

Collection of Collections

The Vas County Museums' Friends Association was founded in 1998 as a non-governmental, public benefit association to foster and preserve cultural heritage. Its activities include design and implementation of cultural projects and exhibitions, cultural events and publications, and maintaining a website. Connections to young people have an important role, and include summer camps and a museum beetle club. The membership of the Friends Association includes representatives of different generations, so storytelling gives them the opportunity to create discourse and to organise joint programmes with the possibility of cooperation.

The idea for this project was rooted in a 2006-2008 Hungarian and Austrian cross-border project which focused on children and material culture. It seemed a great opportunity to build on this earlier project by comparing everyday experiences of young collectors with stories of adult collectors. At the same time Savaria Museum of Szombathely had its 100th anniversary in 2008, which provided a real opportunity to focus on stories of collections and collectors in Vas County thus reinforcing the museum's mission and relevance. Savaria Museum provided the venue for the discussion forums.

The aim of *Collection of Collections* was to create non-formal and informal teaching and learning situations in museums and other out-of-school environments (such as flea-markets, antiques shops, or restoration workshops), where different private and institutional collections could be presented and interpreted by collectors or dealers and develop into an intergenerational discourse. The target group was selected because new museum friends, supporters and external partners for the future can be found among these people.

Objectives

- To research and document the different forms and processes of collecting goods, artefacts and antiques;
- To increase the professional network of Savaria Museum and its friends and supporters;
- To involve private collectors in order to make Savaria Museum a place of cultural events and communal activities;
- To make participants aware of the possibilities of extending their activities with visits to museums, flea-markets, antiques shops and restoration workshops;
- To create a web page of the project.

Process

A competition was announced in the local media and on the Savaria Museum's website for biographical interviews of private collectors. These interviews could be written, photographed or audio/video-recorded. The prizes were given on the Day of European Cultural Heritage in 2009 at Savaria Museum, which was also hosting a meeting of private collectors.

A calendar of 14 cultural events was published in January 2009, all of which generated unexpectedly high interest. At Savaria Museum twelve private collectors and their biographies were discussed at eight open forums. Most of them were widely known in local society and had been selected as representatives of different types of collecting, from sporting to military artefacts.

Before the open forums each private collector was visited at home to record video-interviews in authentic surroundings. Gábor Göndör edited all the video documentation. The short portraits were shown in the open forums and published on the website.

Outcomes

The project attracted an unexpectedly high number of participants (338), many of whom returned several times. The museum felt that this meant that the participants were becoming a real community. The main benefit of the project for the organisation was that it involved many previously unknown private collectors into the network of the museum's friends and the museum. The local cultural role of the museum and the association was also strengthened by this project.

Institution

Vasi Múzeumbarát Egylet (Vas County Museums' Friends Association)
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Project website

<http://gyujtemenyek.muzeumbarat.hu/>

Target audience

Private collectors, young people and adults interested in antiquities, artefacts and other "collectables"