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Facing Change is AAM's field-wide diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) initiative and responds to extensive and multi-year research that underscores the need and desire for change. Facing Change provides the framework, training, and resources for museum leaders and trustees to build inclusive cultures within their institutions' boards that more accurately reflect the communities they serve. Over fifty museums are taking part in this unprecedented national two-year initiative to diversify museum boards and leadership. Participating institutions represent a cross-section of museums of all types and sizes.

CHICAGOLAND

Aurora Regional Fire Museum
Chicago Botanic Garden
Chicago History Museum
Intuit: The Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art
Lincoln Park Zoo
Museum of the Grand Prairie
Naper Settlement
Oak Park River Forest Museum
The DuSable Museum of African American History

TEXAS

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston (CAMH)
DiverseWorks
Fort Bend History Association
Fort Worth Museum of Science and History
Holocaust Museum Houston
Perot Museum of Nature and Science
Space Center Houston
Dallas Heritage Village
Witte Museum

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI

B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center
International Museum of Muslim Cultures
Lauren Rogers Museum of Art
Mississippi Museum of Art
Museum of the Mississippi Delta
Mississippi Department of Archives and History

TWIN CITIES

Anoka County Historical Society
Bell Museum
Goldstein Museum of Design
Hennepin History Museum
Minneapolis Institute of Art
Minnesota Museum of American Art
Ramsey County Historical Society
Science Museum of Minnesota
The American Swedish Institute
University of Minnesota Landscape Arboretum
Walker Art Center
Weisman Art Museum

BAY AREA

Bay Area Discovery Museum
Filoli Historic House and Garden
Museum of Sonoma County
Oakland Museum of California
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA)
Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose
San Jose Museum of Quilts & Textiles
The Contemporary Jewish Museum
The Exploratorium
UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive (BAMPFA)
Yerba Buena Center for the Arts

Interested in participating in Facing Change?

Join our field-wide Museum Staff & Trustee Demographic Study.

Complete this interest form, <http://bit.ly/3t6Wk2r>

Your museum can also be considered for a future cohort in the Facing Change program.

Sign up for more information, <http://bit.ly/3t0Vhkg>

MARCH
APRIL
2021
ISSUE

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Cover:
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MUSEUM (ISSN 0027-4089)

MARCH/APRIL 2021, VOLUME 100, NO. 2

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.

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Rebuilding for Our Future

The past year has demonstrated where we, as a society, have found strength: in our capacity to care for one another, our perseverance to hope in the face of devastating loss, and our boundless creativity even during times of distress.

Simultaneously, it has shown us where we have unfinished work: in the inequities of our education, law enforcement, and health care systems, to name a few. As institutions that reflect, present, and interpret history and contemporary society, museums must challenge themselves to address these societal deficiencies proactively, to be pillars for our communities' healing, and to be leaders in our nation's recovery from the pandemic and the rapid rise of disinformation.

Boldly addressing many of these issues requires a deep examination of our past but also strategically planning for our future. The Alliance will be with you every step of the way through recovery and rebuilding. One example is the *TrendsWatch: Navigating a Disrupted Future* report from our Center for the Future of Museums, excerpted in the pages of this magazine. The new report responds to the events of the past year by examining five primary themes: redressing systemic inequalities of wealth and power; essential technologies for success; caring for the vulnerable; shifts in higher education; and surviving the pandemic through strategic foresight.

It includes critical and timely questions about power, sustainability, community, education, and survival for museum professionals at all levels to ask of their institutions. We urge you to use this report with your boards and in your planning processes, to ask yourselves difficult questions, and to be bold in how you decide to change, experiment, and be part of your communities' rebuilding.

When museums first closed in an effort to slow the pandemic a year ago, a comment I first heard from Scott Stulen of the Philbrook Museum of Art, that “the museums we closed will not be the museums we reopen,” reverberated across our field.

We must embrace that reality, difficult as it is right now, and use this disruption to address many of the structures that have not served us—from precarious business models to the inequities embedded into how we work. We need new models to be successful and meaningful in the future. Our publics are calling on museums to be relevant to them in new ways—to be integral in addressing societal issues, not just a reflection of them.

Now is the time to dismantle the old and rebuild anew; it's time to rebuild a better museum field. While difficult work, we hope that as you use *TrendsWatch* to envision and plan for your and your museum's future, you will find joy and hope for the future we are boldly building together.

1/14/21



Laura L. Lott is the Alliance's president and CEO. Follow Laura on Twitter at [@LottLaura](#).

Pandemic Trends

3X

The difference
in COVID-19
mortality rates
between Black/
Latinx and white
Americans.

1,103

Number of virtual
programs listed on
the Museum Distance
Learning portal.

72/60/55

Percentage of
Latinx/Black/Native
American households
reporting serious
financial problems
during the pandemic
(compared to 36% of
white households).

6.9^x

Increased rate of isolation-related
depression in older adults during
the COVID-19 pandemic.

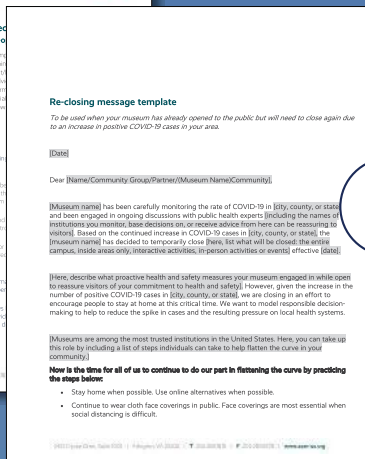
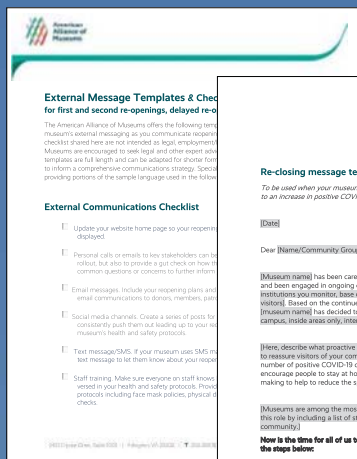
Sources: Clockwise from top: American Public Media Research Lab; AAM/EdCom; American Geriatrics Society; NPR/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health

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



Reopening Starter Kit for Museums

While the prospect of safely reopening your museum to the public is an exciting one, the long list of tasks involved can be daunting and stressful. How should you communicate your reopening, what training does staff need, and what signage is needed? We know these are just a few of the questions running through your mind. To make reopening just a little easier, AAM has created a Reopening Starter Kit for Museums, including printable health and safety signage with customizable design files, messaging templates, and checklists, in one convenient package.



Retail price: \$15. AAM Tier 2 and 3, Ally, Industry, and Individual Members receive an additional 30% off.

To get your starter kit, visit:
aam-us.org/toolkits



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MUSEUM EXAMPLES



The Phillips Collection

The Phillips Collection has taken a multidimensional approach to advancing racial equity. Its board of trustees formed a Diversity Advisory Committee to examine the composition of the board and create a plan for greater representation and inclusion in governance. It created the chief diversity officer (CDO) position and launched a paid internship and fellowship program to diversify its talent pipeline. The museum partnered with the Town Hall Education Arts Recreation Campus to create an outpost in the (majority Black, low-income) seventh and eighth wards of DC.

Location: Washington, DC

Learn more: aam-us.org/2020/06/19/the-phillips-collections-plan-for-advancing-racial-equity/

Oakland Museum of California

As one of 50 museums participating in AAM's Facing Change initiative, the Oakland Museum of California is creating a diversity and equity plan. The museum has set a goal of recruiting at least two new trustees of color; has implemented new processes for recruiting, hiring, and compensation designed to reduce bias and promote equity; and is offering training around equity and inclusion for all museum staff, including all-staff trainings and customized workshops for specific functions. The museum also prioritizes community partnerships that result in programming that resonates with a culturally and racially diverse audience.

Location: Oakland, CA

Learn more: aam-us.org/2019/09/02/no-stone-left-unturned/

San Diego Natural History Museum

The San Diego Natural History Museum remained closed to the public throughout 2020, even after local regulations would have allowed it to reopen. Education staff shifted to producing digital resources for schools, aftercare programs, and other caregivers. The museum deployed prerecorded and live programming to replace traditional school visits and help students experience nature and meet its scientists. Its social media pivoted from attracting visitors to helping local residents explore and enjoy the outdoors.

Location: San Diego, CA

Learn more: aam-us.org/2020/09/16/why-were-staying-closed/

Rhiannon Newman; Oakland Museum of California; San Diego Natural History Museum



The Corning Museum of Glass

In 2019, The Corning Museum of Glass began to examine how to monetize its YouTube channel through advertising revenue. Having grown its subscriptions to more than 160,000 (reflecting a 20 percent increase in the first half of the year), the museum projected six-figure revenue in 2020. The success of this project was grounded in the high-quality content the museum had been publishing on YouTube since it launched the channel in 2007 and the 1.5 staff positions dedicated to content production and channel management.

Location: Corning, NY

Learn more: cmog.org/glassmaking/studio/video-series

Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia

To connect with stressed out and socially isolated students during the pandemic, the Georgia Museum of Art at the University of Georgia worked with the university's student association to spread out its annual Student Nights over a longer period to reduce crowds, created socially distanced scavenger hunts through the galleries, and provided "to-go" art-making kits. It also hosted an outdoor dance performance, made its covered parking area available for studio art classes offered by the neighboring Lamar Dodd School of Art, and provided indoor and outdoor practice space for students from the Hugh Hodgson School of Music.

Location: Athens, GA

Learn more: aam-us.org/2020/11/09/tales-from-campus-connecting-community-in-the-time-of-covid/

Louisiana Children's Museum

During the COVID-19 closure, the Louisiana Children's Museum made its building and grounds available to Langston Hughes Academy, a FirstLine charter school in the city whose student population is 98 percent Black, with 74 percent eligible for free lunch. While the museum was closed to the public due to the pandemic, preschool and kindergarten classes had exclusive access to the museum's brand-new building on 8.5 acres.

Location: New Orleans, LA

Learn more: aam-us.org/2020/11/02/my-primary-school-is-in-a-museum-us-pandemic-edition/

MUSEUM EXAMPLES



Catalyzing Newport

In 2016, Catalyzing Newport, guided by cultural organizations including the Newport Art Museum, the Rhode Island Historical Society, the International Tennis Hall of Fame, and the Preservation Society of Newport County, commissioned “Mayor’s Office 2061,” a pop-up installation imagining what it might be like to live and work in Newport in the future. Working from a scenario written by futurist Jake Dunagan, designers worked with local museum staff, artists, and students to help the public envision the effects of rising sea levels on their community. This initiative was sponsored by the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities.

Location: Newport, RI

Learn more: bit.ly/Newport2061

Urban Agriculture Resilience Program

In June 2020, the US Botanic Garden and American Public Gardens Association awarded \$378,000 to 28 public gardens across the United States affected by the COVID-19 pandemic to help sustain urban agriculture and community food growing. The Urban Agriculture Resilience Program aims to grow capacity, prevent shortfalls, and gather best practices from established programs across the US public gardens community.

Location: 19 states and Washington, DC

Learn more: publicgardens.org

Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

When it closed to the public on March 15, 2020, the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden made some of its most popular animals available for video appearances at virtual meetings and happy hours. All animal calls are 15 minutes long and can be customized to the caller’s request. FaceTime with Fiona the Hippo is priced at \$750, and other offerings include “Goat-2-Meeting” and “Llama on the Line.”

Location: Cincinnati, OH

Learn more: cincinnatizoo.org/news-releases/invite-a-cincinnati-zoo-animal-to-your-next-virtual-meeting/

How is your museum responding to the challenges of 2021?

Pitch an idea for a guest post about your work at aam-us.org/programs/about-aam/idea-submission-form, and it may be featured on the Alliance or Center for the Future of Museums blogs.

Mayor’s Office 2061, Dave Hansen; Urban Agriculture Resilience Program; Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden

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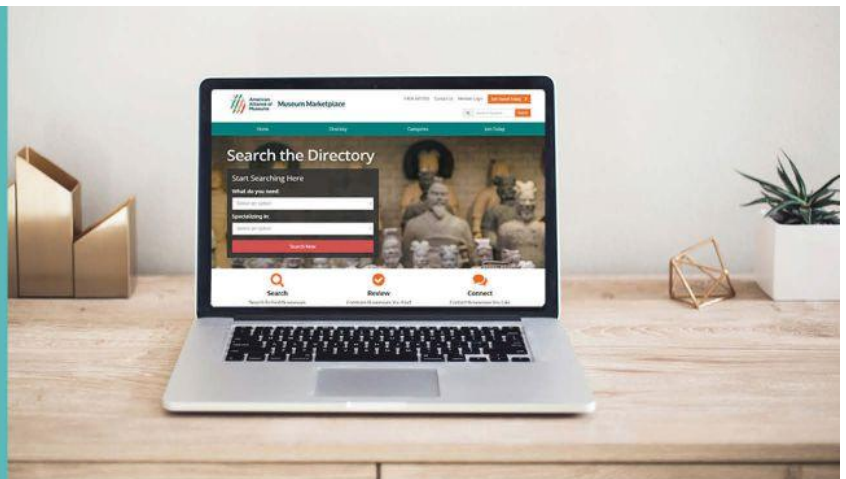
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The Era of Traditional Planning Is Over

Futures-thinking can help museums survive in an era of uncertainty

By Elizabeth Merritt

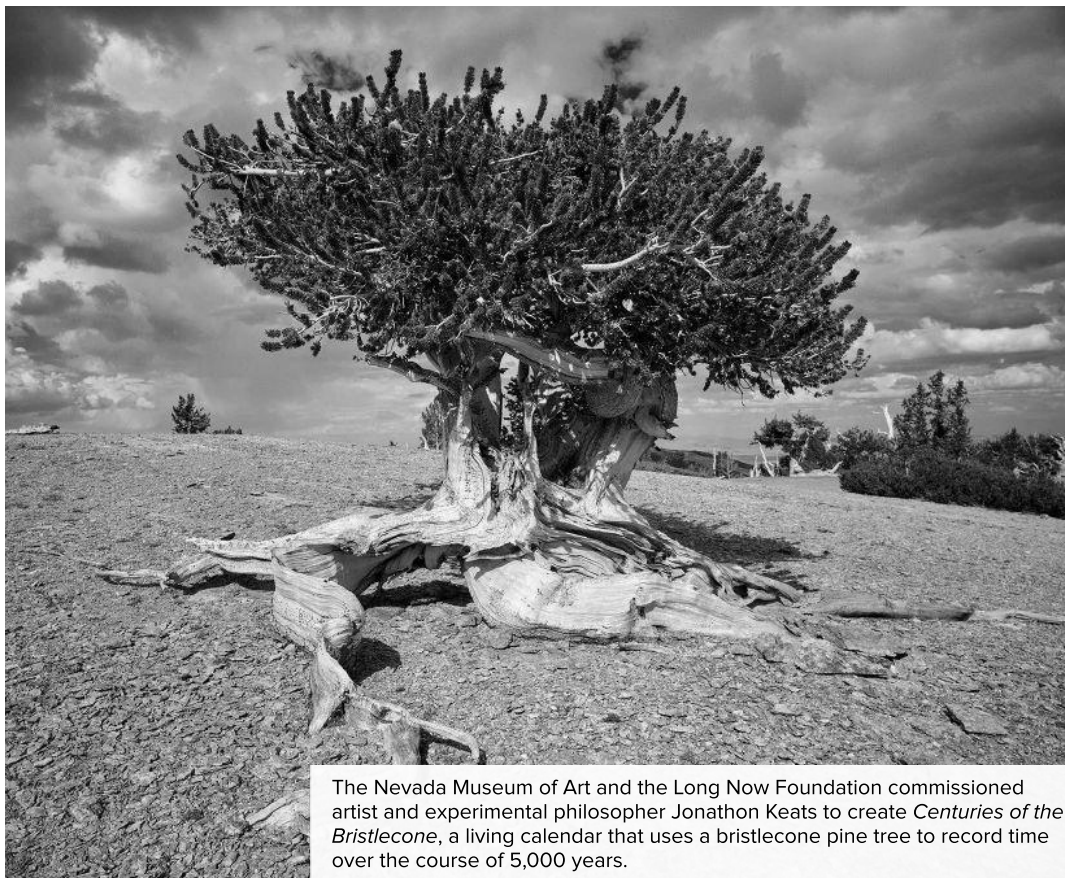
“Inconceivable!’ You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.”

—Mandy Patinkin, in the role of Inigo Montoya, *The Princess Bride*

Last year was truly a “syndemic” year—

shaped by multiple cataclysms, including a global pandemic, wildfires on the West Coast that burned over 5.8 million acres, six major hurricanes, and even a plague of locusts. On top of these disasters, we faced a long overdue—but still painful—reckoning with the long-term blight of racism. While it might seem like epic bad luck to face so many crises at once, in fact, these were not independent events—they are deeply entangled with each other and stem from forces that will continue to reshape the world in coming decades. Responding to these disruptions will not be a matter of finding solutions and moving on. It will require fundamental shifts in how we assess risk, navigate uncertainty, and create strategies that can succeed no matter what transpires.

Courtesy of Ian von Collier



The Nevada Museum of Art and the Long Now Foundation commissioned artist and experimental philosopher Jonathon Keats to create *Centuries of the Bristlecone*, a living calendar that uses a bristlecone pine tree to record time over the course of 5,000 years.

One of the most critical shifts will be in museum planning. Pre-pandemic, museums were only slowly adopting formal planning processes at all. In the past decade, this lack of timely, comprehensive planning was the deficit most frequently cited by the American Alliance of Museums' Accreditation Commission in its decisions. To help museums meet that challenge, the commission created a detailed description of good planning. But given the speed and scale of disruption in the coming decade, this model may not be enough. Museums need to enhance their planning with "strategic foresight"—a

mindset and methodology that helps organizations manage uncertainty and prepare flexible, adaptive responses. Rather than using a plan to guide them through a familiar landscape to a known destination, museums must learn to forge on without knowing what lies ahead, dodging and weaving as new obstacles arise, constantly recalibrating their course toward a preferable future.

Strategic foresight is the practice of systematically observing current events and using the findings as a springboard for envisioning *potential* futures—the many ways things may play out. Foresight both expands the

imagination and compresses uncertainties into a manageable number of possibilities. It combats apathy by empowering organizations to envision desirable outcomes and identify what they can do to create their *preferred* future—the world they hope to live in. Traditional planning is prone to creating a strong but brittle plan designed around one set of assumptions. Foresight helps organizations create a portfolio of actions to deploy as needed and identify strategies that may succeed in a wide variety of circumstances. Museums can use the agility they develop by integrating the skills of strategic foresight into a continual

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TIPS FOR CREATING AND USING SCENARIOS

Ground your scenarios—stories describing potential futures—in trends and events that could have the biggest impact on the museum and its community.

Use or adapt existing scenarios created for the field (see Resources below), or create your own.

Consider four distinct scenarios:

- Explore what you believe to be the probable future.
- Envision what would happen in a future of extreme constraint.
- Help the museum respond to an unexpected abundance of resources.
- Introduce a “wild card”—a potential disruption that would significantly change the museum’s practice.

Craft strategies based on these scenarios:

- What tactics are likely to be effective under a wide range of circumstances?
- Which could you implement as it becomes clear what route the future is taking?

planning process to manage the coming years of intense and rapid change.

Among the many practical tools included in the 2021 edition of AAM’s *TrendsWatch* is an introduction to strategic foresight and a framework for integrating foresight into your organization’s

daily work. Used together with the training, reports, research, and commentary that the Alliance’s Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) has been creating for over a decade, *TrendsWatch: Navigating a Disrupted Future* can accelerate the evolution of museum planning. I like to believe

that museums that have followed the work of CFM for the past 12 years were a bit better prepared to face the challenges posed by 2020. Museums that adopt foresight now will be better equipped to face the next year as well.

This prescription may seem like one more imperative on top of the difficult day-to-day work of holding the museum together. But as you contemplate the energy it will take to integrate new ways of thinking and planning into your work, consider this: pandemics are not the only “unseen” but predictable disruptions we face. At some point in the next century there will be a major earthquake along one or more of the fault lines on the West Coast. Security experts think it highly likely that the US will experience a cyberattack in coming decades that could bring down significant portions of critical infrastructure—communications, electoral systems, the Internet, or the power grid.

These disruptions will be layered on top of an existing landscape of change—trends that have been reshaping culture, economics, technology, our political systems,

RESOURCES

Dispatches from the Future of Museums from the Center for the Future of Museums is a free weekly e-newsletter that jumpstarts museum foresight with a selection of news about culture, technology, the economy, the environment, and policy.

bit.ly/dispatchesfromthefuture

Navigating Uncertain Times: A Scenario Planning Toolkit for the Arts and Culture Sector, The Wallace Foundation, 2020

bit.ly/WallaceScenarioToolkit

TrendsWatch: The Scenario Edition (American Alliance of Museums, 2018) presents four stories of potential futures to support museum planning.

bit.ly/trendswatch2018

and our environment. Perhaps the most significant of these disruptive trends is climate change. All told, somewhere between 4 million and 13 million people in the US will be displaced by climate change by 2100. Many US museums are located in communities that face rising sea levels, flooding, fires, extreme heat, or drought. In the face of these changes, some communities may shrink, pick up stakes and relocate, or redesign their infrastructure (at great expense) to cope with these challenges.

The work of most museums is, necessarily, long term—preserving cultural and scientific heritage for the next generation,

servicing their community and helping it thrive. Because of their responsibilities as stewards of the past, museums need to plan for uncertain futures, or all the good work they do day to day will be at risk. But remember, you aren't in this alone—my colleagues and I at the Alliance are here to support your good work.

So download the 2021 edition of *TrendsWatch* (bit.ly/trendswatch2021), share it with your board and staff, as well as policy makers, funders, and journalists—anyone who could benefit from some tools to understand the changes buffeting museums right now. Use the report to help

envision how museums can help their communities through the trying times to come, and how the museum itself can survive and thrive. Working together, we can help museums foresee their way to a better future.

Elizabeth Merritt is vice president, strategic foresight and founding director of the Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) at the American Alliance of Museums. She is the author of the Alliance's annual *TrendsWatch* report and compiles CFM's weekly e-newsletter *Dispatches from the Future of Museums*.

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The best museums educate, entertain, and evoke reactions. They create experiences that people remember. They tell stories, and tell them well to get people motivated so that they want to know more and so that they stimulate others to come and visit to experience it all first-hand.

That task has remained the same over the years, but the way we get there cannot. I remember, as a kid, going through the Maritime Museum in Rotterdam, and I remember to this day its canal and lock model, where you could take a model ship through a lock, and learn about how a lock worked and how to control it. It was always the highlight of my visit — a hands-on interactive that I can still visualize many years later. This museum was mostly a collection of images and artifacts with printed signage, but that exhibit was really memorable.

Times have changed, but even today we are mostly still using similar methods to tell the same stories to an audience that varies greatly. Our audiences include younger children, school groups, adults, and visitors who want to know more. For many years we've thought about how to change that fixed view, because we believe that

one size does not fit all.



We should deliver different versions of stories to be told to school groups, adults, and to those visitors who are experts on the subject. One of the designers that we worked with many years ago would always split visitors in three groups that he referred to as streakers, strollers, and students. The words are self-explanatory. Streakers fly through the exhibits, and will read the odd headline here and there. Strollers take their time, and will read headlines. They will most likely read a lot of the subheadings too. Students will consume all the information there is and are often left wanting more. This model used a simple approach with headlines, subheads, and body text that served to provide some level of "tailoring" of information.

Obviously this is a helpful starting point, and it served earlier museum designs quite well. Things have changed, though, partly because of the introduction of smart devices and other technology now available to all in their daily lives. This initially caused higher expectations, and it ultimately created a new generation of kids that swiped before they wiped. This means that we have more complex needs and wants — and by the time you add proper integration of ADA accommodations and an international audience, a much more sophisticated way to identify and group audiences is required.

Personalizing the Museum Experience



a true paradigm shift happened when affordable, standard, off-the-shelf hardware became capable of handling all AV tasks



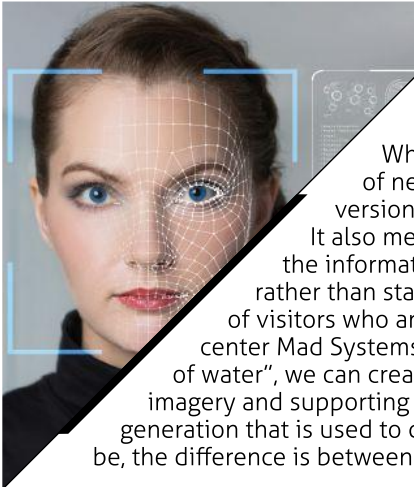
We at Mad Systems propose a new model that allows for different ages of school groups, adults who might have different interests (for example science vs. history), visitors who speak different languages, and of course proper support for those who need some help, because of physical, visual or auditory challenges.

On top of that, technology has changed dramatically. Before about 10 years ago, when products like the smart devices were introduced, people got their

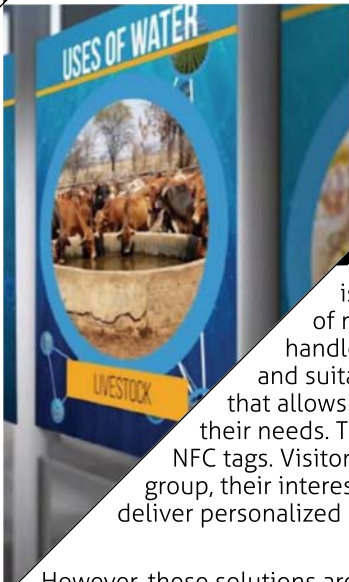
information through the media, and to some extent through a mouse-controlled internet link. Since that time, they have become used to getting information specific to their interests, at their interest level, and in their language wherever they are.

This means that we, at minimum, need to consider matching that in our learning institutions. The key is to provide an adequate level of granularity. We do not necessarily need to modify content for each age group, but it is reasonable to assume that a 5-year-old needs a different approach and different content than a 12-year-old, a 16-year-old, an average adult, or a subject specialist.





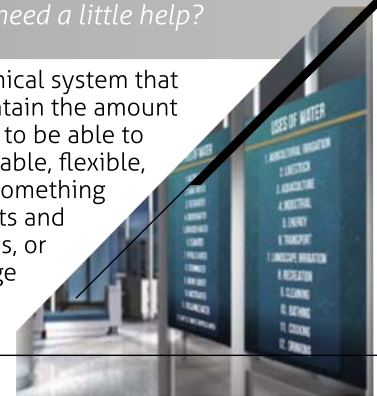
When we combine this “want” to deliver more personalization of content with the flexibility of new technical solutions, it turns out that we can easily provide 5, or even 20 different versions of the media. It really comes down to the effort required in creating that content. It also means that if we use projected media instead of fixed graphic panels, we can not only change the information depending on our audience, we can also deliver dynamically changing information rather than static information, which is essential to attract the attention (and interest) of a new generation of visitors who are likely not to find static graphical images particularly appealing. This image from a visitor center Mad Systems worked on last year shows the difference between the two: instead of a fixed list of “uses of water”, we can create a simple but pleasing dynamic presentation that takes visitors through a sequence of imagery and supporting text that shows them different uses of water as a sequential presentation. With a younger generation that is used to consuming sophisticated media on their tablets, at home or wherever else they happen to be, the difference is between them walking past or stopping to have a look.



a simple dilemma //

How do we create experiences that work for deep thinkers who want to do a deep dive and people who are just in to cruise? How do we provide the right environment for kids, and for those who need a little help?

How do we solve this? The first thing we need is to have a technical system that is sufficiently sophisticated with enough storage to be able to contain the amount of required media. Our QuickSilver® system is specifically designed to be able to handle those needs, using non-proprietary hardware so that it is affordable, flexible, and suitable as a long-term solution. The second requirement is to have something that allows us to be able to recognize visitors and keep track of their interests and their needs. The latter can be accomplished using barcoded or RFID wrist bands, or NFC tags. Visitors can log in when they enter the venue, and maybe enter their age group, their interest, and/or their language preference. Individual exhibits can then deliver personalized media tailored specifically to that individual.



However, these solutions are “non-facing” (and not particularly magical). The system knows that someone scanned a token, but does not “see” visitors nor does it know where they are even just a few seconds after they scan their identification. It can run a two-minute presentation in Dutch that someone has started, and not be aware that the visitor kept moving and ignored the presentation. The next person in the space might prefer Spanish, and now has to wait for the presentation to finish even though there might not be anyone there (or scan their identifier, which causes another set of potential issues). A “facing” system, on the other hand, would recognize a visitor actually looking at the exhibit. If that person is no longer interested (no longer looking at the exhibit), the system will automatically change to the right version for the new visitor. If the first visitor is still looking, the English version continues to run with Spanish subtitles once the second visitor is recognized.

QuickSilver®, an affordable, complete AV solution, allows for all of these possibilities.

Our patented Facial Recognition based media delivery system is the obvious candidate to create that level of functionality. It is a “facing” system that knows when a visitor is actually looking at an exhibit. It also allows for interactives to pass data from one to the other (design a car at one interactive station, and wind tunnel test the car you designed when you get to a testing station later). Interactive control complexity is selected for your age group, and information is presented at your level, in your language. Our patented LookingGlass Concierge can even use facial recognition to guide visitors from one location to another using digital signage.

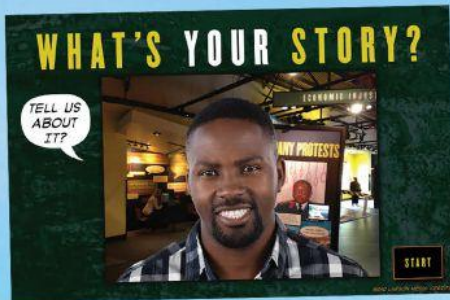
One of the big considerations with recognition systems is privacy, and that has been one of the main design drivers for us. Our system does not need an internet connection, and can be kept in a locked room. It does not need to store people’s images (unless they want to opt-in for additional benefits), and only keeps an encrypted set of parameters that describe the face for the duration of their visit. Mad Systems has created what we refer to as “anonymous recognition” where no personal information needs to be kept in the system at all. The data that is there can be scrubbed after hours, so that no retrievable data remains. These measures mean that concerns related to privacy can be alleviated. What’s more — not using external services for recognition through the internet means that recognition speeds are significantly higher. QuickSilver® coupled with our Facial Recognition system provides for sub-second reaction times from when someone arrives at an exhibit, to “their” media being delivered. This creates a feeling of true magic for visitors due to the immediacy of the response.

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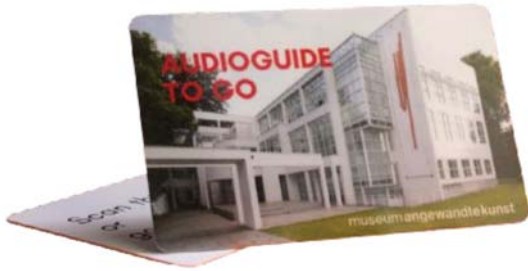
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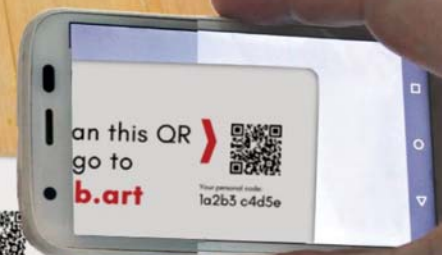


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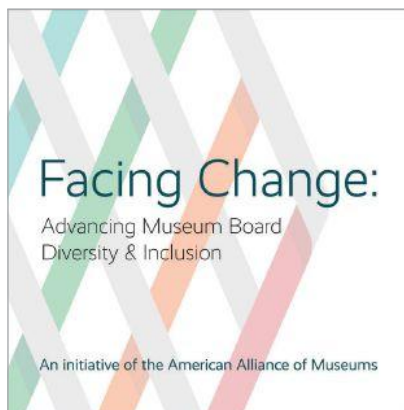
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American Alliance of Museums

Center for the Future of Museums

Phillips@THEARC hosted the Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Washington's "BIG Teen Give Back" event in 2018.



Closing *the* Gap

How can museums redress systemic inequalities of wealth and power?

“In times of crisis, the wise build bridges, while the foolish build barriers.”

—Chadwick Boseman, in the role of T’Challa, King of Wakanda, *Black Panther*

Wealth inequality has been increasing in the US for the past 50 years, built on structures that restrict access to assets and power and inflict the costs of our economic systems on marginalized communities. The COVID-19 pandemic threatens

to widen that gap while wreaking disproportionate damage on people already disadvantaged by society’s core systems.

Museums, as prestigious public institutions, are being called to account for their role in profiting from

and perpetuating these inequalities. But museums often struggle to respond appropriately to these legitimate demands. Many are unsure where to begin, while others are castigated for taking well-intentioned steps that seem inappropriate or out of touch.

Despite the challenges posed by the current crisis, this is an opportunity for museums to act as leaders in society, demonstrating how organizations can transform themselves by applying social justice values to their own work, and by using their influence to increase the power and authority of others.

THE CHALLENGE

Wealth inequality is one of the most daunting challenges facing the United States today. One percent of the population now holds well over a third of the nation's wealth, while the bottom 90 percent holds less

than a quarter. This gap is the result of a pernicious feedback loop of inequity in education, housing, our legal system, job opportunities, health care, and political power—to name a few. In addition to being a social justice issue in and of itself, economists, historians, and policy experts warn that escalating inequality can lead to social and economic instability, and some feel it poses a significant threat to our democratic system.

And this wealth gap is profoundly skewed by race. In 2019, the average wealth of white families was eight times greater than that of Black families. If current trends persist, it would take Black families 228 years to reach the level of average wealth held by white families in 2013. This gap was seeded by 246 years of chattel slavery and perpetuated by social, economic, and political systems that hobble the ability of Black

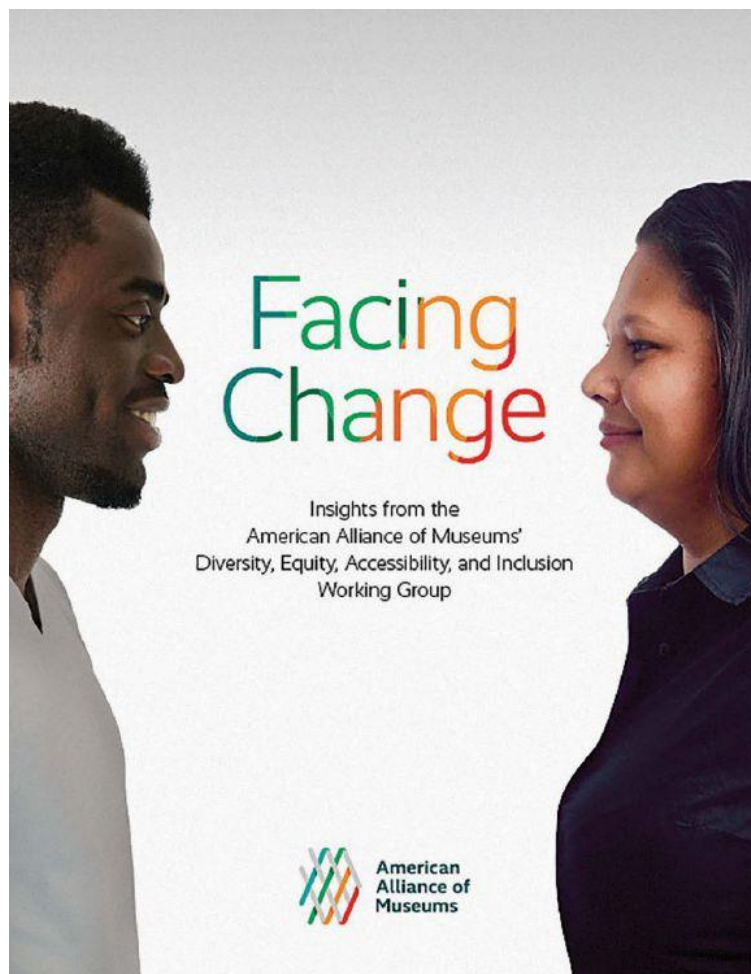
Americans to create and accumulate wealth.

The resulting inequity also leaves communities of color more vulnerable to disaster and disruption. Black and Indigenous Americans have experienced the highest death tolls from COVID-19 and are suffering disproportionately in wage and job losses. The median decline in the net worth of Black families during the 2008 financial crisis was twice that of white families, and it seems likely the COVID-19 financial collapse will increase the racial wealth gap as well.

HOW MUSEUMS ARE RESPONDING

Museums, collectively, have abundant resources, and many museums have significant assets of their own. All museums have the power to influence public opinion through their status as trusted sources of information. This being so, there are several ways that museums can take action to redress

Cover of AAM's diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) report.



inequities of wealth and power—both internally, in how they manage their own operations, and externally, in how they interact with the world.

Inward Action

Some museums begin their equity and inclusion work with training for the staff and board on unconscious bias and cultural competence. However, if you consider that the turnover rate in the nonprofit field as a whole is 19 percent, and boards commonly impose term limits, it becomes clear that diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) training can't be a one-time fix—it has to be part of the ongoing process of staff onboarding and development. And in any case, you can't simply train your way out of 450 years of racism. The lessons from that training must be embedded into the very fabric of museums' operations, policies, and culture.

These operations and policies range from how museums structure and hire for positions to their compensation, working conditions, and the overall internal culture with respect to power and authority. Unquestioned assumptions about the qualifications needed for a given job (particularly jobs of higher status and pay) disadvantage applicants with less access to traditional systems of training and credentialing. Assumptions about wealth may result in systems that exclude people who can't afford to take unpaid internships, float debt for museum purchases on personal credit cards, or pay for their own professional development. Attempts to achieve more diversity in staff by simply hiring more people of color often fail when these employees are expected to behave exactly like (white) colleagues in order to fit in. For this reason, just doing “pipeline” diversity work is a proven way to fail at achieving real progress in racial equity.

The challenge for museums to address DEAI in their own operations has become even more fraught due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even museums deeply committed to DEAI may struggle to continue this work while trying to survive the financial stress created by closure and loss of income from fundraisers, rentals, and events.

As Andrew Plumley, AAM's director of inclusion, has pointed out, “When we take into account the massive racial leadership gap within the museum

field, and the well-known fact that people of color are overrepresented in the lowest-wage work within the field (and most likely to be without insurance and paid sick leave), it becomes apparent that letting equity and inclusion ‘slip’ now ... will have devastating effects on our most vulnerable populations.”

Outward Action

The museum sector often thinks about equity in terms of access to exhibits and educational programs and, increasingly, to digital assets like documentation and images of collections as well. But museums also control immensely powerful intangible assets: notably, reputation, reach, and networks of influence. Museums can use these assets to help build individual and community wealth in ways that redress historic inequities. For example, they can use their space, knowledge, authority, and reputation to:

- Help individuals build their educational credentials through training and certification.
- Equalize access to political and regulatory power.
- Create an accessible infrastructure of economic exchange for artists, craftspeople, and other creators.

Museums have significant financial power as well. All museums shape the world in some way through the money they spend on day-to-day operations and can engage in reparative practice through thoughtful attention to how they spread this operational wealth. A museum can choose to give preference to local-, BIPOC-, or women-owned firms for contracting, or design its food service around values of health or environmental impact. It can partner with businesses and community organizations in ways that support their

RESOURCES

Facing Change: Insights from AAM's DEAI Working Group (American Alliance of Museums, 2018) examines the characteristics of effective museum inclusion practices and considers what steps the field can take to promote DEAI.

Racial Equity and Inclusion Plan Primer (American Alliance of Museums, 2020) provides guidance on advancing racial and ethnic diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion on museum boards.

growth and amplify their impact. And because these daily operational impacts are often hyper-local, even a small museum can have a significant influence on its local community.

In addition to their purchasing power, some museums have significant financial capital as well, and that

capital can be used as a force for good. Ten years ago, the Rockefeller Foundation coined the term “impact investing” to refer to the practice of investing endowments in a way that creates positive social or environmental change. Now impact investing is a \$250 billion market. It encompasses socially responsible investing



A RACE-FORWARD APPROACH: THE IRONY IN IT ALL

By Andrew Plumley, Director of Inclusion, American Alliance of Museums

We've heard all of the numbers. We've done all the research. We know the disparities exist because we read the reports and know the dismal numbers. The racial wealth gap, the disproportionate numbers of BIPOC in the criminal justice system, and the unequal housing, education, and health care opportunities for BIPOC individuals versus their white peers is staggering. When you look at literally every single social indicator in this country, there are vast disparities in outcomes based on race—based on someone's skin color.


But we actually don't need the reports to see, understand, and feel this in many respects. Look at the faces on your Zoom calls, walk in your neighborhood, talk to friends, or join your child's school parent association meetings. We are a segregated society. In many respects, we're just as segregated now as we were before Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, outlawing institutionalized segregation in the United States. And segregation in society at large is, inevitably, reflected in our museums as well.

Not that museums don't think that they are tackling the racial divide. As a practitioner of diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion work, I often hear museum leaders say, “We need to make sure we have a race-forward approach to everything we do,” and I often respond, “I whole-heartedly agree, but you already do!” And if you haven't gotten the irony yet, you will, because with 90 percent of museum directors being white, and 46 percent of museum boards being ALL white, it turns out that the museum field already has a strong, race-forward approach to everything we do—it just preferences everything, and everyone, white.

To fix the inequity we see in our field and in our society, we must have a race-forward approach to our individual and collective work, because “race-neutral” decision-making is, at its very best, a farce. At worst, it's a framing and understanding of the world that norms whiteness and others everything that doesn't fit into that, further perpetuating inequity.

Language matters. That's why we as museum professionals not only need a race-forward approach to our work, but we also need to go further and explicitly name the race(s) we need to put “forward.” Based on the historic and systemic inequity that's laid out so clearly in this article and in *TrendsWatch*, the museum field has an obligation to understand the incredible power it holds, especially at the upper echelons of our field with our museum leaders and trustees. We must forge a collective understanding of what a race-forward approach means, and place individuals who identify as BIPOC at the center of our decision-making. Or, better yet, finally put BIPOC into positions of power so they become the decision-makers.

Given the inequities laid out in front of us, is there any question as to what we need to do? The question for you, and for your museum, is what specifically will you do next?



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The Valentine Museum in Richmond, Virginia, ran a competition in 2020 with the Metropolitan Business League to select a local, Black-owned operator for its café.

(which screens out investments that do active harm), mission-related investing (which both advances the mission and yields a competitive, reliable financial return), and program-related investing (which foregrounds mission-related impact and can accept a higher level of financial risk).

We are also beginning to see a push for “restorative investing” specifically focused on dismantling existing wealth structures, democratizing capital, strengthening local businesses, and prioritizing racial inclusion and diversity. And for those concerned about the duty of endowment managers to support their museums, note that well-managed impact investing yields financial returns just as robust as traditional investment portfolios.

FINDING THE RIGHT APPROACH

There is no one set of actions that is appropriate and realistic for all museums, but waiting for a perfect solution only impedes progress. Focusing on incremental improvement is a valid and effective approach to building equity in the world. A small museum with few staff and limited financial resources may focus on putting itself in the service of its community, with particular

attention to groups that have been previously sidelined or silenced. Operating on lean resources to begin with, small organizations can often be more nimble and responsive than their larger brethren.

On the other hand, a large museum with a business model built on the wealth and power of a small group of individuals can't suddenly transform itself into a community-supported, democratically governed institution. Its business model is—to be candid—built on exclusivity, on trading reputation and access for money. However, there are realistic, practical steps that even a museum reliant on the support of wealthy individuals and corporations can take in the short term, while also advancing incremental, long-term change.

Find Out More

Download the digital edition of this year's TrendsWatch (bit.ly/trendswatch2021) for an in-depth exploration of this topic, additional resources, and a framework for actions museums can take to build racial equity inside their organizations and in their communities.

Digital Awakening

Essential technologies for pandemic survival and future success.

“When digital transformation is done right, it’s like a caterpillar turning into a butterfly, but when done wrong, all you have is a really fast caterpillar.”

— George Westerman, research scientist, MIT Sloan Initiative on the Digital Economy

When museums across the country began shutting their doors during the COVID-19 pandemic, it quickly became clear that those that had invested in digital platforms and content were pre-adapted to engage with the public and with staff under the circumstances.

In some cases, such digital engagement was essential to fulfilling their core responsibilities—for example, supporting college instruction or providing

access for researchers. But other initiatives, although welcomed by a public desperate for distraction, did not have a clear place in museum strategy in the long term. Furthermore, even though museums were starved for income, there were few examples of how digital engagement could be used to replace or supplement revenue tied to physically interacting with the museum—admissions, space rentals, events, and on-site sales.

Courtesy of The Corning Museum of Glass



The Corning Museum of Glass maintains a popular YouTube channel, with recent hits like a “Bring the Heat” demo with artist George Kennard, which attracted 65,000 views.

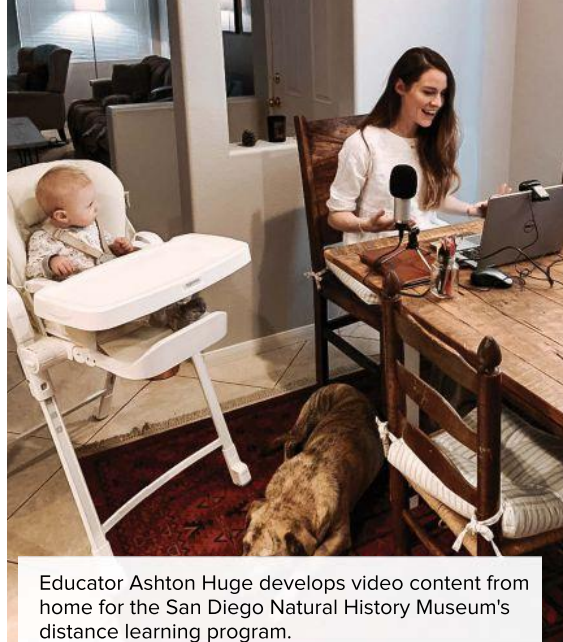


The field faces a long, hard slog before the pandemic fades and attendance income rebounds. Smart investments in digital practice may help sustain museums during the hard times to come and position them to rebound as the pandemic passes. But even before the COVID crisis, museums struggled with how and when to integrate digital technologies into their work. Now they have less capital to invest, a smaller margin for error, and a lower tolerance for risk. How can museums make wise choices about adopting or maintaining digital technology that will help them survive in the short term and thrive in the coming decade?

THE CHALLENGE

As science fiction writer Sir Arthur C. Clarke famously said, “Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic.” Digital technology creates whole worlds from the ones and zeros of code, and in the past half-century we’ve lived through continuous cycles of digital, going from magic to mundane, before leaping ahead again into semi-miraculous territory.

In addition to the speed with which it is displacing older technologies, digital technology is also



Educator Ashton Huge develops video content from home for the San Diego Natural History Museum's distance learning program.

remarkable for the breadth of its applications. Previous technological disruptions often reshaped the world around one area of practice: steam-powered factories displacing handcrafting or vaccines conquering fatal disease. Digital technology, however, is transforming every area of practice: making, teaching, seeing, sharing, thinking. It's difficult to even talk about “digital” as a coherent issue when it spans everything from sending an email to creating an artificial intelligence-powered interactive simulacrum of Salvador Dali.

Confronted by the rapid pace and enormous breadth of digital evolution, museums have struggled with when to supplement or replace older technologies with their digital kin. Most museums have taken a conservative approach, waiting to see which applications (e.g., websites) turn out to be a necessary part of doing business. This patience has often paid off, as late adopters could take advantage of turnkey applications accessible to museums that lack in-house digital expertise. This is a totally valid approach in normal times—especially because most museums don't have the resources, or the risk tolerance, to be digital innovators.

But the financial crisis sparked by the pandemic may not allow museums the luxury of time. The razor-thin financial margins of the coming year will make decisions about digital adoption both more urgent and more fraught. Some digital processes could be crucial to a museum's survival—for example, online reservation software that helps limit attendance



The San Diego Natural History Museum produces a “Career Spotlight” video series, for which Education Specialist Rosie Bell interviewed Botany Collections Manager Layla Aerne Hains.

RESOURCES

Nik Honeysett, “The Digital Awakening: The Global Pandemic Has Demonstrated the Need for a Digital-First Approach to Online Engagement,” *Museum*, November/December 2020

Playbook: Re-opening Museums & Cultural Attractions: Succeeding in the Post-COVID Era with Thoughtful Digital Tools, Cuseum, 2020 bit.ly/CuseumPlaybook

Christine Griffith, courtesy of the San Diego Natural History Museum; Dylan Kosier, courtesy of the San Diego Natural History Museum



A DIGITAL MINDSET

By Nik Honeysett, CEO, Balboa Park Online Collaborative

Prior to the arrival of electricity as industrial power, mechanical power came from a steam engine that turned a drive shaft down the center of a factory. Belts and gears transferred the power to looms, drills, presses, and hammer stations throughout a building. A steam engine had to run 24/7, because even if only one station required power, the coal fires had to keep burning. The layout of the factory was determined by the transfer of mechanical energy from the main drive shaft.

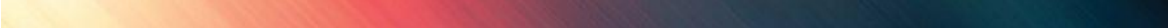
Initially, factory bosses simply replaced their giant steam engine with a giant electric motor, and power was distributed in the same way. Like the steam engine, the electric motor had to run constantly because power continued to be derived from a single source. This was an incredibly inefficient, skeuomorphic tactic, so bosses hired chief electricity officers to determine how to most effectively use electricity. Their solution was to look at the true power (pun intended) and opportunity of electricity, so that it could be delivered individually to every station through simple and efficient wiring. Factories could be redesigned and operations reinvented without the driveshaft constraint. In time, chief electricity officers became obsolete, their work of invisibly embedding electricity into factory operations complete.

Figuring out how to use electricity sounds absurd; for us now, it is just “there.” But getting to that point wasn’t about how to use electricity in and of itself, it was about creating efficiency, increasing productivity, and scaling up on widget production. Factories needed chief electricity officers to complete this transformation.

Museums are at a similar inflection point with their digital strategy. At this moment, we need chief digital officers (CDOs) to embed digital-first practices and a digital mindset within our organizations. Digital mindset is code for culture change to look past “digital” and focus on the mission and goals that digital can help achieve. We don’t need CDOs to create a “digital plan,” we need them to determine how to create efficiency, productivity, and compelling engagement and how to scale audiences. This is a highly strategic pursuit that should be deeply embedded into institutional goals and deeply embedded into operations.

The pandemic has constrained us physically but freed us to evolve a digital mindset. A digital mindset is the pursuit of capacity, capability, and resiliency. For our staff, it’s about clarifying their roles and responsibilities, enabling them with relevant and sustainable tools, and embedding knowledge and literacy to pursue their departmental, cross-departmental, and institutional goals. For our institutions, it’s about creating efficiency and productivity and nurturing an opportunistic, innovative, data-driven, and entrepreneurial approach to our work. And ultimately, we hope to create audience loyalty through compelling engagement, contextual and relevant experiences, and community and personal enrichment.

This digital-first world is easily quantified but less easily achieved. We can only achieve it with an investment philosophy and a strategy drafted on the factory boss’s desk, not the factory floor, and, yes, electricity will be used, albeit invisibly.



to safety-compliant levels. Other initiatives, such as launching a content channel, may seem successful in the short term but lack clear payback. The public has a seemingly boundless appetite for videos, online courses, and online games, but museums can’t continue to feed that desire without a corresponding financial plan.

HOW MUSEUMS ARE RESPONDING

When the pandemic struck, museums around the

globe quickly began pumping out vast amounts of digital content: social media challenges, virtual tours, programs, school curricula, dance parties, cocktail hours, and more. This was awesome in many ways: it provided much-needed relief to people trapped at home and in need of human connection (or a way to distract the kids for a few minutes). Digital engagement was a way for museum staff to help in the crisis, to apply their skills as a cadre



Herpetologist Frank Santana in the San Diego Natural History Museum's "Career Spotlight" video series shared conservation insights on the California red-legged frog.

of cultural first responders. And digital projects provided meaningful work for some frontline staff who might have otherwise been at risk of being furloughed or laid off.

Given the collapse of most forms of earned income (admissions, rentals, programs, and events), museums began experimenting with digital substitutes: virtual galas, paid online programming, online stores. Some zoos offered paid Zoom appearances by charismatic animals. (You can book Fiona the Hippo, star of the Cincinnati Zoo, at the rate of \$750 for 15 minutes.) In some cases, museums have sustained revenue by tying free content to membership, pitches for contributions, or underwriting by funders.

As museums reopened, many implemented online ticketing systems to help limit attendance and reduce staff interactions at the point of entry. Beyond this, companies are offering all kinds of digital services to help implement pandemic precautions, from retrofitting digital interactives for touch-free operation to providing digital membership cards.

We don't know yet whether the current demand for digital content will persist once the pandemic wanes. A year or more of digital immersion for work, play, and school may create a pan-digital version of "Zoom fatigue," resulting in a sharp drop in the demand for digital content and experiences when people feel safe to venture out again. Likewise, a long-term trend toward remote work, online shopping, and virtual instruction may, in time, leave people hungry for in-person, place-based social experiences, fueling the rebound of traditional museum income streams. Museums should factor these possibilities into their planning for online content production.

In any case, as with retail, business, and education, the pandemic will have a permanent effect on the digital behavior of museums. Projections of the proportion of US museums that may close permanently due to the pandemic range from 7 percent to over 30 percent. Many of those that survive may do so through their savvy use of digital technologies to sustain their audiences, members, and income.

Find Out More

In the coming year, museums are going to have to make critical decisions about digital "investment"—what, how, and how much—with little room for error. These calculations will be complicated by the fact that the payback from investments in productivity and efficiency (e.g., reducing the number of steps to complete a website transaction) may be more subtle than, but just as important as, direct earned revenue (such as paid subscriptions). To support this assessment, this year's TrendsWatch (bit.ly/trendswatch2021) reviews emerging best practices for museum adoption of digital technologies and provides a framework for successfully integrating digital into museum decision-making.

Who Gets Left Behind?

Caring for the vulnerable in a time of crisis.

“The peoples of the earth are one family.”

— Ruth Fulton Benedict, American anthropologist and folklorist

“‘Ohana’ means family. ‘Family’ means nobody gets left behind or forgotten.”

— *Lilo & Stitch*

The year 2020 was terrible for pretty much everyone, but certain groups have been especially vulnerable to the damage wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Black, Indigenous, and other people of color fell ill and died at a far greater rate than their white counterparts and suffered disproportionate economic damage from layoffs and business

closures. People over the age of 55 are at heightened risk for serious outcomes, both from the disease and from the negative consequences of social isolation, as family and friends seek to protect them by staying away. Domestic violence has increased during this crisis, and the pandemic makes it more difficult for people suffering from abuse to seek help. People with



During the pandemic, the Louisiana Children's Museum in New Orleans has given classes from the city's Langston Hughes Academy exclusive use of its buildings and grounds.

disabilities face new barriers to accessing critical care and medical supplies. Families experiencing food insecurity have been cut off from already fragile pipelines of support, and school closures mean students do not receive subsidized meals (or dental care). The national pivot to online learning for K-12 students has exposed the vulnerabilities of families without access to child care, connected devices, and reliable high-speed Internet.

Hopefully the US will learn from these failures and rebuild our systems in forms that are more equitable and resilient. Meanwhile, it's incumbent on all sectors—government, private, and nonprofit—to create an ad hoc safety net for people falling through the gaping cracks in our current systems of care.

THE CHALLENGE

Many of the core functions of American society (e.g., education, health care, safety services) barely work for marginalized peoples at the best of times. To maximize private profit and minimize government costs, our nation tends to offload the costs of systems onto vulnerable communities, depending on the nonprofit sector or inadequate public infrastructure to meet essential needs. Health insurance is tied to employment, school takes the place of a public system of child care, and food pantries help support people who are not paid a living wage. Government relief often prioritizes screening out the unworthy or ineligible rather than maximizing reach to people in need. The pandemic has exposed the fundamental weakness of this patchwork approach.

Courtesy of the Louisiana Children's Museum

The current crisis has also revealed vulnerabilities in what might appear to be more robust, integrated approaches to care. For example, schools are effectively the primary social service agencies for children, delivering free and reduced meal programs that provide lunches to nearly 30 million children each day and providing access to health and wellness resources. Pre-pandemic, this was an effective and efficient way to reach children in need. But tight linkages mean that one disruption (such as closure of schools) has disastrous ripple effects.

If there is any upside to the past year, it may be that the pandemic has demonstrated how leaving the most vulnerable of society exposed eventually hurts everyone, even those who are usually buffered from harm. Viruses and financial collapse can't be redlined, and left unchecked, they will eventually undermine the safety and security of all. If only out of self-interest, America may shift, at last, from trying to contain and ignore the weaknesses of our systems to addressing their fundamental flaws.

HOW MUSEUMS ARE RESPONDING

Inward Action

Many museum staff and volunteers belong to high-risk or vulnerable populations. Furloughs, layoffs, and salary freezes are particularly hard on staff working in low-wage jobs and impose additional financial stress on the many entry-level museum professionals still paying off student debt.

Eighty percent of those who have died from COVID-19 in the US have been over the age of 65. Museum volunteers typically skew older than staff and more often fall into the high-risk category based on age. In light of these facts, museums may well ask volunteers to stay away for now, even those eager to return to work. While this distancing may reduce the chance of exposure to COVID-19, it can also increase social isolation, which poses a risk to mental and physical health as well.

As they plan their pandemic response, museums should give particular attention to protecting vulnerable staff and volunteers. For example:

- Check with the museum's health insurance and retirement providers about any financial, legal, and mental and physical wellness services they

offer—such as wellness programs, employee assistance programs, financial planning, etc.—and make sure employees are aware of these resources.

- Offer paid sick leave and emergency family medical leave. Educate employees about the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and other federal legislation enacted to support workers.
- Adopt practices that can reduce employee stress. For example, be generous and flexible in updating policies and practices, offer solutions that meet individual needs, over-communicate about important news and decisions, and formally measure how people are doing throughout the crisis.
- Implement voluntary or mandatory pay cuts that protect the most financially vulnerable by avoiding, delaying, or minimizing the need for furloughs or layoffs. (These cuts might be concentrated in the highest-paid positions in order to shield low-wage workers.)
- Continue to pay workers whose roles center on the physical museum even while the museum is closed, switching them over to behind-the-scenes work such as collections inventory or digitization and transcription.
- Explore what can be done to support staff who are furloughed or laid off. For furloughed workers, this might include maintaining health insurance; for staff who are laid off, the museum might subsidize COBRA payments for some period of time.
- Create an emergency relief fund, or encourage and support staff who wish to create a mutual aid fund to assist colleagues who are in need.

RESOURCES

"Policies to Support Workers During the Coronavirus Pandemic," National Partnership for Women and Families, National Employment Law Project

bit.ly/SupportingWorkersDuringPandemic

"Working Remotely During COVID-19: Your Mental Health and Well-being," American Psychiatric Association

workplacementhealth.org/Employer-Resources/Working-Remotely-During-COVID-19



- Build a culture of connection through frequent check-ins, and combat isolation by organizing opportunities for virtual socializing, both for staff and volunteers.

Outward Action

By thinking broadly and creatively, museums can deploy their resources to serve vulnerable

populations. This may be as straightforward as offering free admission to health care workers or taking traditional museum programs online to make them accessible to people who are unable to get to the museum. Other examples may involve pushing the boundaries of traditional practice. For example, museums can:

- Create or enlarge gardens on their grounds, and

UNIVERSAL DESIGN: A TOOL FOR EQUITY

Andrew Plumley, Director of Inclusion, American Alliance of Museums

Every museum has a mission, vision, and set of values—often codified in writing. Every museum, given the nuance and context of their institutional history, board members, leadership, staff, geographical location, and communities they serve, also has an unwritten organizational culture. That organizational culture dictates how decisions are made, who is at the table to make them, and what populations and demographics are priorities in museum decision-making.

For most museums, that culture results in a planning process that focuses on meeting the needs of 70 or 80 percent of its stakeholders. The other 20 or 30 percent, often belonging to marginalized communities, are only addressed through “special” initiatives like fellowships or specific community engagement, resulting in one-off solutions with minimal lasting impact.

What if this approach to planning was flipped on its head by prioritizing marginalized and not predominate audiences?

This is where the concept of universal design comes into play. You may already be aware of universal design in the context of the disability rights movement. One of the most classic examples is the pedestrian curb cut, designed for people in wheelchairs who had limited or no access to city sidewalks. While this adaptation was designed for those with the least access in terms of mobility, it turned out that curb cuts are good for everyone, including people with bicycles, strollers, and roller suitcases.

Universal design can be applied more broadly to planning as well by prompting museums to ask, “How could we design for the 20 percent of the population who we might most marginalize, who may currently have the least access to our services?” Guided by questions like this, museums will often find themselves arriving at solutions that, like curb cuts, are better for everyone.

But to implement universal design, museum decision-makers need to explicitly identify what groups are most marginalized in their museums and communities. Who is discouraged from using the museum because of physical, technological, or cultural barriers? What designs—architectural, programmatic, or procedural—would eliminate those barriers? And in the spirit of “nothing about us without us” (another precept of disability rights), who should be at the table to help inform these solutions? This approach would embed diversity, equity, access, and inclusion into museum programs, exhibitions, and organizational culture. And it would make museums universally a better experience for all.

donate produce to local food banks or flowers to local hospitals and nursing homes.

- Make museum Wi-Fi accessible outside the building to neighbors and students.
- Supply low-income students with laptops, Wi-Fi, and portable hotspots to facilitate access to the museum's virtual programs.
- Provide quiet study areas with strong, reliable Internet connection for students engaged in virtual learning who need a safe, supportive place outside their homes.
- Make the museum's indoor and outdoor space available to schools serving at-risk students for use as classrooms or to fill other needs.

- Donate protective equipment and supplies to health care workers and vulnerable individuals.
- Offer activities and events that foster health and well-being.

Find Out More

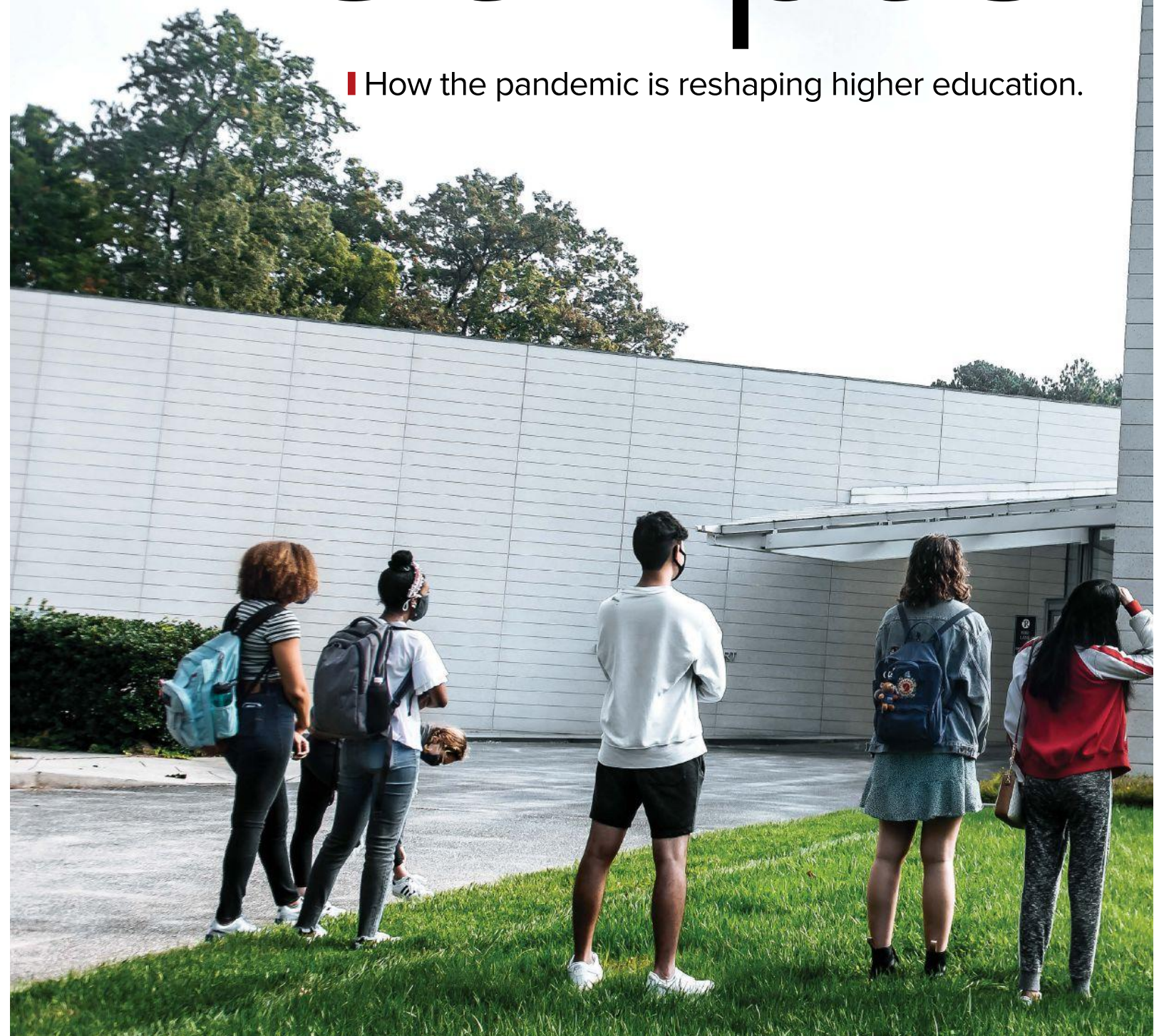
This year's edition of TrendsWatch (bit.ly/trendswatch2021) explores this issue in-depth, offers additional examples of how museums are responding, and provides a framework to guide museum decision-making on how to best support staff and communities in this time of crisis.

The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society is one of 28 public gardens participating in the Urban Agriculture Resilience Program, created by the US Botanic Garden and American Public Gardens Association to sustain urban agriculture and community food growing during the COVID-19 pandemic.



COVID *On* Campus

How the pandemic is reshaping higher education.



“The Internet will save higher education, but it may kill your alma mater.”

— John Katzman, education entrepreneur



DONT WORRY, WE'LL HOLD HANDS AGAIN.



The Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University collaborated with Duke Arts and Duke Health to present "RESIST COVID / TAKE 6!" an outdoor exhibition and public awareness campaign by artist Carrie Mae Weems that emphasizes the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color.



Higher education has been struggling with disruptions for the past decade: declining enrollment, rising tuition and student debt, increasing dependence on low-paid adjunct faculty and graduate student labor, rising competition from online degree-granting institutions, and erosion of the perceived value of a college education, to name a few. One result has been a wave of mergers and closures, with more expected to come.

On top of these trends, we now add the profound disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic: colleges and universities grapple with whether and when to allow students to return to campus, how to transition to online instruction, how to reconfigure campus to support distancing and quarantine, and how to confront lost income and unexpected costs.

These challenges to higher education impact museums at several levels. Academic museums are struggling to adapt to the conditions on their campuses, navigating closures, reopenings, and restrictions on access. Local economies dependent on institutions of higher education are hurting, and the non-academic museums in these communities will suffer as well. Every museum in the country serves populations that include students who, their college plans disrupted, are navigating an unexpected gap year or attending virtual classes from home. And long-term shifts in higher education could transform the pipeline for training and recruiting the next generation of museum professionals.

THE CHALLENGE

Economic Damage to Higher Education

Cumulatively, the economic impact of the pandemic on colleges, universities, and their surrounding communities has been enormous. Institutions that have modest endowments or are heavily dependent on revenue from housing, athletics, and medical campuses have been particularly hard hit. In April 2020, the

American Council on Education predicted that college and university enrollment in 2020–21 could drop by 15 percent, creating a revenue loss of \$23 billion, with the cancellation of fall sports projected to lead to another billion in losses. Government support of state universities had already been gradually declining for decades, and the pandemic has accelerated that trend. State budget shortfalls in 2020 resulted in funding cuts for public colleges and universities, presaging deeper cuts to come. Projections suggest that some states could experience revenue declines of 20 percent or more in 2021. Moody's Analytics estimates that these shortfalls through 2022 could amount to \$434 billion, with 46 states unable to cover the deficits with accumulated savings.

Impact on Academic Museums

Clearly, higher education will be battered by the time the pandemic recedes, and it would be hard to overestimate the collateral damage this will inflict, both on society as a whole and on museums in particular. More than 2,700 academic museums and galleries are distributed throughout America's 4,000 colleges and universities, ranging from institutions with hundreds of staff and multimillion-dollar endowments to galleries with one full-time curator and minimal budgets.

So far, many of these museums have been insulated from the initial financial impact of the pandemic for several reasons. Academic museums typically receive about half their support from their academic parent organizations, most of which did not make immediate deep cuts to their budgets, and many have independent financial resources as well. About three-quarters have their own (typically small) endowments, and a quarter have separately incorporated support organizations.

In the long term, however, academic museums are vulnerable. They are rarely seen as central to the college or university's core mission, and while they



COVID-19 Resources, Association of Academic Museums and Galleries. See especially a link to a Google spreadsheet where academic museums are sharing information on their status and COVID-19 response. aamg-us.org/covid-19-updates/

Bryan Alexander, "Imagining the Pandemic Continues into 2023: Parts 1-3," 2020
bryanalexander.org/futures/



The Georgia Museum of Art has offered its parking garage as an open-air classroom for studio art classes at the University of Georgia. Shown here: Professor Libby Hatmaker teaches a drawing class.

devote considerable resources to supporting teaching and learning, they do not generate enrollment and tuition dollars. For this reason, college and university museums and galleries are often seen by administrators as expenses rather than as assets.

If the pandemic persists through 2021 or beyond, eventually all academic museums, whatever their financial model, will be deeply affected by the decisions their parent organizations make in order to survive.

Looking Ahead

The forces shaping higher education are acting so rapidly, and with such impact, that the outcomes are highly uncertain. These uncertainties, in turn, suggest many ways in which the current crisis could profoundly reshape academia and academic museums. This being so, it is worth considering potential long-term implications of pandemic disruptions to higher education:

- If the pandemic accelerates the adoption of virtual instruction in traditional academia, will

that also decrease the emphasis on face-to-face, on-campus learning? Given the reluctance of many students to pay full tuition for less than the traditional college experience, will some choose to enroll in more affordable, born-digital degree programs instead? Both trends could accelerate the demise of institutions that were already in precarious condition, thus closing, or orphaning, any associated museums.

- Conversely, will campus amenities (including museums) be more important than ever to distinguish face-to-face from online universities, adding value that helps justify the high cost of a place-based degree?
- If the pandemic accelerates the growth of affordable online degree programs, including museum studies, will that increase the diversity of the pool of potential museum professionals? The cost of attending college and graduate school, at present, is a primary reason why people of color are underrepresented among professional museum staff in the US.

WHY DEACCESSIONING IS A THREAT TO CAMPUS ART MUSEUMS

By Jill Deupi, J.D., Ph.D., Beaux Arts Director & Chief Curator of the Lowe Art Museum (University of Miami), Trustee of AAMD, and Co-chair of the Task Force for the Protection of University Collections

Deaccessioning, which has engendered tremendous debate among museum professionals for decades, became something of a household word in 2020. In April of that year, the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) promulgated a temporary resolution that suspended the threat of censure against any member institution using deaccessioning proceeds for *direct care of collections* rather than just the acquisition of additional works of art (as had theretofore been the case).

Motivating AAMD was a recognition of the financial exigencies caused by the COVID-19 global health emergency and the related financial precarity of many of its member museums. The resolution unleashed a wave of concerns, including fears that it might inadvertently encourage, or appear to be licensing, inappropriate deaccessions on college and university campuses across the country.

Indeed, the specter of the Rose Art Museum, and its near closure in 2009 by its parent organization Brandeis University, loomed large in the minds of many academic art museum professionals upon learning of the resolution. In the case of the Rose, standards of best professional practice, ethical principles, and public outrage proved far more important and impactful than any matter of law. This is no surprise given the paucity of relevant legislation in nearly every state, a situation that has condemned deaccessioning to a no-man's land of murkiness. And while this gray area is challenging for all museums, it is particularly problematic for college and university art museums for the following reasons:

Autonomy. The majority of campus art museums are subsidiaries of their parent organizations, not independent legal entities. This means that fiduciary obligations and the related duties of care, obedience, and loyalty under nonprofit law are owed to the college or university under whose aegis such entities operate rather than to the museum itself.

- Conversely, if the pandemic leads colleges and students to emphasize fields such as public health, political science, and economics in preference to arts and humanities, as some have speculated, will museums that continue to hire for traditional academic credentials have a smaller pool of potential applicants from which to choose? A smaller labor pool might drive up salaries, making an entry-level wage more practical for recent graduates with modest financial means.

HOW MUSEUMS ARE RESPONDING

Early in the pandemic, as campuses began to close, many academic museums and galleries deployed staff and resources to support the transition to online teaching—providing digital resources for classes that would normally use the galleries or collections

for instruction, mounting virtual exhibitions, and developing remote internships and educational opportunities for students. On campuses that resumed in-person instruction in the fall, museums adapted to COVID restrictions by limiting entry to designated faculty and students for coursework or research, issuing timed ticketing to limit crowding, and creating or emphasizing outdoor installations.

With the financial support of their parent organizations, many academic museums have been able to avoid layoffs and continue to offer paid work-study and internship positions. Many museums already offer college students taking “gap years” opportunities for work experience, job shadowing, community outreach, and training. During the pandemic, these opportunities have expanded to encompass virtual experiences as well.

Advocacy. As embedded institutions, academic art museums are frequently guided and supported by advisory councils that, though important advocates, are rarely trustees of their parent organizations. In a related vein, campus art museum directors often have little to no access to trustees, making meaningful, nuanced discussions about deaccessioning and disposal with key stakeholders particularly challenging if not impossible.

Academy. College and university art museums typically do not generate tuition-related revenue, and their staffs (even those with terminal degrees) are generally not accorded faculty rank. For these and other reasons, campus art museums are sometimes viewed as auxiliary service units rather than true parts of the academy. In the face of mounting financial pressures, then, their collections may be considered ancillary to their parent organizations' institutional missions and therefore "disposable."

Accountability. The threatened loss of AAM accreditation or censure from AAMD (or other professional museum organizations) may have a limited impact on colleges and universities, whose core operations will continue unhindered. It bears noting that many of the smallest campus art museums are neither accredited nor members of AAMD, rendering them that much more vulnerable to predatory deaccessions and disposals.

Cautionary tales abound about how these and other pressures leave academic art museums uniquely vulnerable in times of operational distress. Beyond the Rose, one need only think about high-profile, highly contentious deaccessions undertaken at Randolph College, Fisk University, and, more recently, LaSalle University to understand how convergent internal vectors can force the hand of academic art museums. To better protect such institutions, the field must unite and continue to assert the importance of academic art museums as integral parts of the academy: we are vital sites of cross-curricular experimentation and interdisciplinary teaching and learning as well as campus and community assets.

In a similar vein, museum leaders must be steadfast in their acknowledgement of the obstacles we face and proactive in our efforts to help senior administrators understand that inappropriate deaccessions have been proven, time and again, to produce more harm than good in the long run. After all, a Band-Aid can never stop a hemorrhage.

The author would like to thank Dr. Christina Olsen (University of Michigan Museum of Art), Dr. John Wetenhall (The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum), and Dr. Stephanie Wiles (Yale University Art Gallery) for their invaluable contributions to this piece.

Anticipating the potential for increased pressure on colleges to raise operating funds through selling museum collections, the Association of Academic Museums and Galleries has stepped up the work of the Task Force for the Protection of University Collections, which was created in 2009 in response to the proposed closure of the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University. The primary charge of the task force is to serve as an advocate of, and resource for, college and university museums whose collections are under threat.

Many colleges that welcomed students back in the fall quickly reversed course after outbreaks of COVID-19, transitioning to entirely online classes and, in some cases, sending students home. Futurist Bryan Alexander has forecast more such "toggle terms" as colleges cope with local resurgences of COVID-19. Some colleges have already made deep

cuts to tenured and nontenured faculty, laid off or furloughed staff, frozen or decreased wages, cut benefits, instituted hiring freezes, and halted construction projects. Such actions are likely to accelerate in 2021 as the full impact of the pandemic on academic budgets, and academic museums, becomes clear.

Find Out More

This year's TrendsWatch (bit.ly/trendswatch2021) contains an in-depth exploration of the challenges facing higher education, additional resources, and a framework academic museums can use to support students, faculty, and members of the broader community during the pandemic, thus setting the stage for their own success.



AAM Museums and Creative Aging



Age is not always part of the conversation with DEAI, but as the Speed Art Museum's creative aging program shows, it should be.

Given the ongoing

demographic shift toward a larger older population in the US, it is more important than ever to change the cultural norms around aging. The Alliance is helping museums serve the needs of, and build stronger connections with, people over the age of 55.

Funded by Aroha Philanthropies, this initiative helps museums combat ageism, understand the latest research on the transformative power of creativity and arts programming, and launch new initiatives, programs, services, and partnerships in support of creative aging.

Learn more about the work of museums deeply engaged with older audiences on the Museums and Aging blog. Tap into AAM's growing collection of online resources by watching a new series of short videos produced by Aroha Philanthropies that profile the creative aging work at several museums, including the Heard Museum, Louisiana State Museum, Craft Contemporary, and others. Of particular relevance is the video "Creative Aging: In-Person to Online," which details how museums are using and expanding their digital platforms to maintain creative

aging programming during pandemic distancing.

And coming in June 2021: a definitive report by museum scholar and historian Marjorie Schwarzer summarizing the state of museums engaging with older audiences, followed by a virtual conference in July 2021 devoted to museums and aging. For details, visit bit.ly/museumsandaging.

Using Our Voices to Speak Up for Museums

In February, nearly 600 advocates from across the country joined us for Museums Advocacy Day 2021, which took place virtually for the first time in its history. Advocates met with legislators and their staff to share their stories and to discuss COVID-19 economic relief legislation, funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Office of Museum Services, tax incentives for charitable giving, and federal education policy.

Connecting with legislators, legislative staff, and each other, museum professionals and supporters from around the country made the case that museums are key providers of education to broad and diverse audiences, and they are community anchors

working to address a wide range of local challenges. Advocates let Capitol Hill offices know that despite suffering from financial distress, museums are continuing to serve their communities in unique and essential ways—from providing spaces for remote and virtual classrooms to providing lesson plans, online learning opportunities, and drop-off learning kits to teachers and families—and that museums will be vital to the recovery of the nation and communities, big and small, urban and rural, all across the country.

How will you be using your voice to speak up for museums and exercise your influence this year? Museums Advocacy Day is just part of our advocacy for museums in 2021. Now and throughout this year we must continue our ongoing stakeholder education to ensure that new and returning legislators understand how deeply museums are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the policy decisions legislators make every day. You can join the cause and get involved today.

Visit the Alliance’s website (aam-us.org/advocacy) to access materials from Museums Advocacy Day and AAM’s full suite of Advocacy Resources—including our new AAM Guide to Working with a New Congress.

MAP and Accreditation Experiment with Virtual Peer Review

Just as museums had to pivot to virtual visits and experiences in 2020, so did the Museum

Assessment Program (MAP) and Accreditation Program. Physical site visits by peer reviewers have been a requisite for both programs since their inception. But the COVID-19 pandemic required that approximately 150 planned or anticipated site visits become virtual to minimize program delays.

In making this transition, AAM wanted to ensure the integrity of the process: namely, that the reviewer obtain a comprehensive understanding of the museum in order to inform a fair and useful written report. This is particularly important in the Accreditation Program because the Accreditation Commission refers to the site visit report completed by the reviewers in its decision-making process.

Typically, physical site visits are an intensive and immersive experience lasting one and a half to three days that include front- and back-of-house tours and one-on-one and group meetings. Likewise, some MAP assessments also involve formal and informal conversations with community members and key stakeholders. One of the unique benefits of the visit is the opportunity to capture intangibles, see policies and practices in action, and observe the human and operational dynamics of the institution—all of which complement museum documents submitted for review.

While there was some trepidation in making this shift, it has been well-received. As Karen Daly, then director of Dumbarton House in Washington, DC, recently wrote, “I want to commend AAM, as

well, on the overall adaptation to the Accreditation Program done a few years back and on your flexibility during COVID-19. We are so grateful we were able to stay on schedule despite the closures and travel restrictions. And, truly, I credit the AAM Accreditation process with so much of our success here—setting us on the path toward strategic planning, governance restructuring, expanding fundraising efforts, creating collections storage, advancing interpretive changes, and so much more.”

A director of a museum in MAP concurred, stating, “What could have been a disappointing peer review experience turned into a total win for us.” Another reported that “we were pining yesterday about how hard this is when you can’t be face-to-face, and I had at first suggested we request a ‘stay’ until next year, but then, as we talked, I think we’ve come upon a plan with which to proceed. Because in reality, COVID is a time to be innovative and find new ways to get things done. We can do this!”

AAM anticipates physical visits will resume in mid to late 2021. We are grateful to the museums and peer reviewers that went the extra mile with us to adapt to the current realities to ensure such an important component of the MAP and Accreditation process is sustained.

For additional insight in undertaking MAP during the pandemic, please visit aam-us.org/2020/11/20/a-big-covid-19-pivot-the-museum-assessment-program-goes-virtual/.

Discussion Guide for *TrendsWatch*

This Discussion Guide is designed to support critical conversations among museum leaders, staff, and boards, and in the broader field, around the topics presented in this issue of *Museum* and explored in greater depth in the 2021 edition of *TrendsWatch* (bit.ly/trendswatch2021).

Closing the Gap

- Who has your organization taken assets/power from?
- Whose assets/power have you reinforced or amplified? Does the museum prioritize racial equity in its decision-making and policy-making apparatus?
- How do the museum's collections, exhibitions, and research reflect marginalized communities?
- How do your operations support or challenge structural inequalities in society?
- How does the museum work to change attitudes of visitors or the general public about race and equity?
- How does the museum deploy its tangible and intangible assets to help Black, Indigenous, and other people of color—as individuals and communities—build their own assets and wealth?
- What are practical, realistic ways your organization can share/give/return assets and power with/to those who are excluded?

Digital Awakening

- In the short term, how can digital solutions help the museum survive the financial crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic?
- In the long term, which digital solutions can fuel lasting improvements in the museum's mission delivery and financial success?
- What ongoing expertise will be needed to implement and maintain digital solutions, and will this require training, new staff, and new contracts?

- How can the museum assess which digital investments will be sustainable?
- What best practices can guide the museum's adoption of digital technologies?

Who Gets Left Behind?

- Which of the museum's internal constituents—staff and volunteers—are particularly vulnerable during the current crisis, whether due to race, gender, age, or individual circumstances?
- Can some of these vulnerabilities be addressed through the creation or expansion of programs, services, or benefits?
- What groups in your community are suffering disproportionately from the pandemic?
- Do you have existing relationships with these communities on which you can build?
- What groups could the museum partner with to meet community needs (i.e., health care providers, schools, and nonprofit social service organizations)?
- How can the museum lower or eliminate economic barriers to programs and services that could help vulnerable communities meet challenges posed by the pandemic?
- How are the museum's own actions affecting at-risk individuals?
- How can the museum use its resources to help support the vulnerable and ensure that “no one gets left behind?”

COVID on Campus

For academic museums and galleries:

- What role can the museum play in supporting online instruction and contributing to a safe, fulfilling on-campus experience during the pandemic?
- How can the museum continue to support students, researchers, and instructors who rely on the museum for opportunities and resources?
- How will the museum prioritize its audiences (e.g., student, faculty, and public) in the face of constrained resources?
- What role can the museum play in supporting the surrounding community?
- What are the short- and long-term financial implications of the pandemic for the museum's parent organization, and how will that affect the museum's own financial stability?

For museums in communities where local colleges and universities are major economic drivers:

- How will the status of the area's colleges and universities affect the local economy?
- How might that impact the museum's finances?

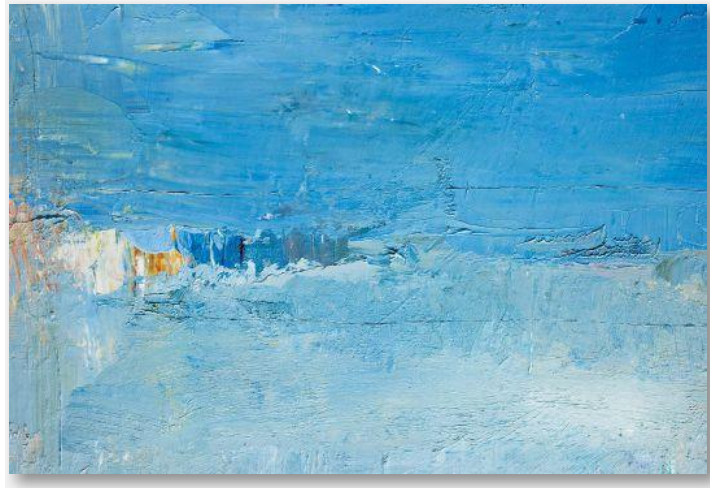
For all museums:

- How can the museum support young people whose college or graduate studies have been interrupted by the pandemic?
- Will the current challenges facing higher education result in long-term change that disrupts the traditional path to museum employment, and how might that affect efforts to increase racial diversity in the museum sector?

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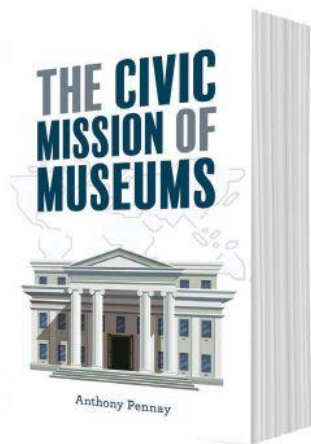
“So why try to predict the future at all if it’s so difficult, so nearly impossible? Because making predictions is one way to give warning when we see ourselves drifting in dangerous directions. Because prediction is a useful way of pointing out safer, wiser courses. Because, most of all, our tomorrow is the child of our today.”

Octavia Butler

From “A Few Rules for Predicting the Future,” originally published in 2000 by *Essence* magazine, online courtesy of the Common Good Collective

Life-altering, ink on paper and magazine collage by La’Nora Boror (2020). Exhibited in “Curating the End of the World” online exhibition by New York Live Arts; courtesy of the artist.

NEW RESOURCES FOR _____ MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS



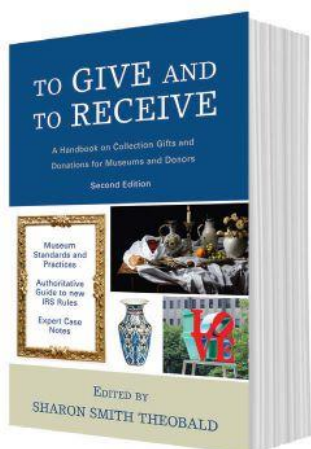
THE CIVIC MISSION OF MUSEUMS

By Anthony Pennay

“Pennay’s timely writing reminds us that we, as museum workers and leaders, have a duty to support a civil society through our educational efforts and the sharing of our museum spaces for the civic process. We can all benefit from this refresher course on civics which also serves to enable museums and their staffs to do better for society.”

—Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, director, Illinois State Museum

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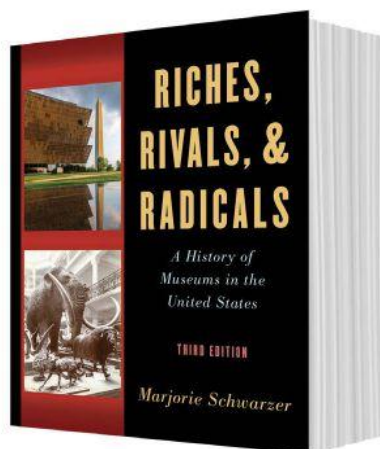
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—Kate Brueggemann, Vice President, Development, Adler Planetarium

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