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- Institutional Code of Ethics
- Strategic Plan
- Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan
- Collections Management Policy

Retail price: $74.99
AAM Member Price: $69.99

Scan the QR code to browse all AAM Toolkits, see what’s included in each, and purchase yours!
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Editor's note:
The social media handle for Remember Love Recovery Project (in the resources box on p. 36 of the May/June Museum article “Partnering for Community Healing and Change”) was incorrect in the print edition. It should be @rememberloverecovery. We regret the error.

Cover: Sergey Lazarev/Alamy Stock Photo
The latest expansion of the wildly versatile LX2044 Series is the ZE3 version. We’ve combined three powerful 4 degree spotlights into one clean, crisp package for unsurpassed optical performance, unleashing 70,000 CBCP of power. With the addition of various accessories, changing the beam from 4 degrees to wider distributions is as simple as adding a lens, making the LX2044 / COB / ZE3 Spotlight the most powerful tool in your space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>ZE3</strong></th>
<th><strong>NARROWEST SPOTLIGHT</strong></th>
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<td>4° Fixed Beam Angle</td>
<td>Up To 70,000 CBCP</td>
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<td>4 5/16” Diameter, 10 5/16” Length</td>
<td>COB, 13 Watts</td>
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**Specifications:**
- **NARROWEST SPOTLIGHT:**
  - Fixed Beam Angle: 4°
  - Diameter: 4 5/16”
  - Length: 10 5/16”
  - COB, 13 Watts

Museums for an Open Mind

When I worked at the Chicago Architecture Foundation, the audience surveys we conducted revealed a common sentiment: people expressing disinterest in visiting because they weren’t keen on architecture. “Okay,” we’d respond, “but what about parks? Bridges? The iconic Chicago skyline?” To our surprise, many would express interest in those topics, even if they had said they didn’t like architecture.

This experience taught me a valuable lesson: sometimes, we hastily dismiss things without truly understanding them. A single word can lead us to make assumptions. I recall a business trip to London where I kept hearing glowing reviews of the Imperial War Museum. “But war?” I initially thought. “I’m not interested in war….”

But I went, and after seeing what I expected to see, like weaponry, I was caught off guard by what I encountered in the galleries. Like an exhibition about World War II that captured the story of the children forced to evacuate to the countryside, or a gallery focused on the horrors of the Holocaust. I took in these stories that were not just about war itself but its impact on people and the way it shapes our lives. I realized war did interest me. I just didn’t like the word.

I think about that experience sometimes when I go to an exhibition that I wish people with different perspectives from mine would see. Like the exhibition I once saw at the Chicago History Museum on lynching, “Without Sanctuary.” Through a collection of photographs, postcards, and other memorabilia, it laid bare the violence Black people lived with during Jim Crow, the terror they were escaping at all costs when they moved to cities like Chicago. I was particularly chilled by lynching postcards that white families used to share their Sunday afternoon experience with friends and family. If more people saw that, wouldn’t they form a different impression of our country’s history with race, of how we got to where we are now?

Museums can open minds. I saw it at the Muhammad Ali Center, where we would get comment cards from visitors who hadn’t expected to like the experience or understand Ali’s legacy. Some came from military families, who wrote that they had thought Ali was an “un-American draft dodger” for his refusal to participate in the Vietnam War. But in the museum, they came to understand his views and respect his principles, even if they didn’t agree with them.

We can ease some of the divisions we see today if we can figure out how to get more people into this position, where they can deeply engage with difficult topics and learn to appreciate other perspectives. How can we meet them where they are and build the on-ramp that will get them into the conversation? Doing so might mean removing barriers of language and avoiding terms that signal “this is not for you,” so we can get people to engage with the heart of the matter.

It may seem naive to say we can cut through differences in our present day, when it seems there can only be absolutes in any ideological debate, and we see so much backlash to progress and campaigning for censorship. But I think it’s important not to be short-sighted when it comes to change and remember that research shows us we agree on a lot more than some may have us think. For example, a recent Associated Press poll showed that between 80 and 90 percent of US adults agree on fundamental American rights and core values like equal protection under the law, the right to vote, freedom of religion, and the right to assemble peacefully.

Sure, it will take a lot of work to dial down the division and dial into this shared value system. But I know from experience that it’s possible, and that museum programs and exhibitions are the places to build this shared understanding. We can make it happen.

5/2/2024

Marilyn Jackson is the President and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums.
BY THE NUMBERS

What Unites Us

Voting in local, state, and national elections
Conservatives: 82%
Liberals: 92%

Seeking and listening to other viewpoints, even when we disagree
Conservatives: 57%
Liberals: 79%

Participating in community activities, such as volunteering or attending community events or meetings
Conservatives: 67%
Liberals: 80%

Scan the QR code for the full data story and sources from Wilkening Consulting.

By the Numbers was compiled by Susie Wilkening, principal of Wilkening Consulting, wilkeningconsulting.com. Reach Susie at Susie@wilkeningconsulting.com.
Museum Junction
community.aam-us.org
The online gathering hub for museum professionals.

Now with new features and peer communities, Museum Junction makes it easy for you to explore topics and discuss what matters most to you. Specialized peer communities are growing—check out some below!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUDIENCE RESEARCH AND EVALUATION</th>
<th>CEOs &amp; DIRECTORS</th>
<th>COLLECTIONS STEWARDSHIP</th>
<th>DEAI LEADERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Join like-minded colleagues to share research, ideas, and insights—helping to grow fellow museum professionals' capacity to make data-driven decisions.</td>
<td>Where museum leaders can connect with one another to share resources, insights, or expertise on topics like museum workplaces to strategic plans, leadership development, and more.</td>
<td>Ask questions, share ideas, and get feedback from colleagues on a range of collections care and management issues, plus, share relevant professional development opportunities.</td>
<td>Are you responsible for managing DEAI efforts as a primary function of your role? Join peers who are leading diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) work.</td>
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<tr>
<th>DEVELOPMENT, FUNDRAISING, AND PHILANTHROPY</th>
<th>FUTURE OF MUSEUMS</th>
<th>FINANCE, ACCOUNTING, &amp; AUDIT</th>
<th>HISTORIC HOUSES AND SITES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From giving to grant-writing, fundraising and more—connect with fellow fundraising &amp; development pros on the topics that matter to you.</td>
<td>Your place to share news and discuss the implications of current trends, projections, innovations, and research. Discussions also build on work from our Center for the Future of Museums.</td>
<td>If you work in museum finance, accounting, audit, compliance, and risk management, then join to exchange experiences that can spark innovative ideas to excel in these vital roles.</td>
<td>One of the largest types of museums in the country are historic house museums and historic sites—connect here for discussions, insights, and practices with fellow professionals.</td>
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<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS</th>
<th>PUBLIC PROGRAMS &amp; EVENTS</th>
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<tr>
<td>For consultants, freelancers, and contractors who offer valuable expertise to museums across specialties—or those looking to connect with them!</td>
<td>Everyone is welcome to discuss virtual, in-person, or hybrid events; member-only vs. public programs; effective event sizes; and other topics within this area of public engagement.</td>
<td>Support the health of humans, society, ecosystems, and the climate by exploring sustainable exhibitions with peers, or ask advice from each other.</td>
<td>Join a vibrant community of diverse educators from across the field to connect with one another and discuss current standards, practices, and trends in museum education.</td>
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<th>Get started!</th>
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<td>» Connect with peers on any topic in the <a href="#">Open Forum</a>, or dive into one of the peer communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>» Adjust your digest frequency to get the updates you want, when you want.</td>
</tr>
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Interested in supporting these communities or creating a new one? We're looking for **volunteer moderators** to help these communities thrive!

Learn more about these changes, new member benefits, and more about our $1 million investment in the museum community: [bit.ly/museum-community-investment](http://bit.ly/museum-community-investment)
Frist Art Museum
“Lee Alexander McQueen & Ann Ray: Rendez-Vous” offers a rare glimpse into the life and mind of McQueen and introduces Ray as one of the 20th century’s great, but lesser-known, fashion photographers. The exhibition features 65 photographs hand-selected by Ray from her archive of over 32,000 negatives, more than 50 dress objects spanning the entirety of McQueen’s career, 10 gifted garments from Ray’s wardrobe, and various pieces of fashion ephemera.

Location: Nashville, TN
Dates: through Aug. 25
Learn more: fristartmuseum.org/exhibition/lee-alexander-mcqueen-and-ann-ray-rendez-vous/

Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology
“Manifest: Thirteen Colonies” features the works of Wendel White, who photographed African American materials housed in private and public collections throughout the 13 original United States colonies and Washington, DC. His subjects are rare, singular objects—such as the Clark baby dolls or a twisted fragment of stained glass from the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing—and everyday material such as diaries, documents, photographs, and souvenirs.

Location: Cambridge, MA
Dates: through April 13, 2025
Learn more: peabody.harvard.edu/exhibitions

James A. Michener Art Museum
The James A. Michener Art Museum recently celebrated the artwork of Bucks County students through its Art Star Program, a new initiative to empower local young people who demonstrate passion for the arts. A select group of 14 elementary, middle, and high school students were invited to participate in the Student Art Gallery at the Bucks County Intermediate Unit 22, which is designed to highlight the creativity and talent of local students. This year’s gallery featured artwork from students in all 14 Bucks County school districts.

Location: Doylestown, PA
Learn more: michenerartmuseum.org/article/42059/michener-art-museum-celebrates-bucks-county-students-with-art-star-program/

What’s New at Your Museum?
Do you have a new temporary or permanent exhibition, education program, partnership/initiative, or building/wing? Tell us at bit.ly/MuseumNewsAAM, and it might be featured in an upcoming issue.
Steamboat Art Museum

"Heide Presse: We Set Our Faces Westward: One Woman’s Journey 1839–1848" tells the story of the Oregon Trail journey—in paintings, drawings, and artifacts—inspired by a settler woman’s journals. The exhibition, which includes educational and collaborative programming, brings to life a uniquely female perspective of our country’s westward migration.

Location: Steamboat Springs, CO
Dates: through Sept. 1
Learn more: steamboatartmuseum.org/current-exhibition

Swope Art Museum

In "Persistent Vision: A Stanley Lewis Retrospective," more than 40 works representing a lifetime of intense exploration of perceptual painting are on display in four exhibition spaces in the museum. Works are on loan from The William Louis-Dreyfus Foundation, the Center for Figurative Painting, Inc., and private collections.

Location: Terre Haute, IN
Dates: through Sept. 8
Learn more: swope.org
**First Look**

**Palmer Museum of Art at Penn State**

The Palmer Museum of Art’s new 73,000-square-foot building opened to visitors on June 1. The state-of-the-art facility, located within The Arboretum at Penn State, boasts unique design elements that bring the outside in, fostering a sense of connection with the landscape and inspiring visitors to reflect on the relationship between art and nature. The new building nearly doubles the Palmer’s footprint and includes 20 light-filled galleries, new educational and event spaces, a museum store and café, a sculpture path, and outdoor terraces.

**Location:** University Park, PA  
**Partners:** Allied Works and Reed Hilderbrand  
**Learn more:** palermuseum.psu.edu

**University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art**

“To My Friends at Horn: Keith Haring and Iowa City” tells a fascinating story of Haring’s multiyear correspondence with students at Ernest Horn Elementary School in Iowa, encouraged by art teacher Colleen Ernst. The exchange of letters and care packages resulted in a three-day artist residency in partnership with the museum in 1984. In another visit in 1989, he completed the mural *A Book Full of Fun*, the centerpiece of the exhibition.

**Location:** Iowa City, IA  
**Dates:** through Jan. 7  
**Learn more:** stanleymuseum.uiowa.edu/art/exhibitions/upcoming/keithharing

**International Museum of Art & Science**

Our known world stretches far beyond what we can see with the unaided eye. That world contains the smallest particles, tiniest organisms, smallest landscape, and natural details, and provides us with an abundance of artistic inspiration. In “Microscape,” artists were encouraged to explore a corner of the world at high magnification, capturing tiny wonders at the microscopic level, or by zooming in on a larger object to show its smallest details.

**Location:** McAllen, TX  
**Dates:** through Aug. 25  
**Partner:** Studio Art Quilts Associates  
**Learn more:** theimasonline.org/microscape
Florida Museum of Natural History

The Florida Museum of Natural History has opened a new state-of-the-art Special Collections Building on the University of Florida campus. The new facility houses the museum’s “wet” collections, including all specimens preserved in ethyl or isopropyl alcohol. The $13 million project took just under two years to complete and includes systems designed to provide the highest level of safety and fire suppression.

Location: Gainesville, FL

Learn more: floridamuseum.ufl.edu/nhdept/visiting-special-collections-building

The Bruce Museum

Experience some of the 20th century’s most celebrated and quintessentially American images at an intimate scale in “Andy Warhol: small is beautiful.” The exhibition invites viewers to look closely at iconic works by the artist in an intimate, more personal size—some as small as 5-by-5 inches. This comprehensive exhibition includes nearly 100 paintings and sheds light on the working process of one of the leading figures of the pop art movement.

Location: Greenwich, CT

Dates: through Oct. 13

Learn more: brucemuseum.org/whats-on/andy-warhol-small-is-beautiful/

JUST RELEASED:
Museum Board Leadership: A National Report 2024

We are proud to present the findings of a new national report on museum board leadership. This second edition of the report first fielded in 2017 finds noteworthy progress in recent years, as well as challenges to continued improvement in museum governance including board diversity. Each of the three sections—The People, The Work, and The Finances—presents key finding and resources to guide your progress on tasks ranging from diversifying your board to creating the core governing documents that undergird your museum’s stability.

Mississippi Museum of Art
“What Became of Dr. Smith” delves into the life of contemporary artist Noah Saterstrom’s great-grandfather, a traveling optometrist whose struggle with, and treatment for, mental illness led to his erasure from family history. The exhibition focuses on Saterstrom’s immersive narrative painting, *What Became of Dr. Smith*; historical artifacts from Smith’s life; and The Asylum Hill Project, a research consortium uncovering the history of the Old Asylum.

**Location:** Jackson, MS  
**Dates:** through Sept. 22  
**Learn more:** msmuseumart.org/exhibition/what-became-of-dr-smith

Huntsville Museum of Art
“CHROME: David Parrish” features artworks from the museum’s permanent collection that trace the evolution of Parrish’s style and allow a rare glimpse into an artist’s journey. Over the course of his decades-long career—from early experimentation to the iconic portrayal of motorcycles and still-life compositions featuring American entertainers that brought him national acclaim—Parrish journeyed from a concept artist for aerospace industries to an acclaimed photorealist painter.

**Location:** Huntsville, AL  
**Dates:** through Sept. 8  
**Learn more:** hsvmuseum.org/chrome-david-parrish

International Tennis Hall of Fame
The International Tennis Hall of Fame has launched “Etched in History: Tales of Tennis Trophies and the Legends Who Lifted Them,” a digital exhibition featuring selections from its vast collection of tennis trophies. Visitors can explore in 360-degree photography, spinning the imagery for an interactive viewing experience. Trophies are organized by era, dating from when Newport hosted the US National Lawn Tennis Championships (now the US Open) to today’s recognizable Grand Slam honors.

**Location:** Newport, RI  
**Partner:** Digital Ark Corporation  
**Learn more:** trophies.tennisfame.com
Explore the new AAM Member Resource Library!

The recently redesigned member resource library has new functions to help you find the resources you need and the inspiration you want! Browse over 2,000 articles, tip sheets, guides, and on-demand programs across 20+ topics, and filter by resource type or sub-category.

We recently added a slew of templates for collections management forms, a tip sheet and on-demand programs on philanthropy and fundraising, a tip sheet on interviewing for a job, and more. Check back often for new resources!

Members can log in to unlock member-only resources throughout the library.

To get started, visit: aam-us.org/resource-library

The new resource library is part of AAM’s investment in the museum community.

Learn more: bit.ly/museum-community-investment
Changing the Rules of Engagement

There are evidence-based strategies museums can employ to become sites of depolarization and civil discourse.

By Coco Xu

In our current divisive political landscape, museums are in a unique position to mitigate polarization. As individuals increasingly retreat into echo chambers and ideologically homogeneous networks, opportunities to engage with those with different views are dwindling. This lack of interaction breeds misperceptions and animosity, further exacerbating the fractures within our society. As one of the few institutions still trusted by the American public, museums can break these silos and bring people together to engage in healthy civil discourse.

Navigating this terrain may seem daunting, particularly amid the headlines on the latest culture wars and contentious school board meetings. Yet decades of research in social psychology, as well as insights from organizations like my organization More in Common, point to strategies that museum professionals can employ to cultivate spaces conducive to civil discourse and constructive dialogue—both internally between staff and board and externally among visitors from all walks of life.

Values, Not Partisan Affiliation

The first rule of engagement for civil discourse is to see people beyond partisan and demographic labels, understanding that we are driven by distinctive values and core beliefs. Core beliefs are psychological attributes, the "hidden architecture" that influences our worldviews and behaviors. One dimension of core beliefs is moral values. The Moral Foundations Theory, developed by social psychologists Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, suggests that there are five or more "moral foundations" that underlie people’s moral judgments:

- Care: protecting the vulnerable and helping those in need
- Fairness: relating to proportionality, equality, reciprocity, and rendering justice according to shared rules
- Authority: respect for traditions and submitting to legitimate authority
- Purity: abhorrence for things that evoke disgust and prioritizing the virtues of self-discipline
- Loyalty: standing with one's group, family, or nation

In More in Common’s landmark study *The Hidden Tribes of America*, we find that rather than being divided into two political camps, American society today consists of seven distinctive groups—Progressive Activists, Traditional Liberals, Passive Liberals, Politically Disengaged, Moderates, Traditional Conservatives, and Devoted Conservatives—that form based on their core beliefs and social-psychological profiles, including moral foundations. (See chart at right.)

Similar to how individuals have different food preferences shaped by variations in taste buds, eating habits, and the environment they live in, people also prioritize different moral foundations based on...
“The Hidden Tribes of America”

In our study, we found that how people prioritized each moral foundation often predicted their views on social and political issues:

- **Care**: correlates with support for policies and causes that protect or elevate historically marginalized groups.
- **Fairness**: correlates with support for equal and just treatment under shared rules, such as closing the gender pay gap.
- **Authority**: correlates with support for policies that enforce law and order.
- **Purity**: correlates with views on sexuality, religion, and spirituality.
- **Loyalty**: correlates with support for behaviors that demonstrate loyalty and obligation toward one’s community or country.

These findings have two important implications for museum professionals trying to create spaces for civil dialogue. Firstly, disagreements and conflicts are often not driven by political affiliation but differences in the values we prioritize. It is crucial to encourage staff and visitors alike to avoid framing different opinions on social issues solely through the lens of partisan affiliation and recognize the deeper values that animate people’s worldviews.

Secondly, by understanding the moral bedrocks that individuals hold, museum professionals can avoid language that violates certain moral values and triggers defensive reactions. For example, for staff, board members, or visitors who prioritize loyalty, it may be useful to reframe language that could be seen as disdainful of their communities or countries.

In addition, new data from the Civic Language Perceptions Project by the Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement further explores which terms Americans like and don’t like, as well as which terms bring us together, drive us apart, and motivate us to act.
For example, the study finds that words such as “unity” and “belonging” are received positively, while “social justice” and “equity” are more polarizing for particular audiences. It is therefore imperative for museum professionals to discern and curate language that speaks to their audiences’ core values.

**Shifting the Moral Bedrock**

“Tribes” differ in their endorsement of the moral foundations:

- Authority
- Care
- Fairness
- Loyalty
- Purity

For example, in More in Common’s study “Defusing the History Wars,” we find that 95 percent of Democrats believe “throughout our history, Americans have made incredible...”

**Correcting the Perception Gap**

Research by More in Common finds that Americans often have exaggerated, incorrect assumptions about the views of their political outgroups, or those they perceive to be the “other side.” We call this phenomenon perception gap—the difference between what we imagine a group believes versus what that group actually believes. For example, in More in Common’s study “Defusing the History Wars,” we find that 95 percent of Democrats believe...

**More in Common US**
moreincommon.com/us

More in Common, *The Hidden Tribes of America*, October 2018
hiddentribes.us

Philanthropy for Active Engagement, *Civic Language Perceptions Project 2024*
pacefunders.org/Language/

doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/ha2tf

Listen First Project
listenfirstproject.org/tips
achievements and ugly errors.” Yet Republicans think only 55 percent of Democrats agree with that statement. Similarly, 93 percent of Republicans say that “Americans have a responsibility to learn from our past and fix our mistakes.” Yet Democrats think only 35 percent of Republicans agree.

Perception gaps work in an almost self-reinforcing cycle: they obscure commonalities and make us believe that our differences are so vast that productive conversations are impossible, thereby reducing interest in dialogue and further perpetuating our misperceptions of each other. Thus, museum professionals who focus on correcting perception gaps can, as a result, also address incorrect assumptions, foster curiosity, and diffuse tension ahead of difficult conversations. There are several ways that a perception gap framework can be incorporated in museum practice:

• Encourage participants to reflect on their own misperceptions.
• Contrast participants’ perceptions with reality, exemplified by statistics and personal stories.
• Depict individuals who are similar to the participants changing their minds about a topic, issue, or an opposing group. (Our research shows that Democrats are more likely to change their minds about Republicans if they watch video testimonials of fellow Democrats changing their opinions about Republicans, and vice versa.)

As divisions grow leading up to the 2024 election, museums have a critical opportunity to cultivate engagement across lines of differences. Museums can not only be public arenas that foster healthy civil dialogue but also shape how individuals engage with one another in our polarized political climate. The positive impact of this work will extend beyond local communities, offering a blueprint for other institutions seeking to build social cohesion.

TIPS FOR DISMANTLING SILOS

Following are practices grounded in social psychology that museum professionals can use to bridge divides.

Encourage perspective-giving and perspective-taking. Research shows that sharing personal perspectives and experiences (perspective-giving) as well as accurately summarizing and reflecting on the stories shared by others (perspective-taking) utilizes the power of being heard to change attitudes toward opposing groups.

Focus on personal experiences. Include opportunities for participants to share personal stories related to political issues. Research finds that personal experiences bridge moral and political divides and lower intolerance better than facts.

Emphasize shared identities. Highlight local identity, American identity, and common interests to foster connection despite political differences.

Build dialogue skills. Teach participants to adopt communication strategies that promote curiosity and respect for differing viewpoints, such as active listening and showing appreciation for input.

Employ moderation and facilitation. Assign a neutral moderator to guide conversations and shift discussion goals away from persuasion and toward understanding. Nonprofit organizations seeking to bridge differences, such as the Listen First Project and Braver Angels, have developed facilitation advice that museum professionals could use.

Coco Xu is a Research Associate at More in Common US. Reach her at coco@moreincommon.com. Follow More in Common on LinkedIn or X at @MoreInCommon_US.
Philosophy of Choice
What if visitors could choose their own intellectual pathways in museum exhibitions?

By Elaine Heumann Gurian

In their book *Broadcast Journalism Techniques of Radio and Television News*, Peter Stewart and Robert Alexander write, “The soundbite should encapsulate the main point of the argument; the strongest opinion or reaction. Again, there is a danger of distortion by over-emphasizing the already emphatic and polarizing a point of view, and this danger can only be eliminated by carefully explaining the context in which the remarks were made.” Please indulge me in an argument against the soundbite in the museum context.

I advocate for an expanded exhibition process that emphasizes a broad field of seemingly unrelated avenues of exploration. Furthermore, I oppose simplified text (soundbites) as the only access to intellectual content.

I propose changing our standard exhibition-making policies to include access to a broad range of augmentative material presented as alternative pathways for exploration, enabling visitors to choose the depth of information and intellectual trajectory they want. AI’s new capacity makes this exhibition design direction easier than ever. However, the most significant changes still necessary for this to work involve museum policy and intention.

**An Argument for More Arguments**

Before I go further, it is crucial to acknowledge that past exhibitions have explored multi-vocality, access to additional information, and alternative methods of interactivity. Many of these techniques are now incorporated as a matter of policy. I propose that museums build on these trends, including changing labeling conventions so that each visitor’s interrogation of the material can differ, not as an occasional experiment but as a matter of routine exhibition design. I know it is unrealistic to expect such complexity from all exhibitions. But if a critical mass of exhibitions in each museum allowed visitors to extrapolate in this way, museum-goers could learn to do this on their own in exhibitions where unitary argument prevails.

I also recognize that implementing my proposal may lengthen exhibition development timelines and potentially increase costs. New design skills would be needed to make these alternative pathways as engaging as the current, more uniform message.

“Why do this?” you rightfully ask. My answer is philosophical. While simplification and directive points of view may facilitate better and easier understanding, they also tend to foster polarization and alienation, especially if the institution is taking a controversial position. Almost all material evidence can be interpreted in multiple ways. If the information were equally presented, visitors would understand that complex issues cannot be reduced easily to single points of view. I hope that such peaceful inclusion would lead to a more developed tolerance of our fellow humans’ different interests and positions.

Allowing visitors to explore personal interests within a group setting reveals the possibility of complexity in arguments and welcomes tangential or adjacent ideas. When we take public transportation, for example, we are permissive about what our fellow seatmates choose to read or watch on their phones. Like that
experience, I want to recognize and support my fellow learners without knowing what they are learning.

**Theoretical Example**

Christopher Columbus statue removed from public square and restored in museum

The Benefits and Challenges

I believe such multi-focal exhibitions would be beneficial in two ways. First, I hope visitors would understand that objects can be legitimately viewed in many ways. Second, subliminally, visitors would realize that individuals standing side by side, holding different views on the subject, pose no threat to one another. It might be an alternative to personal certainty. More importantly, museums would signal to an intellectually and politically diverse audience that they are all “seen” and valued, reinforcing that each visitor has come to the right place.

The dangers of this approach include the use of false information and unsafe affiliations. To combat this, we would need to establish internal guardrails to determine the scope of authentic, vetted, and broad content. I suspect herein lies the most
challenging part of this proposal. If the museum staff deems almost everything frivolous or “low brow” as inappropriate for the public display, the resultant product may lack the engagement it should ideally foster.

Museums are not the moral police; they are expansive repositories that preserve and safeguard our collective and personal patrimony. They are responsible for presenting our interests and their contexts comprehensively, including the emotional, faith-based, and even nonrational aspects. Visitors should be allowed to contemplate their own internal modalities, ingenuity, and accomplishments as they explore museums’ holdings.

Potentially, as a result of my proposal, museums could more easily and seamlessly integrate the work of formerly marginalized people into these broadened exhibitions. In doing so, the creations of all peoples would be included in avenues of delight, concern, investigation, anger, and even adoration. And in this way, we might peacefully stand together without having to agree.

What Does This Look Like?
Upon entering the museum, visitors could encounter a decoding diagram that would help them understand how to navigate through multiple avenues of interest. Labels would have a new taxonomy indicating different paths of exploration without resorting to visual clutter. Overt text would offer entrance to a variety of contexts. For instance, visitors could study making the thing, liking the thing, supporting or hating the maker, and understanding the context in which the thing was made. Ian Wedde, a former curator at New Zealand’s national museum, Te Papa, has said, “I want to go to a museum of war to learn about bicycles.” This is a desired outcome of such exhibition changes.

If museums embraced this template alteration, they would participate in a much-needed critical change in our public dialogue—that is, citizens might begin to reject soundbites of certainty to embrace contextual ambiguity. Most issues (save those few at the extremes) contain partial truths and embedded justifications. In the current political climate, people often consume news that aligns with their beliefs, minimizing their exposure to omitted information.

With this more inclusive approach, we could help create a world in which silos were less evident, and the atmosphere inside our museums might help us feel more broadly forgiving toward one another. Our job in Museumland is to bust the door wide open so that every peaceable human feels safe entering.

For the past 50 years, Elaine Heumann Gurian was either Deputy Director for museums in the planning and construction phases or a Senior Consultant to many international museums with contested histories. She writes and lectures worldwide. Reach her at egurian@egurian.com.

Eric Bender, “Connecting collections through AI,” Oct. 12, 2023 ericbender.co/2023/10/12/connecting-collections-through-ai/
This edition of TrendsWatch explores volatility—strategic foresight parlance for the speed of change—which has increased exponentially in recent decades. Use this report as a catalyst for conversation about how you and your museum could adapt to this rapidly changing environment, tackling the issues below while honing the foresight skills to face future issues.

The free PDF includes additional brief articles and hundreds of embedded link sources for the facts, figures, and stories cited in the report. Plus, it is convenient to share with colleagues, board members, funders, students, planning partners, and others—send them to bit.ly/trendswatch-2024.

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» Trend alert on Combating the Loneliness Crisis in Museums

» A brief guide to Digital Twins and Doom Loops

Save the date!
Dive into these topics even further October 29-30, 2024, by joining the virtual Future of Museums Summit.
Fighting Apathy

The Japanese American National Museum’s Democracy Center promotes unity among people of all backgrounds.

By James E. Herr
An audience at “Vectors,” a live performance choreographed by Jay Carlon at the Democracy Center’s inaugural Civic Season Celebration.
**Sixteen.** What does that number conjure up for you? Perhaps sweet sixteen—like the party or round in March Madness. Or for the mathletes, 16 is a perfect square. (Pause to Google “perfect square.”) It could be the age at which you got your driver's license.

Sadly, that number is also the percentage of young people who say they are proud to live in America. The statistic comes from a recent Morning Consult poll, and it tracks with many other surveys over the past couple years that have examined the issue.

Last year at the California Conference for Equality and Justice's annual convening, I joined a facilitated discussion group that asked, “How does it feel to be multiracial/multicultural in today’s charged political climate?” I was heartened by the many young people in the group; however, the conversation was sobering. Without exception, the young people in the room said they were ashamed to be American and had no faith in our democracy. They had seen two presidential elections where the winner of the popular vote lost the presidency, and the voice of the people no longer seemed to matter. There was a palpable sense of apathy—bordering on antipathy. When people don’t want to engage, when they feel that there is no point, democracy cannot survive.

This is why I was so proud to join the Japanese American National Museum (JANM) in relaunching the Daniel K. Inouye National Center for the Preservation of Democracy (Democracy Center) this past December. At a time when American democracy is being attacked daily, we need institutions—particularly our cultural institutions—to stand up and speak out to not only spread the truth but also stem the tide of apathy and antipathy.

The Democracy Center, founded in 2000 with the support of Sen. Inouye, embodies his vision to inspire all Americans to engage actively in shaping our democracy. In 2005, JANM completed construction of the Democracy Center as an addition to its Historic Building. The Democracy Center serves as lecture hall, film screening and performance theater, and exhibition space.

After the 2016 elections, there was a renewed call for JANM to speak out on issues, such as the proposed Muslim travel ban and the incarceration and separation of families at the US–Mexico border. It was against this backdrop that JANM began to examine how the Democracy Center could have a greater impact. Feedback from a 2021 survey suggested that tackling current events would make the Democracy Center more relevant than ever, and we've taken that advice since relaunching.

At each taping, audience members can engage with a pop-up interactive exhibition—for example, reflection booths created from reconfigured voting booths, where they can explore their own feelings of belonging in our democracy. The episodes have been downloaded more than 3,000 times through the Gratitude Blooming podcast site.
Democracy Center Programs

JANM’s mission is to promote understanding and appreciation of America’s ethnic and cultural diversity by sharing the Japanese American experience. The museum sits in a historic location: where 37,000 Japanese Americans in Los Angeles were ordered to report before being taken to one of America’s concentration camps during World War II. Every day when I walk through the museum’s Democracy Plaza, I’m reminded of the families—American families—who boarded buses here and how US democracy failed its people.

Because of this history, JANM also speaks out when diversity, individual dignity, and social justice are undermined, vigilantly sharing hard-fought lessons. Its underlying purpose is to transform lives and create a more just America and, ultimately, a better world. As a program of JANM, the Democracy Center leans on this work. We contemporize the stories, and we look for solutions to the problems facing our democracy. We center the arts in our conversations in ways that other civic institutions don’t or can’t because the arts inspire action, participation, and empathy.

Our arts and culture institutions have a responsibility to uplift our heritages—the diverse stories brought here from around the world—not to replace a dominant culture but to enhance it, strengthen it, and make room for other stories that create a truly unique American canon. When people see themselves reflected in the arts and civic life, they become more engaged and inspired.

In April 2023, before its formal relaunch, the Democracy Center began hosting programs related to current events to gauge interest and build the capacity of the programming staff. One of the first events was a comedy night, “Democracy on the Rocks … with a soda chaser.” A nod to the role comedy has historically played in political discourse, the evening featured...
comedians from diverse backgrounds along with political improv. Programming can’t be so serious all the time. We were pleased with the turnout and positive feedback, and we are planning another comedy night this summer.

During this time, we also hosted conversations on climate policy, antisemitism, and the history of Japanese American solidarity with the Black Panthers. Through a partnership with Live Talks LA, we hosted authors of books about democracy, including former US Congressman Adam Kinzinger, one of two Republicans who served on the United States House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack, and Harvard University political scientist Daniel Ziblatt.

When the Democracy Center officially relaunched in December 2023, JANM and the Democracy Center worked with our local partners, the Chinese American Museum and La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, to support the Smithsonian’s “Our Shared Future: Reckoning with Our Racial Past” initiative. Programming across the three institutions spanned 17 days and featured a wide variety of experiences, including film screenings, cooking demonstrations, concerts, and exhibitions.

We opened our programming with a symposium on race at the intersection of health, wealth, and the arts. The cross-sector discussion highlighted how important the arts are in these conversations. Attendees could view the Democracy Center’s first exhibition, “The Bias Inside Us,” on loan from the Smithsonian. One of the programs focused on reparations for Black Americans in California. The conversation drew inspiration from JANM’s core exhibition, “Common Ground,” which traces the history of Japanese Americans in the US, including the fight for reparations stemming from the WW II incarceration.

Additionally, we have created three fellowship programs for artists. In “An American Vocabulary: Words to Action,” part of the Artists at Work Fellowship, visual artist Audrey Chan and rapper Jason Chu collaborated on flash cards that portray figures, events, and practices rooted in community, care, and action. Through these words and images, the artists extend an invitation to participate in a shared vocabulary of Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) agency and unity in the fight for justice, healing, and understanding.

The Yamamoto Arts Writers Fellowship supports the work of emerging arts journalists and critics who bring a cultural competency to their work. And the Watanabe Democracy Fellowship will bring a cohort of cross-sector, early to mid-career professionals from Japan to the US to explore issues of democracy.
Fighting Polarization

We recognize that one of the main threats to democracy is the deep polarization currently on display in our country. For many of us, it is hard to reach out to people who feel we do not belong here. But we must find ways to do that. We speak to audiences that feel the same frustration, and we are looking for those answers together.

Early in our programming, we commissioned a dance performance from renowned artist Jay Carlos. “Vectors” drew on the Filipino principle of kapwa, the shared inner self, to create a connective experience. It also offered a nuanced depiction of pervasive power dynamics within people’s lives, communities, and the global collective.

We are also investigating how our communities are specifically impacted by contemporary issues. During the recent “Climates of Inequality Symposium” at JANM, the Democracy Center hosted a screening of the documentary Manzanar, Diverted: When Water Becomes Dust. We also hosted a panel of powerhouse women environmental leaders who spoke about the direct impacts of climate change on communities of color.

As an institution, JANM aims to build empathy in all its offerings, and we are now looking at how we can measure that impact. Creating empathy is central to what we want to accomplish at the Democracy Center.

But our programming is still in its infancy, and we have much to learn. We struggle with finding audiences beyond our usual supporters. How do we create an institution that is seen as the place to have these conversations? How do we get people to come back in person in a post-COVID world? We are certainly not alone in asking these questions. We are open to the sharing of best practices and collaborations with other cultural institutions to help find the answers.

I wrote that JANM sits at a site where democracy failed its people. But it is actually people, through division, prejudice, and apathy, who fail their democracy. However, people also have the power to preserve, protect, and defend democracy. Museums play an important role in inspiring this next generation of leaders to understand what has been and what can be so that no one is ever left behind.

James E. Herr is Director of the Daniel K. Inouye National Center for the Preservation of Democracy at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California. Reach him at jherr@janm.org.
A Controversy of Monumental Proportions

The May 4 Memorial at Kent State University before the storm damage and after (inset) from a photo taken in March 2024.
On August 24, 2023, winds of change literally blew through Kent State University. Security cameras captured the moments when a powerful, sudden storm blew over trees, damaging the official memorial to what is widely known as the Kent State Massacre, but at Kent is simply called May 4, 1970. Debates over the memorial's future have reopened the deep wounds inflicted when members of the Ohio National Guard fired into a crowd of students, killing four and injuring nine others.

Officially dedicated during the events commemorating the 20th anniversary in 1990, the abstract memorial features a 70-foot-wide plaza intended to encourage reflection and four pylons representing the students killed. Designed by Bruno Ast, it was originally awarded second place by the jurors of a national design competition. However, when the first-place design was disqualified for failing to meet US citizen requirements, the Ohio convention of the American Legion seized the opportunity to criticize the university for planning to build a “memorial to terrorists.” The Ohio Fraternal Order of Police soon joined them in opposition. Ultimately, fundraising fell well short of the estimated $1.3 million price tag, and university trustees asked Ast for a blueprint that would not exceed $100,000. Few people found the compromise satisfactory.

The current university administration’s commitment to repairing the broken memorial amid a renewed call to remove the “memorial of four granite coffins,” as it was recently described by a victim’s sister, illustrates the constant renegotiation of the collective memory of a polarizing event that both reflected and exacerbated the cultural wars of the Nixon era. Fixing the now-splintered granite monument offers Kent State University a powerful opportunity, should it choose to take it, to interpret both the history of May 4, 1970, and the longstanding divisions over its commemoration.

Before, on, and After May 4
For many, the Kent State shootings are embodied by the graphic, Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph of Mary Ann Vecchio expressing a combination of horror and disbelief over Jeffery Miller’s bloody body.
The scene was almost unimaginable. Never had uniformed members of the US military shot and killed unarmed students.

Alan Canfora was among those wounded by the 67 shots fired over 13 seconds. He was at the center of another striking image from that day. Minutes before the shooting, Canfora was pictured from behind waving a black flag of protest as the Ohio National Guard knelt in front of him, some with their guns aimed in his direction. From 1970 until his unexpected passing in 2020, Canfora would personify the slogan often seen and spoken at commemorations: “Long Live the Memory of Kent State.” A longtime activist, he frequently spoke on behalf of the victims.

The Kent State shootings followed four days of upheaval. On Thursday, April 30, President Richard Nixon’s televised announcement that the United States would attack targets in Cambodia sparked nationwide protests among students who called for an end to the war and the draft. In downtown Kent, a morning of disturbances, including trash fires and beer bottles thrown at police, city officials closed the bars. As the crowd dispersed, windows were broken and buildings were damaged.

Early Saturday afternoon, with Governor James A. Rhodes’ approval, the Ohio National Guard started making their way from a nearby Teamsters strike to the campus. As night fell, activists marched around campus, gathering supporters on their way to the Reserve Officers’ Training Corp (ROTC) building. For antiwar demonstrators, the ROTC represented the military on campus and was a frequent target of student opposition nationwide. When a fire broke out at the ROTC building, protestors actively tried to prevent the fire department from extinguishing the flames. The Ohio National Guard arrived as the building burned.

At a press conference on Sunday, May 3, Governor Rhodes called the “radicals” responsible for the damage “worse than the brown shirts and the communist element, and also the night riders and the vigilantes.” That evening, students clashed with Guardsmen as tensions escalated and helicopters buzzed overhead.

May 4 would never again be a typical day at Kent State University. Around noon, both service members and students gathered in the large common space, below the current memorial site. To disperse the crowd, the Guard divided into sections. After some maneuvering, 28 Guardsmen fired from atop the highest nearby hill.

On May 4, 1970, there were no protocols on how to respond to traumatic events. Campus was immediately closed, and students were abruptly told to leave without counseling or mental health support. Some students arrived home to parents who blamed them for inciting violence. Some Kent residents resented the students for forever linking their hometown to a controversial tragedy, exacerbating the town-gown divide often present in college cities.

In September, a report from Nixon’s Presidential Commission on Campus Unrest concluded, “The actions of some students were violent and criminal and those of some others were dangerous, reckless, and irresponsible. The indiscriminate firing of rifles into a crowd of students and the deaths that followed were unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable.”
Legally, the first indictments were against the “Kent 25,” a group of students, former students, and one faculty member involved in the weekend of protests. Nearly all the charges were ultimately dismissed. Years of court cases ended in 1979, when the state of Ohio issued a “statement of regret” signed by the former governor and Guardsmen, and awarded the victims a settlement of $675,000.

Commemoration Amid Controversy
Public opinion remained divided as the cases proceeded through the justice system. With tensions swirling, in 1975 university administrators announced that they would no longer plan a commemoration. In response, the May 4 Task Force, a student-led group with support from Canfora and many of the other victims, took on the responsibility of coordinating the annual event. The May 4 Task Force remained in charge until 2019 when the university trustees adopted a resolution stating, “For the continuity and sustainability of these efforts, the time is right for the university to assume responsibility for the annual May 4 commemoration.” Canfora was among the survivors invited to serve on the 50th anniversary advisory committee.

In 1990, long before the university sought his counsel, Canfora authored a passionate article for *Vietnam Generation* titled “The May 4 Memorial at Kent State University: Legitimate Tribute or Monument to Insensitivity?” There he sharply criticized Kent State University for failing to include the victims in the memorial design. He concluded, “The American people care about freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to dissent. We will prove the American people remember and care. We will attain a proper Kent May 4 Memorial.” Likely in response to this criticism, a plaque inscribed with the names of the four students killed and nine wounded was added just prior to the dedication. Until that point, no names were included in the design.

Despite Canfora’s pledge, and several important additions to the interpretive landscape—including memorial markers added to the Prentice Hall parking lot in 1999 to note where Sandra Scheuer, William Schroeder, Jeffery Miller, and Allison Krause were killed and the May 4 Visitors Center that opened in 2012—the memorial itself remains unchanged. Over time, its once-loud critics have grown quieter. However, they have yet to go completely silent.

This past October, Allison Krause’s sister posted an open letter to Kent State on her social media accounts. “Before we rebuild this damaged memorial, I’d like to share my wish to tear the memorial down and hope you will consider this survivor family’s request to build a more fitting and meaningful May 4, 1970 Kent State Massacre Memorial.… The existing memorial does not speak to anything except the U.S. military force’s outrageous killing on May 4, 1970.” The same month, a commentator on the university’s official Facebook page agreed that the memorial should be removed but echoed past criticism that “this riot monument has been up too long!” Though the university has not issued a public response, it continues to update the public on the status of the repairs on its website.

According to a university analysis, 17 of the 137 granite panels, approximately 12 percent, will need to be replaced. It is unlikely that the new panels will completely match the weathered original installation. The undamaged panels include the inscription “Inquire, Learn, Reflect.” Originally intended to reference May 4, 1970, those words apply equally to the memorial.

Whether broken or mended, the altered monument more accurately reflects the legacy of the Kent State shootings. Its design was shaped by people who wanted to remember the victims and lessons of May 4 as well as those who might prefer the day be forgotten. The damaged May 4 memorial carries wounds from the battle of historical memory and the ongoing, challenging work of reconciliation and making peace with the past.

For museum professionals, the memorial serves as an example of the historical trauma carried by a still-divided generation. To effectively interpret controversial history, it is best to meet people where they are. In the case of Kent State, people still come from many different, fractured places.

Mindy Farmer previously served as Director of the May 4 Visitors Center. She is now a Historian at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery.
Search History

Including the public in digital catalogue descriptions will improve access to museum collections and help remove bias.

By Jessica BrodeFrank
Over the past five years, conversations about biases in museums have migrated from internal staff discussions to stories in The New York Times and on the television show Last Week Tonight with John Oliver. While the public has been raising questions about whose history is preserved, who has input in their cultural legacy, where artifacts have been taken from, and more, the very definition of “museum” has changed.

After years of debate, in 2022, the International Council of Museums approved the following definition: “A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.” More succinctly, museums exist to engage the public in varied experiences, not just for study.

AAM’s “Excellence in DEAI Report,” published in 2022, has a similar emphasis on “the responsibility to
“Directly transitioning catalogues meant to serve curators and staff to the web without considering the general public’s search needs and habits has created a semantic gap between what internet users can access and what they are looking for.”

tell all of our stories,” stating that “fostering space for each and every one of us requires intention, courage, and a commitment to the pursuit of excellence.” Museum professionals are not just encouraged but required by ethical guidelines to question the best practices in a field founded on colonialism in which rarities from around the world were sent to cultural centers in Europe and, later, the United States.

This questioning should extend beyond what is collected, what is displayed, and how it is displayed. One of the most basic, and most important, aspects of museum work remains largely obscured from the public: cataloguing. By improving the accessibility and searchability of their catalogues, museums can also address cataloguer bias and bring in a variety of user perspectives.

**History of Cataloguing**

In the 2020 publication *Cataloguing Culture: Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Documentation*, Hannah Turner tracks the history of cataloguing and access to museum collections. As early as the 1800s, catalogues using a single hierarchical classification structure were shaped into public displays and exhibitions that asserted neutrality while suppressing the complexity of cultural, social, and scientific systems.

Cataloguing began with curators creating lists and guides for use in the field during acquisitions, which were later enriched by cataloguing teams at the museum divorced from those collecting in the field. The language used in cataloguing and labeling objects emphasized attention to detail because these descriptions were often the only written record for an object. The descriptions were an attempt to standardize collections cataloguing, but Turner notes that by establishing consistent fields of information, certain information was valued over others.

Museums in the early 1900s continued to privilege physicality in catalogue descriptions. In 1904, the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago had the following fields in their catalogue: when received; catalogue number; original or accession number; object; locality; number of specimens; received from; by gift, loan, or purchase; collected by; when collected; dimensions or weight; and remarks. More than a century later, the majority of museums still focus their cataloguing efforts on these fields.

As the second half of the 20th century dawned, computer use brought an increased awareness to the organization of catalogue information and its importance in facilitating research and access to collections. Due to technical difficulties, technology costs, and limitations on data storage and staff time, museums needed to determine the indispensable information catalogues would include. Different internal users required different information about objects, complicating the decisions of what to include in the catalogue.

In the early 2000s, these databases became online public access portals, effectively sharing collections with the public via the internet. This made it possible to search large amounts of data on a collection from anywhere in the world. But for the most part, these portals adopted the same strategies of the earliest card catalogues, resulting in the same types of information and biases of almost 200 years of description and cataloguing.
Where Museums Are Falling Short
Visitors to cultural heritage websites expect to navigate materials as they would on the broader internet, using thematic and contextual language. Most institutions use terms and descriptions that may be difficult for the public to understand, preventing meaningful access to collections and undermining the belief that collections are in fact for the public benefit, preserving history and culture for all. This disconnect not only limits access but also perpetuates polarization.

The internet is already a saturated knowledge space without a single narrative. By exclusively presenting professionally curated narratives online, museums fail to acknowledge the diversity of perspectives they embrace on-site: objects are interpreted differently based on the individual's experience, and visitors engage with objects through various lenses.

In museums throughout the colonized world, collecting and preserving was often prioritized over sharing. This can still be seen in modern museums that publicly display 1–2 percent of their collection at any given time. According to a 2009 *New York Times* article, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for example, owned two million objects and displayed only tens of thousands at a time, and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston had 18,000 objects on display out of an inventory of 450,000 works.

The public's ability to discover collections materials relies on cultural heritage professionals' anticipation of the language users will employ in their database queries. Directly transitioning catalogues meant to serve curators and staff to the web without considering the general public's search needs and habits has created a semantic gap between what internet users can access and what they are looking for.

Descriptions often focus on physicality: who made the piece, where and when it was made, and its size and materials. Though helpful, this information does not aid a person looking for images that feature specific visual traits or thematic elements—for example, someone searching for snow or for Black history. Users want the descriptive metadata of objects to facilitate searches by keywords, subjects, and names.

What Museums Need to Do
For cultural heritage institutions to remain relevant and sustain public support, they must demonstrate that the objects held in public trust represent the

CAN AI HELP?

Machine learning and AI can enrich metadata and collections, but they also can perpetuate biases in the cataloguing process. AI tagging models like Google Cloud Vision API are trained on existing human-curated data sets that include conscious and unconscious biases in terms of race, gender, age, and emotion, embedding these biases in the algorithms from the onset.

In a 2019 Research Position Paper published by the global library organization OCLC, Thomas Padilla warned that the historic and contemporary biases create exactly this problem. Given that AI success in creating metadata and tags is still extremely dependent on the data set on which the AI model is trained, AI tagging is still inferior to the work of human participants, especially in terms of describing varied materials from multiple points of view.

For example, AI often fails to detect nuance or situational knowledge. For archival photographs at the Adler Planetarium, Google Cloud Vision API inaccurately tagged scientists in lab coats as doctors or nurses. Human volunteers added tags for “scientists,” “labcoats,” and “lab coats” but did not include tags for “doctor” or “nurse” as the images did not show medical equipment or hospital backgrounds that would prompt such tags. However, the Adler’s inclusion of AI tags in its Zooniverse.org project clearly enticed and motivated some volunteers’ participation: the workflow that featured AI consistently saw two to three times more engagement than the non-AI workflow, demonstrating the appeal of AI, automation, and algorithms.

Museums should not consider AI as a replacement for metadata crowdsourcing projects or professional cataloguing but as a motivation and incentive for public participation in these projects.
collective memory of all. According to the January 2022 report Rethinking Relevance, Rebuilding Engagement: Findings from the Second Wave of a National Survey about Culture, Creativity, Community and the Arts, almost half (45 percent) of Americans participated in a community-based or participatory activity connected to a cultural heritage institution in the years before or during the pandemic, with little variation across race or ethnicity. The pandemic primed communities to expect cultural institutions to address social issues and offer online experiences that allow them to engage with collections and learning objectives. Doing so allows institutions to connect with communities and derive meaning from collections together.

Museums need to invite previously excluded voices into cultural heritage interpretations if they want to build and maintain public trust. Museums must understand how their digital offerings and footprints engender distrust. On-site, a gallery guide could explain a specific interpretation or steer a visitor toward other exhibitions for additional context. Online, there is no one to facilitate such an explanation if that information is not discoverable.

By prioritizing engagement as mutually beneficial, cultural institutions can develop projects that bridge the semantic gap while also bringing the mission-driven learning objectives of institutional programming to these projects’ design and goals. Museums that view community engagement as a process, rather than an outcome, can create online experiences as immersive as in-person ones.

Communities have already been invited into museums to serve as docents, or ambassadors to their cultures in the case of the Multaka project at Oxford University. Efforts like the Community Curation Project at the National Museum of African American History and Culture further invite the public into museum programming. Similarly, communities can provide invaluable insights into the cataloguing process.

Projects at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Adler Planetarium, Getty, and more have used crowdsourcing to augment museum catalogues, adding unique access points not found in traditional cataloguing. The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s tagging projects included an AI-run project and a collaboration with MIT and Wikipedia. The resulting Tagging Initiative now allows users to search more than 470,000 objects on subjects across media, cultures, and time periods. For example, it’s now possible to find 2,500 works across the Met’s extensive collection that feature dogs simply by searching on this term.

The Adler Planetarium’s Zooniverse.org-hosted crowdsourcing project similarly increased access to collections. The project attracted 6,976 individual participants to review more than 1,000 collections items, resulting in 322,993 individual metadata tags, 87 percent of which were completely new to the catalogue.

It is time for museums to change the way they fulfill their promise of preserving history and culture for all. Transparent processes that expand and enrich catalogue descriptions through community engagement can not only mitigate catalogue bias but also expose how language impacts daily internet usage. By fostering transparency and co-creation with the public, institutions can effectively represent community members in their collections and museums.

Hannah Turner, *Cataloguing Culture: Legacies of Colonialism in Museum Documentation*, 2020

“Rethinking Relevance, Rebuilding Engagement: Findings from the Second Wave of a National Survey about Culture, Creativity, Community and the Arts,” Slover Linett, January 31, 2022


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*Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum*
A primer for cultivating more inclusive attitudes among the public.

By Susie Wilkening

The following is an excerpt from Audiences and Inclusion: A Primer for Cultivating More Inclusive Attitudes Among the Public.
American attitudes toward inclusion are divided, complicated, and messy. They are also tied to emotions, values, and identity. National research indicates that there is a steep road ahead in building a truly just and equitable society. According to Pew Research Center and Public Religion Research Institute, 39 percent of US adults say there is discrimination against men in our society, and just 34 percent of registered voters in the US think white people benefit “a great deal” from advantages in society that Black people do not have. Additionally, their research shows 44 percent of white Americans think discrimination against white people has become as big a problem as discrimination against Black Americans and other minorities, and 49 percent of Americans describe immigrants as a “burden to local communities.”

What about museum-goers? How do they feel about inclusion? Our research (see graphic below) indicates less than half of museum-goers are proactively inclusive, so for us to be most effective in sharing inclusive content, we have to grapple with the fact that the majority of our audiences are not seeking inclusive content. The good news is that museum-goers are about twice as likely to want inclusive content as they are to reject it, and research consistently shows that the broader population is more likely than museum-goers to want museums to be inclusive. Additionally, inclusive content in museums can have major societal impact by helping our existing audiences become more inclusive and welcoming to new people in museum spaces.

Understanding Visitors
To understand how to expand inclusive attitudes, we have to examine our visitors more closely. Inclusive attitudes can vary widely, so it’s helpful to back up and examine what influences us in the first place. Factors like one’s upbringing, race, parental attitudes, and so much more help us each develop our unique values, attitudes, beliefs, and worldviews. In the aggregate, that means our audiences comprise a spectrum of worldviews, and while individuals have their own unique blends, there are key traits that tend to cluster together, forming what we’ll call “traditional” and “neoteric” segments that reflect society’s polarization. There is also a “middle,” but most people tend to lean one way or the other.

The “traditional” segment is more likely to be:
- anti-inclusive
- politically/socially conversative
- somewhat less engaged with museums and culture
- generally less engaged with their community and the broader world
- of the belief that museums should be “neutral” and not take positions
- taking a “traditional” and often taking a celebratory approach to history and their own culture
- taking pride in the past and their own cultural heritage
- somewhat less curious
- demographically older, more men, and have less educational attainment

The “neoteric” segment is more likely to be:
- inclusive (though some may be fine with the status quo)
- politically/socially liberal
- somewhat more engaged with museums and culture
- generally more engaged with their community and the broader world
- of the belief that museums can take an evidence-backed position
- taking an additive approach to history and culture
- curious about other cultures and worldviews, and more curious generally
- demographically younger, more women, and have more educational attainment

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<tr>
<th>ANTI-INCLUSIVE</th>
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<th>STATUS QUO</th>
<th>LEANS MORE INCLUSIVE</th>
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It is tempting to use these trait clusters, especially the demographic ones, to make assumptions about individual visitors. Don’t do it! Just because certain traits clustered together doesn’t mean they apply to the individual standing in front of you. In other words, an older white man can certainly be “neoteric” in his worldview, and, similarly, a young woman of color can be “traditional.” You have to get to know that visitor, and their worldviews, to begin to understand where they may fall on the spectrum.

But what about the status quo group—that messy middle group that isn’t seeking inclusive content but is not rejecting it either? This group represents our biggest opportunity! Since they are not rejecting inclusive content, we can help them become more inclusive in their own attitudes if we move at, as adrienne maree brown describes, the “speed of trust.”

Everyone wants their identity to be recognized and valued in cultural spaces, but for those with a more “traditional” worldview, inclusive content can feel like a threat to their understanding of the world, their beliefs and customs, and even their identity. That results in a potential emotional response of fear that can be strong, palpable, and defensive.

So how do we mainstream inclusive content when our audiences are so divided and when emotional responses are so strong? That’s tricky, because while museums provide informal learning opportunities, expanding knowledge through evidence doesn’t always work, especially when fear drives a defensive response in a sizable segment of our audience. We need to understand how values, attitudes, beliefs, and emotions affect how individuals approach information in the first place.

As human beings, we practice what is known as intuitive epistemology all the time. That is, individual values and life experiences deeply affect how people process and establish facts. This also deeply affects the questions we ask about the past, science, social issues, and art, and thus the answers we find can vary based on our worldviews. When we ask different questions of museum content, we use that content to find answers that validate our individual worldviews and avoid content that creates dissonance. This is how two people can approach
a single topic, such as climate change or the Civil War, and come to radically different conclusions. This is simply human nature and why “dueling facts” divide us and feed a culture of alternative facts, polarization, and cancellation. In fact, one thing most of us seem to agree on is that we can’t even agree on facts.

It is practically impossible to use evidence to change minds in a world of dueling facts. Instead, we need to consider how to help visitors change the questions they are asking as they approach content. By asking visitors new questions to consider, new information feels less threatening. Additionally, asking visitors to consider new, dialogic questions also makes them feel valued, especially more “traditional” visitors. Why? Because it fits into a desired pattern of museum engagement, which is to be presented with facts and given the opportunity to make up one’s own mind. So, your job then is to use questions to help visitors consider ideas and facts that they may not otherwise think of and crack open those worldviews, whether a tiny amount or significantly.

**Developing an Inclusive Practice**

Of course, there is more to inclusive practice than asking good questions. True inclusive practice and expanding the number of people who have inclusive attitudes begins with us. To be effective in our work, we need to also deploy radical curiosity and courageous empathy in our practice. By striving to understand different worldviews, what shaped them, and anticipating how those with differing worldviews respond to the content we share, we can create respectful environments where visitors are encouraged to ask new questions that just might broaden their worldviews in ways that matter. The 10-step primer below can help you in your inclusive practice.

**Step 1:** Acknowledge your bias from the beginning and then encourage your visitors to do likewise. Create a plan to address your biases (e.g., advisors, team approach, etc.), and be upfront with your audiences about how you strove to mitigate them. We all have biases, and acknowledging them from the beginning engenders trust. Additionally, gently asking your audience to consider how their own values and attitudes influence how they assess information can put them into a mindset that is more open to nuance.

**Step 2:** Reinforce their aspirational identity as curious, open-minded, and/or well-rounded individuals. Doing so can make it more likely that they will strive to achieve those aspirations, and this basic human psychology can be deployed to achieve pro-social outcomes. This aspirational reinforcement makes it more likely they will live up to those descriptors and consider new content or perspectives.

**Step 3:** Spark hedonic and eudaemonic curiosity (for more information on these types...
of curiosity. read the full primer at aam-us.org/audiences). Since we just validated aspirational identity, now is the time to create information gaps that stretch visitors just a bit. This stretching happens in two ways: introducing ideas just outside of visitors’ normal worldviews and helping visitors be more comfortable with uncertainty or even ambiguity. Both help them approach a complicated world more openly.

**Step 4: Engage in dialogic questions.** Present audiences with questions that their worldviews may not have considered, and practice courageous empathy by being open to their answers. Because of the intuitive epistemology we all practice, reframing questions is crucial. Now that visitors are in a more open mindset, and are seeing information gaps, help them formulate new questions that continue to help them stretch. “Consider this” is a great way to introduce a new question in a nonthreatening way. Mutual respect is important here. Sometimes, the answer visitors give still may not be inclusive. If we disparage those answers, we lose our credibility and our opportunity to try again.

**Step 5: Give them all the facts.** That includes multiple perspectives and telling the truth, even when it changes our understanding of the past, different cultures, or others. More “traditional” audiences often say, “Just give me the facts, and I’ll make up my own mind.” Thus, it is entirely appropriate to do just that, and give them all the facts. The trick is that sometimes the facts you share may not be what they expected. Hopefully, their curiosity has been sparked enough to consider those new facts thoughtfully and respectfully.

**Step 6: Show your work.** Trust cuts both ways, so you need to share your process and sources, and identify your advisors. In a time of “alternative facts,” showing your work is more important than ever. This can be as basic as footnotes in an exhibition or tour guides noting that a list of sources can be found on your website. It doesn’t matter if visitors actually check your references because the fact that you are providing that evidence signals credibility.

**Step 7: Mainstream inclusive content, and never apologize for being inclusive.** When museums, as highly trusted community institutions, mainstream inclusive content, it helps community belief systems shift to embrace it as well. And when that happens, visitors better contextualize detractors as outliers and become more likely to choose acceptance, tolerance, and understanding.

**Step 8: Pace your work at the “speed of trust.”** Some of the content you share may be difficult for some visitors, especially if it represents a change from what they thought they understood. Do not make them feel dumb and do not preach. It is so hard to slow down our work to bring others along with us, yet that is crucial if we are going to expand the number of people who want inclusion. So, think through how you are presenting content, and ensure it allows for empathy to grow.

**Step 9: Be a forum for civil discourse.** Most museum-goers are not asking museums to be places of civil discourse, but when museums do it effectively, it can be transformative. This is a case of “do it even when we are not being asked to.”

**Step 10: Accept that, despite your best efforts, you will not be 100 percent successful.** Have the confidence to know you’re doing your best and planning the most effective path. This makes it easier to keep your focus on your goal and not let detractors stop your work.

Inclusive practice takes work, but with radical curiosity, courageous empathy, and thoughtful engagement, museums can make a tremendous difference in promoting a more equitable and just world.

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**Susie Wilkening** is principal of Wilkening Consulting and provides research leadership for the Annual Survey of Museum-Goers. With over 25 years of experience in museums, she has fielded groundbreaking national research on the role of museums in American society and is a go-to expert on museum research, quoted by *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Fast Company*, and NPR. Reach her at Susie@wilkeningconsulting.com. Find the full version of the 2021 publication *Audiences and Inclusion: A Primer for Cultivating More Inclusive Attitudes Among the Public* on the AAM website at aam-us.org/audiences.
Thank you!
You made AAM 2024 a success.

Over the course of our four days together in Baltimore in May, attendees from around the world were connecting, learning, and forging a brighter future for the museum field. You helped make the 2024 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo experience an unforgettable one.

Every year, the AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo is organized by the dedicated AAM staff, Content Advisory and Local Host Committees, and volunteers. The Annual Meeting wouldn’t be the meaningful, educational, and inspiring experience it is without them, all of our attendees, and our generous supporters.

Check out the AAM 2024 photo album (maybe you’ll find yourself in a photo!) and see what attendees are saying at: bit.ly/aam2024-recap

From all of us at AAM, thank you! We hope you save the date for May 6–9, 2025, when we reconvene in Los Angeles for the 2025 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo.

- Marilyn, Brooke, Megan, Grace, Elizabeth, Natanya, Dean, Cecelia, Joseph, Rachel, Sakina, Carys, Jennifer, Eileen, Michelle, Susan, Tiffany, Tiyara, Julie, Diya, Danyelle, Brianne, Martha, Carol, Amy, Vanessa, Barry, Alana, Joshua, Anthony, Carlos, Ryan, Shelon, Grace, Kristin, Kyle, and Ren
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More details will be available soon. Sign up for updates to ensure you don’t miss a thing! [bit.ly/aam2025-updates](bit.ly/aam2025-updates)
TRIBUTES AND TRANSITIONS

New Jobs

Anne Corso, Executive Director, James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, PA

Angelica J. Maier, Curator of 3D Objects, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul

David Snider, Director of Learning and Civic Engagement, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA

Caroline Jean Fernald, Executive Director, Harvard Museums of Science & Culture, Cambridge, MA

Kenyon Mayeda, Chief Impact Officer, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA

Lena Stringari, Chief of Conservation, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC

Elizabeth Kapp, Curator of History, Springfield Museums, MA

Gevelyn McCaskill, Chief Financial Officer, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA

José Ochoa, President and CEO, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, IL

WHAT’S YOUR CAREER NEWS?
Tell us your news at bit.ly/CareerNewsAAM.

Sage Lamade, Manager of Collections & Interpretation, Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum, New Bedford, MA

Jose Ochoa, President and CEO, National Museum of Mexican Art, Chicago, IL

Kris Ludwig, Curator of Art, Springfield Museums, MA

Jonathan Rohner, Chief Operating Officer, The Bruce Museum, Greenwich, CT

Kudos

The Morton Arboretum President and CEO Jill Koski is among 26 influential leaders selected by Leadership Greater Chicago (LGC) for the 2024 cohort of the Daniel Burnham Fellowship. The fellowship is renowned for gathering local visionary executives passionate about making a difference and driving positive change to help shape the future of Chicago’s workforce and economic landscape. This distinguished group of Chicago-area executives from corporate, nonprofit, city government, media, arts, and legal fields was selected by LGC. More than 120 high-impact leaders have been welcomed to the fellowship program since 2019, including former First Lady Michelle Obama. To learn more, visit bit.ly/48UYXsU.

Retirements

Carlos Tortolero, founder, President, and CEO of the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, retired on December 31, 2023, after more than 40 years of leadership. During his tenure, Tortolero directed the construction of the museum, with its four galleries and dedicated performing arts space; saw its permanent collection grow to 20,000 pieces; created the award-winning Yolocalli Youth Arts Reach program; and established and grew the museum’s endowment. Tortolero plans on enjoying his retirement by writing, consulting, and spending time with his 2-year-old grandson.

Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth Director Maria Price will retire after a tenure spanning three decades of visionary leadership. Dr. Price oversaw the Modern during a period of transformative growth, elevating the museum to international prominence. Under her leadership, the Modern opened its iconic building designed by Tadao Ando, expanded its permanent collection, and doubled attendance. All the while, she continued her scholarship, organizing major exhibitions on artists including Milton Avery, David Bates, Howard Hodgkin, and Sean Scully.
OUR LATEST RESOURCES FOR MUSEUM PROFESSIONALS

MUSEUM DIPLOMACY
How Cultural Institutions Shape Global Engagement
By Sarah E.K. Smith and Sascha Priewe

“Cultural diplomacy is rapidly becoming a hot topic. As we read of its permutations in this valuable book of essays on the subject, it is a book that will surely influence, even redirect the course of museum practice.” —William Underwood Eiland, former director, Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia

Museum Diplomacy features case studies from across the world that cover almost every aspect of museum work.

DIMENSIONS OF CURATION
Considering Competing Values for Intentional Exhibition Practices
By Ann Rowson Love and Pat Villeneuve

“A must-read publication for museum professionals and advocates, Dimensions of Curation offers a critical and dynamic approach to the assessment of curatorial practice. Villeneuve and Love demonstrate a unique understanding of the nuanced relationships that drive and govern cultural institutions.” —Keidra Daniels Navaroli, McKnight Doctoral Fellow, University of Central Florida

WELCOMING MUSEUM VISITORS WITH UNAPPARENT DISABILITIES
Edited by Beth Redmond-Jones

Welcoming Museum Visitors with Unapparent Disabilities explores how international cultural organizations (i.e. museums, aquariums, art centers) serve individuals with mental health and neurodiverse challenges. Opening chapters present the status of mental health in society and the need for inclusive design.

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OCTOBER 29-30, 2024

Connect with museum professionals around the world for the second Future of Museums Summit! With this Summit, we take the theoretical framework from our annual forecasting report, TrendsWatch, even further. Join this virtual convening to gain tactical strategies and takeaways to plan for a brighter future for you, your museum, and your community. Stay tuned for additional details and registration!

Sign up for updates at summit.aam-us.org to ensure you don’t miss a thing.