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THE HISTORY OF MUSEOLOGY, ITS SCIENTIFIC FOUNDATIONS, AND METHODS

Abstract. This article explores the historical development of museum studies, its scientific foundations, and contemporary research methods. Museum studies began to take shape as an academic discipline in the late 19th century and became interdisciplinary in the 20th century. The paper analyzes the philosophical and theoretical foundations of museology and examines the methodological approaches used in current research. Both the historical trajectory and modern practices are discussed.

Key words: museology, scientific foundations, methodology, museums of Azerbaijan, cultural heritage.

Introduction. The main purpose of this article is to examine the historical development of museology, its scientific foundations, and contemporary research methods. Museology began to take shape as a scientific discipline in the late 19th century and evolved into an interdisciplinary field during the 20th century. The study analyzes the principal philosophical and theoretical foundations of museology, as well as the methodological approaches applied within the discipline. The article highlights both the historical trajectory of development and present-day practices.

Practical significance. The material can be used in seminars and lectures at higher education institutions and may also serve as a valuable resource for those interested in museology and the history of museums.

Relevance of the topic. Museology is a field of scientific inquiry concerned with the functions, structure, and activities of museums, as well as their relationship with society. The discipline gained scientific

recognition in the late 19th century. For the first time in Europe—particularly in Germany and France—museum activities began to be analyzed on theoretical grounds [3].

The interpretation of the main material. In the contemporary period, museums are not merely spaces for the display of exhibits but have transformed into institutions of strategic importance in terms of knowledge production, the promotion of social dialogue, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Globalization, technological advancement, and digitalization have fundamentally reshaped the functions of museums and their operational methods. These transformations also necessitate a reassessment of the scientific methods and theoretical frameworks of museology [5; 6].

In the Azerbaijani context as well, strengthening the relationship between museums and society, as well as expanding their educational and tourism capacities, has become one of the key priorities of state policy. Reforms in the field of culture and the application of international experience underscore the relevance of studying both the theoretical and practical aspects of museology.

On the other hand, in the post-pandemic era, museums face challenges such as transitioning to virtual platforms, ensuring inclusivity, and achieving sustainability. Within this context, the study of the historical development, scientific foundations, and contemporary methods of museology acquires significant scholarly and practical importance.

Source base and literature review. This research draws upon a broad and multifaceted source base. It primarily examines international scholarly literature, classical and contemporary approaches to museology, as well as studies conducted within the post-Soviet and Azerbaijani contexts. The sources include books, academic articles, conference proceedings, and archival documents.

1. Classical and Theoretical Sources

- Cameron, Duncan (1971) – It emphasizes that museums are not merely spaces for storing exhibits, but also serve the function of a “forum” where society presents itself. This approach has transformed the functional and philosophical foundations of museology.
- Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean (1992) – It examines the role of museums in the formation of knowledge, as well as the epistemological foundations of museums. The author’s approach is particularly significant in terms of education and curatorial practice.

- Falk & Dierking (2000) – It provides a systematic analysis of visitor experience and learning models. Their “Interactive Learning Model” is one of the key theoretical frameworks applied in museum education.

2. Soviet and Post-Soviet Sources

- Piotrovsky, B. B. (1977) – Provides an extensive analysis of the ideological and scientific mission of museums during the Soviet period. He describes museums as “carriers of historical memory and the achievements of socialism.”
- In Soviet literature, methodological rigor and organizational aspects are emphasized; however, the ideological framework somewhat limits their universal scientific value.

3. Azerbaijani and Regional Context

- Elfira Malikova-Qurbanova – “Azerbaijani Museology” (Vols. I–II) – One of the first fundamental works to systematically study Azerbaijani museology. The author provides a detailed analysis of the history of museums in the country, their development dynamics, and management mechanisms. Additionally, this work is regarded as the first systematic academic study in the field of Azerbaijani museology and serves as a teaching resource for higher education institutions.
- The advantage of local sources lies in their contextual relevance and practical applicability. However, in some cases, their theoretical depth and the alignment of methodological approaches with international standards are limited.

4. Official Documents

Reports from the Ministry of Culture, museum activity plans, and state programs also constitute a key part of the empirical basis for this research. Through these documents, the actual status and strategies of museums are analyzed.

This analysis demonstrates that both classical Western theories and local practical experiences should be considered together in museological research. The synthesis of theoretical and practical approaches allows for a deeper understanding of the field.

1. Historical Development of Museology

The history of museums dates back to ancient times. However, their systematic study and scientifically grounded management began in the late 19th century. In 1889, the concept of “museum pedagogy” first emerged in Germany, laying the foundation for the scientific direction of the discipline [6].

In the Soviet Union, museology was primarily developed for ideological purposes, yet at the same time, emphasis was placed on systematic organizational structures and professional training [8].

“State Program for the Improvement of the Activities of Azerbaijani Museums” (2022–2026).

This state program was approved by the Ministry of Culture in 2022 and aims to update the structure, management, and exhibition policies of museums operating across the country. The primary objective of the document is to transform Azerbaijani museums into cultural institutions that meet contemporary requirements, ensure the scientific classification and digitalization of museum collections, and strengthen the educational and tourism potential of museums.

The report emphasizes the interactivity of museum exhibitions, the application of modern information technologies, and the professional development of museum staff. Expanding international collaboration is also highlighted as a priority for the preservation of cultural heritage and its high-quality presentation to the public. Additionally, special attention is given to the infrastructure of regional museums and their alignment with contemporary standards.

“Annual Report on Digitalization and the Organization of Virtual Exhibitions in Museums” (2023).

This report covers the digitalization initiatives and outcomes conducted in museums under the Ministry of Culture in 2023. It notes that more than 45 state museums prepared digital catalogs of their collections, while over 20 museums adapted their exhibitions for virtual tours. The primary objectives of these digitalization projects are to increase accessibility to museum collections, provide international audiences with access, and preserve cultural heritage for future generations. The report also emphasizes that this process positively impacts the educational and research functions of museums.

The Ministry continues its efforts in creating digital archives, utilizing interactive web platforms, and organizing virtual exhibitions through social media. Within these initiatives, collaborations have been strengthened with ADA University, Baku State University, and international cultural foundations

2. Scientific Foundations and Philosophical Perspectives

Museology has developed in close connection with the humanities and social sciences, with philosophy, sociology, anthropology, and educational

sciences playing a significant role. Contemporary researchers such as Cameron and Duncan have emphasized that museums are not merely spaces for the preservation of exhibits, but also serve as important platforms for the production and presentation of culture [4].

3. Contemporary Research MethodsThe primary methods employed in museology include the following:

- Historical-analytical method – involves the study of the historical development of museums and the analysis of relevant documents;
- Field research – entails observing museum activities and conducting interviews to study their functioning;
- Quantitative and qualitative methods – used to understand visitor behaviors and experiences [5].

Conclusion. This study primarily employs a historical-sociological approach and document-based analysis. The main data were collected from academic publications, archival materials, and museum reports. Additionally, contemporary research examples were analyzed comparatively.

Over the years, museology has developed not only as a discipline concerned with the management of museums but also as a body of scientific knowledge regarding their role and function within society. The advancement of scientific approaches and methods has enriched the field both theoretically and practically. Future research in this area should focus increasingly on digitalization and the context of interaction between museums and society.

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Elfira Məlikova (Azərbaycan)

MUZEYŞÜNASLIĞIN TARIXI, ONUN ELMI ƏSASLARI VƏ METODLARI

Bu məqalədə muzeyşünaslığın tarixi inkişafı, onun elmi əsasları və müasir tədqiqat metodları nəzərdən keçirilir. Muzeyşünaslıq XIX əsrin sonlarından etibarən elmi bir disiplin kimi formalaşmağa başlamış, XX əsrdə isə çoxdisiplinli bir sahəyə çevrilmişdir. Məqalədə muzeyşünaslığın fəlsəfi və nəzəri əsasları, eləcə də tədqiqatda tətbiq olunan metodoloji yanaşmalar təhlil olunur. Həm tarixi evolyusiyaya, həm də müasir praktikalar işıqlandırılır.

Açar sözlər: muzeyşünaslıq, elmi əsaslar, metodologiya, Azərbaycan muzeyləri, mədəni irs.

Эльфира Меликова (Азербайджан)

ИСТОРИЯ МУЗЕЙНОГО ДЕЛА, ЕГО НАУЧНЫЕ ОСНОВЫ И МЕТОДЫ

В данной статье рассматривается историческое развитие музейного дела, его научные основы и современные методы исследования. Музееведение стало формироваться как научная дисциплина с конца XIX века, а в XX веке превратилось в междисциплинарную область. Анализируются философские и теоретические основы музееведения, а также методологические подходы, применяемые в исследовании. В статье освещается как историческая эволюция, так и современные практики.

Ключевые слова: музееведение, научные основы, методология, музеи Азербайджана, культурное наследие.