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Committees vs. Curators:
The Use of Power and Knowledge in the Alderney Museum of the Channel Islands

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ABSTRACT

The Alderney Museum is owned by the States of Alderney, but a group of elected volunteers known as the Alderney Society Council (ASC) controls the various aspects of the day-to-day running of the Museum. The Council employed a series of graduate student curators from 2006-2013 to perform tasks, such as accessioning and auditing. Unfortunately the ASC, which is composed of laymen, and the curator, who is a trained professional, frequently have conflicting ideas about how to run the Museum. This often leads to contention between those involved and creates a constant competition for control. In this paper I will present and analyze the evidence for the perceived struggle for power and how it is affected by knowledge and experience. I particularly look at Foucault's theories of the relationship between knowledge and power and their application in this instance.

I throw open the heavy front door of the Alderney Museum and jump inside to escape the unusually brisk “summer” weather. Immediately there is a warm greeting from the small heater just inside the door, as well as a verbal greeting from the two men seated at the desk to welcome in museum patrons. After exchanging a few comments about the weather and how each person is doing, I offer a casual wave and excuse myself to carry on to the curator’s office located upstairs.

Navigating through the cases of the main gallery, I notice that some work still needs to be done on the case about Iron Age pottery. One of the pots is askew and a description for a different pot is peeling off of the table. Other than this, everything seems to be in order in the main gallery. I pass by a table with a large binder sitting on top that I put together the week before. It contains drawings and descriptions of various objects around the Museum as completed by the students of the local school (Ormer House). Smiling at my small contribution to the museum, I continue strolling into the next room.

I briefly glance around the Natural History Room to make sure everything is in order and then take a peek into the neighboring area, known as the Maritime Room. I notice that one of the lights above a case is off, so I quickly walk in and flip the appropriate switch. The two men sitting at the desk I spoke to earlier are the custodians volunteering for that morning’s shift, and they must have forgotten to turn that particular light on. As I leave the Maritime Room, I notice that the two cannons are looking especially shiny today after the curator and I waxed them the week before.

Trotting up the stairs to the upper level, I brush past one of the Alderney Society Council (ASC) members and we exchange greetings before carrying on with what we were previously doing. Finally making it to the curator’s office, I throw open the door and find the curator already hard at work on her computer. After hanging up my coat and scarf, I delve right back into the project that I was working on the day prior, periodically breaking up the work by chatting with the curator and any other volunteers or ASC members who pop in and out. This is just another day at the Alderney Museum.

During my time spent on Alderney, I closely observed the volunteers and employees involved in keeping the Museum running. The Alderney Society Council, composed of a group of elected volunteers, appear to vie for power with employed curators, possibly due to differing sets of knowledge and experience. In this paper I examine this perceived struggle for control, especially by applying the theories of Foucault regarding the relationship between knowledge and power, but I will first present background information to give a better understanding of the people and this situation.

SETTING THE STAGE

Location

Located in the English Channel off the coast of Normandy, the Channel Islands are a unique set of five different islands, including two separate Bailiwicks, that boast their own individuality while maintaining ties with the United Kingdom. The Bailiwick of Jersey includes the island of Jersey and uninhabited islets of Minquiers, Écréhous, Les Dirouilles, and Les Pierres de Lecq; the Bailiwick of Guernsey includes the islands of Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Herm, Jethou, Lihou, and Brecqhou (*VisitGuernsey*). Under the British Crown, each Bailiwick falls under the jurisdiction of a Bailiff. The Bailiff is presiding officer of the States and heads the judiciary. Each Bailiwick is governed separately, but neither one is ruled with common laws, common elections, or a common representative body (*Channel Island Profile*). While there is a primary legislature on each island, none of the islands are represented in the UK Parliament. This hints at the unique identity of the Channel Islanders as both their own entity but with a close relationship to the United Kingdom. The Channel Islands are also considered part of the British Islands, which includes the United Kingdom and the Isle of Man as well (*Channel Island Profile*). In addition to this uncommon type of government, the Channel Islands have distinctive economic qualities that set them apart from other areas of the world.

Economy

Much of the economy of the Channel Islands is founded on tourism, especially in the smaller islands like Alderney, Sark, or Herm. Jersey and Guernsey, the biggest of the islands, also focus on being centers of offshore financial centers and tax havens (*The British Monarchy*). Throughout their history they have also relied on agriculture and horticulture. The Channel

Islands' economy is also unique because each Bailiwick has its own set of banknotes and coins, in addition to UK currency. However it is worthy to note that UK notes and coins can be used in the Channel Islands, but the banknotes and coins of the Channel Islands are not accepted anywhere in the UK.

History

Because of their location, the Channel Islands have a unique and rich history. In order to fully appreciate the islands and their people, one must also gain an understanding of this history. Throughout the centuries, the Channel Islands have seen a variety of influences from various countries and cultures that helped them to develop into the vibrant community and culture that they are today. Evidence indicates the islands were occupied as early as 250,000 years ago (*The British Monarchy*). The lives of these people from the Neolithic period are apparent due to the dolmens and other archaeological evidence found throughout the islands. They had a working societal system and a mass of people large enough to create sizable structures such as La Gran'mère du Chimquière¹ on Guernsey.

Later on in history, the islands were influenced by the Romans during the Iron Age. For example, there is evidence of a Roman fort on the island of Alderney that was used during this time period. Although there was not a vast influence by the Romans, there were clearly visitations by officials and traders. Also around this time period, the islands were visited by Christian missionaries and Norse raiders (*VisitGuernsey*). The Channel Islands were annexed to the Duchy of Normandy in 933, however changes soon came about. William, Duke of Normandy

¹ La Gran'mère du Chimquière is "a 4000 year old statue-menhir situated at the gate of St. Martin's parish church. Thought to bring good luck and fertility to newly-wed couples." (*VisitGuernsey*)

invaded and conquered England in 1066, meaning that the Channel Islands were part of Normandy when they conquered England. Under the rule of King John around 1205, the islands were given the choice to be English or French; the Channel Islands chose to remain English and from then on they continued their role as a possession of the British Crown. The tumultuous history with the French and English as possession changed repeatedly shows how the Channel Islands came to experience influence from both countries. The Norse and French influence predated the islands' connection with England, and it continued over the centuries. Once the islands decided to stay connected with England, the British influence dominated the culture of the Channel Islands, although there is still evidence of the French associations.

Much later in history, World War II played a huge role in the culture of the Channel Islands and greatly affected the inhabitants in ways that are still evident. During World War II, the islands were the only part of the British Isles occupied by German forces. Prior to the arrival of German troops, who occupied the Islands between June 30 and July 4 1940, many of the islanders were evacuated from the area although there were some exceptions. For example, in Alderney no more than twelve individuals stayed on the island while the rest of the population was evacuated (*VisitGuernsey*). Civilian life was vastly affected as the German troops put Nazi law into place and enforced it. The German forces oversaw construction of fortifications, gun emplacements, etc. during their stay; there were also labor camps built on the islands. All of this construction on the islands was completed by East European slave workers brought to the islands to perform forced labor. Because they are made of concrete and are largely weather resistant, a lot of these forts, bunkers, and other World War II fortifications are still in place and can be seen by any visitor or inhabitant of the islands.

At the conclusion of World War II, Guernsey and Jersey were finally declared free from German occupation on May 9, 1945. Sark was liberated on May 10, 1945, and Alderney was finally liberated on May 16, 1945. Most of the Channel Islanders hold annual celebrations around the 9th of May to gather together and remember this glorious day in their history, but Alderney waits and holds celebrations in December which also commemorates when the first islanders were repatriated (*VisitGuernsey*). The people of the islands are most often willing to discuss any memories or stories of their ancestors during the Occupation because it was such an influential part in the modern history of the Channel Islands. Although it was a dark spot in their history, the people acknowledge what happened and understand that it is a massive part of their heritage and culture.

Identity

Based on the influence of all the different cultures and groups of people throughout history, the inhabitants of the Channel Islands have grown to develop their own unique culture and sense of identity. In general, the islanders (those who are born and raised on any of the islands or who have spent the majority of their lives on the islands) identify themselves as English, but do not like to be considered part of the UK or England. Even though there is Norse, French, and a lot of English influence, they all combine into a central identity that creates a Channel Islander. Folk lore, traditions, and other historically popular practices (such as the influence of the shipping industry) still play a part in daily life, but the people of these islands are modern and up-to-date too (*VisitGuernsey*). The people of the Channel Islanders see themselves as Channel Islanders and Channel Islanders alone.

The inhabitants of the Channel Islands fall into two main categories: natives born and raised on the islands or newcomers from other locations. Usually those who move over to the Channel Islands from the United Kingdom once visited the islands and decided to move there; there are also a lot of cases where individuals decide to move to the islands because of the low taxes and other financial benefits (*Channel Island Profile*). Despite the difficulties that accompany moving to the islands, people still make the effort to do so. These difficulties can include the housing tiers, immigration tiers, cost of travel, etc. In regards to the housing tiers, properties are either part of the local market or the open market. Laws control which properties can be purchased or rented based on the market they are placed in. In general, properties on the open market are easier, but more expensive, to purchase. Local properties have more residency restrictions aimed at making them more readily available for people who resided on the island longer and meet the qualifications.

Similarly, there are immigration restrictions that limit the amount of newcomers to the islands. In order to immigrate to the Channel Islands, a person must obtain a work visa, but within the work visa there are different categories, or tiers. Based on the situation of the person, a different type of visa will be issued and obtained. The unique approach to housing and immigration on the Channel Islands addresses the issue of limited housing while controlling population.

Others who live on the Channel Islands only remain for short periods of time. For example, they may have a second home located on the islands while their regular place of residence is on the mainland. Meanwhile, still others visiting the Channel Islands are purely tourists. These tourists often come to the islands from the United Kingdom. The beautiful climate

and landscape of the Channel Islands are a main attraction. The tourists also seem to be a specific type of people that particularly enjoy the island lifestyle which the Channel Islands perpetuate.

Still others that live on the island are seasonal workers, often from various places in Europe. This group inhabits the island for varying amounts of time. As these groups of temporary and more permanent residents work together and interact with one another, they create an interesting dynamic and culture on the Channel Islands. Together these groups of people create their individual senses of community within each separate island, as well as within the Channel Islands as a whole.

The people that live on the Channel Islands permanently are very adept at volunteer work. In fact, it can be argued that the islands rely heavily on the volunteer work force. Without its numerous volunteers, a lot of the entities would shut down entirely because there would be no driving force behind it. Such entities may include the fire department, museums, etc. As will be mentioned later on, this is especially the case on the island of Alderney. The people who move to the islands from the United Kingdom are often in favor of the island lifestyle: everything moves at a slower pace and in its own time, everyone is friendly and relaxed, and there is no tiring and hectic schedule tying anyone down. With this lifestyle in mind, the people usually move to the island in the hopes that they will have more time on their hands than they did on the mainland. However, it is also notable that these people are used to staying occupied and productive so they feel drawn to volunteer in some capacity in order to stay busy and motivate themselves to accomplish a task. The volunteer work is beneficial to everyone involved because it helps to keep the islands running, but it also keeps the people occupied and participating in the community in a fulfilling and satisfying manner.

Alderney

Three miles by one-and-a-half miles wide, Alderney is the northernmost island of the Channel Islands and is also the closest to France (*VisitGuernsey*). While one side of the island is home to lovely beaches, the other side of the island is home to steep cliffs. No matter where a visitor may wander, he or she is sure to find stunning landscapes, populated with a variety of local wildlife—the gannet is a prime example—and an assortment of diverse fauna and flora. If one pays a visit to the northwestern side of the island, he or she will see a harbor sheltered by the longest breakwater in the United Kingdom (*VisitGuernsey*). Alderney is known for its dangerous tides and hazardous coastline which has caused a fair share of shipwrecks over time.

With a population of approximately 2,400 people, Alderney houses a tight-knit community (*VisitGuernsey*). There are a multitude of family connections among the residents; when there is no direct relation via blood or marriage, the people of Alderney focus on developing close relationships with those people. Because of this situation, it is commonly accepted that everyone knows everyone and that gossip abounds. Based on my observations in the field, even with this potential for enmity, the people living on Alderney band together and often put differences aside in favor of improving the overall feel of the community. Alderney boasts a friendly and relaxed atmosphere to any newcomers or visitors that happen upon this island.

Although the Channel Islands have an overall identity that the people associate themselves with, each island also has its own characteristics and values that set it apart from the other islands. Alderney is no different in this case. The people of Alderney are all inviting and welcoming to visitors and newcomers. In fact, the locals will make it a point of getting to know a newcomer until they find something that a brand new resident excels at. They will focus in on

this person's particular talents, interests, and past experiences and encourage the new person to put these items to use on Alderney ([Trudy], Banton, 2013). As Betty mentioned in an interview, "...Alderney is very transient in that way. We have people come with skills. They set up, they go, but...when they're here we have to grab them and make the most of them" ([Betty], Banton, 2013). Even more so than the rest of the Channel Islands, Alderney places a vast importance on the volunteer labor force. Everyone does their part and contributes in whatever way they can. As mentioned earlier, this has a lot to do with the fact that the people living on Alderney are generally older, often retired, and now have an abundance of time on their hands. With this time, they are more apt to volunteer in the community and help out the island as a whole. Volunteering is also popular because of the mentality that remained after the effects of World War II on residents. It all ties in with the idea of thrift and charity.

Alderney Society Museum

The island of Alderney has one museum, which is owned by the States of Alderney and run by the Alderney Society Council ([Roger], Banton, 2013). The Museum is situated in the old school house near the main street on the island. The Museum houses a variety of exhibits that display important aspects of Alderney life and history. Upon entering the main gallery, a visitor finds the front desk where volunteer custodians welcome the visitor and collect an entrance fee. Situated across from the custodians' desk is a small shop where a variety of books and items pertaining to Alderney are sold. The exhibit area holds display cases that focus on the island's relationship with Roman culture, farming tools, weapons from World War II, the Alderney cow, etc. (*The Alderney Society*). There is also a large TV monitor that shows a slide show of Alderney photos selected by the curator.

Off from this main room is a small side room known as the Occupation Room, displaying objects such as a bed, radio, table and chairs, and newspaper clippings to create a feeling of what living on Alderney during the Occupation was like (*The Alderney Society*). Entering the main gallery again and following the flow of traffic, there is another set of rooms known as the Maritime Room and the Natural History Room. The children from Ormer House, one of the local schools, helped design the Natural History Room which holds interactive items such as stuffed gannets and puffins, as well as buttons on the wall that make the designated bird calls when pushed. The Maritime Room holds another large TV monitor displaying a slide show of ships. As mentioned in the opening of this paper, the gallery also houses several large display cases with various artifacts found in the Elizabethan Wreck (including two cannons), discovered in 1977, and located off the shore of Alderney (*Alderney Elizabethan Wreck*).

If the visitor proceeds to the upper floor, he or she walks past a room on the left which is the Alderney Society's room. Books, past bulletins, a safe, etc. are stored in this room and looked after by the Alderney Society Council (ASC). As the visitor walks past this room, it opens up into the summer exhibition gallery. This gallery changes the exhibit located here every summer. During the summer of 2012 it housed an exhibit on the lighthouse of Alderney, while in the summer of 2013 it housed an exhibit by local Alderney artists.

The rest of the upstairs is dedicated to the curator's office and the upper stores. There is another area on the main floor of the Museum right underneath the curator's office which is home to the lower stores. The stores and the curator's office are full of objects and materials, but the volunteers and the curator always find room for more.

Basic Museum Knowledge

Museums are created to serve the public and educate members of the community about specific topics and events through the information and objects it displays. Some museums seek to provide additional programs or events that reach out to members of the community. This entity presents historical material and teaches visitors about aspects of current and past culture. Museums generally experience a lack of funding and inadequate community support for their broad endeavors (*American Alliance of Museums*). This adversely affects the programs and activities that it can provide for the community. Financial issues also impact employment opportunities and this is why some museums often rely on the voluntary sector more than other businesses might.

Museums are run in a variety of ways, depending on resources, the size of the museum, location, funding, etc. While some are managed by a sizable staff, others depend entirely on volunteers as previously mentioned. Museum professionals who have received specific and relevant training may or may not be involved in the management procedures. On the other hand, it is not uncommon for some type of board or committee to be involved. For example, The British Museum “is governed by a board of 25 trustees in accordance with the British Museum Act of 1963 and the Museums and Galleries Act of 1992. Trustee appointments are governed by the regulatory framework set out in the code of practice...The Board is responsible for the general management and control of the Museum...” (*The British Museum*). This mentality of utilizing a board or committee is popular, but not necessarily used in all museums. The method presents some challenges, but also provides a constant management source for the museum to depend on.

Running the Alderney Society Museum

As mentioned before, the Museum is managed by the Alderney Society Council (ASC). The ASC consists of around six elected members, along with any co-opted members ([Trudy], Banton, 2013). The ASC members are all volunteers who were originally members of the Alderney Society. They all reside on the island, which is important because it allows them to be actively involved and aware of what is happening at the Museum. In the Alderney Society's website, it outlines that this "is an organisation dedicated to the historical, environmental and scientific promotion of the island of Alderney" (*The Alderney Society*). The ASC is responsible for more than just the Museum, which means that they cannot focus entirely on the welfare of the Museum.

In fact, the ASC reached a decision in 2006 to employ a post-graduate student to come in and act as curator of the Museum. A few of the members of the ASC were concerned about auditing and accessioning the objects that were being brought into the Museum, and so they determined that someone must be employed to take care of these responsibilities. After the ASC reached this decision, a series of post-graduate students with experience in the museum field were brought in to act as curators.

Even though the most influential people in the museum are the curators and ASC, it is helpful to know that the museum runs based on the combined efforts of those elected to certain positions *and* willing volunteers. Anyone can join the Alderney Society, but all members of the ASC are nominated and voted on by existing members before gaining a position on this committee. Meanwhile, anyone living on the island may offer their time and services as a volunteer, but they do not have to be a member of the Alderney Society or the ASC to do so.

These volunteers are usually the people doing most of the behind-the-scenes work in the museum that keeps it functioning smoothly.

Along these lines, the Alderney Society Museum presents interesting dynamics that set it apart from the average museum because of the duties that individuals take on. The members of the ASC are not necessarily qualified in the same ways as a director of a museum typically is. As was discussed on the previous page, often there is some type of committee or board, along with a director, and so on, to help keep everyone in check and working together. Whereas other museums have clear roles for each volunteer and employee, the Alderney Museum is different because it does not have enough people to assign to these specific positions. The Alderney Museum has to make do with the people it has at hand, and limited resources in regards to employees forces them to take on more responsibility. There is no specific way to address who takes these powers on when there is a lack of staffing for leadership positions. The ASC begins to absorb the roles of the committees, directors, leaders of education, leaders of publicity, etc. In other words, the lines become blurred when it comes to defining the responsibilities of the Council. The people in the group start to take on duties that may not necessarily be within the usual set of power that committees in other museums would have.

However, it is also worthy to note that the curator does the very same thing. Because of the vagueness surrounding the roles of volunteers and employees, the curator starts to get involved in areas outside of their typical control. The curators realize that they are usually the most qualified regarding museum experience, and therefore they seek to apply their knowledge as much as possible. In the average museum, though, the curator would not try to do this because each person has specific assignments within their position. These vague roles within the museum

are definitely a contributing factor in the seemingly uneven distribution of power between the curator and ASC, which will be discussed more later on.

The Power Struggle

In the Alderney Society Museum, the ASC employs a management strategy consisting of a committee of volunteers that are members of the Alderney Society. When necessary, they seek help from an employed curator brought in from outside Alderney. Over the past few years as the curators have come in and attempted to apply their experience and knowledge of the inner workings of museums to the museum on Alderney, there has frequently been a difference of opinion between the curators and the ASC members as each tries to maintain control of the day-to-day procedures involved. Some of the reason for this lies in the fact that, as mentioned earlier, the people living on the Channel Islands often volunteer in the community because they have worked their whole lives and would like to still be actively involved and contributing to society; the same goes for Alderney, and may even be more so on this little island. As such, the people who find their way into leadership positions have often been in powerful positions before in their careers, used to making decisions but not necessarily being team players.

Many members of the Alderney Society Council have indeed been in positions of power before. As of the summer of 2013, there is a chairman of the Council, five Council members, one co-opted member, an honorary treasurer, and several trustees (*The Alderney Society*). Of these individuals, two are currently head of their own company and two others have great experience in running a business. All of these individuals are experienced and clearly excel at leading people.

On the other hand, the post-graduate student curator has experience as well, but it is in a different area. The curator has received schooling and training in programs that are aimed at teaching the person how to work in a museum. The curator is the most qualified person, with regard to museum work, in the Alderney Society Museum, and yet they often have to justify their actions to the ASC and make them understand why they are doing what they are doing when museum professionals would not question such actions. The curators are experienced and knowledgeable in their field, but it sometimes seems that the ASC fails to recognize and acknowledge this. Conversely, the ASC members are experienced business professionals with more knowledge about the financial aspects and the historical dealings of both Alderney and the museum. The curator does not always identify and value their knowledge in these areas. Furthermore, the ASC, as previously mentioned, consists of people who live permanently on the island and therefore have a vested interest in the historical, current, and future development of the museum. This directly contrasts with the curators who are hired from outside the island on a one or two year contract and then return to their homes.

As I go about studying the interactions between the curator and the ASC members, I will apply the theories and concepts set forth by Michael Foucault. He created many ideas centered on the idea of the relationship between power and knowledge. Foucault believes that knowledge is power and controlling the knowledge disseminated to others creates an increase in power as well. I will apply this principle to the perceived struggle for control and power between the employed curator and the volunteers on the Alderney Society Council. By believing that their own set of knowledge and experience is more important than that of the other group, the ASC and curator constantly create a struggle for control and influence in the management of the Alderney Society Museum.

CREATING CONTENTION

The people who call Alderney home are often of the older generation with plenty of previous career and life experience. As they seek to incorporate themselves into the community, the desire to volunteer in many aspects of the island life is obvious and many find themselves volunteering in one or more capacities where their skills and knowledge will be most effectively put to use. This same concept applies to the Alderney Society Museum. As previously explained, the Alderney Society Council, curator, and other volunteers combine their efforts to create an efficient museum for the public.

While these groups of people all work together with similar goals, there is sometimes a conflict of interest. As previously mentioned, many of the volunteers have leadership skills and considerable experience in business which may be channeled into the voluntary sector. It is important for someone to be able to take charge and head a committee for example, but there is bound to be someone else who becomes irritated with the given person in charge and does not think he or she deserves to have so much power. This leads into the concepts of power and control, especially pertaining to the principle of using knowledge as power, within the work place of the Alderney Society Museum. In this section I will present evidence concerning how the ASC approaches this especially in regards to the use of knowledge and experience as power and a means of control. I will then present evidence about the same topics, but specifically concerning how the curator approaches power and control. By doing so, I will show how the ASC and curator compete for their opinions and positions as they work to make the museum function as well as possible.

The Alderney Society Council

In addition to a wealth of knowledge from past experiences in their lives, the ASC has considerable experience with the financial aspect of running the museum, which is very important to the Alderney Society Museum. The ASC nominates other members who have had experience with managing finances in the past to take on fiscal responsibilities. As Betty, a committee member, informed me, her particular position “does anything from minutes of meetings and organizing meetings...mostly to do with donations and membership and funding for the Society.” In addition, “We have a shop for which a Committee member runs the shop...” ([Betty], Banton, 2013).

This piece of evidence demonstrates that the committee gives responsibility to people with experience in that specific area. The Alderney Society Museum is suffering financially at the moment and the concern is a hot topic among members of the ASC. In an interview with one informant, he said “We had a hundred thousand pounds in the bank. We’re now down to 60...If you average it out, we’re losing at about 7,000 pounds a year of expenses above income” ([Roger], Banton, 2013). They carefully choose who they put in charge of the monetary aspects because it is important to the current and future stability of the museum. It is also notable that they found several people on the committee who have experience and can fulfill the needs required in these roles.

The ASC approaches power in a way that seems like a democracy, but in reality the personalities play an important role in who has true control. While the committee members agree that everyone has an equal voice and each opinion is considered as much as the next opinion, it seems throughout observations that this is not always the case. One way this manifests itself is in the different responsibilities that various ASC members take on. Some of the members have

duties that are more directly related to running the museum. As mentioned before, this may include accountability for managing the finances of the Alderney Society and donations to the museum, running the museum's shop, presenting speakers during presentations at the museum, building a case for one of the galleries, etc. Some ASC members take on more responsibilities than other members, and parts of these may be more labor intensive than other parts. Although all of these things are done voluntarily, there is an underlying expectation to donate as much time as possible when someone is on the ASC and in ways that highlight their relevant experiences and skills.

While there are many ways to manage and run a museum, the Alderney Society Museum focuses on management by a committee of volunteers. This detail is notable because it creates an interesting dynamic within the museum. Although the members of the ASC have experience in their own careers and past experiences, they do not have any knowledge directly tied with managing a museum. An article found in the journal *Oral History* delves into this topic in depth by examining a group of curators and interviewing them about their recent experiences in the way that museums are managed. The article mentions that “interviewees tended to focus on changes within the museum world, both good and bad. The principal change was certainly what in shorthand is often called the ‘managerial revolution’” (Davies 2004: 57). In other words, the bigger picture of the museum's purpose is being lost in favor of changing leadership roles. Instead of focusing on the visitor, museums are more worried about the intricacies of governing themselves. The opinions and work of the trained museum professionals is being lost in the efforts at maintaining a specific management structure of directors and boards; therefore, it seems that museums tend to misplace their focus into the increasingly distracting management style. The Alderney Society Museum is clearly run by a committee of people who have a

plethora of knowledge, but it may not be entirely applicable to the task at hand. Running the museum, or any other organization, by a committee presents an interesting view on power itself because of the challenges it both creates and solves.

This ties in with the theories of Michel Foucault because it relates to the concept of power and how it is used in managing this particular museum. Before delving further into the theories of power and knowledge, it is necessary to define the use of power in this argument. Power is used to describe one person asserting influence over another person, especially by controlling or empowering certain actions to take place. In this particular situation, “power is not to be confused with concrete entities or institutional possession; rather it is to be understood as generated by, and acting back upon, truth claims which come to be legitimated as knowledge.” (Smith 2000: 290) When a person holds something to be true, this is recognized as knowledge which creates power for the possessor. In a very basic summary of this concept, I gather that power and knowledge build off of one another. One leads to the other and vice-versa. The terms power and knowledge are intertwined throughout this discussion and will continue to be used in relation to one another.

The ASC believes that they have the most applicable and pertinent knowledge when it comes to managing the museum; it is true that they often have a lifetime of past occurrences and opportunities that allow them to manage the museum as they would another business that they have perhaps had leadership roles in previously. As mentioned in an article explaining the theories of Foucault,

...according to Foucault, rather than being external, or something which operates on something or someone, power is integral or productive in the sense that it *creates* objects. Power is the desire to know. Power is not negative; on the contrary, it is creative (Townley 1993: 521).

They use their knowledge set to empower themselves and those around them because in their minds the knowledge legitimizes their sense of power and promotes a sense of control over others. Herein lies part of the conflict with the curator, which will be discussed later on, because the curator feels the same way about his or her own knowledge set regarding museums.

In another way, the ASC increases their sense of power and asserts control by influencing the actions of the curator. The curator is employed from somewhere outside of Alderney, typically from the mainland, and only when the ASC sees fit to do so. To be specific, in 2006 they decided to employ a post-graduate student curator to come in and clean up the accessioning and auditing that had accumulated despite the efforts of the various volunteers. They employed a series of curators, on 1 or 2 year contracts, until the summer of 2013 when the ASC realized that given the financial state of the museum, it was no longer financially viable for a curator to be employed. Despite the last curator's attempt to persuade the group that the museum would suffer without the work of an employed curator, they decided to move forward without one. As of September 2013, there is no longer a post-graduate student working at the museum.

There is also an understanding between the curator and the ASC that the curator is allowed, and to some degree expected, to take on roles that would typically be associated with the director of the museum. Like I brought up page fourteen, the curator tends to take on responsibilities in the Alderney Museum that would usually be outside of her control in any other museum. This misperception of the role of a curator leads to more confusion about the extent of her power in the museum. On the other hand, though, curators are still technically under the direction and guidance of the ASC. The idea is reinforced by the fact that the curator signs a contract which specifically outlines some of the duties involved with becoming curator of the Alderney Society Museum. The curator is also expected to attend monthly ASC meetings, which

serves as another reminder that the ASC is employing the curator and is therefore under their jurisdiction. Reasonably so, the curator is expected to follow the suggestions and counsel of the ASC. The Alderney Society Council feels directly responsible for the actions of the curator while they are employed and therefore feels that they are entitled to control, to an extent what the curator does. For example, in an interview with one informant, he mentioned that “you take your orders from the Alderney Society Council” and later on he also brought up problems with one of the past curators who “...was actually working. But it wasn’t what she was instructed to do. And she was doing it for herself for the future so it could go onto a CV” ([Roger], Banton, 2013).

This also demonstrates the difference in opinion between the ASC members and the curators. Although the curators may have one motive in mind, the ASC has its own agenda and idea of what needs to happen to make the most of the museum. The members of the ASC feel as if the curator is a way to enable their own plans and ideas and bring them about. By bringing in an outsider who is not from Alderney and providing employment, the ASC believes they are largely responsible for keeping the curator in check and bringing about their own motives.

The Curator

When it comes to the curator’s position, she feels similarly to the ASC members in regards to her knowledge set. The curator will be referred to as female from now on because the Alderney Society Museum has only seen female curators so far. The curator received formal training and schooling regarding various aspects of museum management. For example, one curator completed her undergraduate degree at Swansea in Ancient History and Egyptology, received a Master’s degree at Leicester in Museum Studies, then participated in a year of volunteer work in various museums before receiving the position in Alderney (Banton, Field

Notes 2013: 9). This is similar to the experiences of all of the curators who worked at the museum from 2006 onwards.

The curator brings knowledge which applies directly to the position she is hired to do in Alderney. Because of this, she feels qualified to make decisions regarding the museum work without consulting the ASC. In other words, she may not have as much experience in her career compared to other ASC members, but she makes up for it in her knowledge of many responsibilities in museums. As previously mentioned, the committee authorizes the curator to take on a lot of the basic responsibilities revolving around managing the museum. For example, a description of one of the past curators stated,

If something needed doing, she would do it. She wasn't perfect by any means, but no human being is. She got a lot done. And built on the previous years...hours didn't mean anything to her ([Sally], Banton, 2013).

In general, the curator tries to make lots of decisions on her own without the direct influence of the ASC's opinion and this usually is acceptable. The ASC recognizes that they have hired the curator to fill a particular position, and they need to allow her to do the work that she has been employed to do.

On the other hand, the curator's attempts at moving forward independently have been known to meet with conflict from the ASC. As one past curator said, "...they block me on things which they shouldn't...I have to explain everything I do and they don't understand why I've done things" ([Joan], Banton, 2013). Ideally a committee would understand the inner workings of a museum and have some applicable background knowledge in this regard, but this is not the case in Alderney. As a volunteer said,

A museum should be run by a curator, and the curator should be able to say 'This is what I'm going to do' and any governing body should back the curator. But I don't think that happens. I think that the governing body

interferes with the curator. There are different people in the Society, each of whom have their pet theories, and none of them can get together and agree on anything ([Pete], Banton, 2013).

Although members of the ASC have applicable experience in relation to leadership, finances, etc., they do not have any knowledge about museums specifically. Because of their background and education, the curator feels justified in making decisions without consulting the ASC, but occasionally she finds herself defending decisions that would not be questioned in a museum where the committee also has a background and education relevant to museum work.

There is a struggle when the two groups are trying to balance the sense of control and influence over decisions being made and executed. In the past, there have been conflicts between the ASC and the curator when one group thinks the other is gaining too much power over the other group. For example, one informant said “Well the Council was being taken over by the curator. It’s taken a lot of energy from the Museum to deal with that” ([Peggy], Banton, 2013). This also brings up the issue of the struggle for power drawing attention away from the more important details of running a museum. Should the ASC and the curator focus less on doing things their own way in order to benefit the overall museum? After all, these two groups are supposed to collaborate and create a better museum that will serve the public as efficiently as possible. This will be discussed more in-depth later on.

Case Study

One example of the interactions between the ASC and the curator clearly demonstrates the relationship and dynamics between the two groups. As previously mentioned, the museum has an upstairs exhibition room that changes every summer. It was decided that the summer of 2013 would hold an exhibition of art gathered from Alderney artists.

The curator at the time vied for an exhibition using the art from the museum stores. These pieces are thought-provoking and address topics that are potentially viewed as depressing. For example, one of the paintings that she wanted to display was created during the Occupation and showed a more abstract rendering of a labor camp on Alderney. On the other hand, the ASC desired to use paintings from current artists located on Alderney. This art included photographs of local wildlife, watercolor scenes, and other paintings of various buildings and locations on the island.

The curator wished to show art pieces from the museum stores because she believes it is the responsibility of the museum to store-and also display-the items for the public. The museum is created to benefit the public specifically, and therefore the museum has the responsibility of showing artwork previously hidden from the eyes of society. Unfortunately some of the artwork can be viewed as dark and more depressing, even though it is also thought-provoking.

Meanwhile, the ASC members wanted to show pieces of art that are more aesthetically pleasing to the public. Since it is being displayed in a museum and not an art gallery, they believed that such pieces would appeal more to the museum visitors. They also hoped to draw in and show support for various community members by showing the collections of current local artists. The drawback of this collection that the ASC preferred, however, is that it is not always the most professional looking.

The curator voiced her opinion on which collection of artwork should be displayed, but after some debate the ASC clearly won out and their chosen display was put up in the upstairs exhibition room. In fact, one of the committee members specifically took on the role of designing the exhibition room, even though his chosen profession is not relevant to the museum field at all. Various visitors and volunteers made several comments on the lack of quality of the

exhibition room. For example, one woman commented on how some of the watercolor paintings were framed improperly, which she identified because her ex-husband was an artist. The art was bubbling inside of the frame, and the frames themselves were not hung in a way that allowed the full weight of the art to hang down and straighten itself out (Field Notes 2013: 48). This also reiterates the fact that the ASC members are merely volunteers who try their best to help out when possible. Even though they may not have adequate practice in that field—and the caliber of the work is not as high as if an experienced museum professional had done it—they try their best with the skills they do have.

This case study is also significant because it shows a specific example of a time when the ASC and curator disagreed about an aspect of the museum. The two groups did not agree on what should be displayed in the rotating gallery because of their different sets of experience and knowledge. The ASC has knowledge of Alderney and its people because they are residents of the island and understand its history and what appeals to visitors, and their choice of the type of artwork to display shows that. Conversely, the curator's knowledge and experiences regarding what a museum stands for and its purpose in the community affected her decision about what artwork to display in the exhibition. When it came down to it though, the ASC's opinion prevailed and their group of art was displayed. I am not fully aware how the conclusion was reached, but I do know that both parties made their opinions known and then there was some amount of discussion before the ASC made the final decision in a Council meeting. Based on my observations during a Council meeting that I attended, I assume that some type of vote or majority rule was used to reach this conclusion. As in many of the situations observed during my time working at the museum, the opinion of the ASC often wins over the opinion of the curator.

Although they may listen to the curator and take her opinion into account, they often end up doing whatever *they* feel is most beneficial to the museum as shown in this case study.

I also find it worthy to note the role that visitors seem to play in the power struggle between the ASC and the curators because it is quite apparent in this example. Both parties value the opinions and participation of locals in the museum. However, in my observations it did not appear that locals attend the museum very often, especially considering how greatly these groups emphasize impressing the island's population. It seems that both of them are not as aware of the visitors and their needs as they assume to be.

Moving Forward

The data presented indicates a struggle for control and influence over the decisions of others involved in running the Alderney Society Museum. Both parties feel as if their opinions and actions are valid because of their knowledge set based on education and experiences. This is exactly the mindset that leads to the contention, however. Although the ASC and the curators recognize the important roles that the other group plays, these groups do not always take into account *why* the others feel validated in their position of power. The ASC members and the curators all have legitimate reasons to feel the way that they do, but it is easy to overlook once he or she gets caught up in making sure their own way is used to accomplish tasks.

SIGNIFICANCE

The previous evidence that has been presented all indicates that the Alderney Society Council (ASC) and the curators are validated in the fact that their respective sets of knowledge

create a sense of power and control over the other group. All of the data presented is linked with the theories of Foucault regarding knowledge as power, which will now be discussed more in depth.

Each individual, whether it is a volunteer on the ASC or a curator from the United Kingdom, has a set of experiences and knowledge which accompanies him or her into the work they do accomplish at the museum. On a related note, these individuals believe that the sets of experience and knowledge empower and validate their role in the museum's endeavors.

Throughout his writings, Foucault addresses the issues of power and knowledge and how one affects the other. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault outlines the relationship concisely by stating "...that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (Foucault 1977: 27). In other words, power and knowledge are inseparably linked. You cannot have the existence of one without the other. This is what I found while observing the inner workings of the Alderney Society Museum as well. Knowledge and power were woven together and endlessly affected one another.

As we explore Foucault's ideas in this section of *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* further, he continues to discuss the relationship between power and knowledge. He states that "We should admit rather that power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another" (Foucault 1977: 27). This reinforces the concept once again that power and knowledge are endlessly related to one another, especially as seen in the museum on Alderney. On the other hand, this is a slightly different take on the relations between these two concepts because it states that power produces knowledge instead of knowledge producing power as has been discussed thus far. Both sides use their positions in the museum to increase

their knowledge. In other words, their power leads to knowledge. The positions held by the ASC and curators allow them to access information and data about the museum and the community. In turn, they gain more knowledge about these entities and then they are able to gain an even higher status by using that knowledge. It is an endless cycle of knowledge and power that continues to build on one another. This is clearly visible in the Alderney Society Museum as the curators and ASC members interact and feed off of their current positions of power in the museum. The personalities of each person involved definitely affect the events that unfold. But even if the personalities are taken out of the scenario, I believe the conflict would still exist. The ASC no longer employs a curator and I wonder what tensions still exist between members as they move forward.

In addition to the cycle of power and knowledge, Foucault adds sentiments regarding disciplinary power, which is also related to the topic at hand. It can especially be seen regarding the way that the ASC and curators interact and view one another. Foucault states that

“Traditionally, power was what was seen, what was shown, and what was manifested...Disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline, it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them. It is this fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification” (Foucault 1977: 187).

Upon closer examination of this particular quote, it is evident that visibility is a main source of increasing power and exerting control over others. The ASC and curators are constantly in a state of desiring to observe and be made aware of exactly what the other group is doing, creating power in the more traditional sense. I saw this time and time again during my observations in the field, as seen in the case study presented on page twenty-four. Each group tried to control the

actions of the other by ensuring that all of their actions were witnessed and noted. This often led to frustrations among the individuals because they wanted to be able to act without informing everyone else of their actions and the reasons behind those actions. The groups were able to exert control over the opposing group by ensuring that there was a constant line of information relating the actions taken. By staying informed, they reinforce the perception that they are the ones in power.

As mentioned in a journal article analyzing Foucault's theories on power, he

“...sees power not as a commodity that can be ‘appropriated’ but as something much more fluid and ubiquitous. Power in this sense is ‘embedded in the very fabric’ of the social system and ‘resides in every perception, judgment and act’ of every individual (Hardy and Leiba-O’Sullivan 1998, 459-60)” (Few 2002: 30).

As I see it, Foucault believes that power is not a solid and measurable entity because it is involved in every aspect of society. Power is not a positive or negative aspect of humanity, it is simply another facet of civilization that must be accepted and understood. The manner in which power is used and obtained by both curators and members of the ASC is simply another element that must be learned about in order to better understand the people and culture of Alderney. By gaining more insight about how these groups view power and knowledge, we are able to better appreciate and understand how this particular society works. In a very succinct summary, it can be seen that the people of Alderney have close and personal interactions with one another on a daily basis, even within the workplace. They seek to gain more control and power over other groups because they feel justified in these actions, and not necessarily because they are power hungry and want to assert dominance over other members of society.

The data indicates that there is a struggle for control due to the manner in which the Alderney Society Museum is managed. This is by no means the only museum that experiences

such a struggle for power and control among the volunteers and employees who invest time and effort into making it run smoothly. As previously mentioned, museums often run with some assistance from a committee of some kind, which means that the Alderney Society Museum is no different than the majority of museums. What makes this museum unique, however, is the fact that it is such an extreme case of conflict between the volunteers and employed individuals.

While the Channel Islands pride themselves on tourism as part of its economy, it is accompanied with a sense of separation from the rest of the world. Alderney's museum is fairly isolated from the influence of the overall museum community. As such, it has its own individual way of managing and running that makes it an ideal location to study. Alderney presents a relatively isolated, small, community-run museum that creates ideal circumstances to study the inner workings of such a museum.

The museum on Alderney is a prime example of what to do or not to do in regards to running any museum. It is an easy way to study the communications and interactions between committees and curators in an intimate setting and learn from the observations. By learning from the issues presented by the ASC and curators working in the Alderney Society Museum, the museum community can improve the way that they run institutions in similar situations.

Suggestions for Further Research

Observations and the data collected while working with the museum on Alderney repeatedly indicates that there is definitely room for improvement. While the basic management system is functional, both the ASC and the curators must come to a better understanding of one another. This involves trying to appreciate the individual knowledge set that each person offers. In addition, each group needs to make a conscious decision to come together and communicate

more. By expressing interest and appreciation for each person's knowledge and skills, deeper bonds will develop between the two groups. As a result, the people will work together better and then the museum will benefit in turn.

When it comes to the topic of further research, I think that this field is still wide open for exploration. While researching this topic, I generally found that there was a lack of resources. This indicates that more research needs to be done regarding the field of museums and museum management.

To be more specific, the topic of museum management would be fascinating to study further. More specifically, it would be interesting to examine the way that committees and experienced museum professionals work together. The data that I gathered is only a portion of the research that can be done in this area. The interactions and the way power plays into the work that they do can bring insight into the manner in which museums are run throughout the world. Not only can it affect the museum environment, but in turn it will also reach out and affect the public who visit these establishments.

I think there is also more research that can be done into the way power plays into the management system. A museum can be regarded as a business, and therefore it is worth looking into how it can be better managed, which all relates back to the way museum professionals and volunteers work together as previously discussed. Committees and museum professionals need to find better ways to work cohesively toward common goals. By investigating the topic of power in relation to management, I think that museums can greatly benefit and find more productive ways to direct their institutions as they move forward.

IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, I found throughout the course of my research on the island of Alderney that the museum located there is run by competent and capable individuals. Each person brings his or her own set of knowledge and experiences and applies them to their work at the museum. As the committee of volunteers—the ASC—and the employed graduate student curators interact and try to work together based on such knowledge and experience, there are apparent clashes. The contentions can be tied back into the concepts of knowledge and power as outlined by Michel Foucault because each individual seeks to use his or her own knowledge to increase their power and control within the museum. As a result, such struggles for control can inhibit the work of the museum, and steps should be taken in the research field to diminish these in the future. By delving further into the topic of museum management systems, we can gain insight into better ways to communicate between museum professionals, committees, and/or volunteers and enhance the museum experience for the general public.

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