TrendsWatch 2019

Center for the Future of Museums

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HTB INSURING THE WORLD'S TREASURES

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Introduction

This is the eighth edition of the Alliance's annual forecasting report. As I review the draft, I notice that each year the report has gotten a little longer, the topics a little harder and more hard hitting. It is challenging to do justice to deep, complex issues such as homelessness and decolonization in essays of this length. Most of the chapter on blockchain is devoted to explaining what this technology is—there is so much left to explore about how it is being applied in social justice, art, and museums! Please use the report as solid introduction to these issues and a jumping-off point for your own explorations. I hope it inspires to you delve deeper into the topics on your own.

As I wrote, I assembled a long list of stories and leads that didn't make it into the report. I plan to explore these subjects through posts on the CFM Blog in the coming year. How will we resolve issues of "digital colonialism" arising from the use of 3D scanning to preserve cultural objects and sites? How could blockchain support the creation of new economies for makers and for museums? What does it actually look like for a museum to create self-care systems that foster staff and community resilience? If you have thoughts on these or other issues that build on this text, please reach out to me.

Every year when I take *TrendsWatch* on the road through talks and workshops, I meet a few folks who don't see how this or that trend is relevant to their work. "Why are you writing about privacy?" they might ask. Or, "Seriously, isn't artificial intelligence a bit far out there, when it comes to museum practice?" If I can coax them into reading the report, I'm confident that whether or not they agree with my interpretation, they will understand the relevance of these topics to their work. This year, I'm concerned that some museums will skip over the chapter on homelessness and housing security, thinking it has nothing to do with them or their mission. To such skeptics, I would say, if an issue is important to your community, it should be important to your organization. And as I point out later, there isn't a single county, state, or metropolitan area in the United States where someone who works 40 hours a week at federal minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom rental at fair market rent. Indeed, there are vanishingly few communities where such workers can find even a *one-bedroom* home at fair market rates. I'm not expecting museums to create affordable housing (though some might!), but any museum can draw attention to housing insecurity in their community and provoke conversations about how we can ensure that everyone in society can access safe, affordable shelter. And our sector can make sure that everyone, whether or not they are securely housed, can share in the public benefits provided by museums.

As you read this report, let your imagination range from the near future to the far, using the content to explore how these scenarios might turn out. As you envision these futures, identify actions your organization can take to steer the world in a good direction. What is one thing your museum can do in the coming year to be a more supportive workplace for your staff? What can you do in the next five years to help your community rebuild trust in civic institutions? What is your museum's vision for the long process of decolonizing its own collections and practice, and what is the next step on that journey?

I hope this report inspires you to take personal action as well—whether that's volunteering at a homeless shelter, listening to someone outside your echo chamber, or taking some time to take care of yourself. You could even go online, buy a pair of CryptoKitties (see p. 21) and start breeding digital kittens. It's a gentle introduction to a potentially intimidating technology.

Yours from the future,

Elizabeth Merritt

Elizabeth Merritt
Vice President of Strategic Foresight
Founding Director, Center for the Future of Museums
American Alliance of Museums

How to Use This Report

TrendsWatch 2019 highlights five trends that Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) staff and advisors believe are highly significant to museums and their communities, based on our scanning and analysis over the past year. For each trend, I provide a brief summary, list examples of how the trend is playing out in the world, comment on the trend's significance to society and to museums specifically, and suggest ways that museums might respond.

Here are just a few of the ways people and organizations have used recent editions of *TrendsWatch*:

- The **Carnegie Museums** used *TrendsWatch* to support a grant application to address social justice issues we've covered in the report.
- The **National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture** used the report to spark the imagination of museum staff and board members engaged in strategic planning.
- The **University of Washington Museology program** has used *TrendsWatch* as a prompt for the written portion of their application.
- **Journalists** often use the report to frame their local, national, and international reporting on museums.

To instigate these and other creative uses of the report, I encourage you to share copies with:

- the museum's **executive and planning teams**
- the entire **staff** (paid and volunteer)
- members of your **governing authority**
- **local foundations** and **major donors**
- **policy makers** and **government representatives**
- members of **key community groups** and **museum partners**
- the **press**

To foster discussion, you might host brownbag lunches, make the report an agenda item for staff or board meetings, or organize your own forecasting workshop. (The CFM report Tomorrow in the Golden State: Museums and the Future of California provides a brief guide to organizing such events.) At these gatherings, encourage people to explore the following questions:

- How are these trends playing out in your community, state, region, or country?
- Which trends are likely to have the greatest effect on your organization?
- How might your museum take advantage of the opportunities or avoid the risks these trends present?

If you are not directly involved in museum planning, you might organize similar conversations in other settings, such as museum studies classes or professional conferences.

Another way to use *TrendsWatch* is to make it a guide for your own scanning—helping you focus your attention and filter news, essays, and social media that land in your mailbox or cascade across your screen. In the coming year, keep an eye open for news and opinion pieces illustrating how these trends are playing out.

The PDF version of this report includes copious embedded links to news stories, blog posts, research reports, videos, and other resources. (These links were all working at the time of publication, but we can't guarantee they will remain stable over time.) If you are reading a print copy of the report, you can access the digital version with links, as well as all of CFM's other forecasting reports and scanning tools, at aam-us.org/programs/center-for-the-future-of-museums. The report is complemented by related posts on the CFM Blog, and content shared via Twitter (@futureofmuseums) and Facebook (futureofmuseums).

Please share any stories you think shed light on these or other important trends with me via e-mail (emerritt@aam-us.org) or Twitter (@futureofmuseums). And please tell me what you think about *TrendsWatch* and how you use it in your work. Together we can build a formidable forecasting network to help museums chart a successful course to the future.

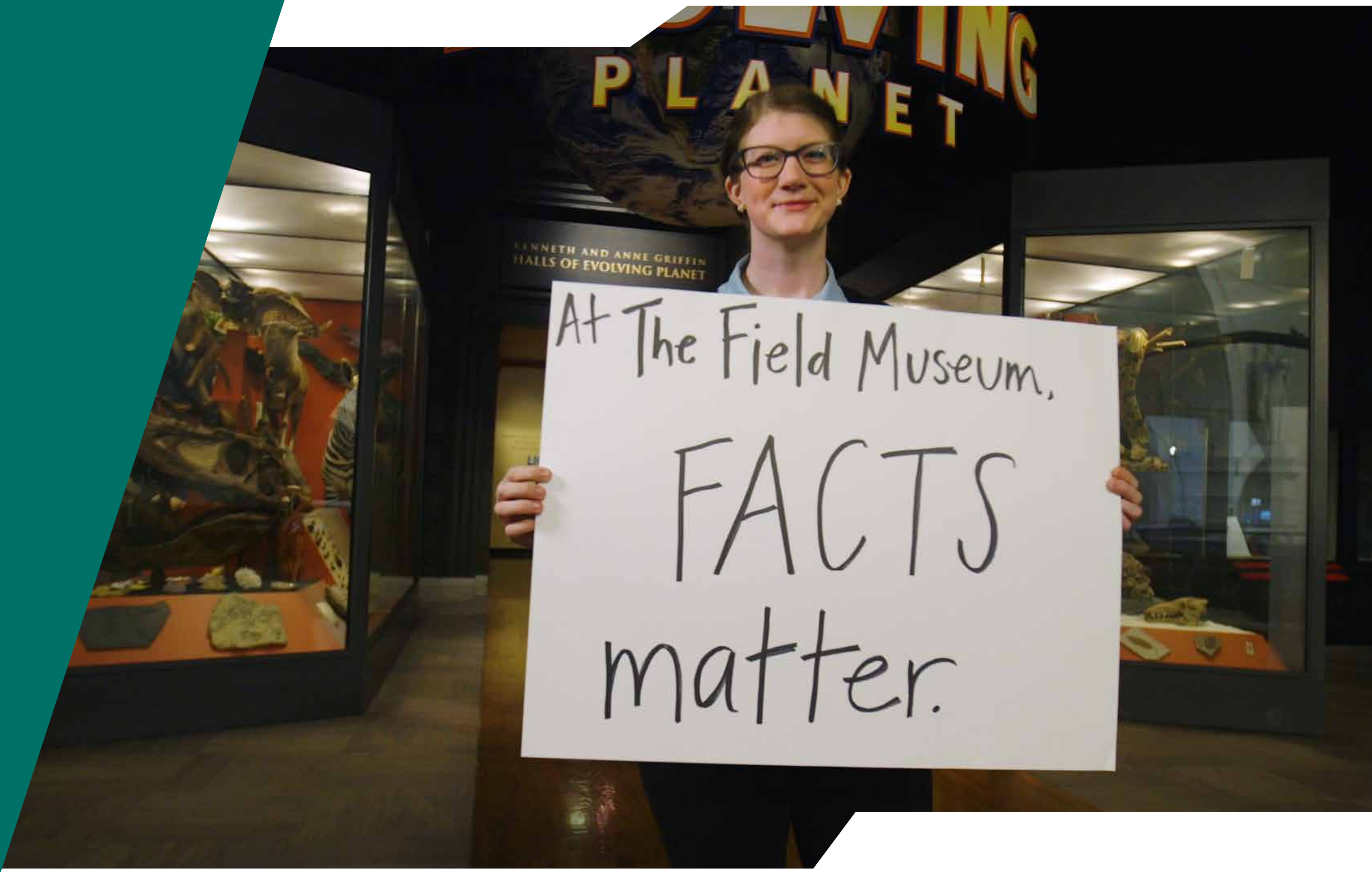
CFM director Elizabeth Merritt with IRL (in real life) kitties at the Crumbs and Whiskers cat adoption café in Washington, DC. Unlike the CryptoKitties scattered throughout this report, these cats appreciate tuna and chin rubs. (For an explanation of digital, blockchain-based, hypoallergenic CryptoKitties, see page 21.)

Truth, Trust, and Fake News

"Trust is the foundation of society. Where there is no truth, there can be no trust, and where there is no trust, there can be no society."

—Frederick Douglass

In 2016, Oxford Dictionaries selected "post-truth" as the word of the year, defining it as "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief." The term, coined in 1992, was originally associated with political discourse, but now encompasses a broader shift in how we read, how we learn, and how we talk to each other about the world. When we can't agree on how to distinguish fact from fiction, we lose faith in experts and institutions. And indeed, trust in government, media, academia, industry, and even nonprofit organizations is at an all-time low. But even as trust declines across the board, nonprofits in general, and museums in particular, remain among the most trusted sources of information. How can museums retain and build upon this trust? How can they help society reestablish a common framework for telling fact from fiction?



In February 2017, the Field Museum of Natural History participated in #DayOfFacts, a social media campaign that brought museums, libraries, science centers, and other cultural institutions together to celebrate objective, relevant facts. © Field Museum.

Description of the Trend

Trust depends on our belief that others are telling the truth, so it's no surprise that trust is suffering in the post-truth world. In 2018, the global Trust Barometer maintained by the marketing and PR firm Edelman registered precipitous drops in the trust granted by the general public to business, media, government, and nonprofit organizations in many countries, including the US. Globally, news media are now the least trusted institutions, creating a feedback loop of ignorance. Half of Edelman respondents reported consuming mainstream news less than once a week, while a quarter read no news at all.

This breakdown in trust may reflect the dark underside of a generally positive trend—the democratization of authority. The rise of the internet and proliferation of social media platforms gave voice to marginalized individuals and groups that were long excluded from traditional authority platforms. Now, Wikipedia, Reddit, countless blogs, and platforms like Twitter and Facebook provide the opportunity for anyone to voice their opinion and share their view of the world. But when anyone can be an authority, how do you assess who really knows what they are talking about? The white, male news anchors of the mid 20th century may have brought a limited perspective to bear on the world, but the fact that everyone listened to what they had to say established a shared starting point for discussion.

The proliferation of information sources has led to fragmentation, as people configure their feeds to create personal echo chambers that reflect their existing points of view. MIT researchers warned of such "cyberbalkanization" back in 1997, predicting that the internet would empower people to form "virtual cliques, insulate themselves from opposing points of view, and reinforce their biases." We may build these echo chambers without even knowing that we are doing so. Sixty-one percent of millennials report getting their news via social media, and the algorithms that control those feeds aren't designed to deliver balanced reporting—they are designed to feed people more of what they already like. One pernicious effect of echo chambers is confirmation bias—the tendency to believe that you are right and disregard information that conflicts with your ideas—which makes people less likely to trust sources of conflicting evidence.

Echo chambers also foster the weaponization of news. Once influencers have undermined trust in conflicting sources of information, they can use false information to shape public opinion without fear of being discredited. The latest Trust Barometer survey shows that nearly 70 percent of respondents worry that fake news is being used to manipulate public opinion—and there is growing evidence that they are correct. Facebook is the site Americans most commonly use to consume news, and the company recently admitted it has found and deleted nearly 300 fake accounts that were created by a Russian "troll factory" in an effort to manipulate the 2016 presidential election. A university research consortium found that nearly a quarter of Americans visited a fake news site leading up to the election, mostly by clicking through Facebook links. Pew Research reports that the majority of Americans know that the information they get from these platforms is largely inaccurate. However, in what is known as the illusory truth effect, repeated exposure to false information tends to influence what people believe.

And it's getting harder to distinguish truth from lies as we get better at faking documentation. The manipulation of photographs is, of course, as old as photography itself, but artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms have taken forgery and manipulation of images and audio to a whole new level. Last year, the Canadian tech start-up Lyrebird announced it had used an AI algorithm to create a speech generator that can mimic almost anyone's voice based on a small sampling of recorded audio. A growing number of sites offer to swap faces in videos to make people appear to be doing something they never did. Combine high-quality fake video and audio and you have deepfakes—highly convincing digital records of people saying and doing things that never actually happened.

We can fight technology with technology, of course. Technologists are developing tools like Claimbuster, which scans digital news stories and speech transcripts and checks them against a database of known facts, and Truth Goggles, which helps readers engage with news articles and evaluate how they themselves process information and draw conclusions. Researchers recently demonstrated a language analysis algorithm that could successfully identify fake news 76 percent of the time—only slightly better than human analysts, but far more scalable. The US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is experimenting with a program called Media Forensics that can detect fake videos.

But as a society we are conflicted about how to apply these fixes: another Pew Research study found that a majority of Americans oppose government regulation designed to combat fake news, preferring instead the freedom to publish and access information—even misinformation. Despite the role for-profit companies

At the Stapferhaus Museum in Lenzburg, Germany, "FAKE. The Whole Truth" challenges visitors to engage in discussion about truth and lies in both the private sphere and the public domain. Photo credit: Stapferhaus/Anita Affentranger.

have played in enabling the spread of dubious information, the Pew respondents preferred that tech companies self-regulate. (That finding echoes those of the Trust Barometer, which found that people trust industry, especially tech companies, more than they trust their own governments.)

Can trust, once lost, ever be rebuilt, and if so, how? A 2017 study on the rise of fake news by the Pew Research Center and Elon University's Imagining the Internet Center found experts were evenly split on whether the information environment would or would not improve. Given the role social media has played in the decline of trust, the future may hinge on how we use choose to regulate, police, and use those platforms.

What This Means for Society

Distrust can lead to polarization. When we can't agree on how to adjudicate the facts, we have no common basis for discourse. We can't even agree on the meaning of "fake news"—the term itself has become a shibboleth identifying the political affiliation of the speaker. Some contend that without trust in our political systems, we cannot continue to function as a democratic society—a grave projection. But given the current levels of polarization, how do we begin a nonpartisan effort to fix the system?

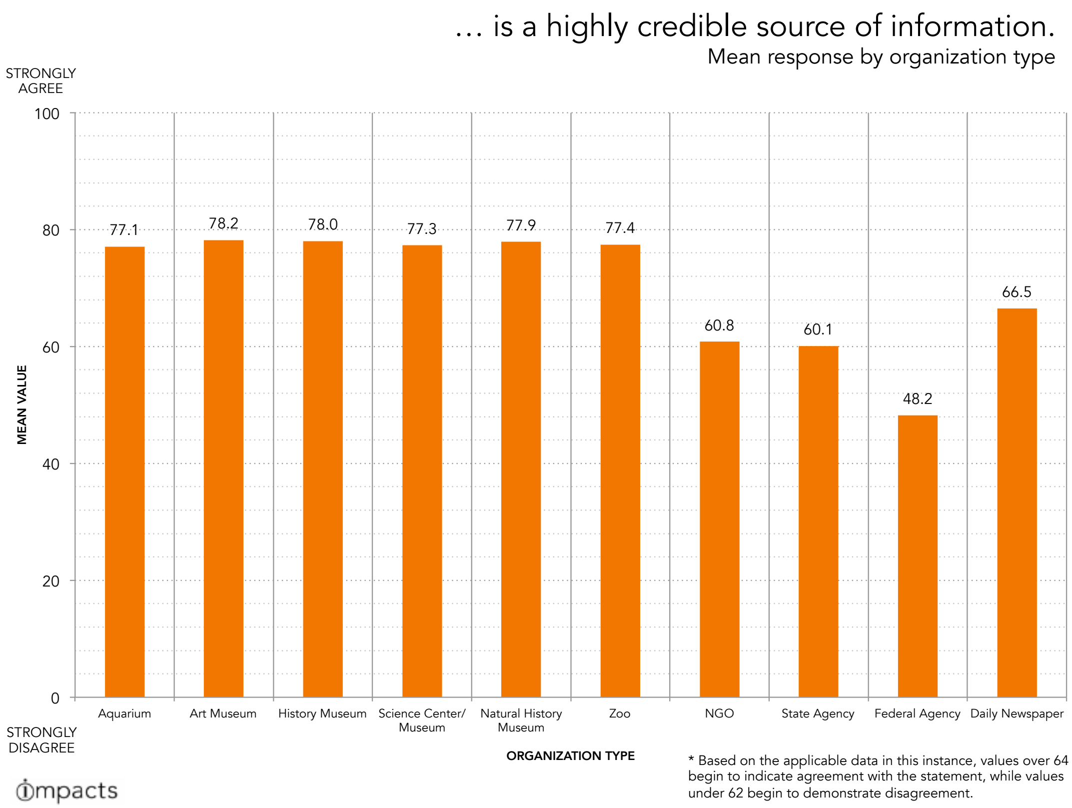
Rebuilding trust may turn out to be a multigenerational effort, beginning with significant changes to how we teach children. The "Voice-of-God" narration in traditional textbooks is often used to bury unpleasant issues and avoid controversy. It is more important than ever that we prioritize critical thinking, rather than rote memorization, across all subject areas. Educators are also calling for greater emphasis on digital literacy. Countries may choose to follow the lead of France, which has integrated media and internet literacy into the public school curriculum to teach students how to spot fake news.

A 2018 Knight Foundation/Gallup poll exploring distrust of media found that almost 70 percent of respondents said their trust in media could be restored, in part, by rigorous, transparent fact-checking and lack of bias—though this could be a difficult corrective to apply, as bias, like beauty, is largely in the eyes of the beholder. Blame has been leveled at social media for promoting misinformation, and to meet that charge, social media platforms like Facebook are experimenting with ways to let experts, or readers, flag content for bias or inaccuracy (though research suggests such efforts may backfire).

We can't blame our rising uncertainty about facts entirely on social media. As we begin to understand how our brains make and store memories, we have learned that we are more likely to remember the stories we have told about remembered events than to remember the original events themselves. It's now well documented that we can create false memories. Empathetic individuals can even "absorb" the memories of others, remembering their pain as their own. It is healthy for society to confront this fact, if only to reduce the incidence of false convictions based on eyewitness testimony. But if we can't trust ourselves to document the truth, whom can we trust?

What This Means for Museums

IMPACTS analyst Colleen Dilenschneider refers to museums as having the "superpower of trust." Analyzing data from the National Attitude, Awareness, and Usage Study, she found that museums of all kinds earn "credible source of information" ratings in the upper 70s, besting other NGOs and newspapers by better than 10 points, and federal agencies by more than 25. In a significant related finding, the US population does not view museums on the whole as having a political agenda.



Data published with permission from IMPACTS Research & Development.

Museum Examples

- The international social media campaign **#DayofFacts** took place on February 17, 2017, with museums, libraries, archives, cultural institutions, and science centers sharing content using the associated hashtag. Organizers Alli Hartley and Mara Kurlandsky explain that by "simply sharing mission-related, objective, and relevant facts, we aimed to show the world that our institutions are still trusted sources for truth and knowledge." The **Field Museum of Natural History** staged a particularly well-received event, captured in a widely viewed video and tagged with the slogan "Facts are always welcome here and so are you."
- In 2017 and 2018, a number of museums debuted exhibits and programming dedicated to fake news. The **Fairfield Museum and History Center in Connecticut** presented "Fighting Fake News: How to Help Your Students Outsmart Trolls and Troublemakers," created for educators as part of CT Humanities' year-long exploration, "Fake News: Is It Real? Journalism in the Age of Social Media," and for the Democracy and the Informed Citizen initiative. The **Cornell Fine Arts Museum** in Winter Park, Florida, mounted "Fake News? Some Artistic Responses," drawing from the permanent collections to explore how artists have responded to and reacted against the barrage of news, and suggesting that artists are "the fact-checkers of their generations."
- At the **Newseum** in Washington, DC, "Digital Disruption" explores how the news industry has been transformed by the internet and digital innovation. The exhibit explores the erosion of local news, the rise of digital news, and the power of Google and Facebook as news purveyors. It also examines fake news, mistrust of the press, President Donald Trump, and Twitter, as well as threats to journalists. With "Fact Finder: Your Foolproof Guide to Media Literacy," the Newseum education department offers strategies that help students avoid the fakes, hoaxes, and misinformation clogging their newsfeed tools.
- In 2018, the **United States Holocaust Memorial Museum** released a report stating that there was compelling evidence that the Burmese military had committed ethnic cleansing, crimes against humanity, and genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority in their country. The museum arrived at this conclusion by consulting with an advisory group of atrocity experts, as well as conducting its own on-the-ground, original research. This investigation was part of the work of the museum's Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide. This is an example of a museum, impelled by its mission, gathering and weighing evidence and taking a prominent position on a globally important political issue.

In "Fake News" (now available as a touring exhibition), the National Science and Media Museum explored how truth, lies, and the pursuit of a good story have always influenced the news. Photo courtesy of the National Science and Media Museum.

As Stephen Kehoe points out in the Edelman Trust report, "In a world where facts are under siege, credentialed sources are proving more important than ever." The trust vacuum, as he dubs it, leaves space for "*bona fide* experts" to fill. Given the trust that museums enjoy, is there a bigger role they can play as fact checkers? The dark "Fragmentation" scenario in *TrendsWatch 2018* envisioned a world in which the original, real things curated by museums become touchstones for the truth, and we see hints that this can really happen. In 2018, some academic historians created widely shared Twitter threads providing context and visual images of primary sources to fact check trending news.

Historically, museums have privileged certain frameworks of knowledge over others—for example, science and academic historical research over traditional knowledge. Opening the museum to nontraditional sources of expertise helps redress historic inequalities in power, while also creating new challenges. People in Western societies are taught to think of truth as a binary state: something is either true (a fact) or not true (a falsehood). Presenting alternative frameworks for seeing the world—such as indigenous knowledge in addition to an archaeological interpretation of history—challenges the museum to help the public understand the nature of these parallel, but potentially conflicting, truths.

Trust confers a power that positions museums to influence the world. But wielding that influence may, paradoxically, erode the public's trust in museums. The report *Public perceptions of—and attitudes to—the purposes of museums in society,* commissioned by the UK Museums Association, found that participants regarded museums as trustworthy because they presented balanced, accurate, and objective facts. By contrast, they regarded the media, politicians, and business as biased, politically motivated, and fundamentally untrustworthy. Participants were "very hostile" to the idea of museums being "political, polemical, hectoring, or didactic." That said, Dilenschneider has also found that the public may respond positively to museums that take a mission-related stand—for example, the Museum of Modern Art highlighting works by artists from Muslim-majority nations in the wake of President Trump's travel ban. There is a fine line between being principled and being partisan, but museums will need to map that boundary if they are to put people's trust to good use.

Museums Might Want to…

- **Educate the public on museum standards for research.** Trust is a precious resource that should not be taken for granted. Be ruthlessly transparent about the source for a statement of fact; make it clear when we are voicing an opinion; admit when we are uncertain; confess when we have been wrong.
- **Foster critical thinking.** Instead of, or in addition to, presenting a single, definitive narrative, teach visitors how to explore the primary evidence, and invite them to draw, share, and debate their own conclusions.
- **Teach people to value evidence-based decision making.** This focus will also ensure that policy makers, philanthropic foundations, and individual museum supporters value and support the archives and collections that provide that evidence.
- **Acknowledge the role museums have played in perpetuating untruths,** whether through unwitting presentation of fakes and forgeries, incorrect catalogue data, or uncritical adoption of dominant narratives. Admit that like all experts, museum staff are fallible. Encourage the public to hold us accountable for explaining how we've arrived at conclusions, and encourage our visitors to correct us when we are wrong.
- **Carefully consider when and how to take a stand on important issues.** As trusted institutions, museums have the potential to help reunite our fragmented society and reestablish a common basis for civic debate. However, museums that become perceived as politically partisan may be shunted into the echo chambers of people who already agree with the positions they espouse.

Further Reading

The European Association for International Education recommends a framework of eight questions for evaluating the credibility of published research, including: Why was the study undertaken? What is the reputation of the organization and individuals who conducted the research? What were the methodology, sample size, and response rate? And (perhaps most revealing) who paid for the research?

Rachel Botsman, *Who Can You Trust?: How Technology Brought Us Together and Why It Might Drive Us Apart,* Public Affairs (2017). Botsman, who teaches at Oxford University, is a widely recognized expert on the economics of trust. In this book, she explores how trust is earned, damaged, lost, and repaired in the digital age.

"This Article Won't Change Your Mind." In this 2017 article for *The Atlantic*, Julie Beck does a good job summarizing "the facts on why facts alone can't fight false beliefs." Print and audio versions of this article are available at theatlantic.com/science/archive/2017/03/this-article-wont-change-your-mind/519093/.

Crisis In Democracy: Renewing Trust In America, The Aspen Institute and the Knight Foundation (2018). This report by the Knight Commission on Trust, Media and Democracy—a nonpartisan commission of 27 leaders in government, media, business, nonprofits, education, and the arts—examines the collapse in trust in the democratic institutions of the media, journalism, and the information ecosystem, and presents new thinking and solutions around rebuilding trust. Available at http://csreports.aspeninstitute.org/Knight-Commission-TMD/2019/report.

Ledger de Main: How blockchain is transforming transactions

"The first generation of the digital revolution brought us the Internet of information. The second generation—powered by blockchain technology—is bringing us the Internet of value: a new, distributed platform that can help us reshape the world of business and transform the old order of human affairs for the better."

—Don Tapscott

Open your news feed and you are sure to see headlines featuring the terms Bitcoin and cryptocurrency. The underlying technology—blockchain—has been around for over a decade, but in the past year there has been an explosion of experimental applications including refugee aid, educational credentialing, and provenance tracking. Because blockchain tech has the potential to transform major sectors—including finance, real estate, trade, shipping, and education—it's important that people understand what the technology is and how it may impact their lives. This chapter provides a basic explanation of what blockchain is and how it works, an overview of how it's being adopted, and an exploration of how it may affect the work of museums.

Primavera De Filippi describes her Plantoids as "autonomous blockchain-based lifeforms" that live both in the physical world (as mechanical contraptions made up of recycled steel and electronics) and in the digital world (as software deployed on top of a blockchain-based network). The sculptures are self-replicating, using Bitcoins contributed by viewers to hire artists to create new Plantoids.

Description of the Trend

Despite all the press, blockchain remains a mystery to most people. A recent survey of the British public found 59 percent of consumers had never heard of blockchain, and of those who had, 80 percent didn't understand it. So this chapter begins with a blockchain primer—a simplified explanation of what the technology is, what it does, and why it is important.

What is blockchain?

Blockchain technology is a system designed to store digital records of transactions—the transfer of anything (physical or digital) from one person to another. It is often referred to as a **digital ledger.**

Why is it called blockchain?

Each entry in the ledger is called a block—a piece of data that records what is transferred, from whom, to whom, and when. Sequences of related transactions (transfers of the same stuff to a new person) are linked together in chains that, taken together, record the transaction history. Hence, blockchain.

What does it do?

Blockchain is commonly described as way of sharing records and data across a **distributed, decentralized** network, using **digital encryption** to ensure the data is **secure** and **immutable.** Blockchain ledgers are both **private** and **transparent.**

Here's a breakdown of these central terms:

Distributed: Instead of living on one central database, a complete copy of every record in a blockchain is stored on multiple nodes on a network of independent servers (also called peer-to-peer networks). People let their computers function as nodes either because they earn associated blockchain-based currency, or because they want to support a volunteer-based blockchain platform.

Decentralized: Because the data lives on distributed nodes, no single stakeholder controls the network or the data stored on the network.

Secure: This distribution makes the data less vulnerable to damage (malicious or accidental) than it would be in a single, central database. In addition, the ledger uses **digital encryption** to protect and authenticate the records via large strings of numbers called keys.

Immutable: Once data is written into a blockchain, it can't be changed. That's because each record in a blockchain ledger exists on thousands of nodes. If someone tries to edit a record, all the nodes compare notes and arrive at consensus on whether the new data matches the original records. If it doesn't, the network rejects the change. This makes it difficult (though not theoretically impossible) to retroactively change the information associated with a transaction.

Private: Blockchains may provide anonymity for users. In many blockchains, users complete transations using a public key and private key pair (a digital ID). It is difficult to match the key to a user's real-world identity.

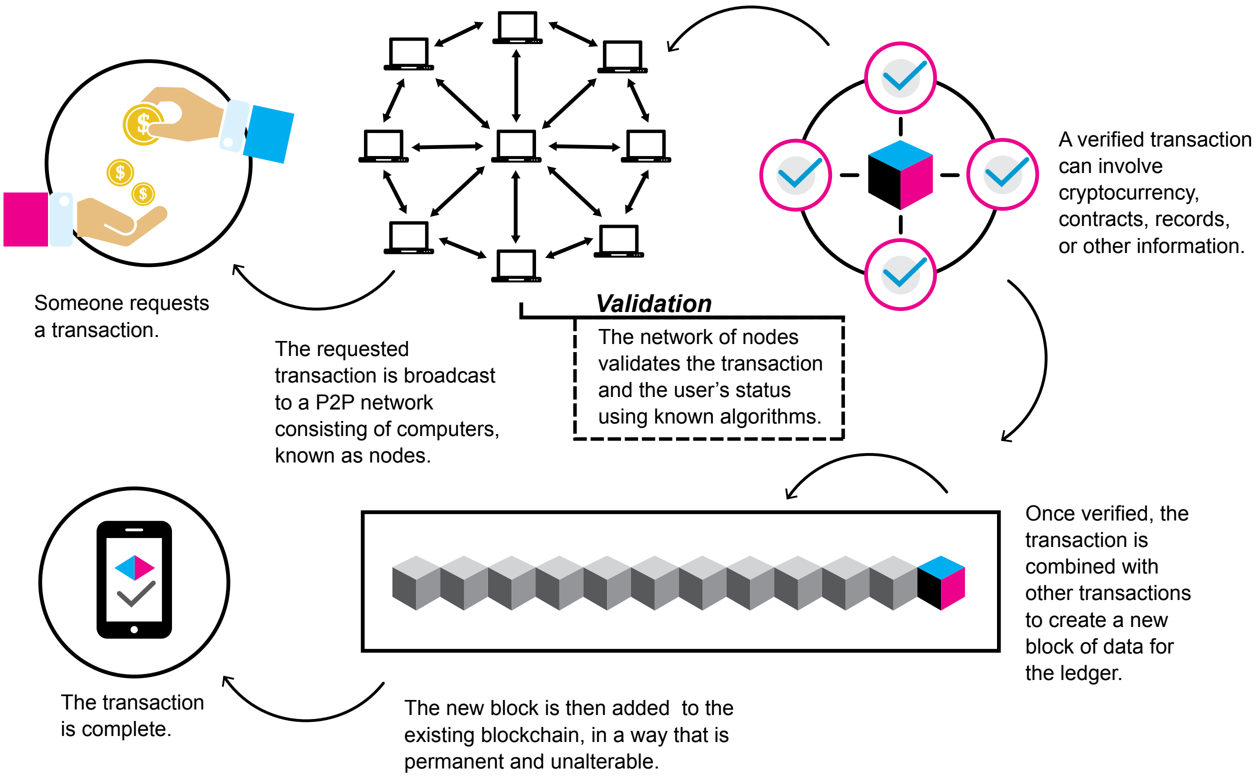
Transparent: Even though users can remain anonymous, the ledger itself can be open for anyone to read. Using an appropriate browser, and knowing a user's public address (which is related to their public key), any member of the public can view the associated transactions. For this reason, blockchain is sometimes described as an open, or public, ledger.

Why is blockchain important?

Whole industries are built on the need for trusted third parties to verify and record transactions: banks for financial transactions, lawyers for contracts, brokers for insurance. Blockchain bypasses these gatekeepers by providing an alternate trustworthy method for verifying transactions. It also provides several advantages over traditional, centralized ledgers. Users can remain anonymous, the records themselves are open to public inspection, and transactions can be recorded and shared in real time.

What is blockchain used for?

Blockchain can be used to track any kind of transaction—transfer of funds, sales of objects, transportation of goods, and the award of educational credentials, to name a few. With funding from UNICEF, the Amply blockchain platform lets preschool providers track attendance and access state subsidies. The World Food



Adapted from a Wikimedia Commons image by Shivratan rajvi.

Program recently tested the use of blockchain to track distribution of aid to refugees. Cook County, Chicago, is piloting a blockchain program to track property transfers. The Blockchain Art Collective (BAC) is one of several startups experimenting with the use of blockchain to track the ownership and sale of art. BAC uses an adhesive, tamper-proof seal containing a near-field communication chip to tag works of art. (Near-field communication [NFC] allows phones, tablets, laptops, and other devices to share data with other NFC-equipped devices over very short distances.) The encrypted data on the chips contains information about the work that is also stored on a blockchain. Using an app, users can scan the work with their smartphone to view associated public data.

The most hyped application of blockchain is the creation and exchange of digital "cryptocurrencies" to both create and exchange wealth. People who allow their computers to be used as nodes are rewarded with tokens—cryptocurrencies associated with the particular platform running on that node network. The most widely known currencies are Bitcoin and Ether (the medium of exchange on the Ethereum blockchain platform). Because cryptocurrency supports anonymous transactions, it is sometimes used for illicit purchases on the dark Web, distribution of pornographcy, extortion, and ransom. It's distressingly easy to launch a cryptocurrency—almost 2,000 were listed as of fall 2018—and bubbles of experimental cryptocurrencies can make or break fortunes.

But cryptocurrencies are not just about investment, speculation, or hiding illicit transactions. They also can be used to create economies of good. For example, Ben & Jerry's partnered with the Poseidon Foundation to attach a carbon credit microtransaction to each sale at one of their stores in London. The system showed customers the carbon emissions associated with the production of their scoop of ice cream, and gave them the opportunity to buy a carbon credit blockchain token (worth one cent) that goes into a fund supporting forest conservation in Peru. This is one small step towards a global, integrated system of tracking carbon offsets to support implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate.

Finally, let's take a quick peek at smart contracts—computer programs stored in a blockchain that can automate the unstoppable transfer of payment between users, according to agreed-upon conditions. The execution of these contracts relies on "oracles"—real-time, trusted data feeds that deliver information like weather data, currency exchange rates, airline flight status, and sports statistics. For example, travelers might purchase insurance via a smart contract that pays out when an airport's database reports that a flight is cancelled. In *Museum 2040*, one author imagined a future in which artists received micropayments based on museum attendance data (presumably digitally monitored and reported), showing how many people viewed their work currently on exhibit.

Where is blockchain heading?

At this point it's not clear which direction this technology will take. On one hand, it is plausible that blockchain could become embedded and ubiquitous. On the other hand, it is equally plausible that blockchain could peak and die. A recent study of 43 blockchain use cases found no evidence that these projects have successfully delivered on their goals, though this finding may simply indicate that the technology is early in its adoption curve. One challenge blockchain will face is the development of functional quantum computers capable of breaking current blockchain encryption. Of course, quantum computing could also be used to generate better codes, setting off a cryptologic arms race or generating other adaptions to the existing system.

Artists of the Blockchain Art Collective use adhesive, tamper-proof seals to link physical works to digital records on blockchain. An embedded near-field communication chip provides a "smart certificate of authenticity." Photo courtesy of Nanu Berks.

What This Means for Society

Like artificial intelligence (another huge digital disrupter), blockchain could supplement or supplant traditional jobs in finance, law, real estate, and any other profession that provided high-cost intermediaries to verify transactions. By reducing costs and bureaucracy, blockchains make it cheaper and easier to make payments, register sales of property, and democratize access to legal services.

Blockchain could provide much-needed transparency and security to election systems, potentially supporting the implementation of digital voting, and reducing vote tampering and voter suppression. It can be used to improve the traceability and transparency of agricultural supply systems, facilitating compliance, certification, and the tracking of food contamination. In the cultural sector, blockchain creates new forms of investment and fractionalized ownership around art. For example, in June 2018, the art platform Maecenas held a cryptocurrency auction for digital shares of Andy Warhol's silkscreen, *14 Small Electric Chairs*.

The wholesale application of blockchain to government could revolutionize citizen participation, oversight, and access to state services. Estonia provides proof-of-concept, as that country is using blockchain to improve the data integrity and security of its already robust digital services (known as e-Estonia). Now Estonian citizens can monitor government transactions through a public blockchain.

One of the most promising applications of blockchain technology is the management of personal data—providing what some have dubbed the "self-sovereign ID." This utopian vision of blockchain sees a future in which everyone has a secure digital identity (in contrast to, for example, notoriously insecure social security numbers) and access to secure, decentralized digital payment systems. In this future, consumers may insist that tech giants like Facebook and Google use smart contracts and micropayments to pay for their use of any individual's personal data.

Finally, society has to confront the potential environmental costs of blockchain. The original distributed networks and massive calculations that support blockchain are phenomenal energy hogs. Last year, the power needs of Bitcoin alone had a carbon footprint equal to that of 1 million transatlantic flights. Developers are trying to create greener ways to maintain consensus-based distributed ledgers, but that will require new, less energy-intensive methods of ensuring the security of the records.

What This Means for Museums

Museums are all about keeping secure, immutable records of transactions about collections (aka, provenance). In past centuries, these records were kept in paper ledgers (using archival, acid-free paper, of course), and more recently on in-house databases. The distributed nature of blockchain ledgers could make this data less vulnerable to loss or degradation by neglect. Blockchain could also enable museums to be utterly transparent about collections and provenance, enabling anyone to access data by use of a public key. Blockchain platforms could support secure, transparent, open sharing of provenance data to support claims based on NAGPRA, Nazi-era assets, or repatriation generally. Because blockchain supports secure, global sharing of data, it could play a role in systems like TRUST—the TRansparent User-friendly System of Transfer that helps share biological data in compliance with the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (ABS) to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Artists are using blockchain to create works that may find their way into museum exhibits and collections. Kevin Abosch created I am a coin, using his own blood to stamp 100 physical works with the blockchain address corresponding to the creation of 10 million virtual works. Primavera de Filippi's Plantoids are

Museum Examples

- In 2015, the **Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/ Contemporary Art** announced it had become the first museum to purchase a work of art using Bitcoin. "Event Listeners," a looping OS X screen-saver by Harm van den Dorpel, was itself cryptographically authenticated through blockchain.
- Several museums have explored blockchain via art. In 2017, the **State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia** in Moscow hosted "CryptoArt," organized by the Rudanovsky Foundation. Each picture in the exhibition was linked to an open digital VerisArt certificate based on blockchain technology. In 2018, the **ZKM Center for Art and Media** in Karlsruhe, Germany, staged the exhibition "Bringing Blockchain to Life." The center used CryptoKitties—digital collectables that are bought, sold, and bred on an Etherium blockchain—to explain the inner workings of blockchain to a popular audience.
- In November 2018, the **Great Lakes Science Center** announced it would accept bitcoin as payment for transactions at its box office. President & CEO Kirsten Ellenbogen characterized the decision as "a small part of the momentum to grow a blockchain ecosystem in Cleveland." The announcement was timed to coincide with the Blockland Solutions Conference, promoting the creation of a local blockchain technology network.
- In October 2018, **Christie's** collaborated with **Artory** to register art sales. Buyers purchasing works from the collection of Barney Ebesworth were provided with secure, encrypted certification of the sale. (Artory promises that collectors registering works on their blockchain registry will remain anonymous. It's not quite clear how that anonymity supports the creation of transparent provenance records going forward.)
- **Artory** is one of several new companies creating blockchain registries to serve the auction market, artists, and private collectors. In 2018, **Verisart** launched "P8Pass," developed in partnership with **Paddle8**, to bring blockchain certification and authentication services to the auction market. Each P8Pass contains detailed provenance information and functions as a unique fingerprint on the Bitcoin blockchain. (Verisart has also launched a hallmark for bronze sculpture called Bronzechain that combines a hallmark stamp with Verisart's blockchain.) **Codex Protocol** provides the Codex Registry—a blockchain-based, decentralized registry for art and collectables that stores ownership and provenance data while providing privacy for auction houses, creators, and collectors.

CryptoKitties are digital collectables that are tracked and sold via smart contracts on the Ethereum blockchain. Each cat's digital DNA codes for traits such as fur, color, pattern, and special attributes such as wings, scales, or costumes. Breeding two CryptoKitties yields kittens that combine these traits.

welded, mechanical sculptures that move and grow when people donate bitcoins to pay for the supplies and labor of building them. (De Filippi refers to the sculptures as blockchain-based life forms that are "autonomous, self-sustainable, and capable of reproducing themselves through a combination of blockchain-based code and human interactions.")

A growing number of artists are using blockchain to tag and track their art. For digital works, the blockchain ID might be coded into the art itself. If this practice becomes common, museums might have to adapt to blockchain record keeping. As Clayton Schuster wrote in an article for the Observer, "[I]magine a future in which a buyer actually wouldn't trust the authenticity of a work unless it were registered on the blockchain."

Museums Might Want to...

- **Educate the public about blockchain technology,** how it will affect their lives, and how they might use it in their work.
- **Work with artists and craftspeople** to experiment with blockchain tracking of art.
- **Consider creating blockchain ledgers** for tracking acquisitions, loans, exhibitions, and resources.
- **Collaborate with other organizations** to create a pan-institutional blockchain for tracking provenance.

Further Reading

"Blockchain for Social Impact: Moving Beyond the Hype," Stanford Graduate School of Business, Center for Social Innovation (2018). This report analyzes 193 organizations, initiatives, and projects that are leveraging blockchain to drive social impact. It includes a blockchain primer and an overview of blockchain applications in a variety of sectors, including democracy and government; energy, climate, and the environment; health; land rights; and philanthropy. Free PDF available at gsb.stanford.edu/sites/gsb/files/publication-pdf/study-blockchain-impact-moving-beyond-hype.pdf.

Artists Re: Thinking the Blockchain, Liverpool University Press (2018). This book features chapters by a diverse array of artists and researchers engaged with blockchain, unpacking, critiquing, and marking its arrival on the cultural landscape for a broad readership across the arts and humanities.

Confronting the Past: The long, hard work of decolonization

"Colonialism and imperialism have not settled their debt to us once they have withdrawn their flag and their police force from our territories."

—Frantz Fanon

As we begin to build the 21st century, one of our most profound challenges, globally and locally, is grappling with the enduring effects of colonial practice. Decolonization is the long, slow, painful, and imperfect process of undoing some of the damage inflicted by colonial practices that remain deeply embedded in our culture, politics, and economies. Nations, organizations, and individuals are struggling with how to confront ongoing economic exploitation and dismantle the intellectual and social constructs that justified colonialism as the right and inevitable dominance of "superior" over "inferior" races. Museums, in their cultural roles of memory keeper, conscience, and healer, have an obligation to provoke reflection, rethinking, and rebalancing. Museums can help us deal with the dark side of history, not just emotionally and personally, but in a way that helps us build a just and equitable society despite our legacy of theft and violence.

Ceremony at the 2018 opening of "Whale People: Protectors of the Sea" at the Florida Museum of Natural History. This exhibition, developed by The Natural History Museum, a traveling pop-up museum, and the Lummi Nation, raised awareness about the Trans Mountain Pipeline and its potential environmental impact, including threats to the Orca whale populations of the Salish Sea.

Sometimes it seems as if colonization is the default condition of the human race, our history comprised of repeated episodes of one nation occupying the lands and exploiting the resources of another people. In the past 500 years, these waves have included the establishment of Belgian, British, Danish, Dutch, French, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, and Japanese empires through colonial expansion, building wealth through the extraction of resources, and in the process, suppressing and supplanting Indigenous culture and religions. In many continents (e.g., North America, Australia, and New Zealand), "settler colonialism" displaced Indigenous people from the land. Colonial power peaked just prior to World War I, with European nations controlling about 84 percent of the globe.

There are some signs that perhaps, at last, humanity is trying to break the cycle of colonial violence and redress its effects. Political colonialism began to unravel in the wake of World War II, as more than 80

“Whale People: Protectors of the Sea” at the Florida Museum of Natural History. Photo credit: Kristen Grace, Florida Museum of Natural History.

former colonies gained political independence. More recently, we have begun the slow and painful work of internal decolonization. In the last decades of the 20th century, the US and Canada dismantled the government-sponsored residential school systems that separated hundreds of thousands of Indigenous children from their families and tried to destroy their language and cultural identity. In some countries, truth and reconciliation commissions have been tasked with uncovering and confronting government wrongdoing to create honest narratives of the past, lay the groundwork for healing deep intergenerational trauma, and advocate for reparative justice.

But confronting historic wrongs is not enough when many nations are still imposing internal colonialism on Indigenous people in settled lands. Exploitation colonialism is still at work as corporations and governments extract resources from Native lands and exploit Native lifeways. Nations populated by settler colonialism struggle with how to build a society that includes justice for Indigenous people. What is the next stage in our evolution? How will society resolve fundamentally conflicting values: wealth, development, and growth versus cultural sovereignty?

What This Means for Society

Organizations of all types are being asked to reassess their legacy and redress enduring damage. One of the most pernicious effects of colonialism is the cultural assumption of superiority, the recasting of the occupied "other" as exotic and inferior. Decolonization must perforce work to dismantle racism and white superiority. For this reason, it was particularly powerful when, in 2018, Susan Goldberg, the first female editor-in-chief of *National Geographic*, commissioned an independent assessment of the magazine's treatment of race, and acknowledged its role in reflecting and reinforcing a colonial narrative of white superiority.

Now Indigenous activists and allies are pressuring government and industry to end the extractive practices that threaten native sovereignty, lifeways, and values. In 2016, members of the Standing Rock Sioux were joined by allies from around the world to protest plans for the Dakota Access Pipeline. The pipeline, designed to carry oil underneath the Missouri River, threatened regional water sources and historic burial grounds. While the protests were ultimately unsuccessful, they garnered international attention and created a model for building broad coalitions of public support for environmental action. In addition to raising objections to specific projects, such actions collectively challenge the cultural values and political and economic systems that prioritize short-term financial profits over concerns about climate change, oil spills, species extinction, and Indigenous rights.

There are numerous examples of how nations, organizations, communities, and individuals are working to acknowledge and redress the effects of colonialism. However, given how deeply this legacy is embedded in our culture, our power structure, and even our mindset, we have to ask if decolonization is even possible. We can't undo history. But we can try to recognize and remediate the harmful legacy of colonialism, and mitigate the power of that legacy to do further damage. Acknowledging that decolonization can never be fully accomplished, we can commit to an ongoing process of changing our attitudes, laws, organizations, and behavior.

What This Means for Museums

Museums are intrinsically colonial, fundamentally reflecting a Eurocentric view of the world. Many were born directly from colonial practices, serving as trophy rooms of conquest and superiority. The field was shaped by scientific disciplines that validated racist worldviews, explicitly ranked the world's cultures, and placed Europeans on top. Colonialism is embedded in the collections—in what museums chose to collect, how it was acquired, how it was documented—and in our methods of classification, display and education. Museums are complicit in colonizers' continuing control over how the world sees

"Museums can be very painful sites for Native peoples, as they are intimately tied to the colonization process."

—Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk), Decolonizing Museums

Land Acknowledgement

We are in the homeland of the Wabanaki, the People of the Dawn.

We extend our respect and gratitude to the many Indigenous people and their ancestors whose rich histories and vibrant communities include the Abenaki, Maliseet, Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot Nations and all of the Native communities who have lived here for thousands of generations in what is known today as Maine, New England, and the Canadian Maritimes.

We make this acknowledgement aware of continual violations of water, territorial rights, and sacred sites in the Wabanaki homeland.

The Abbe is honored to collaborate with the Wabanaki as they share their stories.

The Abbe Museum Native Advisory Council authored land acknowledgement language in 2018 that describes the land and its people, as well as Wabanaki concerns regarding the stewardship of the land. In the statement, the council recognizes the Abbe as an institution that is invited to work with Wabanaki people in this place. This statement is read aloud at key events, is integrated into museum gallery spaces, and is included on the Abbe's website, abbemuseum.org.

Shelly Lowe, executive director of the Harvard University Native American Program, listens to the Native American Poets Playlist created by Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology in 2018. The playlist honored Indigenous People's Day, a holiday created to recognize Indigenous people's strength and survival despite historical injustices, timed to coincide with Columbus Day. Photo by Andrea Shea, courtesy of WBUR Boston.

Indigenous people, and what Indigenous people know of themselves and their culture. The extent to which a specific museum is faced with obligations related to the legacy of colonization will depend on its location, its community, its collection, and its particular history of founding and funding. But all museums share a responsibility to help their country and their society address the legacy of damage.

The power, authority, and trust granted to museums by the public means that the sector has a commensurate responsibility not to preserve and perpetuate the destructive attitudes and practices of past times. As Puawai Cairns writes, museums may never be decolonized because "systemic resistance is too great, the colonial bones go too deep, and decolonising requires much more sacrifice from colonial subjects than ever before." That is true, but it doesn't mean museums aren't obligated to try.

One important facet of decolonization is the return of the tangible heritage removed by colonial occupiers. Honoring the claims of Indigenous people for the return of cultural artifacts will require shifts in both legal and ethical standards governing museums. In the US, the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is a starting point for confronting colonial legacy, but the issues go far beyond the categories of collections legally subject to repatriation and the tribes legally recognized by the federal government. In 2016, the Australian parliament called for the British Museum to repatriate a Gweagal shield, but an act of the UK parliament prevents the museum from transferring ownership. (They offered to loan the shield to the Museum of Australia, but descendants of the shield's original owner were not satisfied with that solution.)

Some museums maintain that they should not be expected to return contested artifacts even when they are legally able to do so, arguing that they steward their collections for all people of the world. However, this concept of a universal, or encyclopedic, museum is being challenged by a growing number of national governments and Indigenous people who reject the premise that such "museums of the world" are exempt from claims for repatriation. The "Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums" released by 18 major art museums in 2002 maintains that museums "serve…the people of every nation." In the intervening years, it has become clear that these people may insist that this service include ceding control over cultural heritage displaced by colonial practices.

Even when there is government support and consensus for decolonizing collections, there remain thorny questions of implementation, such as identifying who will pay for the process and who will receive the returned materials. A recent report commissioned by France's President Macron recommends that objects taken without consent from sub-Saharan African during France's colonial era should be permanently returned. The criteria for restitution outlined in the report specify that the claimant countries must have infrastructure "ready and prepared" to receive such collections. Senegal recently opened the Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar to house returning collections. The construction of that museum, delayed for decades, was financed by the Chinese government as part of building economic relations with African nations. This example is exceptional, as most African nations don't have access to the funds needed to house and maintain collections. What are the obligations of former colonial powers, or the museums that represent them, to help create that infrastructure?

Even as we address historical resource colonialism, we need new ways to address new issues. Contemporary biological collecting, particularly botanical collecting, with its potential for pharmaceutical discovery, can be seen as a form of scientific exploitation. The 2014 Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity creates a framework for sharing the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources in a fair and equitable way. (The US is not a signatory to this international agreement.) Some have criticized new projects to make high-quality 3D scans of the world's cultural sites as "digital colonialism." Technologists may see the scans as a way of saving and sharing world culture, but are these efforts enough? Who owns the copyright to the digital data, and who controls its distribution?

In addition, museums that focus decolonization initiatives only on their collections can overlook deeper issues of power, authority, distribution of resources, and access to opportunity. Decolonizing the museum, to the extent it is possible, should extend to examining how museum governance and operations may perpetuate colonial attitudes and power structures. How are Indigenous people given authority and voice in museums that serve their communities, preserve their heritage, and influence how society sees their culture?

Finally, there is a danger that the effort to decolonize will exploit people of color yet again, using them as natural resources to do the hard work without actually turning over power. Decolonization initiatives can create an illusion that the museum is "dealing with its past" when in fact there is no lasting change. Activist Harsha Walia writes, "'I am waiting to be told exactly what to do' should not be an excuse for inaction, and seeking guidance must be weighed against the possibility of further burdening Indigenous people with questions." She further suggests that the "appropriate line between being too interventionist and being paralyzed" hinges on whether an institution is motivated by a sense of responsibility or of guilt.

In 1897, a British military expedition sacked and looted Benin City. The governments of Benin and Nigeria have formally requested the return of cultural artifacts stolen at that time, including the famous Benin Bronzes, above, from museums in the United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States. Source: Wikimedia, Author: Warofdreams.

Museums Might Want to...

- **Cultivate awareness** among staff, leadership, and boards around decolonizing museum practice. This might involve creating a team/committee/working group at the board or staff level. In any response, museums can ensure that representatives of Indigenous communities have significant power in shaping the process.
- **Consider power structures in the museum.** Discuss who holds power and how it is exercised. Who are the gatekeepers and how can they open the gates? How does philanthropy consolidate power on boards? Decolonization requires systemic reform at all levels of the organization: governance, leadership, staffing, and operations. Museums can start by developing new ways for accessing power that are inclusive and equitable.
- **Ensure that diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) practices work in concert with, rather than as a substitute for, decolonization.** How are Indigenous staff given authority and voice in their organizations? Decolonization will fall flat if the organization is not working inclusively and recognizing systemic racism in its own practice.

- **Support Indigenous communities** in their decolonization efforts by challenging stereotypical representations and uplifting Indigenous voice and perspectives. Cede authority, giving Indigenous communities space and power to tell their own stories and to use the museum's resources (collections, space, expertise, reputation, connections) in service of their own needs.
- **Ensure that Indigenous communities and the legacy of colonialism are kept alive in public consciousness.** As one simple but powerful step, open public events and gatherings with acknowledgement of the traditional Native (Indigenous/Aboriginal) inhabitants of the land on which the gathering takes place.
- **Listen to criticism and be willing to change.** Engage in constructive dialogue with activists who question the museum's authority and traditions. Create policies and procedures for responding to protesters respectfully, and ensure that all staff are trained and supported in implementing these practices.
- **Acknowledge that museums have been the beneficiaries of power structures that derived their wealth from the expropriation of Indigenous resources.** Structural inequalities embedded in our current economies, including commerce, government funding, and philanthropy, reinforce that privilege. Individual museums can choose to play an active role in sharing and redistributing resources.
- **Take the lead in truth telling,** even absent national action for truth and reconciliation, by prioritizing underrepresented history, art, and culture, and including marginalized and absent voices. As repositories of power, museums can give Indigenous people a platform to advocate for cultural, economic, and political decolonization. As trusted public institutions, museums can instigate and inform change.
- The starting point for this investigation within an institution will vary based on the museum's goals, missions, and community stakeholders. **Looking for that starting point** is the first step in a long and difficult process that will never be complete.

Further Reading:

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, adopted by the General Assembly in September 2007, at the 107th plenary meeting. The statement was described by the UN as setting "an important standard for the treatment of Indigenous peoples that will undoubtedly be a significant tool toward eliminating human rights violations against the planet's 370 million Indigenous people, and assisting them in combating discrimination and marginalization."

Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgement, U.S. Department of Arts and Culture (2017). Created in partnership with Native allies and organizations, the guide offers context about the practice of acknowledgement, gives step-by-step instructions for how to begin wherever you are, and provides tips for moving beyond acknowledgement into action. Free PDF download.

The October 2017 issue of *Art in America* included an article titled "Shared Authority," in which five specialists discussed practices and policies for decolonizing museums. A copy of the article is available from http://bit.ly/2UyWg9C.

Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk), *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums*, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press (2012). In this volume, Lonetree investigates how museums can honor an Indigenous worldview and way of knowing, challenge stereotypical representations, and speak the hard truths of colonization within exhibition spaces to address the persistent legacies of historical unresolved grief in Native communities.

Museum Examples

- The **Abbe Museum** in Bar Harbor, Maine, was the first nontribal museum to create an organizational mandate to develop and implement decolonizing practices. This initiative is supported by policy and a strategic plan and enacted by numerous Wabanaki people. The museum's board is now majority Indigenous in addition to a Native Advisory Council appointed by tribal leadership across Maine.
- The **Winnipeg Art Gallery** created the Indigenous Advisory Circle, whose 24 representatives have significant input on exhibitions, curation, staffing, training, as well as the design of a new Inuit art center. One goal is to increase the number of Indigenous curators and administrators in the art world.
- When the **Museum of Northern Arizona** in Flagstaff renovated their Native American exhibition, curators partnered with 42 members of Colorado Plateau tribes. The tribal representatives determined the themes and the educational content of the exhibition. The first question the museum asked each tribe was, "Do you want to be represented in the gallery?" Deeper into the process, the representatives determined which items from the collection should and should not be used for the display.
- In 2017, the **San Diego Museum of Man** in Balboa Park established the position of director of decolonizing initiatives. Efforts to decolonize the museum's practice centered on three main tenets: acknowledging the harm that the institution has previously perpetuated via colonizing practices; amplifying voices from within cultural communities that have been ignored in the past; and working in collaboration with such communities.
- In 2018, the **Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe** in Hamburg, Germany, presented "Mobile Worlds," challenging the traditional Eurocentric order of Western museums. In its review, the *New York Times* said, "'Mobile Worlds' delivers on its contention that European museums need to do much more than just restitute plundered objects in their collections, important as that is. A 21st-century universal museum has to unsettle the very labels that the age of imperialism bequeathed to us."

Give Me Shelter: Everyone deserves a place to live

"You call this progress, because you have motor cars and telephones and flying machines and a thousand potions to make you smell better? And people sleeping on the streets?"

–Howard Zinn

Housing insecurity is a classic "wicked problem"—a significant social or cultural challenge that's difficult to solve for multiple reasons: We have incomplete and contradictory knowledge about effective ways to tackle the housing crisis. The potential solutions require buy-in from many players, including voters, policy makers, funders, and corporations. Housing insecurity imposes an enormous economic burden on individuals and society. And it is intertwined with other critical problems including health, education, employment, and social and economic mobility. Housing security is both a symptom and a cause of the deepening inequality of wealth, opportunity, and access that characterizes the start of the 21st century, and solving these problems will require all actors—government, industry, nonprofits, and philanthropy—to rethink their roles and responsibilities. How can cultural nonprofits play a bigger role in finding a solution? And while society collectively works to solve this wicked problem, how can cultural nonprofits ensure that people experiencing housing insecurity can exercise their right to take part in cultural life?

"Searching for Home" at History Colorado Center featured a collection of cardboard signs that Assistant Curator James Peterson purchased from their creators on the streets of Denver. Photo courtesy of History Colorado.

International law recognizes adequate housing as a fundamental human right and obligates governments to establish legislation, funding, and policies that prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination, protect the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, and guarantee that everyone's housing is adequate. Despite this consensus, over 20 percent of the world's population (1.6 billion people) lacks secure housing, and almost 2 percent (over 150 million people) are homeless. Without secure housing, many people are unable to exercise many other basic rights such as voting, or access health care and social services. Globally, homelessness has spiked as migrants and refugees flee war, economic crises, and climate displacement.

Even in wealthy, stable nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom, housing insecurity is rising in tandem with wealth inequality. It is darkly ironic that the 2008 mortgage loan crisis, which was based on exploitation of the American dream of home ownership, has made owning a home, and the attendant promise of economic mobility and stability, even harder to attain. The controls placed on mortgages and lending in the wake of the crisis have both increased the number of renters and driven up the cost of being a renter. By 2015, 38 percent of US renter households were "rent burdened," spending 30 percent or more of their pretax income on housing. Seventeen percent of such households spend over half of their income on rent. And as they spend more of their income on housing, these families have less to spend on meeting other needs, putting them at risk of economic instability, food insecurity, and poor health.

At the extreme end of housing insecurity lies homelessness. In 2017, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development documented over a half million people living as sheltered or unsheltered homeless, an increase of almost 1 percent from the year before. Following a decade of slow decline, this statistic may not seem alarming, but it masks a number of local crises. Homelessness in major cities rose by 5 percent last year, and states such as North Dakota, California, New Mexico, and Vermont saw big jumps. Over the past 10 years, the number of homeless children has increased by almost 1 million. In New Zealand, nearly 1 percent of the population lives on the streets or in shelters, while in the United Kingdom the number of unsheltered homeless (people "sleeping rough") has increased over 169 percent in the past eight years.

Homelessness and housing insecurity are not purely urban issues—they are hidden facets of rural poverty as well. Rural areas overall have higher rates of poverty, with little public transportation, making it more difficult for people without housing to access support services. About 40 percent of housing on Native American reservations is classified as substandard, and the Urban Institute estimates that 4 to 7 percent of people who identify as Native American or Alaskan Native would be homeless if relatives did not take them in.

Over a quarter of the sheltered homeless population in the US suffers from a serious mental illness, and absent an affordable, accessible system of treatment, the criminal justice system often fills the gap. In addition to the fact that unsheltered people are often jailed for behavior arising from untreated psychiatric conditions, there has been a dramatic increase in the last 10 years of local ordinances that effectively criminalize homelessness, making it illegal to sleep or camp in public places, live in a vehicle, loiter, panhandle, or even sit or lie down in some public areas. More cities are making it illegal to hand out food to the homeless, clearing homeless encampments, discarding people's possessions (which may include ID, legal documents, and medication), and even deploying security robots to deter people from setting up tent cities.

Popular perception often holds that people who lack stable housing have somehow brought it on themselves—if they only got a job or an education, they could "pull themselves up by their bootstraps." In fact, the National Low Income Housing Coalition hasn't found a single state, metropolitan area, or county in the United States where someone who works 40 hours a week at federal minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom home at fair market rent. In only 22 counties (out of 3,000 nationwide) can such a worker afford even a one-bedroom home at fair market rent. In a time when having a college degree is a functional prerequisite for economic and social advancement, homelessness and housing insecurity also handicap people seeking to improve their lives through higher education. Nearly half of students at two-year community colleges and over a third attending four-year colleges experienced some degree of housing insecurity during the past year, while 12 and 9 percent, respectively, experienced homelessness.

What This Means for Society

Homelessness and housing insecurity are part of the spiraling feedback loop driving inequality in society. These problems disproportionately affect populations that are already disadvantaged, including the disabled, the formerly incarcerated, the elderly, people of color, and non-gender-conforming individuals. They reflect, perpetuate, and amplify a national legacy of bias in housing, home ownership, and incarceration. To break with this legacy, we need to redefine our obligations to each other as fellow members of society. Will we continue to stigmatize the unfortunate as "other," or recognize them as fellow human beings, subject to

“Objectified” at Manchester Art Gallery (2018). This immersive exhibition, organized by the Museum of Homelessness, explored the hidden causes of homelessness and the science behind how people become dehumanized. Credit: Joel Fildes.

our basic mutual obligations within a community?

Many government and private programs that provide housing take a judgmental approach that requires people to get a job, seek help for substance abuse, or clear other hurdles before they are eligible for assistance. By contrast, the growing national Housing First movement advocates for providing basic necessities like food and shelter before expecting people to demonstrate their worthiness for assistance by getting a job or seeking treatment for substance abuse. This approach is difficult and at times controversial, as it depends on a supply of affordable housing stock and requires long-term support services that are not always available.

In our increasingly urban world, we embody our social values in the cities we create. The rise in “unkind architecture,” designed to make it harder for homeless people to find a place to rest and sleep, expresses a “Not in My Back Yard” attitude that excludes and marginalizes the homeless rather than solving the problem. By contrast, some cities (e.g., Oakland, San Diego, Portland, Seattle) have taken a different approach—providing sanctioned homeless camps with prefab sheds, 24-hour security, and social services, or modifying zoning regulations to legalize “alternative architecture” such as affordable tiny houses in alleys, on parking lots, or on vacant land. An experiment in Detroit enables residents to rent-to-own microhouses for $1 per square foot per month, providing a path to home ownership without a mortgage.

At the national and state level, policy makers are struggling to find legislative and legal solutions. California State Sen. Scott Wiener (D) has proposed a policy that would give every homeless person in the state the right to a bed year-round. At the national level, the Department of Justice filed a brief in 2015 arguing that it is unconstitutional to make it a crime for homeless people to sleep in public places. In Seattle and San Francisco, legislators have floated proposals to tax local tech companies that many blame for driving up housing prices by creating an influx of highly paid workers. The tax revenue would fund supportive housing, shelters, mental health services, and rental assistance.

Governments, companies, and individual activists are exploring how to harness digital tools to tackle housing insecurity. New York City, which counts more homeless people than any other US city, has introduced StreetSmart, a system that compiles and shares data on this population daily, enabling city agencies and nonprofit service providers to coordinate their work.

On the other hand, our digital age creates challenges for the homeless. With the rise of digital payments, for example, fewer people are carrying cash, and small donations to people on the street are in decline. In response, Amsterdam produced a winter jacket for homeless citizens that is rigged to accept wireless debit donations, channeling the funds to meals, housing, or bathing facilities. There is also a risk that the digital divide can disadvantage this vulnerable population. Social media platforms can be powerful tools for connecting people to social services, but a 2011 study showed only 62 percent of homeless teens had cell phones. While tech can sometimes be used to help the homeless—a recent experiment in Cairns, Australia, coopted footage from CCTV surveillance cameras to coordinate efforts to provide health and housing services—surveillance is more commonly deployed to police public space and remove the homeless from public view.

What This Means for Museums

Society often treats food, safety, and shelter as needs that must be met before people can satisfy "higher" needs, including self-actualization through arts, history, and culture. The UN Declaration of Human Rights challenges this assumption, giving equal weight to the right to housing (article 25) and "the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits" (article 27). If museums are to be public resources that are truly accessible to all, they need to disrupt Maslow's hierarchy of needs—a five-tier, pyramid-shaped model that places people's physiological needs at the bottom and self-actualization at the top. Museums need to serve not just people who have reached the "tip of the pyramid" but those who are not yet adequately housed, fed, or safe.

Museums aspiring to serve the homeless population can learn from their library cousins. People experiencing homelessness often patronize libraries, which they see as safe and welcoming places. In 1996, the American Library Association formed the Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force, and there are numerous examples of libraries implementing its recommendations. The San Francisco Public Library, the first library in the country to hire a full-time social worker, now has seven health and safety advocates on staff, all of whom were once homeless themselves. Museums are not commonly treated as safe spaces by large portions of their communities, including people experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. How can museums become more welcoming and inclusive?

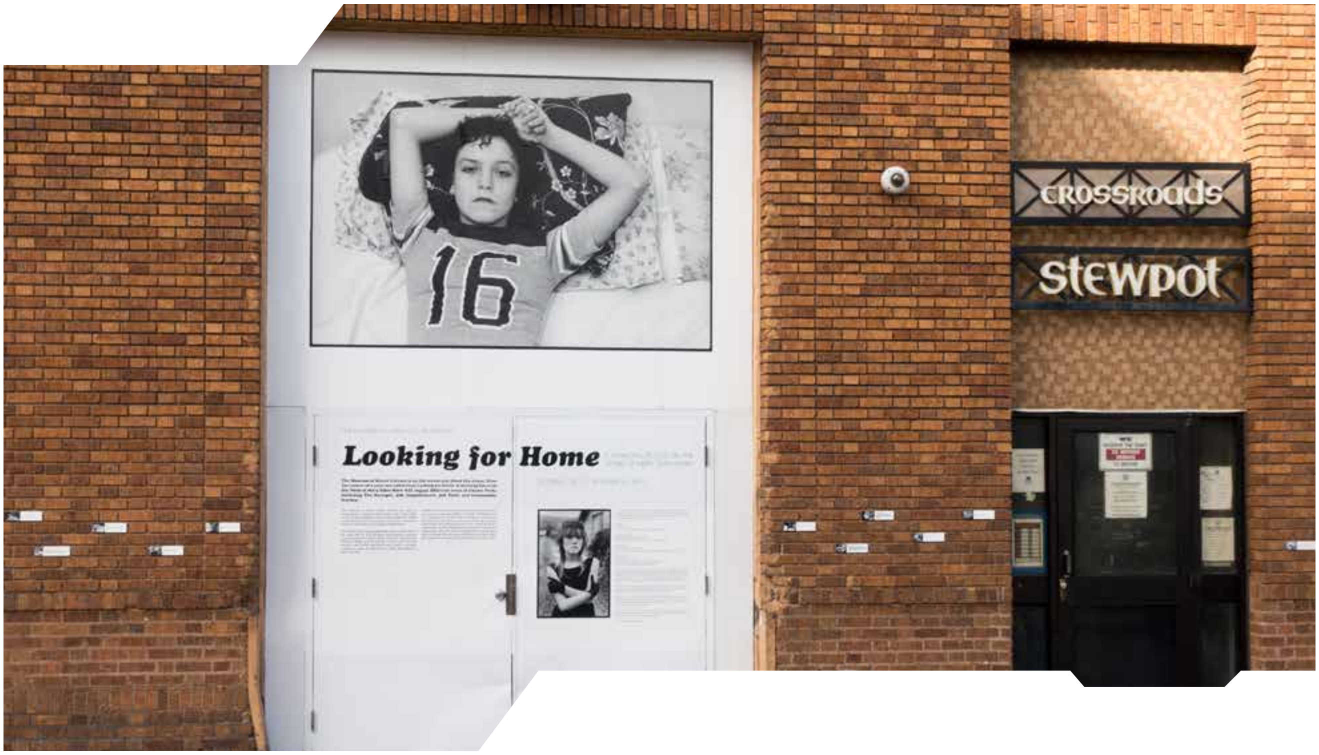
The museum sector often thinks about equity in terms of access to exhibits and educational programs. There is now a robust and growing movement to make museums' digital assets, including documentation and images of collections, open and accessible. But museums also control immensely powerful intangible assets: reputation, reach, and networks of influence. Some museums are beginning to map these assets against community needs, exploring how they can be deployed to help individuals improve their own lives, whether by creating an economic market for the work of indigenous craftspeople (the International Folk Art Museum in Santa Fe), or providing local teens with training and credentials to enter the fashion industry (Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt Museum's Design Prep Academy).

Gentrification is one factor driving up housing costs and displacing community residents. Museums have been tagged by some as agents of gentrification—though a growing body of research (for example, a 2016 study published in *Urban Studies*) suggests that traditional arts establishments (like museums) tend to follow, rather than cause, gentrification. That said, museums are influential players in the urban landscape, and need to be mindful of how they contribute to the creation or solution of wicked problems like housing insecurity.

Museums Might Want to…

- **Educate themselves and their visitors** about the state of homelessness and housing insecurity in their community.
- **Find ways to serve families and individuals** experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity by making them feel welcome at the museum, and/or by taking the museum to them. By prioritizing social inclusion, museums can combat the isolation that often results from homelessness, and help people build social networks and foster self-worth.

The Museum of Street Culture employs clients of the Stewpot, an organization providing a safe haven for homeless and at-risk individuals of Dallas, as docents and tour guides. Photograph by Alan Govenar, courtesy of Documentary Arts.



"Looking for Home" at the Museum of Street Culture in Dallas features the photographs of Mary Ellen Marks documenting the life of Erin Blackwell Charles (a.k.a. Tiny). Photograph by Alan Govenar, courtesy of Documentary Arts..

- **Create a code of conduct** that clearly outlines both the museum's commitment to accessibility and the behavior expected of (any) patron. Train front-line staff to ensure they are ready to welcome all visitors and equipped to appropriately navigate any challenges that arise.
- **Following the lead of the San Francisco Public Library and other libraries,** hire staff who have experienced homelessness themselves in order to encourage a welcoming use of the space and foster mutually beneficial relationships with the local homeless community.
- When planning an expansion or new building, **work with neighboring constituencies** to create a Community Benefits Agreement that specifies how the museum will contribute to the wellbeing of the community. Efforts may include paying a living wage, hiring locally, or providing space that meets community needs.
- **Give people who have experienced homelessness voice and agency** to tell their own stories.
- **Document and share best practices** with other museums engaged in this work.

Further Reading

The Right to Adequate Housing. Human Rights Fact Sheet No. 21/Revision 1, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This publication explains the right to adequate housing, illustrates what it means for specific individuals and groups, and reviews governments' related obligations. It also provides an overview of national, regional, and international accountability and monitoring mechanisms. Available at ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FS21_rev_1_Housing_en.pdf.

"A Review of Arts and Homelessness in North America," *With One Voice: Connecting Arts and Homelessness Worldwide* (2017). This review charts the state of homelessness in a number of cities, summarizes what those connected to arts and homelessness feel they require to continue their work, and offers some recommendations for meeting those needs. Available at with-one-voice.com/north-america-country-review.

Museum Examples

- In 2018, several museum exhibits explored homelessness and housing insecurity. "Evicted," a collaboration between the **National Building Museum** and Princeton University sociologist **Matthew Desmond,** helped visitors explore the world of low-income renter eviction. "Shelter: Crafting a Safe Home," organized by the Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh, invited 14 artists to explore the concept of shelter as a basic human right.
- Museums organizing such exhibits have invited people experiencing homelessness to tell their own stories. In the **Portland Art Museum's** "One Step Away," which focused on local housing insecurity, participant storytellers directed development of the exhibition. The **National Museum Cardiff's** "Who Decides?" (2017) was curated by people who have experienced homelessness. **History Colorado** included community members, including some experiencing homelessness, in the planning committee for "Searching for Home" (2016). The **Museum of Street Culture** recruits clients of the Stewpot, an organization providing a safe haven for homeless and at-risk individuals of Dallas, to serve as docents and tour guides.
- After several years of staging temporary installations around Chicago, in 2019 the **National Public Housing Museum** will reopen in the last remaining building of Chicago's oldest federal housing project—the Jane Addams Homes. The museum is dedicated to presenting the ambitions and failures of public housing in the United States, preserving and presenting the stories of past residents of the project, and empowering current residents of nearby public housing. The museum's Entrepreneurship Hub serves as a business incubator for public housing residents, providing business classes, pro bono advisory services, and a resident-owned cooperative store.
- In the UK, the **Museum of Homelessness** (which does not itself have a permanent home as of yet) "collects and shares the art, histories and culture of homelessness and housing to change society for the better… [and] make the invisible visible through research, events, and exhibitions." In 2017, they partnered with the **Tate Modern** to present "State of the Nation," an installation/report exploring "what is happening in hostels, day centres, social housing, on the streets and in people's hearts, minds and lives." In 2018, the museum acted as pro bono producer for David Tovey's immersive opera Man on a Bench, which "questions stereotypes about people who've been homeless and shows the beauty of second chances."

See also their "Jigsaw of Homeless Support," making the case that the arts should be available to people experiencing homelessness alongside other services from day one: with-one-voice.com/jigsaw-homeless-support.

WebJunction: The Learning Place for Libraries hosts an extensive list of resources on serving people experiencing homelessness that can be of assistance to museums. Includes links to the American Library Association's Hunger, Homelessness, and Poverty Task Force resources, and a variety of online webinars and courses. Available at webjunction.org/news/webjunction/resources-libraries-and-homelessness.html.

Take Care: Building resilience and sustainable practice

"Self-care is not selfish. You cannot serve from an empty vessel."

—Eleanor Brownn

Society owes a debt to everyone who does the hard work of making the world a better place: individuals who speak up in the face of injustice, people who band together for collective action, and those who care for others in need. But that work is often exhausting, debilitating, and traumatic. Self-care—taking action to "preserve or improve one's own health"—has long been practiced by social activists as a way of maintaining their body and souls. In the face of rising stress and stretched resources, it is more important than ever for individuals and institutions to recognize the need for setting aside time and resources for restorative practice.

"Group Therapy," Frye Art Museum. Photo Jonathan Vanderweit.

Description of the Trend

Historically, the disempowerment of marginalized groups, such as enslaved people and women, was justified by the argument that they were unable to care for themselves. In the 20th century, antipoverty activists flipped this reasoning, affirming that having the capacity to care for oneself is a fundamental human right. Health professionals, seeking to elevate public wellbeing, began to preach the value of self-care as a complement to the limited medical care available to many poor, rural, or disadvantaged communities. In the 1960s, '70s, and '80s, feminists, people of color, and LGBTQ activists adopted self-care as a means of affirming their value as individuals and sustaining their work. By the 1980s, the term had become coopted and commodified, turned into a marketing slogan for lifestyle products and services. However, in the past few years, we have seen the resurgence of self-care as a political act, affirming the self-worth of marginalized people and fostering the physical and psychological resilience they need to assert their rights.

“Group Therapy,” Frye Art Museum. Photo Jonathan Vanderweit.

To the extent that self-care arose as a strategy to cope with unequally distributed resources for wellbeing, the need for self-care can be seen as a measure of social equity. Communities disadvantaged by their race, gender, class, or sexual orientation are particularly vulnerable due to the health risks associated with their status and their lack of access to publicly supported resources for care. With respect to African American communities, this double jeopardy has its own name—“John Henryism”—that refers to the negative health effects associated with the extraordinary level of effort needed to overcome racism and bias.

The need for relief is not confined to specific communities. The American Psychiatric Association’s 2018 report revealed high levels of anxiety among the general public, with 39 percent of respondents saying they are “more anxious than last year.” Technology plays a role in this rising baseline as cell phones, the internet, and social media have created the expectation to be on call 24 hours a day. We are just beginning to measure the psychological cost of this hyperconnectivity. Social stress has increased as well, with the global rise of nationalism, nativism, and anti-immigrant sentiment. In the US, hate crimes—a leading indicator of social stress—have risen for the past four years, and spiked in the two weeks following the 2016 presidential election.

In a capitalist economy, any need is going to generate a corresponding business, so it is unsurprising that there is an $11 billion industry marketing self-care products and services. On Twitter, the tag #selfcare is as likely to be attached to sponsored promotions for papaya facial treatments and mink eyelash extensions as to posts about mental health and social activism. For this reason, self-care is sometimes dismissed as trivial and self-indulgent, despite its long history as an important tool for people fighting social injustice.

It can also be difficult to talk about self-care because it takes so many different forms. For people with chronic illness, it can be a way to manage their own health. For people working in high-stress, front-line jobs as first responders or emergency care medical staff, it can be a way to cope with the fallout from exposure to traumatic experiences. For the general public, it has become broadly synonymous with personal wellness and healthy living. In practice, it can include attention to nutrition, exercise, socializing with friends and family, spiritual practice, and recreation, as well as many other ways to care for mind and body. There is no one-size-fits-all prescription. Introverts may require significant alone time to rebuild their emotional energy, while extroverts recharge by spending time with friends. For some people, physical wellbeing may hinge on keeping fit, for others controlling their diet. For at least a third of us, it may include getting more sleep. Some people may need a "digital detox" to recover from the stress of hyperconnection, while members of marginalized groups may turn to social media to access community and support.

What This Means for Society

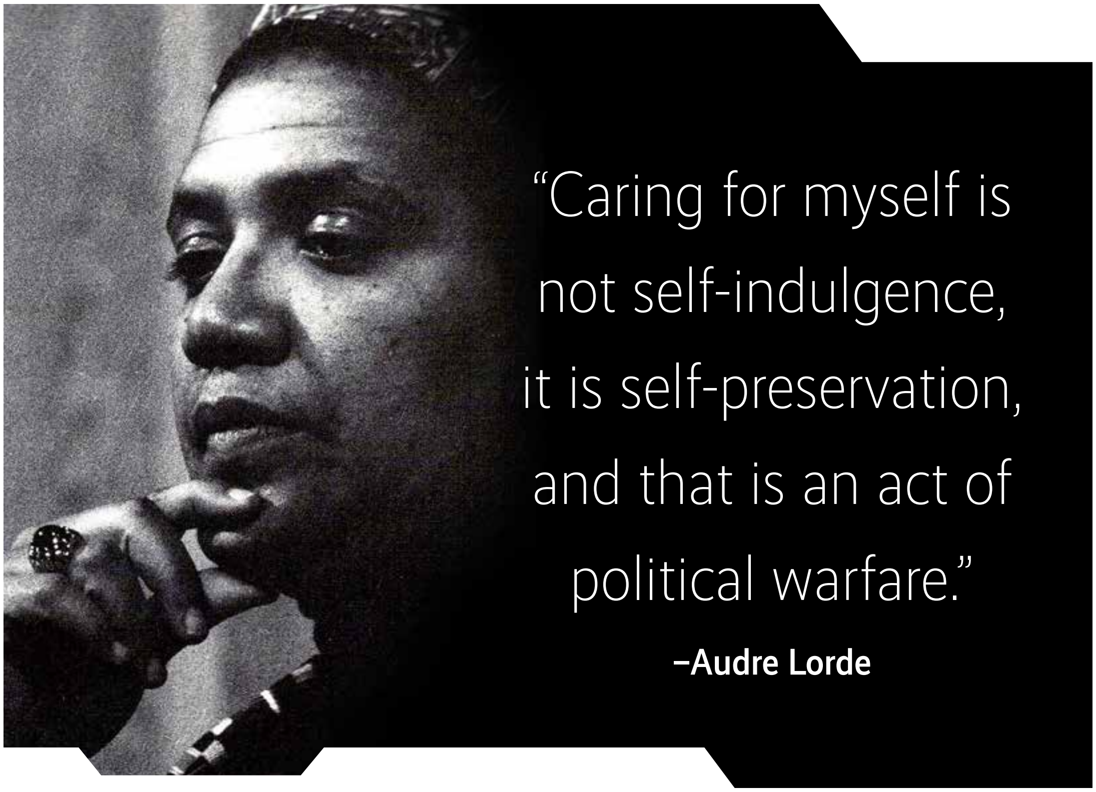
As a whole, the US is not a culture that recognizes and supports the need for individuals to care for their own wellbeing. The difficulty may be embedded in our national DNA—a Protestant heritage of personal responsibility and belief in self-reliance. This legacy has given rise to a work culture in which employees demonstrate their value through self-sacrifice, and working long hours is a marker of success.

Yet the culture of hard work and self-reliance has created significant costs to society. In the workplace, stress leads to absenteeism, disengagement, decreased productivity, burnout, and high turnover. Research shows that 36 percent of workers in the US suffer from work-related stress, and the overall costs—in lost work days, health effects, and decreased performance—are as high as $300 billion a year. The chronic stress of caregiving work can lead to compassion fatigue, characterized by apathy, isolation, and secondary traumatic stress disorder triggered by treating those who are traumatized. In response, some high-stress caregiving professions are incorporating self-care into training curriculums and work environments. There is a growing body of evidence that such practices work. For example, fostering healthy lifestyles, mindfulness and meditation, and reflective writing has been shown to reduce the likelihood of stress and burnout among physicians caring for terminally ill cancer patients.

Residents of the US are further stressed by the lack of a comprehensive support system for the basics of life, such as health care, paid sick time, and parental leave. In the absence of programs provided or mandated by the government, what are the responsibilities of employers? The data on stress and productivity suggest an economic argument for supporting workers' efforts to care for themselves since the space, time, and resources to support self-care can be relatively affordable employment benefits. On the other hand, there is a risk that such workplace perks might substitute for deeper, more meaningful change such as paying higher salaries or providing better health coverage.

Stress and its costs are unequally distributed, disproportionately affecting racial and ethnic minorities and populations with low socioeconomic status. In the face of rising inequality, self-care is an important corrective to the health effects of the effort required to overcome social and economic barriers. The commodification of self-care is therefore particularly pernicious. Could wellbeing become yet another luxury only accessible to those with the time and money to care for themselves?

If self-care is seen only as an individual responsibility, there is a danger that it will become yet another a source of stress—a guilt-inducing item on the checklist of things we think we ought to do. We need to be careful that we do not use successful self-care as an excuse to avoid changing the systems that cause harm. Just as the need for self-care is driven by stress created by our organizational and social systems, the most effective solutions will themselves be systematic. Systems that support self-care must respect the myriad forms that support can take.



Through her poetry and prose, Audre Lorde (1934–1992) explored civil rights, racism, feminism, lesbianism, black female identity, and social injustice.

What This Means for Museums

Research by Tech Impact shows that nonprofit workers often feel overworked and that their productivity drops when the workweek reaches 50 hours or more. Post-recession, it has been increasingly difficult to fund nonprofit work, and organizations tend to pass this pain on to staff in the form of low pay, long hours, and high expectations in preference to cutting services to the communities they serve. While nonprofit workers often are motivated by a commitment to mission, this dedication comes at a cost. A 2011 study by Opportunity Knocks suggested that as much as 30 percent of the nonprofit workforce was experiencing burnout, and another 20 percent was at risk.

Museums, along with other employers, pay a high if hidden price for stress. Turnover results in a loss of knowledge, experience, and institutional memory. It necessitates recruitment, hiring, and training, as well as incurring the hidden costs of work that goes undone while a vacancy is unfilled. Despite this, museums often cannot afford (or feel they cannot afford) many of the perks that successful for-profit companies can offer to employees. Focusing on employee care can include a number of low or no-cost practices, such as offering flexible work schedules or designating a workplace "de-stress" room, that have a significant impact on employee wellbeing. Yet it is more common for museums to create self-care and wellness programs for the public than for their own staff.

For museums that do want to focus on employee wellbeing, the solution is not as simple as offering a menu of yoga and meditation classes. Laszlo Bock, former senior vice president of people operations at Google, maintains that one of the most powerful guiding principles a company can adopt is "make life easier for employees." That means being attentive to and flexible about individual needs. Some organizations let employees telecommute, condense their workweek, customize their work hours, negotiate job sharing, and donate sick time to colleagues. Other "family-friendly" work practices include providing a dedicated, private space for new mothers to pump milk, accommodating parents who need to bring a child to work on occasion, and offering paid parental leave. Rather than obsessing about applying one set of policies "fairly" across the board, many organizational experts recommend focusing on what an individual needs to get done, and what support they need in order to be able to do a good job.

Museums Might Want to...

- Start by **talking to employees about the specific conditions** that drive stress in their jobs, such as harmful or unsafe conditions, understaffing, irregular hours, overwork, expanded responsibilities due to downsizing, inadequate equipment or materials, or a lack of regular, clear feedback from their supervisors.
- **Implement Bock's approach towards "making life easier for employees."** Review policies for pain points and identify practices such as telecommuting and flex time that employees can use to meet their individual needs. Design employment and workplace policies to be supportive rather than punitive.
- **Create an annual "quality of life" survey** to benchmark progress in lowering employee stress and providing a supportive work environment, and identify potential actions. But only conduct a survey like this if you are ready to act on the information it provides. Otherwise you may add to people's stress and frustration.
- **Create a staff committee to foster self-care in the organization,** and give participants the resources and authority to implement their ideas. Ensure that staff can access resulting programs during officially sanctioned work time, without adding to their own workloads.
- **Set a positive example,** starting with the director/CEO and the organization's leadership staff. Encourage management staff to be open about their own need to care for themselves, share best practices, and model work-life balance. Train managers to include self-care in their discussions with the people they supervise. Encourage staff to take sick time when they need to, and to use their vacation days, even if this means redistributing assignments or adjusting deadlines.
- **Build support for these policies with the board of trustees.** Make the "business" case for self-care by documenting tangible organizational benefits such as higher employee engagement, increased productivity, and lower turnover.
- **Offer self-care programs for the community,** with an emphasis on serving populations that may have particularly acute needs and face barriers to safely accessing existing options.

Museum Examples

- The **Museum of Science in Boston** is in its ninth year of an employee wellness program that offers programming in physical, emotional, financial, and social health. This initiative has included a month-long yoga course, a six-week tai chi series taught by a museum employee, a virtual summer race series, a mobile mini-golf tournament, healthy chef demonstrations from catering partner Wolfgang Puck, a staff-created cookbook of healthy recipes, and annual financial planning sessions. On a quarterly basis, the wellness program offers "quiet time" sessions in the museum's Charles Hayden Planetarium, providing staff with a break from the regular workday via tours of outer space accompanied by calming music.
- The **California African American Museum's** program "Reclaiming Our Time: Radical Self Care Now!" explored "how a balanced and vibrant life demands that we take our needs into consideration and act upon them." The series included tai chi chuan classes, coffee tasting, and a panel of "diverse and fearless leaders sharing their methodologies for care while making a major impact in their respective fields."
- From September 15, 2018, to January 6, 2019, "Group Therapy" at the **Frye Art Museum** in Seattle featured a roster of international artists addressing themes of healing and self-care through a range of media. During the exhibit, the museum also functioned as a community "free clinic" with immersive installations and participatory projects. By including racism, sexism, and political tribalism as social pathologies, the show reframed what it means to be ill in the 21st century and offered community building as one possible curative.
- In July 2018, the **Nantwich Museum** (UK) became the first museum to be recognized by the National Health Service with a Bronze Self Care Award for their work in sharing key health and wellbeing messages with their staff, volunteers, and visitors.

“Reclaiming Our Time: Radical Self Care Now!” at the California African American Museum. Photo by HRDWRKER.

Further Reading

Seema Rao, *Objective Lessons: Self-Care for Museum Workers*, Amazon Digital Services (2017). This workbook presents 50 exercises to help readers explore their own strengths as well as their feelings about working in the museum sector.

Beth Kanter and Aliza Sherman, *The Happy, Healthy Nonprofit: Strategies for Impact Without Burnout*, Wiley (2016). This book offers strategies for organizational leaders who want to avoid nonprofit burnout among their staff. The authors propose a system they call “We-Care,” in which “employee wellbeing takes a front seat next to organizational performance.”

Where to Find the Future

Most of CFM's content is available free over the Web.

CFM's page on the **Alliance website** (aam-us.org/programs/center-for-the-future-of-museums) includes links to all of our projects and reports, including past editions of *TrendsWatch*.

The **CFM Blog** (aam-us.org/category/future-of-museums) features a mix of essays by CFM's director, guest posts, recommended reading and viewing, and commentary on current news. The trends featured in this report will be explored in more depth on the blog throughout 2019.

CFM's **weekly e-newsletter,** "Dispatches from the Future of Museums," contains summaries of and links to news items about trends, projections, museum innovations, and tools for the future. You can find a subscription link at aam-us.org/programs/center-for-the-future-of-museums/dispatches-from-the-future-of-museums.

You can follow CFM on **Twitter** (@futureofmuseums), where our tweets feature links to news, research, opportunities, and current events.

On **Pinterest** (pinterest.com/futureofmuseums/), CFM's boards are devoted to images illustrating the trends we follow, recommended reading and viewing, and glimpses of potential futures.

CFM's **Facebook** page (facebook.com/futureofmuseums) shares links and brief commentary on stories related to museums.

CFM's **YouTube** channel (youtube.com/futureofmuseums) hosts interviews with museum professionals around the world as well as recordings and screencasts of talks by CFM staff, while our "Favorites" list is a compilation of futures-related videos from a wide variety of sources.

Author Credit

Elizabeth Merritt is vice president, strategic foresight, and founding director, Center for the Future of Museums at the American Alliance of Museums. In the spirit of fostering healthy skepticism and critical research skills, she offers the following snapshots of her life, and challenges readers to distinguish fact from fiction.

The first futurist Elizabeth ever met was architect/inventor Buckminster Fuller. She played beneath his desk as a toddler while her father discussed the Vinland map (real or fake?) with the great man.

Her roots in both baking and social activism go deep—as a tweenager, she roamed the Cleveland airport handing out homemade sugar cookies decorated with peace symbols to protest the Vietnam War.

At the age of 14, she participated in the first accurate land survey of Stonehenge and its surroundings under the direction of Professor Alexander Thom, who theorized that the site functioned as a megalithic lunar observatory. (Elizabeth had the honor of schlepping a theodolite across the countryside.)

Her first public speaking gig was presenting about opossums during a live animal demonstration at the Cleveland Museum of Natural History. (Did you know that opossums have 50 teeth—more than any other North American land mammal?)

The first museum position she interviewed for was assistant penguin keeper at the Boston Aquarium. This was before she discovered she was prone to hypothermia. Fortunately, she didn't get the job.

Her first television appearance was a public service announcement for a local station in New Bedford, Massachusetts, in which she handled a 6-foot boa constrictor while explaining that (most) snakes are harmless. (The boa, unimpressed by his moment in the spotlight, pooped in her pocket during filming.)

She once used a kitchen cleaver to dismember a baby walrus in the parking lot of the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History. (Not to worry—it was already dead.)

All of her cats in the past two decades have been named after museum founders. One of the current set, William Wilson Corcoran, is perennially anxious because, well…dissolution, closure, deaccessioning. He has issues.

She maintains a fashion blog and a poetry blog, publishing under a pseudonym.

For the record, everything above is true, subject to the vagaries of human memory.

About Us

The Alliance's Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) helps museums explore the cultural, political, and economic challenges facing society and devise strategies to shape a better tomorrow. CFM is a think tank and R&D lab for fostering creativity and helping museums transcend traditional boundaries to serve society in new ways.

The American Alliance of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. Representing more than 35,000 individual museum professionals and volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners serving the museum field, the Alliance stands for the broad scope of the museum community.

For more information on CFM and the Alliance, visit aam-us.org.

Designed by:
Selena Robleto, Red Velvet Creative

Cover:
RFX1, *Homesick* (2017).

Artist's statement:
"The piece *Homesick* was created the same time I got into blockchain and cryptocurrencies in 2017. It began to inspire my work, and was the final cherry on top of developing my style. Staring at charts and reading up on blockchain inspired the look of this painting. But the real story about this piece is that it is about being isolated and homesick, and how we feel disconnected through the use of technology even though we are more connected than ever through it. These are some of the negative side effects of technology that people will experience until we fully become one with it, which will then contribute to our evolution. *Homesick* is also a representation of myself at the time, and the bipolar nature of my mind state after experiencing a series of events that would shape who I am today. And that is what my art is about, finding the light within the darkness or at the end of the tunnel. It is all about the process of life, and appreciating all the ups and downs, which is what the graphs and charts represent."

RFX1 is a member of the Blockchain Art Collective, a technology company that provides artists and artist representatives with a holistic, blockchain-based system for cataloguing and tracking fine art. Artists create use stickers equipped with near-field communication chips to link physical works with digital records stored on a blockchain. Anyone can use the collective's "dApp," an app that scans the sticker and reads the publicly registered information.

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TrendsWatch is made possible by the collective wisdom of many people inside and outside the museum field who contribute their time and creativity to CFM's work. For their help with this edition, I would particularly like to thank:

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- **Jess Houlgrave,** co-founder, Codex Protocol
- **Seema Rao,** principal, Brilliant Idea Studio

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—Dale Strange, President & GM, Blackbaud Arts & Cultural

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HTB INSURING THE WORLD'S TREASURES

"I always look forward to reading CFM's annual *TrendsWatch* report, as it provides a window into the world of what concerns museums most. The highlighted trends often provide a spotlight on current perils and exposures and thus potential helpful clues about how we need to modify risk management techniques to better serve the museum community."
—Joe Dunn, President & CEO, Huntington T. Block Insurance Agency, Inc.

Huntington T. Block Insurance manages AAM recognized insurance programs offering Museum Collections, Exhibitions & Temporary Loans/Fine Art; Property & Casualty; and Trustees/Directors & Officers Liability insurance. Each unique program strives to provide broad coverage at very competitive premiums with service from a knowledgeable and responsive team of risk professionals.

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PGAV Destinations supports *TrendsWatch* for the same reason we conduct our own primary research: we believe museums thrive when dedicated to better understanding their audiences.

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TrendsWatch and other Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) activities are supported by American Alliance of Museums member dues and donations. If this report sparked your thinking and you would like to see *TrendsWatch* prosper, please consider supporting the Alliance by joining or making a tax-deductible contribution. For over a decade, CFM has been helping museums explore today's challenges and shape a better tomorrow. We welcome your investment in our shared future.

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Corporate and foundation support are also welcome. To learn more, contact Eileen Goldspiel, director of advancement, at **egoldspiel@aam-us.org** or 202-218-7702.