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Small Museum Network of Japan and its Roles for the Members and the Community

Kenji Saotome

Suita City Museum, Osaka, Japan

Abstract

In the 1990s, the collapse of the bubble economy in Japan left a huge burden on the national and regional finances, and sudden changes in social conditions emerged. As the level of administrative and financial strength dropped remarkably, local people also started looking harshly at public services including those of museums. In response to this, people involved in the museum sector began discussing how museums can contribute for the contemporary society. However, financial conditions of the national government and local governments have become more restrictive, many museums have difficulty organising quality projects, while they are conducting various collaborative activities in their efforts to find solutions for revitalisation.

Such a trend is especially noticeable in smaller museums that have closer ties with the communities they belong to, or the administration and the assembly, and for this reason, there are a lot of issues museum staff have to sort out. Because of the situation, a number of discussions have been made in recent years on small-scale museums, and museum staff at these small-scale museums have created partnerships.

Under such circumstances, the Small Museum Network of Japan, which has been holding Annual General Conference since 2010 and has been exchanging information via mailing list, started to offer opportunities to talk about issues and prospects small-scale museums can share with the members and the communities, and it also makes various efforts such as establishing a space called "Give and Take," where participating museums can bring in things that they do not need, or giving advice and support to museums on the verge of being closed down due to tight financial conditions.

This paper will discuss about the roles of the Small Museum Network of Japan for the members and the communities they belong to.