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## EdCom Newsletter: October 2015

### Chair's Corner

I'm a big believer in Shine Theory, or the premise that "I don't shine if you don't shine." Coined by journalist Ann Friedman, the term in its original incarnation refers to the reciprocal benefits gleaned when women support each other in the workplace. But I think it's a meaningful principle for anyone to consider. Actively seeking out professional friendships with colleagues you respect and praising their accomplishments isn't smarmy; it makes you better at your job by providing inspiration, new perspectives, and access to alternative sounding boards.

The [EdCom awards](#) are a perfect outlet to put Shine Theory into practice. How often do you hear about an impressive program and think "what an awesome contribution to the field"? Take action. Give props to an educator you admire by nominating him/her for a national award. It offers you a chance to learn more about the project and deepen your relationship, while giving visibility to good work—a win-win.

Learn more below and join us!



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### What Are You Reading?

Each month we ask luminaries in the field what's on their nightstand. This newsletter features Kimberlee Kiehl, Executive Director of the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center and President of the Visitor Studies Association.

### In this issue

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### Calendar

#### October 2, 2015:

[John Cotton Dana Award for Leadership](#)  
Nominations Open

#### October 7, 14, & 28, 2015:

[Stories of Inclusion: Inclusive Practices at Cultural Institutions](#)  
Webinar Suite

#### November 2, 2015:

[EdCom Awards for Excellence and Innovation Nominations Open](#)

#### November 10, 2015:

[EdCom Virtual Book Club: Distance Learning in Museums Online](#)

#### December 13, 2015:



John Cotton Dana Award for  
Leadership  
Nominations Close

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*A Curious Mind: The Secret to A Bigger Life*  
by Brian Grazer and Charles Fishman

I just recently finished reading *A Curious Mind: The Secret to A Bigger Life* by Brian Grazer and Charles Fishman. I will admit that I started to read it more for my own interest rather than for my professional life, but I found it full of wisdom for our school here at the Smithsonian and for museums in general. In case you don't recognize the name, Brian is a Hollywood movie and TV producer who has partnered with Ron Howard on many projects and has produced many films including *Splash*, *Apollo 13*, and *A Beautiful Mind*.

This book is a beautiful homage to the value of curiosity and the importance of learning to ask good questions, learning to pay attention to the answers, and to using those answers to form new questions. Grazer talks about the role curiosity has played in his own life, both in his everyday activity and through a series of "curiosity conversations" that he has been having with everyone from Castro to presidents over the years.

I agree with Grazer's view that curiosity has been undervalued, even maligned in our society. As he reflected back on his school days in the 50's and 60's, the same years that I was in school, he states that "...being curious wasn't exactly considered a virtue." Unfortunately, I think this is all too often still true in classrooms. But this is where museums excel. We not only want people to be curious but we do all we can to stimulate that curiosity through our design and through our programs.

This is also what we want here at the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center (SEEC) where we provide children with the space to "search for knowledge rather than be spoon fed information." Grazer's states it this way: "The classroom should be a vineyard of questions, a place to cultivate them, to learn both how to ask them and how to chase down the answers."

While Grazer talks about the many ways courage contributes to lives that are richer, deeper and more creative, I particularly loved his discussions about the relationship between curiosity and courage and curiosity and storytelling. He believes that curiosity and storytelling are "natural allies" --something I totally agree with and think that we don't use story often enough in education or in museums.

I, like Grazer, believe that curiosity is a "superhero power" and that if we all work together we can create the "golden age of curiosity." I think museums and schools like ours have a lot to contribute to the creation of this golden age!

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### Awards of Excellence

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

## John Cotton Dana Award for Leadership

### Elizabeth (Elee) Wood, PhD, Indiana University School of Liberal Arts



Nominated by one of her students, Dr. Wood is well-published in the field of museums and has “continued to beat the drum of access, equity and outreach for museums – with a clear goal of making museums and their information available to all.” The impact of her work also extends through the hundreds of students she coached, mentored and taught over the years who have continued the commitment instilled in them by Dr. Wood. The judges applauded the impact Dr. Wood’s work has had on the field. As her nominator noted, “I can think of no other professional so deserving of the John Cotton Dana award than Elee, in whose voice I hear every Dana quote I read.”

## Nominations Open for John Cotton Dana Award

This award recognizes an individual, other than someone working directly with museum education programs, for efforts on behalf of public education and community service. Eligible nominees include:

- museum directors
- curators
- researchers
- exhibit designers
- school administrators
- government officials
- those in foundations, corporations and training programs

*Practicing museum educators are ineligible* since this award is designed to recognize those outside the field of museum education who exhibit outstanding leadership and promote the educational responsibility and capacity of museums.

The John Cotton Dana Award recognizes exemplary leadership. It is therefore awarded on an occasional basis (not annually) as extraordinary leadership is brought to the attention of the nominating committee through the nomination process.

This award was established in 1991 by EdCom in tribute to John Cotton Dana, founder and director of the Newark Museum. During his life, he worked incessantly to make the museum a center of community service whose chief function was to be educational and interpretive.

**Nominations** are due by **Sunday, December 13, 2015**.

## Mark Your Calendar

EdCom has a number of upcoming events.

### Awards for Excellence

The John Cotton Dana Award is now accepting nominations, but our Awards for Excellence in Practice, Programming, and Resources will also be opening soon. It’s time to start thinking of nominees. We will begin accepting nominations on November 2. Links to the nominating form will be found on our [website](#) and will be posted to social media starting in November. We will also list them in our December Newsletter.

## Award for Innovation in Museum Education

This November 2, we also open nominations for the first Award for Innovation in Museum Education. More information about this award will be found on our [website](#) later this month and in the December Newsletter.

## Stories of Inclusion: Inclusive Practices at Cultural Institutions Webcast Series

2015 marks the 25th anniversary of the landmark Americans with Disabilities Act. Today, people with disabilities represent the largest minority group in our country, comprising upwards of 56 million Americans. Disability can affect anyone's life at any given moment in a myriad of ways.

Join us for this three-part webcast series developed by AAM in collaboration with EdCom and DivCom. During the sessions advocates and experts explore issues of accessibility and inclusion from the perspective of visitors, staff and facility or program users in museums, libraries, archives and other cultural institutions. Presenters and special guests in each webcast highlight case studies and examples of inclusive practice, addressing and responding to the first-hand stories of visitors with disabilities.

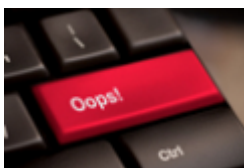
You can [register for sessions](#) on October 7, October 14, and October 28, or you can attend free local "watch and talk" events at sites across the country. Attendees will have a chance to network with fellow museum professionals, watch the webinar together, and participate in a discussion afterwards. Check the event page to see if one is happening near you.

## EdCom Virtual Book Club: Distance Learning in Museums

In what feels very apropos, the fall EdCom Virtual Book Club session on Distance Learning in Museums ran into technical problems and had to be rescheduled. This means you still have time to register and attend. The new date is **Tuesday, November 10 at 2:00 pm EST/11:00 am PST**.

Please [register in advance](#) and join us for this free discussion on the summer edition of the *Journal of Museum Education*. Participants who were originally registered are automatically registered for the new session.

## Correction



In the August 2015 newsletter, the link to the *Journal of Museum Education* was incorrect. The link is: <http://museumeducation.info/>. EdCom apologizes for the mistake.

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## One Good Thing

### Teen Guides

*Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art*

Each summer the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art employs 35 teenagers as tour guides with three goals; to offer summer employment, provide hands-on tours for youth K-6, and to create a strong bond for both teens and youth to the museum. Teen Guides are trained on how to best facilitate learning through engagement methodology including Visual Thinking Strategies, participatory activities, empathy, and commitment. With tours at both the museum and at The Anita B. Gorman Discovery Center, a local nature preserve and conservation center, the Teen Guide program serves over 2,500 youth from summer camps, daycares, and summer schools from across



the Kansas City area. This partnership provides experience in science and art (STEAM) and a chance for both the teens and museum visitors to learn and grow from their shared experiences.

For more information, visit their [website](#).

## Leadership Lowdown

Each newsletter we'll introduce one of our committee chairs. If you're interested in helping with one of EdCom's committees, see our [volunteer site](#). This month we meet Sheri Levinsky-Raskin, Chair-Elect of EdCom's Professional Development Committee and Assistant Vice President, Education & Evaluation at the Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum.



### Why are you involved in EdCom?

For me, museum education centers on audience advocacy and EdCom provides opportunities and platforms to share opportunities and resources, track trends, and discuss ideas with colleagues from across the country.

EdCom's mission embodies so many aspects of what inspires me, including supporting the professional growth of each other in museum education, whether seasoned educators or emerging into the field. I proudly served seven-years of volunteer service as a Board Trustee for the New York City Museum Educators Roundtable and am excited to contribute to a wider, national dialogue.

### What's your day job?

In the fall of 2014 my role shifted to focus on evaluation practices and data collection. I work with my colleagues in the education department and across the institution to more clearly define outcomes, define why and how we offer programs and resources, and develop assessment strategies and tools for gathering information about our visitors experiences and their expectations and recommendations.

Having worked closely with staff and consultants to develop and design many of the Museum's diverse programs and resources over the past 10 1/2 years, I consider myself lucky that my "day job" now takes my involvement in the those programs to another level through the lens of assessment, while complementing my interests in audience advocacy, accessibility, and inclusion.

### What is the future of museum education in 10 words (or fewer)?

Increased advocacy and confidence in ourselves and what we do.

### Recalling your expectations on your first day as a museum education professional, what is one thing that has surprised you about working in museum education?

Realizing how many museum professionals working in departments outside of education truly do not understand museum education.

### When you need inspiration as an educator, who or what do you turn to?

Depending on the situation, when I need inspiration I either turn to those I consider my mentors, spend time with visitors in the museum galleries and spaces, or lose myself in a great game of fetch with my dog and allow myself space and time to think.



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