

Collections of the Babylon Center Museum for Civilizational and Babylonian Studies Heritage

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Abstract

Regarding museums as information institutions, some researchers in museum studies and museum science have predicted their future in the digital environment. They have indicated that the World Wide Web may play a significant role in changing the function of museums in the future. These predictions have likely led to concrete initiatives and serious efforts to study the World Wide Web for cultural and heritage purposes. The museum is considered an important cultural and educational destination in Iraq, enhancing visitors' understanding of the history of the city of Hillah, in particular, and of Iraq in general.

Keywords: Heritage collections , Iraq, museum establishment, photos of heritage collections, University of Babylon

الملخص

بالنسبة للمتاحف كمؤسسات معلوماتية، توقع بعض الباحثين المهتمين بدراسات المتحف وعلوم المتحف مستقبل هذه المؤسسات في البيئة الرقمية، وقد أشاروا إلى أن الشبكة العالمية قد تلعب دوراً رئيسياً في تغيير وظيفة المتحف في المستقبل. من المحتمل أن هذه التوقعات قد أدت إلى مبادرات فعالية وخطوات جادة نحو دراسة الشبكة العالمية، بهدف تعزيز الأغراض الثقافية والتراشية. ويعتبر المتحف وجهة ثقافية وتعلمية مهمة في العراق، حيث يعزز فهم الزوار لتاريخ مدينة الحلة على وجه الخصوص وال伊拉克 بشكل عام. افتتح مركز المتحف الجامعي يوم الاثنين 12/11/2012 في إحدى قاعات المركز. يمثل متحف الجامعة التراشية نافذة أخرى ينظر من خلالها المركز لتوثيق التراث المحلي المهم، وأن هذا التراث يمثل ذاكرة المدينة (الحلة) لمئات السنين. تسعى جامعة بابل للحفاظ على هذا التراث من خلال إكمال موسوعة الحضارة للحفاظ عليه من الجوانب اللغوية والتاريخية والجغرافية. وهو أهم مشروع علمي وثقافي في تاريخ المدينة.

كلمات مفتاحية: المقتنيات التراشية، جامعة بابل، تأسيس المتحف، صور المقتنيات التراشية، العراق

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Introduction

Preserving collections is considered a means of maintaining human roots, preventing them from disappearing. These collections represent a tangible testament to what humanity has left behind from ancient times to the present day. Museum institutions play a fundamental role in preserving this cultural heritage, embodying a living message to the world, serving as a platform for artistic and civilizational encounters and communication. Many museums around the globe often house diverse collections from around the world and across multiple civilizations. Museum institutions are considered safe environments for preserving and maintaining archaeological collections of various types, especially organic ones that require special care due to their sensitivity to environmental conditions, whether in exhibition halls or storage rooms.

Preserving these collections is an essential part of protecting archaeological and cultural heritage from disappearance. Among the objectives of preservation is ensuring continuity and follow-up, and extending the life of collections through continuous maintenance and periodic monitoring. Therefore, providing the appropriate conditions is of paramount importance. The benefit of conservation is to reduce the level of direct intervention on the artifact, thereby enhancing its role in providing technical support for a comprehensive project aimed at creating a heritage that can be displayed and studied. Museums are information institutions that play an essential role in preserving human heritage and partner with libraries and archives. The Internet has provided these institutions with opportunities to enhance their mission of preserving human heritage and making it available to the public. This study explores the applications of information technology and the World Wide Web in Arab museums. The study relied on a field approach, drawing on the University of Babylon Heritage Museum.

Based on the study's primary aim, the following research questions are set as follows:

- 1-What are virtual museums, and what is their importance in preserving cultural and human heritage?
- 2-What is the reality of using information technology in Arab virtual museums?
- 3-How are global network technologies applied in Arab virtual museums?
- 4-What are the most prominent Arab virtual museums that include technical and network applications?
- 5-How is real information presented to visitors?

To answer these questions, the researchers set the following research objectives:

- 1-Exploring the concept of virtual museums and their importance in preserving cultural and human heritage in Babylon

2-A study of the nature of the use of information technologies in virtual museums in the Arab world at the University of Babylon

3- The close relationship between heritage houses and museums, and the exploitation of heritage houses in old shops to design and display pictures of the belongings of the people of Hillah and photos of the scholars who founded the Hillah Seminary and their manuscripts.

4-The museum aims to preserve traditional Iraqi heritage from loss and extinction, to be a prominent symbol of the achievements and creativity of Iraqi society, and to highlight its interaction with the surrounding natural environment and the ways to exploit its resources to meet its diverse needs.

5 -The museum also seeks to present elements and tools that contribute to shedding light on the nature of social life that prevailed during specific periods of Iraqi history, and to explore the social values and customs that were followed. These material cultural elements reflect methods of social organization across various areas of life, particularly in food and drink utensils, clothing, and agriculture.

Museum as an Institution

A museum is a non-profit educational institution that provides cultural and educational value without seeking financial gain. Among the many definitions of the museum, we find the one provided by the American Association of Museums: Museums are places dedicated to collecting, preserving, and displaying human and natural heritage for educational, cultural, and other purposes (Al-Shaer 1992, p. 4). With the technological progress and strategic transformations the world has witnessed, it has become necessary to update the museum's definition to be more comprehensive (Musa, 2002, p. 43). Therefore, the Council members pointed out that the museum is a public institution that seeks to serve and develop society. The museum's tasks include displaying artistic and scientific works and providing historical and technical information, making it an essential resource for researchers, students, and others (Hamlawi, 1991, p. 86). This contrasts with traditional museums, which rely on physical entities such as walls, floors, and ceilings. Direct interaction with museum content also gives virtual museums greater weight and success compared to their traditional counterparts (Ahmed et al., 2017, p. 22).

Establishing the Museum

Many believe that museums have suddenly emerged as a modern idea. Still, historical studies have proven that the essence of the museum is as old as humanity itself in its confined form. It is helpful to follow the museum's emergence as an educational and entertainment institution and as a research center that researchers draw on for studies of aspects of civilization across different

eras. From here, it is not a bad idea to review, in the pages ahead, the emergence of the concept of museums and its development from the Pharaonic era to the modern era.

Pharaonic Era

The famous Roman commander said AgrippaIn. " In his public speech, he said:

The emergence of the idea of museums came from the premise of preserving the precious artistic things in the ancient temples, and the importance of the concept of establishing the Alexandria and Pergamum Museums in the Hellenistic era, and its connection to the library, culture, and scientific research, and attracting practical scientific elements to it.

(A cited in Muhammad, 2002, p. 23)

Middle Ages

In this era, places of worship in those ages made themselves into small museums represented by churches and monasteries, in the splendor of their buildings and the beauty of the images and frescoes that decorated their walls, and the natural treasures that their various halls preserved, such as jewelry, enamel, icons, and textiles that filled the treasuries of those places, and many of the relics that pilgrims brought from distant lands as gifts (Muhammad, 2002, p. 27).

Islamic Era

Muslims were accustomed to collecting precious and rare artifacts, especially after their conquest of the Persian and Byzantine regions. Although the Arabs were unaware of private museums and treasuries that, in addition to containing manuscripts, also preserved valuable artifacts, the Abbasids were interested in collecting artifacts and adding them to their treasuries. For example, Al-Radi had a special treasury to collect crystal artifacts. The Arab historian Al-Suli said, "I have never seen more crystal in the possession of a king than Al-Radi, nor has any king made as much as he did...etc.

Renaissance

During this era in Europe, there was a special interest on the part of the kings, merchants and consuls of Europe who were influenced by the voyages of sailors exploring the New World and the rare and precious artifacts they brought back, to begin the most extensive process of looting and plundering the heritage of this New World in the name of conquests etc (Al-Quddus, 2001, p. 121).

Academic studies were established to modernize and develop museum sciences, to study the effects of various ancient civilizations, and to translate them; cuneiform and Pharaonic scripts were translated by English and French archaeologists with an unprecedented competitive spirit (Marzouq, 1981, p. 42).

Museums were established in Arab countries in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Most Arab museums, in their early days, focused on displaying Roman and Greek civilizations and the statues, pottery, porcelain, and glass finds dating back to them. The opening of these museums occurred during the period of European occupation of Arab countries (Asir, 2003, p. 42).

Opening of the University Museum

Anyone who links writing about Iraq to thoughtful, conscious tours of the cultural, heritage, and archaeological sites spread across its land will discover the great importance of what these sites carry in terms of vibrant movement, giving, and continuous communication. It will also become clear to him that the history of these sites goes back to the oldest known historical eras, which enhances his understanding of the active role of Iraq in the Arab and human cultural depth, since the emergence of civil life in this country and the succession of states and the intermingling of cultures on its lands.

The Babylon Center team is proud of their efforts in reopening one of the most prominent museums that tells the stories of their ancient city. The museum showcases traditional crafts and popular cafes, as well as a collection of games and traditions dating back nearly two centuries. The work included installing new decorations inspired by the traditional shanasheel, known for its fine details and colorful decorative carvings. The museum was also designed in the conventional shanasheel style, using local building materials.

The museum, in its new form, is no less critical than other museums. Neighboring countries, despite the small size of your exhibition space, were designed with your own efforts. The opening was attended by academic and cultural figures from the people of Hillah Al-Faihaa, and prizes were distributed to those present. As attested by everyone who has visited and seen it, the museum currently houses more than 200. A specific piece of the museum, on a dedicated side, houses historical photographs of the city of Hillah, including oil paintings of maps of the town since its founding. The museum also contains an extensive collection of historical memorabilia, archaeological models, and figures dating back to the Babylonian period. It is part of a project aimed at building historical memory.

The museum displays diverse models of social and economic lifestyles in Hillah, highlighting the productive side of families. The museum also features several corners that illustrate the city's diverse lifestyles, including one dedicated to traditional coffee and another to the Babylonian inscribed tiles used to build the ancient city. There's also a corner for traditional jewelry and clothing, as well as coins, important documents, weapons, and old printers. The museum also contains a collection of agricultural tools, household utensils, coffee-making tools, and other collectibles.

Display and Storage in the University Museum

Regarding the methods of display and storage within the university museum, the quality of the display depends on sound artistic taste. Those in charge of this display must have sufficient knowledge of the foundations of museum display and some artistic principles that can be instilled in a person from an early age. These officials must also possess a distinct artistic spirit (Hamlawi, 1991, p. 86). In the past, museums acquired artifacts in various ways and worked to maintain and preserve them. Today, their role has evolved to become more important, focusing on displaying materials attractively and engagingly, both in terms of organization and design.

Halls and Display Methods

Display is one of the essential functions of a museum, serving as a mirror that reflects the cultural evidence it contains to the visitor. In the context of museology, display is understood as a vision aimed at achieving a specific purpose, whether scientific, entertaining, or educational.

1. During the collection process: Heritage collections face many risks during the collection process. At the University Museum, a team of experts specializing in heritage and antiquities is available to ensure the preservation of these artifacts.
2. During the preservation process, Cultural property is preserved as heritage. Please put it in a shape-appropriate
3. During the display process, Museums are distinguished by their attractive display of cultural and

The most prominent heritage holdings of the University of Babylon Museum:

- 1- Ancient weapons, swords, and curved spears

The sword is considered one of the most prominent hand weapons used by fighters in close combat, whether offensively or defensively. Considered one of the most noble and honorable weapons in the eyes of the world's peoples, it has been used throughout the ages. However, what Arab and Muslim scholars have written about the ancient concept of the sword is considered very rare, given the paucity of available literature. Despite the valuable information provided by Al-Kindi in his book on swords and their types, including their origins and the history of their manufacture, studying swords remains a challenge, as most of the ancient Arab swords worthy of study and comparison are not housed in our museums but are instead scattered across various museums around the world.

- 2- Kitchen utensils: pots, plates, utensils, and large and small trays

Pots engraved with the names of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) are utensils used for cooking. They are often made of metal and decorated with engravings and motifs bearing the names and titles of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), such as Ali, Fatima, Hussein, Hassan, and others, as a sign of respect and reverence. These pots are used for religious and social occasions, especially

during holidays and when the Ahl al-Bayt are mentioned, and they symbolize loyalty and love for them.

3- Old Iraqi currencies: The museum contains a diverse collection of old currencies from 1920 to 2023 AD, including metal and paper currencies, as well as original and photographed national occasion currencies.

4- Old cameras: The old cameras are imaging devices that use lens technology and light-sensitive materials (such as film or chemical photography) to capture still images. They were also known as photographic cameras or traditional cameras, and came in a variety of shapes and designs depending on the type of technology used.

5-The stone mill: The mill is one of the oldest traditional grinding machines used by women in past centuries to grind various types of grains. This machine was invented with a unique engineering design in that era, and it was considered one of the basic household tools in every home. A mill is used to grind grains, herbs, or other materials into a powder or flour. Hand-operated mills consist of two circular chambers and are driven by a wooden stick from above.

In the past, mills were widely used to grind wheat and barley for making bread. They are considered ancient and vital kitchen tools. They usually consist of rings or rotors that rotate to grind the ground material. In 1991, our people relied heavily on them. The museum has one of these.

6- Ancient Babylonian fashion.

7- Clocks: old, large wall clocks and wristwatches.

8- Old printers: These printers were used in writing texts before the advent of computers.

9-The old engraved bricks used in building the heritage houses of the people of Hillah are red bricks that bear the inscription of the name of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar in cuneiform.

10-Old electrical appliances (TV, Telephones, radios, CD players, etc).

11-Samovar: A samovar is a traditional device used to heat water and is often used in some Arab regions and other countries to prepare tea, coffee, or for general heating. A samovar typically consists of a water tank placed over a heat source, such as coal or gas, and contains small tubes or pipes to pass the water through and heat it.

12- The large copper mortar: It is a traditional tool used to grind and crush solid materials, such as herbs, spices, grains, or other food or herbal ingredients. Typically made of copper or brass, it is characterized by its large size and heavy weight, which facilitate manual grinding and produce accurate, fast results. The mortar is widely used in traditional kitchens and areas that rely on hand grinding. It is an ancient tool that holds heritage value, as it expresses conventional culinary arts and manual skills.

13- The jawan: They are part of the Iraqi folk heritage. The wooden threshing floor was made from a mulberry tree trunk, which a carpenter dug to accommodate the amount of rice to be threshed. The second tool is the "mighana" or "mahbash", which is a thick column made of tree trunks that resembles a hammer, but is much larger. A quantity of rice grains is placed inside the jar, then one or two women face each other and slap the jar firmly, concentrating on the middle point. As a result of this beating, the rice appears to be rotating due to the movement in the middle of the bowl. This process continues until the rice is cooked. The most beautiful thing about this process is the chants that accompany it, which are said to the sound of the Mahabish drums. Some of these chants have been passed down through generations and stories.

14- The Copper Bucket: A Traditional Tool in the Life of Iraqi Rural Women. The bucket is a large copper jar used to collect water from wells or springs, or to store it indoors. It was often carried on the head or shoulder during women's daily watering trips. The bucket was more than just a vessel; it held symbols of work, dignity, and skill. The way it was carried, cleaned, and decorated, and even the sound of the copper drumming when used, all created a deep emotional connection between it and rural women. The manufacture of copper tools in the Arab world dates back thousands of years and flourished during the heyday of civilizations such as the Phoenician and Abbasid, where artisans excelled at shaping, smelting, and decorating copper by hand. In the rural context, the copper bucket appeared as a tool manufactured locally, using traditional methods, by "coppersmiths" in popular markets or in villages near craft centers (Abdul Aziz, 1998, p. 112).

In Arab rural communities, the copper pot was considered one of the most essential items in a bride's trousseau, placed among a group of traditional vessels presented to the bride on her wedding night. This was not only due to its function of fetching water but also symbolized the ability to manage household affairs, maintain cleanliness, and maintain good organization (Al-Zahraa, 2014, p. 162). In some environments, especially in the countryside, the bride is sent, the day after the wedding, to the well or spring with her bakma, amidst the ululations of the women, to fill it with water and return it to her husband's house. This ritual is sometimes called "the water's ascent," and it represents the bride's official entry into the life of her new household, as if to declare her responsibility and readiness to serve it (Al-Rahbi, 2003, p. 44). The bakma is specially decorated at weddings: it is polished well until it shines like gold, then colored ribbons (especially red and white) are tied to it, and sometimes branches of basil or dried cloves are tied to it, and it is placed on the head of the bride or one of her relatives as part of a symbolic ritual that signifies cleanliness, dignity, and modesty(Al-Attar, Mahaias, 2008.32)t is also used in some popular proverbs that describe an active or clean woman, for example: "So-and-so waters the house with water and makes it shine." (Al-Janabi, 2015, p. 45). With the changing lifestyles of modern life, the bakma began to lose its practical function, but it became a

heritage item. Some women kept it as a memento of their dowry or from their grandmothers' days. It is sometimes hung in homes as an expression of nostalgia for simpler times, or displayed in museums or old houses as part of the memory of a rural wedding (Al-Shuaibi, 2016, p. 33).

.15- Saad Mubarak's paintings; In one of the alleys of the ancient city of Hilla, lives the visual artist Saad Mubarak, born in 1971, who turned his old hobby into a vibrant artistic and social message that has become his identity in his city and country. Saad, known as 'Abu Fatima', is a member of the Iraqi Artists' Union - Babel branch. He chose to make his voice art, and his means of expression simple materials that pulse with creativity; wood, lighting lamps, painting on glass, and making sculptures, with each piece of his work carrying a story from Hilla, from its houses, and from its heritage and ancient spirit, reflecting the shapes of the old houses known as 'shanashil'.

Conclusion

Regardless of the circumstances, the founders of these pioneering initiatives deserve appreciation and support for their tremendous efforts to protect a significant portion of the local heritage and popular culture, which was threatened by numerous dangers, both natural and human. Thanks to years of continuous work and their sacrifices of time and money, they were able to collect and preserve as much of the local heritage as possible.

About the Author

Ali Obayes Hussein Ali Al-Maamouri was born in Iraq 1979. He is a teacher of Islamic History. He got an MA degree from the University of Babylon. He was appointed in 2004. He has many published papers on Islamic history, heritage, and cultural studies.

AI Statement

This document has benefited from the application of AI-driven tools, including Grammarly, to refine its linguistic aspects. These tools were utilised to correct grammar and spelling and improve the overall writing style. It is acknowledged that the use of these technologies may introduce specific AI-generated linguistic patterns. However, the core intellectual content, data interpretation, and conclusions presented remain the sole work of the authors.

Statement of Absence of Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to the research, findings, or recommendations presented in this paper. All conclusions drawn are independent and unbiased.

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