After 2001: Can We Maintain A Future For Cultural Heritage Tourism?

This paper was delivered by Gordon Grimwade, Managing Director, Gordon Grimwade & Associates at the MAQ State Conference, 15-16 September 2001, Cairns

Introduction

The past few years have been exciting times for the museum and cultural heritage industry. The Centenary of Federation has been the springboard for many new projects that have enabled existing museums to improve their presentation and for new attractions to open. Consider that there are currently 32 major Queensland Heritage Trails attractions being developed, for which the Commonwealth, Queensland and Local Governments have committed $110 million (QHTN Secretariat 2001:1). The Commonwealth has funded 40 applications under its major grants programme, and 60 projects under the Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects Program (DOCITA 2001). Both levels of government have supported over 1000 smaller projects as part of the Centenary of Federation. In addition the Queensland Government has provided ‘$1,224,369 to museums through Arts Queensland’s grants programs since 1995’ (Johnson 2001).

As the euphoria settles, however, there is a need to take a closer look at the future for those initiatives. Sites and museums need sound management, curation, conservation, and well maintained displays. But, can we afford to maintain all those new facilities? Do we have the management support structures in place? Should marketing be competitively or cooperatively based? Perhaps we have become victims of ‘conservation schizophrenia’, as heritage consultant, Jane Lennon, is quoted as saying recently (Hart 2001). This attitude is driving us to save anything and everything, with scant regard for true significance and reliant, often based on the eloquence of the project’s submission writer rather than on true heritage values. Long term maintenance and display upgrades appear to be overlooked with long term planning dealt with, at best, superficially or, at worst, simply ignored.

The Bicentennial celebrations in 1988 was a period where partying was paramount (O’Brien 1991). The title of his book says it all, The Bicentennial Affair: the Inside Story of Australia’s Birthday Bash. The theme of ‘Celebration of a Nation’ has a certain advertising snappiness about it but it did little for engendering concepts of value adding either in a social or an economic sense for the future. It is hardly surprising that the Bicentennial was later described as a ‘big flop’ by historian Manning Clark, and ‘dull and inappropriate’ by former Governor General Paul Hasluck (O’Brien 1991: 301). There are, of course, some outstanding achievements which developed from that party time. These include the Stockman’s Hall of Fame in Longreach and the Adelaide tropical conservatory but there are many projects that never developed further. Lack of on-going support may often be cited as a reason for failure but issues such as an absence of community commitment and inadequate forward planning cannot be dismissed. O’Brien’s closing remarks that ‘the lessons of 1988 shriek to be remembered’ (O’Brien 1991:308) will not, hopefully, form the epitaph of the Centenary of Federation.

A brief review of Centenary of Federation projects suggests that Australians are seeing a greater emphasis being placed on cultural heritage projects in 2001 than was the case in 1988. There is, however, still a plethora of somewhat avant-garde community projects in which future management and maintenance is being overlooked. There is, too, an apparent but unquantifiable, concern within the heritage industry that attention has to be given to the long-term benefits and issues.

Most major federation projects require business plans and adequate evaluation of their direction before a firm commitment is made (for example, Kleinhardt 2001). Where evaluation has indicated limited prospects for projects to be self-supporting, or that a change of direction
is appropriate, they are being modified at the outset (3-D 2000, and Gordon Grimwade & Associates 2001). The issue remains, however, of whether or not the recognition of the problems is sufficient to generate an ongoing commitment, beyond 2001, which will sustain the various projects.

Management, maintenance and marketing are key issues for new and refurbished attractions as they open, develop, and, inevitably, compete for visitors. Without that, the majority of projects run the risk of being five-year wonders before deteriorating into obscurity. After years of virtually ignoring Australia’s heritage we seem hell bent on conserving almost everything, and presenting anything remotely associated with the past, in the name of heritage conservation. For the more cynically minded it may also be motivated by an exploitation by governments of the great Aussie battler myth and the perceived potential for developing rural economies. Consider, for example, that all 32 heritage trails projects are for projects outside the metropolitan area.

Despite the fact that tourism is the largest, and fastest growing, industry (Hundloe 2000:18) there is also the reality that there are more places to see and more things to do worldwide. Selectivity in what is chosen for conservation and presentation is essential (Grimwade & Carter 1999:165). Maintaining and promoting a venue needs a lot of hard work. You cannot just open the door, grab a cup of tea and sit, waiting for tourists to flock through the door.

The projects that emerge successfully will be those that demonstrate that they have sound management structures in place, have implemented well-planned maintenance programmes, and sell their product well to a clearly defined market. One redeeming feature here is that, according to the 1997 International Visitor Survey, 30 percent of tourists visit historical sites in (Lever 2000:7). That figure provides scope for substantial increases, but only if the venues are of sufficiently high standard and targeted to satisfy and expand this market segment.

This paper draws, substantially, on recent involvement in several disparate Centenary of Federation projects. These are therefore, briefly described before focusing on some of the issues facing management, maintenance, and marketing. It is impossible in so short a time to provide a comprehensive assessment of what requires much in depth consideration and resolution. The paper, thus, aims to stimulate discussion rather than offer neatly packaged solutions.

In referring to ‘museums’ in this paper I refer not only those structures which display and care for collections of portable artefacts but to archaeological sites which are interpreted for public enjoyment and education.

**Case studies:**

Two Centenary of Federation projects and three Heritage Trails Network projects provide the case studies for this paper.

**Centenary of Federation projects**

(1) The Federal Government’s Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects Program grants included $572,000 to the Torres Strait Historical Society and Museum Association for conservation and site presentation at Green Hill Fort, Thursday Island. The Queensland Government Centenary Projects provided an additional $84,000 for the development of new museum displays, and the Regional Living Infrastructure Program, $50,000, for a viewing platform.

Thursday Island is about as remote as you can get in Australia. Port Moresby (800 km) and Dili (2100 km) are closer than Brisbane (2400km) and Melbourne (3300km). The 3.5km² island is home to about 3800 people of diverse cultural backgrounds. Thursday Island is one of the most cosmopolitan communities in Australia.
The historical society comprises about 45 members of whom a handful is actively engaged in the society. A fairly typical regional scene.

Green Hill Fort was built in 1891 – 1893 under a team led by Major Edward Druitt, of the Royal Engineers, and George Cryle, who later became prominent in Queensland’s fledgling construction industry. Its purpose was to protect the coaling hulks moored nearby from possible attack by the feared Russian invaders who never arrived. It was abandoned in the 1920s. The three 6 inch guns and the fort remained intact. Despite several attacks on nearby allied bases during the Second World War the fort, then used as a Signals Station, never fulfilled a major military role again. Before conversion to a museum in 1993 the fort was used as a weather station by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Green Hill Fort, Thursday Island attracts large numbers of tourists during the dry season from April to September. Group tours are the most popular. (Photo – Gordon Grimwade).

(2) Croydon Shire secured $81,000 from the Queensland Federation Grants fund for presentation of their Chinese Temple archaeological site to the public – an outdoor site museum.

Croydon is a large Gulf Savannah shire, 500 kilometres west of Cairns, with a small resident population: 500 people in an area of 29,000 km² (equivalent to about 40 percent of the area of Tasmania). It has an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 tourists travelling through each year, mainly between April and September.

A little over a century ago it was a thriving gold town with a population of around 6500 of whom 500 were described as ‘aliens’ (Towner 1888:59). It was one of the larger Australian Chinese centres, outside the major cities, at that time (Grimwade: in press). Once the gold reserves dwindled the population gradually decreased. From 1878 the Chinese were restricted, by law from working new mines for the first three years of their existence. Instead, they were extremely successful as market gardeners, storekeepers and hawkers. Chinatown flourished and with it, the economic resources to fund construction of a temple. By the 1920s,
however, lessening economic opportunities and adversity from the ‘White Australia Policy’ saw many Chinese move away to the major cities or back to China.

The contemporary Croydon community has recognised that its heritage resources are valuable assets. Several sites, in addition to the Chinese temple site, have been identified as deserving both conservation and presentation. But the decision as to which got attention first was really opportunistic. Centenary of Federation funding favoured the Chinese site so, quite simply, that is where energies were directed.

An innovative memorial in the Centenary of Federation Park, Croydon provides novel three dimensional interpretation and links with the nearby Chinese Temple archaeological site. (Photo: Gordon Grimwade).

Heritage Trails Projects

(1) Coincidentally, the Chinese Australian community also features in my next example. At Atherton, the heritage listed Temple of Hou Wang received $1.3 million for conservation and interpretation from the Queensland Heritage Trails Network.

Atherton is an agricultural service town 80 kilometres west of Cairns. Its highland setting, around 750 metres above sea level, gives it a mild tropical climate; well suited to market gardening, dairying, and maize growing. Colonial settlement started with extensive timber felling in the 1880s in which Chinese and Europeans settlers played major roles. Although the Europeans gained title to much of the cleared land they generally leased their properties to Chinese farmers (May nd:2). The Chinese settled in ‘a township of their own about two miles from Atherton; this was known as “China-town” (May nd:2). After several years of fund raising, they erected the Temple of Hou Wang in 1903 (Grimwade 1995). It is the only building still extant and has many of its original furnishings.
The Temple of Hou Wang is now a highly significant place museum. It was built in 1903 as the spiritual focus for members of the Atherton Tableland Chinese Community. (Photo: Gordon Grimwade).

(2) Eleven Far North Queensland projects have been identified as major heritage trails projects. They include the Temple of Hou Wang, Atherton; the Dairy Centre, Malanda; the Cardwell Heritage Centre; Hasties Swamp, Atherton bird reserve, the Quinkan Interpretation Centre, Laura; and the Mining Centre at Chillagoe. In total they are a disparate collection of fascinating sites. Total value exceeds $4.9 million.
Hastie’s Swamp near Atherton is a fresh water lagoon favoured by a diversity of waterfowl. A hide has been built as part of the commitment to properly preserve and interpret this natural and cultural gem. (Photo: Gordon Grimwade).

To develop the overarching theme of ‘People living in the Far North Queensland landscape’ a project was initiated to strengthen linkages between the sites. Interpretive briefs were developed through which individual projects could develop their own stories but which linked with others in the region. It was a tentative first step, in many ways, to draw together what would otherwise be a series of attractions related only by political geography.

(3) The Queensland section of the Savannah Way heads west from Cairns across the Gulf Savannah where it crosses into the Northern Territory, west of Doomadgee.

The long-term goal is to link the north east coast (Cairns/ Townsville) of Australia with the northwest (Broome). That, in itself, is an innovative step for it requires cooperation between two States and the Northern Territory. The initial work on the Queensland section has started with an interpretive themes concept (Grimwade, Burke and Tunney 2001) and a report on planning and management issues (Clouston • Probe 2001). The Queensland section will provide a range of interpretive tools as travellers head east or west: CDs, tapes, guide books, signage etc. It will also, in the spirit of the Heritage Trails Network, link the attractions along the route: Cobb and Co coaching stations, the telegraph line, explorers’ routes, Afghan transport tracks, Chinese settlements, and Aboriginal culture.

This diverse range of projects shares a commonality in that they are all major developments which, on close scrutiny, share more than the fact they are all in the northeast of Australia.
Each has demonstrated in its own way that without continued focus and management they could, themselves, fade quietly, and prematurely, into the annals of history. Each, however, has much to offer, provided a few actions are taken to ensure that continuity. It is here that management, maintenance and marketing become critical issues.

Management

The development of cultural heritage tourism in Australia has reached the stage where two levels of management are identifiable: local, or site management and coordination and service management. Local management is essentially site specific, aiming to address the operational needs of a single museum. Coordinating management is necessary to guide government policy making, on coordinating and maintaining the linkages between sites and improving, the overall quality of Australia’s, now diverse, cultural heritage product.

Local management

Local museums are no longer the social clubs of a few decades ago where a few locals clung desperately to the memorabilia of the past. Many museums, old and new, have taken on high tech roles with slick, professionally developed displays in professionally curated centres. Others now rely more heavily on external, part time professional advice. In the words a nameless graffitist ‘nostalgia isn’t what it used to be’ (Signoret in Knowles 1999:647).

More recently the focus has turned to the development of high tech, sleek, professionally run centres. Displays are more interactive and involve more graphics than artefacts. Curatorial work is often undertaken by an overworked graduate; who should probably have completed a degree in grant writing and marketing than in history or museum studies. Conservation is considered desirable, but expensive. Overall, there is now a higher level of professionalism evident at the local level. This has been an emerging process which, with the impetus of Centenary of Federation funding, has experienced a sudden expansion.

It has been said that museums are ‘only meaningful if they (tell) a story about and for people’ (Davis 1999:49). In periods of rapid expansion and tight deadlines people can easily be sidelined. The focus turns to product, outcomes, political gamesmanship, and grant acquittals.

Most significantly, once external, financial aid is obtained, local management structures necessarily undergo change. Grant recipients have to adapt to additional external demands of accountability. The bigger the injection of funds the greater the demands: GST issues, grant management, and increased exposure to technology and marketing precipitate this process. If an institution is to accept external funding it must also accept that added responsibility. It has a commitment to meet conditions specified by the funding authority some of which may seem onerous to groups previously operating with a high degree of independence.

At the local level, management needs more than ever to provide a balance between the various elements of a museum: community, sense of belonging, sense of achievement, collections, structures, displays, and forward planning. In some situations there is a healthy desire to maintain a community based social atmosphere. This can, of course, be achieved by avoiding getting caught up in the grant race and remaining as a small-scale operation. This head in the sand approach is fine for addressing personal goals but it does little for the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage values. It is a dinosaur approach: extinction is probably only a generation away. Many institutions now recognise it is necessary to involve professional advice and to employ trained staff. But that can be an expense that a small facility cannot afford. This is where the Regional Museums Advisory service and professional consultancy services now play critical roles.

In some cases advisory sub-committees are being established to assist local museum management teams. Expertise is thus co-opted to assist the management committee to achieve their goals. Forging stronger links between local government and community groups is an approach being explored in many areas (Grimwade & Carter 1999:167).
At Atherton the local Council and the National Trust are co-operating on the Temple of Hou Wang project. A joint management structure is being developed. In part this is because Council owns the land and building destined to house the orientation displays while the Trust owns the adjacent temple and the majority of the former Chinatown.

Green Hill Fort is an example of a different form of cooperation between a local authority and the community. The Torres Shire leases the land and fort to the historical society, which maintains the facility. Where appropriate Council has assisted the society to access funds not otherwise available to the general community.

The cooperative approach, in one form or another, is certainly a desirable model, for it ensures the community can retain a sense of belonging and association with the project.

There are exceptions. At Croydon a joint venture is impractical. Most of the 200 or so residents are either Councillors, Council employees or their relatives. Council owns the various heritage site museums and manages them directly. Consultancy services are used to provide the technical expertise to develop identified sites and facilities to a high standard and within the legislative framework.

**Coordination management**

Projects developed under the various Centenary of Federation programmes, have improved the conservation and presentation of numerous collections and sites across Australia. Linking those sites through the Heritage Trails Network is a commendable and unique concept. However, if local museums and sites are not well supported, and do not work cooperatively, in the future we could see a repetition of the numerous ailing Bicentennial and ad hoc projects which dot the cultural landscape. Many failed then because of poorly developed concepts, they were inadequately funded from the outset, or subsequent management was not sufficiently pro-active. This is not only harmful to the collections and sites themselves, but to the future of Australia’s heritage tourism industry.

Some people may argue, erroneously, that themed trails are not museums and therefore are of little concern to museum professionals. Consider, however, that heritage trails have, as their artefacts, the landscapes through which they pass (the gallery space) as they systematically link museums and sites (the display cabinets). They become the links in the interpretation of specific elements of our heritage.

The Matilda Highway stretches north to Normanton and Karumba through Central Queensland. It was established a few years ago with clearly marked route signage and interpreted some interesting historical sites along the route. Nowadays many of the trail markers are missing. They were popular souvenirs. Solitary steel posts devoid of any sign are all the indications of the former existence of an historic marker. Maintenance of the route was not undertaken and so there has been a decline in the quality of the facility originally offered. Fortunately, this is one of several routes due to be revamped by the Heritage Trails Network.

Some years ago the, then, Gulf Local Authorities Development Association developed some interpretive signage for the Gulf Savannah. Despite warnings that paper printed signs held behind perspex would deteriorate they proceeded to erect the signs. The theory was that the signs would have less appeal to vandals and could be replaced once they faded. Unfortunately, very few get replaced and the comprehensive material they contain is illegible. Funding constraints also dogged what was an ambitious effort at the time. Again, it is a project now being taken up by the Queensland Heritage Trails Network.

Route signage must be kept up to date, marketing needs to be developed and maintained, and new concepts developed. This expertise is beyond that which one can expect from a Local Authority, or a Regional Museum Advisory Service. It requires more diverse expertise, including tourism specialists, heritage managers, and road engineers.
Coordination management has to focus on issues of site linkage maintenance and development, maintaining quality, and visitor satisfaction at least across the state and, ultimately, across the country.

The Queensland Heritage Trails Network is a temporary section of Arts Queensland which is undertaking the themed interpretive development of several major highways. It has a finite life aimed at getting the trails programme up and running. What happens afterwards? Where will the coordination and funding come from to maintain those trails?

Appropriate, long term, coordination management would avoid the failures of the past recurring. Museum operators, whether they run a local museum or a site museum, need to have access to quality support services, ongoing financial support, and assurances they will have well maintained linkages between attractions.

**Maintenance**

While good management can ensure that conservation and presentation is always of a high standard it is the quality of physical maintenance which can make, or break, a project. Site maintenance can be costly if it is not integrated into operational budgets from the outset. There is often, a tendency to avoid budgeting for maintenance until it becomes a major issue. If a place and its contents are poorly maintained then, eventually, it will self-destruct or require the injection of excessive capital. Some of the recently funded projects require sophisticated maintenance in the longer term. Sophisticated conservation and complex, hi-tech displays are not always jobs for the local, weekend handyman to tackle.

The guns at Green Hill Fort require regular care and immediate treatment if parts are damaged. After several years of neglect they took a week for two skilled operators and a conservator to treat in 1999. Two years later it took a conservator two days to clean them, deal with the vandalism, and control the spot rust and corrosion. Planning is now well advanced for more frequent inspection and maintenance.

The Temple of Hou Wang, Atherton, is about to undergo extensive conservation works. Past work has been constrained by minimal funding. Once the current work is completed the building will require regular inspection and immediate rectification of deterioration. Failure to put that ideal into practice will reflect poorly on the commitment of $1.3 million now being expended.

Regular maintenance programmes are essential. Some government grants are actually specifying that a maintenance manual should be produced as part of the project. That is an excellent idea; as long as it is comprehensive, easily understood, and acted upon. It may well be that part of that programme calls for a regular inspection and action by specialist consultants. That could be seen as an expensive approach; but, it must be borne in mind that poorly maintained resources will result in their loss and will not attract the visiting public.

Croydon Shire Council has recognised that it faces an annual maintenance requirement with its various heritage site museums. Regular mowing and weeding to reduce potential fire damage, fence maintenance, and signage replacement are key elements. A small site is easier to maintain in some ways. These actions all require ongoing maintenance which, obviously, must be budgeted for by the site managers. If that commitment is not forthcoming then it is better to cancel the project at the outset. Clearly it is desirable that some contribution towards this work should come from the users — the tourists. Some sites do not readily lend themselves to charging an entry fee. At Croydon, for example, the Chinese cemetery contains rare examples of sandstone grave markers. Maintaining the area costs Council several thousand dollars each year. But you cannot charge anyone to walk around a cemetery. A donation post has been suggested but the spectre of theft has reared its head.
It has been estimated that the Croydon Chinese Temple site museum probably needs about a $10,000 maintenance budget each year. It certainly does not justify a full-time maintenance person. This allows for:

Grounds maintenance (208hrs @ $40/hr, inc overheads, i.e. average of 4 hours per week) $8,320
Fuel and equipment costs $25/month x 12 $500
Quarterly management and annual professional site audit $1,000
Total $9,820

Signage replacement is an additional cost, every 5 to 8 years. This, in itself, raises the important issue that display material, whether it is signage, display cabinets, or interactives, must be updated regularly. No display, no matter how well it may be received initially, can be held up as the ultimate in design. Eventually it will show its age. Unless it is updated before it gets ‘tired’ it will adversely impact on visitor numbers. Maintenance must, therefore include a component for upgrades.

Site museum managers should have little difficulty in providing ongoing physical maintenance. It is the cost of display or signage replacement that is probably most often neglected. Croydon’s low rate base proves that basic maintenance is achievable. For organizations like Croydon Shire the problem is that there are several other site museums under their jurisdiction also needing similar work.

At Green Hill Fort different challenges are evident. The tropical, maritime site is one which demands consistent conservation and maintenance. At first glance the cost may seem prohibitive for a small community to handle on its own. But, by increasing entry charges to a realistic $7 per head over the next two years there is no reason why a part-time maintenance person cannot also be employed. Careful control of part-time salaries, and developing souvenir sales as an income generator, allows for a modest budget for annual conservation inspections by a specialist conservator. An annual, and quite achievable, visitor level of 10,000 to 12,000 would readily provide a level of profitability whereby the venue can be self-sustaining; provided the urge for full-time staff positions is rejected, at least for the foreseeable future.

Green Hill Fort can, often have three medium sized coaches turn up within minutes of each other during the period April to August. While staff are often needed to provide supplementary interpretation and to oversee the collections and displays at the fort the local tour guides undertake that role themselves. But what is really needed is someone to staff the museum shop. It has been proposed that a seasonally employed, part-time, attendant should be employed to handle this task. A small shop, with carefully selected stock and staffed for a minimum number of hours, will not make a fortune but it can certainly make a positive contribution to total income.

Grants are an obvious additional revenue source. But they are both diverse and highly competitive. Only well prepared submissions, reflecting sound planning and high degrees of compliance with grant conditions, will succeed. It is well worth using skilled resources to search out those elusive funds as grant competitiveness increases.

Maintenance expenses are clearly an essential component of any operational budget. Achieving the funds to meet those costs is not simply desirable; it is essential.

Marketing

Museums have to compete with burgeoning competition in the tourism and leisure markets. Those with nifty marketing campaigns are more likely to succeed, but even they will find the competition is intense. Those in remoter areas will find that challenge even greater (Dickman 1995:8). Poor marketing may see the collections and displays suffer. Successful marketing
strategies will result in higher revenue levels that can then be use to help ensure the displays are well maintained and frequently updated.

In Queensland alone there will be at least forty new cultural heritage ‘destinations’ (I use that term in a tourism sense) by 2002. Competition for visitors on a statewide basis will increase. Attracting greater numbers of visitors will depend upon product quality and on promoting the attraction. Promotion in isolation is unlikely to be particularly successful. Well coordinated, cooperative marketing is essential.

There is a need then, to develop marketing strategies, which will help both those with the marketing skills (and the bigger budgets) as well as those interesting, small site museums to maintain themselves. Many projects are still in the embryonic stages, or have only recently opened. The concept of joint marketing is one that is worth further consideration. It may involve a thematic approach, such as mining museums. This may involve the standard suite of brochures or even the production of thematic publications such as North Queensland’s Heritage Mining Trails (Pearce 1999). It may involve marketing of a cluster of regional sites and museums as exemplified in the Far North Queensland Heritage Trails Interpretive Strategy (Environment North 2001) and for the Savannah Way (Clouston • Probe 2001).

Marketing is sometimes, erroneously, overlooked as a major concern for new projects. There is more energy being directed at meeting construction deadlines. But marketing is not something that can be done at the last minute. It needs to be planned, and integrated into the development of the new facility. Brochures and advertisements are an integral part of the marketing package. Other avenues need to be exploited to the fullest to have maximum, positive effect. Press releases about project developments, new acquisitions, and forthcoming displays are great and they are relatively inexpensive. Radio and television interviews reach a large part of the market and can be used effectively once you have found the ‘hook’ on which to hang the story.

At Green Hill Fort the conservation of the three six inch guns involved some dramatic in situ sand blasting and painting. The transformation of three 10 tonne artefacts from rusting relics, to glistening black artefacts was dramatic enough for several ‘stories’ run by the media.

The progress of a project draws considerable interest, particularly in rural areas, where local news is often ‘a bit thin’. Again, press releases are helpful pre-opening publicity. The use of a small but informative display in a central public facility such as the local library is helping keep the Atherton public aware of progress at the Chinatown heritage trails project. The widest possible marketing ensures your product becomes known, used, talked about, re-visited and – most importantly – survives.

We need to be continuously considering new ways of seeking out visitors. Tourism professionals will tell you that good promotion, plenty of forewarning to tour operators, and some healthy commissions (in the region of 10 to 20 percent) are the foundations to increasing visitor numbers (Kleinhardt 2001:39).

For some institutions developing those market opportunities takes a lot of time and absences from the museum while links are established. If you are running a museum with only one staff member it gets pretty difficult to effectively market and still keep the doors open! The production of brochures, liaising with operators, writing press releases, developing web sites, determining what souvenir lines to sell all take a deal of expertise and energy but they have to be done. The need to employ outside specialists or, at least, to delegate those tasks to colleagues has to be considered.

Marketing is, likewise, very much an individual activity but there are underlying principle we have tried encouraging. The inevitable brochures need to be well produced and eye-catching. Consider the style, size and form of the attractions with which you are competing.
Placement of those brochures needs careful planning. There is little point placing Croydon, or Thursday Island, brochures in the Hilton but the RACQ, regional Visitor Information Centres, and the southern caravan and camping venues are great.

At Croydon the old, heritage listed, Police Station is used as a very successful venue for a modest photographic display of the area. In effect one attraction is being used to promote others. Collecting the locally available material for the display was also used as an opportunity to market the district’s heritage values. A photographic and art competition was run to access privately held material. In the short term the results were a bit underwhelming. Only about ten photographs and three paintings were offered. In the longer term the results have, however, been above expectation. Two highly regarded North Queensland artists are now planning to visit Croydon to research opportunities for future work and several more photographs have been donated to the Council’s collections.

Incorporated within the messages on several interpretive signs around Croydon are references to similar sites in other towns. The aim is to encourage more visitation to more places. At the Croydon Chinatown site specific reference is made to Atherton, where it is pointed out there is an intact temple but little evidence of the pig oven. Reciprocally, at Atherton it is intended to point out that a visit to Croydon will enable visitors to see an excellent example of a nearly intact oven and the foundations only of a temple. It is a localised attempt to reinforce the concept of a heritage trail.

Nominating for one of the many awards for heritage related projects is another sure-fire way of increasing exposure to any site.

Marketing can use a myriad of techniques. The application of a little lateral thinking and the services of a marketing consultant can pay off in the long term.

**Conclusion**

If Australia’s recent initiatives and actions in respect of cultural heritage conservation and presentation are to have much of a life beyond 2001 there are important management, maintenance, and marketing issues to consider and to act upon. Failure to do so will result in loss of cultural material and a decline in visitor satisfaction.

Management, at the local and the wider levels, has to adapt to the increasing challenges and complexity of museum based presentations but must still link people and collections. Professional advisory services need strengthening to ensure linkages and trails are well maintained. Regular maintenance of the museum or site and the continuing development of displays is essential. Conservation must be an integral part of any operational budget to avoid the demise of some, otherwise commendable, projects. The production and implementation of a maintenance manual is a cost-efficient first step.

Co-operative and joint marketing should be a major focus in this competitive world. Australian cultural heritage places are of interest to domestic and international markets. Maintaining the initiatives provided by unusually supportive governments in the lead up to the Centenary of Federation is a responsibility of all concerned with the future of Australia’s museums. Two thousand and one has seen the development of a plethora of new projects. Their long term survival depends on enthusiasm and commitment from the local community to all levels of government. Without that, many inspiring projects will have unjustifiably short life spans.

**Acknowledgments**

Thanks are due to those with whom I have had the opportunity to work on various major project developments in recent years. In particular Queensland Heritage Trails Network, Croydon Shire Council, the Torres Strait Historical Society, Atherton Shire Council, and the National Trust of Queensland have been the catalysts for many of my comments.
Gary Couchman offered some pertinent comments in relation to display development for which I am most grateful. Bill Carter’s critical review contributed substantially to the development of this paper.

References

3-D Exhibitions and Leserco Pty Ltd, 2000, ‘Atherton Chinatown Interpretation Plan’

Clouston • Probe, 2001, ‘Savannah Way Summary report of planning and management issues’ (Report to Queensland and Northern Territory Governments)


Biographical Details

Gordon Grimwade is a north Queensland based heritage and museum consultant. Gordon specializes in providing services to rural communities across the country. He has managed a range of new initiatives in cultural heritage tourism and site museums, including Green Hill Fort, Thursday Island and the Atherton Chinatown site. He is Heritage Consultant to Croydon Shire where he has undertaken heritage restoration and presentation projects now attracting significant community interest and support. He holds postgraduate qualifications in Museum Studies from James Cook University.