

The Future Development of the Curatorial Industry in the Era of New Media

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Abstract: In the era of the gradual development of digital media, the curatorial industry faces both opportunities and challenges. On the basis of traditional curation, the development of technology has led to changes in the form of curation. Under the influence of the epidemic environment, online exhibitions have become a hot topic of discussion. This study research and analyze the future development direction of the exhibition industry through a literature review and case analysis. It has been found that new media has brought both positive and negative impacts to the art curating industry. Digital curating can contribute to the popularity of exhibitions due to their convenience. However, how to protect the traditional culture and reflect the authenticity of exhibits in the process of technological development remains to be studied. In the future development of curating, curators can consider combining traditional curating methods with new media to maximize their respective advantages and achieve better visual effects.

Keywords: art curating, curatorial industry, new media, digital media

1. Introduction

In the course of human economic development, technology research has emerged and gained more attention in recent years. This has led to significant leaps in human technological civilization, and new digital media has entered various industries and aspects of people's lives. Meanwhile, museums and art institutions are also beginning to explore the use of new media technologies to present and communicate cultural heritage. As a result, the curatorial profession is also facing unprecedented opportunities and challenges in this digital age. With the outbreak of COVID-19, the emergence of virtual exhibition halls has gradually accelerated the process of digitalization of art curating. Although new media has undeniably brought many conveniences, it has also raised many issues worth considering. At such a turning point, it is imperative to consider the future development direction and trends of the curatorial industry. This article analyzes relevant papers and cases to study the impact of new media countermeasures on the exhibition industry and the future development trends of the exhibition industry under new media in order to provide practical suggestions for the future development of the exhibition industry.

2. The Features of New Media

With the beginning of The Third Industrial Revolution and the development of science and technology, art curating is gradually becoming digitalized. New media is a medium for disseminating information to the public. It regards digital compression and wireless network technology as a support, using the large capacity, real-time performance, and interactivity to overcome the distance and reach globalization. New media is one of the contemporary cultures, and some scholars believe that it has three main characteristics: Diversity, subjectivity, and consumption. These three main features are respectively manifested in digital multimedia culture, cyberspace culture, and mass consumption culture [1].

With the process of digitization, the pattern of curating is not just a traditional one. Curators and artists widely use many digital ways, and digital multimedia culture has been further developed. The combination of Multi culture and Multimedia Culture make a good artistic space for the public. Some exhibitions use LED screens, music, and other media on the basis of traditional methods to make the viewers more immersive and thoughtful. For example, the largest immersive digital media art experience museum ART MUSEUM built by a district company in South Korea. This exhibition aims to lead viewers to explore the world of the symbiosis of all things through a stunning immersive sensory experience and to reflect and restore the origin of life. This approach breaks the traditional way of using physical objects as carriers and achieves a combination of dynamic and virtualization. Some curators also use digital media to plan virtual exhibitions to make them more widely spread, especially during the COVID-19 epidemic. In 2020, Shenzhen Design Week launched the “Crossing Innovation - Da Vinci Science Special Exhibition” as the first cloud-based art exhibition hall. This exhibition is constructed with new technologies, providing viewers with a more novel and profound viewing experience and stimulating their imagination and creativity.

In the new media era, the real world is not unique, and Cyberspace gradually replaces the scenes of daily life. Creating similar sensory stimuli as the real world through the virtual world constructed by one's own subject. With the development of science and technology, digital media has been able to create virtual worlds based on various human needs. In order to make human life more convenient, new media is made more applicable to humans through human initiative, creating a virtual world that is closer to the real world. The boundary between the real world and the virtual world is gradually fuzzy. As people now have more channels to obtain information, their consumption will also shift from basic consumption to personalized consumption and symbolic consumption. The things in the real world are limited, and the digital things are infinite, which can provide people with infinite satisfaction. Therefore, the development of new media culture is also conducive to promoting the development of the digital economy.

3. The Impact of New Media Countermeasures on the Exhibition Industry

3.1. Positive Impacts

Digital new media is conducive to promoting the popularization of art curating. Digital exhibitions have opened up ways for audiences to participate and dilute the concepts of time and space. During COVID-19, the global museum industry was greatly impacted, so many museums launched online digital exhibitions [2]. Visiting the exhibition at home shortens the distance between the art exhibition and the public and provides spiritual food for people at home due to the epidemic. For the replicability of digital content, a set of digital content can be presented at different locations at the same time. Compared to cultural relics exhibitions, it has lower requirements for exhibition halls and does not need to consider issues such as transportation safety of cultural relics. Therefore, it has a broader dissemination ability [3].

Adequate communication is a crucial way to realize the value of art or artwork. However, in traditional art curating models, both time and money costs are relatively high when communicating with artists and audiences. The limitations of time and space are the main factors causing communication barriers. In the era of new media, exhibitions or exchanges can help more people know about artists and their works, which is also beneficial for enhancing the value of artworks in a relatively short period of time [4].

Another undeniable feature of the digital exhibition is its convenience. In many digital exhibitions, it can be seen that many artworks can be repeatedly magnified and watched by views. Viewers can browse digital images of artworks online, zoom in tens of times, view details, and use these materials for secondary creation [5]. The use of digital media is also beneficial for optimizing the information of artworks, creating clearer guides, and facilitating the organization and management of artworks. At the same time, digital exhibitions adopt new media technology, presenting virtual, non-material results and mostly based on the network. Therefore, theoretically, digital exhibitions can be held wherever space, equipment, and network are available [3].

In addition to facilitating audience visits, digital media is also beneficial for curators and museum management. Digital exhibition halls generally have a main control system to control the classification, aggregation, restructuring, switching, and other operations of all projects, which helps to improve the efficiency of exhibition hall management. For example, the Chengdu Jinsha Museum has established a comprehensive information management platform called “Smart Jinsha”. To optimize the museum’s application integration process, it rebuilt a comprehensive work portal that provides a one-stop solution for all business-related activities. The portal provides a unified access point for museum staff, improving operational efficiency and facilitating effective collaboration between multiple teams. In addition, an integrated business collaboration system has been established to rationalize office work, project management and internal control management. This system will facilitate seamless communication and knowledge sharing among staff, fostering collaboration and teamwork. Finally, the core data resource management and sharing system will include collection management, digital resources, automatic three-dimensional modeling of cultural relics and museum operation management. The system facilitates the sharing and retrieval of important information and data, thereby enhancing overall operational efficiency and effectiveness. At the same time, a cultural relic preservation environment monitoring system covering the entire museum has been constructed, and a regional monitoring center has been established to real-time grasp and display the preservation environment status of cultural relics, laying the foundation for intelligent protection of cultural relics.

3.2. Negative Impacts

The evolution of technological ontology drives social change while also changing the landscape of human art. On the one hand, it brings social progress and development to people. On the other hand, in a sense, it constantly degrades individual human knowledge. New media not only brings convenience to curating, but also impacts traditional curating.

Artist Hu Shuai once created an artificial intelligence curator named “Curator Nereus”. Enter an exhibition theme, which can use big data crawler software to organize artworks and create its own online exhibition [6]. This convenient curation undoubtedly leads to the unemployment of many curators who do not understand the essence of curation, causing an impact on the traditional industry structure and workforce. Furthermore, this algorithmic curating brings about the rapid spread of landscape curating, exaggerating the value of the exhibition’s products and forgetting the vital attribute of contemporary art as an exchange value.

Moreover, the effect of the exhibits in the exhibition will also be reduced. In digital exhibitions, electronic exhibits are used, and although there are many benefits, there is still a lack of shock brought by actual exhibits. Some exhibits use special materials that require on-site viewing to feel their charm.

Just like some landscapes, the photos or videos recorded with digital cameras are never as impressive as those seen with the naked eye in reality. Including some works of art made of crystal, they are far less shiny in digital images than on-site.

In this era where digital curating is very popular, more and more professional curators are accustomed to relying on digital technology and equipment to attract the attention of the audience [5]. In the current era of digital technology, it is crucial not to reject it blindly, but it's also important to avoid excessive reliance on its convenience. Over-reliance on technology can hinder critical thinking and potentially result in a loss of fundamental human values.

4. The Future Development Direction of the Curatorial Industry

4.1. The Development Direction of the Curator

For curators, facing continuous technological updates in the future means they need to constantly communicate with editors, technical teams, and audiences familiar with new media laws and establish closer connections. Although online exhibitions cannot replace the offline experience, the complex offline exhibition structure can be rearranged and combined to present a new narrative relationship online. Maximize the advantages of digital media, leverage the technological advantages of sound and light in spatial environment reproduction, and enhance viewers' visual experience. It should be noted that the use of technology is reasonable. Reasonable use of digital technology can effectively enhance the artistic effect of exhibitions and enhance the three-dimensional and authenticity of exhibitions. If digital exhibitions blindly pursue stunning visual effects and a sense of multimedia interaction technology but are weak or lacking in narrative, it can only be called a "listing" of digital projects [7]. Emphasize the role of the human body as a carrier of traditional technical knowledge, and showcase cultural content through visual, embodied, participatory, and multi-sensory channels [8]. Combining traditional curating methods with digital media, leveraging strengths and avoiding weaknesses, innovating and integrating, leveraging their respective strengths, and ushering in a new era for the curating industry.

Besides, in digital media, the protection of cultural heritage should also be taken seriously. Some art organizations established the Variable Media Network (VMN) in the early 21st century to improve protection methods and tools by transferring, imitating, or using non-outdated technologies to completely recreate art, especially by involving artists and audiences as active stakeholders in defining the core essence of the work to be protected. Instead of trying to maintain these inherent dynamic works of art in a fixed form, the variable media approach takes change itself as the basis of the protection paradigm. Over the past twenty years, cultural heritage professionals have developed innovative preservation strategies for web-based artworks to promote variable media approaches [9].

4.2. The Development Direction of New Media and Related Industries

To present an excellent visual experience to the viewers, achieving deep integration of digitization and museum application scenarios is necessary. In the ancient history exhibition of the Guangxi Museum in China, an immersive scene called "Huashan Rock Painting" is also a practical case of the effective integration of digital media technology and large-scale restoration scenes. Huashan rock paintings are static, but the content they present, whether it is ritual, boat racing, drumming, or dance, is essentially dynamic. If only the scene is restored, the audience will only see static images. But after combining digital media technology, the images on rock paintings have come to life and moved, significantly improving the audience's perception and experience. They will also have a deep impression of the different combinations and contents of rock paintings [10].

With the development of the economy, exhibitions are gradually becoming popular. Digital new media should focus on a people-centered interactive experience, which helps enhance exhibitions'

interactivity. For example, in the immersive experience of the “Huashan Rock Painting” scene, viewers can also participate in the interaction of drawing rock paintings through the “AR Exploration+APP Interactive Game”, and have fun and share in the game [10]. Digital new media still needs to continuously explore more new technological means to make exhibitions more perfect. At the same time, it is also necessary to enhance the security of online media and protect cultural heritage.

The relationship between digital media technology and museum exhibits is complementary. What needs to be displayed to the public is the exhibits themselves, not digital media technology. To better showcase the exhibits, efforts need to be made to improve the effectiveness of digital media technology in museum exhibitions. Digital media also needs to adjust and use digital technology according to the needs of exhibitions. In exhibitions, more digital technology is not always better. It should be comprehensively considered based on the application of digital media technology in museum exhibitions. Grasping exhibition content, audience psychology, and exhibition hall environment is important to ensure rationality and scientific nature [10]. In the application process of digital media technology in museum exhibitions, it is necessary to study the specific characteristics of exhibits so that digital media technology can play a finishing touch role in museum exhibitions. Through the application of this technology during the visit process, visitors can better understand the knowledge of exhibits and fully integrate the application of technology and content in the process of watching and listening to the introduction of exhibits.

5. Conclusions

This study found that the impact of new media countermeasures on the exhibition industry is twofold, with both positive and negative impacts. In the future development of curating, it is impossible to completely abandon new media because of the trend of the times. So, to present the best exhibition effect, new media should be effectively integrated with traditional curating methods. It should be noted that both parties should make changes. Curators can use new digital media appropriately on the basis of traditional methods, and new media should also accelerate the improvement and completeness of technology to meet the needs of curators. The main contribution of this article is to provide suggestions for the future development of the curatorial industry, which can be used as a reference for curators and relevant technical personnel. However, this article lacks an analysis of the situation of curators, and future research can focus more on the situation of curators.

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