

## MAKING A PROFESSION

In this spring number of the Bulletin we publish for the first time the names of Canadian candidates who have successfully passed the Diploma Examinations of the Museums Association. In congratulating the five persons concerned, we would point out that it is now possible for the Canadian Museums Association to co-operate with its British counterpart in the establishment of a widely recognized standard of professional qualification. It is true that at the moment only the natural sciences and history have been covered and that further qualified candidates particularly from the field of Art will greatly strengthen the Canadian position. It is hoped that examinations will be held next fall and that an even wider representation in Canada will be attained.

The Museums Association Diploma is recognized throughout Great Britain by the Government and the Municipal Authorities as the professional qualification for museum curators. It is true that in nearly every case the holder of the Diploma has also academic qualifications. But it becomes increasingly necessary to point out that even a Ph.D., given a seat and a desk in a museum, does not automatically become a curator.

Museum aspects in any discipline include much more than the mere academic. It is suggested that the additional experience can be obtained only by working in a museum in some curatorial capacity. Even a wide experience of looking at museums cannot confer this knowledge. Museum Curatorship is compounded of academic knowledge, wide experience in recognizing and handling objects, the understanding of problems in conservation concerning them, and the highly specialized art and science of interpretation which we call display.

We state this clearly here, for there is urgent need of the recognition of the museum profession as a "profession". If, for example, one looks at the yellow pages of the Toronto telephone directory, one finds that 50% of the listed names under the heading of "Museums" are those of art dealers. The Canadian Museums Association has already made representations to the Bell Telephone Company, especially as the Royal Ontario Museum does not appear in the list. Recently representations have been made to the Toronto Postmaster in order that a collecting box for out-going mail might be installed in the Royal Ontario Museum but the request was refused.

The official reason for refusal, I am told, is that postal boxes must be available to the public for twenty-four hours of the day. I imagine that few officials consider museums as places of business, even though my own experience is that people are far more likely to buy books, post cards, and museum souvenirs, if immediate postal facilities are available.

There is, alas, a general idea that museums are a series of shop windows that can be opened up, like an arcade, for so many hours of the day and then, just as easily, turned off like a tap. The lack of appreciation may be very largely our own fault. We are too complacent and too tolerant of amateur interference. By amateur I mean some person who obtains museum employment without previous academic or technical training for the job and with no previous museum experience. Their numbers are increasing and they frequently tell us how to conduct our business.

As an association we allow museum positions to be advertised with conditions that permit this sort of thing. We do not press hard enough for the recognition of the hard road of museum experience. We acquiesce too often in the founding of institutions which have obviously no hope of long term life. These half-alive museums eventually stagnate and add to the lessening of the museum image in the public and the official eye.

THE MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION  
DIPLOMA EXAMINATION NOVEMBER 1963

At our annual meetings we are content to listen with some attention and even with respect to quite unqualified persons. The familiar preamble: "Though I am unfamiliar with your field of work and was somewhat surprised to receive an invitation to address this distinguished gathering today-----" is usually followed by didactic statements on how museums should be run and how our business can best be conducted. A search of the records of two main conferences in North America in the last year will substantiate that statement.

It does not mean, of course, that we are all excellent at our work or that we are omniscient. But can anyone imagine a conference of doctors or dentists, lawyers or ministers of religion tolerating this sort of thing? Unless, of course there was the smell of large sums of money in the offing!

It may be small wonder therefore that the museum continues to be regarded as the home of curiosities both in the galleries and in the curator's office. Museums should be neither the repositories of other people's unwanted objects nor a resting place for persons between social engagements, as some staff members and as many callers appear to believe.

These are strong words, but they must be said and they can be substantiated. The inauguration of training programmes, such as that outlined by the American Association of Museums later in this issue on page 19, and those that one hopes may shortly be inaugurated in the Royal Ontario Museum (which is after all a University museum), and the system of examinations to be continued by the Canadian Museums Association scheme will soon alter the whole character of the museum movement by instituting genuine professionalism.

The tasks that lie ahead of Dr. Jean Sutherland Boggs and the members of her training committee are indeed formidable, but the experience of Dr. Boggs herself and that of her associates can assure us that they will not be balked and that, in fact, a new era will dawn for the whole Association. W.E.S.

The successful candidates in the recent Museums Association examinations were Mrs. Nancy Dunbar (McGill University), Miss Ruth Home (Toronto), Miss Alice Johannsen (McGill University), Dr. Loris S. Russell (Royal Ontario Museum), and Hugh Thompson (National Museum of Canada).

Dr. Russell was awarded Distinction, the first award of this kind for many years.

PAPER F (Administration)

FOUR questions to be answered (including No. 1)

1. Your governing body is planning a new museum and art gallery. As Curator, you have been asked to indicate the needs of the building. How important do you regard the entrance hall? What facilities would you wish to provide there?
2. You have been appointed to the Curatorship of a city Museum. You have three assistants, all of whom will be retiring within the next five years. The exhibition galleries have been undisturbed for the last twenty years and there is a general air of melancholy about the place. What steps would you take to revitalize the Department?
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4. Discuss the importance of research in relation to the other activities of a museum.
5. Describe examples of the significant use of textures in museum displays.
6. Draft a press hand-out giving details of a forthcoming temporary exhibition at your museum.
7. A party of teachers from overseas is visiting your district and has asked to be shown something of the services which the museum provides for local schools. As Schools Service Officer, what arrangements would you make?

## PAPER A (Administration)

FOUR questions (including No. 1) to be answered

1. You are the Curator of a Museum with two branch museums under your control. Your Board is due to meet and you have to prepare a monthly report on the work of your Department. Prepare an imaginary report setting out an agenda and, in note form, outline typical items of business which you are likely to submit to your Board.
2. Your Board, being conscious of the security risks relating to the Museum under your control has asked for a report on this matter. What essential factors should be taken into account and what recommendations would you propose?
3. A new Lecture Hall is being planned for your Museum. What considerations must be taken into account? If you are obliged to accept a dual purpose Lecture Hall, how will this affect the proposal?
4. Outline the sequence of steps to be taken in registering and cataloguing a newly acquired gift collection of local history material.
5. Write brief notes on the principal ways in which the museums and art galleries have been established by authorities in Canada.
6. A recent major purchase by your Department with the help of a grant from an outside source has aroused wide public interest and Press comment. It has been suggested that a "Friends of the Museum" Society should be formed. What would your attitude be to such a proposal? What advice would you give your board about it?
7. In a small museum what procedure would you adopt for handling and recording enquiries, including requests for identifications made by personal callers, by telephone and by correspondence?

## PAPER B (Folk Life and Local History)

FOUR questions to be answered (including No. 1)

1. "In the present state of Canadian historical museums it is more important to collect than to display". Do you agree? Discuss this.
2. How far is it a museum's duty to publish information on folk-life, or local history material in its possession? Describe the types of "popular" and "expert" publications the museum should have available for sale or publicity.
3. Discuss the community needs served by such large folk-museums as Upper Canada Village or the Pioneer Village, Black Creek Conservation Area.
4. Discuss the problems of labelling in "street" and "period room" displays.
5. You are to interview applicants for the post of museum technician (folk-life material). What qualities would you expect of the applicant? Give four questions you would put to him and the main points you would watch for in his replies.
6. As Curator of a small local museum what museum programmes would you organize to:
  - (a) win greater support from municipal authorities
  - (b) obtain financial support from individuals and corporations
  - (c) persuade the schools to use the museum's facilities.
  - (d) attract visitors to the town to visit the museum
  - (e) maintain a high degree of interest over a period of years
7. If modest funds were available to establish a display in a small museum on the lumbering or shipping industry of the town, what steps would you take to plan and set up such an exhibit?

PAPER C (Folk Life and Local History)

FOUR questions to be answered (including No. 1)

1. What do you consider the key qualifications - academic and personal - for the Curator of a folk-life or local history museum?
2. If you were the Curator of a local history museum, what criteria would you apply in the matter of acquisitions for that museum - whether by gift, purchase, or exchange.
3. Describe either:
  - (a) the techniques of preparing the materials and weaving a wool blanket in mid-nineteenth century Ontario.
  - or
  - (b) the method of building a log cabin.
4. As Curator of a small folk-museum or local history museum what action would you take if:
  - (a) Some of the textiles became infested with moths?
  - (b) Leather books and gloves became hard and brittle?
  - (c) Paper documents began to mildew?
  - (d) Wooden objects began to check and warp?
  - (e) Pewter became cloudy?
5. Describe the methods and tools required by our colonial ancestors to make:
  - (a) shingles
  - (b) maple sugar
  - (c) cheese
  - (d) soap
  - (e) shoe leather
6. Discuss the advantages and drawbacks of dioramas in a folk-life or local history museum.
7. What books and journal articles are available for the student of Canadian folk-life? Criticize them. Point out the areas in which you feel more research is required and what evidence is available.

PAPER H (Canadian Geology)

FOUR questions to be answered (including No. 1)

1. "Geology is inextricably linked with the biological and physical sciences, and should be displayed with each of them and not separately". Is this view correct? Discuss its practical implications.
2. Local quarry owners tell you of fossil bones which are becoming visible in their quarry. These prove to be part of a Mesozoic reptile skeleton. What action do you take to recover the specimen and bring it to your museum?
3. To whom would you turn for help and what works of reference would you consult to help you answer one of the following queries:-

"I am digging a well in my farm--What geological deposits will it pass through?"

"I am going to Blankton for my holidays. What is there of geological interest to see?"
4. Many groups of fossils are suitable for zoning rocks. What characters make them suitable? Describe an exhibit to illustrate zoning.
5. If you had \$3,000. to spend on forming a geological laboratory, how would you spend it? What equipment and apparatus would you install?
6. Much of the Northern Hemisphere was glaciated during Pleistocene times. Describe evidence of this and show how you would illustrate it in an exhibition case.
7. Write a label (approx. 200 words) describing an exhibit of polished agates or precious stones or rock-forming minerals.

## PAPER G (Canadian Geology)

FOUR questions to be answered (including No. 1)

1. What types of evidence in sedimentary rocks can be used to elucidate the conditions under which they were formed?
2. Describe and discuss meteorites and their occurrence.  
  
How might they be displayed in the public galleries?
3. Microfossils are important in oil geology. Discuss the reasons for their importance and describe an exhibit to illustrate this.
4. Describe the commoner rock types in a Pre-Cambrian outcrop.
5. In the field it is important to be able to tell whether horizontal rocks are inverted or are the right way up. What evidence should be sought?
6. What apparatus would you wish to take into the field for a collecting trip for museum specimens to illustrate the rocks, minerals and fossils of a region?
7. Give a short synopsis of a pamphlet describing the geology of your area.

Part II of the examination (for non-graduates)  
and combined examination (for graduates)

### Paper I (Essay)

Examiners: Miss A. Buck and Mr. T. Hume  
20 November 1963: 9.30 a.m. - 12.30 p.m.

Write an essay on one of the following subjects, giving also a brief summary (about 150 words) of what you have written. Sketches and diagrams may be introduced if desired.

1. 'Museums need to eliminate the amateurism that has in the past been so widely characteristic of many curators.'
2. Museums and the child.
3. Conservation in provincial museums; the need for a new approach?

Note: In those subjects where the word "museum" occurs, it may be interpreted as meaning either a museum or an art gallery, or a combined museum and art gallery.

Candidates are reminded that in composing an essay they must pay special attention to style and presentation, spelling and punctuation, and correct use of the English language. Many marks may be lost if a candidate fails to satisfy the examiners on these points.

The Diploma examinations were held concurrently in London and in Toronto. One examiner was in Canada, the other in each paper in England. The examination fee due to the Museums Association, London, was three guineas (\$10).

Copies of past examination papers are available from the Museums Association, 87 Charlotte Street, London W. 1, England, from whom details of the registration qualifications can be obtained.

The Calendar of the Museums Association, obtainable from the same office, gives the regulations in outline, as well as names and addresses of associated Museums Associations in the Commonwealth. It may be presumed that after the Hamilton Conference of the CMA special Canadian arrangements will be effective and that a purely Canadian Diploma may have been established.