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Alliance of
Museums

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[Resources](#)
[Membership](#)
[Advocacy](#)
[JobHQ](#)

**EdCom Newsletter:
June 2014**

Message from the Outgoing Chair

Dear EdCom Members,

It has been my esteemed honor to serve as Chair of EdCom for the past four years. It has been a time of great change. EdCom has transitioned into a new membership and operational relationship with AAM's Professional Networks, adopted a new strategic agenda that focuses on "best and next" practices in museum education, reorganized its board structure to better tackle work and priorities as well as foster greater volunteer opportunities, and celebrated the 40th Anniversary milestone. I can't overstate what a pleasure it has been to work with my talented colleagues on the board and with the many wonderful and inspirational EdCom members across the country. I am proud to hand the mantle of leadership to Sarah Jesse, EdCom's new chair. She is a forward-thinking, talented and enthusiastic individual who will help EdCom through its exciting next phase.

Sincerely,

Nathan Richie
Outgoing Chair, EdCom
Director, Golden History Museums
Golden, Colorado

In this issue

[Message from the Chair](#)
[Highlights from the 2014
Annual Luncheon](#)
[What Are You Reading?](#)
[Calling You!](#)
[Seeking Regional and State
Representatives](#)
[Call for Volunteers](#)
[Awards of Excellence
Spotlight](#)
[One Good Thing](#)
[Meet the Board](#)
[Calendar](#)

Message from the Chair

Dear Colleagues,

I'm feeling particularly energized post-Seattle. The conference was meaty with content, but as many of you echoed, the built-in downtime often spurred the most fertile conversations and highlighted the collegiality that unites our field. We're unique considering how secrecy and competition rule many other industries. Ours is a domain of idea sharing. It made me think that maybe one of the reasons we're good at building community in our own institutions is because we have a rich one of our own. EdCom is a forum to foster exchange throughout the year. Get involved by participating in upcoming professional development programs, volunteering to help, or contributing to this newsletter (see below).

Sarah Jesse
Chair, EdCom
sjesse@lacma.org

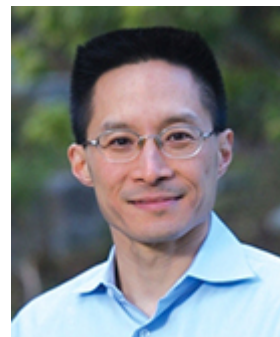
Highlights from the 2014 Annual Luncheon

Museums as Cradles of Democracy

by Courtney Brouwer, Annual Conference Chair

- [Watch the video and join the discussion!](#)
- [Share your feedback and suggest next year's speaker.](#)

In his captivating remarks at this year's luncheon, Eric Liu underscored the crucial role of museum educators in nurturing democracy and promoting what he calls the art of powerful citizenship. He called on us to acknowledge our institutions—whether they interpret collections of history, science, art or animals—as cradles of democracy that foster meaningful participation in public life.



Luncheon speaker Eric Liu,
founder of Citizen University

Eric noted that documentation status is entirely extraneous to his conception of citizenship, a regrettably politicized and therefore polarizing term. Instead, in its most ideal form, the word evokes for him a sense of commitment to our communities, where the spirit of fellowship thrives. Eric posits that museums nurture this spirit by illuminating the interconnectivity of our lives and commonality of our concerns. Yet he noted that this work has never been more difficult, and decried the ubiquitous metaphor of the market that has come to dominate all aspects of our lives, that has created an “ambient pressure” to talk about everything we do in terms of return on investment.



Luncheon speaker Eric Liu (left) with EdCom's
professional development chair and moderator, Tony
Pennay.

Our mission, as Eric poignantly reminded us, is not to further “amplify and extend the imperialism of the market,” but rather to “create a space safe from [its] valuations.” Just as cathedrals offer refuge for reflection and communing with something greater than ourselves, so, too, do museums offer sanctuary from the pressures and mundane concerns of everyday life. They remind us that we are connected across generations, inheritors of the past and stewards of the future. The market doesn't let us think that way, but museums do.

What Are You Reading?

Each month we ask luminaries in the field what's on their nightstand. This newsletter features Wendy Woon, The Edward John Noble Foundation Deputy Director for Education at The Museum of Modern Art.

"I almost never read a book from beginning to end, rather I read many simultaneously, picking them up and putting them down as the content is relevant. Here's a short selection of what is either beside my bed, in my studio, or on my iPad right now."



Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes, by Maria Konnikova

"The acute sense of observation and deductive reasoning based on visual cues is something akin to what we do in the galleries looking at art. We do programs with medical students to hone their observation skills and, I dare say, most of us could use a little more of Holmesian awareness, keen observation and deductive thought processes.

The book reminds me of the importance of being fully present in our daily engagement with others and with art, which increasingly becomes challenging with so many distractions.”

Letters to a Young Artist, by Anna Deveare Smith

“This book, which is written as a series of “mentorship” letters to a suburban high school student who is passionate about art is inspiring, frank, personal and engagingly written. I wish I'd read it thirty years ago, but at any age the good advice, insight and good humor about living a life in the arts is inspiring and helpful.”

Smarter Than You Think: How Technology is Changing Our Minds for the Better, by Clive Thompson

“I'm particularly interested in the notion of memory, and how memory works (or not) and how technology now aids us by rather instantly providing us with the information we need, which is more accurate than memory. Is that a good thing? What function do memories have for the 21st century?”

Draw It With Your Eyes Closed: The Art of the Art Assignment, edited by Paper Monument

“This book includes art assignments from various artists. It reminds me that teaching is a creative profession. I'm all for experimentation and keeping things fresh, and testing new ways of working so the ideas in the book are a great jumping off point.”

Calling You!

As your bimonthly newsletter, we want to hear from you! Want to highlight events at your museum or in your community? Is there a burning issue you want to bring to the attention of your colleagues? Or do you have some thoughts to share on museums and museum education? Let us know! E-mail your opinion pieces to edcomweb@gmail.com for inclusion in the newsletter, and we'll share your ideas with the museum education community.

Seeking Regional and State Representatives

Are you interested in serving the museum education field and becoming more connected to education-minded professionals in your area? In order to better represent museum education across the country and bring EdCom programming to you, EdCom needs to establish a strong network that includes representation of each region and state to serve on the Membership Committee. There are currently 38 positions available. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the EdCom board and participate in realizing the various strategic goals. [Learn more about the Membership Committee and vacant positions.](#)

If you have questions or are interested in becoming a representative, please contact Leah Fox, Membership Chair, at lfox@currier.org.

Call for Volunteers

Over the next two years, EdCom will be working to define, foster and celebrate best practices in museum education; and investigate, articulate and provoke “next” practices. You can be a part of this. EdCom is looking for volunteers to serve on committees.

If you would like to be involved in the work of an EdCom committee, please let us know by filling out the form linked below. You may rank up to three committees on which you would like to serve, and there is space for you to describe any special credentials or experience that would be useful for us to know.

You can sign up for your preferred committee placements here: <http://bit.ly/edcomvolunteers>.

Please submit your committee preferences by COB on **Friday, July 11**. You will then be contacted by an EdCom representative and informed of your committee placement so you can get started!

The primary work of each committee is on our website here: http://www.edcom.org/Volunteer_with_EdCom.asp.

Awards of Excellence Spotlight

Congratulations to the 2014 EdCom Award Winners! As announced in Seattle, our awardees are:

- **Excellence in Programming:** Lincoln Park Zoo, [Young Researchers Collaborative](#)
- **Excellence in Practice:** [Leah Melber](#), senior director, Hurvis Center for Learning Innovation and Collaboration, Lincoln Park Zoo
- **Excellence in Resources:** Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) Museum
- **John Cotton Dana Award:** [Lori Fogarty](#), executive director, Oakland Museum of California

EdCom has recognized outstanding contributions to museum education since 1983. Over the next four newsletters we will be highlighting the accomplishments of this year's awardees. If you know a person, program or resource worthy of recognition, keep them in mind for our next call for nominations this winter.

One Good Thing

We received many submissions highlighting incredible educational activities in the New England region. Below are some highlights and a [larger report](#) can be found on our website.

2014 Maine in America Award

The Farnsworth Art Museum, in Rockland, Maine, is proud to announce the Shakers of Sabbathday Lake as the recipients of the 2014 Maine in America Award—presented by the Farnsworth's Presidents Council to honor an individual or group who has made an outstanding contribution to Maine's role in American art.

Visual Literacy: Rethinking the Arts in Education

This new [short documentary](#) (35 minutes), produced by the Yale Center for British Art, focuses on the role the arts can play in literacy and demonstrating the unique part that art museums can play.

Sign-Language Interpretation

As part of a research study, a selection of Museum of Science, Boston live presentations were interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL) on all Saturdays in May. Front-line and education staff were provided with training to ensure all visitors felt welcomed and included.

Professional Development Opportunity

The Greater Boston Museum Educators Roundtable is hosting a workshop: Experimentation, Risk-taking and Creativity. Wednesday July 23, 1–4 p.m. at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum.

Meet the Board

Betsy Bowers, Museum Education Issues Committee Chair

Why are you involved in EdCom?

Museum educators see the value of museums as educational institutions. EdCom gives us a platform to articulate to others, including AAM leadership and policymakers, the potential impact museums can have on a nation of lifelong learners.

What's your day job?

As the Director of the Center for Innovation in Early Learning at the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, I have an opportunity to see, every day, how museums can support the positive development of a child's curiosity, sense of wonder, 21st Century learning skills and excitement about learning from authentic objects, artistic masterpieces and real world experiences.



What is the future of museum education, in 10 words or fewer?

Museums will be valued as important educational resources for all.

What advice do you have for new museum education professionals?

Don't assume that your CEO, development officer, board member, marketer, regional superintendent of education or local congressman know the kind of impression that the museum experiences you implement every day have had on an individual's life and love of learning. Share your stories.

What is one fun fact about yourself?

One of my many jobs as an administrative assistant for the China Exhibition Corporation in New York City (many years ago) was roller skating messages between the two offices and exhibition site.

George Buss, Board Development Committee Chair**Why are you involved in EdCom?**

Being involved with EdCom is a great way to give back to the field. I want to be a part of helping our organization's be the best we can be for our visitors.

What's your day job?

I am the Director of Experience and Education at Minnetrista, the home of the Ball Jar, in Muncie, Indiana.

What is the future of museum education, in 10 words or fewer?

Creating safe places to connect to people, ideas, and objects.

What advice do you have for new museum education professionals?

Stay well read and experiment without fear. Think about the outcomes you want to see and economize every action to make that happen.

What is one fun fact about yourself?

I collect and read children's literature with a passion.



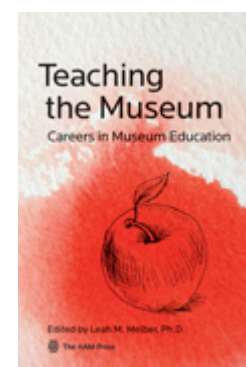
May/June issue
of Museum is
now available
online for
Alliance
members



New from
The AAM Press

**Teaching the Museum:
Careers in Museum
Education**

Edited by Leah M.
Melber, Ph.D.

**Calendar**

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| June 25 | Collections Assessment for Small Museums
Live webinar |
| July 1 | Museum Assessment Program Applications Due |
| July 23 | Copyright Licensing: Giving and Receiving
Live webinar |

Sept. 3

Embracing 360 Engagement: Widening the Circle

Part of [Magnetic: The Art and Science of Engagement](#) webcast series



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