

## 《图书馆，博物馆将对游客免费开放》

Libraries, museums to be free to public

Entrance fees to cease being charges by 2012

BEIJING - Art museums, libraries and other public institutions in China have long been accused of catering to elite academics and professionals, rather than the general public.

A joint statement issued on Thursday by the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Finance is aimed at changing that situation.

It stipulated that Chinese citizens will not have to pay to enter the country's public art galleries in two years' time.

According to the statement, public art museums and libraries at State and provincial levels will cease charging entrance fees by the end of 2011.

And when the following year is up, all public-funded art museums and libraries will be open to citizens free of charge, the statement said.

The changes come after China began giving the public free access to its museums and memorial halls in 2008.

To ensure the future strength of cultural institutions, the ministries' statement said that finance departments at all levels should give more money to art galleries and libraries, enabling those institutions to continue operating and improving their basic services without relying on entrance fees.

The central government also planned to provide special subsidies to art galleries and libraries in the less-developed regions of central and western China.

The statement encouraged art museums and libraries to become more efficient by making changes to their management and organizational structures, and to improve the services they offer to special groups such as children, rural migrant workers, the disabled, and the elderly.

"This is definitely a boon for art lovers and culture vultures in China," said Fan Di'an, the dean of the National Art Museum.

In recent years, the nation's top art museum has offered discounts to the public when it has put important exhibitions on display, while striving to offer better services, Fan added.

In early 2008, when a grand exhibition on the art of the Dunhuang Grottoes took place in the museum, a record number of more than 600,000 people attended the show in two months.

But up to now, most public art museums in China still charge fees ranging from 5 yuan (76 cents) a person to 30 yuan a person.

In 2007, the outspoken artist and writer Chen Danqing said: "We have many art museums. But there is no art-museum culture. Art museums should not function merely as an exhibiting space for a handful of artists. They should assume the more important role of serving the public."

In mid-January, an East China library made headlines when it openly invited the disadvantaged, including beggars, to use its services.

Fan said that the new policy indicates that art museums in China are adjusting to changing times and catching up with their Western counterparts.

But Zhu Zhihong, deputy head of Hubei Art Museum, the first non-profit art museum at the provincial level to allow visitors in free of charge in late 2008, said: "Free admission is just a minor step in attracting attention."

