PRESERVING THE PAST: AN ACCOUNTABILITY STUDY OF THE ANNUAL REPORTING PRACTICES BY LEADING MUSEUMS IN USA, UK AND EUROPE

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Abstract

Museums as custodians of important cultural heritage assets attract significant sponsorship from government and communities and a need exists to understand how the resources made available are being spent, to maintain and increase the value of these assets. The significance placed on museums warrants further investigation into their accountability and the purpose of this paper is to analyse museums reporting practices, as a way to discharge performance accountability. The reporting practices of the world's leading museums in the USA versus those predominately located in the UK (with a small focus on Europe) were examined, compared and contrasted, in order to suggest better practice for improved accountability in in annual reporting so as assist in improving the governance of museums.

To assess the annual reports, a modified version of a research instrument which works in conjunction with the balanced scorecard framework to evaluate performance accountability, namely the Museums' Performance Accountability Index (MPADI) by Wei, Davey and Coy (2008) has been adopted.

Evidence is found that the four perspectives of the Balanced Scorecard were emphasized differently between USA and UK/European institutions. The findings demonstrate areas of strength s but also recommend improved reporting practices for museums. The study draws out a number of detailed observations which offers suggestions for better practice in reporting by museums. Until recently there has been little research on the performance and accountability of this sector. This work assists in addressing this deficiency.

Keywords: Museums, Accountability, Reporting, BSC

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Introduction

Museums are key repositories of human kind's cultural heritage and as such are significantly important in the preservation of our knowledge bases for current and future generations. As well as being custodians of valued artefacts, museums are also influential in educational development and lifelong learning throughout society. (Wei, et al., 2008). Like any public entity museums require a level of accountability not only regarding the services that they provide, but also how they account for the use of public money and charitable donations. (Brown and Troutt, 2007; Weil, 2002; Rentschler and Potter, 1996).

This paper supports the notion that it is essential for museums to have greater accountability if they wish to continue to attract future funding. Although there has been some research into accountability in the museum sector (Jackson, 1991; Weil, 1994; Pignataro, 2002; Gstranthaler and Piber, 2007; da Silva Menezes, Carnegie and West, 2009) investigations into appropriate measures with which to measure museum accountability are limited. The work of Wei, Davey and Coy (2008) in creating a Museums Performance Accountability Disclosure Index (MPADI) to measure the level of accountability in annual reports of museums is the exception.

The objective of this study is twofold. The first objective is to address the limitations identified in the earlier Wei, et al (2008) research in order to propose a modified version of the MPADI. Secondly, through application of this revised MPADI, determine, examine, compare and contrast the reporting practices of world's leading museums in the USA, UK and Europe, in order to suggest better accounting practice, to ensure improved accountability by museums.

Communication is central to the issue of discharging accountability and the annual reporting process presents a primary mechanism for this. Although there have been questions raised by Carnegie and West (2005) regarding the merits of using financial measures such as annual reporting to report on museum activities the work undertaken on museum performance at Wintergreen (Weil 1994) makes it very clear that performance indicators are the only way that museums can demonstrate their performance. By improving the performance measures created in the MPADI, this paper also provides additional insights to a largely under-researched area in the literature.

The paper is structured as follows. In setting the biographical and legislative context of the study, the paper first presents an understanding of what constitutes a museum. The theoretical framework of stakeholder theory within which museum accountability is set is then covered. A literature covering changes to the MPADI and a discussion of broader topics of Not for Profit (NPO) accountability and voluntary disclosure. Focus is then placed on the research method used. The findings and the analysis of the reporting practices of the leading museums of the study are then provided. Finally a discussion of the implications of the results and conclusion is presented.

Context of the study

The global financial crises and austerity measures in Europe have placed renewed focus on spending in the public sector, an area viewed by politicians with some scepticism (Gstraunthaler and Piber, 2007). In Marriott and Miller (2012) arguments that governments should not be funding artistic endeavours as there are more worthy causes like poverty and disease, also questions museum spending. In order to improve control over public spending, concepts and tools from the business world have been introduced into public administration, which Gstraunthaler and Piber (2007, p. 361) refer to as the *new paradigms for public administration* [where the] *influence of business concepts have changed the requirements for managing museums.* At the heart of the new paradigm for not for profit entities is the matter of accountability. Before attempting to posit an understanding of the meaning of accountability of museums, an understanding should first be gained of what constitutes a museum, as well as of the legislative and demographic background in which museums operate.

What constitutes a museum?

The Association of American Museums (AAM, 2012) states that for an organisation to be recognised as a *museum* that organisation must be a *legally organized non-profit institution or part of a non-profit organization or government entity… and be essentially educational in nature*. The notion of a non profit organisation (NPO) is also firmly supported by the International Council of Museums (ICOM, 2007) which includes in their definition a description of the tasks performed by museums such as acquiring, conserving, researching, communicating, exhibiting, educating, and making available for research, material evidence of people and their environment. The British Museums Association (BMA) (1998) defines museums along similar lines saying that *Museums enable people to explore collections for inspiration, learning and enjoyment. They are institutions that collect, safeguard and make accessible artefacts and specimens, which they hold in trust for society. This definition includes art galleries with collections of works of art, as well as museums with historical collections of objects*. The AAM, ICOM, and BMA definitions thus include elements of non-profit, education, communication, and research and heritage preservation.

Museums in the USA

AAM (2012) estimated that there are approximately 17,500 museums throughout the USA visited by an estimated 865 million people annually, thus averaging an estimated 49,500 visitors per year. Despite the large numbers of visitors the importance of government and public funding is imperative to ensure museums remain viable. The AAM Financial Information Survey (2006) found that earned revenue of museums in the US contributes less than a third of total revenue required. Thus donations and public funding are critical to their survival

Museums in the United Kingdom (UK) and Europe

The Museums Association (MA, 2012) website, estimates that there are 2500 museums with an average of 100 million visitors per year. Although substantially less museums compared to the USA the British museums average an estimated 40,000 visitors per museum per year, similar to that of the USA museums. The majority of museums in England and Wales operate under the Public libraries and Museums Act (1964) which dictates acquisition and spending for these museums. As seen in the USA despite large numbers of visitors the UK museums rely heavily on government funding. Similar to AAM the Network of European Museum Organizations (NEMO) is a key independent organisation that represents the interest of the European museum community. NEMO indicates that 15,000 museums exist in Europe and they are visited by some 500 million visitors per year (NEMO, 2010).

Legislative requirements of museums

The legislative context in which US museums operate sets standards requiring a NPO to prepare a Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Activities and a Statement of Cash Flows. The responsibility for the preparation of annual reports and financial statements of a museum are assigned to the trustees who will ensure that such documents are produced with the intention to "discharge accountability to external users" (Wei, et al., 2008, p. 32). Besides some rather basic stipulations regarding donor contributions made in recent years little development has been made in the US with regards to museum reporting requirements. UK reporting is different with varying levels of reporting requirements for NPOs depending on gross income. Further, the Charities Commission is charged in conjunction with the Accounting Standards Board (ASB, 2007) to provides a Charities Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP)" (Charity Commission for England and Wales 2005). Finally, all NPOs where the gross income exceeds £500,000 are required to undergo a statutory audit and the SORP (2005) outlines the features to be included in the annual report of the organisation subject to a statutory audit. In contrast to the UK, the Napoleonic Code has influenced all public institutions in the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain and as such the laws are quite detailed (Beck, Demirguc-Kunt and Levine, 2001). From a European perspective, there is not a singular governing body that sets out reporting requirements for NPOs, but rather each nation operates under its own jurisdiction. For example in France the decree of July 28, 2005 states that any association having received more than 153. 0000 Euros of donations must publish a balance sheet and an income statement. Regulations in France pertaining to museums also depend on the ownership structure i.e. NPO or Public entity.

Literature Review

Recognition of the scope and importance of accountability has grown significantly in recent years in the business, public and NPO sectors. Rentschler and Potter (1996) summed it up aptly when they said, since *museums are organizations of public service, they should be accountable to the public (p.104)*. Poister (2003); Little (2005); Moxham and Boaden (2007) and Moxham (2009, p740) all suggest that NPOs *are under pressure to demonstrate their achievements*. The funding challenge faced by museums will therefore form the basis from which the matter of accountability will be raised.

Accountability

As early as the mid-nineties Rentschler and Potter (1996) argued that the debate on accountability of museums is not new, but gaining a clear consensus on what is meant by accountability is another matter. Mulgan (2000) says that although the term accountability has been around for a long time it remains a difficult term to define and is often not clearly understood, a notion strongly supported by Davison (2007), Gray, Bebbington and Collison (2006) and Unerman and O'Dwyer (2006). Thomas (1998) argues that difficulty in defining accountability lies in the fact that it has many different connotations, a view supported by Sinclair (1995) who says that different stakeholders define accountability from different perspectives, thus making the concept complex. Da Silva Menezes, et al., (2009) argued for different types of accountability. For example Schedler (1999) suggests that accountability represents a commitment to actively engage, inform and explain to stakeholders what is being done and for which purpose, whereas Mulgan (2000, p555) defines accountability as *social interaction and exchange, whereby one side calling for the account, seeks answers and rectification, while the other side, being held accountable, responds and accepts sanctions*. Accountability is defined by the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB, 1993) and International Accounting Standards Board (IASB, 2007) as *the process of discharging responsibility by means of financial reports*, this view would appear to capture a widely held view of accountability. The accountants' definition of accountability and its suitability to NPOs (in particular museums) has led to significant discourse. Carnegie & West (2005), for example, question the financial emphasis of accountability when they say *…the rich cultural, heritage, scientific, educative and other values of collections are at risk of being misunderstood and misinterpreted when they are accounted for by a profession which that is in calculated to understand and prioritise objects and experiences in primarily financial terms. (p. 909)*. Cnaan (1996) and Ebrahim (2003) also debate that heightened regulatory requirements should be tempered with respect for the actual purpose for which the NPO exist, namely public benefit.

Thus while accountants like Coy, Fischer and Gordon (2001) view annual reporting as the primary medium which an organisation should use to discharge and ensure accountability Stone and Ostrower (2007) say that this should not happen at the cost of the quality of museum collections, exhibitions and activities. Stone and Ostrower (2007, p 423) argue strongly, that accountability in the not for profit context should not be a mere focus on financial reports but address two fundamental questions: *accountability to whom* and *accountability for what?*

Stakeholder Theory

As previously discussed museums fulfil a variety of roles and are accountable to a number of different stakeholders. O'Dwyer & Unerman (2010) list the various stakeholders as regulators, donors, staff and clients, while Gstraunthaler and Piber (2007) suggest that in order to understand museum performance *a detailed knowledge of all stakeholders and their needs* are required *(p.366).* Stakeholder theory, broadly defined by Donaldson and Preston (1995) as the idea that a corporation has various interested parties, who have co–operative and competitive interests, is therefore at the heart of understanding accountability. The Donald and Preston (1995) definition also suggests that all stakeholders *have intrinsic value*, implying that each stakeholder… *merits consideration for its own sake and not only because of its ability to further the interest…* of one group (p. 67).

Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997) suggest the fundamental question relating to stakeholder theory is defining which stakeholders require what information and the NPO's challenge is not only identifying the diverse range of stakeholders, but also attempting to meet the multitude of needs and concerns. Only by achieving this, can they meet the demands of public accountability. Viewing accountability through the stakeholder lens, clearly shows that accountability in museums can never be a mere focus on financial figures and presents museums with a broader challenge.

Performance Accountability and disclosure

Increasing reliance on external funding means that museums now actively compete with each other for contributions (Brown and Troutt, 2007). Coy and Pratt (1998) called for increased commitment to voluntary disclosure by museums to improve awareness of accountability among stakeholders but Christensen and Mohr (2003) and Ebrahim (2003) indicate that voluntary disclosure of performance information may not just facilitate a greater awareness it could possibly assist to attract increased public contributions. With these calls in mind, it appears that the annual reporting process offers the single most effective means to communicate with a wide range of stakeholders. However there are criticisms of the nature of the annual report. Christensen and Mohr (2003) describe annual reporting practices as lacking, varying greatly and being generally limited to some form of financial information disclosure.

Over a number of years researchers like Gstraunthaler and Piber (2007); Carnegie and West (2004); Parker (1996); Carnegie and Wolnizer (1995) and Laughlin (1990) have questioned the merit of using financial measures to report on museum activities but Niven (2008) says in an era with decreased funding, pursuing goals without regard of the financial consequences, will have a detrimental effect in which everyone loses. Trying to balance often opposing views of museum accountability, Moxham (2009) calls for performance measures in museums and suggests that accountability can be better discharged by including qualitative assessment, as opposed to purely quantitative analysis in the process of measuring museum performance. In support da Silva Menezes, Carnegie and West (2009) indicate that effective public sector performance measures require an *array of quantitative measures combining both financial and non-financial indicators* (p.80). While Gstraunthaler and Piber *(2007, p.366)* indicate that *sound performance measurement is essential for identifying a wrong direction* and Agyemang, Awumbila, Unerman and O'Dwyer (2009) say that the crux of performance accountability is the ability to *control organisational activities upon which performance depends (p.762).* Though the 1993 Wintergreen (Weil, 1994) report also acknowledged that museums cannot survive through the competence of its management or curators alone and require something more profound such as performance indicators, to demonstrate the services that museums provide. Some researchers on museum reporting have taken a sceptical view of the ability of accounting to provide a solution for museums.

Some of the most critical views of accounting and related reporting practices, are aired by Carnegie and West (2005, 907) saying that accountants are an *elite occupational group* [which] *enjoys a privileged capacity to impose the very systems of monetary valuation that commands its expertise.* Rentschler and Potter (1996) are also critical saying that museum accountability has been *hijacked by accountants and need a broadening to include both viability and vitality.* While Tinker, Merino and Neimark (1982) hold the opinion that accounting does not understand the public sector environment, Carnegie and Wolnizer (1996) took it one-step further saying that trying to value museum collections, borders on stupidity. Yet Gstraunthaler and Piber (2007) acknowledge that despite the shortcomings of accounting and management techniques, they are essential when financial resources are limited and da Silva Menezes, et al., (2009, 89) say, *enhancing accountability* [should not be seen as] *a chore* [but] *a pathway to a brighter future*.

The development of disclosure indices for the measurement of reporting practices is a widely used tool which has facilitated many studies (Coy and Dixon, 2004) and one much researched method relevant to this study is the balanced scorecard approach developed by Kaplan and Norton (1996).

Previous research into museums reporting practices

Although studies focussing on museum reporting practices, performance and accountability measurement are limited, they span the globe for example Jackson (1991) in the UK, Weil (1994) in the USA, Rentschler and Potter (1996) in Australia, Pignataro (2002) in Italy, Gstraunthaler and Piber (2007) in Austria, da Silva Menezes, Carnegie and

West (2008) in Portugal and Dainelli, Manetti and Sibilio (2012) in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, UK and US. In the USA Christensen and Mohr (2003) highlighted the variability in quality of museum reporting and concluded that museum size positively correlated to the level of disclosure. In New Zealand Thompson (2001) performed ground-breaking work by focussing on problems and issues inherent to museum reporting practices.

Research into performance measures for museums by Paulus (2003) studying 14 museums in the US and France, related museum performance to five defining factors - validity, reliability, feasibility, externality and synthesis. This study concluded that whilst these quantitative indicators were useful in determining a museums efficiency and effectiveness, the qualitative assessment component of the study significantly lacked reliability and validity and was potentially damaging to the overall results. Research by Turbide and Laurin (2009) examined performance indicators of 300 arts and cultural organisations in Canada and identified six performance indicators prominently used across all four dimensions of the balanced scorecard with financial statement analysis as the most prominent measure. Turbide and Laurin (2009) concluded that the main reason for NPOs to use performance indicators lay in their ability to *track progress about objectives... and compare actual results to forecasts* (p.67).

Acknowledging the importance of the annual reporting process for museums the most relevant performance measure study to date will be that conducted by Wei, Davey and Coy (2008) who established the MPADI. The index was derived from the balanced scorecard approach to strategic management as established by Kaplan and Norton (1996). The Balanced Scorecard approach supplements financial measures (profit focus) with an additional three perspectives – customers, internal processes as well as learning and growth. However, as profit maximisation is not a focus within non-profits Kaplan and Norton (1996) suggest that "Mission" replace financial outcomes, i.e. maximization of profit, as the overriding objective for a NPO. (Wei, et al., 2008). Whilst voluntary disclosure is still a prominent feature of a NPO the Balanced Scorecard framework helps to improve the relevance and transparency of annual reporting of public sector organisations (Gambles, 1999). Gstraunthaler and Piber (2007) raised some reservations about how the implementation of the Balanced Scorecard can ensure quality in terms of its evaluation but Zimmerman (2009) concluded that the balanced scorecard is a *means to an end, and not an end in itself* and was appropriate for use with NPOs and by implication suitable for museum performance appraisal. The Balanced Scorecard also provides internal management with useful information for decision-making and enhances the reputation of the NPO as stakeholders are reliably informed of organisational activities and successes (Sarstedt and Schloderer, 2010).

Developed using a six-step process by Wei, Davey and Coy (2008), the MPADI sought to represent all four categories of the balanced scorecard framework, with the inclusion of the additional overriding category, "Mission". The inclusion of Mission was based on recommendations by Rentschler and Potter (1996) who indicated that focussing on the organizational mission in museums will go a long way to address the debate of accountability being seen in pure financial terms as mission is not only vitality orientated. Each category was then broken down into subsections that measured specific aspects relative to each broad category. The index eventually comprised 18 separate performance measures that were applied and tested against the annual reports of 16 United Kingdom and New Zealand museums. Wei, et al., (2008) confirmed just like Christensen and Mohr (2003) that larger museums were more likely to achieve higher disclosure scores and thus discharge a greater level of accountability. A gap however exists in the literature as weaker aspects evidenced when applying the MPADI to the annual reports were lack of evidence of employee satisfaction, lack of budgeting evidence and lack of information regarding customer satisfaction.

Overview of MPADI and MPADI (2)

In order to appropriately evaluate, measure and differentiate between levels of detail and understand ability of disclosure within museum annual reports, MPADI (as referred to earlier) with its 18 performance indicators was used as point of reference (Wei et al, 2008). To improve the existing research on factors limiting the MPADI in NPOs, four additional performance indicators were added to the original MPADI namely, strategies and critical success factors (under mission and objectives); reputation (under customer /stakeholder); directors' remuneration (under financial position) and online connectivity (under learning and growth). As can be seen in Figure 2 this leads to 22 performance indicators for MPADI (2).

Mission and objectives

For the purposes of the MPADI (2), mission, vision and core values were united under a single scoring category (Figure 1: M1) and strategies and critical success factors were added. (Figure 1: M2). In MPADI "Statement of Objectives" as a singular measure denoted the numerous features of mission statement, vision, specific goals and relevant time frames (Wei, et al., 2008). In the absence of a weighting system, it was felt that the attachment of single score as a means of valuing such a broad and encompassing category such as "Mission" was inadequate. Mission, was included to ensure that alignment is achieved, by comparing all other measures to the mission to account for performance (Weinstein and Bukovinsky, 2009).

Customer / Stakeholder

Operational viability of NPO is heavily correlated to the reliance on external funding. The MPADI measured disclosure on four separate levels (Figure 1: C1 – C4) (Wei, et al., 2008). A new category, reputation amongst stakeholders (Figure 1:C5) was added to address the ambiguity associated with what is actually being measured in terms of balancing customer and stakeholder satisfaction. (Sarstedt and Schloderer, 2010). Key determinants that affect reputation within the NPO sector include:

- the perceived trustworthiness of the organisation
- the willingness of donors to contribute or work as honorary members within the NPO
- relevant activities demonstrating organisational social responsibility (OSR)
- The perceived attractiveness of the organisation (quality of brand recognition).

Financial Perspective

The assessment of the financial perspective within MPADI (2) remains largely unchanged (Figure 1: F1 – F5). As the “Statement of Financial Position”, “Statement of Financial Performance” and a “Cash Flow Statement” are still considered the main means through which museums discharge accountability (Wei, et al., 2008). A category pertaining to director’s remuneration (Figure1: F6) as an important aspect of accountability, was however added (Oster, 1998).

Internal Business Process

The Internal Processes category remains unchanged from the original MPADI (Figure 1: I1- I4) (Wei, et al., 2008).

Learning and Growth

The vitality and viability of a museum in the long-term is only assured through a commitment to learning and growth. The categories L1-L4 (Figure 1) remained largely the same as MPADI (Wei, et al., 2008). Online connectivity (Figure 1: L5) was added to assess the use of other mediums through which a museum is actively engaging with the public. The increasing power of the web has allowed businesses to connect with customers through more direct and less costly mediums. Such features include online memberships to websites and mailing lists, providing users a closer understanding and easier communication of the museum and its operating interventions (Long and Chiagouris, 2006).

Research Method

What constitutes a “leading museum” was based on the perceived importance of that organisation, but including a reference to the earlier discussed and established definition as well as a number of defining characteristics, in particular (but not limited to):

- Number of visitors annually
- Number of employees
- Amount of annual revenue and level of public funding
- Type of museum (art, science or natural history)
- Number of artefacts and their perceived value
- Frequency of high calibre exhibitions

Though visitor numbers was a primary characteristic that helped shape the final list, it was also recognized that a study of museums based solely on visitor numbers could be deemed to be misrepresentative and therefore a range in the above characteristics was used.

Google searches of Best Museums in... USA, UK, Europe and the World respectively, were combined with the defining characteristics above. Using the boundaries set by the definitions helped to explain for example why the Louvre in France would be included, yet the Centre Pompidou excluded. “Theartnewspaper.com” was a key source with the April 2010 issue providing a comprehensive list of the most visited art museums in the world for 2009. Identifying an appropriate sample size is somewhat contentious, particularly due to the limited amount of extant research conducted on museum reporting practices. Taking into account numbers of museums selected in previous studies namely 16 to cover NZ and the UK (Wei et al, 2008); 14 to cover US and France (Paulus, 2003) it was felt that a sample of 30 of some of the most important museums, 15 to cover the UK an Europe (Group1) and 15 for the USA (Group 2), would be adequate. The final list is summarized in Appendix1. Recognition is given to the fact that the sample has been filtered by perceived importance. Owing to language and difficulties with foreign websites it was decided for Group 1 to mostly concentrate on leading UK museums and only include leading European museums where websites did not present particular translation difficulty. Yahoo! Babel Fish translation service was used to interpret the annual reports of The Louvre and Musée D’Orsay (France), The Van Gogh Museum and The Rijksmuseum (Holland).

Establishing appropriate evaluation criteria to measure and differentiate between the levels of detail and understand ability of disclosure within the annual reports, resulted in using 5-point scales as it was believed to provide a sufficient range of scores. (Coy and Dixon, 2004). The benchmark score five was awarded for optimal level of disclosure and was used as an anchor statement from which other judgements could be made. Non-disclosure would result in a score of zero. An ordinal scaling method was used to ensure consistency in judgement relative to the benchmark score (Coy and Dixon, 2004). A pilot study was conducted to test the effectiveness of MPADI (2) and applied to two randomly selected museums from each group. In order to limit subjectivity associated with interpretation and scoring of qualitative data disclosure, two accounting students from the University of Waikato assessed the annual reports independently. Any differences in opinion that resulted were further discussed until both parties agreed a fair score.

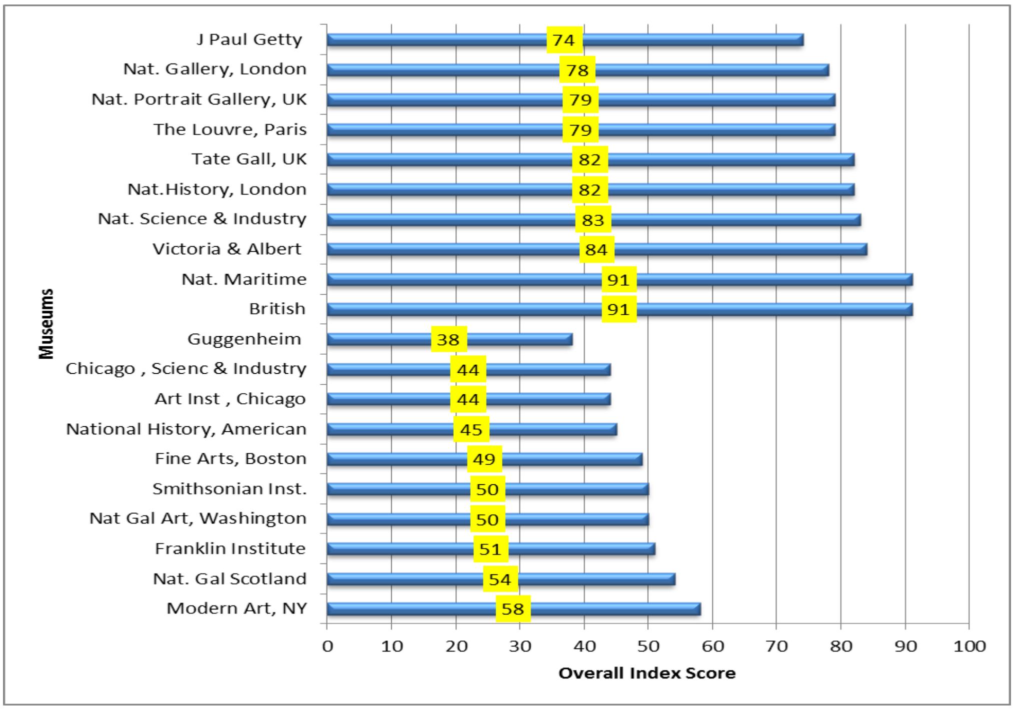
Results

The mean performance accountability disclosure score across the entire study was 59 % (64.7/110). Whilst this investigation examined reports of museums that have never been included in such a study before, it was decided to compare this result with the mean result of 61% (55/90) attained in the original MPADI study (Wei *et al.* (2008). Considering the MPADI was modified and the sample selected expanded, it was hoped that the mean result of the MPADI(2) would represent at least a similar level of optimal disclosure, however the actual result for the 2008 reports was slightly down. Although further investigation into the quality of the reports examined should be examined as a possible cause, the result may also be an indication of the effects of the modifying features included within the MPADI (2). Further discussion of this will take place as a means of identifying any limitations and potential source of improvement for future studies. Figure 1 shows the overall mean scores of the ten best and ten worst museums irrespective of country.

US Museums (Group1) vs. UK and European museums (Group 2)

In line with the results of the Wei, et al. (2008) study, *the* variation in the quality of disclosure was again a significant feature with percentage scores ranging from 38 to 58 for US museums and 74 to 91 for the British and European museums. From a geographical perspective as evidenced in Figure 1, the results were persuasive.

Figure 1. Top 10 best and worst ranked museums according to accountability disclosure index



British museums dominated the top 10 best rankings, securing eight places out of the study of 30 museums. US museums occupied nine of the worst 10 disclosure rankings and only one of the top 10 best disclosure rankings (The J Paul Getty Museum). Of the four European museums, only one scored within the top 10 best, namely the Louvre, the most visited art museum in 2009 and arguably one of the most famous and important museums throughout the world. The highest scoring museums included the National Maritime Museum, the British Museum and the Victoria and Albert Museum. Both the National Maritime Museum (previously ranking12th) and the British Museum (previously ranking 3rd) were also included in the original study by Wei, et al. (2008). Using the MPADI (2) index, these museums improved their accountability disclosures across all categories, indicating a strengthened commitment by both museums to improve their annual reporting practices, which is particularly pleasing. The annual report of the British Museum exemplified the commitment of UK museums to reporting on a comprehensive range of stakeholder issues. Whilst devoid of glossy images, the annual report of the British Museum represented a logical flow of relevant information, covering the majority of the categories within the MPADI (2) and providing detailed disclosure on aspects not assessed within the index. For example the Statement of Internal Controls focusing on museum capacity and financial and non-financial risk management.

The worst museums, displayed in Figure 1 were the Guggenheim Museum (38) the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry and the Art Institute of Chicago (both scoring 44). These three museums were particularly weak in the disclosure of mission and objectives, and learning and growth and consequently their reports lacked direction and flow. Many of the US museums reports appeared to be more of a marketing publication designed to attract further support for the museum, with glossy images, snapshot facts and numerous customer testimonials; the result being an annual report that looked good, but was in fact light on content. For example, the annual report of the Art Institute of Chicago consisted of 94 pages, of which two thirds supplied generalist information. This was similar to the annual report of the Chicago museum of Science and Industry (CMSI). Although only ranking 13th overall in this study, the Metropolitan Museum of Arts (The Met) had one of the better performing US museums annual reports with a stronger focus on content and a logical flow. By clearly identifying its mission and objectives at the opening of the report, the annual report had a structure, which ensured that the content was aimed at demonstrating how objectives identified were achieved throughout the year. Unfortunately the Met was guilty of devoting nearly two thirds of the annual report to listing all collection acquisitions, exhibitions, funders and supporters and staff members of which the benefits of doing so remain questionable. Generally, the US museum reports were collectively much weaker at identifying their mission and objectives and consequentially their reports lacked direction and flow.

Results by Balanced scorecard Category

In addition to the results of MPADI (2) being reported according to country, it was also reported according to the main categories and sub categories derived from the MPADI and adjusted for MPADI (2). The overall study ranking of the individual disclosure quality score of the sub categories according to MPADI(2) is displayed in Figure 2, whilst the MPADI(2) comparative disclosure quality score ranking of the main categories are displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 2. MPADI (2) Balanced Scorecard performance indicators per category

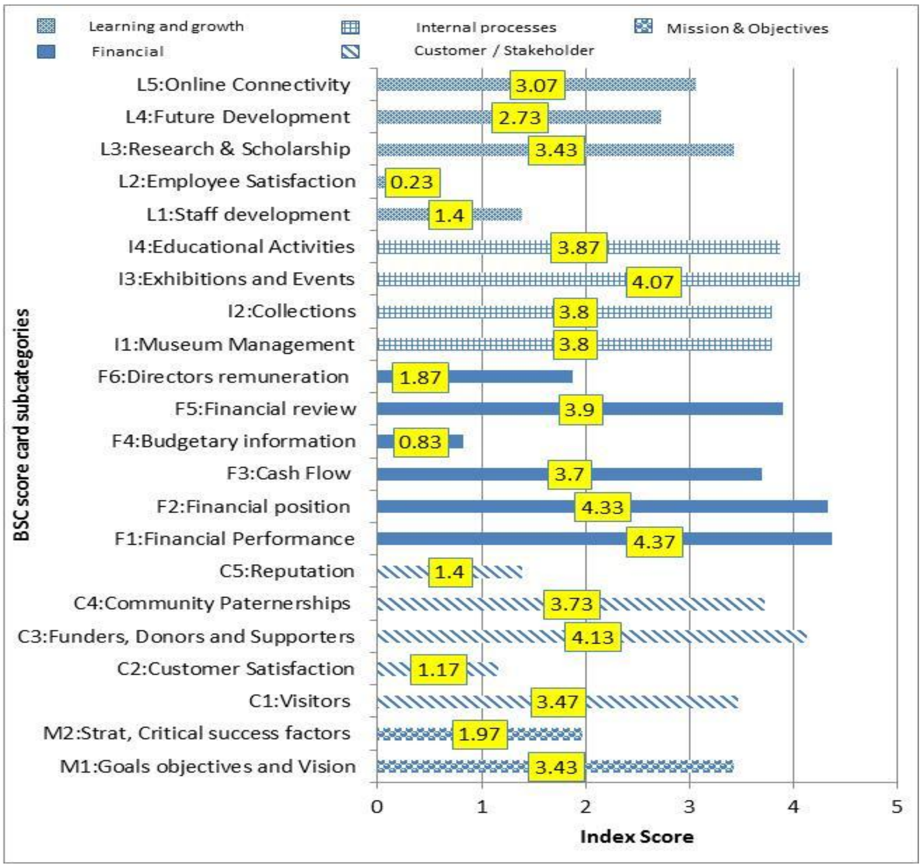
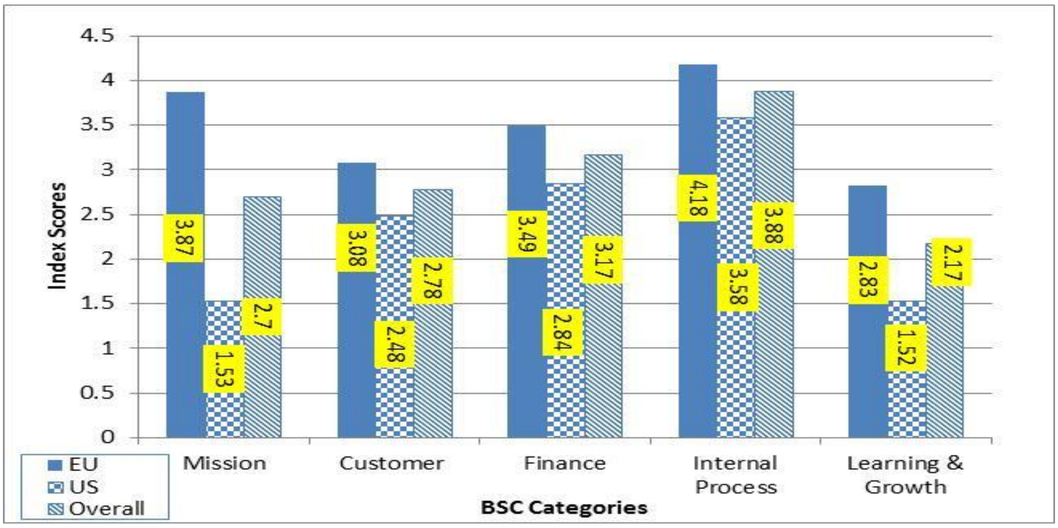


Figure 3. Best and Worst Balanced Score Card perspective scores



Mission and Objectives

The greatest difference between UK/European and US museums were reported in the category mission and objectives (Figure 3). UK/European museums provided some evidence of a mission statement, and detailed their vision and key objectives at the beginning of the annual report. This appeared not to be a priority for US museums. Inclusion of the additional item, "Strategies and Critical Success Factors" within this category of the index, was largely neglected by US museums. UK/European museums provided a satisfactory level of disclosure, linking their mission and goals with strategies that indicated how such plans and objectives were achieved. Though improvement could still be made by both museum groupings, it was felt that including the aspect of mission and objectives in the MPADI (2) was an effective measure.

Customer/ Stakeholder

Referring to Figure 3 it is evident that the Customer/Stakeholder category evidenced the third highest mean across the entire study. Again, the scores of UK/European museums indicated a slightly greater depth of disclosure over those of the US. The US museums were particularly strong at recognising all donors, funders and supporters while both groups disclosed community partnership information relatively well in the annual reports. In addition both the US and UK/Europe provided strong evidence detailing collaborative efforts with other museums and community sectors. Visitor numbers featured strongly with the majority of UK/European museum reports and were often broken down into subsections such as age of visitors, attendees per event and international profile.

Evidence of customer satisfaction information was limited throughout the UK/European museums and virtually non-existent amongst the US museums, except for the customer satisfaction survey results disclosed by the Dallas Museum of Art, resulting in ranking this performance measurement item 20th out of 22 items in the index. The Louvre scored a maximum "5" for this section, providing substantial evidence of customer satisfaction for all facets of its museum operations – exhibition, collection, events, and museum facilities. Museums in the UK provided a basic measure of customer satisfaction, detailing a percentage of customers who would recommend a visit, yet omitting any customer satisfaction surveys findings.

The mean score across the entire study, for reputation as modified for MPADI (2), (Figure 2) was quite low (1.40) and ranked 18th. The only lower scores obtained were for customer satisfaction, budgetary information and employee satisfaction. Both the US and UK/European museums were similar, with the majority of museums disclosing some information relating to reputation, in the form of awards won. The low scores obtained in the reputation category, indicate that museums are currently not committed to engaging in this aspect of performance measurement. However, the Louvre clearly demonstrated a sound commitment to the measurement of reputation and suggests that museums have the capacity to measure such information. The Louvre detailed evidence of rising museum membership and volunteer support, indicating its perceived trustworthiness as an organisation and consequently scoring a "4" for this item. This aspect of the index should therefore is maintained to encourage improvement within this area of annual reporting.

Financial Perspective

The Financial Perspective category (Figure 3) scored the second highest mean for disclosure over the aggregate results. Although the UK / European and WE results were very similar, the slightly greater depth of disclosure of UK/European, museums placed them slightly ahead of the US museums. This affirms what Turbide and Lauren (2009) concluded, that financial statement analysis was the still the most prominently used performance indicator. Despite this two European museums (The Louvre and Muse D'Orsay) disclosed no financial statements, whilst the Van Gogh Museum, provided no evidence of a cash flow statement and only minimal disclosure within their annual reports.

On the budgetary information level, three European museums (The Louvre, The Rijksmuseum and The Van Gogh Museum) scored a maximum "5" for comparing actual results against forecasted plans. None of the British and US museums, excepting the US National Gallery of Art and the US Field Museum, disclosed evidence of budgetary information in their annual reports. Poor disclosure of budgeting left this performance indicator mean ranking second lowest, in line with the original Wei, et al. (2008) study results. All of the UK museums scored "5" on directors' remuneration, causing the biggest score difference between UK/European and US museums. This heightened disclosure is largely caused by legislative requirements pertaining to the UK (Irvine and Ryan 2010).

As voluntary disclosure of such information was not made, a score of mostly zero was attained by all other museums, bar the Musee d" Orsay, France, which scored 1. If the mean score for directors' remuneration, of UK/ European museums were excluded from the financial perspective category, similar scores would be obtained by the US and UK/ Europe museums. As directors' remuneration is an important aspect of accountability it should be maintained within the MPADI (2) index irrespective of whether the reporting is mandatory or not.

Internal Processes

Internal Processes was the strongest category across the entire study (Figure 3) with the UK/European museums having a slight edge over the US museums. Information relating to collections, exhibitions and events and educational activities were prominent between both groups. Regarding the performance indicator museum management, most US reports only identified the staff structure and the board of directors in contrast to the British annual reports disclosing all director and staff responsibilities as well as procedures to handle risk and review the effectiveness of internal operations.

Learning and Growth

Despite the category Learning and Growth (Figure 3) again attaining the lowest mean score similar to the Wei, et al. (2008) study, the UK/European museums overall still outperformed their US counterparts. For UK/European museums, the strongest aspects were disclosure of future development plans, while the strength of US museums lay in the reporting of research and scholarship information. Again, for both reporting groups, employee satisfaction recorded the lowest mean score of the entire index, with both failing to disclose any substantial evidence of employee satisfaction information. The modifying feature of this category classified as "online connectivity" (as discussed earlier) were evidenced by both groups. Of the four modified items included in the MPADI (2), this item was ranked the highest (14th). In what is a satisfying result, five museums in the study (The National Maritime Museum, The British Museum; Victoria and Albert Museum; The Tate Galleries, and The Louvre) recorded a score of five for this section and ranked within the top 10 museums (Figure 1).

Investigation among factors of results

The results of MPADI (2) to were further investigated by applying regression analysis to the 2008 reporting period. While studies by Wei, et al. (2008) and Christensen and Mohr (2003) showed a positive correlation between museum size and the volume of annual reporting, this was not the case with the MPADI (2) study. The results show no clear relationship between a museums size and the volume of annual reporting. As visitors numbers were perceived to be important throughout the study, these were also plotted against total revenue earned on an annual basis, but indicated no apparent correlation between factors and delivered particularly low R^2 values.

Although the UK and European museums did indicate some correlation between the amounts of revenue earned over the period (including public funding) and the number of annual visitors, this result would have been influenced by the fact that UK museums rely on grant aid from government funding which in turn establishes performance indicators for these museums. This is not the case for US museums who rely more heavily on private funding.

The implications and limitations of study findings

Some limitations regarding the study existed in terms of the foreign language barrier, and contributed to confusion regarding whether the French NPO's are required to produce Financial Statements for public examination. While the Louvre, outperformed every other museum in the internal processes, customer stakeholder and learning and growth categories the non-disclosure of financial information meant it was ranked only eighth.

Whilst the sample selected does include 30 great museums, some significant European museums were excluded from the study, as access to their annual reports could not be gained, owing to language difficulties associated with their foreign websites. Examples of such museums include; The State Hermitage (Russia), the Vatican Museums, Museo del Prado (Spain), and the Uffizi Gallery (Italy). With Asia as a region of exceptional growth, an examination of the reporting practices of museums located throughout Asia – Japan, Korea, China and India, would offer considerable insight into museum practices from a global perspective and warrant future research.

In the event of future modification of MPADI(2) careful consideration needs to be given to what can be included and what may need to be grouped together, for any future MPADI index, in order to prevent measuring multiple items within the index from a singular item of disclosure. Future research could also concentrate on reasons as to why US museums, predominantly funded through private money, disclose less information than government funded UK and European museums.

Conclusion

This study has sought to examine how well museums throughout the UK, Europe and the United States are discharging their accountability obligations through their annual reporting practices.

As a means of determining distinction between the levels of quality in the information disclosed, the MPADI (2) was developed from its original use by Wei, et al. (2008). Modifying features included scoring items for "Strategies and Critical Success Factors", "Reputation", "Directors Remuneration" and "Online Connectivity". It is felt that all four of these features contributed well to strengthen the comprehensive nature of the index. It is not suggested that these 22 performance measures are complete and future research could endeavour to expand on some of these categories, for example, consideration could be given to assurance of security and safety of collections as part of the process of discharging accountability.

In general, the UK and European museums outperformed their US counterparts in all aspects. Museums from within the UK attained particular high disclosure scores, largely due to the establishment of stringent regulatory frameworks and oversight bodies that prescribe annual reporting requirements. It is therefore believed that regulation as opposed to size is highly correlated to the quality of annual reporting for museums. Whilst it has been recognised voluntary disclosure may result in net benefits for those engaged in its practice, museums in the US are not engaging with stakeholders on a great enough level to effectively discharge their accountability. The quality of reporting is therefore dependent on the attitudes of management and the governance structures inherent within the museum environment. An awareness of what needs to measured, how it can be measured and most importantly, how it can be communicated with stakeholders is necessary in order for US museums to improve the quality of their annual reporting practices. Unless there is a dramatic tightening of the legislative requirements for NPOs in the US which appears unlikely in the immediate future, change will only occur if those in the positions of power are truly committed to best serving the stakeholders of their organisations.

Based on the findings US museums need to focus on improving disclosure practices pertaining to, Employee Satisfaction, Directors Remuneration and Customer Satisfaction. However US museums in general can all improve their annual reporting practices through a greater commitment to depth of information disclosure across all categories of the balanced scorecard and indeed the MPADI(2). Whilst museums in the UK and Europe appear to be reporting at a much higher level, continued improvement should be key focus. The three primary areas in which significant improvement can be made by museums in the UK and Europe are in employee satisfaction information, budgetary information and reputational information.

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Appendix 1. Museum Sample Summary (information contained in the 2008 annual reports)

Museum	Total Visitors (million)	Revenues $m (US)	Public Funds $m (US)	# of Employee's
USA				
The Smithsonian Institution	30	1,240.60	854.8	6300
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY	4.89	213	77.3	2200
National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C	4.6	122.8	32.5	NA
American Museum of Natural History	4	174.7	40.4	NA
Museum of Modern Art, NY	2.67	157.9	49.6	750
The Field Museum, Chicago	2.1	89.8	32.7	600
The Art Institute Chicago	1.85	194.8	73.2	NA
Chicago Museum of Science and Industry	1.42	38.9	15.9	350 approx.
Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	1.27	48.5	39.1	NA
Guggenheim Museum, NY	1.26	53.8	9.7	NA
J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles	1.15	24.5	4.4	NA
The Franklin Institute	1.12	32.6	12	270 approx.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston	0.93	132.1	43.3	1000
Dallas Museum of Art	0.9	20.1	12.2	NA
The Cleveland Museum of Art	0.28	48.1	22	270
Europe				
The Louvre Museum	8.5	315.6	NA	2000
The Tate Galleries, Britain	7.5	312.1	97.5	1300
The British Museum	5.5	131.6	91.6	Just over 1000
National Gallery, London	4.78	104.6	94.6	457
National Museum of Science and Industry UK	4.3	91.3	66.1	NA
Natural History Museum, London	4.1	124.7	89.8	915
Musée d'Orsay	3	NA	NA	578
National Maritime Museum, UK	2.37	39.52	29.8	412

Victoria and Albert Museum, London	2.27	124.2	94.1	NA
National Portrait Gallery, London	1.96	31	19.9	NA
National Museum Wales	1.52	46	39	613
The Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam	1.45	46.0	17.9	NA
National Galleries of Scotland	1.35	49.2	41.5	274
National Museums of Scotland	1.15	48.2	33	NA
The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam	0.86	71.8	48.8	NA