



## Dear Friends,

Few people, I imagine, would say we are living in a “fun” time. The year 2020 feels as if it has ushered in an especially potent array of challenges – among them a deadly global pandemic; civil uprisings over systemic racism; ever-more-urgent warnings about climate change; and, here in the United States, a rancorous presidential election.

We decided to create an issue on fun in the fall of 2019, and our authors were well into writing their articles when these particular challenges unfolded. While suffering is always part of the human condition, we wondered if we should move ahead, if “fun” would feel too disconnected from our times.

After much discussion, we decided to proceed, despite – and because of – the topic. As noted by the Culture Track report *Culture +*

*Community in a Time of Crisis*, even in the grip of a pandemic, “having fun” remained the single greatest motivator for audiences seeking cultural activities (see [www.culturetrack.com/research/reports](http://www.culturetrack.com/research/reports)). And as Culture Track’s Diane Jean-Mary posits in the Q&A column on page 16, it is indeed possible to “hold fun in one hand while holding contemplation and process around critical societal issues in the other hand.”

We hope you will enjoy this issue, which tackles fun (and its close cousin, playfulness) as important tools for visitor engagement and enhanced learning in museum exhibitions. Our authors will lead you through their journeys and the journeys of others, past and present, as they remind us that creating fun in exhibitions is a serious business that can reap positive rewards – and that having fun as a team can improve

the process. I think you will find inspiration in their experiences, as well as a host of ideas that can be used in a variety of settings.

As always, I’d like to thank our outstanding editorial advisory board, the NAME board, designer Charita Patamikakorn, Exhibits Newslines editor Jenny-Sayre Ramberg, our authors, our reviewers, our contributors, and you, our readers. I’d also like to extend a special note of gratitude to Liza Rawson, who served brilliantly as the journal’s managing editor for 10 years – and extend a heartfelt welcome to our new managing editor, Ian Kerrigan.

**Ellen M. Snyder-Grenier**  
Editor