



Producing and Touring a Major Intercontinental Exhibition with Multiple Collections and Host Museums presented by Élisabeth Côté.

The exhibition *Queens of Egypt* was developed by Pointe-à-Callière, Montréal Archaeology and History Complex (Canada), in collaboration with Museo Egizio of Turin (Italy). Located across three archaeological sites in old Montreal, Pointe-à-Callière is a museum of archaeology and history which was established in 1992.

The exhibition featured over 300 objects, including statues, sarcophagi, funerary objects, and jewellery, to tell the story of the women leaders of ancient Egypt. In her presentation Elisabeth Côté, Senior Project Manager at Pointe-à-Callière Museum, provided an overview of the project, and anecdotes of some aspects of coordinating the exhibition, including the loan arrangements and the logistical requirements.

The contents of the exhibition were borrowed from six museums across five countries: Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada and the United State of America. The bulk of the holdings was from the partner museum, the Museo Egizio of Turin - the oldest museum devoted to Egyptian culture, with one of the largest holdings of Egyptian artefacts outside of Cairo. The exhibition toured to four venues, starting in Pointe, then travelling to two venues in the United States of America, then back into Canada.

What struck me as significant was that Elisabeth Côté acknowledged that the relationship between project manager and registrar is very important to get right, and that the two roles were an important partnership in this project. Given some of the most significant negotiations to secure a loan and host venues are based around the insurance and indemnity, and the costs associated with the packing, couriers and freight are the largest section of a touring exhibition budget, I wondered how this relationship was established and evolved over the life of the project with the numerous challenges they faced.

In discussing the loan coordination, Côté explained that each of the four host museums entered into Agreements with the six lenders. Given this would be substantial work for both the lenders and the host museums, I was left pondering the reasoning around this - perhaps issues of insurance/indemnity, lender policy, or a legislative reason for the countries of the host museums in Canada and USA.

Côté painted an excellent picture of the bureaucratic quagmires of multi-border crossings. With the first host museum in Canada, the exhibition travelled to the USA for the second and third displays, before returning to Canada for its final exhibit. The import and export administration around this, along with the special requirements for keeping the cultural material out of Italy for longer than 18 months for 'research' was multifaceted and onerous. Her cautionary tale highlighted how important it is to coordinate a tour schedule to limit multi-border crossings.

Given that some of the objects in the exhibition contained ivory, it's no surprise that the CITIES requirements for the touring exhibition were extensive, and far more complex given the materials were crossing international borders. Indeed, the host museum in Washington, USA did not have enough time to arrange the permits required and as a result the ivory objects were not able to travel onwards and had to be returned to the lender in Italy.

Côté's presentation showed that a city museum with experience in hosting international museums can apply those skills and knowledge to touring an international exhibition. Pointe-à-Callière Museum embraced a flexible and versatile attitude to develop the exhibitions, and



their partnership with Museo Egizio demonstrated the ways that partnerships can attract new visitors and offer new experiences.

While partnering with another institution, and borrowing works from multiple lenders adds enormous complexity to the coordination of a project, it can also establish rich and trusting relationships. Given the complexities of the project, I imagine there would have been intricate discussions and arrangements during the loan coordination in relation to insurance or indemnity coverage, however, this wasn't touched on, nor the proposals for global budgets and negotiations around cost-sharing with host venues, nor any lender requirements for immunity for seizure. It leaves questions: What were some of the challenges with the relationships, with the partner, lender and venues? Were there differences of opinions? How easy or hard were the negotiations? What compromises had to be made?

Often as registrars we focus on the technical 'hard skills' of the vocation, the things that make our profession unique – naturally we want to talk about how we managed to safely move a sarcophagus around the world. But it's just as important that we talk about the 'soft skills' required to undertake such a complex exhibition – how we communicate, collaborate and negotiate.

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