

The Educational Function of Modern Museums

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Abstract: We have several patterns of Museology, such as Audience development, Exhibitions and display, Community programs, Education and children's programs, Risk management, Project management, international engagement and partnerships, Museum strategy, planning and leadership, Libraries and archives, and Digital strategy. In this regard, I am going to discuss "**The educational function at the modern Museums**", and how the functions at the museums developed. One of the purposes was to preserve and explore the historical objects as museums nowadays have other important missions most important of all is the educational function as well as the spread of awareness for our audience.

Keywords: Education Museum - Museum Missions-Educational Function - Modern Museums - Policy of the Museum - Exhibitions Aims.

الوظيفة التعليمية في المتاحف الحديثة

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المخلص: لدينا العديد من الإدارات المهنية وثيق الصلة بعلوم ودراسات المتاحف، مثل: إدارة المجموعات المتحفية، إدارة العرض المتحفي، إدارة التعليم المتحفي، وإدارة المخاطر، وإدارة التعاون الدولي، إدارة التسويق المتحفي. في هذه الأطروحة البحثية، سأناقش "الوظيفة التعليمية في المتاحف الحديثة"، وكيف تطورت الوظائف في المتاحف. من الحفاظ على الآثار وشواهد التاريخ والحاضر واستكشافها إلى أن وصلت المؤسسة المتحفية على مؤسسة تربية وتعليمية وتنقيفية متكاملة، حيث أن المتاحف في الوقت الحاضر لديها مهام أخرى، ولعل من أهمها الوظيفة التعليمية وكذلك نشر الوعي لدى الجمهور.

الكلمات الدالة: التعليم المتحفي - الرسائل المتحفية - الوظيفة التعليمية - المتاحف الحديثة - سياسة المتحف - أهداف المعارض.

- Museums: Mission and Educational Function

Museums are interesting places to visit, through displaying objects and exhibits, which are considered as engines to militate and develop knowledge and culture in countries¹. For the current communities and generations, exhibitions are innovative places that promote new ways of engaging with the public and encouraging more people to understand and enjoy the diverse cultures and knowledge².

- The Museum Exhibitions Aims & Educational Function

Exhibitions are created to transform some aspects of visitor's vision, behaviors, culture, values, traditions and attitudes. Good exhibitions aim to create some kinds of contact between the museum and the public, encouraging them to participate and learn where the exhibition is considered as the source of inspiration in presenting information. Showing exhibits in high standards and well planned in a way to delight the viewer's eyes and visitors, achieving the highest benefit of the exhibits as a method to transfer knowledge to visitors³.

Museums today use a large scale of methods to display their exhibitions, such as audio guides, dioramas, panels, etc. Moreover, other elements such as the design, walls, ceilings, colors, light, and floors fulfill the success of their internal exhibition elements besides themes this makes museums living institutions dedicated for educating and entertaining visitors⁴.

Excellent and famous museums worldwide realize that there is a must in receiving sustain active funds to cover the institutional costs and open opportunities for future redevelopments⁵.

- The Collections Management Policy & Educational Function

The Collections Management Policy is considered to be such an important document that has its own section in the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums. It states that the governing body for each museum should adopt and publish written collections policy addressing the acquisition, care, and use of collections. Thus, having a collections management. Policy is considered to be a professional, ethical responsibility⁶.

¹ Mohamed Ahmed Abd el-Salam, *The Museum of Islamic Art* (Cairo: MIA press, 2016), 12.

² Emmanuel N. Arinze, *The role of the museum in society-Lecture delivered at the National Museum, Georgetown* (Guyana: The National Museum, Georgetown press, 1999), 23.

³ Andrew Kelly, *Impact and Values, Assessing the Arts and Creative Industries in the South West*, (Bristol: The Museum press, 2000), 41.

⁴ John H. Falk, Lynn D. Dierking, *Learning from Museums. Visitor Experiences and the Making of Meaning* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2000), 7.

⁵ Graeme K. Talboys, *Museum Educator's Handbook, 2nd Edition* (Hampshire: Ashgate press, 2000), 13.

⁶ Matthew Stiff, *Cultural Heritage Protection Handbook N°3. In: Documentation of Artefacts* (Paris: UNESCO, 2007), 35.

- Examples of Educational plans at Museums

Example1: The Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo

- Historical Background of the Museum of Islamic Art, Cairo

At first, I want to give a brief note on the historical background of The Museum of Islamic Art. In addition, I will focus on the role of collection management to keep the memories of the Museum, and how to use that for education program at the Museum? This museum is located in Bab al- Khalq in the heart of Historic Cairo. It is considered to be the largest Islamic Art Museum in the world, as it houses almost hundred thousand artifacts of various types collected from India, China, Iran, all the way to the Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, Egypt, North Africa and Andalusia. This collection is characterized by its breadth of coverage of all the branches of Islamic Art throughout the ages, which makes it a beacon of Islamic Art and Civilization for all times.

The importance of the Museum of Islamic Art also stems from its being the greatest institute of learning in the world which caters to the fields of Islamic Antiquities and Islamic Art in general, due to the versatility of its collection which spans a broad gamut of raw materials such as metals, mouldings, wood carvings, as well as ivory, ceramic, stone, textile, glass and carpet artifacts, among others.

The idea of establishing a museum for Islamic arts and antiquities first came up during the rule of Khedive Ismail in the year 1869, when architect Salzman suggested the idea to His Highness. Khedive Ismail immediately commissioned the head of the technical department of the Ministry of Endowments, Frantz Pasha, to collect artefacts from the different Islamic monuments and place them in a governmental building. This was achieved during the rule of Khedive Tawfiq, his son, in the year 1880, when Frantz Pasha collected antiques and artefacts of the Islamic period in the eastern wing of al-Ḥākīm bi' Amr Allah's Mosque.

Further efforts were made towards collecting more relevant artifacts, when the Committee for Preservation of Arab Antiquities was founded in the year 1881 and chose al-Ḥākīm Mosque as its headquarters. A small building was erected in the courtyard and was named The Arab Museum with Frantz Pasha as its director. Upon his retirement in 1892 the Committee appointed its chief architect Hertz Bey to supervise the small museum. In 1895, he wrote a catalogue of its contents.

When Hertz Bey later realized that the area allocated to the museum was too small, it was decided to construct the current building in Bab al-Khalq Square under the name of The House of Arab Antiquities. The corner stone was laid in 1899, and its construction was completed by 1902. The collection was then moved to the new building and the museum was officially inaugurated by Khedive Abbas Helmy II on December 28th, 1903.

Generally speaking, the Museum's collection stands as a treasure trove for all the researchers and historians interested in the Islamic Civilization. Together with visitors from all walks of life, they will be capable of witnessing, first hand, what this civilization has managed to offer humanity in a diversity of fields. These achievements stand as solid proof of the degree of exquisite taste and perfect workmanship which were the hallmarks of the Muslim artisans. All this has rendered the Museum of Islamic

Art in Cairo a Mecca for visitors, whether they be kings, statesmen or regular individuals¹.

The role of risk management for developing the Museum education& Staff

-What happened on 24th Jan, 2014? Unfortunately, on 24th January of 2014, the Museum was subjected to a vicious terrorist attack which targeted the Cairo Police Headquarters across from it. The Museum employees exerted heroic efforts in their attempts to save and rescue the artifacts; having to hand pick them sometimes, piece by piece, from the debris left by the explosion, and quickly confining them to safe storage spaces. The staff of the Museum's Restoration Department had then to meticulously sift and sort out this massive amount of debris in order to put together the pieces associated with every single artifact, before proceeding with its successful restoration. It took a whole year, until the beginning of 2015, before serious steps were taken to bring the Museum to its original state before the explosion².

How to Fix It? (How can we deal with this crisis? How can we rescue these objects?)

- Collecting the artifacts:

The team consisted of 25 persons, the Head of Egyptian Museums, Mr. Ahmed Sharaf, the General Director of Islamic Museum, Mr. Mustafa Khaled, the keepers of departments, five conservators and five security men. We entered inside the Museum at 8 a.m.(after the damage one hour and half).

-We decided to move the masterpieces to the restoration lab, especially wood and glass objects.

-We surveyed each gallery to rescue the most damaged objects to send them to the restoration lab.

-We chose rooms 17 and 18as a temporary place for the storage of the objects. The temporary place for storage was chosen to be a very safe and good place to store the objects for (some time). I think **this decision** was the most important step in the management of this Crisis.

-We moved the objects from display to temporary storage (rooms 17&18), this was a total of 1,471) objects. This took three days; of continuous work from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

-I received almost all the objects in this temporary storage, and I put the same materials together, we registered number of object, number of gallery, number of show case, short description, and notes.

-We were packaging of the objects, for safe removal to other storage spaces.

-Small objects were placed in boxes. After that, we carefully transported each object to its specific storage space, for example, ceramic in to ceramics storage, textiles in to textiles storage. In fact, all the museum curators and conservators played an excellent

¹ Ahmed Al-Shoky, and others, *The Guidebook of the Museum of Islamic Art* (Cairo: The Ministry of Antiquities press, 2016) 7-10.

² The author reading, *The Museum Archive*, (MIA Cairo: 10-2-2020).

role in this crisis, everybody played his/her Part, and we achieved good results as regards the restoration of the objects.

- After three days, we did the first report about the losses:

Number of objects on display: 1,471

Number of un-damaged objects: 1,306

Number of objects in need of restoration: 165

Number of destroyed objects: 16

The challenge that faced the team was not only limited to the restoration of the museum to its original status before the blast, but also to avoid and reconsider all the negative aspects of the displays that were raised by the museum visitors whether they be specialized or non-specialized, such as:

- Lack of the whole foundation statements of the museum; mission statement, vision, mission, mandate.
- Lack of displaying key iconic objects considered as masterpieces for many visitors as well as keeping them preserved in the store.
- Lack of the landmarks and highlights at the exhibitions environment for some key objects in addition to not having any plans to bringing a clear focus on them.
- Lack of Temporary Exhibition galleries at the museum.
- Bad arrangement/placement for some pieces at the museum garden.
- There was no attention to children or visitors with special needs.
- Lack of supporting materials that lead the visitor to deeper engagement with the displays.
- There are wrong writings as well as wrong dates at the labels and other texts; panels.
- Lack of scientific researches and analysis that approach the specialized.

Many meetings have been conducted to investigate different solutions to the aforementioned problems, which came up with the following work agenda:

First- Upgrade the Museum staff:

- 1- Develop the overall administrative structure of the museum, specify the job description for all the curators and the department's chiefs to facilitate their responsibilities, as well as deliver many training courses to improve the English language for the museum staff.
- 2- Deliver many training courses in the field of museology\ museum studies as well as many talks and sessions to raise the awareness of key roles of museums and heritage.
- 3- Provide the museum staff with opportunities of travelling abroad to gain more experiences and to catch up with the missing aspects in the museum including the training in Louvre Museum for 40 days.

- 4- Provide the care service company with specialized trainings to keep the environment clean and safe.

Second- Exhibition & display:

- 1- The museum was able for the 1st time in its history to adopt mission and clarified messages which have been uploaded in the new website, herewith the mission, messages.
- 2- Responding to the adopted mission and messages of the museum, we renovate all the exhibition galleries to approach the new museum features
- 3- Increase the number of displayed objects from 1457 object to 4000 objects without misplacement or misdistribution to the display, moreover enrich the display with 400 object exhibited for the 1st time.
- 4- Add 14 new show cases to the display functioning as follows:
 - Refurbished the first zone area of the museum entrance to explain the role of the Islamic civilization to the world and its contributions in the different fields.
 - Install a whole new gallery to the coins and weapons including more than 95% new objects exhibited for the 1st time.
 - Install a whole new gallery that belongs to Mohammed Ali period to exhibit magnificent pieces that were stored in the museum depository.
 - Install new gallery entitled: "the daily life" to exhibit attractive and wonderful pieces reflecting the daily life at the Islamic period including 95% new objects exhibited for the 1st time.
 - According to the new policy adopted in the museum for creating a long term plan to the internal and external exhibitions as well as contributions to support the others museums exhibitions, two new show cases have been installed in the temporary exhibition gallery aimed to demonstrate the story of the blast that damaged the museum and the reconstruction of the museum.
 - Re-arrange the objects in the museum garden to save a space for events and celebration, parties. (it was a weakness point at the museum not to have outdoor space to conduct some events for the local community)¹.
 - Participation in international Auctions.
 - Encourage exchange objects between the museum and other international ones, we have many objects duplicated.
 - 3-Providing financial support for buying through trustable channels².

¹ The author reading, *The Museum Archive*, (MIA Cairo: 11-2-2020).

² Mohamed Ahmed Abd el-Salam, *Education and Exhibitions* (Cairo: MIA press, 2017), 17.

Third- Exhibition Supporting Elements:

- 1- Improve the display with many exhibition elements and supporters by using Palksy material to highlight on the key iconic objects, and make the visitor engaged with the display.
- 2- Prepare\ organize a high committee from university professors to verifying the academic data as well as the information written on the labels, taken into account that the museum has already adopted the global standards in the exhibitions text writings.
- 3- Adopted different levels of information "Text Hierarchy" approaching a wide range of different audiences illustrated with maps, timelines and photographs¹.

Fourth- Publications:

- 1- Print the museum guide in Arabic language, prepared by the general supervisor of the museum in collaboration with the museum curators.
- 2- Print another museum guide in English language, prepared by the general supervisor of the museum in collaboration with the museum curators, and edited by specialized in the Islamic studies.
- 3- Currently, the museum is working on the 1st museum guide targeting children in Arabic language entitled: "Alaa Al din and the magical garment". This guide aims to explain the stories behind the museum collections and pass on its meanings and significance to the future generation. The kids guide is created by Dr. al-Shoky and it includes many comic pictures for the children.
- 4- Print the 1st museum leaflets in two languages (Arabic and English) prepared by the general supervisor of the museum in collaboration with the museum curators.

Fifth- Using technology in the Exhibition Context and Marketing:

- 1- Launch a new website for the museum in two languages: Arabic & English that include many services targeting the audience and researches.
- 2- Apply the 1st mobile application with diversity programme.
- 3- Scan 10 objects by 3D scan in collaboration with Centre for Documentation Cultural and Natural Heritage in Egypt to be displayed after the museum opening.
- 4- Prepare a temporary exhibition in parallel to the museum opening about:" Science in the Islamic civilization" in collaboration with Cult Net\ Bibliotheca Alexandria that will display the top inventions of Muslim Scientifics.
- 5- Using 10 AV/interactive screen uploaded with 5 different languages in collaboration with Cult Net.
- 6- Improve the social media applications of the museum approaching actual & potential visitors that increased their numbers from 11000 to 29000 member in one year.

¹ Abd el-Salam, *Education and Exhibitions*, 17.

- 7- Create 2 minutes video clips in order to illustrate the museum renovation for marketing purpose¹.

Sixth- approaching new types of visitors:

Promoting a variety of educational and cultural activities targeting different age groups (Schools groups, university students, adults, etc), as well as visually impaired visitors to broaden their appreciation and knowledge of the museum, such as:

- 1- Dedicate a special area for visually impaired people with particular replica designed for them supported with Braille system.
- 2- Provide the museum visits with replica for children to inspire them and make them more connected to the Islamic heritage.
- 3- Improve the skills of children by using many toys inspired form the displayed objects.
- 4- Prepare storytelling activities targeting diversity of visitors including tours and other programmes will be announced on the website

Seventh- Academic Researches:

- 1- Issue the academic journal of the Museum, and select new editors from specialized Egyptians and foreigners. And already many articles and essays have been submitted to the board of the academic journal.
- 2- Redistribute the academic books in the library to receive more books, (it will be opening soon)
- 3- Prepare a meeting room with screen to facilitate the training courses and others sessions or workshops that are going to be delivered there.
- 4- Working on the Database and collecting the data for all the displayed objects as well as 5000 object from the store.

Eighth- International collaboration:

Two Protocols have been issued, to be launched in parallel to the museum opening, which will provide many of the museum staff with the opportunities of training abroad as well as collaborations in the field of academic research and loans for temporary exhibitions:

- 1- Islamic department of Louvre Museum
- 2- Islamic Art museum of Canada
- 3- Prepare initiative/collaboration protocol with Islamic art museum at Australia (still on board)./ in progress.

Today, after the successful completion of this daunting task, we feel fully confident in our capability to redress the wrong that has been perpetrated against our museum. This will be a vivid proof of Egypt's intent resolution to face the dark forces of bigoted

¹ The author reading, *The Museum Archive*, (MIA Cairo: 12-2-2020).

terrorism which continuously attempts to cast doubts in our capabilities and obscure the legacy of our glorious patrimonial heritage¹.

Photography and documentation are at the centre of collections management and the ability to ensure that the collection is accessible to audiences both on-site and on-line.

Why is that so important to museums today? In fact, Photography and documentation are very important in our field for several reasons:

Firstly, the Museum can not make successful collections management for its departments without very strong database including the information about the object and high quality images.

Secondly, if the museum has available collection to the audiences on-line, it will help us to attract many audiences from several age categories for example; the British Museum and Liverpool Museum, all of both have around 5 million visitors per year. However, both have more this number of audiences (about 15 million) check them websites².

In our case, at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, we developed our official website (www.miainegypt.org), we added more interactive material for specialist and non-specialist audiences, and we prepare many activities on-line for our followers, that make a good connection among the museum and the public audiences³.

Finally, collections management servant in different axes in museology such as "Risk Management", in this regards images and documentations for the objects held us to deal with the Museums' crisis on Jun 24, 2014, as I illustrated above⁴.

Actually, if I get this chance for participating, it will be great for me to exchange experience around Photography and documentation, that will cover professional and personal goals. This relates to the following axes:

- Definition and Importance of Documentation:

Documentation is a vital procedure of the museum management policy; it may exist as separate document or be included as major section in the general policy depending on the museum preference. Documentation is the process of recording all the information about any object of the collections of a museum or a cultural institution. By the same token, you can't talk about the full database collections and documentations without images⁵.

¹ The author reading, *The Museum Archive* (MIA Cairo: 15-2-2020).

² Mohamed Gamal Rashed, *The Museums of Egypt* (Cairo: Al-Arabi press, 2017) 33.

³ The Museum website, Google, last modified April 15, 2020, www.miainegypt.org

⁴ The Museum website, Google, last modified April 15, 2020, www.miainegypt.org

⁵ Abd el-Salam, *Education and Exhibitions*, 25.

- The Importance of Collection Management:

It helps a museum management to:

- Identify what it has in its possession
- Identify if any item is missing.
- identify the location of each item.
- An evidence of the ownership of items.
- Organize and preserve the information about Collections.
- The images besides its important role in the preservation and protection of antiquities and identification of the ownership rights, it has an influential role in combating illegal trade, especially in times of crisis and conflict.

- Our Collecting Principles:

The Museum is committed to the principle that all collecting is to be done according to the highest standards of ethical and professional practices, in order to;

- Photography and documentation department is sort of Information Sector at The Museum of Islamic Art.

- The museum should develop a file for each item of its collection including:

- Summary sheet with all the information about the source.
- An outline of the objects (authentication of origin, assessment of the condition),
- The significance to the museum.
- The proposed acquisition method (purchase, gift, excavation),
- How it applies to the policy of the museum.
- The curator recommendations
- The committee decision.
- A photograph or digital image of the item.

- The Overall Acquisition can be used when the museum receives group of objects and it applies to collection related to Archaeology, history and natural history, each individual object of the group of collections will be given a separate number either subdivision of the accession number or separate of it¹.

When we prepared the operation plan and put a new educational system at the museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, as the most important museums in the world in Islamic Art, which played a great role to spread awareness among Egyptian people, and also it will reveal a positive image about Islamic culture to the world². This raises the following questions:

- What about our target audience?

¹ The Museum website, Google, last modified April 15, 2020, www.miainegypt.org

² Abd el-Salam, *Education and Exhibitions*, 18.

- What does the museum need to achieve its mission and vision?
- How to attract specialist and non-specialist audience, from inside and outside Egypt?
- How to develop the story line of the Museum to reflect Islamic identity for the wide world? Targeting audience would be the main goal for us, so we organized a campaign entitled "Know your Museum" to explain the Museum aims to people, and prepare many activities to establish a strong relationship with them¹.

Example2- Basrah Museum in Iraq:

- **Basrah Situation Analysis:** The former Basrah Museum is not fit for purpose. It is a courtyard house, in poor condition, in an insecure part of Basrah, and is unsuitable for displaying and safeguarding high value archaeological and historical material. In the future, it might be used to display heritage material from the city of Basrah.

In April 2008 British Army Royal Engineers identified a former palace (the Lakeside Palace) on the outskirts of Basra as being completely suitable for a new museum. They produced afterwards an estimate of the cost of refurbishing it and fitting it out with display cases, ambient lighting and other display materials. In 2010 Mott MacDonald were asked to survey the building again and to estimate the current cost of refurbishing it and produced the figure of \$3,000,000 for complete refurbishment of the building, excluding display cases, which are estimated at \$2,000,000 (sourced from Turkey). This gives a grand total of \$5,000,000. It is proposed that the full costs of converting the Lakeside Palace into an operating Museum².

- The Collection Management and Educational program of Basrah Museum

The Lakeside Palace on the outskirts of Basrah will make an ideal museum. It is in good condition and requires only a modest amount of refurbishment and renovation.

The palace is exactly the right size to provide the amount of display area appropriate to an important regional museum together with the other spaces that are essential for the smooth functioning of a modern museum. The purpose of the museum is to show the history of all parts of Iraq from about 3300 BC down to about 1800 AD. Although the scope of the museum is national, the emphasis will be on southern Iraq and the Basrah region in particular³.

Most of the objects for the museum will be sent from Baghdad, where they are currently in secure storage, but some will be sourced locally. The gallery plans have pictures indicative of the type of objects that will be displayed, not the objects themselves. More than 1000 sq. m. of exhibition space is available in the museum, divided between five galleries. The Sumer Gallery (378 sq. m.) will cover Southern Iraq in the period 3300 – 1900 BC, the Babylon Gallery (111 sq. m.) will deal with the great period of Mesopotamian civilization between 1792 and 539 BC, the Assyria Gallery

¹ Lamiaa Abudief, *The museum of Islamic art in Cairo Collection management policy* (Cairo: Helwan University press, 2016), 78.

² Oxford University Workshop: *Basrah Museum Operating Plan, Basrah: its history, culture and heritage*, (Basrah Museum-Basrah, Iraq: 28–29 September 2016).

³ Alliance of America Museums Committee, *120th Annual Meeting of the AAM*, (AUS: AAM press, 2019), 13.

(106 sq. m.) will be about Northern Iraq between 883 BC and 612 BC, and the Basrah Gallery (378 sq. m.) will show cultures in the local region from 200 BC down to the beginning of the 19th century.

A temporary display area (106 sq m) will make it possible to mount special exhibitions that are locally generated, come from elsewhere in Iraq, or come from abroad. It is hoped that longstanding relationships with museums outside Iraq such as the British Museum will lead to small special exhibitions being sent to Basrah from time to time.

There will be new display cases throughout the museum, and the exhibitions will be mounted according to the latest international standards. To take full care of the needs of visitors, provision is being made for a retail outlet and for a refreshments area. There will also be educational facilities in the museum. Back of house functions will include offices, a room for meetings, a laboratory, a library and a storeroom¹.

By the same token, if you see the Basrah Museum aims, the Museum will seek to inform a general public consisting of Iraqi citizens of all ages and foreign visitors about the history and culture of Iraq in general and Basrah in particular².

The focus of the Museum will be on archaeology and history up to AD 1800 AD. Heritage material of 19th century and 20th century and contemporary art will be exhibited elsewhere³.

The Museum will be an important educational resource for school and university students from the Basrah region.

The Museum will provide facilities for archaeologists and other specialists to research the collections.

The Museum will be a major cultural resource not just for Basrah but also for Southern Iraq and for the wider region⁴.

In conclusion:

I hope we put short goals for near future and long goals for the future to achieve excellent vision of the Museum role. If we do that, we can evaluate our work to bring multi cultures under one roof.

¹ Alliance of America Museums Committee, *120th Annual Meeting of the AAM*, 32.

² Christian Wautl, Available from: www.intercom.museum/documents/1-4wautl.pdf-Accessed 20 June 2017.

³ Mumbai Workshop, *Creating museums of world stories "Marking 10 years of the International Training Programme"* (India: 19-21 November, 2015).

⁴ Carol Scott, *Museums and impact, How do we measure the impact of museums* (8th International Conference on Arts and Cultural Management, Montreal: 2005), 34.

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