

ACTION
EDUCATION
ADVOCACY +
PURPOSE

MUSEUM

CULTIVATING
CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT



A message to our museum family

DURING THESE UNPRECEDENTED TIMES,
WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

As our nation confronts this period of uncertainty, we want to assure you that one thing has not changed, our support for museums and cultural sites across this country and the world. 10-31 is a family company and we stand with our museum family partners as we weather these historic times. We understand that capital purchases are not a part of your near-term goals, but we will be here for you when this world starts spinning again. We're a business of relationships, not transactions. If there is anything we can help with, let us know and we will be there for you.

Your Family at 10-31 and Art Display Essentials



MUSEUMRAILS™

MUSEUMSIGNS

10-31.COM

800.862.9869

MUSEUM OF THE BIBLE

History of the Bible Galleries

WASHINGTON, DC

EXHIBITS, GRAPHICS, SCENIC ENVIRONMENTS,
CASEWORK, MEDIA HARDWARE, and LIGHTING



Martin Luther
(1483–1546)
Reformer and Bible Translator

der Epi
li An Z
rheon.
erst La

sa Christi
pudon tie
in Christo I
Nymen lict
Teyt fride vo
Christo.

Luther

1483

1517

1520

1521

1525

1546

SEPTEMBER
OCTOBER
2020
ISSUE

CONTENTS



FEATURES

- 18** Space for Civic Dialogue
A public education program at the Walker Art Center involving local artists invites community conversation on immigration and citizenship.
By Jacqueline Stahlmann
- 24** Civics in Action
How can museums nurture the next generation of citizen-leaders?
By Tony Pennay
- 28** Redefining ‘American’
A collection initiative at the National Museum of American History gives voice to undocumented immigrant activism.
By Patricia Arteaga and Nancy Bercau
- 32** Making the Abstract Real
The US Capitol Visitor Center engages student audiences near and far in civics education.
By Nik Apostolides
- 37** Rising to the Challenge
In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, museums are broadening their missions to serve community needs.
By Mary Ellen Collins

Cover:
Artwork by @CeceCarpio



DEPARTMENTS

- 5** From the President and CEO
- 6** By the Numbers
- 8** Point of View
Get Out the Vote
- 12** Point of View
Being Part of the Solution
- 44** Alliance in Action
- 48** Reflection



Photo by Galen Fletcher for Walker Art Center, Minneapolis



Mercury MR-2, Gemini 11 and Apollo ASTP capsules, California Science Center, Los Angeles. On loan from the Smithsonian Institution.

HAHN MUSEUM DISPLAY CASES

WORLDWIDE LEADERSHIP IN PRESERVATION & PRECISION

- MicroClimate Conditioning
- HAHN Pure Conservation
- Advanced Lighting Systems
- HAHN Nitrogen Case
- Security Systems
- HLS Modular Case

 **BAM** Certified and under surveillance
Certification N°: BAM/ZBF/017/12

The BAM certificate refers only to the low-emission materials used according to the BEMMA scheme for being processed at the display case manufacturer.



MUSEUM

A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Dean Phelus

MANAGING EDITOR

Gayle Bennett

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Megan Lantz, Cecelia Walls

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Team of Creatives, LLC

ADVERTISING

Carol Nettles
aamad@adboomadvertising.com
404-347-1755

ALLIANCE PRESIDENT AND CEO

Laura L. Lott

ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Chair (2020–2022)

Chevy Humphrey, Arizona Science Center

Vice Chair (2020–2021)

Berit N. Durler, San Diego Zoo Global

Treasurer (2020–2021)

Jorge Zamanillo, HistoryMiami Museum

Immediate Past Chair (2020–2022)

Kippen de Alba Chu, Fort Worth Museum of Science and History

TERM OF OFFICE 2019–2022

Robert M. Davis, America's Black Holocaust Museum

Marcia DeWitt, Hillwood Estate, Museum and Garden

Kelly McKinley, Bay Area Discovery Museum

James Pepper Henry, First Americans Museum

Julie Stein, Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture

TERM OF OFFICE 2018–2021

Susana Smith Bautista, Independent Museum Consultant

Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, Illinois State Museum

Nathan Richie, Golden History Museum and Park

Ruth Shelly, Portland Children's Museum

Stephanie Stebich, Smithsonian American Art Museum

Karol Wight, The Corning Museum of Glass

TERM OF OFFICE 2020–2023

Devon Akmon, Science Gallery Detroit

Carrie Rebora Barratt, The New York Botanical Garden

Frederic Bertley, Center of Science and Industry

Alison Rempel Brown, Science Museum of Minnesota

Christine A. Donovan, Northern Trust Company

Charles L. Katzenmeyer, Field Museum

MUSEUM (ISSN 0027-4089)

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2020, VOLUME 99, NO. 4

PUBLISHED BIMONTHLY (J/F, M/A, M/J, J/A, S/O, N/D)

BY THE AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS

2451 CRYSTAL DRIVE, SUITE 1005, ARLINGTON, VA 22202; 202-289-1818; FAX 202-289-6578; 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 US Postal Service.) POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MUSEUM, 2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 1005, Arlington, VA 22202. Copyright 2018, 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 Arlington, VA, and additional mailing offices. Printed in the US by Lane Press, Burlington, VT.



twitter.com/aamers



facebook.com/americanmuseums



linkedin.com/company/american-alliance-of-museums



instagram.com/aamersofficial

Thanks to our Member Discount Providers



HUNTINGTON T. BLOCK
INSURANCE AGENCY, INC.



Our Role in This Historic Moment

Each election cycle, we are overwhelmed with media claims that this is an election year like none other. Whether you take this to heart or consider it repetitive, it's hard to deny that in 2020, this is truly the case.

The global COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial and health crises have been compounded by social unrest and calls for racial justice. Alliance museums were closed for months and, sadly, thousands of museum staff lost their jobs. It is abundantly clear that we are at a turning point in our country's history. As museums, we have unique and special roles to play in this historic moment.

Your first inclination may be to shudder at the prospect of involving your museum in lobbying or voter engagement. Please know that while nonprofit museums are prohibited from supporting or opposing candidates for public office, they are free (and encouraged) to advocate throughout the year and to encourage participation in the democratic process. In fact, you can encourage participation in the electoral process, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote activities, if you do so in a nonpartisan manner.

As an example of the power you wield as advocates, we don't have to look back more than a few months. This past spring, you sent more than 45,000 messages to Congress seeking financial relief and support for museums shut down due to the pandemic. This is the strongest advocacy we've seen in a generation, and it resulted in hundreds of millions of dollars in vital relief. You have the power—and responsibility—as individuals and organizations to advocate for our field and educate policy makers about how critical museums are to our nation's education system, in the preservation of our history and culture, and in the recovery of our communities from the pandemic.

Why is 2020 a unique window of opportunity to influence change? Not only will we elect a president in November, but a total of 470 seats in the US Congress (35 Senate seats and all 435 House seats) are up for election. To put it another way, every member of the House, along with about a third of the Senate, is fighting for their job. As a result, your advocacy is aimed at a

very receptive audience. For resources that can help you make the case for museums, visit bit.ly/invite-congress.

The American public considers museums to be among the most trustworthy sources of information. This posits us to play a unique role in helping our communities activate their voices in the most powerful way: by voting. We must take up our role as institutional leaders in our communities and share information on the voting process; how to register; and importantly in this time of physical distancing, how to engage in the democratic process without choosing between the ability to vote and community health and safety.

Tuesday, September 22, 2020, is National Voter Registration Day—a day founded by and for nonprofit organizations. The Alliance is proud to be a partner of this national effort, and we encourage every museum to consider how it can engage in the democratic process this year. To learn more, visit the Nonprofit Voter Resources page on our website at bit.ly/voter-resources.

Laura L. Lott
—June 30, 2020



Laura L. Lott is the Alliance's president and CEO. Follow Laura on Twitter at [@LottLaura](https://twitter.com/LottLaura).

Civic Engagement

People who visit
museums are
50%
more likely to
vote than those
who do not visit
museums at all.

18%

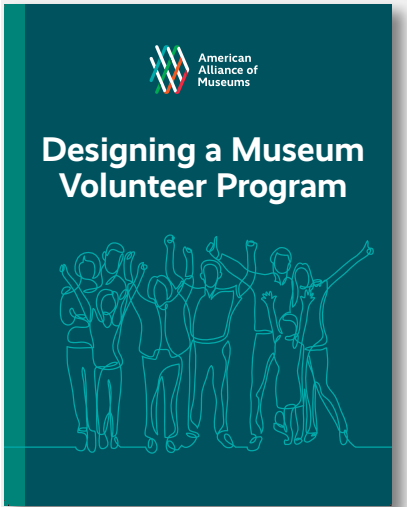
Percentage of regular museum-goers who think museums should “facilitate more civic conversations about currently divisive issues affecting us.”

1 in 4
Number of
regular museum-
goers who think
museums should
make “wide-
scale changes”
to reflect and
engage diverse
audiences.

Sources: Clockwise from left: *Museums & Public Opinion: Summary of Findings from National Public Opinion Polling* by AAM and Wilkening Consulting; 2020 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers by AAM and Wilkening Consulting; and 2020 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers by AAM and Wilkening Consulting

By the Numbers was compiled by Susie Wilkening, principal of Wilkening Consulting, wilkeningconsulting.com. Reach Susie at Susie@wilkeningconsulting.com.

Designing a Museum Volunteer Program Toolkit



Whether you want to start a new museum volunteer program or revitalize an existing one, this toolkit will guide you toward the resources and framework you need to be successful and sustainable.

Purchase your digital copy through the AAM bookstore.

aam-us.org/bookstore

With AAM member discount: \$29.99
Retail: \$34.99

Visit bit.ly/volunteer-toolkit to listen to *Volunteer Voices*, a podcast discussion with AAM author Susan Zwerling and the American Association for Museum Volunteers.



Toolkit includes:

Guidance
Policies
Worksheets
... and more!



Get Out the Vote

Museums may—and far more should—support political participation.

By Sean Kelley

This is a true story.

A group of museum studies graduate students are collaborating with a museum to develop a history exhibit. A student suggests, “Hey, we should add a voter registration table to the exhibit!” The curator says, “No, that would be too—you know—*political*.” The subject of the exhibit? The struggle to pass the 19th Amendment, granting American women the right to vote.

That curator was mistaken if he believed that voter registration is forbidden under the tax code for 501(c)(3) organizations. The US tax code does state that 501(c)(3) organizations are “banned from partisan electioneering” with potential penalties including loss of tax exempt status and excise taxes.

Critically, however, IRS guidance for 501(c)(3) organizations notes that certain voter education activities and activities intended to encourage participation in the electoral process, such as voter registration and get-out-the-vote drives “would not be prohibited political campaign activity if conducted in a non-partisan manner.”

More likely, the curator feared the perception of a partisan political agenda. As nonprofit museum professionals—working with funders, boards of directors, and multiple audiences—our world is rife with potential criticism. It’s one of the defining characteristics of our field—but one that we do best to embrace.

This fear of perceived partisanship, I believe, has led some museums to try to have it both ways: reflect American political life while avoiding legally sanctioned opportunities to support the democratic process. But when museums fear even a passing accusation of partisanship, they relinquish a critical role in the civic life of their communities.

Each institution must find its own voice. Here are some ways to get involved.

Nonpartisan Voter Registration

Many nonprofits conduct nonpartisan voter registration. The Georgia Museum of Art, in collaboration with the International Economic Justice League, registered voters during its Kevin Cole exhibition. The mixed-media artist’s work references the history of white communities suppressing the voting rights of Black Americans during the Jim Crow era; museum visitors were both reminded that racialized voter suppression goes back generations and provided the means to cast their vote.

The Levine Museum of the New South in Charlotte, North Carolina, has been registering new voters at naturalization ceremonies for years. Recently the museum developed a partnership with the League of Women Voters to staff a voter registration table at every evening program and Family Day. “Every event yielded new voter registrations and raised the league’s profile in Charlotte,” says museum CEO Kathryn Hill.

Here at Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site we maintain voter registration tables in two on-site locations in election years and non-election years. We registered about 250 new voters in



The League of Women Voters set up a game at the Levine Museum of the New South’s HERstory Family Day in March 2020 to educate attendees on voter rights and suffrage.

Photo by Kama Pierce, courtesy of the Levine Museum of the New South



One of the stickers in the *Voting Kits for the Disenfranchised* by Cute Rage Press (Aram Han Sifuentes and Ishita Dharap).

2019, a non-election year.

We have been questioned just once about the legality of our program—by an elected official. We responded by citing the exact language from the IRS tax code. I like to think that we taught an elected official an important civics lesson that day.

Forums for Civic Dialogue

Leading up to the 2016 election, Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago partnered with artist Aram Han Sifuentes and collaborating artists across the United States to create *Official Unofficial Voting Station: Voting for All Who Legally Can't*.

A form of the project continues as the nation approaches another presidential election. Several museums will host Sifuentes' *Voting Kits for the Disenfranchised* throughout the fall. The artist helps museums produce imaginative "voting stations" for people who can't vote, bringing attention to voting barriers or restrictions in the United States. The toolkits include infographics showing the population of people who cannot legally vote in the United States

and "If We Could Vote, We Would" wristbands by the artist collective Undocumented Projects.

"In 2016, according to the United States Election Project, 29 percent of Americans (more than 92 million people) were ineligible to vote in the presidential election," Sifuentes says. "This list does not even address voter suppression."

Sometimes convening discussions among civic leaders, elected officials, and community members serves a vital democratic role. The House of the Seven Gables in Salem, Massachusetts, organized a 2017 public forum about a contentious piece of local sanctuary

legislation, giving the mayor and councilmembers time to sit down with the capacity crowd to answer questions and talk through the proposed legislation.

Census Participation

The deadline for US Census participation has been extended to October 31. The Museum of the City of New York, among others, has built programming, much of it now online, to encourage their audiences to participate in the Census.

"We are presenting [our exhibit] *Who We Are* as a way to highlight the importance of the upcoming



Visitors play *Gerrymander Madness: The Anti-Democracy VR Game* in Connection Point gallery at Greensboro History Museum on December 5, 2019.

RESOURCES

Nonprofit Voter Resources

aam-us.org/programs/advocacy/nonprofit-voter-resources/

TrendsWatch 2019, "Truth, Trust, and Fake News" chapter, Center for the Future of Museums

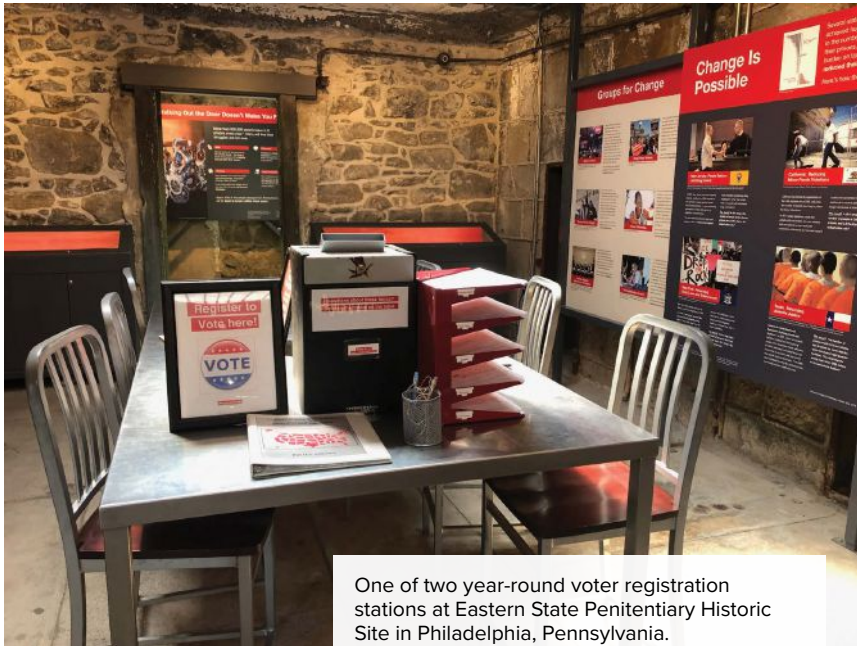
aam-us.org/programs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/trendswatch-2019/

"Museums and libraries fight 'alternative facts' with a #DayofFacts," *The Washington Post*, February 17, 2017

[washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/02/17/museums-and-libraries-fight-alternative-facts-with-a-dayoffacts/](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/02/17/museums-and-libraries-fight-alternative-facts-with-a-dayoffacts/)

"In an era of 'fake news,' people are turning to museums for facts," *The Star*, July 9, 2017

[thestar.com/news/canada/2017/07/09/museums-eye-renewed-relevancy-in-era-of-fake-news.html](https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2017/07/09/museums-eye-renewed-relevancy-in-era-of-fake-news.html)



One of two year-round voter registration stations at Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

YOUR MUSEUM CAN REGISTER VOTERS, TOO!

Eastern State Penitentiary’s Annie Anderson has created a simple “How To” guide for museums to get started with voter registration. It includes links to registration forms, suggested language to answer questions about nonprofit law, and the protocol for collecting and submitting the forms. Email us at newvoters@easternstate.org, and we’ll send you a copy!

Here are some highlights:

- Identify the states from which you receive the most visitors, and stock voter registration forms for those states. You can download and print blank voter registration forms for any state at vote.gov.
- Stock the national form that any US citizen from any state can use. It’s a bit more complex than any of the individual state forms, but having it on hand means that every visitor will have information on registering to vote. Download the national form at eac.gov/voters/national-mail-voter-registration-form.
- Designate a computer kiosk for visitors to register to vote. Any American citizen can register to vote in about two minutes at vote.gov.
- Include information on voting and pertinent links in your digital newsletters, press releases, websites, and social media.
- Participate in National Voter Registration Day on September 22, 2020. Learn more at nationalvoterregistrationday.org.
- Check out AAM’s Nonprofit Voter Resources, which provides answers to frequently asked questions about how nonprofits, including museums, and their staff and leadership can participate in advocacy and lobbying, nonpartisan election activity, and voter engagement. Learn more at aam-us.org/programs/advocacy/nonprofit-voter-resources/.

Census—including what’s at stake in terms of ensuring fair political representation and sufficient funding for education, infrastructure, and social programs,” said museum Director and President Whitney Donhauser in a statement.

Fighting Misinformation and Disenfranchisement

Museums play multiple roles in fighting disinformation. As trusted content experts, museums can often present information and perspectives that some audiences will reject from journalists or academics in a setting conducive to healthy discourse. Additionally, as Braden Paynter of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience points out, “Museums don’t just present the information side: it’s hard and rare to find places that can create the social, emotional, and physical setting that needs to be in place for the information to be effective.”

In planning for its “Project Democracy 20/20” initiative, Greensboro History Museum in North Carolina wanted to draw attention to the impact of partisan gerrymandering in the democratic process. The museum developed *Gerrymander Madness: The Anti-Democracy VR Game*, which gamifies the gerrymandering process. The exhibit uses virtual reality headsets to place visitors in the office of a fictional North Carolina legislator. The museum-goer’s objective is to redraw voting districts on a North Carolina map to gain political advantage for their political party or, put another way, to disenfranchise as many voters as possible.

Photo by Annie Anderson

“In gerrymandering, the voters don’t choose the politicians, the politicians choose the voters,” says museum Director Carol Ghorsi Hart. “When a player wins by turning the state red or blue by big margins, democracy loses.”

The proliferation of misinformation in recent years prompted two museum professionals to create the #DayofFacts hashtag for museums to share hard evidence of climate change, evolution, immigration, and political history. More than 280 cultural and scientific institutions participated in the thread on February 17, 2017, according to *The Washington Post*. Since June 2020, however,

the thread has been taken over by anti-Black Lives Matter posts.

We can choose to sit on the sidelines of the political process and civic debate. There is value in museums as places of beauty, reflection, and respite during times of national and personal crisis. It may be a fair critique, however, to suggest that a museum that chooses to play that role, and only that role, demonstrates an institutional comfort with the status quo.

Our work must be nonpartisan, but that doesn’t mean it can’t have some teeth. We can use our authority to dispel misinformation. We can call out ongoing

efforts to suppress political representation. We can encourage and support voter engagement.

We can keep the text of the IRS tax code handy, and we can get to work.

This article is the perspective of the author and does not serve as formal legal advice. It’s always recommended to consult your own legal counsel with specific questions about your or your museum’s activities.

Sean Kelley is senior vice president at Eastern State Penitentiary Historic Site in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Assess Your Assets

NOW AVAILABLE!

The General Facility Report (Updated Edition)

Document the latest information about your institution’s physical specifications and staff practices through this updated standard report form.

An indispensable resource for your lenders, insurers, architects, designers and other pertinent partners.

COST: \$19.95 FOR NON-MEMBERS
\$9.95 FOR MEMBERS

To purchase the report, visit
<https://bit.ly/generalfacilityreport>



Being Part of the Solution

There has never been a better moment for museums to be active partners in the life of their communities.

By Spencer Crew

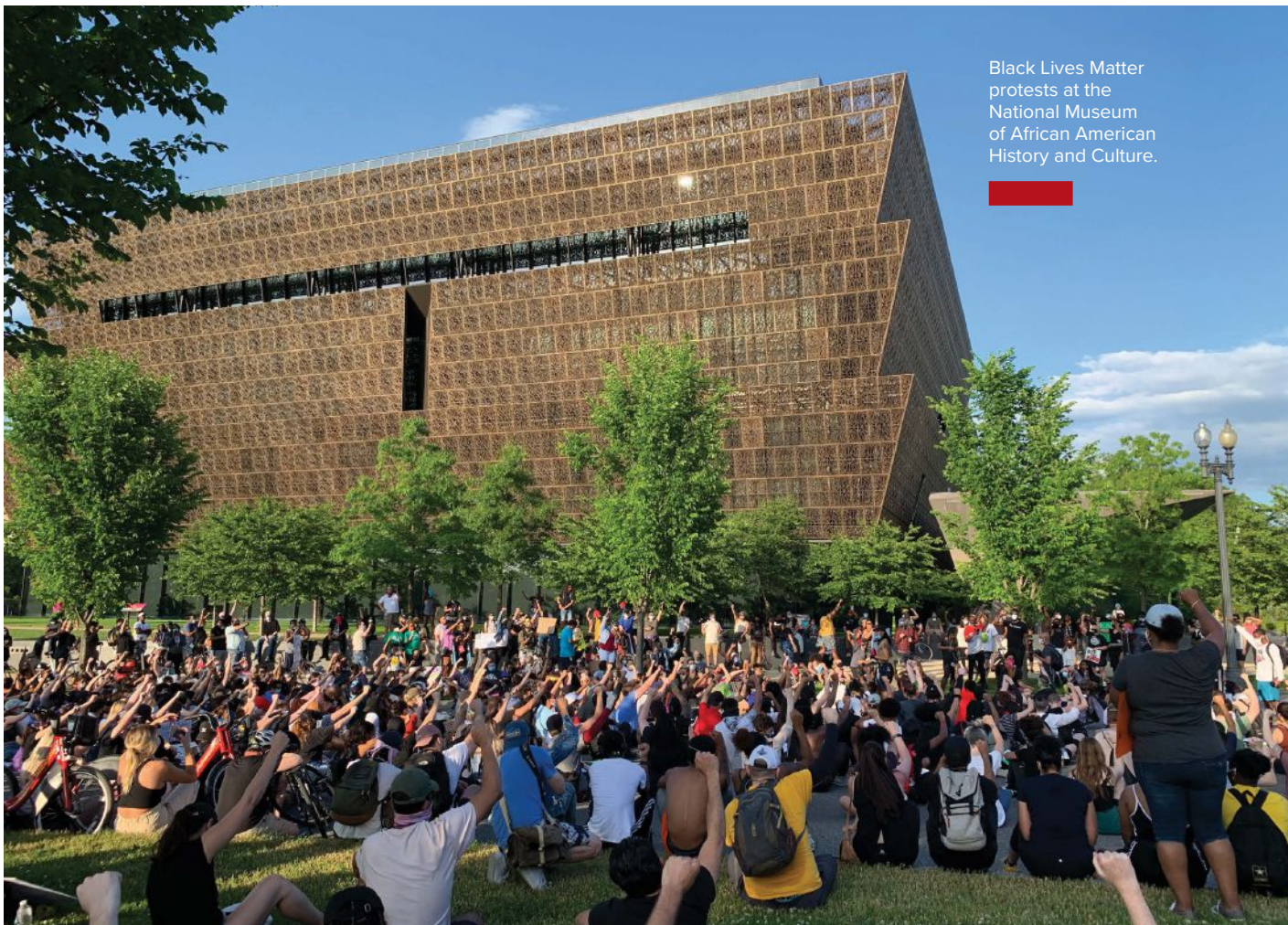
In 1971, the director of the Brooklyn Museum, Duncan Cameron, wrote an essay titled “The Museum, a Temple or the Forum.” He argued that museums were suffering an identity crisis because they fluctuated between different roles that he believed were incompatible.

As temples, museums were church-like places of

contemplation and thoughtful reflection. Staff members sifted through the available artifacts to determine which ones were worthy for exhibition and admiration. Placing them on exhibit signaled the end of any discussion about their value to society.

In contrast, museums that followed the path of a forum created a different atmosphere. In

forums, ideas and new perspectives were the coin of the realm. Debate was central to the process: the conversation itself was important, and reaching a unanimous decision was no longer the end goal. This emphasis on exchange made institutions into lively, engaging spaces. Cameron did not object to the idea of the forum, but he firmly believed that the temple and the forum



Black Lives Matter protests at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.



could not exist in the same space.

While I do not necessarily agree with Cameron, he does create a dichotomy worth examining. On one end of the spectrum, museums view their role as repositories for important materials where the primary function is to preserve, research, and exhibit objects. The role of the public is minimized in this process. The staff, who are the experts, determine what is best and then share it with the public. The public is expected to passively accept these decisions and take in the intrinsic value of the displayed materials. There is no exchange in this setting.

On the other end of this spectrum are museums and staff who see their institutions' primary role as that of a forum. They are places where ideas are explored and traditional ways of doing and seeing things are challenged. They raise questions of interest for their visitors and attempt to stimulate critical thinking. The objects they collect and uplift are not just beautiful or significant items, but also vehicles for exploring the world and seeing it through a new perspective. The visitor, rather than the artifacts, is the focus in these circumstances. These institutions also emphasize building a strong, positive connection with the communities they serve.

While these models of museum functions overexaggerate how the field operates, they still capture the different views that permeate and cause friction within the field 40 years later. Last year, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) brought forward a new



definition of “museum” for consideration, as reported in the Summer 2020 issue of *Museum*, which stated: “Museums are democratizing, inclusive and polyphonic spaces for critical dialogue about the pasts and the futures. Acknowledging and addressing the conflicts and challenges of the present, they hold artefacts and specimens in trust for society, safeguard diverse memories for future generations, and guarantee equal rights and equal access to heritage for all people.”

For many in the field, this point of view expanded the role of museums too far. As John Fraser wrote in the October 2019 issue of *Curator: The Museum Journal*, the definition “pushed at the edges of past practice to suggest a more activist role of museums as contributors to their cultures, redressing past wrongs, and aspiring to leadership for a more inclusive and environmentally responsible global culture.”

Is it improper for museums to take a social activist role? Should museums remain passive and focus on the preservation, presentation, and study of the materials under their control? How one responds to those questions is important in the context of the current turmoil—some would say the social revolution—occurring

in the United States and other parts of the world.

The Community Question

An important aspect of this discussion within the museum profession is this question: Is it the responsibility of cultural institutions to provide value and positive contributions to the communities that surround them? Museums that welcome interaction and regular visitation from nearby residents are seen as an asset to their communities. The status of this ongoing relationship shapes the role a museum can play during a time of social unrest: if the institution has not built trust with the immediate community, it will be difficult to find connection and resonate in a moment of heightened tension. Even with a well-formed relationship, there are a variety of ways that museums can increase their value during these moments.

Museums must proactively seek engagement and conversation with the nearby community to accurately gauge their perceived value. Institutions should not make uninformed assumptions about what is needed or what will resonate with others. Feedback can be uncomfortable to receive, but the opportunity to learn and

internalize community needs and perspectives is invaluable.

Fully engaging in this type of practice can transform an institution from an imposing, uninviting presence to a place that values the viewpoints and contributions of its neighbors. Actions resulting from these conversations must also be more than one-time efforts and should demonstrate an ongoing commitment to dialogue and engagement.

For museums that have not been connected to their community, our current moment is precisely the time to begin to build these bridges. As many institutions are intensifying their commitments to equity, museums that have not historically been viewed as community partners have an opportunity to improve how they are viewed by their communities. Institutions that have established relationships with their communities also must

reimagine their role going forward.

At the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), we have sought unique ways to connect with a global contingency of visitors as well as our regional Washington, DC, community. We developed “A Seat at the Table,” a program series that brings together individuals from a cross section of communities for a family-style dinner and evening of conversation. Registration is open to the public with a small fee that is subsidized by the program sponsor. Program topics have uplifted dialogue around social justice and religion, culture, identity, and community. While a speaker or panel is featured during the meal, tables of randomly assigned participants are encouraged to reflect on the topic at hand and then share with the larger group, creating a forum where all voices can be heard and

new ideas and perspectives can be exchanged.

This program goes beyond convening the community—it de-centers our institution as the single source of knowledge and value and shares that power with each person who participates. “A Seat at the Table” has continued to encourage productive dialogue across lines of difference and provide space for healing in moments of local or national crisis.

Adding Current Value

During the current COVID-19 global crisis, NMAAHC has also sought to provide an outlet for users to express their reactions to the events swirling around them. Feeling anger, confusion, fear, and other strong emotions is natural during extraordinary moments such as this. Offering space to share these feelings allows participants to understand that they are not alone in facing these emotions.

This spring we created our Community Curation platform, a digital space that seeks to creatively capture the impact of the pandemic. The effort encourages interested parties across the nation to electronically share important images and thoughts they are having during the pandemic.

We are particularly interested in the ways in which African Americans are navigating this health crisis and have especially reached out to communities where we have established previous ties and good relationships. The project offers real-time reactions of those who respond, and that data will

A participant shares her family documents at an on-site Community Curation event.



Photo by Leah Jones

inform future museum programming and give researchers insight into the on-the-ground experiences of people of color navigating the impacts of a pandemic. The project also encourages participants to recognize the historical importance of their experiences and to consider how their material culture has possible historic importance and can be shared with a local museum in their area or with NMAAHC.

We have applied the same principle to capturing the energy of participants in recent protests against racism across the United States. In many ways, these actions have generated a possible watershed moment in the history

of the United States and perhaps the world. In collaboration with the National Museum of American History and Anacostia Community Museum at the Smithsonian, NMAAHC curators have been on the streets of DC talking to protesters and collecting the posters, signs, and art that express the sentiments of the individuals who are having an amazing impact on society.

Our staff have approached the collecting process with sensitivity, understanding these materials have tremendous emotional meaning and value for their creators, who might not wish to have their objects removed and taken to a

museum. Curators take time to talk with the participants and build rapport so that participants are comfortable with the collecting effort.

We also hope to conduct and record interviews with some of the participants to capture their thoughts about why they are protesting and what outcomes they hope to generate. We believe that this collecting process has value both for the people from whom we are collecting and for the museum in achieving its desire to capture a record of this historic moment.

Difficult Conversations

Another pathway for museums to

NEW TOOLKIT AVAILABLE



Speaking Up:

Museum Advocacy in Action

This year has proven that museums advocacy has never been more critical.

No matter your skill level, this all-in-one toolkit—with comprehensive fact sheets, workbooks, policy information, and more—is the resource you need. Learn more and get yours today:

aam-us.org/toolkits



American
Alliance of
Museums

Bookstore



The “Talking About Race” portal builds on a decade of work and in-person workshops for educators and families.

add value to their communities is through their role as educational institutions. In this capacity, they can provide tools that capture critical issues of the moment and offer pathways for users to address them and create tactics to overcome them. We have found that digital platforms are effective because they reach beyond the walls of the museum and connect with those who use them.

This was the principal underlying the “Talking About Race” portal created by NMAAHC over the past year and shared publicly at the beginning of June. Our goal was to construct what our education staff called a “brave space” that offered ways of constructively engaging a critical issue facing American society—race.

Over the past decade, and before the doors of the museum ever opened, our education department staff began offering workshops for educators titled “Let’s Talk: Race in the Classroom” to help them sensitively navigate issues of race with their students.

Through trial and error in the workshops, staff identified the worries and challenges many educators face. Some of these issues were external, but others were internal baggage carried by the teachers. To craft strategies to get past these impediments, museum staff enlisted outside experts to help effectively navigate discussions about race, and they tested and refined those strategies over time. They saw this work as a core responsibility of the museum and an important tool to provide classroom educators.

While our staff was pleased with the effectiveness of the subsequent workshops, only workshop attendees benefited directly from the experience. So the museum organized a team to broaden the reach of the workshop material. The result was the carefully crafted, multimedia portal “Talking About Race” (nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race), which aims to provide tools to support more conversations about racial identity and racism, and their

historical as well as current impact on American society. The platform acknowledges how challenging these discussions can be and creates helpful entry points for generating exchanges and learning. We believe that if we can more squarely face and understand these issues, actions might increase to lessen racism’s negative impact.

The platform employs several techniques to increase the portal’s effectiveness. Most importantly, it encourages the participants to be reflective and thoughtful during the process. At the start, the portal directly confronts the reality that we are all aware of race, both our own and that of others. Even children are aware of these differences at a very young age. Rather than ignoring or denying the reality of race and racism, the platform encourages participants to engage and understand its impact. Specifically, it offers pathways for three sectors of society—educators, parents or caregivers, and individuals committed to equity—to wrestle with the historic role of racism in US history and its negative impact through to the present day.

Embedded in each pathway are activities, multimedia presentations, questions, and action steps designed to facilitate learning and insights. We hope to encourage users to think, talk, and then act in opposition to racism. Users are encouraged to embrace the responsibility to resist racism with the understanding that not doing so allows it to flourish.

The goals of the portal are ambitious but appropriate for

our museum. A commitment to social justice is a long-standing core principal of the National Museum of African American History and Culture—and a position our supporters have come to expect. Consequently, creating the portal and continuing to add new learning, as well as guidelines for additional sectors of society, represents a logical step for the museum. NMAAHC—and other cultural institutions that see social responsibility as an important part of their mission—must provide new tools and programs in times of social change that acknowledge and speak to our current experiences.

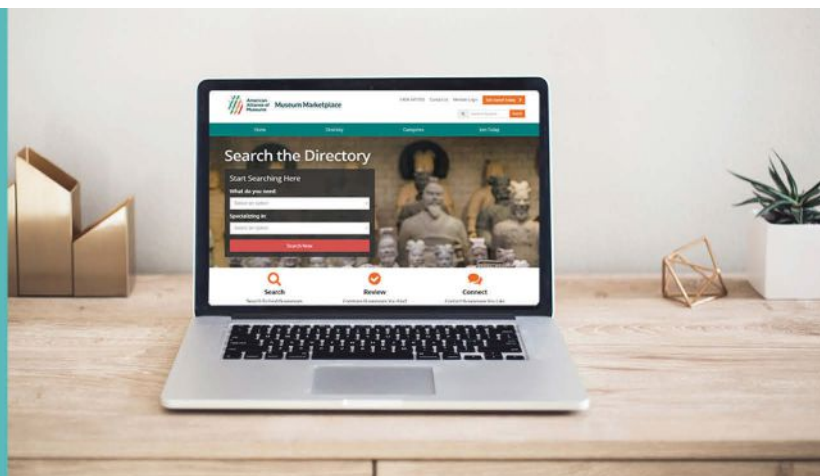
Museums are part of a larger community and society. They collect, perform research, and share their work through exhibitions. However, it is not enough to create experiences for visitors that are enjoyable to observe but do not offer food for thought. We will seem tone deaf if our work does not recognize the issues swirling around us. Our local communities will see us as detached and unconcerned about what is important to them. We will reinforce the view of our organizations as imposing and uninviting places disconnected from our local communities.

More importantly, to paraphrase civil rights activist and

social critic Eldridge Cleaver, if you are not involved in solutions, you will be perceived as part of the problem. If museums are to remain valued partners in their communities, they should not be viewed as part of the problem.

Spencer Crew is the interim director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC. He is also the Clarence J. Robinson Professor of American, African American and Public History at George Mason University.

In need of hand-sanitizer stations, or translation services? Head to Museum Marketplace, the one-stop-shop for products and services that help museums run smoothly at any time. Search by dozens of categories, including location and type of service. Many providers are offering free or discounted pricing to ease the impacts of the pandemic on museums.



Browse the new Museum Marketplace!

» museummarketplace.com

If your company is offering free or discounted pricing on products or services, you can purchase a listing and select the free COVID-19 category to be added. Terms and conditions of posting your listing apply.



2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 1005
Arlington, VA 22202 | aam-us.org

SPACE FOR CIVIC DIALOGUE

A public education program at the Walker Art Center involving local artists invites community conversation on immigration and citizenship.

By Jacqueline Stahlmann



Four years ago, cultural institutions across the country were reacting to a major event: the 2016 US presidential elections. Seemingly overnight, these election results led to drastic shifts in American political and social discourse. In response, many museums quickly reconsidered their curatorial approaches, especially after policy changes such as Executive Order 13769, signed in January 2017, which banned travel to the United States from a number of predominantly Muslim countries.

In the fall of 2017, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, opened “I am you, you are too,” a permanent collection exhibition that drew together works addressing monuments, nationalism, migration, and the politics of solidarity. This exhibition, which was on view for three years, provided a bedrock for rich civic discourse.

From this exhibition, we developed a public programming series that aimed to engage artists and audiences on the topic of immigration. “Citizenship Series: Filling the Void” ran four times over the course of two years, adding depth and detail to the exhibition and paving a way for us to discuss current events with our community in the future.

Local artist Nimo Farah lays down a rug to tell her story inside Carey Young’s *Declared Void II* (2013) during a September 2018 “Citizenship Series: Filling the Void” event at the Walker Art Center.



A Piece of Art and Current Events

The basis and title of this program series refer to an artwork featured in the exhibition: *Declared Void II* (2013) by London-based Carey Young. The artist, who is also an associate professor at the Slade School of Fine Art at the University College London, often incorporates law as an “artistic medium” in her practice.

The piece itself is conceptual. The thick, black vinyl stripes plastered to the white gallery wall create the illusion of a box in the corner of the space. Bold text directly to the left of the box states: “BY STANDING IN THE ZONE CREATED BY THIS DRAWING, AND FOR THE PERIOD YOU REMAIN THERE, YOU DECLARE AND AGREE THAT YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.”

For a conceptual sculpture, the piece is concrete and direct in its message. By working with attorneys to develop the language, Young created a genuine contractual agreement or “legal instrument” with the viewer, wherein the moment a person steps into the box, they are declared to be a citizen of the United States. Originally created in 2005, and then reiterated in 2013, *Declared Void II* developed out of a different geopolitical and temporal context. In Minnesota in 2017, the piece seemed to speak to issues of immigration and the moving target of “citizen” as defined by US immigration law.

This piece was especially profound in Minnesota, home to roughly half a million refugees and immigrants from all over the world, according to data from the American Immigration Council. The immigration status of many of these individuals hinges on a word at the root of Young’s piece: citizen.

Photo by Malanda Jean-Claude, Walker Art Center

Building a Platform for Community Voices

Many artists in the Twin Cities incorporate political issues, such as citizenship, immigration, and critiques of nationalism, into their artistic practices. As the exhibition went on, I wanted to know how local artists were responding to these current immigration issues, and I wanted to help our audiences understand how these urgent and abstract policy changes were affecting our local community on a human level.

In January 2018, we began working with artists to co-create a platform for response, defining parameters for how they could present their work. Using *Declared Void II* as the framework and literal stage for a series of live programs, we invited local artists to help develop a structure for the program.

One by one, we met with four artists whose work related to immigration issues and eventually selected them to kick off the series on April 5, 2018. Spending time in the galleries with these artists, we discussed

how their artistic practices intersected with the themes the piece evokes. We listened to their concerns about the latest immigration policy changes and learned about how their artistic practices were shifting because of the effects of these policies on their personal lives, family, or communities.

Listening closely and developing relationships with these artists was the most crucial step in developing the series. We wanted the participating artists to trust us to create a platform through which they could express themselves without feeling tokenized or censored in the process. Learning about their practice ensured that their projects, whatever they ended up being, were genuine to them and their experiences.

Since this would be an in-gallery program, we knew audiences would be either standing, sitting on the floor, or sitting on a few gallery stools that we have on hand. Because of this possibly uncomfortable viewing setup for visitors, we wanted to limit the program

RESOURCES

“Carey Young Interviewed by Maria Walsh,” *Art Monthly*, March 2019
ucl.ac.uk/slade/documents/cw-art-monthly-march-19.pdf

Jacqueline Stahlmann, “Filling the Void: The Politics of Geography,” April 5, 2018
walkerart.org/magazine/zoe-cinel-carey-youngs-declared-void-ii-2013

Pavel Pyš, Vincenzo de Bellis, and Adrienne Edwards, “Art in Times of Uncertainty: *I am you, you are too*,” November 20, 2017
walkerart.org/magazine/art-in-times-of-uncertainty-i-am-you-you-are-too

Artist and activist Peng Wu created a piece called “A Long Hug,” wherein participants hugged for 10 minutes from one side of the line of the box to the other. Due to visa issues, one participant joined via hand-held projection.





Visitors to “Citizenship Series: Filling the Void” on September 13, 2018.



WHAT WE LEARNED

Respond versus react. When a current event hits, we are quick to try to react to the issue through our platforms as museums. With the Citizenship Series, we took the time to observe and listen and then respond, even though that meant it took longer to develop the program.

Look outside the museum. Instead of looking within our field for ways to engage audiences in civic discourse around current events, we worked with attorneys focused on the issues at hand. Their presence grounded the program and helped engage the artists and audiences.

Co-create the model. By creating a model for programs where the content is driven by the participants, museums can serve as platforms for community voices. Working with the artists to develop this model was essential in supporting their voices.

Change as you go. Setting up the program as a series from the beginning allowed us to evaluate and make changes for each iteration. By the end of the program, more than 15 artists had participated in the series and developed a community from the collective experience.

Find flexibility in the specificity. How do you make a permanent exhibition, or one that is up for several years, relevant to current events? Select an area or theme you are interesting in creating a public program around, and invite an expert in that field to view the exhibition. Ask that individual what speaks to them. A different perspective will shed light on new possibilities for your galleries.

to about an hour. Aside from the usual gallery restrictions (e.g., no water, glitter, live animals, plants), the other program parameters were as follows:

- each event would feature 3–4 artists;
- each artist would prepare a 10-minute response to, or interaction with, *Declared Void II*;
- artists would submit their program descriptions two weeks before their program date; and
- artists’ programs could not require more technical support than a microphone and a speaker system.

Selecting the artists, guiding the development of their projects, and coordinating schedules so all the artists could run through their pieces together took several months. During this time, the initial four artists we were working with helped us develop and refine the program’s structure. By April 2018, our first lineup of artist projects would kick off the Citizenship Series, which ultimately included four unique hour-long programs involving 15 different artists over the course of two years.

The Series and Its Impact

Each program began with a 10-minute introduction by an immigration attorney representing different immigration rights organizations from around the Twin Cities, including the ACLU of Minnesota, The Advocates for Human Rights, the Immigrant Law

Center of Minnesota, and the Binger Center for New Americans at the University of Minnesota Law School. Due to time constraints, the attorneys could provide only a cursory view of immigration law in Minnesota, but they also hosted 15-minute Q&A sessions with the artists and answered audience questions following each program.

The artists’ projects ran the gamut in terms of tone, aesthetics, and creative response. Some were playful, poking fun at the ridiculous nature of some of the arbitrary policies in immigration law. Some of the works were deeply personal, with artists drawing on sensitive stories of parents and relatives and the delicate predicament of living their lives in the many shades of gray within a very black-and-white legal system.

After each iteration, we tried different ways of engaging the audience in discussion, which was challenging. During the Q&A session of the final event in the series, attorney Michele Garnett McKenzie from The Advocates for Human Rights tried a reverse Q&A, where she and the artists asked the audience questions. This did help a bit, but the sensitive nature of the topic perhaps accounted for the short audience discussion.

Audience and participant feedback was good. One attendee mentioned in a post-program survey that they realized that they had been taking their citizenship for granted and had not been aware of the complex system of applying for citizenship. Some audience members had loved ones going through the

Photo by Malanda Jean-Claude for Walker Art Center, Minneapolis



During her 10 minutes, Essma Imady, a Syrian-born artist based in the Twin Cities, tried on scarves and asked the audience, “Which scarf looks most American?”

immigration process, or they had firsthand experience with the bureaucracy of the citizenship application. The attorneys expressed their gratitude for being involved with the project and seeing the impact of the issues they deal with on a daily basis in a completely different context.

In addition to facilitating local civic engagement, the program also had an international impact. The artist of the exhibited work, Carey Young, wanted to fold the program into her work at the University College London. In her research, she is assessing the social impact of *Declared Void II* and the Walker series. She sent surveys to series attendees, which have given us valuable feedback from our audiences.

As part of the opening of each program, Young also delivered a foundational introduction of her artwork from London via Skype. The call-ins, coupled with the national and ethnic diversity of the presenting artists, deepened the sense of internationality addressed in these works, particularly in light of the

Carey Young's *Declared Void II* (2013), as installed in “I am you, you are too.”

abundant worldwide news coverage of immigration and refugee crises occurring in other countries, such as Syria and Myanmar.

For many museums, public programming can be a nimble and responsive way to engage audiences with current issues in their gallery spaces. In the case of the “Citizenship Series: Filling the Void,” we worked with one artwork in the gallery to create a broad range of conversations, reactions, and interactions about a timely issue that was, and still is, impacting our community. We created a space for local artists to respond, and by doing so, we invited our audiences to engage with the themes of the piece on a raw human level.

We may not be able to predict the next global crisis or current event that shakes our communities, but we are able to build public programming models that encourage discourse around these issues. This program responded to a specific piece, in a specific exhibition, for a specific issue, but we created a structure that will engage artists and audiences around future current events.

Jacqueline Stahlmann is manager of public programs at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Top: photo by Emmet Kowler for Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; bottom: courtesy of the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York, photo by Gene Pittman

BY STANDING IN THE ZONE CREATED BY THIS DRAWING, AND FOR THE PERIOD YOU REMAIN THERE, YOU DECLARE AND AGREE THAT YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

A network diagram consisting of numerous black dots connected by thin grey lines, forming a complex web-like structure that spans the entire page.

Strengthen your museum's financial future with *TrendsWatch*



This year, the Alliance's forecasting report provides a framework for examining any museum's financial performance and thinking about long-term strategies for fiscal success.

TrendsWatch: The Future of Financial Sustainability dives into:

- Earned revenue
- Charitable contributions
- Government funding
- Financial capital

Exploring the disruptions in museums' traditional business models and sharing emerging practices for fiscal health, the report supports honest discussion—and swift action—to secure museums' financial futures.

PDF download available from the AAM website, and in print from the AAM Bookstore.



Center for the Future of Museums

is an initiative of the American Alliance of Museums

High school students participate in the interactive Air Force One Discovery Center at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.



Civics in Action

How can museums nurture the next generation of citizen-leaders?

By Tony Pennay

“Why does it even matter?”

As a middle school history teacher, this was the sort of question I would typically field during the first week or two of school. Math and language arts are on all the big tests. Mastery of science can lead to careers that pay well.

History, though . . . why does it even matter? Often, I'd throw the question right back at the class. The answers were broad:

*So we don't repeat the mistakes of the past.
I need good grades to get into college.
It's fascinating. I saw it on the History Channel.
Because you said so.
Ugh. Don't make me think.*

Though it's been a decade since I left the classroom, I'm still responding to that question through my work at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute in Simi Valley, California.

Quite simply, history matters because the context of the past allows us to thoughtfully address the challenges of the present. We stand on the shoulders of those who've come before us, and with their wisdom, guidance, and knowledge of what they did to make progress, we have a template for moving toward that “more perfect union.”

Our education mission at the Reagan Foundation is to cultivate the next generation of citizen-leaders. Here are a couple of the ways we are using history to help students become more civically minded.

The Power of Simulation

In 2011, a group of leading civic learning scholars published *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*. This landmark report detailed six proven practices that support effective civic learning. Proven Practice #6, Simulations of Democratic Processes, helps develop civic knowledge and skills because games and simulations can be highly engaging and motivating. “[S]tudents learn skills with clear applicability to both civic and non-civic contexts, such as public speaking and teamwork,” according to the report.

The concept is not new: learning through doing has been around forever. And museums can offer immersive learning environments, through the use

of artifacts or replicas, that a traditional classroom can't. The replica Senate chamber at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate, the lunch-counter interactive at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, and the Star-Spangled Center at The Magic House in St. Louis are just a few of the many immersive simulation environments at museums.

At the Reagan Foundation, we offer the Air Force One Discovery Center, where more than 25,000 elementary and secondary students each year can simulate decision-making and collaboration at the highest levels of government, the media, and the military. Students take on the roles of the president and his advisers in the model of the Oval Office, of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs and military advisers in a Command Decision Center, and of correspondents in the White House press room.

The simulation hinges on a news report that the US is preparing to send the military to Grenada, which means a top-secret mission is now public. Students get information from a variety of news and national security sources based on their specific role and then recommend a course of action. There is no clear and unambiguous right answer; students must make tough choices and defend their reasoning.

The students discuss two important American ideals that often come into conflict with one another: freedom of the press and national security. Our educators lead a debrief discussion that brings this clash to the forefront and encourages teachers to continue the discussion back in the classroom.

For the purpose of this simulation, our team prioritizes the process of critically thinking through a decision rather than a specific outcome. While we want students to leave with an accurate understanding of what decisions were made in history, we focus on giving students an opportunity to develop their civic skill set. We want them to grapple with conflicting values and pieces of information and make a tough decision.

Far too often in the real world, issues are portrayed as overly black and white. We believe the gray is the best place to learn. Of the more than 500 teachers who have responded to our exit survey, more than 99 percent report that the learning experience in this simulation met or exceeded their expectations.



In the Student Leadership Program, students work to become civic-minded leaders who contribute to their schools and communities.

In the museum tour that accompanies this simulation, we strive to make connections for students. Of course, our museum tells the story of President Reagan, but it also tells the story of our country during his lifetime and how an individual can effect change. We don't just want the students to learn this story and leave the museum with a long list of facts. We want them to connect to the story, to understand that they too have power and influence as civic actors. They too can lead and influence others in their home, at their school, and in their community.

The Building Blocks of Leadership

Following her retirement from the Supreme Court, Justice Sandra Day O'Connor founded iCivics, an interactive, game-based website that teaches civics and government to millions of students each year. In early 2019, iCivics hosted a convening of researchers, funders, and programmers to talk about what works in civic learning. To provide a theoretical backbone for the convening, The Center for Educational Equity at Columbia University summarized the prevalent research, which finds that the same skills and values that make someone a good citizen—self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and responsible decision-making—also make them a good person, a good community member, and a skilled member of the workforce.

This begs the question: How can museums leverage their collections and programs to help develop these skills and mental habits? We are trying to find out through our Student Leadership Program (SLP), a week-long summer camp where high school students identify an issue that they would like to address at their school or in their community.

Over the years, these issues have spanned the spectrum of civic-mindedness, including organizing supplies for wounded veterans, forming anti-bullying clubs, distributing personal care packages to the homeless, and more. Whereas the tours with the Discovery Center leverage the idea of plugging into a broader civic and American narrative, the SLP allows students to dive deeper into self-assessment and civic skill-building activities that provide a toolkit for effective civic action.

At the end of their week in the program, students present their plan of action to a community mentor—local leaders of businesses, nonprofit organizations, schools, and the government—and get feedback on how best to implement their plan. In brief, here are four ways in which we cultivate the students' civic skill set during the SLP.

Self-Assessment: We use The Personality Compass to help students better understand themselves and others. After answering a series of questions, they are assigned a point on the compass based on their responses. North is goal-centered and confident. West is creative and energetic. East is analytical and logical. South is sensitive, patient, and generous. Students then learn about the typical characteristics of each quadrant and how they can better understand both themselves and those who are not like them. It teaches both independence and interdependence, two incredibly important civic skills.

Responsible Decision-Making: Once students have their idea, they must research it thoroughly.

RESOURCES

Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, *Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*, 2011
carnegie.org/publications/guardian-of-democracy-the-civic-mission-of-schools/

iCivics
icivics.org

Peter Levine and Joseph Kahne (eds.), "Civic Learning Impact and Measurement Convening: Research Summary," Center for Educational Equity, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2018

SPECTRUM OF CIVIC LEARNING

Civic learning is much more than simply sharing the stories and artifacts of our collective past. Below, I connect the research on effective and impactful K–12 civic learning to the work of museums.

Civic Knowledge: This is the basic unit of civic learning: facts, stories, artifacts, pictures, exhibits, primary source materials. For museums, civic knowledge is our collections and the stories we tell about them.

Civic Mindset: When museums leverage their collections and programs to promote mental habits like self-awareness, social awareness, political awareness, tolerance, and empathy, they contribute to the creation of a civic mindset.

Civic Skill Set: When museums leverage programs or exhibits to help visitors develop their communication skills; offer democratic simulations; promote models for effective dialogue around controversial issues; or model how to gather, analyze, and apply data on civic matters, they help their visitors develop the skills that will make them effective citizens.

Civic Action: Ideally, civic action occurs when our visitors and community members apply the knowledge, mind-set, and skill set they've learned in museums and beyond. Civic actions include voting, volunteering, hosting public meetings or forums, community service, and exploring current events and their impact.

What are the root causes of the issue? What other organizations on campus or in the community are already working to address the issue? Who are the right people at school or in the community to contact? What solutions would be most effective long term? Under the direction of interns and staff advisers, students conduct this research and ultimately decide which actions to take, which stakeholders to engage, and what timeline is reasonable. They put together a set of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely) goals, which we tell them at the program graduation is only the beginning.

Communication: The ability to effectively communicate with others to inspire change is key to effective civic action, so we help students improve their communication skills throughout the week. Early in the week, they work with a group on their ability to sell an idea to a Shark Tank–like panel of potential investors. Later, and on their own, they develop an elevator pitch laser-focused on why their researched idea is important. Finally, they pitch their fully fleshed-out plan to a respected adult they don't know from the community. Though this makes them slightly nervous, it is also a safe way for them to practice their civic skills with something real at stake.

Leadership Ladder: Finally, we know there is a difference between a single civic action (a vote or donation) and sustained, impactful civic action

(starting an organization, enlisting volunteers for an extended period of time, working to advance a piece of legislation). We want our students to be able to develop their skills over time. With SLP, students can start as a camper, return as a leadership ambassador (who supports students and the interns who facilitate the program), and return again as a lead ambassador (who has some managerial duties). In college, they can return as an intern (who facilitates the program under the guidance of our education staff) and finally as a lead intern (who oversees the other interns and mentors the ambassadors). In this way, we provide opportunities for students to level up their leadership.

Students who've graduated from the program recently have planted acorns to help rebuild the land after destructive Southern California fires, started clubs to address mental health and anxiety on their high school campuses, worked with local banks to teach financial literacy to students, and taught students CPR.

In short, they're becoming the sorts of engaged citizen-leaders our community needs.

Tony Pennay is chief learning officer of the Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute in Simi Valley, California. His book, *The Civic Mission of Museums*, will be published by AAM in the fall.



Elver Barrios, a former undocumented organizer in Charlotte, North Carolina, shows his photo album of the actions and organizing workshops he collaborated on during 2010–2015 to Patricia Arteaga (left) and Nancy Bercau (middle).





Redefining 'American'

A collection initiative at the National Museum of American History gives voice to undocumented immigrant activism.

By Patricia Arteaga and Nancy Bercaw

On March 5, 2018, hundreds of demonstrators gathered outside the National Museum of American History in Washington, DC, in a last-ditch effort to push Congress to vote on the DREAM Act, which would grant undocumented youth a pathway toward citizenship. Only six months before, President Donald J. Trump had rescinded Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), which protected some undocumented youth from deportation.

On this day, however, it became clear that Congress would not act, and the political history curators from the National Museum of American History were ready. Following routine collecting procedures, they spoke with several demonstrators and collected several posters; T-shirts; and a pair of monarch butterfly wings, a symbol of the movement.

Ordinarily, this collecting would have completed the museum's work until the next protest, march, or demonstration in Washington, DC. This time, we wanted to dig deeper because the actions of the undocumented activists seemed qualitatively different.

We were witnessing civically engaged activists who—without citizenship or the power to vote—were successfully engaging in politics on many levels. They were influencing national policy, shaping public

opinion, challenging local governments, and galvanizing Congress to act on their behalf.

Commonly referred to as “DREAMers,” undocumented organizers had become an unlikely political voice during a time of increased hostility toward immigrants. Moreover, the organizers demonstrated innovation and adaptability. At first, undocumented activists focused on gaining access to higher education and legalizing their status. Over time, the movements became more community-centered, addressing intersecting issues affecting daily life, such as health care, affordable housing, reproductive rights, deportation pipelines, and national political campaigns.

As historians and educators, we know that individual voices, especially those from at-risk communities, tend to get lost or ignored in the national record. Here was an opportunity to correct this. Through contemporary collecting, we could speak directly to the organizers to secure their firsthand accounts for future generations.

To do this, we had to go beyond the National Mall and one-time collecting. This was not just one movement, but multiple movements in different regions that don't look the same. Therefore, we had to engage in community-based collecting to learn from

the undocumented experts who are redefining what it means to be American.

Nancy Bercau, curator at the Division of Political History at the National Museum of American History, applied for a Smithsonian Latino Center grant to contract with Patricia Arteaga as project lead and José Centeno-Meléndez as oral historian. Together, we began a project in which two or three people could record a rare moment in American history.

Our Goals and Processes

Our first goal was to create a national repository for undocumented organizers to share their knowledge and experience. Second, we wanted the collections to reflect the diversity and creativity of these movements. Finally, we wanted to use digital resources to share the

BUILDING TRUST

As we navigate two very different worlds, we repeatedly encounter questions of trust that inform our process. How can the people we work with in their communities trust us as a federal institution? How do we build trust in order to redress past Smithsonian practices? Or how do we introduce the museum to those who are unfamiliar with the Smithsonian or with museum-going more generally?

A key component is the partnerships we have with undocumented organizers. They are trusted figures within the sites where we are working, and they consult with us.

Within the institution, we also work hard to build trust. This involves positioning the project in relation to existing collections and past practices. We emphasize that the Smithsonian has collected contemporary issues since the Civil War, and the collections reflect other movements in which people without citizenship or the vote effected great change.

With this reasoning in place, we reach out to the Smithsonian Office of Government Relations, members of Congress, the Office of the General Counsel, and the Smithsonian and National Museum of American History public affairs offices to make sure everyone is informed about the project. All this takes time, so we also ask for patience!



collections and oral histories with the public, highlight a significant national moment, and open the museum to new audiences.

The project, “Transformative Politics: Undocumented Immigrant Activism 2000 to Present,” is a six-site initiative to provide the public with unfettered

access to the voices and perspectives of undocumented organizers through the collection of objects and oral histories. The sites—Washington, DC; North Carolina; Southern California; Nebraska; Chicago; and Mexico City—are emblematic of the different strategies organizers are using depending on regional policies, organizing structures, and histories. The Mexico City site looks into organizers’ voluntary or forced deportations and how they adopt and reform their strategies in their home country.

1. SELECTING COMMUNITIES

Selecting communities from vibrant and complex movements was difficult. We began by researching and reaching out to scholars and organizers. We wanted a good geographic spread to represent how undocumented organizing is occurring across the United States. We knew that experiences varied widely depending on state and local laws and on how established the immigrant rights communities were in each place. The six sites encompass cities, rural states, the nation’s capital, and one international location to provide a wide breadth of experiences.

2. FEEDBACK

We are talking to as many people as possible—organizers, scholars, educators, observers, and artists—in each location to reflect what makes it unique and important. We ask for recommendations on who else we should talk to, what groups we should be aware of, and what we might be overlooking. To be community-centric, we identified people already doing the groundwork—both scholars and undocumented organizers—whose guidance is crucial.

3. FIRST SITE VISIT

The team conducts the first site visit to meet and talk

with possible participants. During this first meeting, we want to get to know one another; we do not record or ask about objects at this point. This is key. For the most part, the participants understand what we are trying to accomplish with the project at this point, but it's important to first interact with each other, share food, and listen. The team does not come with a list of questions or tell possible participants what we are looking for. We don't know what we are going to learn in these site visits, and we arrive with an open mind.

4. REEVALUATE

We are changed by each visit, and it takes us at least two weeks to digest what we have learned. In the process, the project changes as well. This occurred most profoundly when we traveled to Los Angeles in September 2019, where we also met organizers from Orange County and San Diego. After that meeting, we realized that we had to expand the study to each of those areas. Enforcement created sharply different political environments, and the organizations in the three areas differed in structure, tactics, and philosophy.

5. RECORDINGS AND COLLECTIONS

On the second visit, we return to record the oral histories. José works closely with each participant to ensure that the recorded narrative reflects the individual's vision and voice. Many undocumented organizers have been using personal narratives as a political strategy for the past 10 years in an effort to humanize their experience. They are used to being recorded, and many are frustrated with the limits of storytelling that centers on their lack of legal status.

Our first task is to create an environment where the person being interviewed controls the structure and form of the interview so they can speak about their political work. More importantly, they get to share what informs them as a person. José also emphasizes that each individual has control over whether they donate their oral history to the museum or keep it for themselves.

If the oral history is donated, we have it transcribed and then send it to the participant for review. The project is a collaboration with at-risk communities whose members are facing deportation. Therefore, we check the interviews several times and encourage participants to redact the recordings when necessary.

6. PUBLIC ACCESS/SHARING

We have no immediate plans for an exhibition; however, "Undocumented Organizing" material will be on view this fall in the "Girlhood (It's Complicated)" exhibition at the National Museum of American History and will be part of the opening exhibition of the Smithsonian Latino Center's Molina Gallery in 2021.

For more immediate public access, we intend to use social media and the National Museum of American History website to provide access to the oral histories, objects, and stories featuring organizations, strategies, and individuals' experiences. Ideally, we would like participants and their communities to be able to see and share the stories as soon as the collections are processed.

Our Ever-Evolving Work

We recognize that this year is pivotal for many of the organizers we are collaborating with in terms of elections, Supreme Court decisions, and placing crucial issues on the forefront. This movement is not just about gaining legalized status, but about creating a new recognition of what citizenship can look like and how to aid your community along the way. This is what we have learned from the organizers who have told us about their work.

Through this project, we hope to record not just a moment in time or how a new political voice emerged, but also how this movement asks key questions:

How can we civically engage within our own communities to address policies that are detrimental to people's livelihoods? How can we change our future when lives are inextricably rooted in systems of oppression? Who gets to define what it means to be an "American"? Who belongs?

Those are the questions we are posing every day in our work at the National Museum of American History and with this project.

Nancy Bercaw is the curator and **Patricia Arteaga** is curatorial project lead of the Division of Political History at the National Museum of American History in Washington, DC.



Here and on page 30, posters collected on the National Mall on March 5, 2018.

Education Specialist Sam Berton leads students in a discussion about the full-size plaster model of the Statue of Freedom by Thomas Crawford on display in the Capitol Visitor Center.



Photo by Marcey Frutchey, 2017

Making the **ABSTRACT REAL**

The US Capitol Visitor Center engages student audiences near and far in civics education.

By Nik Apostolides



If—to quote the title of a seminal 2000 report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni—our nation is “losing America’s memory” in ways that endanger our treasured values and way of life, can an American museum help?

And, even when that institution seems perfectly positioned for positive impact—with a clear mission, committed partners, engaged and entrepreneurial staff, and a healthy visitorship—what is the alchemy that achieves the intended effect?

And how do we ensure that this mission embraces the local community as well as the national and international public?

These are questions the staff at the US Capitol Visitor Center (Capitol Visitor Center) continually asks. And with good reason.

Each year, more than 3 million eighth-grade students across this country study US history and government. And yet, according to the 2018 Civics Assessment, conducted as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, just 24 percent of US eighth-graders were proficient in civics. In fact, for decades studies have signaled an escalating civics education crisis in the United States.

Sometimes we hear these findings in comic sound-bites: more Americans know that Michael Jackson composed “Billie Jean” than that the Bill of Rights is a body of amendments to the United States Constitution; nearly three-quarters of Americans can name the Three Stooges, while less than a quarter can name all three branches of our federal government; 10 percent of college students think Judith “Judge Judy” Sheindlin is a justice on the US Supreme Court.



Educational Program Manager Lauren Windham Roszak shares objects and information from a historic desk program in Emancipation Hall of the Capitol Visitor Center.

But together, the statistics show a sobering reality—what Charles N. Quigley, former executive director of the Center for Civic Education, called “a civics recession” that’s especially acute among our youngest Americans.

At the Capitol Visitor Center, we believe one answer to this crisis lies in *informal* education: learning that occurs outside of a structured curriculum and beyond a classroom setting that includes conversation, exploration, and experiential learning. Research shows such approaches are essential to improving student outcomes in civics and other subjects. Many US museums and other civic and cultural institutions are perfect venues for this type of enrichment.

Making a Good Program Better

Each year, hundreds of thousands of students take a class trip to Washington, DC, to visit the Capitol and learn about American civics. Our goal at the Capitol Visitor Center is to help students understand our unique form of government, the role of citizens, and the relevance of Congress to their daily lives through the legislation debated and passed here.

Because ours is, in the words of President John Adams, “a government of laws and not of men,” sharing American civics with our visitors means helping them understand how the laws that enshrine our fundamental rights and comprise our system of self-government have been debated, formed, passed, and reshaped—a process that continues today. It can also mean helping them play their rightful role in the preservation, prosperity, and progress of our nation.

Our visitor guides are the beating heart of our passion for civics education. Each visitor guide gives up to five tours daily, often with groups of 50 or more students. They know that more than half of our visitors have never been to the US Capitol before, and most will not return until they are themselves parents or grandparents.

When I came to the Capitol Visitor Center in 2014, I saw how well we served students from around the country, and I was eager to find meaningful ways to ensure that our staff’s passion for civics was equally accessible to students in our backyard—the diverse neighborhoods of Washington, DC.



Education Specialist MaryBeth Wagner and Visitor Guide Laurel Martin provide interpretive materials at the Capitol Visitor Center's Homeschool Day.

I discovered that we already had the ideal partners as well as an ideal platform. For many years, under the leadership of the US Capitol Historical Society, a dedicated coalition of organizations—the US Capitol, the White House, the National Mall and Memorial Parks, the Supreme Court, and the National Archives—had offered the “We the People Constitution Tour” for DC public school students. “We the People” is a day-long field trip in which students visit the US Capitol, the White House Visitor Center, and the National Archives, among other stops. The program explains to students how each branch of government works together to uphold the principles of the US Constitution.

However, I also learned that students in the “We the People” program only visited the *grounds* of the US Capitol and did not come *inside* the building. Clearly, getting them in the building was a significant opportunity to engage them more deeply with the Constitution.

We needed a champion to gain consensus among the partners and work to realize this program’s full potential. That person was Lauren Windham Roszak, the Capitol Visitor Center’s educational programs manager. With a commitment to “having the courage to abandon successful methods,” Roszak collaborated with the US Capitol Historical Society staff to incorporate a tour of the Capitol. Now eighth-grade students explore the Constitution, learn how its principles are applied in the work of Congress, and consider its effect in their own lives.

She also arranged for these students—from every background and circumstance—to have a free lunch through special support from funders and the Capitol Visitor Center’s food service contractor, Restaurant Associates. This last feature—lunch—is so important for students who might not otherwise be able to afford it. It’s hard to engage with complex concepts

of civics and American government on an empty stomach!

DC students—some of whom grow up just steps away from our historic campus—now understand more about how Congress functions under our Constitution. We hope that our student visitors grasp the history, context, and concepts of representative democracy not as abstractions, but as relevant to their daily lives. We hope they leave with the sense that, as Justice Louis Brandeis suggested, “the most important office, and the one which all of us can and should fill, is that of . . . citizen.”

By expanding the Capitol tour portion of the “We the People” program, we dramatically increased our outreach to DC public school students. Just two years after implementing these changes, we now reach more than half of the city’s eighth-graders versus a few dozen at best previously. This remarkable growth is a testament to the impact one museum professional (Roszak in our case) can make in the lives of students and in the deeper fulfillment of our institution’s mission.

“This is the first museum in which I’ve worked where the museum itself is not the primary function of the organization,” Roszak says. “First and foremost, this is the working office building of the legislative



National Assessment of Educational Progress civics assessment
nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/civics/

US Capitol Visitor Center Education Resources
visithcapitol.gov/education

US Capitol Historical Society, We the People Resources
uschs.org/educate/we-the-people-constitution-program/

DRAWING EVERYONE OUT

To foster children's civic engagement, it's useful for them to see the adults in their life modeling that behavior. At your institution, don't just relegate the adults to the silent back row. Include questions that allow the adults to impart their wisdom. For example, we might ask them to share the first time they voted. What was happening in the US around the time of that election?

To get the students more involved, create opportunities for visitor guides to prompt discussions and debate where the students express their personal beliefs on a topic. Start with a short warm-up debate on a topic they will feel confident discussing. We begin with a debate about food choices before digging into complex legislative history. This has been a successful engagement model for us.

branch. . . . I come to work every day *owning* the fact that I am here to connect people to their government and civic process through the objects and stories in this fascinating place.”

Other Opportunities for Engagement

In addition to the “We the People” program, the Capitol Visitor Center’s education specialists and public programs staff deliver a range of activities on-site and online—including classroom programs, family days, teacher institutes, film programs, and mobile education carts focused on civics and the history, art, and architecture of the Capitol.


We also try to offer programs that are both substantive and inclusive. For example, the annual “Mornings at the Capitol” program transforms the Capitol into a more welcoming, less distracting learning environment for children with learning differences. For example, we turn off water fountains, large information screens, bright displays, and our orientation film.

In our 30-minute “VOTE!” program, students role play as members of Congress, learn about an issue that an earlier Congress considered, and then vote on the historic issue. Middle and high school teachers can elect to participate in “VOTE!” at the beginning or end of a Capitol tour.

Perhaps the biggest opportunity of all is on the horizon. Right now, the Capitol Visitor Center’s exhibits team is renovating our museum space, Exhibition Hall. Scheduled to open in 2021 and informed by visitor studies, this major redesign aims to provide an even deeper educational experience, helping visitors understand how Congress affects their daily lives. As we strive to make the most of it, we’re implementing all the lessons we learned with “We the People” and our other ventures, including interpretive techniques to help students gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of civics.

Exhibition Hall will house a special exhibition gallery; a permanent exhibition on the history of Congress that includes thematic exhibits about the impact of Congress and the role of citizens in a democracy; exhibits that explore the art and architecture of the Capitol; and a democracy lab with “hands-on” and “*minds-on*” activities that cover fundamental concepts, including civics education.

As President John F. Kennedy noted, “Democracy is never a final achievement. It is a call to an untiring effort.” To keep pace with this effort, and equip future generations to contribute to our national welfare, our museum teams and partners must be equally purposeful and bold.

 **Nik Apostolides** is deputy CEO of the US Capitol Visitor Center in Washington, DC.

PARTNERS IN SUCCESS

With help from sponsors—including the Brown Rudnick Charitable Foundation, International Paper, and the Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation—the US Capitol Historical Society has led a consortium of organizations that make the “We the People” program a success. The consortium includes Children’s Concierge, the federal courts, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Park Service, Restaurant Associates, USA Guided Tours, the US Capitol Visitor Center, The White House Historical Association, and the White House Visitor Center.

Rising to the Challenge

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, museums are broadening their missions to serve community needs.

By Mary Ellen Collins

THANK
YOU

The Museum of Us projected "Thank You" on its iconic building to honor frontline workers during the pandemic.

Baking bread, teaching cross stitch online, providing feline pen pals. These activities don't immediately come to mind when we think of museums' community engagement efforts, but they are among the ways in which museums have continued to serve their communities during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this time, museum leaders have repurposed their assets and resources to help their communities by, among other things, contributing masks and gloves to PPE drives, making financial and food donations to local organizations, and instituting a range of innovative online programs. This work not only addresses immediate needs, but also may transform how museums serve their communities in the future.

Connecting Can Be Simple

When the Philbrook Museum of Art in Tulsa,

Oklahoma, closed, President and Director Scott Stulen and his staff launched a flurry of new programming.

"We already had a very robust social media presence," says Stulen, and "I said, 'We're not going to put the mission on pause. We're going to go from ideas to execution in hours instead of months.'" Of his 120 staff members, he furloughed all of the part-timers and 17 full-time employees, until he received a loan that allowed him to bring back all of the full-time staff in June.

"I thought we could take some risk and experiment, and it's been a great kind of lab. We've done almost 200 new programs geared to different audiences for our weekly Museum From Home platform and had more than 250,000 views." Well-received Museum From Home programs have included hands-on art projects through the Family Art Club, behind-the-scenes tours, and gardening lessons from the horticulture team.

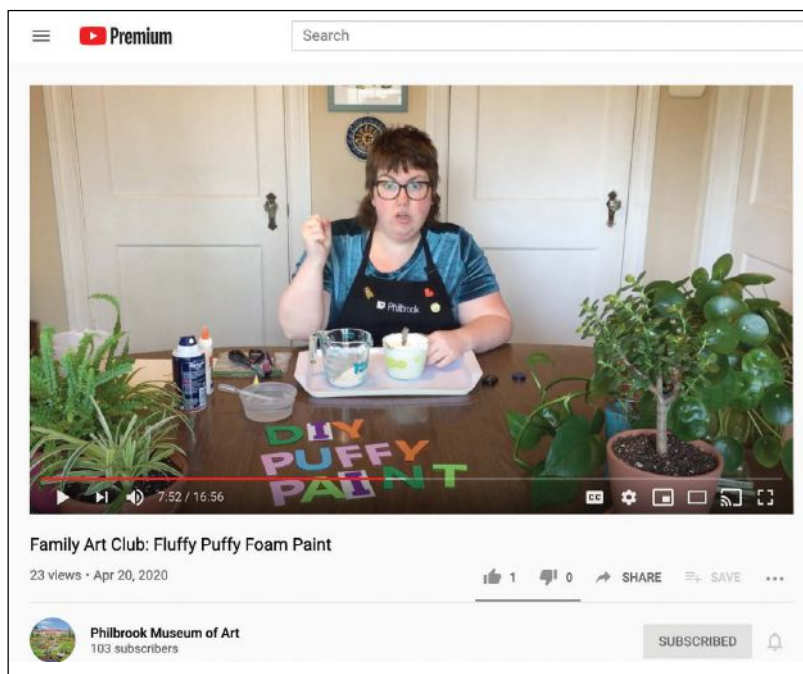
The museum also tripled the size of its vegetable garden in order to supplement Tulsa food banks and created an online marketplace where artists could sell their works and receive 100 percent of the proceeds. The museum committed to giving 10 percent of membership fees they receive during the shutdown and beyond to the United Way COVID-19 relief fund and contributed almost \$5,000 in the first two months.

One particularly popular engagement offering was the opportunity to exchange letters with the museum's two garden cats, Cleo and Perilla, with responses written by staff volunteers. The cats received thousands of letters from all over the world—including an especially moving one from an incarcerated man who said he was lonely and needed to talk.

"It does go to our core mission—connecting people to art and gardens," Stulen says. "Sometimes keeping people connected is really simple."

He anticipates that the approaches he and his team are taking now will alter their actions in the future. "We're allowing things to happen and giving it some

Jenny Fisher, learning & engagement programs manager at Philbrook Museum of Art, leads Family Art Club, a digital initiative created in the wake of the pandemic.



“Sometimes keeping people connected is really simple.”

— Scott Stulen, president and director, Philbrook Museum of Art

Courtesy of Philbrook Museum of Art

space. I'm hoping we can get a little looser, not be quite as buttoned up, and take more risks—and that this will allow us to operate with less resources and still be successful.”

The Work Continues

Micah Parzen, CEO of the Museum of Us, responded to the pandemic by sending out a “Proposal to Serve Community Need” to 15,000 stakeholders, including members, funders, and local politicians, seeking suggestions on how the museum could assist the community.

“In the 1940s the museum was used as a hospital by the Navy, so we said, ‘We are standing at the ready and eager to help,’” Parzen says. The museum sits in Balboa Park and has 60,000 square feet of space that Parzen was eager to repurpose. “We got an amazing response, with many unique and innovative suggestions, including a domestic violence shelter and a tiny homes community for veterans.”

After reviewing the ideas, Parzen took steps to become a food distribution site for the food bank Feeding San Diego. “We had pre-existing, high-level contacts among food distribution and homeless

support nonprofits, and logistically it made sense to try to go in that direction. We were ready to act on that partnership, but the city wasn't comfortable reopening the park to anyone other than essential staff, which precluded us from using our steps and the California Plaza in front of the museum in that way.”

They decided to use the museum's iconic California Tower, which can be seen for miles, to display a message of gratitude on all four sides. “Every night at dusk we project “THANK YOU” in blue lights, in keeping with the worldwide #LightItBlue movement to honor frontline workers everywhere.” The effort garnered extensive media coverage and positive response.

With Balboa Park reopening for outdoor museums, restaurants, and retail, Parzen has again reached out to Feeding San Diego to see if there's still a need the museum can serve. If so, he will ask the city for permission to serve as a food distribution site until the museum can reopen.

In the meantime, the critical work of the museum continues. Fifty-two staff members have been furloughed, and the remaining 11 are focusing on the museum's ongoing decolonizing, consulting, and repatriation efforts.

Remember Your Mission

Washington State Historical Society staff purposely hit pause for several weeks after shutting down to determine how they could help their Tacoma community, says Director Jennifer Kilmer.

“It was challenging for us because we realized we had not been living in a digital sphere,” she says. “We didn't have online exhibits, so we had to evaluate what we could do.” They decided to provide educational resources to help local schools' digital learning efforts.

“We had already created an app that museum visitors could use to dive deeper into our exhibits,” Kilmer says. “So our staff adapted it by adding History Lessons to Go, which can be done from home, and downloadable activity sheets that link to the content in the app's gallery tours. We also retooled some of our traditional classroom curriculum and created units that parents can download to support their children's learning at home.”

For their heritage organization colleagues across the state, they created an extensive list of COVID-19



At a virtual story hour for the 40th anniversary of the Mount St. Helens eruption, Parks and Recreation Interpretive Specialist Alysa Adams led viewers through a volcano hat-making craft.

Courtesy of the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

“The programs we’ve done that have stayed closest to our mission have been the best attended. Something that guides us, even in non-COVID time, is asking not just *can* we do it, but does it play to our strengths?”

— Jennifer Kilmer, director of the Washington State Historical Society

resources for museums on their website as well as a Heritage Outreach Facebook group to connect and share common concerns.

They also launched “Collecting the COVID-19 Experience,” which asks community members to document the pandemic by submitting anything that helps tell the story of living through it. The first 250 items included videos, photos, quarantine journals, and the promise of a quilt made by quilters from across the state. The items will eventually become an exhibit that aligns with the museum’s mission of “partnering with our communities to explore how history connects us all.”

And by presenting traditional live programming online, the society significantly broadened its reach.

The Mount St. Helens 40th Anniversary Story Hour, a program with Washington State Parks that featured five storytellers sharing their memories of the 1980 volcanic eruption, had more than 10,000 views, far beyond the reach of an in-person program.

“We can now reach out all over the state—we need to keep including this virtual format,” Kilmer says. “Going forward, community engagement looks exciting and daunting. This has been an opportunity for us to become much better

known, but we still have to ask, ‘What’s our strength?’ The programs we’ve done that have stayed closest to our mission have been the best attended. Something that guides us, even in non-COVID time, is asking not just *can* we do it, but does it play to our strengths?”

Meet People Where They Are

When the pandemic struck, Dumbarton House Executive Director Karen Daly and her 11 staff members immediately focused on the critical public health needs of its Washington, DC, area. With four other local house museums and a museum collections contractor, they launched a PPE drive and were able to contribute 2,500 pairs of nitrile gloves plus homemade masks and Lysol to Unity Health Care, a network of community health centers in DC.

They also developed a biweekly e-newsletter to share news and resources with the members of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America (NSCDA) and affiliated museums and historic sites across the country. And they created new virtual programming, which included the “Cross Stitch in Quarantine” workshop and the regular Great Dumbarton Bake Off, an Instagram story where anyone can make and share recipes. Between 100 and 200 people watch the latest baking story every Wednesday, 10 times the interaction of Dumbarton House’s other Instagram stories. In addition, staff created digital puzzles made from works in the collection to share on the NSCDA website (nscda.org/nscda-digital-puzzles).

Despite those successes, Daly didn’t want to limit Dumbarton House to online outreach. “People do want virtual opportunities, but there is some kind of exhaustion with screen time. It’s important to look

In Dumbarton House’s East Garden, the Little Free Library has become a community favorite.

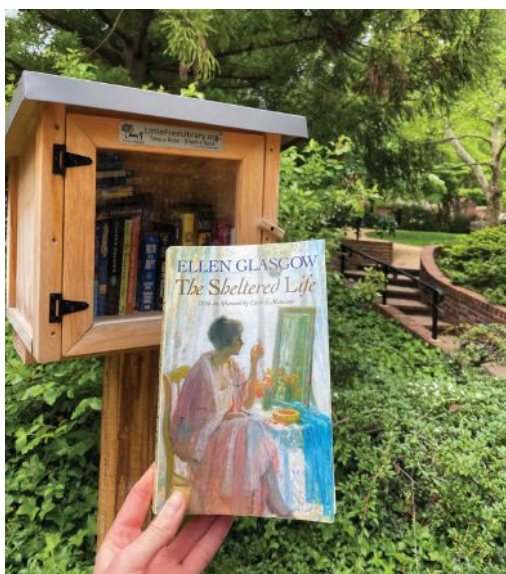


Photo by Kelly Paras



Chad Smith (right), head pastry chef for the Old Salem Museums & Gardens Winkler Bakery, and James Whitley, the Second Harvest Food Bank driver, load 250 loaves of donated fresh-baked bread onto the truck.

for things that are therapeutic and rejuvenating, something people can do as a family. We are an urban green space in a residential community, so we decided to leave our grounds and gardens, which are usually inaccessible, open to the neighbors.”

People use the grounds to jog and walk, have picnics, and work using the free Wi-Fi. “We’ve had very positive social media posts, and multiple families have told me how much they appreciate the space, especially since the playgrounds closed,” Daly says. “This reinforced that it’s important to meet people where they are, and we’re finding that there’s a real, genuine need for that outdoor space. It’s something our community really values, so we will be keeping the gardens open once the museum has reopened.”

Feeding Body, Mind, and Soul

Franklin Vagnone, president and CEO of Old Salem Museums & Gardens/Museum of Early Southern Decorative Arts in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, also owns an international consulting firm. Through his communications with colleagues around the world, he understood what was coming and got a head start on implementing new online programming.

The museum launched the Old Salem Exploratorium, a series of five- to 10-minute

educational videos that have included craft workshops, a seed-saving lab, and behind-the-scenes looks at the collection, and the popular History Nerd Alerts, social media posts that highlight collection items related to illness, health, and medicine.

The museum has also focused on food-related outreach efforts. “The community we serve is in transition,” Vagnone says. “Winston-Salem has gone from being a fairly affluent community to one that’s in need of a lot of help; there’s a lot of food insecurity. So when the public bakeries were closing, our head baker [at the living history site] said, ‘Why don’t I just go in by myself and bake?’”

The museum has donated more than 2,000 loaves of bread to Second Harvest Food Bank. It also turned some of its flower gardens into victory gardens, and the first biweekly harvest resulted in 140 pounds of vegetables going to the food bank.

The garden also produced some unexpected sustenance. “A woman from New York saw one of our Twitter videos where my husband and I are working in the garden, and she sent a message thanking me because the peaceful sound of birds in the background was drowning out the sound of the New York ambulances,” Vagnone says. “That peaceful quality is in itself part of feeding the soul.”

He expects that many of these outreach efforts will become permanent. “Our ability to serve the larger community is too important not to continue. We’ve undergone a drastic shift in the way we operate, and there’s been an amazing transformation of how a living history site can help the community. The community has embraced us—they see us now as a real, tangible community asset, whereas before they might have seen us as a nostalgic and pretty place to walk.”

He also hopes this type of outreach results in more systemic changes among museums and the entire nonprofit community. “This is the kind of DNA we should be swimming in. We should invert the traditional model of focusing only on ourselves, and use our collections, our histories, and our stories to help our communities.”

Mary Ellen Collins is a freelance writer based in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Championing Museums During a Pandemic

By Barry Szczesny and Ember Farber

It is an unprecedented time to be lobbying for the museum community. I have been a lobbyist for more than 20

years and have never experienced anything like the chaos, speed, and around-the-clock intensity of working to include museums in

recent COVID-19 economic relief legislation.

In early March, we were focused on following up from a very successful Museums Advocacy Day when the virus hit the fan, so to speak. The Alliance quickly pivoted to lobbying virtually with a laser focus on COVID-19 economic relief legislation, working directly with Capitol Hill, and activating our network of museum advocates across the country to identify the field's needs and communicate them to the United States Congress. We also engaged with multiple coalitions and partner organizations within the larger nonprofit community on legislative priorities to benefit the entire nonprofit sector, including museums.

In late March Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act—a massive COVID-19 economic relief bill that included important support for museums. It was the third round of legislation providing emergency response funding and by far the largest, at an estimated \$2.2 trillion.

Due to the tireless work of museum advocates, we successfully ensured that museums were included in this critical economic relief package. We estimated that,



For Freedoms (Hank Willis Thomas and Emily Shur in collaboration with Eric Gottesman and Wyatt Gallery of For Freedoms), *Freedom of Speech*, 2018

collectively, museums were losing at least \$33 million per day due to the nationwide shutdown. With our allies across the field, AAM delivered a powerful joint letter to Congress with an audacious ask—\$4 billion in funding for museums through June 30—as well as a universal charitable deduction. Museum advocates sent more than 33,000 messages to Congress within two weeks, many of them personalized. And we were heard. The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) received \$200 million collectively (\$50 million for IMLS and \$75 million for each endowment).

Additionally, we collaborated with others in the nonprofit sector to ensure nonprofit organizations, including museums, were eligible for small business loans, including the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) with loan forgiveness provisions. PPP proved to be a lifeline for many museums and their employees. The legislation also included charitable giving incentives, including a universal charitable deduction.

Letters like those from Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and House of Representatives members from New York City supported \$1 billion and \$4 billion asks for museums. And advocates were able to personally reach House and Senate leadership to make the case directly. We are proud of the field and this amazing effort during this crisis. But we also

realize that we have much more work to do.

It is apparent that the nation's museum community faces an existential threat from the closures required to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Addressing this threat requires congressional action beyond the CARES Act. Museums are anticipating closures and reduced visitorship through at least 2020. Normal revenue from admissions fees, retail sales, and event rentals has ceased, and charitable contributions are expected to continue to decline. Amidst these challenges museums are navigating complex decisions related to planning phased reopenings and struggling with when and how to do so.

Only a few days after the CARES Act passed, we began advocating for additional aid in a fourth major economic relief package, which we still are fighting for as of this writing. The Alliance is urging Congress to pass several measures, including:

Small Business Administration (SBA) and Main Street Lending Program. The Alliance supports extending the SBA's Paycheck Protection Program to nonprofits with more than 500 employees, including museums, and making them eligible for loan forgiveness. It would also allow existing PPP borrowers to apply for additional loans. In addition, it would adjust the Main Street Lending Program or other mid-size loan programs to cover and offer loan forgiveness to nonprofit employers with more than 500 employees.

Funding for Museums through IMLS. The Alliance supports allocating \$6 billion specifically for museums, to be administered by the IMLS Office of Museum Services, for general operating support and payroll; assisting museums in developing and sharing distance learning content; and pandemic recovery planning and implementation, including improvements to protect employees and visitors and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Charitable Deduction Expansions. The Alliance supports expanding the universal charitable deduction provision in the CARES Act by removing the \$300 cap and extending the act's removal of the 60 percent limit on adjusted gross income that may be deducted through charitable gifts of cash.

It will be critically important for the museum field to remain engaged this fall, through the election season, and with a new Congress and potential new administration next year. We will continue to employ relevant advocacy tools, such as this spring's request letter from more than 50 national, regional, and state museum associations; a support letter in May from Representatives Debbie Dingell (D-MI) and Fred Upton (R-MI) with 88 bipartisan House member signatures; a support letter from Senator Cory Booker signed by 23 of his Senate colleagues; a support letter from more than 200 local Chambers of Commerce from all 50 states supporting museums' legislative priorities; and Zoom briefings

on museum priorities for Capitol Hill staff. And the Alliance will continue identifying and sharing information about opportunities to secure financial relief and support as the result of legislation related to COVID-19 and museums. This work is in addition to the Alliance's ongoing efforts on the regular annual appropriations process and policy priorities.

Together we can continue to increase support for museums.

Advocate for Museums During COVID-19

Since March we have worked quickly and continually to engage with partners across the field, craft and articulate field-wide asks, mobilize museum professionals and supporters, and directly communicate with Capitol Hill. And we are heartened that we are in a far better position than during the 2008-2009 Great Recession recovery efforts, which saw museums and zoos and aquariums under direct threat—and some outright excluded in recovery funding. In the CARES Act, we secured dedicated funding for agencies that support museums. But we know the situation is dire and the need is great, so we continue to fight for funding and policies to further support museums both in any economic relief and recovery bills and in the annual appropriations process.

There's never been a more important time to advocate for museums and your role in the field. The Alliance has been working hard to advocate for museums and provide you with the resources you need to educate your legislators on the pandemic's impact on your museum and your work, and how museums are continuing to serve their communities before, during, and after COVID-19.

And the museum field has responded. You have sent more than 45,000 messages, many with your personal stories, to Congress using the Alliance's online advocacy tools. These messages have been, and continue to be, critical in garnering federal support for museums. Visit the Alliance's website to learn more about our advocacy for museums, extensive advocacy resources, and additional ways you can advocate today.

Invite Congress to Visit Your Museum

Inviting local, state, and federal elected officials and their staff members into your museum is a powerful way to show them the unique work museums do—from world-class exhibitions to working with local students and community members on critical life skills. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic, federal,

state, and local legislators are eager to connect with their constituents and communities across all available platforms.

Since 2012, #InviteCongress has been a national field-wide effort to encourage and empower museums of all types and sizes to invite their federal, state, and local legislators and stakeholders into the museum during the month of August, when legislators are typically home, to see firsthand what museums are and do. This year AAM encourages museums to take advantage of virtual and telephone opportunities to connect with legislators as well.

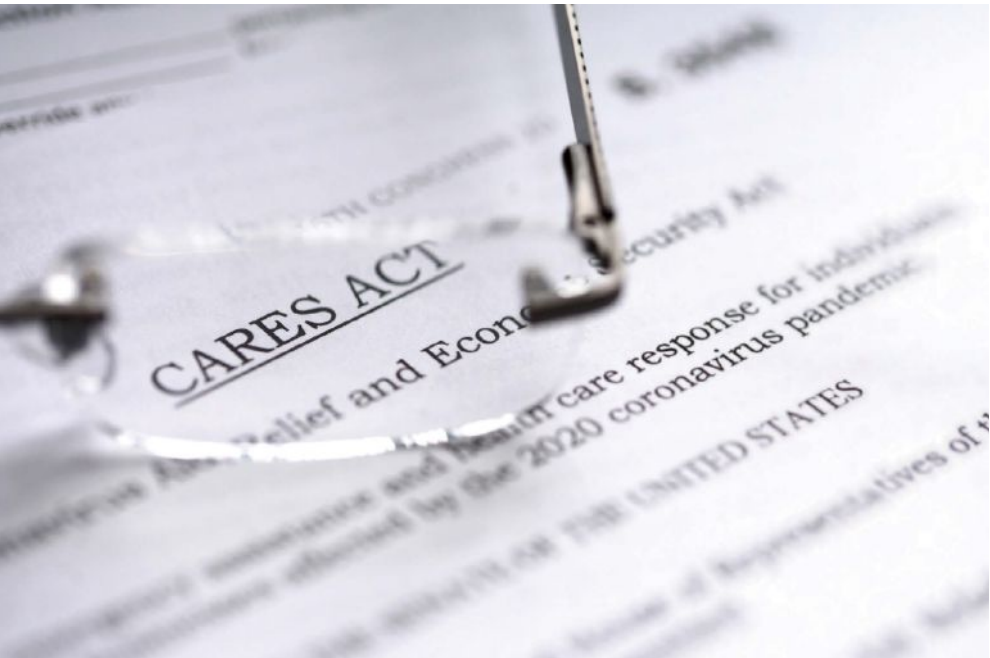
This fall, Congress will continue to consider legislation impacting museums, including remaining FY 2021 appropriations bills and potential additional economic relief legislation. It will be critical for museum advocates to continue to make the case for federal, state, and local support for museums over the coming weeks. Our updated How-To Guide—now including information on participating in and hosting virtual events and telephone meetings—makes it easy for museums of all types and sizes to connect with elected officials throughout the year. Be sure to use #InviteCongress on social media.

Keep Making the Case for Museums—It's also an Election Year!

We encourage you to follow the AAM website, social media, and Alliance Advocacy Alerts for updated news, information, and

NOTE

IMPORTANT NOTE: AAM Nonprofit Voter Resources information and links are provided for informational purposes only and do not serve as formal legal advice. It's always recommended that you consult your own legal counsel with specific questions about your or your museum's activities.




resources to use your voice to make the case for museums.

We know that some museums participate in powerful activities throughout the year, from hosting citizenship and naturalization ceremonies to providing visitors with voter registration information and forms and serving as local polling places. While public charities are prohibited from election activity that supports or opposes a candidate or a political party, charities and museums can continue to advocate for their mission and participate in voter engagement during an election year, or any other year.

The Alliance's **Nonprofit Voter Resources** provides

extensive informational materials and answers to frequently asked questions about how nonprofits, including museums, can participate in advocacy and lobbying, nonpartisan election activity, and voter engagement, highlighting available resources from Nonprofit VOTE, Independent Sector, and the Alliance for Justice's Bolder Advocacy initiative.

 **Barry Szczesny** is director of government relations & public policy and **Ember Farber** is director of advocacy at the American Alliance of Museums.

Advertiser Guide

10-31 Company
Inside Front Cover

Advocacy Toolkit
page **15**

Design and
Production Inc
page **1**

General Facility
Report
page **11**

GLASBAU HAHN
America
page **3**

Museum Marketplace
page **17**

Rowman & Littlefield
**Inside
Back Cover**

Trends Watch
page **23**

Volunteer Program
Toolkit
page **7**

RESOURCES

Information on museum-related legislation

aam-us.org/programs/about-museums/financial-relief-and-resources/#Legislation

AAM Advocacy Alerts

aam-us.org/category/advocacy-alert/

Nonprofit Voter Resources

aam-us.org/programs/advocacy/nonprofit-voter-resources/



RADICAL REIMAGINING

AAM Virtual Annual Meeting & Museum Expo
MAY 18 & JUNE 1-4

Revisiting the first #AAMvirtual in our 114-year history

At the AAM Virtual Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo, museum colleagues and students from all 50 states, Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, and 26 countries around the world connected during an unprecedented time for the museum field. After pivoting to a virtual conference during the COVID-19 pandemic, sessions were reimagined for our current moment—including 15 sessions designed to address concerns and challenges in the COVID-19 era. Due to the generosity of donors, AAM was able to offer a deeply discounted (\$25) registration rate to all who wished to attend but were furloughed or unable to afford the full cost of registration. **Thank you to all of our #AAMvirtual attendees** for making this year's Annual Meeting such a success. As one attendee said, "This experience is so great and all of your hard work at adapting to COVID-19 shows with every click!! Loving every minute!"

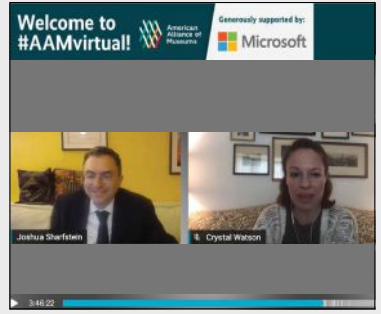


« **Available for Free:** The recording and transcript of "Racism, Unrest, and the Role of the Museum Field" with Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole, Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III, and Lori Fogarty, and moderated by AAM's Andrew Plumley, is now available to all at: bit.ly/unrest-panel

All #AAMvirtual general sessions are free and available to all at aam-us.org.



Laura Lott, AAM's President and CEO, gave opening remarks for the first virtual conference in AAM's 114-year history.



75+ Sessions for our current times. Above: Dr. Josh Sharfstein and Dr. Crystal Watson (Johns Hopkins Univ.) on public health implications for museums reopening during COVID-19.



Museum professionals around the world connected during more than **10 virtual networking events**—including a virtual reception, moderated chats, and events hosted by AAM Professional Networks.



Surprise Moments of Joy: Tamar Greene (cast of Hamilton on Broadway), Don Wildman (Travel Channel), Bryan Stevenson (Equal Justice Initiative), Sue the T. Rex (The Field Museum), Darren Walker (Ford Foundation), and Elizabeth Alexander (Mellon Foundation).

At a Glance:

Nearly
4,000 Attendees
75 Sessions
248 Speakers
79 Scholarships

THREE FREE FEATURES

41 Exhibiting Companies MUSEUMEXPO	11 Posters for Download POSTERS	17 Bay Area Museums Highlighted MUSEUM SHOWCASE
--	---	---

TO VISIT ANYTIME: bit.ly/visit-aam-virtual

Stay tuned for #AAM2021!
LEARN MORE: annualmeeting.aam-us.org

The Alliance wishes to thank these organizations that generously supported our Virtual Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo:

Signature



Visionary



Leader



Patron



Supporter



Friend

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive • Chicago Scenic Studios, Inc.
Frank Showcase Systems • MA in Museum Studies – University of San Francisco
Roto • Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

REFLECTION



These words—“national unity”—must not be allowed to become merely a high-sounding phrase, a vague generality, a pious hope, to which everyone can give lip-service. They must be made to have real meaning in terms of the daily thoughts and acts of every man, woman, and child in our land during the coming year and during the years that lie ahead.

For national unity is, in a very real and a very deep sense, the fundamental safeguard of all democracy.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt
State of the Union Address, January 3, 1940

AP Images J. David Ake

NEW RESOURCES FOR _____
MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS

N E W

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Developing and Managing Traveling Exhibitions
Second Edition

By Rebecca Buck, Jean Gilmore, and Irene Taurins

Organizing a traveling exhibition for the first time or the tenth time? This second edition of *On the Road Again* covers all you need to know about touring an exhibition to multiple venues. Appropriate for staff at all types of museums, particularly those at small and midsize institutions, this title is a must for every museum bookshelf.

2020 • 116 pages

978-1-5381-3077-3 • \$35.00 • Paper

978-1-5381-3076-6 • \$80.00 • Cloth

978-1-5381-3078-0 • \$33.00 • eBook



N E W

MUSEUM REGISTRATION METHODS

Sixth Edition

Edited by John E. Simmons and Toni M. Kiser

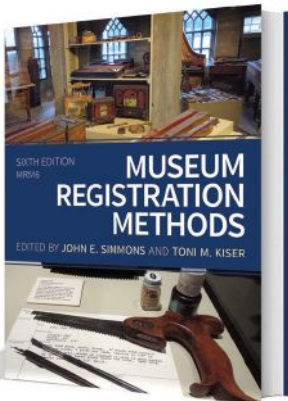
The sixth edition of our classic *Museum Registration Methods* is a comprehensive guide to registration and collections management of museum collections, from acquisition to use and deaccessioning.

2020 • 604 pages

978-1-5381-1311-0 • \$95.00 • Paper

978-1-5381-1310-3 • \$175.00 • Cloth

978-1-5381-1312-7 • \$90.00 • eBook



N E W

FINDING HISTORY WHERE YOU LEAST EXPECT IT

Site-Based Strategies for Teaching about the Past

Edited by Jill M. Gradwell and Kathryn H. Leacock

This book explores innovative museum programs across diverse sites. The chapters highlight how museum programming, object-based learning, and site-specific education can impact learning. It is aimed at educators, programing developers, university students, and teachers to illustrate the innovative and engaging programming anyone can do.

2020 • 194 pages

978-1-5381-4088-8 • \$32.00 • Paper

978-1-5381-4087-1 • \$75.00 • Cloth

978-1-5381-4089-5 • \$30.00 • eBook



SAVE 20% when you order our classic
at www.rowman.com with
promo code **AAMPRESS20**

ROWMAN &
LITTLEFIELD





**American
Alliance of
Museums**

2451 Crystal Drive, Suite 1005
Arlington, VA 22202

A BENEFIT OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE
AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS

From all of us at AAM— thank you for being part of our Alliance.

The Alliance was founded in 1906 as a way to bring museums together, and that mandate has only grown stronger over the years.

In these uncertain times, one thing is clear—we're in this together. As a member, your dues not only provide you with valuable information and connect you with museum colleagues around the world, they also support our work to champion the entire field.

During this crisis, your membership dues have supported:

- Free, comprehensive COVID-19 resources for the field, including financial relief and resources for museums and museum professionals, reopening guidance, and equitable response strategies.
- Our ability to aggressively advocate for the inclusion of museums in federal financial relief and increase charitable giving incentives. This includes our ability to empower advocates to send over 50,000 letters to Congress in recent months.
- Making diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) resources freely available to all. No matter if you're just starting this work or if your institution has been doing this work for years, AAM is dedicated to providing the resources you need to drive and sustain DEAI in your museum.

Your membership dues are a critical source of support for AAM. We would not be able to produce these resources without your help. Together, we will tackle our uncertain present reality and look to the future where museums not only survive, but thrive.



Thank you for your continued support,
The AAM Team