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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Book Review: Communication Strategy–Strategic Public Relations for Archaeological Open-Air Museums by M.A. Zielinska and R.P. Paardekooper

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How a museum communicates to its audience has changed significantly in the past decades. With the introduction of the Internet and the creation of social media sites such as Facebook,

Twitter and Instagram, social media has become an integrated part of the everyday life of the majority of museum visitors. Furthermore, the way in which museums understand their visitors has changed considerably also, as museums now for example talk of users instead of audiences.

> The overall high quality of the handbook and the fact that it covers a diverse range of topics concerning communication strategies and marketing, makes it a must read if you are looking for inspiration on how to create a communication strategy for your open-air museum.

This Handbook deals with and gives advices on how open-air museums can adjust to these changes and integrate these new forms of media into their communication strategies, while also making use of and improving older practices in communicating to users. The handbook is well written in a simple but suitable style and uses a variety of illustrations and examples from relevant European museums and surveys. The handbook is divided into six chapters. Each chapter deals with different aspects of museum communication. Each aspect is presented through relevant use of expert advice, examples and illustrations. There is a general clear flow to the book with each chapter leading to the next. But the chapters may also stand alone, so that the handbook can be used as a work of reference.

Chapter one "People Matter" stresses out the importance of communicating to the users during the onsite visit. The chapter gives specific advice on how to greet and give information to the visitors, but perhaps more importantly the chapter addresses the importance of "word of mouth" and illustrates how the regular user can become an important part of a museums marketing and communication strategy. Another important issue, which is briefly mentioned, is the importance of free Wi-Fi in museums. The authors illustrate this by using an example of how visitors enjoy sharing their visit, while being at the museum.

Chapter two covers the relatively new subject of "Digital PR". This chapter is probably the most relevant in the handbook not only for open-air museums, but also for museums in general. The chapter deals with a relative new subject for many museums; the use of digital media as a marketing tool and the impact digital media has made on how museums should do Public Relations (PR). The handbook emphasizes "PR is no longer about keeping friends with the local journalist and churning out press releases" (p. 10). Instead according to the handbook, PR has changed into a diverse subject, which deals with traditional PR as well as content marketing, social media and online search (*Digital PR)*. Digital PR combines "old" types of marketing with "new" types of marketing as a strategy of reaching a broader audience. The chapter provides the reader with an overview of each of the different elements of digital PR, as well as tips and knowledge about different ways of creating and updating a strategy for implementing digital PR. In general this chapter is well structured and provides the reader

with very useful “do’s and don’ts” about digital PR, as well as a brief, but very useful overview of different types of social media sites.

Chapter three “Combining Social Media and Print Marketing” provides the reader with advice on *how*, *when* and *what* to do and think about, when working with print marketing. By print marketing the handbook means posters, flyers, vinyl banners etc. The authors stress that social media and print marketing is depended on each other, and that both of them are important tools for the museum.

Chapter four “Printed and Tangible PR products” is divided into three subchapters -1.Printed material, 2. Promotional products, and 3. Souvenirs - which all deal with tangible things you can produce to promote your museum. Through a series of dos, the chapter explains the importance of quality, material and knowing your target audience. The chapter offers advice on how to apply printed and tangible products into a successful campaign and branding.

Chapter five “Media and Going public”. This chapter is very significant for creating a strategy for communicating to a broader audience, as it deals with very diverse ranges of communicating, from press releases to presentations and film. In general, the chapter provides the reader with excellent ideas and ways of communicating to a broader audience through different types of media, by using relevant examples from a wide range of museums. The chapter also offers the reader a very helpful guide on how to do presentations in public to users/visitors, fellow museum researchers and workers.

Finally, in chapter six, the authors present “How to organize an International Public Event”. The chapter gives a step-by-step guide on how to plan and execute a major event at an open-air museum. The guide is easy to follow and addresses some of the concerns an open-air museum would have with planning an event. It is also a nice sum up of the handbook, as this chapter incorporates some of the advice and suggestions given throughout the book.

The overall high quality of the handbook and the fact that it covers a diverse range of topics concerning communication strategies and marketing, makes it a must read if you are looking for inspiration on how to create a communication strategy for your open-air museum; most museums would benefit from reading and inacting the advice given in the book. It would have benefited from a standard style of writing and layout throughout the book, as each part of a chapter is presented in a different way. It can be confusing at times for the reader to grasp the main points and ideas of the book, because of the variety of ways in which they are presented. However, in general, each chapter is structured in such a manner that even though it lacks consistency in communication style, no one feels left out. It is my opinion that the general high quality of the book and the relatively simple approach to the, at times, rather difficult topic of creating a communication strategy, makes this book relevant to all employees and volunteers working at a museum.

Book information:

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