



Chair's Corner

Before passing the baton to Tony Pennay, I'd like to use my last "Chair's Corner" to give a few shout-outs. Through serving in this role over the last two years, I've learned so much about the exceptional programming being offered by museums around the country. What a gift to become exposed to the work of educators who are serious about the mission and extremely thoughtful and creative in achieving it. Your commitment to excellence is what fuels EdCom and makes our field as strong as it is.

In addition, I'd like to acknowledge AAM for not only shouting from the mountains (Capitol Hill, included) the importance of education, but also aligning their resources to advance the educational function of museums (I can't wait to see what emerges from the [Ford W. Bell Fellowship](#)).

Finally, I'd like to recognize the Education Committee and volunteers for giving their time and expertise, including Tony Pennay, who will become Chair starting June 1. Tony is a generous, democratic leader with great ideas and energy. I know he will represent us well. Thanks to AAM, EdCom, and all of you members, I leave my post as Chair with new relationships, ideas, motivation, and much to look forward to for our field.



Sarah Jesse
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In Memoriam

The museum community is saddened by the loss of Claudine K. Brown, Assistant Secretary for Education and Access for the Smithsonian, who passed away on March 17. Claudine was responsible for defining the Smithsonian Institution's overall education program, and she worked tirelessly with staff from 32 education offices across the Institution to develop initiatives and resources to benefit

In this issue

[Chair's Corner](#)

[In Memoriam](#)

[AAM Annual Meeting - Session Highlights](#)

[Voices from the Field](#)

[One Good Thing](#)

[Mark Your Calendar](#)

[EdCom Elections](#)

Calendar

April 9, 2016:

New Facilitator Proposal Deadline:
[EdCom Marketplace of Ideas](#)

April 9, 2016:

Registration Deadline:
[Exhibition Label Writing and Audience Engagement](#)

April 29, 2016:

[AAM Annual Meeting Advance Registration and Ticket Purchase](#) deadline

May 4, 2016:

[Towards a More Accessible and Inclusive Presentation](#) webinar

May 25, 2016:

[Exhibition Label Writing and Audience Engagement](#) workshop, Washington, DC

May 26-29, 2016:

[AAM Annual Meeting &](#)



learners of all ages. Claudine began her career with the Smithsonian, serving as the director of the National African American Museum Project (1990 to 1995). In 1991, she became the Smithsonian's Deputy Assistant Secretary for

MuseumExpo, Washington, DC

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the Arts and Humanities.

Claudine left the Smithsonian to serve as the director of the arts and culture program at the Nathan Cummings Foundation in New York from 1995 to 2010. During her tenure, she positioned the organization as a leading arts grantmaker that supports institutions that are committed to excellence, diversity and community involvement.

In addition to working in the museum and philanthropy communities, Claudine served for more than 20 years as a faculty advisor and instructor in the Leadership in Museum Education Program at Bank Street Graduate School of Education in New York City. Many of the more than 200 students she advised and taught are now directors of education and managers at museums throughout the country.

She had the strength to tackle big issues and projects, the temperament to remain calm in any crisis, and an unforgettable charisma that continues to inspire us all.

Stephanie Norby

Director of the Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access

AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo Session Highlights

To prepare and excite those of you attending the upcoming AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo in Washington, D.C., we are highlighting a few sessions that look interesting to us as educators.

EdCom Reception and Luncheon

Don't forget to sign up to attend the EdCom Reception on Thursday, May 26 and the EdCom Luncheon and Awards Ceremony on Saturday, May 28. **Monica Montgomery**, Action Director of the Lewis H. Latimer Historic House Museum, Co-Founder and Strategic Director of Museum Hue, and founder of Museum of Impact, a pop-up social justice museum, will be our guest speaker at the Luncheon.

Papa Don't Preach: Creating Compelling, Issues-Based Exhibitions

How do we create museum experiences addressing serious societal issues that are meaty (do justice to complex topics), meaningful (provoke deep reflection, dialogue, and even constructive action taking), AND magnetic (draw and engage many visitors, who have competing options for their time)? Join leaders in museum education, curatorial, design, and audience engagement who've taken on this challenge in a discussion of three diverse, trail-blazing exhibitions: the Skirball Cultural Center's "A Path Appears: Transforming Lives, Creating Opportunity," the Oakland Museum of California's "Altered State: Marijuana in California," and the San Diego Museum of Man's "Cannibalism: Myth and Reality." Session attendees will learn about adaptable strategies for creating exhibitions on complex societal issues that draw visitors and inspire active engagement; gain insight into the importance of clear visitor experience goals and the value of inspired,

goals-driven design; and engage with colleagues who've adopted fresh approaches to developing issues-based exhibitions that embrace visitors as whole, integrated beings.

Inclusion Strategies that Extend Beyond Separate Programs

What does research tell us about designing a science museum environment for families who visit with a child impacted by autism? How can I start or infuse new energy into my art museum's access and inclusion efforts? How can my zoo inspire conservation leaders of all abilities? Join us at AAM if you're interested in getting the answers to these questions and sharing your own ideas. We'd love to talk about how we can create welcoming environments for any visitor and how separate audience-focused programs fit into this broader goal.

Legitimizing Irreverence in the Museum

Our session explores the place of irreverence in the museum as a way of looking at tropes that are present in museum interpretation (and in the reputation of museums as "venerable institutions"). Acknowledging and poking fun at some of those tried and true museum tropes can help to create comfort in what can be uncomfortable spaces or ideas for some visitors. All of that sounds like fun, of course, but there are some big challenges when trying to employ irreverence as a legitimate interpretive perspective. This panel draws from museum folks in art, history, and natural science museums to illustrate those challenges, and make fun of all of it in the process.

Empathy & Evil: Moving Beyond 'Good-guy/Bad-guy' Narratives

Museums are tasked with unpacking complex social narratives in order to accurately document conflict and actively further public understanding. Even seemingly benign narratives are often told through the eyes of an oversimplified "good guy" and "bad guy." This reduction is rarely accurate and may, in fact, be harmful: victims get presented as powerless and victimizers as non-human monsters. We hope that our session will build on a previous session at AAM 2014 on empathy in museums, led by one of our panelists, Adam Nilsen. The session, which drew over 70 participants, raised rich questions about empathy in relation to perpetrators of atrocities. As a follow-up, a Google group called "Empathy in Museums" was launched and has grown to include 75 professionals engaged in further dialogue. We have intentionally assembled panelists who will speak from varying areas of expertise, from academic research to exhibit design and programming, in a wide range of settings. Beyond simply presenting material, we will lead participants through activities to encourage problem-solving and brainstorming about far-reaching applications of this material.

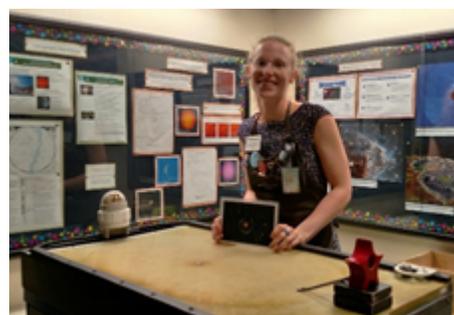
Voices From the Field

Shauna Edson, Astronomy Educator, [Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#)

On February 11 of this year, when scientists [announced](#) that they had detected gravitational waves, I was among the thousands of people who were so excited we couldn't sit still. This news was literally Earth-shaking!

So of course, I took the first opportunity to talk about it with visitors. The day after the announcement, I set up our black holes Discovery Station, which uses a rubber sheet to demonstrate how space-time gets warped by massive objects. I created my own "gravitational waves" by tapping on the rubber sheet to make it vibrate, like ripples on a pond.

Midway through the afternoon, a man came up to the Discovery Station and was interested to see that I was connecting the activity to the previous day's big news. This visitor turned out to be University of Oregon physicist [Dr. Robert Schofield](#), a member of the [LIGO](#) science team that made the discovery! Whoa, how often do you get



that kind of opportunity?! I spent 20 fascinated minutes talking with him.

Little did I know that the best part of the conversation would come at the end. Standing there in the Explore the Universe gallery, which tells the story of humans and astronomy, Dr. Schofield said that he grew up here and he used to be one of the kids running around these exhibits. Then he looked me in the eye and said, **“It was this Museum, and people like you, that grew my interest in science.”**

WOW. Is it just me, or was that the education equivalent of winning the Olympic gold medal?! That is IMPACT! Dr. Schofield went on to describe the value of seeing the “real thing” in person, and how as a physics student he would come study the instruments at the Museum. Details about the objects’ form and function, which don’t all come through in a picture or textbook, were crucial throughout his education. He also fondly remembered taking the docent tours while in college, and said, “I was one of the quiet teenagers at the back, paying a lot more attention than it seemed.”

I was completely blown away by this whole conversation. Here’s a person whose research has changed the world, and he’s telling me that the work I do is what got him excited about science.

As educators, we see uncountable numbers of Museum visitors. We watch their eyes light up when they learn something really cool. We smile as we recognize that their Museum visit, and their interaction with us, makes a difference for at least that moment. But we almost never get to follow up and find out what kind of long-term effect it has on their interests, career aspirations, or life paths. On February 12, 2016, I got the rare gift of unequivocal validation that the work we do really, REALLY matters. Every one of us can make a truly profound difference for someone. There is no greater reward than that!

One Good Thing

Smithsonian Institution’s National Postal Museum *First Class Problem Solvers*



The First-Class Problem Solvers school tour helps students improve critical problem solving skills by learning from postal history and applying them to a challenge. During this facilitated experience, students first learn the four steps of problem-solving (identify the problem, think about the problem, create a plan, and take action). Students then see examples of the problem-solving steps in history through our museum’s exhibitions.

After these activities, students apply their new found skills and knowledge by solving a challenge.

Teams work together to design a container that can safely ship a potato chip without breaking it. Teams

present their strategies and decision-making process with the class. They test the container by tossing it into a mailbox from afar, and reveal the result with everyone to wrap up the project.

The First-Class Problem Solvers is a challenge-based program that is highly participatory. Instead of taking a traditional tour through the museum, students are given a context for understanding postal history that makes the exhibitions relevant and engaging. The program is also interdisciplinary, and succeeds in fostering skills that align with Common Core State Standards. Students are required to apply their knowledge from different subject area such as English Language Arts, History and Science, as well as cognitive skills like critical and analytical thinking.

Mark Your Calendar

2016 *Journal of Folklore and Education* Call for Submissions

The *Journal of Folklore and Education* is a peer-reviewed, multimedia, open-access K-16 journal published annually by Local Learning: The National Network for Folk Arts in Education. Local Learning links folk culture specialists and educators around the world, advocating for inclusion of folk and traditional arts and culture in education. As a digital publication, the [Journal of Folklore and Education](#) provides a forum for interdisciplinary, multimedia approaches to community-based teaching, learning, and cultural stewardship.

The 2016 *Journal of Folklore and Education* issue is dedicated to exploring the intersection of folklore and museum education. This theme creates an opportunity to think deeply about museums in multiple contexts. Submissions may include best practices for museum strategies for learning and engagement that connect meaningfully with communities, preparing students to visit museums, critical reflections on visual literacy and object-centered lessons, submissions that explore curating exhibits in the classroom, and other applications of the theme in light of critical Folklore in Education practice. *We welcome submissions of articles, model projects, multimedia products, teaching applications, and student work accompanied by critical writing that connects to the larger frameworks of this theme.* Contact editors [Paddy Bowman](#) or [Lisa Rathje](#) with ideas for stories, features, lessons, and media productions. Initial drafts of submissions are due April 30, 2016. Please share this announcement with colleagues, museum professionals, and educators in your community. This endeavor is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts.

EdCom Elections

EdCom Elections

We are delighted to announce the newest members of the EdCom steering committee! Many thanks to all who voted.

- **Secretary:**
Megan Wood, Director of Museum and Library Services, Ohio History Connection, Columbus, OH
- **Chair-elect, Communications:**
Rachel Parham, Volunteer and Tours Coordinator, Petersen Automotive Museum, Los Angeles, CA
- **Chair-elect, Membership:**
Russanne Hoff, Curator of Education, Hastings Museum, Hastings, NE
- **Chair-elect, Annual Conference:**
Mark Osterman, Guiding Programs Manager, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, FL

The new members will assume their new positions at the conclusion of the AAM Annual Meeting in May.

Want to become a part of EdCom Leadership? [Volunteer for EdCom first!](#) If you have questions, please email Elissa Frankle, Leadership Development and Awards chair, at epfrankle@gmail.com.



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