display narratives, they often inevitably produce other hierarchies that may be just as problematic⁸ (Williams, 2001).

Of course, the anthropological trope still exists within the contemporary museum. However here, the turn of cultural display towards the vernacular realm (to popular culture, the everyday, the history of ‘ordinary’ people), is typically much more pronounced (Dicks, 2003a). Contemporary museums are also much more likely to embrace postmodern intellectual modes of display, rejecting strong narratives for a “kaleidoscopic approach, the ambition only to provide a series of impressions...and the frequent collage-like use of pre-existing statements (Cochrane and Goodman (1988, p.38). In practice, this means that objects are often collated from seemingly disparate histories, grouped instead for some kind of perceived, abstract property⁹. This aesthetic undoubtedly also comes to frame various aspects of museum communication. Much can therefore be deduced from a museum’s exhibitionary history and the manner in which it is discussed and promoted.

Popular culture is also increasingly part of a commodified culture, which too is often equated with democracy and postmodern anti-elitism. According to Norman Fairclough, commodification is:

⁸ Many have been widely discussed in the literature: for example, the fetishism of the ‘other’, and the evolutionary and colonial ‘ordering’ of races and technologies through time (see Pieterse, 2005 for an excellent discussion of related issues; and Hakiwai (2005) for a recent New Zealand perspective).

⁹ For example, the postmodern aesthetic was epitomised in New Zealand by *Parade*, Te Papa’s opening art exhibition. In this revered New Zealand artist Colin McCahon’s *Northland Panels* could be found juxtaposed “by an old TV and a Toby jug on one side, and some Hamada pottery and a 1959 Kelvinator Foodarama fridge...on the other” (Dutton, 1998, p.23). What bound each piece together was a loose framework of national identity, however this was de-historicised and visually ambiguous (Williams, 2001).

“...the process whereby social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption.”

(Fairclough, 1992, p.207)

Although commodification is not a particularly new process, it has nonetheless gained intensity since the 1980s in range of public cultural fields such as art and education. For museums, the traditional, liberal conception of display as a path to individual improvement has had to run parallel to—if not compete with—neoliberal notions of culture as a consumer product (Barry, 1998). Thus the recent proliferation of new sites of display goes hand-in-hand with moves towards creating museum products as objects with definable dollar values. Museums are now sites of commodity-exchange—whether the trade involves orthodox exhibitions (traditional); or additional public programmes, spaces, tangible purchases, experiences, or refreshments (contemporary).

One key consequence of commodification is that cultural display is increasingly geared towards cultivating the model consumer, rather than the model citizen proposed by Tony Bennett (1995). However commodification is still attributable, in part, to the influence of anthropology, which Bella Dicks claims has produced a view of the world as “cultural mosaic” (2003a, p.27): a site of diverse cultures, where ‘culture’ is place- and socially-bound, and can be clearly distinguished, documented and displayed (and, therefore, also *sold*). Instead of hierarchies of taste, we have come to distinguish cultural differences in terms of lifestyles, which can be accessed via consumption. Thus a second signifier of the contemporary museum is the collapsing distinction—both real and semantic—between economic and cultural activity.

1.3.2 ‘Marketization’? The Orientational Dilemma

Another lens through which museums can be viewed is the framework of marketization. Undoubtedly, recent decades have seen an upsurge in the extension of the market to new areas of cultural life. However ‘marketization’ is

not simply a matter of the substitution of public sector with private sector funding and control (Dicks, 2003b). As outlined in Section 1.2, even the most commercialised museum venture in New Zealand (Te Papa) still relies upon state subsidies. Instead, marketization within the public sector should be understood as a “powerful discourse of the market...used to instil an increasingly orthodox concern with ‘value for money’ ” (Dicks, 2003b, p.33). Marketization, then, is not the same as privatization. Rather, it operates through the coupling together of private-sector and public-sector interests, via the much-vaunted rhetoric of ‘partnership’ and ‘enterprise’ (Hall & Hubbard, 1998), commercial management discourse and ‘accountability’.

Furthermore, one of the main effects of marketization is an increased pressure to engage in marketing activities. ‘Marketing’ is yet another concept which has undergone significant flux across the twentieth century (albeit to a lesser degree than ‘museum’ and ‘culture’). As indicated in Section 1.1, the core of the marketing concept is market- (or customer-) orientation, which holds that production should not merely be conscious of consumer needs, but should also begin with them via market research (Kotler & Kotler, 1998). This provides not only a management strategy for individual organizations, but also an ideological framework: the market is championed as empowering people by ensuring their right to voluntarily choose what they wish to consume.

Clearly, the traditional museum pays homage to a very different ideological framework. For much of their history, public museums have enjoyed remarkable insulation from the ‘public’ they professed to serve, remaining instead wholly product-oriented. And although marketing strategies today appear almost ubiquitous (identifying a regional museum in New Zealand which does not claim at least some use of marketing tools would be extremely difficult), the chief concern is still arguably not consumer satisfaction; rather such strategies are functional tactics employed simply to find consumers who will appreciate the product (Kolb, 2005). Furthermore, traditional museums have lagged behind other cultural spheres in adopting even this approach. The integration of marketing and tourism has been far from consistent or even wanted by all museum ‘producers’, including many museum curators outside of

major tourist destinations (Prentice, 2001). As a more general principle, it is widely acknowledged that museums internationally have lagged considerably in conducting useful visitor research (cf. Tobelem, 1997; Black, 2005).

In contrast, contemporary museums are much more closely directed by the customer's perceived wants, which is evident across a range of phenomena such as management structures—for example, the replacement of traditional curators with 'Experience Hosts'—(Witcomb, 2003), inviting exhibition layout, and the much-debated integration of interactive technologies. But remarkably even here the market-led philosophy is less than pure. As Lee (2005) argues, 'marketization' is not a clear-cut or one-sided change because cultural organizations across the board still straddle an "orientational dilemma" (Lee, 2005, p.295) when it comes to adopting market logic. Despite notable developments in arts marketing theory since the mid-1990s, museums are still embedded within a Romantic notion of arts and culture, whereby the 'product' and the organization itself are regarded as paramount, with intrinsic value to all society (Upchurch, 2004; Kolb, 2005; Lee, 2005). This of course is at odds with a free-market ideology which privileges demand.

Museum marketing theory has attempted to bridge this contradiction by extending the definition of the product to include a "total package of experience" (Lee, 2005, p.297). Kotler and Kotler (1998) in particular have aligned the museum product (or actual exhibition) to all kinds of simultaneous experiences, including education, recreation, sociability, aestheticism, and celebration. It is assumed that all of these can be catered for without modifying or debasing the "core" product, by creating various "secondary" products that facilitate consumption of the core activities (McLean, 1997, p.107). Thus producer authority can be retained to a degree because a customer-orientation is applied only to the augmented products, which include such things as carpark and building accessibility, staff hospitality, quality catering, unique gift items, interesting events programmes, and welcoming signage (Lee, 2005).

Marketization is, however, still that: a contradiction inherent within the literature. What remains to be seen is how current museum practice in New

Zealand deals with this dilemma. If the AWMM ignores and/or reduces marketing to mere function this would suggest that traditional, producer authority persists despite rhetoric to the contrary. If it instead constructs contradictory discourses—that of fulfilling a cultural and social mission vis-à-vis satisfying demand—it could be argued that the distinction between traditional and contemporary museums is indeed dissolving.

1.3.3 Promotional Culture and the ‘Smiling’ Professions

Contemporary culture has also been characterised as ‘promotional’ (Wernick, 1991; Featherstone, 1991). In his book *Promotional Culture*, Andrew Wernick uses the term to refer to “advertising and its practices taken in the widest and most generic sense” (1991, p.vii); denoting a generalised, rhetorical form of communication that, it is argued, has moved beyond purely commercial spheres of discourse (and into the cultural, social, and political) in much the same way that both marketization and commodification have. Indeed, according to Fairclough (1993), ‘promotional culture’ can be interpreted as a consequence of both of these processes. As social life has been reconstructed along market lines, promotion has come to dominate social relations in the quest to sell not just goods and services, but also organisations, ideas, people, and identities.

This generalization of promotional discourse has a number of implications for museums. One broad aspect is a documented shift in the relative salience of different semiotic modalities used for communication (Fairclough, 1993). Museums are increasingly subject to a widespread trend for greater use of visual imagery, whether in exhibition, official documents, or overtly promotional materials such as advertising and signage. Many such texts can also be regarded as relatively ‘new’: various traditional forms of communication have arguably been colonised by consumer advertising to produce hybrid, partly-promotional genres such as public-sector “prospectuses”, and staff curriculum vitae (Fairclough, 1993, p.141). Contemporary museums are therefore more likely to make use of visual communication and promotional genres; yet the traditional museum undoubtedly incorporates both to some degree, in line with traditional

arts marketing theory which appropriates marketing as a tool (see Section 1.3.2).

Promotional discourse also brings up the wider question of how public museums address the audience they both produce and represent. Although Wernick's assessment is that promotional culture is "radically deficient in good faith" (1991, p.194); its practices also potentially open the door for more democratic dialogue. If the majority of communication is now promotional to some degree, communication itself has arguably become just as important as content. As John Hartley suggests in *The Politics of Pictures* (1992), museums are now part of a group of 'smiling professions', in which performance is measured by "consumer satisfaction, where self is dedicated to other, success to service, where knowledge is niceness and education is entertainment" (Hartley, 1992, p.134). Promotional communication thus helps to ensure that the audience is not forgotten in the work of museums: indeed, one argument in support of the contemporary museum is that the message is often lost when traditional museum 'experts' are not also good communicators. The flipside of this argument is, of course, that questions still remain about the long-term effects of 'smiling' on the production of specialised knowledge (Witcomb, 2003).

But for better or worse, it is predicted that a movement towards 'smiling' also comes to bear upon the AWMM. And according to Witcomb (2003), it will most likely manifest in language that attempts to define the 'core duties' of a museum. Whereas traditionally these have been "collecting, interpreting and exhibiting" (all noticeably curatorial and custodial), contemporary definitions are more likely to involve "access, social responsibility and community involvement" (Witcomb, 2003, p.59). It will also manifest in the intended audience of museum texts, whereby "promotional material addresses readerships as consumers or clients" (Fairclough, 1993, p.157). What is less predictable however is whether the combined forces of commodification, marketization, and promotional discourse are as totalizing as the literature claims. Have they indeed rendered a singular new identity for the AWMM, or is there still a place for the traditional museum in New Zealand?

Chapter 2: METHODOLOGY

This chapter draws on the thematic work of Chapter One, in order to delineate the theoretical approach which informs the investigation pursued in this dissertation. Firstly, it locates the project philosophically by defining concepts key to discourse analytic methodology. It then presents the specific formulation of discourse theory that underpins the research, via references to other published studies. In doing so, it defines and justifies the parameters within which the analysis will take place. The collection of data and its detailed analyses are then described in full.

2.1 Discourse and Ontologic Assumptions

Although there are many definitions of discourse in the literature, discourse analytic approaches share the belief that language is not neutral or transparent. Rather it is interpreted across the spectrum as constitutive, in that it produces (to varying degree) our lived, social realities. Thus according to Norman Fairclough, 'discourse' is a social practice, or:

"...a particular way of representing some part of the (physical, social, psychological) world – there are alternative and often competing discourses, associated with different groups of people in different social positions."

(Fairclough, 2003, p.17)

Such representation is thought to be found within an "interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception" (Hardy & Phillips, 2002, p.3). If a 'text' is a material manifestation of discourse (Hardy & Phillips, 2002), the form it may take is limited only by the parameters of communication. Thus a host of research sites, from conversational speech and official documents, to the more "semiotic" (Fairclough, 2001, p.229) visual imagery and body-language, can and have been studied to ascertain the effects

of language in a similarly diverse range of social processes¹⁰ (Fairclough, 2001). Texts are also regarded as belonging to one or multiple ‘genres’, meaning uses of language associated with particular social activities (Fairclough, 1993)—for example a job interview, a conversation between close friends, or indeed, an annual report.

The analysis of discourse therefore reflects a “social constructivist epistemology” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002, p.1) vis-à-vis various other qualitative methods used within the social sciences. As a naturalistic, or poststructuralist paradigm (Grant & Giddings, 2002), it has been described as both a resource with which to research change in contemporary life (Fairclough, 2001), as well as a lens through which discourses can be read (Carabine, 2001). Amid the range of approaches that comprise discourse analysis, Phillips and Ravasi (1998, cited in Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.19) have identified four main perspectives along the key theoretical dimensions of ‘constructivist—critical’ and ‘context—text’. These continua denote the degree to which research places emphasis on power dynamics over social construction, and on the wider, distal social context versus the text (and its immediate, or proximate context) respectively (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.19). Thus *social linguistic analysis* can be classified as constructivist and text-based, whereas *interpretive structuralism* analyses the wider context in greater depth. Similarly, *critical linguistic analysis* focuses on individual texts, but with a “strong interest in the dynamics of power that surround the text” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.27); while *critical discourse analysis* is less concerned with fine-grained micro-analysis and more with the distal role of discursive activity.

Discourse analysis is also, therefore, a methodology rather than simply a method (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). As an epistemology it both explains the nature of reality (ontology) *and* provides a set of inductive techniques for studying it (methodology). Thus it has been noted that many qualitative techniques or processes of sorting can be discourse methods, as long as

¹⁰ See for example, Carabine’s (2001) genealogical investigation of discourses of ‘sexuality’ within social policy; Fairclough’s (1993) critical analysis of the ‘marketization’ of university discourse, and Wetherell & Potter’s (1992) concern with the language of ‘racism’.

discourse analytic assumptions underpin them (Taylor, 2001; Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

2.2 The Present Perspective

The methodology for this study takes as its starting point the techniques of critical discourse analysis (CDA) outlined by Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1993, 2001, 2003). CDA provides a useful framework for marrying language analysis with social theory, as it focuses upon the role of discursive activity in constituting and sustaining unequal power relations (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997). As the case is here, CDA research similarly begins with social issues and/or their representation, rather than with the texts or interactions themselves (Fairclough, 2001).

According to van Dijk, the purpose of CDA is to “describe and explain how power abuse is enacted, reproduced or legitimated by the talk and text of dominant groups and institutions” (1996, p.84). However as Phillips and Hardy point out, much work ostensibly within the critical tradition is really more concerned with the way in which discourses ensure that certain phenomena are “created, reified, and taken for granted and come to constitute that [social] ‘reality’ ” (2002, p.21) than power and politics *per se*. It is arguably beyond the scope of this study to examine distal political dynamics of late capitalism in-depth. Nor is it necessarily my desire to change discursive practices—the primary focus of CDA (Fairclough, 1993)—within the cultural sector. Rather the concern at hand is the extent to which discourses from the private sphere have come to constitute the ‘reality’ of the public sphere.

As a result, the methodology has been adapted to incorporate much more of a constructivist perspective (see Section 2.1). It is therefore somewhat eclectic in that it also draws on elements of the interpretive structuralist approach. This domain has been identified as particularly useful in understanding “macrochanges in broad discourses over periods of time” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.25). As the aim of this study is to investigate the alleged marketization

of a New Zealand public museum, the focus here lies more with the broader, institutional context of this organisation and its evolution across time. Thus akin to Hirsch's (1986) study of changes in the meaning of organisational 'takeover'; Waller's (1996) historical analysis of discursive juxtaposition between the New Zealand film industry and 'national identity'; and Crowther's (2002) semiotic critique of corporate reporting, the methodology has been modified in order to look at changes in the social context of the 'museum'—and the discourse(s) that support it—without an absolute concern for 'unequal' forms of power in discourse and the resulting constellations of social advantage or disadvantage.

This essentially "explorative" (Crowther, 2002, p.2) framework also draws equally upon Boyatzis's (1998) formulation of thematic analysis. As Boyatzis himself points out, when historical documents are the source material, "...questions about the unit of coding become the most complex" (1998, p.64). His approach is therefore understood not as a separate 'method' in its own right, but as a complement to a more micro-analytic discourse analysis. Thematic analysis involves identifying and coding 'themes', or patterns, which are:

"...found in the information that...may be identified at the manifest level (directly observable in the information) or at the latent level (underlying the phenomenon)."

(Boyatzis, 1998, p.vii)

However in the present study this analysis is done without regard to both Boyatzis's (1996) positivist insistence on 'representative' sampling and interrater reliability, as well as his contention that raw data (or 'text') can be sourced only from an interpersonal domain. In this way I seek to use thematic analysis not as a bridge between quantitative and qualitative paradigms (Boyatzis, 1996), but rather as a device for managing the content of the raw data. Although this was motivated chiefly by practical concerns, such a "hybrid" approach is still sanctioned by Boyatzis who validates my use of prior research as a "guide for articulation of meaningful themes" (1996, p.52) *even when* the analysis is primarily data-driven. This also avoids the controversial practice of identifying a dependent variable on which to code various themes.

2.3 Sampling

In selecting the annual report as one generic form of text worthy of research, a number of other sources of data have been ignored, which is a problem associated with discourse analysis generally (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Here a combination of practical and theoretical arguments can be made in support of this decision.

Due to the logistics of an Honours dissertation, practical concerns about the access, feasibility, and availability of data were paramount. Thus annual reports were chosen (amongst other texts such as memos, emails, speech, exhibition and publicity materials) for their public and historical nature. This ensured likelihood of access, whilst simultaneously avoiding potential ethical problems of commercial sensitivity or participant recruitment. At the same time it was assumed that, because annual reports are systematically related to each other, they could be seen as constructing the organisation more fully than, for example, publicity materials (which might only comprise the isolated discursive work of a solitary marketing department). In this way they can be seen as representing a body of 'statements' (Foucault, 1979) which—although embedded within broader discursive flows—rise “above the flux of everyday oral discourse” (Stenson & Watt, 1999, p.192).

Furthermore, as Crowther argues, the genre of the annual report has evolved in modern history to be little more than an “image creation” mechanism (Crowther, 2002, p.12). Thus with a concern for the broad marketization of museum discourse, annual reports were of interest in themselves as having “migrated in an inter-textual chain from commercial management discourse into the public sector” (Stenson & Watt, 1999, p.194). If language really does constitute, or “blur” (Taylor, 2001, p.9) into practice, then it is highly likely that commodified museum practice and commodified museum reporting are inter-woven discursive phenomena.

Consequently, four annual reports from the AWMM were chosen for comparison across distinct yet contemporary time periods (1978/79, 1988/89,

1998/99, and the most recently available, 2005/06). Again this arguably narrow selection was not completely arbitrary: both theoretical and more data-oriented justifications can be provided for sampling from these time periods. Firstly, it was considered important to compare evidence from both before and after the 1984 General Election, in order to encounter discursive change post-neoliberal reform (see Section 1.1). In addition, the 1998/99 Report (Auckland Museum, 1999) was selected as it represents an identifiable point of rupture, or “discursive struggle” (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.67), from which the observance of discursive activity can be made more meaningful (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). It is somewhat unique in that it was the first (and only) time that the tasks of the annual report were divided across multiple publications. Consequently, the text under analysis from that year represents the Museum Trust Board’s statutory obligation only, with a more extensive, yet wholly supplementary, ‘Annual’ published separately to “further inform readers on aspects of the Museum’s work” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.5). Interestingly, this ‘Annual’ was not included alongside the statutory Report at the time of printing, and is no longer available from the Museum Library. As an historical document, it cannot therefore be considered to have risen above ‘everyday discourse’ in quite the same manner.

It was also of interest to source a very recent report in recognition of the continuing development of the public ‘museum’. As a result, the chronological distance between each Report became irregular in the final instance.

2.4 Data Collection

The ‘hybrid’ version of textual analysis discussed in Section 2.2 was thus used to broadly analyse the content of the four annual reports from the AWMM. These were accessed as far as possible online, or where this was not possible, retrieved from the Auckland Museum Library. The reports were compared across time in an attempt to uncover both a shift in emphasis, as well as any corresponding persuasive, or ‘rhetorical’ features (Gill, 1997).

The genre of these texts prescribed a primary concern with their linguistic (versus 'semiotic') properties and the processes of text production (rather than consumption). However, because discursive themes can operate through both the texture and semantic content of texts (Stenson & Watt, 1999), a considerable discussion of texture, form, and textual organisation was necessary for a fuller understanding. Here the research was in part directed by studies such as those by Fairclough (1993; 2001) and also Stenson and Watt (1999), which attend to official documents.

Recurring themes relevant to the research question were then identified, as well as key categories and terms, consistency and inconsistency, functions, broad variation and omissions (Tonkiss, 1998). These themes correlated to those identified in Chapter One, and hence shaped the analysis with a search for evidence of commodification and underlying assumptions about the meaning of 'culture'; marketization and orientational dilemma; and use of promotional discourses with reference to 'smiling'. As suggested by Boyatzis (1996), this process was not fixed: data was returned to when needed to establish a link between the discursive evidence and theory. Identifying multiple instances in which the themes were visible was therefore useful in strengthening their validity (Neuman, 2003).

Chapter 3: DATA ANALYSIS

The four Reports from the AWMM (Auckland Museum 1979, 1989, 1999, 2006) differ noticeably in form and content across the time period under review. Most salient is the similarity between the earliest two (Auckland Museum 1979, 1989) which have been compiled from what are represented as almost separate entities within an 'umbrella' institution. In contrast, the most recent two (Auckland Museum 1999, 2006) are formal versions of the 'marketized' official report genre (Stenson & Watt, 1999), incorporating increasing levels of commercial management discourse across multiple sections. In these two, representation of the 'Museum' as the overarching entity is much more apparent. Unsurprisingly, the principal elements of continuity between all four are the use of declarative statements as befitting this genre, as well as a set of financial reports outlining major cashflows to and from the Museum. However, even within these two aspects there are differences, as well as a number of other discursive changes tracked between each progressive decade. In what follows, these changes are related back to the themes identified in Section 1.3, outlined with relevant examples, and subsequently discussed in detailed commentary.

3.1 Texture, Form, and Organisation

Both the 1979 and 1989 Reports appear, on the surface, to construct more or less the same 'museum'. Visually, the two Reports are virtually identical: both are of comparative length (71 and 87 A5 pages respectively); both use fonts inconsistently between sections suggesting a lack of over-arching design; both utilise space economically; and both are plain in black and white print, each illustrated by only four photographs (excluding the front and back covers). Likewise, both covers depict ethnographic and artistic 'purchases' for the year of publication.

They are also structurally similar, with both comprising between eight and ten main sections. Significantly, neither provides a contents page. It is therefore difficult to navigate the documents non-linearly: these Reports must be read in their entirety, with no provision for speedy indexing or cross-referencing. Such an ostensibly simple omission in fact seems to assume a very narrow readership of Museum members and public-sector officials, to whom all the information is deemed relevant. This in turn suggests that there has been no attempt via this document, at least structurally, to sell or promote the Museum to outside or private interests.

If there is indeed an implicit audience, it soon becomes explicit when the first and foremost section of both Reports bears the title "Reports to Members" (Auckland Museum, 1979, p. 5; 1989, p.9). These appear subsequent to lists of Officers, Staff, and Past Presidents of the Auckland Institute and Museum¹¹, and are dedicated to informing the reader of important happenings both museum-wide and specific to what might be described as the individual 'scholarly' departments of the Museum (versus more arbitrary, administrative departmental divisions). These 'Reports' thus begin broadly, with an official address from the 'President', the 'Chairman [sic] of the Trust Board' and the 'Director' respectively, under sub-headings such as 'Awards', 'Council', 'Obituary', 'Institute Lectures and Meetings', 'Gifts', 'Local Authority Contributions', 'Attendances', and 'Publications' (amongst others).

The summaries from individual, specialist departments then follow, although there is some evidence of rearrangement by the latter publication (Auckland Museum 1989). Most notable is a switch to alphabetical ordering, suggesting that more attention has been paid to editing the document; as well as the introduction of entirely new departments and the elimination of several old ones. Hence in 1979 there is feedback from the 'E. Earle Vaile Archaeologist', 'Curator of Applied Arts', 'Curator of War Relics', 'Botanist', 'Entomologist', 'Malacologist', 'Honorary Research Associate in Mollusca', 'Marine Biologist',

¹¹ The Auckland Museum's governing body was the Auckland Institute and Museum until 1996, when the Auckland War Memorial Museum Act 1996 saw the formation of the Auckland Museum Trust Board. Today, the Institute Council makes four appointments to the Trust Board but otherwise plays no part in the governance of the Museum (Auckland Museum, 2001).

'Associate Ornithologist', and the Librarian. By 1989, this segment has abandoned the practice of referring to departments by a singular, pseudo-adjectival role, and thus presents summaries from the wider 'Applied Arts', 'Archaeology', 'Botany', 'Conservation', 'Display', 'Education', 'Entomology', 'Ethnology', 'Liaison Service', 'Library', 'Marine Biology', 'Ornithology', an 'Astronomical Section', 'Conchology Section', and a 'Maritime Section'.

The latter sections of these two Reports also contain a number of similarities. Both commit considerable space to a full listing of both the 'Benefactors of the Auckland Institute and Museum' and the various relevant collection 'Acquisitions'. Both also relegate a set of relatively straightforward financial data virtually until the end, where it is presented at times in Landscape orientation, and with no unifying title.

In stark contrast, the later Reports (Auckland Museum 1999 and 2006) reveal a very different format when compared to the earlier two, and also when compared to each other. Overall they are both multi-semiotic, highly processed, and visually cohesive texts, indicating a marked shift towards construction of the Museum as a unified 'whole' (versus a set of individual departments). Because the 1999 Report was divided across two publications (see Section 2.5), the 2006 Report is also significantly longer in length, (77 A4 pages), than its 1999 predecessor (35 A4 pages). Thus while the 1999 Report employs a consistent, but nonetheless bland and generic layout, the 2006 Report makes dedicated use of colour and digital photography to more inviting effect. Most obvious in this respect is the difference between 1999's black and white, text and logo-only cover; and 2006's eye-catching image of insect specimens tagged in an old-fashioned, handwritten script.

Moreover, the only real structural continuity between the four documents is the continued presence of a Chairman's and a Director's report. Unlike the earlier versions, both Reports supply Contents pages for easy navigation; however in these two the updated design-enhanced Mission Statements precede this, promoting them at least outwardly to higher importance than previously.

By 1999 the departmental summaries have been entirely replaced by a set of “Key Performance Indicators” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.10) and then “Statement[s] of Service Performance” (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.12) in 2006, which broadly outline the Museum’s achievements (relative to operationalised goals) as a whole. In both cases, these ‘performance’ sections act as the new focal point of the Reports, and directly mirror the language and structure of their respective Mission Statements. They are also itemised in tabular form, with headings numbered and repeated for easy reference.

In addition, this particular section is considerably more extensive in 2006, and has also been pre-empted by a one-page summary entitled ‘Performance at a Glance’, placed strategically on the inside front cover. Such an explicit use of synopsis, coupled with presentation by simple bar and pie chart, points to an intended audience very different from that observed in the three earlier Reports. No longer is the reader presumed to have an interest in all parts of the Report: their attention is drawn to the main financial outcomes immediately upon opening it. They are, however, assumed to be able to interpret these discursive devices, which to some extent points to a discourse in which “experts address experts” (Stenson & Watt, 1999, p.194). Although in this case it is not so clearly just *museum* experts that this Report is written for.

Having considered the texture of each document as a whole, I now move on to consider the data in relation to each theme: culture and commodification, marketization and orientational dilemma, and finally promotional culture.

3.2 Culture and Commodification

Interestingly, changes in discussion of culture occur just as incrementally as the differences observed so far. The first two reports retain a similar approach towards discussion of the year’s main exhibitions, which includes the naming of a selection within a dedicated ‘Display’ section, alongside highlights and brief details of interest. Unfortunately, this limited data makes deciphering

constructions of narrative or otherwise relatively difficult. However exhibition content in itself is still revealing.

In 1978/1979, thirteen special exhibitions were held, all utilising the museum's reserve collections to various degree. Thus the rather traditional, themed *Craft New Zealand* preceded *Japanese Bronzes of the late 19th Century*, *Regional Variation in Maori Carving*, and the geographical display *Auckland—Past and Future Landscapes* (Auckland Museum, 1979, p.43). Remarkably just ten years later, the special programme had been developed to include the international exhibition *Coke—Designing a World Brand*, which is described as a “very popular...panorama of popular culture and successful advertising” (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.28), brought to the AWMM in part by Coca-Cola South Pacific Ltd. Even the Auckland-based exhibitions of this year were organised around external events in the architecture industry.

In contrast, the 1999 Report has no dedicated discussion of exhibitions, but instead disperses their (incomplete) documentation within both the Director's Report and the Key Performance Indicators (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.8 /14). From this one can piece together a varied programme consisting of *Precious Legacy*, an international exhibition of Nazi-confiscated Judaic treasures; a local collection of textiles by *The Mulvany Sisters*; and the noticeably un-discussed *Wearable Art* (perhaps because it produced a noticeable income deficit). However, earlier in the Report it seemingly invokes the contemporary by acknowledging contradictions about the ethnographic construction of history and culture. In an opening, or 'Mission' statement, the first aim is to be the “hub of our culture” by both “caring for treasures” and “interpreting our heritage” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.2). Here, then, culture is simultaneously a found object *and* a social construction.

The 2006 Report to some extent undoes this work by presenting a very ethnographic conception of culture when discussing the Maori and Pacific galleries. It does, however, provide more exhibitionary detail (as might be expected post-reintegration of the two documents), constructed in an identical format to the 1999 Report. Thus here we again see a mixed programme of

traditional ethnographic and natural history exhibitions (*Volcanoes, NZ Glass, Ko Tawa*) alongside several more populist—yet still cohesively curated—exhibitions (*Dinosaur's Alive, Zambesi: edge of darkness, Veteran's Club*) which draw in part on the “tried and true formula of dinosaurs” (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.37); contemporary industry (fashion); and popular wartime memorabilia. Yet the most interesting change is the way in which recent acquisitions are discussed. In all former Reports, additions to the museum collection are simply listed, whereas in 2006 there is a detailed description of each major piece, supported by background information. Tellingly, the contemporary works¹² all require justification, whereas the more historical items are deemed worthy of purchase on their own merits.

What the data reveals very clearly is a marked tendency towards commodification. The early Reports contain little mention of economic activity, and even go so far as to reject the notion. The 1989 Report, for example, briefly addresses service charges by stating that “Charging, however, remains an uncommon occurrence as most identifications [of plant specimens, undertaken by the ‘Botany’ department] result in a useful extension of scientific knowledge” (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.25). But by 1999, “total commercial activity revenues” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.5) are given pride of place at the top of both the Chairman’s Message and the Key Performance Indicators. Both sections are dominated by discourses of finance and commercial management, and revenues are framed succinctly but positively: often joined in collocation to a negative (deficit) outcome by an ‘although’ clause, which negates the importance of the deficits. This is particularly telling given that the opening statement makes it ambiguous as to whether or not the AWMM falls within creative industry discourse.

1999 is also the year in which the admission by donation entry regime is first evaluated (see Section 1.2). This too is framed positively, by dispelling acknowledged debate with the claim that “visitor response...has been encouraging” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.5). In addition, this marked shift

¹² For example, four designer shopping totes by contemporary Maori artist Gina Matchitt, versus a 1898 Hotunui watercolour by artist Christopher Aubrey (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.30).

towards user-pays is reflected dramatically elsewhere: revenues from the Museum Library reportedly rose by 100 percent on the previous year, which was only half of the 200 percent objective. This particular piece of information is astonishingly controversial. Hidden away amongst the Key Performance Indicators, it appears in a sub-section entitled 'Sharing Knowledge', which is a blatant contradiction in terms: one effect of increasing visitor costs for use of the library is surely the creation of a *barrier* to knowledge.

The final Report continues this trend of commodification with an increased devotion to peripheral museum products. For the first time, a special exhibition is reported as finishing "196% above budget" (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.13), and is underpinned by an emphasis upon "commercial services which extend the visitor experience whilst returning revenue to the Museum" (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.32). The fact that commercial returns are used as the major benchmark for success (in addition to attendance statistics) shows the colonisation of the document by a discourse of consumption. Likewise, by not questioning the inaugural mention of the new quarterly MQ magazine; extensive education and lecture programmes; and increased revenue from the "hospitality portfolio"—involving "Front of House staff"—(Auckland Museum, 2006, p.34), the 2006 Report constructs this obvious diversification as entirely natural.

3.3 Marketization and Orientational Dilemma

There is much evidence to be found in the data that supports the conclusion of a shift to marketization. Although without doubt each separate Report was constrained by an operating budget, it is really only the latter two which explicitly concern themselves with revenue surplus, procuring corporate sponsorships, and external partnerships. There is a hint of corporate management re-structuring in the 1989 Report, when the President advises that although it is "unsettling for the staff, the Council is convinced that the reorganisation is essential for the future progress of the Museum" (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.11). Subsequently, three Assistant Directors are introduced,

alongside the AWMM's very first Mission Statement. Although the 1984 General Election is not mentioned specifically, its effect is hinted at by the Chairman who laments the "changed economic circumstances" (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.14) of the time.

In both the latter Reports we see the complete development of this structural change, with organisational charts included to visually highlight management hierarchies. Here, commercial and corporate jargon is very conspicuous with multiple references to 'strategic appointments', 'outputs and measurable targets', 'key objectives', 'cost per visitor', 'Human Resources', 'competency reviews', an 'Organisation Culture Survey', 'dual matrix-managed responsibilities', and 'maintaining accountability'; all of which are eventually justified by the AWMM's supposed (and vague) responsibility to a "new generation" (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.40). However, again it is not a complete transition. The traditional, non-profit funding model does appear to still have some influence: a 1999 commitment to "fundraising" and the "effective use of available resources" (Auckland Museum, 1999, p. 2) implies a far more reactionary approach than the aggressive, promotional model of the contemporary museum.

The task of identifying a recent orientational dilemma is less straightforward. Nonetheless, the 1979 and 1989 Reports can be characterised as overwhelmingly producer-oriented. Notwithstanding organisational and heading changes discussed in Section 3.1, the authorial voices of each specialist AWMM department remain explicitly apparent in both Reports, since not only is each individual summary signed by the respective writer, the first person (I/we/my/our) is also used repeatedly across all summaries. Although this appears in combination with more formal grammatical structures like passive verb construction—as exemplified by the statement that "Various conservation reports have been prepared by the staff" (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.27)—the text remains largely personal and clearly fragmented amongst multiple contributors. This museum is not, then, constructed as being an entity much more than the sum of its 'members'. The majority of the summaries, in particular the 'Maritime Section' of the 1989 Report, read very much like the

minutes of a members-only 'interest' society. They also all consist primarily of succinct, declarative statements of events and departmental activities, with a repeated concern for individually acknowledging the contributions by, and changes to, museum staff. The overall effect is therefore a highly authoritative and member- (read producer-) oriented museum, which is aptly reinforced by the immediate juxtaposition of a section entitled 'Staff Publications' in both the 1979 and 1989 Reports. This mix of formal yet personal tone is thus a bridge between the author, a narrow but familiar readership, and the requirements of an 'official' and historical document.

However this certainly changes over time. By replacing these with "Key Performance Indicators" (1999) and "Statement[s] of Service Performance" (2006; see Section 3.1), the highly individual authorial voice that once set the tone of this discourse has almost entirely disappeared. Today's AWMM is no longer a collection of individual scholarly pursuits: it is a service organisation bound together by common evaluation criteria. In this vein, it is referred to in the third person, and individual staff members remain unidentified until they appear diagrammatically in the new 'Appendix' (compared with being acknowledged adjacent to the front cover in the earlier Reports). Although design features suggest that these 'Statements' have been produced by dedicated writers and editors, it is unclear just who those individuals might be.

More importantly in the early Reports, marketing tactics are largely absent whilst the later Reports espouse both marketing philosophy and collection-centred loyalties. In fact, the 1979 Report goes so far as to frame customer service requests (from the Library's 'Photograph Collection') as an extra drain that "takes up a great deal of time" (Auckland Museum 1979, p.40), thus detracting from the 'real' purpose of museum practice. By 1989 there is some recognition of the AWMM's "value as a tourist facility" (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.12), however this is discussed only in regards to a funding grant from the industry. There is also some wind of orientational change with the first mention of "marketing workshops" (p.36) and a call from the Liaison Service for "clearly stated policies to define the scope and purpose of museums and their

collections” (p.35). However this remains a request yet to be acted upon by management.

The 1999 Report itself is designed much more with readability and the consumer in mind, however (most likely due to the splitting of documents) there is little explicit reference to museum purpose outside of that contained within the ‘Opening [Mission] Statement’. Across the three tenets of “Caring for Treasures”, “Gathering Knowledge”, and “Sharing Knowledge” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.2) it seems that on the surface, market concerns have been given the least weight. Interestingly however, on the very same page the AWMM is constructed alternatively as an “attraction” with an ameliorated identity concerning the “Auckland region, then New Zealand, the South Pacific and generally the rest of the world” (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.2). This can be interpreted as a direct bid for tourism: an “attraction” is typically not intended for local residents.

Moreover, by 2006 the once-singular ‘audience’ has become much more diverse: simultaneously ‘Aucklanders’, ‘New Zealanders’, ‘our communities’, ‘the public’, ‘visitors’, and most crucially, ‘customers’. It is to these groups that the museum professes to serve, on the proviso that “in our game, participation and reach is everything” (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.3). This “integrated, first world, 21st Century [read contemporary]” (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.3) outlook is later strongly reinforced by the claim that a market-led approach has been integrated into the very core of the museum:

“One of the reasons for the success of the Museum in increasing its positive engagement with the local community has been the very effective and integrated marketing of all its programmes and services. Understanding that marketing must be integrated right from the inception of the various programmes and not a later ‘add on’ has ensured that the marketing message is consistent and persuasive.”

(Auckland Museum, 2006, p.34)

Yet even at this late stage the AWMM still shies from referring to the 'consumer'. It may be championing a cohesive marketing framework, but this is still underpinned by traditional museum roles and functions. Even the paramount emphasis on 'Access and Engagement' within the 'Statements of Service Performance' has an educational thrust, which is very closely followed by a set of operationalised goals pertaining to achieve status as "New Zealand's leading object based learning and research centre" (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.14). And there is concrete evidence to back this up: the Report details much development work, particularly with relation to Maori and Pacific resources, the AWMM's War Memorial role, and a working research relationship with Auckland University.

3.4 Promotional Discourse

As outlined in Section 3.1, the Reports show clear changes over time with regards to image content, multi-semiosis, and the acknowledgement of a potential canon of readers who may have something to offer in return. The latter Reports may thus be technically longer in terms of content, yet in comparison they are easily navigable, highly legible and visually stimulating documents. In this way the 2006 Report in particular falls within the partly-promotional and inviting 'prospectus' genre: here the aim is to summarise activity from the year preceeding, but to do so in a way that constructs the AWMM as a highly developed, dedicated, and innovative organisation worthy of cross-industry and commercial investment. In fact, the mere act of re-integrating the Report into one document suggests that traditional reporting functions can or no longer need to be separated from the contemporary requisite to promote.

Consequently, the 2006 Report reveals a number of promotional features that have not been seen before. There is a marked use of design logos to delineate major sponsors (versus the simple listing used in previous Reports). There is a dedicated 'Trust Board' section (pp. 4-5), featuring short 'biographies' (or curriculum vitae) of each member, accompanied by a simple but effective headshot. Most noticeably, there is also the introduction of several one-page

case study-like profiles of various major exhibitions—again with attractive accompanying photo.

This marked revolution of the Reports' visual language has also encroached, albeit to lesser extent, upon the written. Nowhere is this more obvious than in dramatic changes to the 'Mission Statement' concept at each point in time. This section has undergone serious re-drafting in each new Report: entirely absent in 1979, it is not until 1989 that we see the Museum's very first attempt at incorporating one. Interestingly, the President Mrs S. M. Weight describes this addition as having been "...printed [merely] for information, adjacent to the Annual Accounts" (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.11). Her account thus at once belies any importance that the new construction of a Statement might have been given. Hidden away between 'Acquisitions' and said accounts, the 'Mission' comprises an over-arching goal¹³, accompanied by seven action clauses (or 'recipes') for achieving that goal. However there has been no attempt to assimilate the language of this Mission into the rest of the document, suggesting that it is more of a superficial change than a fundamental, organisational one.

By 1999 however, this simple goal has been transformed into a 'Vision' and summarised with three clauses, followed by a 'Mission', or three corresponding present participles: "Caring for treasures", "Gathering Knowledge", and "Sharing Knowledge" (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.2). In 2006, this is further distilled to produce three new mantras—"Honouring the past", "Embracing the present", and "Guiding our future" (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.1). Given their renewed precedence at the forefront of each Report it seems convincing that these now attempt to govern at least all subsequent content, if not the day-to-day running of the Museum itself. Yet even here there are inherent contradictions: in a list of 'Values', the traditional notion of being 'Distinguished' is given priority over the more contemporary 'Caring', 'Welcoming', 'Encouraging', and 'Involving'.

¹³ This early Mission Statement is "*To identify and present the culture and environment of New Zealand, those cultures and environments that impinge on New Zealand and the cultures and environments of the world through collection, conservation, research, education and exhibition...*" (Auckland Museum, 1989, p.52).

Such poetic language is also mirrored elsewhere in these texts, such as this narrative and creative use of metaphor from Director Rodney Wilson:

“New Project works for 1998/99 rose, Phoenix-like, from the dust, noise, dirt and disruption of the mid-1998 seismic shear wall construction designed to strengthen the middle section of the Museum building”.

(Auckland Museum, 1999, p.7)

There is also plenty of varied sentence structure, informality, similes, descriptive adjectives, alliteration and repetition evident in the authored sections of the same Report. Such promotional devices can similarly be found throughout the 2006 Report, which is at the same time less encumbered by alienating jargon than its three previous ancestors. Yet this use of language which is not strictly informative or taxonomic cannot be interpreted one-dimensionally as simple evidence of service-oriented ‘smiling’. Enthusiastic descriptions also connote pleasure taken by staff in the collections themselves, depicted for example as “splendid”, “unique”, “finely-carved”; characterised by “valuable...richness”; and requiring “behind-the-scenes craftsmanship” (Auckland Museum, 1999, pp. 7-8).

As this thematic analysis has shown, the raw data is exceptionally rich and at times contradictory. In the following chapter I reflect more concisely upon the Reports, moving on to summarise the ways in which each respective theme illuminates aspects of traditional and contemporary museology constructed at each point in time. These conclusions are informed directly by the background theoretical work of Chapter One.

Chapter Four: DISCUSSION

4.1 Summary

The founding assumption of this dissertation is that the most pertinent current dichotomy surrounding cultural display is in fact a heated debate between those who claim that museums need to change and those who defend traditional practices (Witcomb, 2003). Driving this is uncertainty about how to define 'culture' and just whom it belongs to: are museum collections intrinsically valuable in and of themselves (traditional), or does value accrue from their relationship to a populace (contemporary)? Alternatively, is it possible that both scenarios might currently be true? And how do these identities manifest in New Zealand?

The broad, thematic analysis performed here points to a number of conclusions that suggest New Zealand museum identity is indeed in a state of multisemous flux. As predicted, regional exemplar the AWMM combines elements of both traditional and contemporary museology, but in contrast with much management-based rhetoric, there is plenty of evidence to contradict the simple assumption that the gap between traditional and contemporary can only be bridged in a linear, progressive fashion. In siding with interactive technologies, consumerism and market-led approaches, it is often claimed that museums are overcoming their conservative, elitist stasis and moving forward into cultural and class diversity, and thus, contemporary relevance (Witcomb, 2003). Yet, as I have discovered, the situation is far more complex than such a black-or-white position will allow.

From this sample of Annual Reports representing 1978–2006, it was possible to systematically analyse both linguistic and, to a lesser extent, visual content along several themes grounded in cultural, postmodern, and marketing theory. Together these themes—culture, commodification, marketization, orientation, and promotion—cover a significant proportion of the supposed chasm between

traditional and contemporary museums, and hence provided various markers of change that could be used to assess the AWMM's shifting identity.

As any person with anecdotal experience of major museums might expect, commodification has become quite noticeably normalised over time at all levels of the AWMM visitor 'experience'. Following radical shifts in the external fiscal environment, the later Reports show evidence of a number of user-pays and 'value-added' rescue measures which show little sign of abatement. Indeed as documented, the AWMM is particularly remarkable for its recent Admission by Donation scheme, one unique to New Zealand museums. An array of peripheral museum products completes this contemporary concern: every space and associated experience is put to good revenue-gathering use¹⁴. And this is entirely consistent with the observation that AWMM success is measured largely on income levels. So in this regard, the AWMM is comparable with many of its private leisure and recreation peers: there is at the very least an imperative to turn a profit (although exactly how that profit is utilised will surely be unlike that of many private companies).

In contrast, it was extremely hard to pin the AWMM down as either refuting or embracing popular culture. The later Reports were slightly more likely to reveal evidence of populist curatorial endeavours (often drawing on contemporary local or international industry); however despite 2006's Mission to "Embrace the present" (Auckland Museum, 2006, p.1), they do not construct exhibitionary strategies as overwhelmingly postmodern or conclusively anti-elitist. Even the recent *Zambesi: edge of darkness* (2006)—a celebration of locally-designed consumer fashion—represented the high end of the industry in terms of affordability and accessibility. In most cases contemporary objects have been deemed to warrant further justification (whether explicitly in Report text or when underpinned by a middle-class appreciation for 'good' design), and their mention sides variously with a weak or strong ethnographic worldview depending on the exact objects of focus. This may indeed be a reaction to the criticisms fired at the likes of Te Papa: for a museum steeped in traditional

¹⁴ Although outside the bounds of this research, this also includes a late-2007 (post-analysis) building upgrade which enables corporate hire of a dedicated function area.

history, much reputation and conservative patronage stands to be lost in the fight for heritage and leisure market share. But I argue that this focus is unlikely to be so reactionary. Instead, it is most probably the result of an organisation consistently determined to retain a degree of producer-authority. And given that the ability to determine exhibitionary content is a museum's principal tool with which to do so, this will probably remain the case for some time yet.

Such moderation in turn has implications for marketization and the question of market-orientation. As with commodification, the data provided much evidence of the contemporary influence of marketization on the AWMM. Hence the later documents construct a noticeably accessible yet fiscally responsible and proactive image overall, in comparison with the rather insular, sector-specific and fiscally reactionary nature of the earlier two. This is also accompanied by evidence of real-world management re-structuring, which is presented in the flow-chart manner of a standard corporate report. The rather powerful 'value for money' discourse that is synonymous with marketization (Dicks, 2003b) is thus well and truly present by 2006.

In terms of market-orientation, today's AWMM also sits closer to the new than it does to the old, which to the lay observer may not seem entirely obvious at first glance. Not surprisingly, the two very early Reports remain staunchly traditional when it comes to their primary purpose for being. Evidence of even very limited use of marketing techniques is hard to find within the detailed pages of their departmental summaries, suggesting that producing and retaining custom is something that was largely taken for granted (not, in fact, something that needed to be actively sought as per arts marketing theory). Yet in contrast, the later two show the infiltration of a customer-orientation via the implicit recognition of tourism, the creation of a singular identity devoted to service, and the adoption of a "consistent" marketing message supposedly from the outset of all museum activity (see page 38). Admittedly these developments are less extreme than might be found within the pages of, for example, a recent Te Papa report, however they do depict contemporary museology as I have formulated it in Section 1.3.2. Although there is still much in the 2006 Report to show that education and cultural communities remain major concerns, these

are equally offset by an unrepressed concern for customer demand. This concern places the AWMM squarely amongst those institutions who straddle an orientational 'dilemma', which according to Lee (2005), is the hallmark of a contemporary cultural organisation. As a point of comparison, even Te Papa espouses various public-service, market-contradictory ideals¹⁵: any recipient of taxpayer funding cannot afford not to (Williams, 2001).

Finally, a discourse of promotion has also colonised these Annual Reports. If the old adage that a 'picture speaks a thousand words' rings true, then the spread of visual communication seen here must surely increase the impact of the AWMM's message over time. Interestingly, the division between the first two and final two Reports is not as distinct as it has been for the other themes: the photographic gulf between the 1999 and 2006 Reports ensures that the latter can be distinguished for its heavy use of visual imagery. This may be due to the splitting of documents in 1999; it may also be a result of developments in publishing technology since 1999. But whatever the cause, it is not until 2006 that the AWMM Annual Report can be said to fall squarely within the hybrid, part-advertising genre described by Fairclough (1993).

Of course, how the AWMM officially articulates its own role in writing also has implications for the degree of contemporary promotion. The development of a Mission Statement is particularly conspicuous within this data: each Report differs markedly in how the Statement is constructed and utilised, and even (as in the case of 1979) whether it exists at all. However the drive to promote is less obvious within this text than one might have expected. Although the AWMM may indeed take part in John Hartley (1992)'s 'smiling' across other facets of its operation (it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to confirm this), there is no definitive written suggestion that knowledge is indeed "niceness" or education is equal to "entertainment" (Hartley, 1992, p.134). Instead, the 'core' duties of the AWMM remain arguably custodial even at the end: the third tenet of 2006's Mission ("Guiding our future") is arguably even more producer-oriented than its

¹⁵ For example, Te Papa's very first Mission Statement claims that the organisation is a "forum for the nation to present, explore and preserve the heritage of its cultures and knowledge of the natural environment in order to better understand and treasure the past, enrich the present and meet the challenges of the future" (Te Papa, 1999, p.1).

prior counterpart from 1999 (“Sharing Knowledge”). Of course, this is just one facet of these perceived duties: again it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to delve into behavioural data that might suggest otherwise.

As a result, I stand firmly behind the proposition that museum identity is anything but clear-cut. Although much of the literature to date has focussed on a clean break between the traditional and the contemporary museum, painting a world in which the former must ultimately become the latter if it is to survive, I argue that this is problematic: the divide between the old and the new can instead be bridged quite happily by a continuum. The AWMM found in this sample of Annual Reports is steeped in a long history of collection-centred endeavour, which it still embraces and which can be found even within more contemporary promotional rhetoric describing its own resources as “splendid”, “unique”, and “valuable”. It will, then, probably not become the next Te Papa, even though the city that supports it might indeed be more likely to favour and support a similarly contemporary hybrid complex¹⁶.

Yet while seeking to retain as much organisational authority as possible—more so than Te Papa, which has adopted the inclusive “Our Place” slogan (Tramosch, 1998)—the AWMM is at the same time dictated by consumer demand. However, evidence of this surfaces less within populist display programmes (which would suggest more of a classic marketing approach), and more within the AWMM’s focus on peripheral revenue-gathering activities and the corporate framing of organisational identity. In this way, the AWMM indeed straddles the orientational dilemma common to most arts and cultural organisations, placing it well beyond the traditional public model on a hypothetical continuum, but not quite at a fully-commercialised extreme. And there is no absolute proof that this continuum is a linear trajectory: although differences between the early and later Reports were quite marked, this is also reflective of marked changes in the external environment.

¹⁶ Auckland has a much larger population than Wellington, with more cultural diversity and a higher average income (Statistics New Zealand, 2006).

4.2 Limitations

Although selected strategically (see Section 2.3), it is, nonetheless, hard to insist that the four Reports used for this research are properly representative of the complex order of discourse with a modern museum. The limitations of pursuing an Honours dissertation meant that I was entirely unable to triangulate, and thus, further validate my research across multiple methodologies. It would have, for example, been very interesting to compare a textual analysis with more practice-oriented interview or behavioural data to determine how well texts such as Mission Statements compare to perceptions and opinions from the 'real' world. An organisation's identity is composed of much un-recorded information: that which is spoken and unspoken, the cognition used to process visual imagery, and regular surveys of wider public opinion are but a few examples. Any future research would thus do well to widen my focus on official documents to more unofficial instances of museum identity negotiation. A further tangent might be to target some other area of culture altogether, as the marketization of the discursive practices of museums is but one dimension of the marketization of the cultural sector generally (Fairclough, 1993).

A more specific limitation resides in the nature of the 1999 Report. As discussed in Section 2.3, this Report was sampled deliberately on the assumption that it provided an identifiable point of rupture: the tasks of this Report were divided into two publications (with that under analysis representing only one of these). While I stand by this decision, at the same time I acknowledge that it may also have limited my analysis. As the second document appears to have been designed for the more casual, interested reader (Auckland Museum, 1999, p.5) it may well contain evidence of promotional discourse that my analysis would otherwise have reflected. However, as there is no public holding of this document, I remain unable to confirm this.

Conclusion

To conclude, there is still, it seems, plenty of room for elements of traditional museology at the New Zealand regional level. And while in the AWMM's case these elements are suitably tempered by significant market and public accountability concerns, this dissertation provides no strong basis on which to expect any further radical change in the near future. As I alluded to in Section 1.1, current debates about the need for drastic change reflect very similar debates from earlier periods of the museum's history (Witcomb, 2003). Thus it is unlikely that market mechanisms will have as totalising effect on the public sector as some would seek to claim.

I now bring this dissertation to a close with some brief reflections upon possible uses and implications of the research. While I don't envisage my conclusions to be wholly surprising to those within the dedicated field of museum studies, I do think there is a case for more in-depth research that seeks to construct a classification system that could be used to identify cultural organisations at various stages of their identity development. More importantly however, from a communications and marketing perspective I believe there are lessons to be learnt about the over-simplification of the cultural sector. Too often 'marketing' specialists are hired by the public sector as a solution to various organisational problems, yet the relevant position description invariably makes an understanding of cultural organisations 'desirable, but not necessary'.

What I hope to have shown here is that 'culture' is in fact a highly-specialised pursuit requiring both an understanding of the relevant history and the complexities of modern practice. And this isn't simply a case of distinguishing 'pure' marketing from 'arts' marketing: discursive overlap with the recently-coined 'cultural industries' (culture produced largely in the private sector such as film, fashion, publishing, and design) means that principles derived from 'arts' marketing theory are increasingly being applied to products traditionally conceived of as tangible consumer goods (Kolb, 2005). Instead, working within

the cultural sector requires a sensitivity to the multiple and contradictory influences that impinge on contemporary practice. It also requires a dedicated reflexivity on the part of the cultural worker—one must constantly read ‘between the lines’ (or perhaps, between the discourses) in order to question accepted wisdom and formulate practice philosophies.

What I also hope to have highlighted is the value and potential pleasure involved in pursuing text-based research for cultural topics. There has been a notable shift in recent years towards ‘creative’, or practice-based research within universities. However in the public sector, official written and oral language is still a primary mode of communication, and as such there is a wealth of documentation ripe for research. Indeed, a large part of the AWMM’s history includes the way museum professionals and political figures communicate the role of the AWMM and its relationship to Te Papa. This is true too of other spheres: regardless of the industry, there is just as much to be learnt from what is *not* said or published as what is. This makes a discourse analytic approach to cultural communication a valid and interesting methodology.

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