

# museum

A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS

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The New Meaning of Distance Learning



Also in this issue:  
Nine Effective Strategies of  
Audience Building



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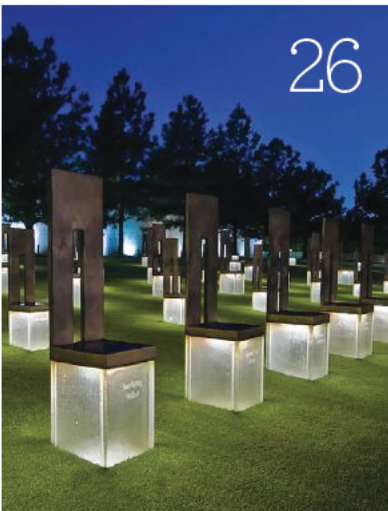
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# museum



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MUSEUM (ISSN 0027-4089)

July/August 2015, Volume 94, No. 4

Published bimonthly (J/F, M/A, M/J, J/A, S/O, N/D) by the American Alliance of Museums  
1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005; 202-289-1818; FAX 202-289-6578; [www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org).

Annual subscription rate is \$38. Copies are mailed to all members. Single copy is \$7. Overseas airmail is an additional \$45. Membership in the Alliance includes \$22 from annual membership dues applicable to a subscription to MUSEUM, except for students and retirees. (This notice is required by the U.S. Postal Service.) POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MUSEUM, 1575 Eye St. N.W., Suite 400, Washington, DC 20005. Copyright 2015, American Alliance of Museums. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine or its cover may be reproduced without written consent of the copyright proprietor. MUSEUM is indexed in The Art Index, which is published quarterly and available in public libraries. The magazine is available from ProQuest in the following formats: microform, electronic and paper. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Alliance. Preferred Periodical postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the U.S.A. by Lane Press, Burlington, VT.





**AS I ROLL UP** my sleeves and step into my new role as president and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums after nearly five years as its chief operating officer, I'm contemplating a daunting yet wonderfully exciting list of goals and opportunities for the Alliance—and for the museum field.

I have truly big shoes to fill. Ford Bell has been a great leader. Together—with our talented board and staff, and all of you—we have made a lot of progress. But there is a lot more work to do, and we are not going to stop now! As Michelangelo is credited with saying, “The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it.”

My vision is for the Alliance to be the go-to place for you, the museum community, to be inspired, to find needed information and to get support in preparing museums for a bright future. That bright future will call on museums to serve increasing—and increasingly diverse—audiences.

Over the coming months, I will be

## New Beginnings

working with the Alliance board to develop a strategic plan to guide our work for the next few years. As a sneak preview, I expect to strengthen the Alliance's role as a thought leader—expanding the work of the Center for the Future of Museums through fellows who will drill into specific trends and through innovation labs that foster experimentation and innovation with museums and their communities. We will further diversify our museum community through global partnerships that facilitate cultural exchange and learning from each other. And there is much to be done to ensure decision makers in the government—and in related sectors—understand and invest in the vital role of museums in their communities, in the economy and *particularly* in our education system.

I hope you enjoy reading several feature stories in this edition of *Museum* that are examples of what this field can accomplish. “Exploding the Four Walls,” page 30, profiles museums that are using digital resources to create distance education programs. “Nine Effective Strategies of Audience Building” on page 48 describes research completed by the Wallace Foundation. It was one of the most popular sessions at April's AAM Annual Meeting, as was the session on “Demanding More from Interactive Media” featured on page 40. Lastly, on page 54, you'll find information on the Small Museums

Accreditation Academy we are launching this summer with support from the National Endowment for the Arts to provide support for museums preparing for accreditation.

I feel very fortunate to work in this field that inspires me every day. My recent visit to Indianapolis is a case study of museums making a proactive positive difference in the world. Through its “Power of Children” initiative telling the stories of extraordinary children in history—Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges and Ryan White—the Children's Museum of Indianapolis inspires young people to fight discrimination and intolerance. The Indiana Historical Society allows visitors to see, hear and touch history—bringing historic photographs to life using actors—and providing meaningful work for the city's performance artists. This summer, the Eiteljorg Museum unveils a new shaded patio beside the popular walking paths along the canal. With regular programming for families, it is the Eiteljorg's latest effort to play a larger role in enhancing the vibrancy of downtown Indianapolis.

I look forward to meeting those of you I have not yet met. I hope you will follow me on Twitter (@LottLaura) and will be in touch with your feedback, thoughts and ideas on how we can better serve you and this amazing museum field.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laura L. Lott".

---

Laura L. Lott is the president and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums.





## » IN BOX

The July/August 2014 issue of *Museum* centered on the theme of social justice. We, of course, applaud this discussion in these pages, as we also believe museums can be intertwined with social justice objectives. We do, however, want to issue a caution that within this discussion lies the risk of espousing or

projecting the idea that we (museums) have something special others lack and that, due to these special qualities, we are the chosen group to help those perceived to be without the means to help themselves.

There are some clear problems with this line of thinking, sometimes referred to as “savior complex/mentality.” First, this assumes an exceptionalism that distances museums from other organizations or institutions trying to address social justice. Rather than distancing, museums can benefit from engaging with people and resources in other fields to build community around

social justice. Second, this line of thinking obscures the fact that museums have many issues to deal with internally too. Sure, museums can be strong partners towards positive social change, but this ought to be accompanied by critical self-examination and internal institutional change.

For this reason, we would like to see *Museum* “turn the social justice lens inward,” to quote [museum professional and activist] Alyssa Greenberg. Topics that we would like to see discussed include (but are not limited to): structural institutional legacies, staffing and language.

Under *structural institutional legacies*, which constitute the root of the injustices to be tackled, questions to be explored could include: How has your museum benefited from white supremacy (dominance of white people in society)? Who were your founders? What money founded your institution? How was that money made? How was your collection assembled? How has your museum maintained practices over the years that reinforce service to some groups over others?

Under *staffing*, topics the magazine could explore include: internal labor practices, such as the perpetuation of unpaid internships and

their impact; hiring practices that integrate museum goals to have a staff more representative of local communities and desired audiences (on that note, whatever happened with AAM’s Diversity and Inclusion policy?); and support for staff to understand their personal privilege and build habits of awareness about how this functions in their personal and work experiences.

Under *language*, the magazine could help support critical inquiry into concepts such as social justice, inclusion, diversity, access, equality, etc.—words that might be narrowly understood.

We love museums and are invested in seeing them become places that all people can equally choose to participate in. Many, including The Inluseum—a multivocal project to promote critical discourse and reflexivity on inclusion in museums—have been working at the margins of the sector to raise awareness and build community around the above three topics. We would like to see these points of internal injustices move towards the core of our field. Let’s turn that social justice lens inward to be better partners for social change!

ROSE PAQUET KINSLEY  
ALETHEIA WITTMAN  
CO-FOUNDERS, THE INLUSEUM



Do you have comments or concerns about *Museum* magazine content? Please share your thoughts. Contact Managing Editor Susannah O'Donnell at [sodonnell@aam-us.org](mailto:sodonnell@aam-us.org).



# 4,346

Number of people attending the 2015 AAM Annual Meeting in Atlanta.



# 49

Number of U.S. states represented at the annual meeting. Attendees also hailed from Washington, DC, and Puerto Rico.



# 34

Annual meeting attendees from China, third in international representation after



# 1,300

The number of attendees who visited CFM's "Museum of the Future" using Google Glass in MuseumExpo.

# 770

Number of attendees identifying as consultants/independent professionals, the largest category represented. Following were presidents/CEOs/executive directors (509) and museum educators (386).



### Frist Center for the Visual Arts

**Nashville, TN** | Decades before designers such as Armani, Dolce & Gabbana and Gucci were household names, the Italian government was struggling to get the country back on its feet. World War II had weakened Italy physically and morally. With help from the United States, Italian factories were revamped; many began producing fine textiles, which creative entrepreneurs then began transforming into luxurious apparel. In 1951, Italy launched its first fashion shows to earn international recognition; the innovation, high-quality materials and attention to detail showcased at these displays earned Italian clothing a devoted following worldwide. Celebrities sported Italian-made gowns at special events, and “Made in Italy” became a coveted description for premium goods.

Organized by the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, “Italian Style: Fashion Since 1945” traces the recent history of Italy’s tastemakers and fashion houses. Alongside photographs of the seminal 1950s Sala Bianca catwalk shows, the exhibition features dozens of garments, shoes and accessories. Examples range from a Gucci bamboo-handled pigskin bag dating to the early 1960s to a Tom Ford velvet suit made in 2004–05. With archival film footage and original design sketches, “Italian Style” explores both the origins and the future of Italian fashion. To Sept. 7, 2015.



## Yale Peabody Museum of Natural History

**New Haven, CT** | Today, samurai are typically associated with intense battles and intimidating armor—yet these warriors oversaw the longest war-free period ever maintained by a large society. “Samurai and the Culture of Japan’s Great Peace” scrutinizes the archetype of a samurai as a gentleman, aesthete and stoic warrior, examining what fighters turn to when there’s no war to wage. More than 150 artifacts reveal the complex and sometimes paradoxical layers of samurai history. Some of the glimmering swords on display, for example, were never intended for the battlefield; they were made simply to uphold the noble samurai tradition. To Jan. 3, 2016.



## Dallas Museum of Art

The “mirror stage,” a term coined by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, is when infants first see reflections of themselves. How has having reflective screens (and countless selfies) at our constant disposal changed our perceptions of ourselves? In “Concentrations 59: Mirror Stage—Visualizing the Self After the Internet,” eight contemporary video artists take on this query. Incorporating modern media such as webcam footage and 3D animation, these pieces posit that omnipresent devices have altered our relationship with reality. Not only are we often separated from the world by a screen, but we can and often do use technology to reimagine ourselves in unprecedented ways. To Dec. 6.



## Bata Shoe Museum

**Toronto, Ontario** | Women aren't the only ones who like a little lift. As shown in "Standing Tall: The Curious History of Men in Heels," men have strutted in heightening footwear for centuries. The exhibition kicks off in the early 1600s, when European men began to adopt the equestrian heels that had long been worn by horseback riders in Western Asia. From there, the history of men's heels goes from functional to pure fun, as evidenced by Elton John's silver platforms and colorful costume footwear from the musical *Kinky Boots*. Another highlight is the original 1960s "Beatle boot" worn by John Lennon. To June 2016.

## Anchorage Museum

One hundred years ago, Anchorage celebrated its first official Fourth of July by building a baseball diamond. As part of the Anchorage Centennial Celebration, "Home Field Advantage: Baseball in the Far North" looks at how America's pastime has been played in this arctic climate over the past century. Archival photographs show the clever ways that locals have managed to hold games in frigid conditions, such as spreading ashes over sea ice to create a makeshift field. Artworks and memorabilia, including a program and ball signed by Satchel Paige, recall moments when legendary players visited Alaska from the mainland. To Nov. 1.



## International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum

**Newport, RI** | A hologram of Roger Federer greets visitors to the museum, which reopened this spring after a \$3 million renovation. The museum is now equipped with a holographic theater, a 5-foot touch table stocked with tennis-related media and an equally large interactive globe showing where the sport is played around the world. Each of the 243 Hall of Famers has his or her own touchscreen kiosk, where visitors can tap into career stats and highlights clips. Along with the technological features, the museum houses some 25,000 artifacts, ranging from the first Wimbledon trophy Rod Laver took home, to the dress Serena Williams wore at the 2012 Olympics.



### National Archives Museum

**Washington, DC** | Establishments throughout the nation's capital are toasting to "Spirited Republic: Alcohol in American History," a look at the evolving alcohol-related opinions and actions of the US government and its citizens over the centuries. With nearly 100 historical records and artifacts, the exhibition goes back to the days of the Founding Fathers, recalling facts such as the whiskey rations for the Continental Army and George Washington's heated response to the Whiskey Rebellion. The timeline proceeds through Prohibition—when some Americans were able to secure prescriptions for medicinal alcohol—to the present day.

That's when the rest of DC comes in. Appointed "Chief Spirits Advisor" in his partnership with the National Archives Foundation, renowned bartender Derek Brown has created a 10-part seminar series titled "History of the Cocktail." Each talk features a writer, mixologist or other alcohol expert highlighting a specific era in American drinking, right up to today—the "Platinum Age" of cocktails. Plus, Brown has collaborated with 20 local bars, which have fashioned exclusive "Spirited Republic" cocktails. Each drink will be served up at its corresponding seminar and made available at individual watering holes throughout the show's run. To Jan. 10, 2016.



## Walters Art Museum

**Baltimore** | Gold isn't normally associated with grooming, but in ancient Colombia, a pair of solid gold tweezers may have been used in important rituals. "Gold of the Ancient Americas" is full of surprising uses of this most precious of elements, as seen in works originating from Panama to Peru and dating to between 500 and 1500 CE. At the beginning of this span, for example, gold became the choice material for personal adornments. Jewelry and pendants were shaped like animals and spirits, while elite members of Peru's Moche civilization might have sported shimmering golden ear rods depicting fierce warriors. To Oct. 11.



## Longwood Gardens

**Kennett Square, PA** | Elements that make up a peaceful garden during the day mutate into monuments, animations and other unexpected features in "Nightscape: A Light and Sound Experience." Klip Collective, a visual art shop, created this series of immersive installations, which illuminate sections of Longwood Gardens each night. With light and color effects, yew trees in the Topiary Garden turn into sculptures, while a lake becomes a screen that displays abstract reflections. Original soundscapes and scores by multiple composers add to the transformative experience. To Oct. 31, 2015.



## Bowdoin College Museum of Art

**Brunswick, ME** | Moonlight reflecting on the Atlantic Ocean, Fourth of July fireworks illuminating a dark sky, streetlamps flickering on a New York City avenue: scenes of night-time have long entranced American artists. "Night Vision: Nocturnes in American Art" surveys artistic depictions of night since electricity was introduced to the United States. As shown in the exhibition, Georgia O'Keeffe, Ansel Adams, Winslow Homer and Lee Krasner are among the artists who took on the challenges of depicting an evening setting—a difficult task considering the limitations that a lack of light places on shading and form. To Oct. 18.



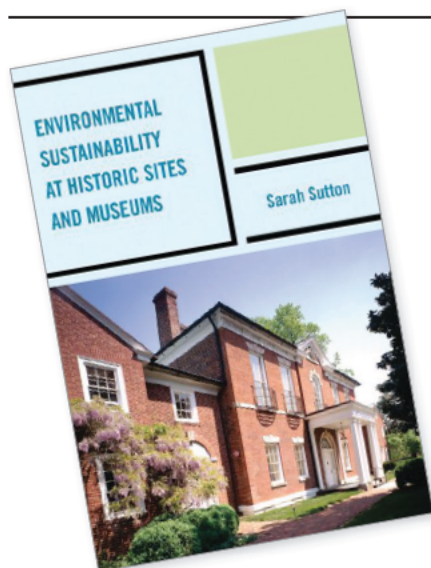
## Museum of Fine Arts

**St. Petersburg, FL** | Geishas, actors of the kabuki theater and powerful sumo wrestlers were among the stars of the "Floating World," as the pleasure-seeking aspects of Edo-period Japan were known. *Ukiyo-e*, the pictures that encapsulated these indulgences, make up "Images of the Floating World and Beyond: Japanese Woodblock Prints." Dating from the late 18th century to the 21st, the works in this exhibition, created by luminaries such as Hokusai and Hiroshige and later admired by artists including Claude Monet, also depict tranquil landscapes, heroic warriors and frightening demons. To Aug. 16.

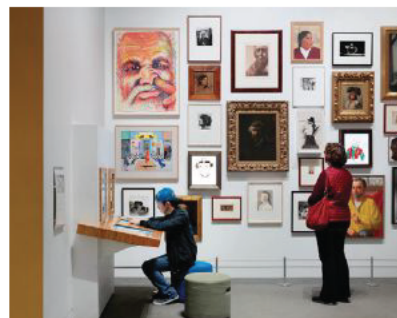


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Dumbarton House in Washington, DC, is the cover image of *Environmental Sustainability at Historic Sites and Museums*. The staff at this historic house museum has made a concerted effort to use green practices, from its energy-efficient events to its reliance on wind power. Released this spring, the publication's 170 pages are full of such case studies, highlighting institutions that are leading the field in eco-friendly adaptations. Author Sarah Sutton, who also co-wrote *The Green Museum: A Primer for Environmental Practice*, has first-hand experience as a consultant for museums looking to join this movement, helping them find ways to reduce, reuse and recycle.



Multisensory tours and monthly Twitter chats are among the innovations highlighted in the Association of Art Museum Directors' *Next Practices in Digital and Technology*. Released this spring, the publication includes 41 examples of how museums are embracing technology in new and creative ways. The Art Institute of Chicago, for example, is using 3-D reproductions to give visitors with reduced vision enhanced access to its art, while the RISD Museum has gathered audio insights from more than 100 contributors into a compilation that visitors can listen to in the galleries and at home. Other examples include forward-thinking applications of social media, collections management and mobile apps.



Parents wondering where they should lead their little ones at the Children's Museum of Houston can find answers in the new More CMH app. Developed with the tech consultancy Pariveda Solutions, the app, available for both Apple and Android, is designed to enhance and ease the in-gallery experience. Users can filter exhibitions by age—ranging from 2-year-olds to adults—to see which ones will appeal to toddlers or teens. Tapping on questions such as “What Do I Do?” and “What’s Going On?” leads to detailed information about objects on display and age-appropriate activities for the whole family.



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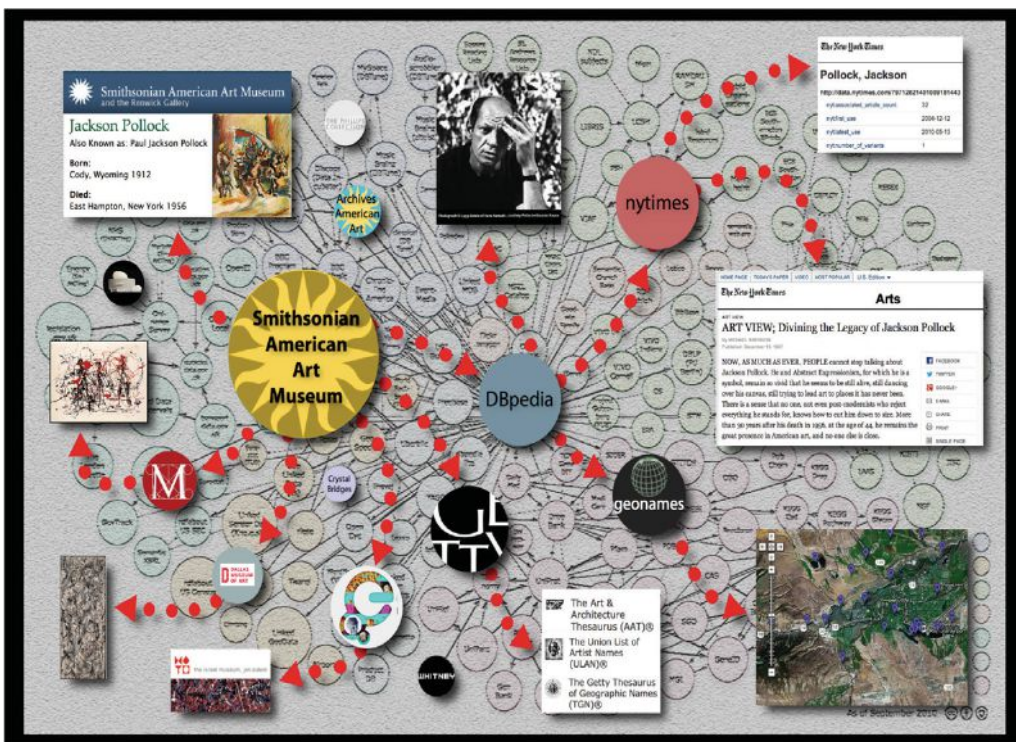
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# Beyond the Hyperlink

## Linked Open Data creates new opportunities

BY ELEANOR FINK



## What is Linked Open Data (LOD)?

Tim Berners-Lee, father of the World Wide Web, defined Linked Open Data in a 2009 TED talk as a new way to publish information with precise links and interconnections so that it is more useful. Up until recently, information resources on the Web were limited to hyperlinks that create connections on

a document level. These connections enable users to click through to various resources, but they do not express what type of connection exists between two pages—merely that there is one. Internet users conducting a Web search generally receive hyperlinks to potentially relevant pages that they must then read through to determine how relevant the links are to their

interests. LOD combines a domain (subject matter) ontology that expresses the relationships between people, places, events and things with RDF, a new standard for tagging. The result is information that is interconnected more precisely, avoiding all the “noise” and unrelated hyperlinks typically associated with an online search.

## Why should museums be interested in Linked Open Data?

Nearly every organization whose mission includes promoting access to information is interested in how technology can help achieve those goals. Linked Open Data can help museums make collections more discoverable, improving access and making data more useable to developers. It can help tell fuller stories about objects, provide more meaningful content and better support research. LOD provides opportunities for collaboration, including cross-domain connections, collection data links across museum websites, and connections with curators in other institutions and the general public.

## Are museums using LOD yet?

LOD began in the commercial and publishing worlds, sciences, government and military, with leading examples including the *New York Times*, BBC, Wikipedia



and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Recently libraries, archives and museums have begun to explore LOD. The largest application is Europeana (europeana.eu), an EU-funded effort to connect Europe's archives, libraries and museums. In the US, interest in LOD is rapidly spreading within the museum community. The leading example is the American Art Collaborative (AAC), comprising 14 art museums that intend to publish their data on American art as LOD, explore connections across other LOD nodes and develop applications. (See next page for more information.)

### How can LOD change museums' interactions with each other and the public?

LOD can interconnect relevant facets of information in a cloud, enabling greater research potential. Users can explore relationships not only among works of art in other museums but also across other domains. Scholars or the general public can thus more easily pursue an artwork or artifact's meaning, history and social context.

While most museums have websites, we do not always know what is in their collections until we

explore their website. One cannot as yet seamlessly and simultaneously search several museum websites. With LOD, the walls disappear and access by artist or creator, subject and place is enabled as if all the data were in one place (a virtual database). Rest assured that LOD notes the owner or keeper of each object. Easier access and the potential for serendipity can actually increase the visibility of museums and their collections.

Many museums educate via distance learning because of capacity limits in bringing schoolchildren into the galleries or as a means of reaching groups that cannot easily visit the museum. Curricula are often developed with local teachers who use the courses in their classroom, which then may be followed by a museum visit. Increasingly educators seek content from a variety of institutions, relating an artwork, for instance, to an object in the local archives or a science museum. With LOD, these connections are easy. For example, one might navigate from a letter in an archive to a work of art in a museum to an obituary in a local newspaper.

Like Wikipedia, the LOD format allows users to access, reuse, enrich and share data. Museums can

engage audiences by inviting them to provide information about works in the collection or upcoming exhibitions. It could be a new way of preparing for exhibitions and conducting research. Institutions may also elect to restrict contributions of information to museum records to just curators in other museums.

### Is LOD costly?

Doing something new and doing it right always requires an investment of staff time and commitment. When museums first embraced the idea of launching their own websites, they learned that they needed to hire a Web developer and manager not only for site development, but for updates and maintenance. Museums need to determine whether their technical staff members have the expertise to engage in LOD, especially if they choose to handle the data conversion in-house. As an alternative, outside services can convert data to LOD. When the Smithsonian American Art Museum decided to convert its collection to LOD, for instance, they worked with computer scientists at the University of Southern California. KARMA, the university's open source tool, makes conversion of museum data to LOD efficient and highly

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accurate. (For a video demonstrating KARMA, go to [isi.edu/integration/karma](http://isi.edu/integration/karma).)

### What's next for museums and LOD?

LOD is here to stay and is spreading. It is increasingly a topic of conversation at gatherings such as the Museum Computer Network conference and Museums and the Web. More and more museums are going to want to use it. It can be applied to data in museums of all sizes, with smaller institutions potentially standing to gain the most through increased visibility. With projects like the American Art Collaborative playing a catalytic role by providing museums with guidance and promoting best practices, the timing is right for museums to learn about and explore LOD. «

*Eleanor Fink is a digital cultural heritage consultant who created and manages the American Art Collaborative. She has held senior positions at the Smithsonian, J. Paul Getty Trust and World Bank. Documentation standards such as the Getty Vocabularies, Object ID and CDWA are some of the products of her leadership. She can be reached at [eleanorfink@earthlink.net](mailto:eleanorfink@earthlink.net) or 703-528-7132.*



The American Art Collaborative (AAC) is a consortium of 14 American museums committed to creating a diverse, critical mass of LOD on the Web on the subject of American art. The Smithsonian American Art Museum, one of the first American museums to make its entire collection available on the cloud via LOD, is currently the lead museum for the collaborative.

The AAC will place the collections of participating museums in the cloud and tag the data as LOD, greatly enhancing access, linking and sharing of information. Member museums are working together to learn about LOD and to leverage skills needed to update and maintain LOD. They are identifying best practices for publishing museum data as LOD, and identifying use cases that will help scholars, educators and the general public learn about and appreciate art. AAC intends to share the best practices, guidelines and lessons learned with the broader museum community.

AAC members believe it is important for museums—the primary holders of objects—to take the lead in converting their data to LOD, ensuring that data presented is authoritative. Placing third-party aggregators in charge can increase the likelihood of errors, such as linking an image with the wrong description.

The collaborative has received a planning grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation that has funded educational

briefings with LOD experts and convenings for the discussion and development of both publishing data as LOD and developing applications.

Participating institutions are:

- Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX
- Smithsonian's Archives of American Art, Washington, DC
- Autry National Center, Los Angeles
- Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, ME
- Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Crystal Bridges, AR
- Dallas Museum of Art
- Thomas Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, OK
- Indianapolis Museum of Art
- National Museum of Wildlife Art, Jackson Hole, WY
- Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, Washington, DC
- Princeton University Art Museum, Princeton, NJ
- Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
- Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT
- Walters Art Museum, Baltimore

Learn more at

**<http://americanartcollaborative.org>.**





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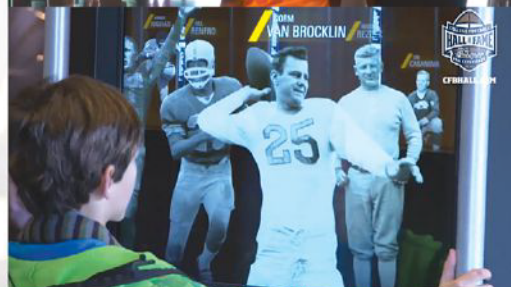
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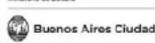


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# Cut Those Ties

## Museums should divest from fossil fuel industry interests

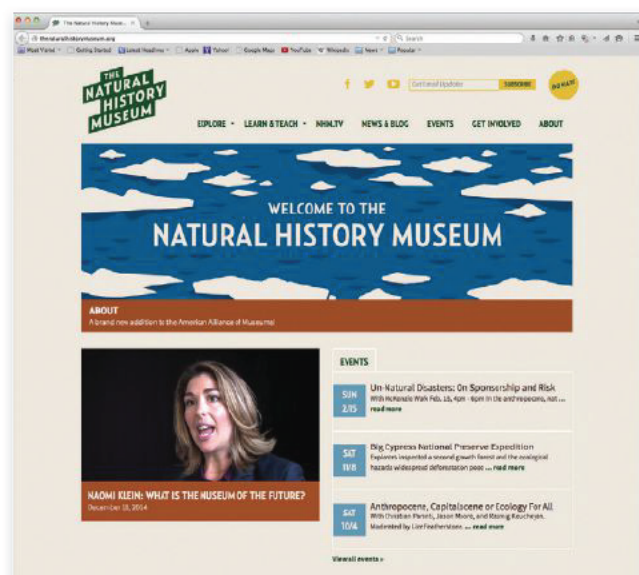
BY ELIZABETH WYLIE

I started writing this piece in April in middle Georgia, where spring is long and beautiful. Temperatures have been in the 70s, and there has been enough rain to take the edge off the state's multiyear drought. April also brought the news that 2014 was the hottest year on record. By the time this issue of *Museum* comes out, it will likely be miserably hot here. Given the trend line, 2015 could be the hottest year on record.

Heat and climate denial were topics at this year's AAM Annual Meeting in Atlanta, when The Natural History Museum (NHM), a new pop-up museum, participated in MuseumExpo with a well-attended mobile exhibition about fossil fuel industry greenwashing, climate change and conflicts of interest. The NHM was launched at the Queens Museum around the time of the fall 2014 People's Climate March in New York City (attended by an estimated 400,000, including 50,000 college students—the very millennials I heard so much about in sessions in Atlanta) with a series of panels, workshops and performances led by artists, activists, scientists and others. The project questions the ethics of institutions that accept philanthropy from donors with connections to the fossil

fuel industry, borrowing from climate-activist playbooks by naming names.

In late March, the NHM issued an open letter ([thenatural-historymuseum.org/open-letter-to-museums-from-scientists](http://thenatural-historymuseum.org/open-letter-to-museums-from-scientists)) signed by a cross-disciplinary mix of scientists (including several Nobel Laureates), calling for all museums of science and natural history to “cut all ties with the fossil fuel industry and funders of climate science obfuscation.” The letter received wide press coverage as well as a response this May on AAM's Center for the Future of Museums blog. A petition was also launched to urge the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and the American Museum of Natural History to “get science deniers out of science museums,” according to NHM's website. Plenty of AAM Annual Meeting attendees were sporting “Kick Koch off the Board” buttons, referring to the NHM's efforts to oust oil mogul David Koch from the boards of these two museums. The petition had over 197,000 signatures in late



The Natural History Museum, a new pop-up museum, encourages museums to refuse philanthropy from fossil fuel industry-connected donors.

April. How many will there be by the time you are reading this?

Time is not on our side. The warming of the planet is accelerating at an alarming rate. Impacts of the change loom large and represent a significant risk for mission-driven institutions that are here for the long term, including art and natural history museums, zoos, aquariums and botanical gardens, historic sites, and our national parks and monuments. Museums are increasingly challenged by sea level rise, along with severe weather events such as droughts, hurricanes, flash floods and intense summer heat.

The museum community seems to be coming late to the game on the issue, well behind colleges and universities and members of the philanthropic sector and the financial services and

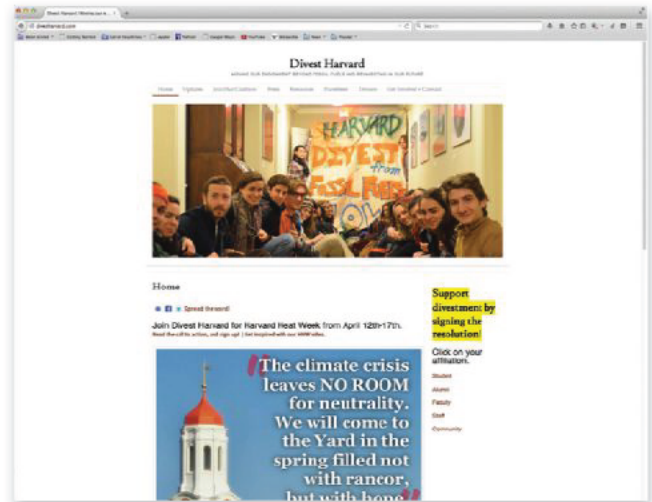
## » My TAKE

insurance industries. At Heat Week Harvard this spring, for instance, a series of protests called for the university to immediately freeze any new investments in fossil fuel companies, divest holdings from the top 200 publicly traded fossil fuel companies and reinvest in socially responsible funds. This effort is backed by prominent alumni, including former Colorado Senator Tim Wirth and Bill McKibben, founder of climate action group 350.org, which has helped ignite a global fossil fuel-free movement by calling for divestiture from the fossil fuel industry. Divest Harvard, the group behind the Heat Week actions, has rallied a coalition of students (remember those millennials

that museums are trying to reach?), faculty, staff and alumni around a number of strategies to raise awareness on carbon risk and the erosion of trust in the university.

Similar student-driven divestment protests have sprung up at Yale, MIT, Columbia, the University of Chicago and Stanford. Like Divest Harvard, a Fossil-Free Divestment Fund has been created by a multischool coalition. As of April 2015, 20 schools from small (Boston College) to large (University of

Pennsylvania) had signed on. There are over 300 college and university divestment campaigns across the US, and many of these campuses house world-class art, science and natural history museums. What would you do if your community and constituents started



The group Divest Harvard is pressuring the university to reinvest in socially responsible funds.



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protesting and calling out the disconnection between your stated mission and values and the way in which your endowment is invested?

These actions in the higher education sector follow a number of high-profile statements and policy shifts regarding fossil fuel investments among philanthropies. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), founded on family wealth from Standard Oil, decided fossil fuel extraction and use was no longer in line with their goals as investors. RBF announced last September that they had completely divested from coal and tar sands, while increasing investments in clean energy alternatives, and have made a commitment

to untangle the remainder of their portfolio from the larger fossil fuel sphere. Trustee Steven Rockefeller, a son of Nelson A. Rockefeller, told the *New York Times* (September 22, 2014), “We see this as having both a moral and economic dimension.” It is worth noting that RBF has granted a number of New York City area museums multiyear awards in the range of five to six figures.

The group Divest-Invest represents the philanthropic community’s desire to support divestment activism. They describe themselves on their website as “foundations divesting from fossil fuels and switching to clean energy investments, joining college,

health, pension funds and religious endowments doing the same.” Aren’t museums conspicuously absent from this list? In January 2014, 17 foundations with a total asset base of \$2 billion had announced plans to divest. In April 2015, 68 foundations—including the RBF—were listed as signatories to the commitment to divest and are at varying points in the process. By the time you are reading this in July, will the number have increased even further?

The Montréal Carbon Pledge was launched in September 2014 by the Principles for Responsible Investment (PRI) and the United Nations Environment Programme



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Finance Initiative (UNEP FI). To date, there are 30 signatories—asset owners and investment managers—from North America, Europe and Australia who have committed to annually measuring and publicly disclosing the carbon footprint of their investment portfolios. The most recent to sign is AXA Group, one of the world's largest insurance companies, which has also announced divestment from coal-related industries while tripling investment in clean technology, green infrastructure, impact investment and green bonds. Insurance companies are all about risk assessment and mitigation. This action should encourage museums to sit up and listen.

Guardian Media Group (GMG),

which owns the *Guardian* and *Observer* newspapers and websites, announced in April that it was selling all the fossil fuel assets in its £800 million investment fund, making it the largest entity yet to withdraw from coal, oil and gas companies. In their announcement, GMG noted that the return on investments from fossil fuel industries had fallen in recent years and their viability called into question. In a press release explaining the decision, GMG Chair Neil Berkett said, "This means we can adopt socially responsible investment criteria without putting at risk the core purpose of GMG's investment funds: to generate long-term returns that guarantee the financial future and

editorial independence of the *Guardian* in perpetuity." Isn't "in perpetuity" part of the museum credo of collection and preservation?

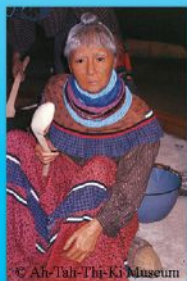
This is pressing stuff. At least two museums have found themselves on the defensive from external pressures. Internally, staff are increasingly concerned about losing the public trust that museums enjoy. As one natural history museum sustainability manager shared during a divestment discussion at the Marketplace of Ideas in Atlanta, "At every monthly staff meeting, folks raise their hands and ask about divestment." There is an undeniable momentum building as people start to ask museums and other trusted



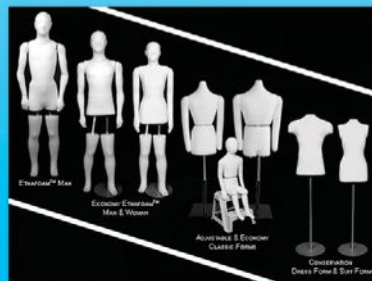
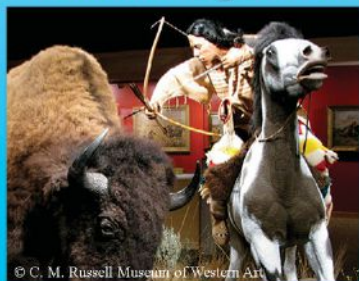
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institutions some hard questions about inaction, denial and transparency.

What can museums do? Divest! The most common worry is that removing fossil fuel-related investments from the endowment mix will lose money for the institution. Studies clearly counter that argument. The Aperio Group, an investment advisory firm, states on their website that the theoretical risk to return is a negligible .0044 percent when an organization removes fossil fuel-related investments from a portfolio. Divest-Invest's website points to "a growing range of opportunities to build assets by investing in vehicles with low-carbon impacts," calling for "the same clear vision for catalytic change

from our investment professionals as we do from our grantees."

My organization is striving to conserve our good will and trust capital by demonstrating our commitment to providing a healthy environment for future generations and for our site and collections. At Andalusia Farm, the 500+-acre former dairy farm and historic home of the 20th-century writer Flannery O'Connor, we contend with issues familiar to historic sites and house museums across the country: decreases in visitation, diminution of interest in history (and reading!), fewer resources for school field trips, and all the preservation and conservation concerns related to stewarding living

and nonliving collections. We also grapple with the heat—we live without air conditioning (a lifeway worth preserving)—and know it will just get hotter. Risk management is an important part of our suite of strategies to insure our own future. We are aware that the climate is changing, act like we care about that, and institute and message environmentally sustainable practices. We are currently without an endowment, but have a small nest egg set aside to start one. Our choice to invest in climate solutions and a sustainable future economy is a no-brainer. It is also best practice in the field.

AAM's own Standards Regarding

*Continued on page 55*



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The Field of Empty Chairs represents each of the individuals killed in the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building.

# Remembrance, Relevance and Engagement

## Oklahoma City looks back 20 years later

BY KARI WATKINS

The bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City on April 19, 1995, remains the largest domestic terrorist attack on American soil, with impacts that reverberated far beyond the area. Many Americans became aware for the first time of our vulnerability to the devastating impacts of terrorism. The lessons learned thereafter regarding violence, crisis management and community engagement have changed the way our nation responds to these kinds of attacks.

The Oklahoma City National

Memorial & Museum, which opened in February 2001, honors the stories of the 168 men, women and children killed that day. In addition to housing these memories, at the core of the museum's mission is ensuring that the world never forgets the lessons learned. When we were first designing the museum, it was critical to incorporate the dual themes of commemoration and knowledge gained with input from those most impacted, including family members of victims, survivors and first responders.

It's now been 20 years since

the events of that day. Much like Oklahoma City, the world has changed. We face new challenges: How do we maintain relevance as the event recedes further into the past? How do we engage new generations who either don't remember 1995 or weren't yet born then? Like other museums built after specific events, we always seek new ways to ensure that these important stories continue to be told.

As the mother of two young children, I've experienced firsthand the importance of providing interactive, hands-on learning opportunities, as



well as the critical need to capture shortening attention spans with engaging content. In today's technologically savvy and fast-paced world, it is no longer enough to fill a museum with thoughtful artifacts to be observed. We knew that our mindset had to change.

When we undertook a \$10 million renovation of the museum in this 20th anniversary year, we included hundreds of new videos, social media integrations and state-of-the-art interactive technologies. A central part of our renovation is the engaging and interactive "Responsibility Theater." The exhibit encourages multigenerational visitors to ponder and discuss highly debated and relevant questions about what they've seen in the museum regarding the bombing, its perpetrators and the aftermath, addressing issues like the importance of speaking up, how a community heals and how to reach forgiveness. The ultimate goal is to inspire visitors to apply what they have learned from the experience to their own lives today.

Touch screens and individual kiosks surround a presentation screen in a classroom-like setting designed to appeal to a variety of age groups. Visitors consider hypothetical scenarios inspired by the Oklahoma City bombing, selecting potential responses from a list of options. In one example, visitors watch a video story of a friend posting links on social media in support of organizations advocating antigovernment violence. They can then choose from several response options on their touch screens, ranging from doing

nothing to sharing concerns with an authority figure. Visitors also follow the hypothetical story of a woman who dies following an assault by a group of teenagers, and then consider three potential choices about reaching forgiveness. Each of these scenarios is followed by the relevant history of the bombing and its aftermath; visitors are subsequently asked whether their perspective has shifted. A surprising 50 percent of visitors would change or consider changing their mind after learning more about lessons from the bombing.

The response to the exhibit has been overwhelming, particularly among millennials. On a recent visit, the Oklahoma City Thunder basketball team—young players, many of whom grew up outside the city—spent by far the longest time in this portion of the museum.

Equally important as new

technology is the need to visually bridge the past and the future. No place in the updated museum better symbolizes this aim than the new overlook of the symbolic memorial grounds from within the museum's first floor, where we replaced a solid wall with a 40-foot glass balcony. Here, visitors almost always become silent as they gaze at the symbolic Field of Empty Chairs—one seat for each of the 168 men, women and children killed in 1995—where the Alfred P. Murrah Building once stood. The view continues beyond our walls to a thriving downtown, again making the deep connection between the memorial and Oklahoma City.

Beyond the many enhancements we made as part of our renovation, we have always believed that education should continue beyond the museum walls. In this spirit, we launched a

The interactive "Responsibility Theater" encourages visitors to ponder ethical questions.



community engagement campaign that asked all Oklahomans to honor the spirit of generosity that carried our state through April 19 and beyond by committing to the Oklahoma Standard—the term visiting rescue workers and journalists used to describe the sense of generosity they witnessed. The commitment was simple: those who joined us pledged to complete acts of service, kindness and honor leading up to the anniversary, such as volunteering for community organizations, mowing neighbors’ lawns and carrying groceries. At our 20th Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony, we also encouraged those listening and attending to place an

Oklahoma Standard pin on a friend, student or young person. This symbolized both parties’ commitment to maintaining and teaching the stories of how our community came together for years to come, and thereby maintaining its relevance. The acts of service are as varied as the people who performed them: a Girl Scout troop scrubbing the memorial’s 168 chairs, coins taped to a hospital’s vending machines for families of patients, a wheelchair ramp built for a senior citizen, medical bills paid for a cancer patient, 25,500 runners participating in the Memorial Marathon honoring those killed in the bombing, high school students planting trees, airport employees

carrying passengers’ luggage and a state agency holding a “Compliment a Co-Worker Day.”

By elevating these incredible stories of generosity and resilience, and by using new technologies to ensure their ongoing relevance, the renovated museum reminds us all that the world holds far more good than bad. Experiencing these stories and their connection to everyday lives underscores the inspiring contrast between the brutality of the evil and the tenderness of the response. «

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*Kari Watkins is executive director, Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum*

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A new balcony affords a view of downtown Oklahoma City.





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# EXPLODING

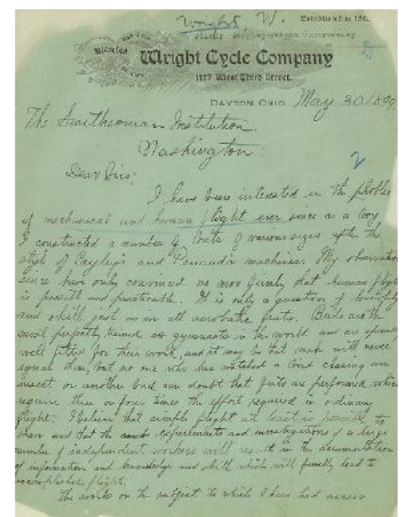
“The past is prologue.”

—William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

By Jeff Levine

On May 30, 1899, a struggling young inventor wrote the Smithsonian Institution asking for help: “I am an enthusiast, but not a crank in the sense that I have some pet theories as to the proper construction of a flying machine.”

Wilbur Wright received a letter back dated June 2 that year with recommended readings on “aerial navigation” certainly a quick turnaround for the time. Had Wright made the same request today, he would likely have done so online, where the response is virtual and virtually instantaneous, mining vastly greater depths of information than anything available then. Nor would such a quest for aeronautical advice be limited to any particular entity, as museums here and everywhere willingly share their treasured resources with anyone who can tap out a URL on a keyboard. Institutions from the de Young Museum of fine arts in San Francisco (see page 38) to the Fort Worth Museum of History and Science to the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, are using digital resources to facilitate distance learning, bringing their resources to vast and varied audiences.





# THE FOUR WALLS:

## Museums Face the Prospects and Perils of Digital Learning

“All museums should reexamine the role that they play in learning, both in their geographic communities and in their digital reach and assess how they can increase the depth of their impact,” said former Alliance President Ford W. Bell at a national conference focused on digital transformation in museums last September. Some 200 hundred experts and thought leaders participated in the event, sponsored by the Fort Worth Museum of History and Science.

Wilbur Wright’s letter, wrinkled and stained with age, is now one of millions of artifacts in the Smithsonian’s online collection—a talisman of the transition from the mechanical to the information age. It stands as a monument and an urgent reminder. “We’re only at the beginning of this wave of technology, and it’s really going to dominate our approach to learning in the next few decades,” says Smithsonian Secretary Emeritus G. Wayne Clough. “We’ll learn how to do it better. And if you sit around and wait until it’s already happened, it will be too late.”

Back in 2009, seeing the inevitable, Clough spearheaded “Smithsonian 2.0,” a digital initiative with dual goals: protect the Smithsonian’s artifacts from damage from too much physical handling, and simultaneously build outreach to new audiences who could only enter the institution through an information portal. “Here is a

resource that’s paid for by every taxpayer in the country, [but] you can’t expect everybody to make a trip to the Smithsonian every year. So the way you compensate for that is you deliver the materials, the richness of the Smithsonian digitally,” he says.

Distance education means more than providing pictures of things. Museums must also explain them so the online experience is value added. Thus the Smithsonian started collecting metadata, and Clough accessed experts in Silicon Valley to build programs that allow the public to read details about an item within three days of entry. Some 4,000 volunteers are now engaged in this process, accelerated by rapid-capture pilot projects. A good example is the Smithsonian’s collection of 66,000 bumblebees (probably safer to view via computer than in person!), each pictured online with two descriptive tags.

In 2014, some 28 million readers plunged into the Smithsonian’s pool of digital information, and they didn’t want to stay in the shallow end. “Access to information is not the problem anymore,” says Carrie Kotcho, director of education and outreach at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, an early adapter of digital technology and distance learning. “Do you know the facts? Do you know the year? Do

you know the name? Do you know the event? It's what the significance is. Why did this happen? How does this relate to me today? How does this relate to what America is now or could be in the future?"

Among the history museum's relatively new course offerings for K-12 students are MOOCs (massive open online courses). One on "Superheroes in American History" has attracted some 40,000 registrants, with an additional 2,000 seeking a certificate. The program stops short of offering academic credit, but the Smithsonian is headed in that direction, backed by a teacher advisory group. "All the technologies are exciting. We need to keep track of what's going on and stay ahead. It's all

about using the best technology to meet the needs of the audience," says Kotcho.

"Is the concept of a physical classroom outdated? ... Should a classroom, a university, a museum, a school, should all those be on a continuum somewhere, where digital natives can just pick what they want and move on?"

—Vistas Karbari, president, University of Texas at Arlington, at "Learning Crossroads, The Digital Future: A National Forum," Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, September 18, 2014

Below and opposite: A pilot online course at the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art brings the collection to high school students in rural areas.

SESSION 3

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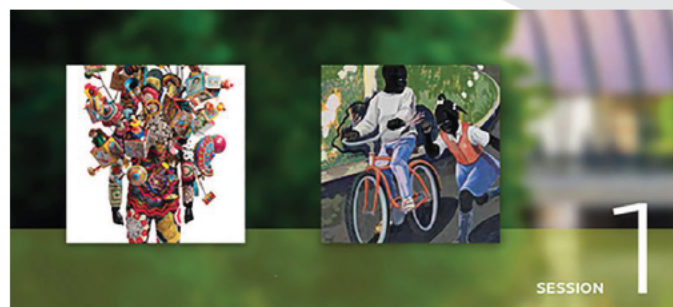


Some institutions are already getting that message. Distance education delivered via digital resources is turning the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art's collection into a classroom for students seeking academic credit and greater understanding of the arts. Anne Kraybill, who directs the museum's education program, wanted to bring its American art collection to high school students—many from low-income backgrounds in rural parts of Arkansas—unlikely to make a visit in person. “If we’re going to leverage technology, if we’re going to do this with the idea of access for everyone, I think there’s no point in thinking small,” she says.

The resulting pilot online course for credit, “Museum Mash Up: American Identity Through the Arts,” is far different from a videoconference or field trip lecture. The course is the right fit for a new state requirement that mandates high school students have .5 credit hours in fine arts and one online course to graduate. About 40 students have taken the course, which was created with technical support from the University of Arkansas.

Kraybill says so far the results have been mixed. “We have something that looks great,” she says. “We have put all of the passion and energy into it, but I do think that we have a lot more work to do to make sure that every student is successful.” Students enrolled from small Arkansas towns like Star City, population 2,248, and Deer, population 680.

Getting the credit can be challenging. Students must analyze 36 artworks from the Crystal Bridges collection depicted in 3-D rendering, and then curate their own exhibition as a final exam. The course content is wrapped in a video game format inviting students to learn as they play. Pictures can be tagged Facebook style with descriptive phrases like “bold” and “death.”



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### BIG IDEA

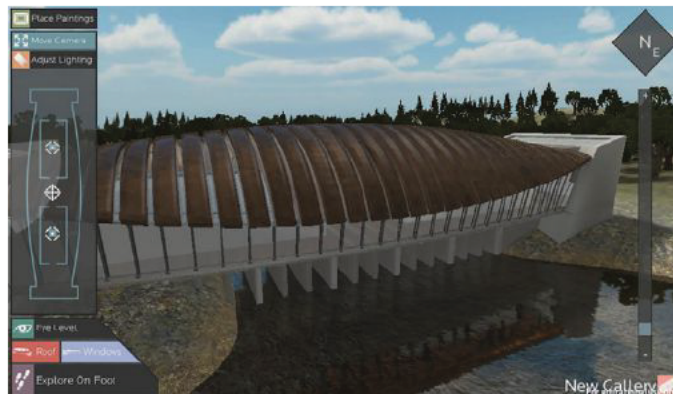
**HAVE YOU EVER ASKED YOURSELF, HOW DID WE GET HERE?**

Exploring and understanding history can help us begin to answer that question, and in this course, we will look at history through the lens of art. Rather than progress through American history with a traditional textbook and timeline, we will use the visual arts from Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art and other museums to examine and gain a deeper understanding of how the American identity of the present has been shaped by events from the past. We will look at artwork, make interpretations about it, and look for connections between art and history.

During the first six sessions of the course, we will look at modern and contemporary America, from World War II to the present. At the turn of the century, everything changed. New technology impacted everything from tools to transportation to toasters. The way of life in America shifted as we began to embrace “modernity” or the quality of being modern. World War II was the first modern war. Women and minorities fought for equality and America began to dominate the cultural and economic world. Artists responded by defying convention, pushing the envelope of what was expected and accepted in their art forms with new approaches and techniques. We will explore how the visual arts reflect current and modern events through the exploration of identity, conflict, and the environment, beginning in this session with Identity.

**BY THE END OF THE SESSION YOU WILL HAVE:**

- Read**  
About events in history that have shaped the artists in this session and the artworks they created.
- Share**  
What you notice and wonder about the artworks presented.
- Discuss**  
How artists create art based on their experiences in the world and what this means about identity.
- Create**  
The beginnings of a representation of your own identity in artwork.



# Will distance learning prove so compelling that it will pose an existential challenge to the very institutions that created it?

Each of the 15 sessions, or lectures, explores a “Big Idea” topic. Section 2, for example, is titled, “What does a portrait represent?” The artworks initially offered for analysis are Wayne Thiebaud’s *Supine Woman* and Norman Rockwell’s *Rosie the Riveter*. Readings are suggested and online discussion opportunities are provided through Voice Thread, a tool that allows for a crowd-sourced cloud conversation using text, video or audio. It isn’t live interaction, but it’s close.

“We had a lot of kids who did not meet the credit. They were seniors.... If they were not inherently interested, it was a lot easier for them to blow off certain assignments,” says Kraybill. Still, her primary goal is entrepreneurial—to create a tool that teachers can use in preparing online courses. “The way in which they do it is going to depend on whether or not it’s a gimmick or an actual deep learning experience, but they certainly have to take the plunge,” she says.

Even so, won’t socially and politically conservative rural school districts recoil against innovative art courses containing explicit or controversial material? “Our course deals with issues that are challenging, particularly race. We also move into issues of violence, gender, the environment,” wrote Kraybill in an e-mail. “None of the work selected would spark what would typically be considered controversial: basically overt sexuality or nudity. So we haven’t had any issues come up ... yet!... What we encourage is

the idea that you are allowed to challenge an artist’s intent and the quality of their message. But to do so with evidence to back up your claim.”

While art education online is a new approach for students who must respond to works that are aesthetically abstract and fraught with symbolism, science museums can connect the intangible with the real. The emerging technology of 3-D printing gives students a tool that can turn a set of computerized instructions into a real object.

The George Lucas Educational Foundation promotes that idea through its Edutopia.org website. Some 1 million visitors every month open the portal to learn about innovations that once seemed impossible. One video features a remarkably poised eighth grader named Quin, who has graduated from Lego construction to creating real objects with a 3-D printer. In matter-of-fact narration, Quin explains how he went online to harness “maker” programs that he put into an “Arduino,” or builder, robot. The device instructs the printer to make objects from heated plastic that’s extruded in fine layers like the image slices from a CT scan. As they collect, they form real objects—potentially anything. Quin’s creations include a nightlight and a sign showing his name carved through the plastic. The 3-D printer eliminates most of the physical steps between a concept and the real thing. Quin took his creations and ideas to school, where they were welcomed.



The distance from museum instruction to real-life application is shrinking, thanks to these new tools. “Ultimately, I think that’s what teaching is all about,” says Shree Bose, a Harvard pre-med student whose interest in science was nurtured by the Museum School sponsored by the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History. “That feeling of making a kid’s face light up—when, they’re like, ‘This is really, really cool.’... That moment when a kid understands something ... and they realize they have the tools to pursue it no matter what.”

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“I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation!”

—Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

While the new learning technologies are exciting, there are relatively few metrics to define their impact, or indeed which of the new approaches will abide while others fall away. Or whether distance learning will prove so compelling that it will pose an existential challenge to the very institutions that created it—in effect, becoming a digital Frankenstein out of control.

Wayne Clough dismisses such notions as reductionist. “People will always want to see the real thing,” he says, citing the original Star Spangled Banner at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Seeing a digital image of the flag is “not the same thing as being there and seeing that fragile bit of cloth and what it stood for in our history ... with 50 other people ... all feeling this incredible sense of pride and awe.”

Still, does being a museum require that you are ... a museum? The Google Art Project

founded in 2011 is a massive online big data compendium featuring works of 11,361 artists from 558 galleries around the world, supported in many cases by detailed explanations and descriptive videos. It’s a meta-museum harnessing metadata, but is it metaphysically a museum experience? Are binary bits of electronic information as powerful as living base pairs of DNA? “Being large and comprehensive doesn’t buy you anything. It’s being good. It’s being truly effective at reaching the people who need what you have,” says Clough.

So what is going to work? There was a lot of buzz at the Fort Worth meeting about the Oculus Rift virtual reality headgear currently in development. Priced at approximately \$350, the device has seemingly overcome the challenges of adequate resolution, reasonable cost and low “lag”—meaning that the image doesn’t noticeably blur when you turn your head. It can function as a planetarium on your head showing, for instance, a view of earth from the space shuttle. Our planet’s curvature and blue white surface is off to your right. Look down and you see the international space station pass beneath your line of vision. Turn left and the earth slowly recedes as you peer out into the void and then at the moon.

The effect is nothing less than stunning—and that could be a problem. “If these experiences are so powerful, ... why come to a museum?” asks Doug Roberts, an associate professor at Northwestern University and architect of the WorldWide Telescope Project, sponsored by Microsoft Research, which developed the technology.

Less unsettling are tablet devices like the “Gallery One” in use at the Cleveland Museum of Art. Visitors can take the tablet into a gallery, “show” it to a work of art and receive on-screen answers to questions like, Who painted it?

What's it about? Users can also learn about an artwork's historical context. For an exhibition about Depression-era painting in New York, for instance, the device could explain what conditions were like during that period.

"Gallery One" is an attempt to integrate the physical, digital and aesthetic dimensions of going to the museum into an organic experience, says John Durant, director of the MIT Museum and a speaker at the Fort Worth conference. "Notice that guests can curate their own experience. You can do your own art show for yourself, and you can download it and take it as a souvenir of your visit," he says.

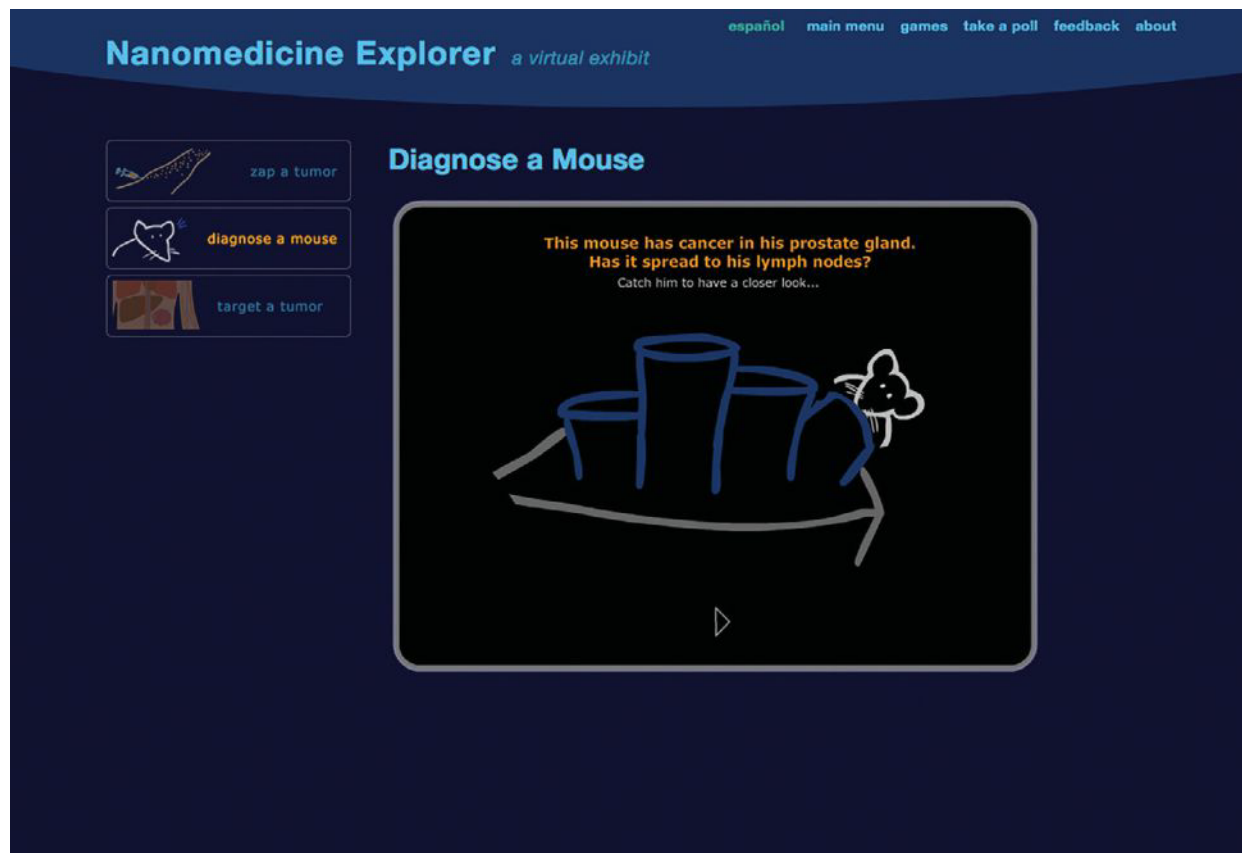
How effective are digital learning approaches? They are apparently good enough to alter the perceptions of many patrons about what a

museum really is. "The Institute of Museum and Library Services did a comprehensive survey of visitor experiences at museums. And people came back and said, 'We love the museum,'" says Anthony (Bud) Rock, president and CEO of the Association of Science-Technology Centers, and also a Fort Worth conference presenter. The big surprise: 75 percent of the people who had a great museum experience had not physically visited the actual museum. "I was absolutely stunned by this statistic," he says. "It tells you what the power is of extending beyond your four walls."

On the other hand, he says, digital learning can build the actual museum experience. One example is the "Diagnose a Mouse" exhibit on the Nanomedicine Explorer site of the Museum

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Distance learners can diagnose cancer in a mouse on the Nanomedicine Explorer site of the Museum of Science in Boston.





of Science in Boston. The user is challenged to diagnose cancer in a mouse with bits of visual and textual evidence. While that is a virtual experience, Rock believes it's a motivator. "Most people are saying, 'Saw your online diagnosis of a mouse, really cool.' Digital technology driving you to the museum—a great experience," he says.

The Smithsonian has invested heavily in its "X3D" program to add new dimensions to artifacts like the Gunboat *Philadelphia*, the only American combat vessel to survive the Revolutionary War. If you were to see the boat at the National Museum of American History, your view would be limited largely to the bow angle. But with 3-D photography, online viewers see what the boat might have looked like originally, or its below-water structure. Likewise, the museum has used 3-D printers to create replicas of life masks made of Abraham Lincoln just after he became president and then four years later—strong visual evidence of the stress of the country's highest office during the Civil War.

"All the technologies are exciting, and we need to keep track of what's going on and stay ahead, but it's all about using the best technology to meet the needs of the audience," says Kotcho of the American history museum.

Someone has to pay for these efforts, but it shouldn't be the museum-goer, says the Smithsonian's Clough. He suggests tapping private donors and foundations like the Gates and MacArthur foundations, which helped bankroll the Smithsonian's drive to go digital (though it's not clear how many museums might have that high-level opportunity). While the Smithsonian's core funding comes from the government, digital development is supported primarily by other sources. "It's important for museums to control their own destiny," says Clough.

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"It is possible to fly without motors  
but not without knowledge and skill."

—Wilbur Wright

In his book *Best of Both Worlds: Museums, Libraries, and Archives in a Digital Age*,

Clough writes that museums have had a tough time adapting to the digital environment, partly because of limited technology and "a culture that is built more around curated exhibitions than open access." Still, Clough says, the message is clear: "Either institutions embrace [digital technology] or they risk being marginalized."

Perhaps "museum" will ultimately be defined as a verb instead of a noun. It will be a place of engagement at every level—from the building itself, if there is one, to the home office and school. Whatever the medium or the method, a museum should, as its root word suggests, be a muse. Knowledge is the fuel that drives the engine.

So it was with the Wright Brothers in 1903. Their Flyer 1 had a 12-horsepower engine, and their wooden biplane was covered only in cloth. But the design was powered in no small part by the information they received from the Smithsonian.

It's fair to say that the era of digital technology in American museums has taken flight. Yet like the Wright brothers, we are only at the beginning of the journey. There is no limit to how far and high museums can go, if the basic rules apply. Curate wisdom, disseminate knowledge in whatever appropriate way and be relevant to your audience. Then you can soar. <<

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*Jeff Levine is a Maryland-based freelance writer. He was one of CNN's founding correspondents in 1980. During his nearly 20-year career with the network, he reported from a number of US cities, including Atlanta, and also served as CNN's Israel bureau chief.*

## Leading the Way and Opening Doors: Digital Technology at the de Young Museum

What if you couldn't come to the museum? At San Francisco's de Young Museum, the museum can come to you via Beam, a "telepresence robot" that navigates through the galleries, providing a virtual tour to people who cannot easily move throughout the galleries. When users first log on, they're presented with a map that orients them to the museum's layout. Then they're off on a self-guided tour. Equipped with high-resolution lenses, Beam projects images in detail, while its two-way microphone enables the virtual visitor to receive live or recorded audio commentary about the artworks and converse with staff or passersby.

Other museums participating in the Beam accessibility pilot project include the Detroit Institute of Arts, the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California, the Seattle Art Museum and the National Music Museum at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion. The robot is just one digital project underway at the de Young, which is at the forefront of museums using the latest technology to greatly enhance the visitor experience.

Spotlighted in a CBS *Sunday Morning* broadcast last March, Henry Evans was one of the first to benefit from Beam. The former Silicon Valley executive suffered a massive stroke in 2002 that confines him to a wheelchair, paralyzed save for the ability to move his head and one hand. With the aid of an interface device, Evans can tell Beam's computer where he wants to go in the museum, discussing artworks with a docent and other museum patrons along the way. It's almost like being there. Evans, who helped the de Young implement Beam, told CBS that the device is "pretty remarkable."

Two of the robots have been loaned to the de Young by Sutable Technologies, which

designed the technology to provide an independent and interactive experience for individuals with disabilities or other special needs. The program has been up and running for less than a year, and so far 12 individuals have used the robots. Gary Castro, the de Young's director of technology and innovation, says demand is growing to include multiple users living in nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Other innovations at the de Young include an experiment with Google Glass projecting exhibit information directly in front of the wearer's vision. "The content was beautiful, but there are some technical issues regarding interference with other electronic sources nearby," says Castro. He sees a broader opportunity in creating apps that anyone with a smartphone can use.

Here are Castro's thoughts about some of the key issues as museums develop their digital strategy:

### Looking down the road, which technologies appear most significant in terms of building digital platforms for your museum?

The priority is indoor location positioning that will allow us to build creative mobile app platforms to engage and educate audiences. Specific recent exhibitions have allowed us to build pilot in-gallery digital extensions. My goal is to continue these collaborations with curators and to add digital engagement throughout the many free spaces in the museums.

### What changes in personnel do you anticipate for developing and implementing digital programs? Will you need "all-platform" people to manage these new technologies?

This is a conversation most museums are having right now. It is imperative for us to bring talent in house so that we have the flexibility to adapt



quickly to changing priorities and focuses for the museums and to be ahead of new emerging technologies. We have the privilege to be based in Silicon Valley, where we have access to creative talent, and I am working to expand the digital production team.

**Will the primary consumers of the new technologies be individuals with disabilities, or will the museum of the future offer digital facilities to everyone?**

In regards to our Beam program, the initial focus of the pilot program is to provide access to those

with disabilities. As our technology initiatives expand, we are absolutely committed to making them available to as many visitors as possible.


**Though you suggested museums should tap into their own support networks for funds to make the digital transition, won't patrons have to bear a significant burden of the cost in terms of higher admission fees?**

Not at all. Our current commitment is for these initiatives not to affect admission fees. To date, all of our digital initiatives have been free to the public, and we are committed to continuing this.

*—Jeff Levine*



# ► Beyond the Label Strategies for effective interactive media ◀



**C**reating digital interactive experiences in museums can be costly and time consuming. Given the financial and human resources required to create high-quality interactives, what are key performance indicators and what qualifies as an acceptable return on your museum's financial investment? At the 2015 AAM Annual Meeting in Atlanta, the session "Demanding More from Interactive Media" addressed these questions and more. **Josh Goldblum**, founding principal of the Philadelphia-based media design firm, Bluecadet, led the discussion, with members of the audience also posing queries. The other presenters were **Taylor Peterson**, media and interactives coordinator/project manager, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago; **Marla Shoemaker**, senior curator of education, Philadelphia Museum of Art; and **Kate Tinworth**, independent consultant, ExposeYourMuseum. Following is an adapted excerpt of the discussion.





An interactive display at the Field Museum teaches young visitors about *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

### How do you plan for interactive media in an exhibit?

**Shoemaker:** You have to have your goals straight. You have to know why you want to use media, what it brings to you. It brings a different experience in the galleries, expanding the opportunities for visitors to engage with objects. Because it's expensive, you use interactive technology when nothing else will do for the experience that you want to create.

**Peterson:** If it's a really complex concept, sometimes a digital touchscreen is just the way to organize all of that content and to step visitors through that experience. Sometimes it's simpler. Maybe our gallery doesn't have a lot of objects, so we look for some immersive media or big media pieces to round out the entire experience.

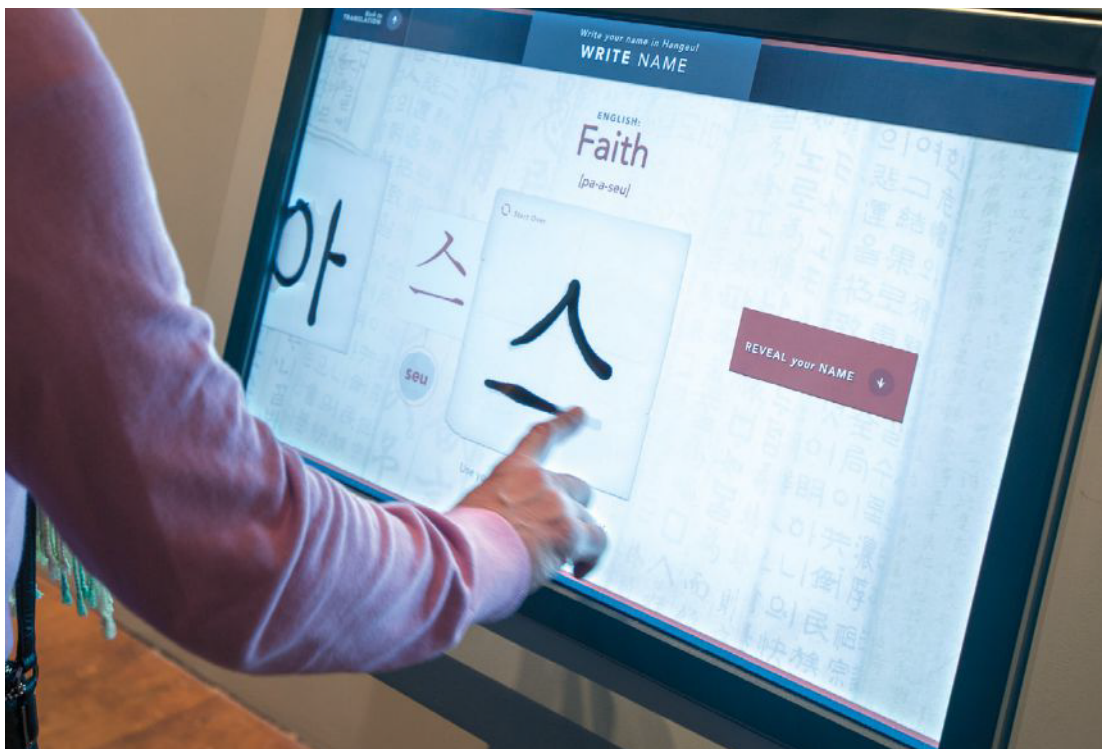
**Tinworth:** When I am thinking about evaluation, I always want to think with the end in mind.

I want to start with the anticipated outcomes that we want to reach. So I want to start with the focus on audience. Planning is going to involve getting all the players around the table as soon as possible—a dynamic team that represents all the different departments or divisions of your museum that you know should be involved. Sometimes those are players you wouldn't necessarily consider from the get-go.

### What's an example of interactive media that's been successful for you?

**Peterson:** We have a high-traffic area on the second floor of the Field Museum called the Searle Lounge. This is an exhibition space that includes our display of [*Tyrannosaurus rex*] Sue's real skull along with interpretive material; the majority of the skeleton is on the main floor.





It's not a closed-off gallery—it's a walk-through space that's highly trafficked because there's a restroom there and our 3-D theater is located around the corner. So when plans were made to upgrade and spruce up the lounge, we saw an opportunity to maximize on that foot traffic and put in something that's exciting and fun. We developed a puzzle where you can put together Sue's skeleton using images created from 3-D scans of her bones and access additional content. It's a successful interactive that's constantly being used. Sometimes during down hours, this is still a place that always has a kid in front of it, using it.

**Shoemaker:** When we presented the exhibit "Treasures from Korea: Arts and Culture of the Joseon Dynasty, 1392-1910" a couple of years ago, we did early focus groups and learned that nobody wanted to come to the exhibition. Nobody knew anything about Korea. Even Korean people said, "We'll come, but probably because we'll feel guilty if we don't come." And

yet we were really invested in this material—it was a beautiful show. We decided early that we needed to figure out what kind of experiences we could add so that people wouldn't feel stupid because they didn't know anything about Korea. They needed to engage with the material and think about it in a new way without feeling like they had to have a lot of prior knowledge. So we built three different interactives. One brought a book to life; many of you know that books basically die in exhibitions when they're in a vitrine open to a single page. We also interpreted a 14-foot-long, folding "10 longevity symbol" screen. We wanted to tell people, "Within this big landscape, there are 10 symbols of longevity. You can touch one of them and find out why it is a symbol of longevity." And finally we created an experience where you could write your name in Hangul, the phonetic Korean alphabet. It shows you what your name looks like. Then you can use your finger to write your







Interactives were key for teaching visitors about Korean art and culture at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

name and see what your handwriting looks like in Hangul. You can print a little ticket and take it with you.

Hangul was invented during the Joseon Dynasty, which was the theme of this show. It was the first phonetic alphabet in Korea—the biggest cultural contribution of the whole dynasty—so we knew curatorially we were in the right place. However, all people wanted to do was write their name. We had to install a second

station because the lines were so long. People wrote their children's name, their grandchildren's name, their cat's and dog's name. Nobody read the opening screen that we worked so hard on, which explained why Hangul was important. They just went right to "start." They were watching and they couldn't wait to write their name. It's partly a credit to how beautifully the interactive worked. When you touched the screen, the slower you went and the wider the ink spread. It

felt like an authentic experience of writing with ink. We took the text from that opening screen, which was only three sentences, and we made a sign. Visitors had to wait in line, and they could read the sign on the wall. So we used analogue to get the content across, but the experience was the writing of the name.

### How can museums evaluate gallery media?

**Tinworth:** When you're thinking about evaluating digital products, the best thing is to start at the very beginning, even when it's just a scrap of an idea, and test that out first. Have the audience voice with you the whole way.

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Exploring at the Field.





**Peterson:** What we do internally is set up the concept. We can test concepts and ideas well before the programmers even make anything, which usually involves a lot of paper prototyping that we can do on the floor with visitors. Visitors sometimes are really into the concepts and sometimes they're not, and if they're not, we have to go back to the drawing board to figure out whether we're doing the right thing or if we need to do something completely different. You can come back later when you have some PDFs or screenshots to test rough designs of the layouts and user interfaces.

**Shoemaker:** We took curatorial texts for the new interactive we just built into our permanent collection gallery and sat with visitors and said, "Would you read this? Would you circle things you like and cross out things that don't interest you as much, and talk to us while you're doing it?"

**When you're producing all this amazing content for an interactive, how can you deploy it in advance to engage audiences?**

**Peterson:** This brings up a current issue for us. For our front-end Web experience, we want to create some sort of teaser for our new Cyrus Tang Hall of China. We want to give a good snapshot of what this exhibition is, have visitors say, "Oh, we're going to see that in there?" but not, obviously, put all the content from the exhibition on the website. Since we do have a few media elements that are included in the exhibition, our Web team has been thinking about formatting some of these for the Web experience.

**Tinworth:** It's early coordinated efforts that make it sing. If you've got your marketing team and they're working alongside you from the beginning, then they're not pulled in at the end, which happens all too often.

**What strategies are not appropriate for interactive media?**



Visitors can zoom in on tiny details in a Jan van Eyck painting at the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

**Shoemaker:** Content dump: putting all the things you couldn't get on the label into the interactive media. It's just more labels, and that's not the best use of the technology. In art museums, there's the standard behavior of walk, look, read. How can you break that up with a different kind of experience? Not more to read, not more to learn. We have a new interactive we built with our Jan van Eyck painting, *Saint Francis of Assisi Receiving the Stigmata*, which is 5 1/2 inches by 5 1/2 inches. It's an incredible masterpiece and it's tiny. We built an interactive next to it where you can pinch and zoom. Every age group is enjoying pinching and zooming and being able to see the details, and then looking at the painting and being amazed at how tiny they are.



### What are some tips and starting points for a small museum with no permanent collection or interactive media?

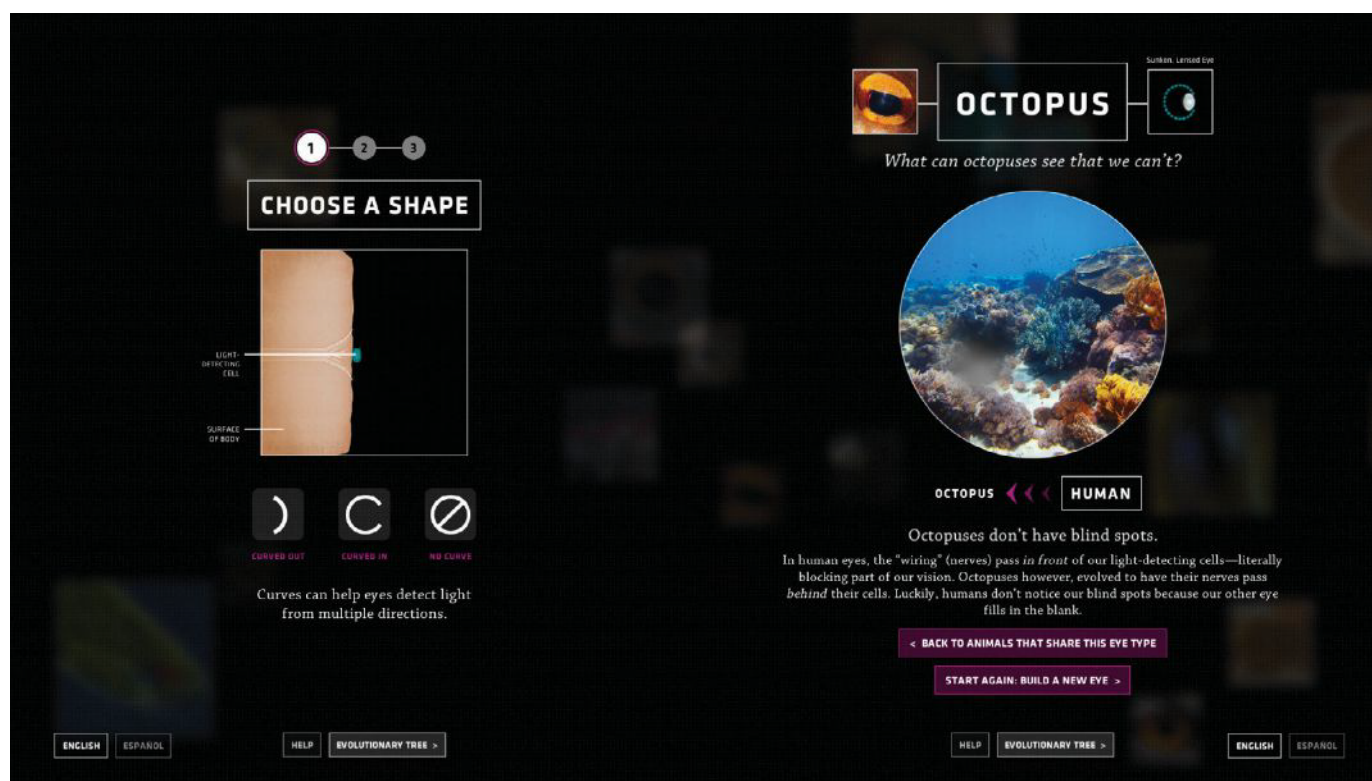
**Peterson:** It goes back to being clear about what goals you want to set with each exhibition and if there is an opportunity for some sort of interactive experience. The more clear you are in describing the outcomes—what visitors are going to learn, what this is going to do, how it is unlike anything else—the easier your case for funding.

**Tinworth:** One thing that's great about working in the museum field is that we're pretty collaborative. Reach out to others who may have done similar things, and they will probably share with you. There are so many things that have already been designed or are currently being designed that might work as a solution for you, so you don't have to do it yourself.

### What can interactives or digital experiences do that analogue experiences cannot?

**Peterson:** Digital touchscreens work well for complex ideas or concepts, helping a visitor discover something. Maybe it's very linear and you need to walk them through—something that a graphic and label copy are not going to do very well. For the Field's exhibit "The Machine Inside: Biomechanics," we built the "Evolution of an Eye" interactive to teach visitors how different eye shapes are built by stepping them through the evolutionary process. Not only are they able to choose and build specific eye types, they are also able to see how light filters through the eyes, illustrating the inner mechanics of how they function. In building specific eyes, visitors get to see a sample list of the animals that have that type of eye—such as a human or a dog or a lizard—and read about how they see. There's also an opportunity to look across the phylogenetic tree and see how surprising it is that very different organisms can share similar eye types. There

The "Evolution of an Eye" interactive at the Field allowed visitors to choose and build an eye.





# ► Good digital experiences now do what dioramas used to do. ◀

were a ton of concepts, and we wanted to share them all.

**Tinworth:** Good technological or digital experiences in museums now do what dioramas used to do. They transport you. It's this window into a world that you wouldn't otherwise have access to.

**Shoemaker:** We're currently working on a new interactive for a Chinese dragon ceiling. There are only two in the United States, and it's 20 feet above your head. Our new curator of Chinese art tells us it's visually fantastic in 10,000 ways. We asked visitors, "What do you want to do?" They wanted a lift, where we could lift them up and bring them down. That's a mechanical solution that we cannot do. So can technology do that for us? Yes, it can, so we're inventing a device like a camera through which you can see the whole thing in all its intimate detail.

## What are some resources for museum professionals seeking information and funding for interactives?

- **Institute of Museum and Library Services (imls.gov):** For potential funding for interactive projects, check out the IMLS's Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums and National Leadership Grants for Museums.
- **Museum Computer Network** (<http://mcn.edu>): The MCN fosters "innovation and excellence by supporting professionals who seek to

transform the way their cultural organizations reach, engage and educate their audiences using digital technologies," according to its website. The MCN-L Listserv is an online discussion list where members and nonmembers can post inquiries about various topics, including interactive media. The annual MCN Conference is an opportunity to learn more about the latest museum technology, with workshops, panel presentations and vendor demonstrations. This year's conference will be held in Minneapolis, November 4-7.

- **Museums and the Web ([museumsandtheweb.com](http://museumsandtheweb.com)):** A "collaborative space for professionals creating culture, science and heritage on-line," as described on the website. An annual conference (next up, MW2016) features "advanced research and exemplary applications of digital practice" for heritage organizations.

- **AAM's Media & Technology (M&T) Professional Network** (<http://aam-us.org/resources/professional-networks/media-technology>): The network "strives to identify, access and advocate for a broad variety of uses for media and technology that help museum professionals meet the needs of their diverse publics." For exemplars in museum media and interactive programs, check out the winners of the annual Muse Awards at the above link. ◀



# EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES OF AUDIENCE BUILDING

Museums looking to build audiences face serious headwinds as arts and humanities education continues to decrease, competition for leisure time intensifies and new generations of visitors interact differently with institutions than generations past. Given these challenges, arts leaders are eager for information about what works and what doesn't in audience engagement. In 2001, *A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts*, a landmark report produced by the RAND Corporation and funded by The Wallace Foundation, suggested a systematic approach based on two precepts: the alignment of audience building efforts with an arts organization's mission, resources and work; and the removal of relevant barriers between the organization and target audiences.

To determine if and how these concepts could work in practice, The Wallace Foundation funded 54 arts organizations between 2006 and 2012 to develop and test approaches for expanding audiences. Among the 46 organizations with reliable data, the results were impressive: those seeking to boost their overall audiences saw gains over three years of more than 25 percent, and results for those targeting specific audiences were even higher. Based on case study evaluations of 10 of those successful organizations, market researcher Bob Harlow identified nine common practices, and the results were published in the 2014 report *The Road to Results*:

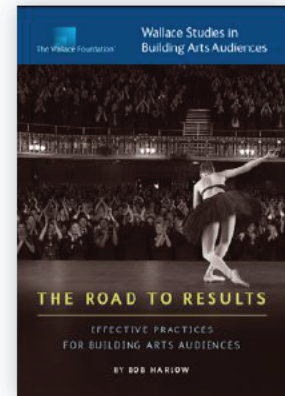
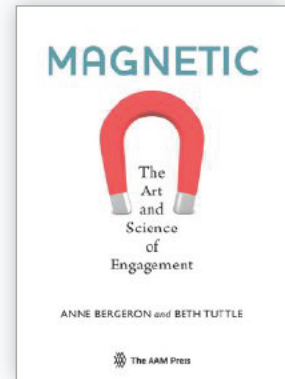
*The Road to Results: Effective Practices for Building Arts Audiences* and the related report *Taking Out the Guesswork: Using Research to Build Arts Audiences*, written by Bob Harlow and published by The Wallace Foundation, are available as free downloads at [thrivingarts.org](http://thrivingarts.org). Case study evaluations of the work of Fleisher Art Memorial and Clay Studio will be available later this summer. *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement*, co-authored by Anne Bergeron and Beth Tuttle and published by The AAM Press, is available at [aam-us.org/bookstore](http://aam-us.org/bookstore).



### *Effective Practices for Building Arts Audiences.*

A separate multi year and multi institutional study conducted by Anne Bergeron and Beth Tuttle resulted in the publication of *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement* (2013, The AAM Press). Their research and book defined “magnetic” organizations as those with a powerful internal alignment around engaging stakeholders and a compelling vision, enabling them to attract critical resources for organizational success. Through quantitative data analysis, interviews and qualitative case studies, *Magnetic* identified six practices leading to deeper engagement of internal and external constituents. As such, *Magnetic* serves as a natural complement to The Wallace Foundation’s practical guide to engaging audiences.

At the 2015 AAM Annual Meeting in Atlanta, attendees gathered at a session entitled “Nine Effective Steps of Audience Building Programs” to discuss the steps and practices driving success across diverse audience building initiatives. **Lucas Held**, director of communications, The Wallace Foundation, kicked off the discussion led by the co authors of *Magnetic*, **Anne Bergeron** and **Beth Tuttle**. Joining the conversation were representatives from Wallace grantee organizations: **Magda Martinez**, director of programs, Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial; and **Christopher Taylor**, president, The Clay Studio. The following is adapted from the presentation.



The overall trend in public participation in the arts is downward. This decline, which analysts think is driven by increased competition and some diminution in arts education, has helped elevate audience building to the top of the list of concerns for arts and cultural organizations. Occurring simultaneously is a dramatic growth in the number of arts organizations—an astonishing 145 percent increase in the past 25 years or so.

In this context, The Wallace Foundation surveyed arts leaders across the country. The number one difficulty that arts leaders said they faced was fundraising and revenue. The next problem was building audiences: attracting them, developing effective audience strategies

and handling increased competition.

Addressing the audience-building challenge has been hindered by a lack of hard evidence. There has been a lot of advice, but often not attached to data. That’s where The Wallace Foundation thought it could help. The foundation launched an initiative in 2006 to help arts organizations experiment with building audiences and, using data, figure out what worked. RAND’s *A New Framework for Building Participation in the Arts* was foundational. This report argues that many audience-building efforts are hit-or-miss because they have not identified either a specific target or the relevant barriers that need to be overcome for people to participate.

The results were surprisingly positive: over a four-year period, audiences grew substantially. Over a three-year period, for those organizations looking to grow their overall audiences, the rise was 27 percent. For those looking to increase a segment, like young people or families with children, audiences went up even more: 60 percent. The next step was figuring out what worked and finding common factors behind success to share with the broader field.

Evaluative case studies of 10 organizations (seven are now available) determined that there were nine effective practices that all successful

organizations employed—though not necessarily in order. First, they recognized when change was needed. Second, they identified a specific target audience rather than going after the general public. The third was determining the barriers that needed to be removed. The fourth was taking the time to understand through market research what the prospective audience thought about the organization. That turned out to be a crucial step—not guessing what folks thought, but asking them. The fifth was thinking through the relationship. Sixth was providing multiple and different kinds of gateways into the

## Case Study: Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial, Philadelphia



The mission of the Fleisher Art Memorial is to make art accessible to everyone, regardless of economic means, background or artistic experience. But Fleisher was serving a predominantly mainstream audience when we started our audience engagement research. Our mission and founder's intention suggested much greater diversity demographically and economically. This lack of diversity became our call to action.

Out of the research, three main themes emerged. One was “Come to us.” People in these communities were saying, “We don’t know who you are. Come to where we are.” Then “show us” who you are—not just what you do, but who you are as an institution. What do you value? And finally, “Welcome us. Be ready for us when we come to your institution. You only get one chance at a first impression.”

Our first step was to create a

definition for what “arts-based community engagement” meant for us as an institution. Engagement can mean many things to many people, even at the same institution. We realized that lots of arts institutions used the phrase but didn’t define it. We ended up creating one based on how social service agencies look at engagement.

Aligning the institution around your definition of engagement is important because often we’re trying to change *other* people’s behaviors. What you quickly find out is that it’s *your* behavior that needs to be examined. How are you presenting yourself to others? The only thing we have control over is us. You can’t force someone to come to you. All staff participated in self-examination exercises of their world views and in cultural sensitivity training, from the executive director to facilities personnel



organization. The seventh was aligning the organization around the audience-building goal. The eighth was building ongoing learning, and ninth was preparing for success. The nine divide into two categories: creating meaningful connections with your audiences and aligning the organization around those activities.

The Wallace Foundation and its grantees are certainly not alone in exploring what works when it comes to engaging audiences. *Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement* shares many common themes with *The Road to Results*, including an emphasis on the importance of

prioritizing engagement and ensuring its adoption as a pan-institutional strategy. *Magnetic* examined the practices of museums that outperformed their peers in the first decade of the 21st century (between 2000 and 2010) in attracting and retaining financial, social and human resources. Each of the six museums profiled successfully transformed their operations by adopting concerted strategies to deepen engagement with their internal and their external communities (staff, trustees, patrons, volunteers, civic leaders, the general public and the like).

In the organizations studied for *Magnetic*,

to receptionists to the board.

Out of this work we created several new programs. We recruited FAMbassadors, local advisors who create a channel of communication between their communities and Fleisher. ColorWheels, a mobile art studio, was our response to the call to “come to us.” We also started changing our offerings onsite, adding, for example, our first bilingual drawing course. Enrollment of local children in our onsite programs rose 50 percent, and a survey found that 72 percent of visitors felt that Fleisher cared about serving the local community.

Perceptions are the hardest but most important thing to change when you want to engage new people. It’s like inviting someone you don’t know to dinner without asking them what they like or if they follow a gluten-free diet. You might make the most beautiful bread, but it doesn’t really matter to them. This is about thinking

through a human interaction. It is not solely a marketing effort. It is about an institution taking time to look at itself. The marketing message follows because you know what you want to say and to whom you

want to say it. It is up to you to make the first move. If someone doesn’t know about you, are they suddenly going to pick up your pamphlet and think, “Where have you been all my life?” —*Magda Martinez*



## Case Study: The Clay Studio, Philadelphia

Our challenge was an aging audience. We realized not only was the younger audience not coming in, we didn't know much about them or how to talk to them. So our focus was understanding the young professional audience (ages 25-45), their consumption trends, and how and where to effectively speak with them.

Through market research, we realized that 36 percent of our focus group had never before come to our space and 40 percent had come four times or more. So when we had you, we had you. At the same time, we were effectively attracting "samplers"—those who come in and don't really make deep commitments to any one institution. We realized that this group was comprised of our target young professional audience. So very early on, the data was giving us interesting information.

Simultaneously we were looking at marketing language. We put material in front of the focus groups and said, "What do you think?"

We learned that our previous tagline, "Shaping the future of ceramics," was meaningful to us but didn't mean anything to them. So we dropped this tagline and increased our use of action words. Our website began using the word "see" instead of "exhibit," and we started using the phrase "Get dirty with us." We also began changing our marketing photographs to people actively participating and making as opposed to highlighting the finished product on a pedestal or wall. In addition to becoming a more active and welcoming place, we had to talk and show that aspect, too.

From a programming standpoint, we heard what they *didn't* want. They didn't want high cost; they didn't want high commitment; they didn't want overly serious. So we experimented with programming that was social, low cost and low commitment. We

offered shorter classes, weekend workshops and more sampling opportunities to engage people in our programs. Something simple—a few hours, or even a few minutes.

We saw a lot of great results thanks to our willingness to change, learn from our data, understand our audience and create multiple entry points. Since 2008 we've had a fourfold increase in our workshops, from 140 participants to over 700. We've more than doubled our overall school income from \$140,000 to almost \$380,000.

—Christopher Taylor





six common practices emerged that ultimately helped define the “magnetic museum”: a high-performance organization that delivers tangible cultural and civic value, and achieves superior business results through a commitment to service, engagement and empowerment of others. What the authors call “360 Engagement” is achieved through collaborative vision setting, broad-based relationship building, and creating meaningful experiences with and for a diverse range of stakeholders.

While there isn’t an exact correlation between the six practices of magnetic museums and the Wallace report’s nine practices in audience development strategies, there is a great deal of consistency and overlap related to the importance of organizational alignment, the commitment to engaging and empowering internal and external stakeholders, and proactively welcoming outside voices and becoming essential to the community. If *Magnetic* focuses largely on understanding the “why” of engagement, *The Road to Results*

focuses on the “how to.”

A key observation of both studies is that transformation begins with awareness that change is either needed or wanted. Another correlative finding is that museums must be intentional, and that they need to be fully committed to instituting change while being flexible and adaptable to what they learn during this process. *Magnetic* found that change can be initiated and cultivated anywhere within an institution, but if it’s not embraced at the highest levels, it can only go so far.

An institution’s commitment to audience engagement must be firmly grounded in its mission and belief in the social value of accessibility to achieve organizational impact. Efforts to increase audience engagement that are motivated solely to meet revenue needs rarely succeed. Marrying mission with market focus in a context of commitment to serving the real needs of people is the key.—Lucas Held, Anne Bergeron and Beth Tuttle <<

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[Please see page 56 for a discussion of excellence at small museums.](#)

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Facilities and Risk Management state: "A museum should manage risk to ensure: that risks to people (visitors, staff, neighbors) and to collections are accurately identified and assessed; that appropriate methods are employed to avoid, block, mitigate, share and assume or insure against risk; and that resources are appropriately allocated so as to have the greatest effect on reducing risk to people, facilities and collections." Are your risks accurately identified and assessed? Climate change is clearly a risk. Are your resources appropriately

allocated? Museums holding investments in industries that are damaging the planet now and into the future are not acting ethically. Does your institution have a response when called out on these questions? <<

---

*Elizabeth Wylie is executive director of the Flannery O'Connor - Andalusia Foundation, Milledgeville, Georgia; co-chair of PIC Green, AAM's Professional Network on Environmental Sustainability; and co-author of The Green Museum: A Primer on Environmental Practice. She frequently writes and speaks about museums and environmental responsibility.*



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## EXCELLENCE ON A SMALL SCALE

BY ANN FORTESCUE

What does excellence at a small museum look like? My experience moving from a large history museum, with a full-time staff of 77 and an annual budget of \$9.3 million, to a small art museum with a full-time staff of three and an annual budget of \$382,000, taught me the importance of focus, prioritization and vision.

The Springfield Museum of Art in Ohio has been accredited by AAM since 1977. But somewhere along the way we lost our culture of excellence. A stunning new addition in 1994 doubled the museum's space, and an outstanding exhibition program became the focus for all activities. The museum brought in and curated art exhibitions that were high quality and cutting edge but lacked broad community engagement. Many in the community viewed the museum as elitist. In response to reduced support from a declining population, the museum closed its art school and stopped offering education programs. This cost-cutting measure seemed prudent at the time, but the longer-term result was declining attendance and membership revenues. The museum continued to struggle financially, and the board realized we had to change in order to survive. Our plan was several years old and out of sync with our financial situation and community.

We rebuilt our culture of excellence by listening to our community, following the Alliance's accreditation process, forming a strategic plan and refocusing on our educational mission. We reshaped our operations to do less, but with more community involvement. In the past year, we increased attendance by 131 percent, more than doubled our membership and overcame a several hundred thousand dollar deficit to end the year in the black. Making the change to become more relevant to our community took two years.

With the Characteristics of Excellence—the Alliance's overarching, core standards for all museums—at the center of



our work, our actions to become financially responsible and our programs using art education to connect with audiences were critical to earning renewed respect from the community. These initiatives translated into increased support and participation.

A good plan kept us focused on outcomes and honest about performance measures. In a small museum with fewer staff (or maybe no paid staff), a good institutional or strategic plan determines how best to allocate resources. Planning is even more important when, as in small museums, each staff member wears many different hats and changes them frequently, quickly adapting skills to match the task at hand. Small museums are ideally suited to striving for excellence in small steps because one or two staff members often handle problem solving, planning and implementation.

The Springfield Museum of Art's most recent reaccreditation site visit was scheduled three months after I began my job as director. The experience—particularly the site visit—was informative and affirming. Our reaccreditation,





however, was tabled for a year because we didn't have a good strategic plan. The Visiting Committee and Accreditation Commissioners sent a clear message that we needed to take stock of our resources, figure out how to be relevant to our community and develop a new plan with measurable results. At the time I was crestfallen but later recognized this as a good opportunity to make significant changes and do an even better job. An imbalance of expenses to income put the board and staff on the same page, along with data from a membership survey that supported our decisions.

Our fellow cultural organizations had been using educational activities to demonstrate value and connect with audiences. Community members shared with me their memories of making art in the museum's classes and the emotions they had felt. As part of the new strategic planning process, we identified "art education" as the way people in the community connected with the museum. The museum's operations and staffing, however, weren't structured to make this important shift to a renewed focus on art education. I made the difficult but necessary decision to completely change our staffing,

allowing us to manage our finances more responsibly and connect with the community. Staff size was reduced from three full-time and three part-time to two full-time and two part-time positions. (Yes—I made our small museum even smaller!)

The staff believed in and worked toward the vision of using art education experiences at the museum and in the community to build strong, relevant relationships with our audiences. We had to produce results quickly, but we prioritized quality over quantity. We focused on creating and implementing each art education program really well, conducting formative evaluation along the way.

Knowing the value our community places on youth education, we offered to develop a partnership art education program with six organizations that had successfully served children. We wanted our partners to be representative of the whole community and recognized for their work making a difference in children's lives. We reached out to artists, at-risk youth groups, an after-school program for English language learners and the regional preschool program. At the end of the first year, we expected a few partners to drop off, but every organization wanted to not only continue but do more with us.

The small size of our museum did not make this work any less complicated, rigorous or impactful. We needed to communicate continuously among staff and with our board, membership, donors and community. We wanted to share what we were doing to make a difference. Telling the great stories of how your audiences engage with the museum can demonstrate why your institution matters to your community and help build a culture of excellence.

For us, the reaccreditation process catalyzed a stronger culture of excellence, but any part of the Continuum of Excellence can serve this function. Building and sustaining this culture was not always easy, and we're not there yet. As at any museum, it should be seen as an ongoing activity.

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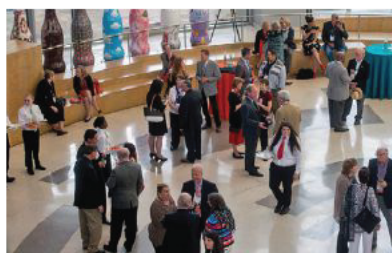
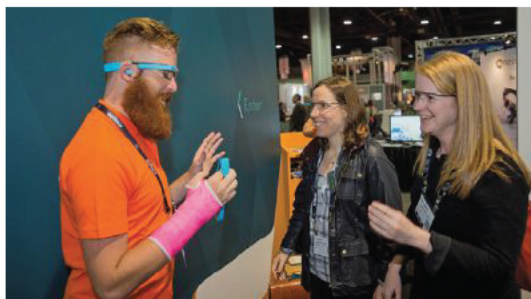
*Ann Fortescue is executive director, Springfield Museum of Art, Springfield, Ohio. She also serves as an Accreditation Commissioner and as a member of the advisory panel for the Alliance's new Small Museums Accreditation Academy (for more information, see page 54).*

## ANNUAL MEETING & MUSEUMEXPO 2015

Georgia was indeed on the minds of more than 4,300 museum professionals. Atlanta proved to be a worthy host. The city known for its leaders in the civil and human rights movement was the perfect stage for this year's theme, "The Social Value of Museums." Johnnetta Betsch Cole proved to be one of the most inspiring speakers in AAM's history. And the nearly 200 sessions rounded out a valuable professional development experience. More than 250 business partners filled MuseumExpo, and the evening events were once again highly rated networking opportunities.



- ▲ Above: Final farewell address by retiring Alliance President Ford W. Bell.
- ▶ Above center: Rapt audience at the General Session.
- ▶ Right: Networking in MuseumExpo provides business solutions for attendees.
- ▼ Below: Attendees make their way to sessions.



- ▲ Top above: Incoming AAM Board Vice Chair Doug Jones and retiring President Ford W. Bell at the CEO Symposium, hosted by the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation.
- ▲ Above: MuseumExpo opening with Puppets on Parade.
- ▶ Right: CEO Symposium Speaker Eloisa Klementich of Invest Atlanta.



- ▲ Above: Wearable technology showcased at CFM's Museum of the Future.
- ▲ Above right: Global Leadership Reception.
- ▶ Far right: High Museum retiring CEO Michael Shapiro with Johnnetta Betsch Cole (center) and seven of the 10 Michael E. Shapiro Small Museum scholars.





▲ Above: Keynote speaker Johnnetta Betsch Cole brought the crowd to its feet with her inspiring message on diversity and inclusion.

► Right: Retiring President Ford W. Bell with Distinguished Service to Museums award winner Tom Livesay.



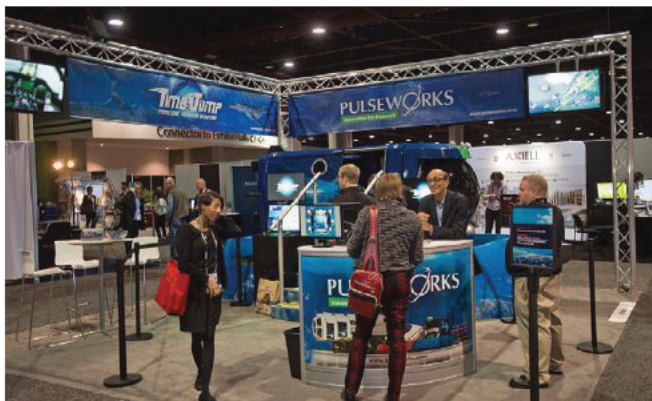
▲ Above: AAM Board Chair Kaywin Feldman (left) bid President Ford W. Bell a fond farewell and welcomed incoming President and CEO Laura L. Lott, AAM's first woman CEO (right)



▲ Above: Major sponsor US Trust/Bank of America executive Wendy W. Kopp visits with CEOs.

▼ Below: Global Leadership Reception sponsor Invesco executive Melissa Wyatt at World of Coca Cola with their Polar Bear mascot.

▼ Below: CEO Symposium Sponsor PGAV Destinations executive Tom Owen and National Museum Wales Director General David Anderson.



▲ Above: Atlanta hometown favorite Pulseworks drew crowds to its interactive simulator.

▼ Below: *TrendsWatch* sponsor Blackbaud executives Dale Strange and Kevin Russell with CFM Founding Director Elizabeth Merritt.

▼ Below right: Fellows supported by the Getty Foundation engage at the Leadership and Career Management Program.



## » COMMUNITY

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The American Alliance of Museums wishes to express appreciation to the following organizations and individuals who have generously supported the museum community and the 2015 Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo:

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## PEOPLE

## NEW JOBS



**Guzel duChateau** to manager of e-mail marketing & engagement, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Washington, DC.

**Cara Starke** to director, Pulitzer Arts Foundation, St. Louis.

**Carol Scott** to chief executive officer, The Children's Discovery Museum of the Desert, Rancho Mirage, California.

**Debra Petke** to executive director, Danforth Art Museum\School, Framingham, Massachusetts.

**Vivian Li** to curator of Asian art, Worcester Art Museum, Massachusetts.

**Francine Webber** to events manager and **Stephanie Johnson** to registrar, National Mining Hall of Fame and Museum, Leadville, Colorado.

**Jason S. Wright** to executive director, Carl & Mary Koehler History Center, Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

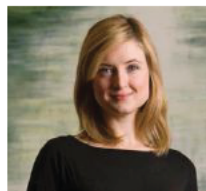


**Timothy Rodgers** to director, The Wolfsonian-FIU, Miami Beach, Florida.

**John V. Quarstein** to chief development officer, USS Monitor Foundation, Newport News, Virginia.

**Amy Hollander** to executive director, The National Museum of Industrial History, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

**Anna Stothart** to curator of modern and contemporary art, San Antonio Museum of Art, Texas.



**Katherine de Vos Devine** to executive director, Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center, Asheville, North Carolina.

**John Jacob** to McEvoy Family Curator for Photography, Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC.

**Rebecca R. Hart** to curator of modern and contemporary art, Denver Art Museum.



**Matthew Teitelbaum** to director, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



**Erin Coe** to director, The Hyde Collection, Glen Falls, New York.

**David N. Schmitz** to executive director, Dubuque Museum of Art, Iowa.

**Colin B. Bailey** to director, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York City.

**Victoria Glazomitsky** to executive director, Nichols House Museum, Boston.

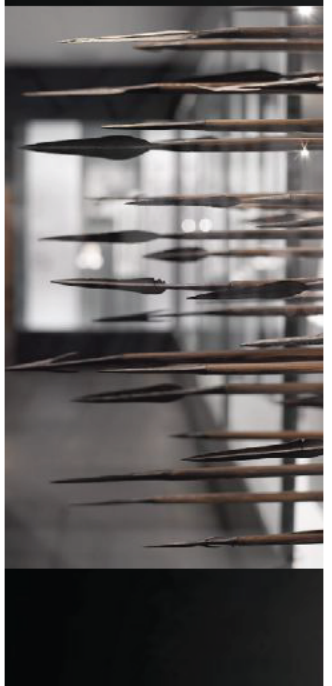
**Scott Wilcox** to chief financial officer, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, Texas.

**Elizabeth Pierce** to president and CEO, Cincinnati Museum Center.

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## PEOPLE (continued)

### KUDOS

**Gail Harry**, president and COO of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, was awarded the James Biddle Lifetime Achievement Award by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia for her conscientious stewardship of the museum's landmark buildings over nearly 20 years.

**The Memphis Brooks Museum of Art** has received the Hyde Family Foundation's \$1 Million Challenge Grant. The grant will support the implementation of a new

strategic plan developed with arts organization consultant Michael Kaiser in conjunction with the Brooks' new executive director, Emily Ballew Neff, the board of trustees and museum staff.

**Mystic Seaport** has received a \$199,806 grant from the National Park Service, in partnership with the Maritime Administration, to support the restoration of its 1908 steamboat *Sabino*.

**The Wellin Museum of Art** has received a \$100,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to study

the museum's educational programs supporting object-based learning for K-12 students. This grant will enable the museum to engage more effectively with public schools.

### TRANSITIONS

Baltimore Museum of Art Director **Doreen Bolger** retired from her position effective June 30, 2015. Bolger, who served as director since 1998, is recognized for redefining the museum's artistic focus and placing greater emphasis on its world-renowned collection, initiating major traveling exhibitions,

expanding educational programs and eliminating general admission fees.

### IN MEMORIAM

**Roger Lidman**, director of Pueblo Grande Museum, died this spring after a battle with cancer. Lidman led Pueblo Grande for many years, and his vision and leadership greatly influenced the museum. His other professional accomplishments include serving as president of the Museum Association of Arizona and chair of the Arizona Humanities Council.

**Amy L. Brandt**, curator of modern and contemporary art at the Chrysler Museum of Art, died May 15. She was 37 years old. Brandt's untimely death came during what may well mark her greatest professional success. Brandt researched, curated and wrote the exhibition catalogue for "Tseng Kwong Chi: Performing for the Camera," which has garnered art-world praise and was hailed by the *New York Times* and other national and international press as a must-see exhibition.

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## » PHOTO CREDITS

**Cover:** Image courtesy The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Photograph by Randy Dodson.

**p. 8:** Sfilata (fashion show) in Sala Bianca, 1955. Archivio Giardini. Photo by G.M. Fadigati. © Giardini Archive, Florence.

**p. 9:** (top) Samurai face guard and helmet, adorned with golden sea urchins. Photo by W. Guth; (bottom) Ryan Trecartin, (Tommy-Chat Just E-mailed Me), 2006, video. Courtesy of Andrea Rosen Gallery, © New York Ryan Trecartin.

**p. 10:** (left) English, turn of the 18th century, Black "jack" leather boot with stacked heel' (right) Winter Baseball, c. 1980s. Fairbanks, Alaska. Credit: Terrence Cole; (bottom) International Tennis Hall of Fame & Museum.

**p. 11:** A pro-prohibition booth at the Parents' Exposition at the Grand Central Palace, New York City, New York, March 1929. National Archives, Records of the Internal Revenue Service.

**p. 12:** (top) Human Effigy Pendant, Costa Rican. Photograph by Susan Tobin. Photo © The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore; (bottom) Longwood Gardens.

**p. 13:** (top) The Fountains at Night, World's Colombian Exposition, 1893, by Winslow Homer. Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine; (bottom) Paul Blinnie, Yoshitoshi's Ghosts (2004), from the series A Hundred Shades of Ink of Edo. Gift of

Dr. John E. Schloder in honor of the MFA's 50th anniversary.

**p. 14:** (top) courtesy Rowman & Littlefield and American Association for State and Local History.

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**p. 50-51:** Photos by Dominic Mercier.

**p. 52:** (top and bottom left) photos by Jordan Cassaway; (right) photo by Joe McFetridge; (bottom right) photo courtesy The Clay Studio.

**p. 56-57:** photo by Rod Hatfield.

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