

If History is Hot, Why are Museum Admissions Declining?

Roundtable Panel Discussion moderated by Cheryl M. Hargrove (Hargrove International, Inc. based in Georgia) with Heather Hodges (The Historic New Orleans Collections), Elon Cook Lee (National Trust for Historic Preservation), George H. McDaniel (Middleton Place in South Carolina), Whitney Stewart (Coastal Georgia Historical Society)

Key Take Aways:

- Don't let the exhibit and programming marketing overshadow or push out general awareness marketing. Programming is an essential piece of your operational strategy, however people are less likely to come to programs if they don't know who you are.
- International tourism is down in the United States right now.
- "History is an active verb."
- Consider "Emphasizing discovery – method over content"
- Newsletters should include NEWS, not just announcements.

Inspired Action:

- Schedule a meeting with the CVB to gain a better understanding of WHO is visiting the area in large groups and WHY.
- Survey our current membership to inform future decision making and make them feel included in the institution.
- Research and define our "Drive Market" to assess how and what we can market to a larger audience. Similarly, we should explore profiling our virtual visitors and those who use our resources for research. These are potentially untapped markets.

Keynote Address by Don Wildman

Key Take Aways:

- The County Commissioner of Cincinnati made a few remarks ahead of the keynote presentation. She encouraged everyone in the room to go home and remind our own elected officials how vital the cultural economy is to our communities.
- Public historians bridge the gap between the public and academics.
- "Kids today see the world in 2-D through their screens. Public historians have the unique expertise to add dimension to their world views."

Inspired Action:

- Look more into National History Day and talk to our educators about the role this initiative could play in our local curriculum.
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Writing and Editing Excellent Museum Exhibition Label Copy

Presented by John Russick (Bronzeville Center for the Arts in Milwaukee) and Kris Nesbitt (Black Ensemble Theater in Chicago, formerly of the Shedd Aquarium)

Key Take Aways:

- Object labels should be no more than 100 words.
- When you're editing exhibit text, read it out loud. Your copy should flow and be accessible enough for intergenerational groups to read together.
- Everything in an exhibit should support the Big Idea.
- Big Idea = subject + action + consequence
- "Drop a word, gain a reader."
- Headlines should carry enough "umph" that even if someone only read the exhibit headlines they would understand the big idea.

Inspired Action:

- Organize the baseball script by headlines/sections and read it aloud as a part of the editing process.
 - Consider line length and how the typography fits together when designing labels.
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Values Matter: Building Shared Purpose in Chaotic

Facilitated by Andrea Jones (Peak Experience Lab based in Maryland), Ann Bennett (Howard County Historical Society in Maryland), Janna M. Bennett (Carnegie Museum of Montgomery County in Indiana), Erik Mason (Longmont Museum in California), Anne Miller (Newport News Parks and Recreation in Virginia)

Key Take Aways:

- Our values impact everything we do. Values are a way of being or believing that drives decision making and motivates action.
- There is a museum in Portland that believes this so fundamentally that they transformed their budget to be organized around their five institutional values.
- Values hold true no matter the context. That being said, new experiences can transform our values.

Inspired Action:

- Bring the provided activity to our next staff development day to gain an understanding of our individual values and begin to formulate institutional values.
 - Next time you become judgemental, pause to examine why that is and what it reveals about your own values.
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Hard Choices: Redefining Your Museum's Legacy Through Deaccessions

Katherine Gould (Cincinnati Museum Center), Amanda Bryden (Illinois State Museum), Kisha Tandy (Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites)

Key Take Aways:

- Patience, trust, collaboration, and time are essential to building long term partnerships.
- When deaccessioning, over communicate to establish trust – go to clubs and make presentations, send press releases, write articles for your newsletters etc.
- Emphasize what deaccessioning will open up for visitors and do to establish future stability.
- Deaccessioning is not a side project. You must plan ahead and create the time and space to do it properly.
- “Everything in a collections space costs money – even dormant objects just sitting there.”
- Keep an accurate and detailed list of everyone who rejected an item before it was slated for destruction.
- “A no today leaves room for a yes tomorrow.”

Inspired Action:

- Create more open lines of communication with Jackie to ensure that we have the time and space to properly deaccession in the future.
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FSA Tips: Real Talk About Burnout

Katherine Lowe (The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia), Tamara Hemmerlein (Indiana Historical Society), Katie Henry (Oregon Heritage Commission)

Key Take Aways:

- By their definition of burnout, I am burnt out and I think 90% of our staff is too. We are not alone in that though.
- Everyone in the room lamented about the difficulty of managing work you care about with your actual capacity for work. Some people suggest sound machines and essential oil diffusers, but other than that there weren't any concrete suggestions on how to prevent or remedy burn out.
- Fidget toys can help brain processing!

Inspired Action:

- Actively discuss ways we can reorganize our workflows to provide more space for rest and recovery, and to more equitably distribute the workload.
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Salaries, Demographics, and Perspectives of the Public History Workforce Room

Presented by John Marks (AASLH, based in Nashville)

Key Take Aways:

- AASLH conducted a survey of history practitioners earlier this year. They received 3,700 responses from all 50 states. This session provided a “sneak peak” at the survey results and provided space for group discussions to further AASLH’s understanding of what its membership would like done with the data.
- The history field is disproportionately staffed by women, yet, women are still less likely to hold leadership roles and make less than men do.
- Our staff salaries are in line with the general spread of this survey. Most history practitioners make between \$40,000 and \$80,000 per year.

Inspired Action:

- An early report of these findings will be shared later this fall. We should review the survey results during a staff meeting.
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PLENARY SESSION - Stronger Together: New Experiments from the Creative Economy in Cincinnati

Kareem A. Simpson (Taft Museum of Art), Aaron Deininger (Brewing Heritage Trail), Colleen Houston (Artworks), Leslie Mooney (BLINK), Alandes Powell (Black Art Speaks), Robert Alan Wight, Ph.D. (The Christ College of Nursing and Health Sciences, and author of “Cincinnati’s Foodshed: An Art Atlas”)

Key Take Aways:

- Cincinnati is a vibrant city because of the robust public and private partnerships (and large tax base).
- Within the metro area there are several arts organizations who receive adequate funding and are empowered to add public art throughout the city.
- The city’s 300+ murals make it a cultural destination.
- Murals are teaching tools!
- The city has seen a boost in resident happiness and economic growth since investing in partnerships with their local art agencies, such as ArtWorks and Black Art Speaks.
- Cincinnati raised over \$1 million with “The Big Pig Gig” inspired by Chicago’s Cows on Parade, and similar to Bloomington’s Corn on the Curb initiative.
- “Public history has porous edges” “Make space for interdisciplinary collaboration and to be responsive to the needs of your community.”

Inspired Action:

- Continue collaborating and advocating for more public art in Downtown Bloomington. It matters.

Partnerships Between Local Media and History Organizations for Greater Impact

Presented by Samantha Ragland (American Press Institute, based in Florida)

Key Take Aways:

- Local news organizations are fueling connection, conversation, and co-creation.
- Local history organizations can meaningfully engage with local media organizations beyond the press release by providing facts AND added value.
- Creating content driven partnerships is a win win for both organizations.
- Communicate your value through impact narratives.
- Create plug and play content for your media kits.
- Don't send press releases to news@_____ email addresses. Build relationships with specific journalists, people in content distribution positions, and editors to send your content to directly.

Inspired Action:

- Invite local journalists to the museum for a Media Day Open House.
- Check out Google Notebook LM, Tiny News Collective, URL Media Collective, coschedule.com, Lion News, and INN (Institute for NonProfit News).

Embracing Community Led Accessibility— A Partnership for All Roundtable

Gwen Elliott (Cincinnati Museum Center), and Vicki Lorenz (Cincinnati Association of Blind & Visually Impaired)

Key Take Aways:

- Expand accessibility beyond disability – this includes financial ability, physical ability, etc.
- People aren't handicapped, spaces are.
- Center people with the lived experience. Invite them into the space and be curious about what can be done to make them feel more included and more empowered to explore it on their own.
- Creating more accessible spaces happens one day at a time, step by step.

Inspired Action:

- Review the provided handout with key members of our staff to assess our current accessibility offerings.
- Create a specific accessibility web page and email address.
- Identify a "quiet zone in the museum" to create a safe space for breastfeeding mothers and people who might need a sensory break during their visit.
- Add free menstrual products to our bathrooms.
- Look into Bloomberg Connects for future translation projects.