

## The Quality of Research Is Definitely Strained: Collections Research in Ontario Community Museums

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### Introduction

Collections research<sup>1</sup> is a closet activity in many Ontario museums. As a pursuit, it lacks definition, is often conducted in isolation and is subordinate to other museum functions. The 1982 report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee reveals that this situation exists on a national scale:

Lack of research . . . jeopardizes the whole heritage field. Without research, it is impossible to identify what should be preserved, how it should be kept and the ways in which this knowledge can be made accessible. Yet research, the least visible activity in the heritage process is usually the last to be funded and the first to be cut.<sup>2</sup>

In Ontario the greatest number of museum collections, outside of our provincial and national institutions, reside in local-history museums and historic sites. Most of these museums belong to the Province of Ontario's Community Museum Programme, which provides operational funding and advisory services to its members. Funding is contingent on achieving minimum standards of operation determined by the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications. These standards are regulated by Ministry policy and operating guidelines, on which most museum policies are based.

Information on collections research in Ontario museums was drawn in part from Ministry policy and grant files of a sample of twenty-five community museums in this province, representing about twelve percent of those within the province's Community Museum Programme. Statements of purpose, collections policies, research policies and research progress reports of these twenty-five institutions were examined; their operating budgets ranged from less than seventy-five thousand to over one million dollars. The museums surveyed were located across the province and operate essentially year-round.

The sample was biased by choosing year-round operations and those with reputations as well-managed institutions. From the sample of twenty-five museums, ten curators or directors were interviewed.<sup>3</sup> This information on collections research in local museums was evaluated against studies conducted in large institutions and outside the museum field.

### Material Culture Research Outside the Museum

Research is an activity geared to the production of new knowledge and new information. Material culture research in Canada is conducted both within and outside museums. The latter category involves two major groups: individuals who are dealing in material culture as a business, or academics who analyze material culture as part of the research they do within their own discipline. The former group, consisting mainly of collectors, connoisseurs and dealers, rarely conduct artifact research beyond an initial identification process, frequently termed "antiquarianism." This approach is characterized by an overriding aesthetic attention to the object, with corresponding value attached to age, provenience and "uniqueness."<sup>4</sup> Studies by these individuals rarely interpret the object as part of a cultural process; rather the object exists as a descriptive product. Antiquarian attitudes are not restricted to dealers and collectors; even some curators at major museums have been known to conduct this kind of collections research, as witnessed by existing permanent exhibits and curatorial articles in collector's magazines.

On the other hand, material culture study in major museums and the academy generally involves the use of objects as data to answer questions concerning cultural, social and individual belief and behaviour. Many of these

approaches have been discussed elsewhere in syntheses by Simon Bronner and Thomas Schlereth of the United States and Susan Pearce of Britain.<sup>5</sup> In Canada, material culture analysis is conducted by individuals in a range of disciplines. Organizing principles in these disciplines play a role in determining theories and methods that these researchers use, and ultimately, the conclusions they reach. Types of materials investigated may also vary with disciplinary orientation.

Following Bronner's, Schlereth's and Pearce's categorization of major theoretical approaches as symbolist (or structuralist), functionalist and behaviouralist, one tends to find certain disciplines and sub-disciplines more comfortable with one paradigm over another. For instance, anthropologists have a disciplinary syllabus embodying symbolic analysis, which is concerned with expression of belief. George MacDonald of the Canadian Museum of Civilization has used Levi-Straussian structuralist analysis to understand the ritual meaning in design and use of Kwakiutl painted, kerfed boxes.<sup>6</sup> Folklorists, art historians and intellectual and cultural historians also engage in symbolic studies. Archaeologists and social historians usually employ a functionalist interpretation to understand design and change in the manufacture and use of objects and materials. The underlying concept in functionalism is utility, and in history such changes are usually attributed to social and political conventions or outside influences. Here one thinks of David-Thierry Ruddell's analysis of the domestic textile industry in the region of Québec city, in which he used post-mortem inventories to identify and attribute cloth preferences and the state of the domestic textile industry in Québec to class distinction and colonial political policy.<sup>7</sup> "Behavioural" analysis is more frequently conducted by art historians and folklorists who are concerned with the world view, motives and expressive techniques of individual creators. Folklorist Pauline Greenhill's study of a contemporary Ontario rural folk artist, his work and the role he occupies in his community, is an example of this type of study.<sup>8</sup> Psychohistorical analyses of individuals as producers and consumers are also behaviouralist approaches, such as Ann Condon's work on New Brunswick Loyalist Jonathan Odell.<sup>9</sup> These categories are reviewed here to give the reader an idea of the type of work in progress in Canada, but it should be restated that these categories serve mainly to provide a manageable taxonomy of research

being conducted. They are neither absolute nor complete. In some cases scholars borrow theories and models from other disciplines in their research work, and scholars from several different disciplines may work with the same material type. For instance, in a single issue of *Material History Bulletin*, folklorists, historians, cultural geographers and fine art historians authored separate studies of gravestones, cemeteries and the rites of death, each working from a different disciplinary perspective.<sup>10</sup> Although scholarly studies tend to be microscopic in focus, researchers rarely restrict themselves to a single source of data and generally acknowledge that substantial data bases are a prerequisite for a significant results. Such data bases may consist of a combination of oral, documentary, artifactual and in some cases archaeological evidence. With the exception of larger institutions this approach to material culture research does not represent that in Ontario museums. In fact, collections research in most community museums in this province is conducted at such a preliminary level that it is questionable whether this work, by definition, constitutes material culture research at all.

### **The Dialectic of Museum Collecting and Research**

Although what actually lies behind many of our heritage programmes is a combination of tradition, politics and maybe management theory, research is an intellectual endeavour. In Ontario museums, collections research is directed and limited by both philosophical guidelines and operational objectives. These factors unite to shape the collecting and investigation of the material life of our communities.

The sheer volume of extant material culture as potential museum collections forces the use of collecting criteria which are spelled out in museum statements of purpose and collections policies. The intent of these policies is to limit the focus of a museum and its collection and to organize this collection in a logical fashion. The organizing framework in most Ontario community museums today is a chronological interpretation of local history. Within this framework the significance of artifacts either within the collection or within the community is assessed. This idea of significance is a necessary and primary criterion listed in most collections policies, but curators to a person find it difficult to assess historical significance, because its intellectual basis is ambivalent. The range of approaches to the

study of history is broad, but each of these (for instance, biographical, cultural) is limited in relative terms of information and explanatory power.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately the curator is forced to decide: is historical significance related to critical events and to important people, as a political historian might think? Or is significance based on aesthetic form, a criterion used by art historians? Does it mean instead that the item best represents a way of life or thought shared by a majority of the population, an interpretation that anthropologists, folklorists and cultural or social historians might apply? What questions should curators be asking? With one exception, museum policies do not define significance specifically in any of these ways, and for local-history museums the broad and diffuse interpretation of historical significance, matched with an infinite potential of material collecting, presents enormous problems in both collections management and collections research.

The interpretation of history is subject to revision, and the idea of what is historically significant changes over time. As a result, museum curators find that their collections inadequately reflect local history and culture as they currently understand it. One curator who called his collection a "mish-mash of what people thought belonged in a museum" (other people, that is) stated that for him collections research consisted mainly of aggressive deaccessioning and recollecting to obtain a more representative sample of materials from the past in his community. With burgeoning storerooms and a new "professional" cast in museum management, the re-evaluation of existing collections has become a major collections research-management activity in local community museums. "Deaccessioning" is now a household term in the vocabulary of the community museum curator. I remember a local-history curator proudly telling me how he had dispensed of three dump-truck loads of "junk" from his museum's storage facilities. While this activity may weigh in varying degrees on the conscience of individual curators, its greater implication is rarely discussed. In the words of George Kubler:

The decision to discard something is far from being a simple decision . . . It is a reversal of values.<sup>12</sup>

Historical significance as it is understood in some community museums carries a bias imbedded in our society: that older is better. This notion is reflected in statements of purpose, collecting policies, exhibits and pro-

grammes. Many local-history museums do not collect within a hiatus of thirty to fifty years prior to the present. While this may be a decision based in part on storage restrictions, it reveals a philosophical bias toward the material life of a community. In these communities objects are condemned to remain in historical purgatory until their fiftieth birthday, at which time the survivors are put to the test of historical significance. Significance and survival are, of course, not mutually consistent. Even in those museums with collecting imperatives up to the present, collections and exhibits date predominately from the period before the Second World War. In a recent issue of *MUSE*, Chris Miller-Marti has tackled this particular notion as a cultural myth. Historical story-lines are formulated in combination with other myths, such as the idea of progress, and consequently shape research, collecting and interpretation activities in community museums.<sup>13</sup>

It is ironic in light of this that material culture analyses seek to understand the object as an indication of a process of ideas and practice representing a particular group of people within a certain period. By not documenting contemporary material culture, we may be repeating the sins of our curatorial predecessors. In Sweden, museums have designated certain families to identify and record their attitudes, values, customs, activities and belongings in order to understand the heritage of Sweden as it is expressed today and so that in the future a well-integrated data base of information concerning material life as part of cultural process will be accessible.<sup>14</sup> This active collecting intent is based on an intellectual framework for the collecting and research of material life, which is more consistent with an intellectual philosophy found in anthropology, folklore and folk life than the discipline of history. However, the History Division of the Canadian Museum of Civilization has engaged in limited contemporary collecting, and various debates exist about the purpose and value of this activity.<sup>15</sup>

Other intellectual restraints restrict the base of material life collected and researched. A local geographic concentration can certainly focus research and collecting, but may also contribute to a myopic viewpoint in absence of a bigger picture of artifact production and consumption. Many objects in community museum collections were neither made nor used exclusively in that locale. As George Kubler reminds us, the existence of masses of copies of manufactured goods testifies to a

large public.<sup>16</sup> One of the reasons that collections from one museum to the next appear similar is that despite economic, cultural and other distinguishing aspects of separate localities, these communities were part of a larger network of production and consumption of material life. To understand their collections of material life, curators need to focus on their own community's use of these objects and then telescope out to understand the relationship of this use against other communities. But local-history museums rarely conduct research to the degree that they compare artifact production and consumption in their own community with neighbouring areas or central places.

It is the use and interpretation of intellectual organizing frameworks, such as those described above, that serve to focus and limit collecting and research to a particular representation of the material past, while rejecting other material culture data. Whether these are appropriate philosophies for preserving our material culture remains to be determined. It is important that heritage administrators understand the implications of the philosophy they choose on how the cultural past and present of a community becomes represented and researched in our museums.

Part of the reason for what may appear as an intellectually uncertain purpose in collections gathering and research in local-history museums is that history, as it is practiced in the Canadian academy, provides little theoretical or methodological direction for interpreting the past through the analysis of material culture.<sup>17</sup> Historians in our universities rarely consider material culture evidence either in formulating research questions or in resolving them. By tradition, the discipline of history invokes a hierarchy of data sources that places primary written documents superior to all else. If consulted at all, artifacts are used by historians to confirm documents. From my own experience the majority of the history fraternity remains immune, disinterested or dubious about the value of objects as historical data. As a consequence local-history museums and historic sites are to some extent intellectual orphans—country cousins to professional academics who do not speak the same dialect. This relationship is apparent in past Ontario Museum Association Heritage conferences in which academic historians and museum curators have respectively made presentations seemingly irrelevant to each other: the historians discussing political and social change, but not objects, and the curators talking objects,

but without the framework of a historical thesis.

### Thanks for the Memories

In spite of the intellectual limits on how we create and research our collections, it is the legacy of past collecting practices and the operational imperatives of museums today that impose even greater limitations on collections research activities. If academic historians do not seem to believe that material culture adds up to good history, they are not alone. Museum curators also agree! Chris Miller-Marti and David Richeson have described inherent biases in museum collections, such as an emphasis on elite and ceremonial objects and an underrepresentation of common, bulky or industrial material life.<sup>18</sup>

It is not just this skewing of potential research data that creates difficulties for scholarly historical research on collections. Since history is a study based on "time" and "place," it is no wonder that museum curators cannot effectively investigate local history, even with limited collections. The majority of museum collections in Ontario, and especially in local-history museums, have no provenience. Collections lack specific historical data regarding makers, date of manufacture, users and patterns of use. In Ontario local-history museums and in some historic sites, collections research is routinely limited to inventorying and cataloguing artifacts and is often conducted by volunteers. In some of these museums much still remains uncatalogued and unrecorded. These curators do not have a profile of their collection, either by object type, provenience or date. Because many museum collections have no provenience, and local-history story-lines must, by default, be determined through documents, material evidence in many local-history museums is reduced to a referential rather than an expressive role. Exhibits and interpretative programmes use artifacts to illustrate a local history.<sup>19</sup> This practice is by no means restricted to Ontario local-history museums. A recent review of new exhibits at the New Brunswick Museum noted that:

In developing "On the turn of the Tide" considerable energy was invested in crafting a storyline that represented current research findings on a subject often obscured by myth. Artifacts were selected to complement and illustrate this information. The result was an exhibit that taught and interpreted history.<sup>20</sup>

This process may lead toward interpreting the past with material culture, but not neces-

sarily toward deciphering it. As Gregg Finley has stated on the basis of his work in this museum:

For too long we have been interpreting and exhibiting objects and ideas as more or less separate entities—the objects come from the store rooms and the ideas from books and sometimes archival documents, and the precise intellectual link between the two of them is often ambiguous, dubious and mysterious.<sup>21</sup>

Because this intellectual link is indeed ambiguous, and secondary sources provide “quick and dirty” story-lines, museum artifacts are often treated as representations, rather than as historical text. Another example of this notion in practice in Ontario museums is compliance with a doctrine against collecting duplicates. But neither government guidelines nor collecting policies specify what exactly constitutes a “duplicate.” While the functional benefits of this practice are obvious, it slights an intellectual intent to understand artifact variation in function and to determine type and stylistic preferences. This philosophy also inhibits shaping collections to demographically reflect community production and consumption of material life.

Cataloguing is usually descriptive and is based on categorizing systems such as those by Sears and Chenhall. These are taxonomic but not analytical models, and despite their use, cataloguing is not necessarily a uniform process, as suggested by catalogue work sheets and file cards. Material culture analysts in the academy insist that we should re-create the categories of the artifact makers (and users) in order to understand the meaning and use of the object to them,<sup>22</sup> but meaning or significance of object to user rarely exists as an index category in our museum cataloguing systems. That this situation may be representative of collections documentation across the country was illustrated in a recent presentation concerning the difficulty of finding Jewish objects in Canadian museum collections. Although the cultural attribution of the piece could in some cases be determined through donor records, specific information on a generic-appearing object, such as that an ironstone bowl was used to make matzoh balls, remained unrecorded.<sup>23</sup> Curators need to engage in what anthropologist Clifford Geertz calls “thick description.”<sup>24</sup>

Despite these criticisms, the categorizing and cataloguing process in Ontario museums in the last ten years has greatly improved and our information about past materials has expanded accordingly. This activity is fundamental and preliminary to any analysis, but

represents only an elementary level of material culture research.

### The Curator's Dilemma

When I discussed these findings with a colleague, he suggested that the quality of collections research conducted in a museum may be more dependent on curatorial expertise than on museum philosophies and policies. But these elements are interdependent, and my discussions with curators suggest that they remain uninformed about recent developments in material culture research. Models for artifact analysis in a historical context do exist, but less than twenty-five percent of curators interviewed had heard of these, including those designed by Americans E. McClung Fleming and Jules Prown and Canadian cultural historian, Gregg Finley.<sup>25</sup> Of those curators familiar with these models, none were using them in their research. Some curators indicated uncertainty about how to proceed with a collections research project. Moreover, it is evident from both policy statements and discussions with curators that the definition of collections research is not clear within the museum community. All curators I spoke to agreed that they conducted collections research, but when asked to describe what they meant by “research,” responses varied from gathering information using secondary sources to, in one case only, a highly structured research proposal, and this was not a local-history museum, but a museum specializing in a specific theme. This situation appears similar to that described by E. McClung Fleming fifteen years ago when introducing his artifact analysis model:

There has not been equivalent progress in differentiating the information level from the conceptual level in museum scholars research with collections.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, “research,” a museum function recited by curators as key to the purpose of their museums, appears in reality to be a shadow of other activities. Curators do not, and can not, conduct material culture research to the extent that scholars do, because curators are busy doing something else besides managing unwieldy data bases: they are mounting exhibits and conducting programmes for a public audience. Unlike university scholars, curatorial research is not directed at one's peers but at a museum clientele. Curators indicated that the bulk of their collections research efforts were directed toward the production of exhibits or educational programmes. As one curator said: “The

expediency of exhibit design is the controlling factor in collections research."<sup>27</sup> The targeted audience for this research is an estimated thirteen years of age. Research, then, is conducted to sustain an exhibit, rather than the exhibit serving as a vehicle of research. For these reasons alone, our exhibits may be intellectually uncertain. In addition, because collections research for exhibits is focused locally but on a range of material life that had a wide expression in this province's history, there is a duplication of collections research efforts among museums. Research reports indicate that several museums are researching costumes, period interiors, domestic textile production and so on.

That collections research, and research in general, is an understressed activity in local museums is evident in museum policies, organizational structures, budget statements and government funding programmes. Only one site surveyed had a permanent researcher position, and only one site had a separate budget category called "research." Otherwise collections and other research expenditures are sublimated under administrative and cataloguing supplies, photocopying, travel, etc. This format may be based on Ministry operating-budget categories, which also exclude research per se. As a result, museum curators do not know how much their research costs, although policies and discussions suggest that research expenditures for all museum research activities average between less than one percent to six percent of museum operating expenditures. This represents a zero-sum equation in which research must compete for resources with other museum functions. Statements concerning collections research in museum research policies moderate a somewhat negative tone: limits are set on maximum amount of time for research and, in some maximum expenditure for research materials. This concern does not extend to exhibit and interpretation policies. Clearly there appears to be a cautionary note in research guidelines, suggesting uncertainty concerning museum research objectives and the resources needed to fulfill them. In no case except one was more than ten percent of curatorial time allotted for conducting research per se. To cope with this situation many curators have engaged volunteers in artifact-cataloguing efforts and document research toward fulfilling both internal and external research needs. Most research policies carry far more criteria about collections research access and publishing rights

for outside researchers than what research responsibilities are expected of museum staff.

Curators and museum directors looking for funding for extensive collections research or research of any kind are usually forced to isolate this activity for special funding outside of the general operating budget. But funding for research per se is not available from any of the main cultural funding agencies. As one curator drily noted:

It is easier for me to get government capital funds to double the amount of space in my museum than it is for me to have someone paid a salary to conduct research.<sup>28</sup>

Although some provinces such as Alberta provide direct funding for museum research programmes, in Ontario funding for collections research simply does not exist, either from the provincial lottery programme grants or from the national Museum Assistance Programme. Museums and museum curators do not qualify either as institutions or as scholars to receive Social Science and Humanities Research Council funds. Neither will the provincial Community Museum Programme fund archives, thereby discouraging the vital collection of documents relevant to past material life. Curators and museum directors generally resort to temporary federal government job-creation programmes and provincial internship grants to fund research positions. (I should note here that the "research" function is even de-emphasized by the Ontario Museum Association whose conference streams are still organized around all the primary museum functions except research.)

For most of us, none of this discouraging information is news, but it is a predominant concern among curators, who feel a real responsibility for the quality of research conducted at their site and who believe that their museum's research efforts are insufficient. But our current method of evaluating the performance of an institution is on the basis of its audience appeal, not on its quality of research. This emphasis on a "Disneyland with a pill" approach to museum goal-setting brings into question the actual role of community museums in our society and the expectations for us as curators. In an often-quoted letter written almost seventy-five years ago Franz Boas warned Edward Sapir, then director of the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa, against taking a museum position in the United States. He wrote:

I believe that any step of this kind would be the mistake of your life. I do not know if you

have a clear impression of the character of museum work in the United States; but I feel quite certain that I judge it correctly partly from my own experience, partly from what I see people doing who are employed by museums. The fundamental difficulty that you will find everywhere is that all purely scientific work, particularly the work in which you are interested, would have to be done as a side issue, and that the essential interest of the museum is not exploration, but the exhibit, and ordinarily the popular exhibit...<sup>29</sup>

Today's museum commentators call this situation the "curator's dilemma," and ask:

How can museums and those working within them resolve these conflicts, the "curator's dilemma"? One way, and the approach favoured by large civic and district museums, is to abandon all pretence at research except that which is directly related to exhibit and collection needs. In some of these museums, in fact, the curatorial contract explicitly excludes personal research from this list of official duties. Curators in such

institutions become librarians to their collections and information officers to the public, expected to know a little about everything the museum holds, and not too much about any one thing.<sup>30</sup>

I suggest that this quote adequately reflects the situation for many community museums in this province and raises several questions regarding the role of collections research in local museums. Should we expect community museums to produce scholarly research on their collections? If museums should be, as Marjorie Halpin has suggested, a bridge between the academy and the public, to what discipline do we harness ourselves?<sup>31</sup> Or, should museums function, as Michael Ames has observed, as display centres with limited research activities? If so, then the future of collections research in this province and in this country can not and will not be in the community museum.

## NOTES

*A version of this paper was presented at the annual conference of the Ontario Museum Association, Toronto, 23 October 1987.*

1. Collections research will also be referred to as material life research, or as material culture analysis when it actually involves analytical work.
2. *Report of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee* (Ottawa: Department of Communications, Government of Canada, 1982), pp. 114-15.
3. This data gathering was made possible through the support of Mary Brent and her staff at the Ontario Ministry of Culture and Communications, Mac Swackhammer and Susan Murdoch of MAP, as well as ten curators across the province who discussed their collections research activities and gave me a piece of their mind concerning collections research in their institution and in museums in general.
4. Michael J. Ettema, "History, Nostalgia and American Furniture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 2 (1982): 138.
5. See Simon Bronner, "Concepts in the Study of Material Aspects of American Folk Culture," *Folklore Forum* 12 (1979): 133-72. Thomas Schlereth, "Material Culture Studies in America 1876-1976," in *Material Culture Studies in America*, ed. Thomas J. Schlereth (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1982). A good explanation of these approaches is also provided by Susan M. Pearce in the following articles: "Thinking about Things: Approaches to the Study of Artefacts," *Museums Journal* 85, no. 4 (March 1986): 198-201; "Objects: High and Low," *Museums Journal* 86, no. 2 (September 1986): 79-82; and
- "Objects as Signs and Symbols," *Museums Journal* 86, no. 3 (December 1986): 131-35.
6. George MacDonald, "Material Culture as Text: A Structuralist View." Paper presented at the conference "North American Material Culture Research: New Objectives, New Theories," St. John's, Newfoundland, 19-21 June 1986.
7. David-Thierry Ruddel, "The Domestic Textile Industry in the Region and City of Quebec, 1792-1835," *Material History Bulletin* 17 (Spring 1983): 95-126.
8. Pauline Greenhill, "Lawrence McGuire: Voice from a Community," *Rotunda* 18, no. 1 (Summer 1975): 22-27.
9. Ann Gorman Condon, "The Celestial World of Jonathan Odell: Symbolic Unities within a Disparate Artifact Collection." Paper presented at the conference "North American Material Culture Research: New Objectives, New Theories," St. John's, Newfoundland, 19-21 June 1986.
10. *Material History Bulletin* 23 (Spring 1986).
11. Claude Levi-Strauss gives an interesting discourse on the idea of history and its limitations in his essay "History and Dialectic," in Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (English transl., London: George Weidenfield and Nicolson Ltd., 1966).
12. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 77.
13. Chris Miller-Marti, "Local History Museums and the Creation of the Past," *MUSE* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 36-39.
14. Kurt Dewhurst and Marsha MacDowell, "Popular Culture and the European Folk Museum," in *Twentieth-Century Popular Culture in Museums and Libraries*, ed. Fred E.H. Schroeder (Bowling

- Green, Ky.: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1981), p. 110.
15. David Richeson, "Museum Collections—Distortions of Our Past?" *Museum Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (Winter 1983): 18–22.
  16. George Kubler, *The Shape of Time*, p. 85.
  17. There are a few notable exceptions, such as the material history programme at the University of New Brunswick. For a description of a seminar component of this programme, see Gregg Finley, "Towards a Material History Methodology," *Material History Bulletin* 22 (Autumn 1984): 31–40. American Studies programmes in American universities also include material culture studies in their syllabus.
  18. Chris Miller–Marti, "Local History Museums and the Creation of the Past" and David Richeson, "Museum Collections—Distortions of Our Past?"
  19. Chris Miller–Marti discusses mythical storylines in local-history museum interpretations of the past in "Local History Museums and the Creation of the Past." See also Claude Lévi–Strauss, *The Savage Mind*.
  20. Peter E. Rider, "144 Years Proud: New Exhibits at the New Brunswick Museum," *Material History Bulletin* 22 (Fall 1985): 76 (Introduction).
  21. Gregg Finley, Unpublished report to the National Museums of Canada, "A Methodology for Artifact Studies," 1983.
  22. Michael Ettema, "History, Nostalgia and American Furniture," p. 138.
  23. Sandra Morton Weitzman, "Ethnic Collections and Strategies for Research." Paper presented at the Ontario Museum Association Annual Conference, Toronto, 23 October 1987.
  24. "Thick description" is based on the following idea: "A culture may be thought of as a related set of languages, or as a multichannelled system of communication. Consisting of more than just words, it also comprises gesture, demeanor, dress, architecture and all the codes by which those who share in the culture convey meaning and significance to each other. Through a process of elucidating contexts, structures, and meanings, we can learn to reconstruct something of the participant's world as they experienced them." Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 24
  25. For a description of these models, see E. McClung Fleming, "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model," *Winterthur Portfolio* 9 (1973): 153–73; Jules Prown, "Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method," *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1–19; Gregg Finley, "Towards a Material History Methodology," *Material History Bulletin* 22 (Autumn 1984): 31–40.
  26. McClung Fleming: "Artifact Study: A Proposed Model."
  27. Personal communication with museum director in southwestern Ontario.
  28. Personal communication with museum curator/director in Northern Ontario.
  29. Quoted in Regna Darnell, "The Sapir Years at the National Museum, Ottawa," in *The History of Canadian Anthropology*, Canadian Ethnology Society, Proceedings no. 3 (1976), p. 117.
  30. Michael M. Ames, *Museums, the Public and Anthropology* (Vancouver and New Delhi: University of British Columbia Press and Concept Publishing Company, respectively, 1986), p. 22.
  31. Marjorie Halpin, "Quality and the Post-Modern Museum." Dr. Halpin suggested that museums are the medium between the scholar and the public in a paper presented at the Canadian Museums Association Trainer's Workshop, "Delivering Quality Training," Ottawa, 19–21 August 1987.