



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD AGENDA
556 W MAPLE
Thursday, September 5, 2024
5:00 PM**

Mission Statement: *The Birmingham Museum will explore meaningful connections with our past, in order to enrich our community and enhance its character and sustainability. Our mission is to promote understanding of Birmingham's historical and cultural legacy through preservation and interpretation of its ongoing story.*

1. Call to Order & Welcome to New Member

2. Roll Call

3. Approval of the Minutes

Minutes of July 11, 2024

4. New Business

- Strategic Plan--Review and discuss:
 - AAM's *Museum Ethics and Standards*
 - *Museum Code of Ethics*
 - *Museums and Society*
 - *Museum Accountability*
 - *Building a More Human-Centered Future*
- B. Exhibit walk-through

5. Communication and Reports

- A. Director Report
- B. Member comments
- C. Public comments

6. Next Meeting: October 3, 2024

7. Adjournment

NOTICE: Individuals with disabilities requiring accommodations for effective participation in this meeting should contact the city clerk's office at (248) 530-1880 (voice), or (248) 644-3405 (TDD) at least one day in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance. *APPROVED MINUTES OF THE MUSEUM BOARD MEETINGS ARE AVAILABLE IN THE CITY CLERK'S OFFICE AND ON THE CITY WEBSITE AT www.bhamgov.org.* City of Birmingham, 151 Martin, Birmingham, MI 48009; 248.530.1800. Persons with disabilities that may require assistance for effective participation in this public meeting should contact the City Clerk's Office at the number (248) 530-1880, or (248) 644-5115 (for the hearing impaired) at least one day before the meeting to request help in mobility, visual, hearing, or other assistance.

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**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MEETING
556 W. Maple
Thursday, July 11, 2024
5:00 PM**

Members Present: Kristy Barrett (Alternate), Bev Erickson, Alexandra Harris,
Eva Kirkman (arrived at 5:04), Marty Logue
Members Absent: Pat Hughes, Judith Keefer
Administration: Museum Director Leslie Pielack

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 PM by Chairperson Logue.

Election of Chair

MOTION: by Harris, seconded by Erickson:

To nominate Marty Logue as Chair.

VOTE: Yeas, 4
Nays, 0

**Approval of the Minutes
Minutes of June 6, 2024**

MOTION: by Logue, seconded by Barrett:

To approve the minutes of June 6, 2024.

VOTE: Yeas, 4
Nays, 0

New Business

Members introduced themselves and welcomed Ms. Kirkman. The board discussed general approaches to the upcoming strategic planning process, which is set to begin in earnest at the September board meeting. Discussion included consideration of the appropriate scale of the museum's potential impact; the appropriate place of board, community, and staff values; the importance of structuring the survey process to gather meaningful input from the community, affinity groups and stakeholders; the consideration of collaboration in implementing the strategic plan, and the role the board may play in active fundraising. Ms. Kirkman has tools available through her non-profit work that may be of help in the strategic planning process relating to collaborative and fundraising goals and offered to make them available when the board takes up those issues in the months to come.

Communication and Reports

Director Pielack shared the final design and cost estimates from Nagy Devlin land designs for the first phase of the Pond landscape work (the area along Willits). The board

acknowledged their understanding that the design's recommended hybrid elms were in compliance with city tree policy. Some funding has already been received from a major donor to install trees, a bench, and a bike rack. The balance of the estimated costs would have to be covered by a combination of city funds in the museum's 24/25 budget and from other sources. Ms. Barrett asked if the City would be able to provide the trees from its ongoing tree-planting project, but Director Pielack clarified that this design is a separate initiative and the cost of the trees is not covered by the City. Ms. Erickson asked if it would be permissible to seek donations from landscaping contractors that provide services to the City. Director Pielack will look into this issue and report back for the September Museum Board meeting and will also review the items in the cost estimate and available funds in the museum's budget for this project and provide that information at the September meeting. She also clarified that the RFP process would not be possible until the fall at the earliest, with hoped-for installation in spring of 2025. She also pointed out that the CDBG-funded work for the pond area ADA pathway and boardwalk will also be in process at the same time but has separate funding that involves federal funds and matching City funds.

In lieu of a typical Director Report, Director Pielack distributed a copy of the current Around Town newsletter that includes a summary of the accomplishments of the museum in the last ten years. She also highlighted some key trends in museum work that resulted from her two week seminar in history leadership. Some of the key trends were touched upon in the strategic planning discussion, but were clarified further. These included the role of values in the implementation of museum programming and services; the increasingly collaborative nature of museum work; the integral connection of the museum to all people in a community, both past and present, and the possibilities of using the museum's efforts to achieve greater inclusion of all. Members especially appreciated the idea of 'humanizing history,' as it incorporates the goals and values of social equity and justice in a positive and proactive way. Director Pielack reiterated the museum's past and current emphasis on the importance of *people*, not *objects*, which is made explicit through the museum's mission statement. She also clarified that museum ethics and standards are distinct from the City's Ethics Ordinance, and that they are not in conflict with each other in application to the museum board and staff. Other current issues, such as generative AI, will be further addressed during the strategic planning process; however, Director Pielack mentioned that the City has developed a Gen AI policy for its employees that requires disclosure of the use of AI for any written reports or materials.

Member Comments

None.

Public Comments

None.

There will be no Museum Board meeting in August. The next Regular Meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 5, 2024, at 5:00 PM.

Ms. Logue adjourned the meeting at 6:20 PM.



**CITY OF BIRMINGHAM
MUSEUM BOARD MINUTES
556 W. Maple
Thursday, July 11, 2024
5:00 PM**

Supplement to July 11 Minutes

Text from email sent by Museum Director Pielack to the Museum Board on June 21, 2024 regarding Caroline Ashleigh's departure, with notice that it would be included in Museum Board materials for July 11, 2024 meeting and meeting minutes:

"Attached, please find the following:

- 1. Draft Museum Board minutes for 6/6/2024*
- 2. Document shared by member Jay Shell at that meeting regarding the departure of Caroline Ashleigh from the Museum Board*

To provide more complete information regarding Museum Board member Caroline Ashleigh's departure from the Museum Board, I would like to share the following facts, all of which are in the public record, for your consideration in the matter of Ms. Ashleigh's resignation from the board.

- In **December of 2023**, a class action lawsuit was entered into against the City of Birmingham with Ms. Ashleigh as lead plaintiff, regarding damage to personal property due to flooding. The lawsuit alleges that the City of Birmingham was responsible and parties in the lawsuit are seeking damages from the City.*
- In the **early weeks of January, 2024**, City Manager Ecker attempted to reach Ms. Ashleigh several times by phone and email to make arrangements to discuss her role in the lawsuit and her role on the Museum Board as a potential conflict; however the two did not connect. During this time Ms. Ashleigh was apparently out of town and not available.*
- On **March 15**, after failing to connect with Ms. Ashleigh by phone, City Manager Ecker sent a letter stating the City's position regarding a potential conflict of interest between Ms. Ashleigh's position on the Museum Board and her participation in a tort action against the City, citing the City's Ethics ordinance in that regard, and suggested that Ms. Ashleigh consider resigning her position on the Museum Board accordingly. In addition, Ms. Ecker informed Ms. Ashleigh that the City Commission may wish to take action to remove her through a public process that includes a public hearing (which would be set by the Commission, if they decided to take action, at their meeting on April 8, 2024), followed by a waiting period until May 6, 2024, when the City Commission may then consider whether to take action to remove her.*

Ms. Ashleigh was advised of her options to resign, or to continue in her MB role, but if she decided to continue, Ms. Ecker asked her to refrain from attending Museum Board meetings until the matter was decided.

- *On **March 26**, Ms. Ashleigh responded in writing to assert that she did not agree that there was a conflict of interest and that she wanted to continue on the Museum Board, and that she would like to request the public hearing for May 6, 2024.*
- *On **March 28**, City Attorney Mary Kucharek sent a letter to Ms. Ashleigh suggesting that an appropriate course of action for all concerned would be to appeal to the City of Birmingham's Ethics Board for their recommendation about the matter, and citing previous recommendations/findings from the Ethics Board in a similar case in the past. The Ethics Board is composed of Birmingham residents with legal background and expertise who review potential conflicts of interest regarding city officials and employees, and they make recommendations to the City Commission on matters that come to their board for review.*
- *On **April 8**, the City Commission considered the matter and decided to request that the Ethics Board review and make recommendations to the City Commission regarding Ms. Ashleigh's position on the Museum Board. The following excerpt from the Commission Meeting Minutes pertains to this action:*

"04-099-24 Museum Board Member Caroline Ashleigh (Item G)

Commissioner Long removed Item G from the consent agenda and recommended the Commission request an advisory opinion on the matter.

MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Long, seconded by tMPT Longe: To request an Advisory opinion from the Ethics Board to determine whether or not Ms. Ashleigh is creating an irreconcilable conflict of interest and unable to serve on a voluntary board when she is in the position of being a Plaintiff in a multi-Plaintiff cited lawsuit against the City and potentially acting in a position which is adverse and in conflict to the City's best interest.

*ROLL CALL VOTE: Ayes, Commissioner Baller tMPT Longe
Commissioner Haig Commissioner Host Mayor McLain Commissioner Long Nays, None" (p. 4)*

- *On **April 19, 2024**, Ms. Ashleigh personally delivered a letter to the Clerk's Office stating that she wished to resign her position. As a result, no Ethics Board review was scheduled. The City Commission duly noticed the public that there was an open position on the Museum Board.*
- *The resulting Museum Board opening was noted at the **May 2** meeting of the Museum Board.*

Please note that this information is being presented to you in response to Mr. Shell's statement to clarify that there is, in fact, a transparent public record that documents these events, which I would have been able to clarify had I been present at the June 6 Museum Board meeting. While this information is being provided to you in between Museum Board meetings as an "Information Only" communication, the full text of this information will be available at the Museum Board meeting, and will be incorporated into the Museum Board's minutes."

DRAFT



Ethics, Standards and Best Practices

As the national organization representing museums of all kinds, we bring together museum professionals in order to formulate voluntary ethical guidelines, standards and best practices that inform museum operations. The [Characteristics of Excellence for U.S. Museums](#) and [Code of Ethics for Museums](#) provide the foundation for museum excellence. They address “big picture” issues about how museums should operate and put forth broad outcomes that can be achieved in many different ways based on an institution’s discipline, type, budget, governance structure and other unique circumstances.

These standards are directly informed by the field. They are filtered through the dialogue, debate and data generated by our excellence programs, professional networks, conferences and seminars, national studies and relationships with other museum service organizations. We recognize the great diversity of the museum field and the importance of the ethical codes, standards and best practices developed and issued by various discipline/interest-specific museum associations. Taken together, they work in concert to ensure museums hold themselves accountable to their peers and their publics.

Importance

Ethics and standards help foster common vocabulary, expectations and assumptions. They foster informed decision-making, which contributes to an accountable and credible museum field. Adherence to mutually agreed-upon standards also enables museums to self-regulate, to a large extent, in a flexible and appropriate way that accommodates the huge diversity of our field, rather than have regulations imposed by lawmakers.

We encourage all museums to commit to these standards, best practices and ethical guidelines in order to fulfill their roles as essential educational and community institutions. This commitment to excellence is necessary to secure the support, trust and recognition we need to advance our goals with lawmakers, funders, other community groups and the general public.

Resources

Field-Wide [Ethics](#) and [Standards](#)

Read more about ethics and standards issued by the Alliance and other organizations.

National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museums

This guide is an essential reference work for the museum community, presenting the ideals that should be upheld by every museum striving to maintain excellence in its operations. This publication is available as a free PDF to all museum members.

[Standards Assessment and Recognition Programs](#)

Learn about programs that support, motivate and recognize your pursuit to uphold standards and best practices.

[Professional Resources](#)

Join the Alliance

Membership is the foundation for excellence and unites the field.

Take the Pledge

Demonstrate and communicate your commitment to standards and ethics.

National Standards & Best Practices for U.S. Museums



An essential reference work for the museum community, this publication is available as a free PDF to all museum members.

12/12/12

Museum Ethics Standards and Best Practices

Reference guides, articles and tools to help your museum understand and apply standards and best practices.

American Alliance of Museums

1575 Eye Street NW, Suite 400, Washington DC 20005

202-289-1818



Code of Ethics for Museums

Adopted 1991, amended 2000.

Please note that the Code of Ethics for Museums references the American Association of Museums (AAM), now called the American Alliance of Museums.

Ethical codes evolve in response to changing conditions, values and ideas. A professional code of ethics must, therefore, be periodically updated. It must also rest upon widely shared values. Although the operating environment of museums grows more complex each year, the root value for museums, the tie that connects all of us together despite our diversity, is the commitment to serving people, both present and future generations. This value guided the creation of and remains the most fundamental principle in the following Code of Ethics for Museums.

Code of Ethics for Museums

Museums make their unique contribution to the public by collecting, preserving and interpreting the things of this world. Historically, they have owned and used natural objects, living and nonliving, and all manner of human artifacts to advance knowledge and nourish the human spirit. Today, the range of their special interests reflects the scope of human vision. Their missions include collecting and preserving, as well as exhibiting and educating with materials not only owned but also borrowed and fabricated for these ends. Their numbers include both governmental and private museums of anthropology, art history and natural history, aquariums, arboreta, art centers, botanical gardens, children's museums, historic sites, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology centers, and zoos. The museum universe in the United States includes both collecting and non-collecting institutions. Although diverse in their missions, they have in common their nonprofit form of organization and a commitment of service to the public. Their collections and/or the objects they borrow or fabricate are the basis for research, exhibits, and programs that invite public participation.

Taken as a whole, museum collections and exhibition materials represent the world's natural and cultural common wealth. As stewards of that wealth, museums are compelled to advance an understanding of all natural forms and of the human experience. It is incumbent on museums to be resources for humankind and in all their activities to foster an informed appreciation of the rich and diverse world we have inherited. It is also incumbent upon them to preserve that inheritance for posterity.

Museums in the United States are grounded in the tradition of public service. They are organized as public trusts, holding their collections and information as a benefit for those they were established to serve. Members of their governing authority, employees and volunteers are committed to the interests of these beneficiaries. The law provides the basic framework for museum operations. As nonprofit institutions, museums comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws and international conventions, as well as with the specific legal standards governing trust responsibilities. This Code of Ethics for Museums takes that compliance as given. But legal standards are a minimum. Museums and those responsible for them must do more than avoid legal liability, they must take affirmative steps to maintain their integrity so as to warrant public confidence. They must act not only legally but also ethically. This Code of Ethics for Museums, therefore, outlines ethical standards that frequently exceed legal minimums.

Loyalty to the mission of the museum and to the public it serves is the essence of museum

Join the Alliance

Membership is the foundation for excellence and unites the field.

Professional Resources

Reference guides, articles and tools to help you and your museum succeed.

work, whether volunteer or paid. Where conflicts of interest arise—actual, potential or perceived—the duty of loyalty must never be compromised. No individual may use his or her position in a museum for personal gain or to benefit another at the expense of the museum, its mission, its reputation and the society it serves.

For museums, public service is paramount. To affirm that ethic and to elaborate its application to their governance, collections and programs, the American Association of Museums promulgates this Code of Ethics for Museums. In subscribing to this code, museums assume responsibility for the actions of members of their governing authority, employees and volunteers in the performance of museum-related duties. Museums, thereby, affirm their chartered purpose, ensure the prudent application of their resources, enhance their effectiveness and maintain public confidence. This collective endeavor strengthens museum work and the contributions of museums to society—present and future.

Governance

Museum governance in its various forms is a public trust responsible for the institution's service to society. The governing authority protects and enhances the museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources. It ensures that all these resources support the museum's mission, respond to the pluralism of society and respect the diversity of the natural and cultural common wealth.

Thus, the governing authority ensures that:

- all those who work for or on behalf of a museum understand and support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- its members understand and fulfill their trusteeship and act corporately, not as individuals
- the museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources are protected, maintained and developed in support of the museum's mission
- it is responsive to and represents the interests of society
- it maintains the relationship with staff in which shared roles are recognized and separate responsibilities respected
- working relationships among trustees, employees and volunteers are based on equity and mutual respect
- professional standards and practices inform and guide museum operations
- policies are articulated and prudent oversight is practiced
- governance promotes the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Collections

The distinctive character of museum ethics derives from the ownership, care and use of objects, specimens, and living collections representing the world's natural and cultural common wealth. This stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation, accessibility and responsible disposal.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- collections in its custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for and preserved
- collections in its custody are accounted for and documented
- access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials
- acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities
- disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of nonliving collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or

direct care of collections.

- the unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections
- collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain
- competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsively and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

Programs

Museums serve society by advancing an understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural common wealth through exhibitions, research, scholarship, publications and educational activities. These programs further the museum's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of society.

Thus, the museum ensures that:

- programs support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- programs are founded on scholarship and marked by intellectual integrity
- programs are accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with its mission and resources
- programs respect pluralistic values, traditions and concerns
- revenue-producing activities and activities that involve relationships with external entities are compatible with the museum's mission and support its public trust responsibilities
- programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Promulgation

This Code of Ethics for Museums was adopted by the Board of Directors of the American Association of Museums on November 12, 1993. The AAM Board of Directors recommends that each nonprofit museum member of the American Association of Museums adopt and promulgate its separate code of ethics, applying the Code of Ethics for Museums to its own institutional setting.

A Committee on Ethics, nominated by the president of the AAM and confirmed by the Board of Directors, will be charged with two responsibilities:

- establishing programs of information, education and assistance to guide museums in developing their own codes of ethics
- reviewing the Code of Ethics for Museums and periodically recommending refinements and revisions to the Board of Directors.

Afterword

Each nonprofit museum member of the American Association of Museums should subscribe to the AAM Code of Ethics for Museums. Subsequently, these museums should set about framing their own institutional codes of ethics, which should be in conformance with the AAM code and should expand on it through the elaboration of specific practices. This recommendation is made to these member institutions in the belief that engaging the governing authority, staff and volunteers in applying the AAM code to institutional settings will stimulate the development and maintenance of sound policies and procedures necessary to understanding and ensuring ethical behavior by institutions and by all who work for them or on their behalf.

The Code of Ethics for Museums serves the interests of museums, their constituencies, and society. The primary goal of AAM is to encourage institutions to regulate the ethical behavior of members of their governing authority, employees and volunteers. Formal adoption of an institutional code promotes higher and more consistent ethical standards.

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an initiative of the
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

MUSEUMS & SOCIETY 2034: TRENDS AND POTENTIAL FUTURES

VERSION 1.0
DECEMBER 2008

“The goal of forecasting is not to predict the future but to tell you what you need to know to take meaningful action in the present.”

— Paul Saffo, futurist

Oracle bones, Ouija boards, Tarot, crystal balls, tea leaves, Magic 8-Balls—humanity has always been obsessed with predicting the future. The unknown scares the pants off us, as well it might! Knowledge is power, and knowing what is coming around the corner would be immensely reassuring. Unfortunately, that isn't going happen. And predicting the future is not, in fact, the goal of futurism. We can't determine what will happen, but we can take a thoughtful look at what might happen, and the attendant consequences. This awareness of potential futures enables us to choose which future we most want to live in, and figure out how to bring it into being. The American Association of Museums has established the Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) to help with that task.

CFM commissioned a trends paper by Reach Advisors to kick off this discussion. The condensed version presented here introduces the major themes that will be explored in more depth in a white paper to be released in 2009. We asked Reach Advisors to be edgy and provocative, and they have obliged. Sure, we hope that things will turn out fine without our active intervention, but do you really want to take that chance? Complacency breeds complacency, and thinking about potentially dark futures is a very effective

motivator. Our hope is that this paper stimulates lively discussion, and we look forward to incorporating your input both into the forecasting and into exploring how museums might respond. Working together we can help create a healthy, stable society in which every person has the leisure and ability to enjoy what museums have to offer.



Elizabeth Merritt
Founding Director

Center for the Future of Museums

The Center for the Future of Museums (CFM) helps museums explore the cultural, political and economic challenges facing society and devise strategies to shape a better tomorrow. CFM is a think-tank and research and design lab for fostering creativity and helping museums transcend traditional boundaries to serve society in new ways. CFM is an initiative of the American Association of Museums.

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Museums are often viewed as conservators of the past, but some have always been in the business of the future—even going so far as to enshrine it in their mission statements.

But what will the future look like? How much can we really anticipate about the world of 2034?

To address those questions, Reach Advisors pored over nearly a thousand articles, data sets, interviews and discussion forums to identify the trends that are most likely to change U.S. society and museums during the next 25 years. Our quarry was the emerging structural changes that are highly likely to reshape society and highly likely to affect museums.

Of course, there will be other trends that impact the future of museums. But some of these trends might not be apparent yet; others may have a huge impact on some museums but not a broad cross-section of the field; others might have profound impacts on museums if they come to pass, but the likelihood of that happening is low. This report focuses on demographic trends, changes in the geopolitical and economic landscape, shifts in technology and communications, and the rise of new cultural expectations.

To assess how each of these trends might shape the future, we start by stepping back 25 years to 1984, to identify some of the emerging structural shifts that shape what we see today. With the full benefit of hindsight, it becomes clearer which of today's emerging trends are most likely to shape the world of 2034.

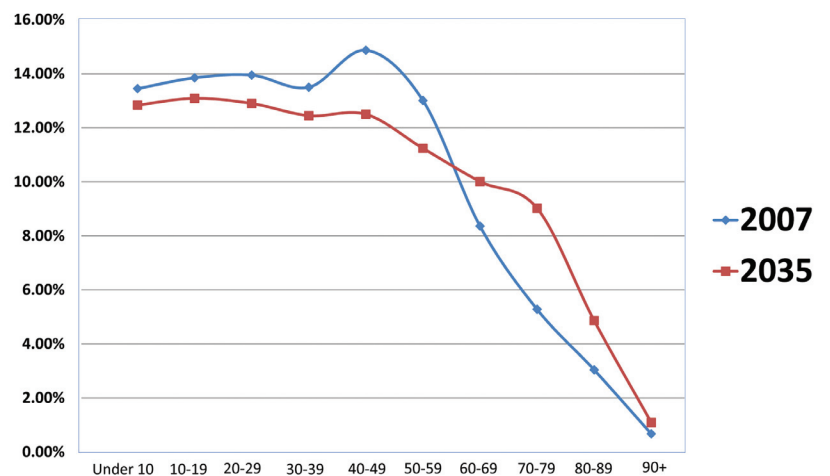
I. THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICA

In 1984, signs of dramatic demographic and socioeconomic shifts in American society were already apparent. For the first three-quarters of the 20th century, minorities constituted 10–13% of the American population. By the early 1980s, thanks to changes in immigration laws and enforcement policies, the minority population had climbed to 20%. (Today, minorities represent 34% of the population.) At about the same time, the youngest of the Baby Boomers reached adulthood and participation rates in postsecondary education rose sharply. Each of these demographic trends will continue to shape American society by 2034.

an aging population

As the Baby Boomers age, their sheer numbers tell a story of future change in U.S. society. Today, 1 in 8 Americans are older than 65. In 2034, the ratio will jump to 1 in 5. This is a generation that has reshaped lifestyles and the U.S. consumer landscape at every stage of life. The upcoming stage will be no exception.

What this means for society: A 50% jump in the post-retirement population will require greater focus on healthcare and other services for the aging and a subsequent strain on the existing services. How will the government pay for unfunded entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare? Already, those unfunded commitments exceed the national debt, with more pressure to come on everything else that depends on federal funding. Another big unknown is how the Baby Boomers will spend their time in the traditional



Age profile of the American population, 2007 and 2035 (U.S. Census Bureau).

post-retirement years. Surveys consistently show that Boomers are far more interested than their parents in continuing some form of work after retirement—and many will do so out of necessity.

What this means for museums: How will the Baby Boom engage with museums in retirement? Can museums position themselves as employers of choice for post-career bridge jobs? Perhaps one of the most important things to consider is how museums can reinvent the role of the post-retirement volunteer, simply because this is a generation that has rarely followed in lock-step with the preceding generations. (Actually, it rebelled against them.) The Boomers constitute a large talent pool working its way towards the golden years of volunteerism, at least among those who can afford to do that.

In 2034: Exhibit labels have bigger print and museums are easier to navigate with a walker or wheelchair. Universal design is a given in even the smallest museums. Museums are at the forefront of the “brain exercise” movement, helping to maintain the cognitive powers of an older population. Museums play an important role in addressing the increased demand for all services for the aging and are an increasingly desired partner for existing senior service organizations, which are under pressure to serve a larger and more active senior population. And just as 2008 witnessed a presidential campaign that reinvented civic involvement for a new generation of young adults, museums will take the lead in reshaping civic involvement for a new generation of aging citizens.

Looking ahead a quarter century, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will reach the 400 million mark, up from 300 million today. While the population will grow at a healthy clip, the growth rate of the Caucasian population is projected to grow only 4% by 2034—not 4% annually, but 4% in total. Virtually zero growth.

Instead, almost all of America’s population growth will come from minority populations. By 2034, minorities are likely to comprise just under half of the population. Four states in America have already become majority minority, with five more states projected to reach that level in the next decade.

Among America’s children, the majority will be minority within 15 years. After analyzing survey responses from 30,000 core museum visitors, Reach Advisors has identified a group that we call “Museum Advocates.” Museums are not just places that they visit on occasion, but are especially important places in their lives where they truly enjoy spending their leisure time. And what distinguishes Museum Advocates from other people? Nearly all have a distinct memory of a specific, seminal museum experience, usually between the ages of 5 and 9. The number of Caucasian 7-year-olds is projected to decline by 4% over the next 25 years. The number of blacks of the same age is projected to increase by 5%, Asians by 49%, mixed race children by 72% and Hispanics by 73%.



Changing composition of America (U.S. Census Bureau/Reach Advisors).

multi-ethnic america

One of the most striking changes in the composition of America since 1984 has been the dramatic expansion of the minority population. For most of the prior century, just 1 in 10 Americans was a minority, accelerating rapidly to 1 in 5 Americans in the early 1980s to 1 in 3 Americans today.

What this means for society: The obvious answer is that America will look very different in 2034 than it does today. Communities will need new and better ways to promote integration and develop understanding across cultures. For many parts of the country, this is more than a mere “cultural sensitivity” issue—it is socially and economically vital to sustain healthy communities given the dramatic shift in racial composition. What else does this mean? Just as 2008 saw a major expansion

of African-Americans in political power, by 2034 the U.S. Congress and other elected bodies across much of the country will be much more Hispanic.

What this means for museums: The fundamental challenge is that while the population is already one-third minority, heading towards majority minority, today only 9% of the core visitors to museums are minorities and approximately 20% of museum employees are minorities. If museums want to remain relevant to their communities, the museum audience will have to look dramatically different as well, particularly in the western and southern U.S. and in most of the larger cities across the country. If 5 to 9 is the critical age for converting children into lifelong museum-goers and advocates, how can museums attract minority children in this age range whose support they want in 2034? And are museums cultivating relationships with minorities serving as community organizers, political staffers, on local school boards (now a targeted entry point by some of the more savvy Hispanic political organizations)? It's a safe bet that a number of those individuals will be voting on local, state and federal museum funding 25 years from now.

In 2034: More museums will be places of cultural exchange in their communities; they won't have any other choice. Museums will be primary sites for civic dialogues about community interests and the policies that affect communities. They will be one of the most powerful agents in helping *all* children understand the future and ensuring they are prepared to take leadership roles in various sectors.

a new gender gap

Circa 1984, 55% of girls who completed high school enrolled in college. Today, almost 70% who complete high school enroll in college. Over that time, the trajectory of educational attainment

has remained relatively stable for men while arcing higher for women. As a result, women now outnumber men on most college campuses by a 60:40 ratio. The most stunning change is in the attainment of professional and doctoral degrees. When looking at the current holders of those degrees, men outnumber women by a 2:1 ratio. But the majority of those now graduating with professional and doctoral degrees are women.

When it comes to income, the old gender gap persists. As of 2007, women who work full time earn only 79% of their male counterparts, but this gap is closing rapidly for well-educated women. For example, the number of women earning over \$50,000 more than their spouses has doubled in the past ten years, and in most major U.S. metropolitan areas that draw an influx of college-educated employees, women in their 20s now earn 100% to 120% of what men of the same age earn.

We see no signs of this trend letting up over the next decade or two. Current national test scores show girls starting to pull away from boys academically as early as the fourth grade, starting down a long-term path towards higher educational attainment.

What this means for society: One implication of this ongoing shift is that the average age at which women marry and have children will likely continue to increase, at least among the women who earn college degrees. If that trend continues—carrying the next generation of mothers even further into careers where they are likely to outearn their male partners—then we also anticipate a dramatic shift in gender role expectations. This may prove to be one of the biggest social challenges in America over the next 25 years as this generation of women moves through college into the workforce and family life.

What this means for museums: Given that museums traditionally attract college-educated audiences, the impact of this change may be felt in a number of ways. When women hold the lead in educational attainment, will they constitute the majority of visitors? In many cities across the country, the mothers visiting with young children will be even more likely to be in their 30s and 40s, rather than their 20s—how will this affect museum programming? With more couples working full time and splitting childcare duties, who will have the time and inclination to become museum volunteers?

In 2034: Museums have developed many new strategies to attract both men and women as visitors. With educational attainment becoming a more visible tool of social mobility than ever, museums provide more opportunities than ever for girls (and boys) from less-educated families to gain exposure to topics that drive academic interest and carry them to college. As the percentage of two-income parents continues to increase, museums meet the demand for a more robust network of community support for the young children of mid-career parents. With more women serving as primary breadwinners, museums provide convenient, welcoming venues where families have rich experiences during their increasingly scarce time together. As important players in the formal and informal education system, museums work hard to meet the rising expectations that highly educated moms have for their children.

II. A SMALLER, FLATTER WORLD

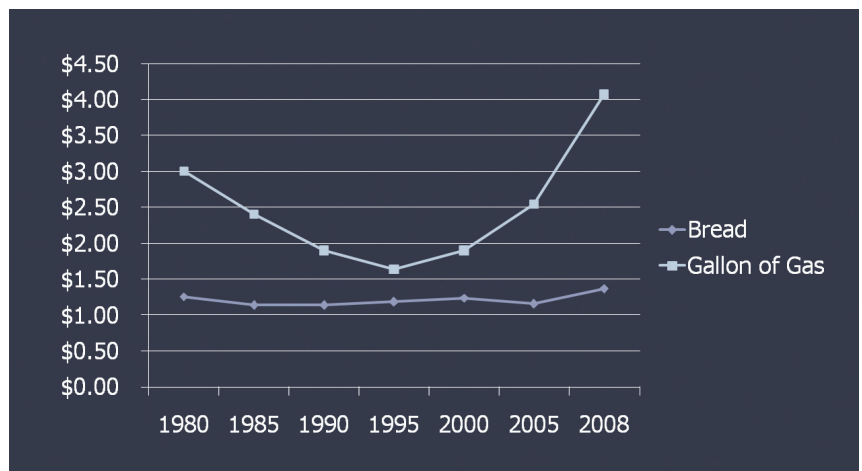


Major economic and geopolitical trends that shape the world we live in today were already evident in 1984. The United States was slowly recovering from the OPEC embargo that forced us to confront the limitations of dependence on foreign oil. It took the better part of a decade but, as a result, automotive fuel efficiency started to increase with the introduction of more fuel-efficient cars (e.g., the Ford Escort became the best-selling car in the country)—at least until fuel prices stabilized again. In related shifts, the U.S. economy experienced a period of rapid globalization and American wealth became more concentrated in the hands of its richest citizens and foreign investors.

As we look forward to 2034, these structural shifts provide clues for how the future is likely to play out in the next 25 years. Let's start with one trend that dominated most Americans' thoughts during the summer of 2008.

energy price volatility

As gasoline prices began stabilizing in the 1980s, the demand for fuel conservation eased. Sales of fuel-efficient vehicles in America were flat; the memory of the oil shocks faded, and Americans increased their consumption of larger trucks and SUVs. In the current decade, oil prices have destabilized again compared to such other staples as bread.



Bread vs. Gas (in today's dollars).

Worldwide oil consumption is projected to increase by 34% over the next 25 years. How will we plug that gap? Domestic oil production is only a small part of the answer: The largest known reserve in America, the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge, according to best-case projections can produce a total 21 billion barrels of crude oil, the equivalent of just one year of domestic consumption.

What will a gallon of gas cost in 2034? Our projection is based on conservative assumptions (i.e., a stabilized pricing environment rather than the peak prices from the summer of 2008). Extrapolating from a 25-year period of relative price stability when gas prices rose at about the same rate as the historical inflation rate, gasoline could cost \$4.91 per gallon in 2034. But if we extrapolate the price increases from just the last five years, when gas price increases far outstripped the inflation rate, then gas could cost \$25.47 per gallon in 2034. At either price, we can safely assume that consumer behaviors would change significantly.

PRICE OF GASOLINE IN 25 YEARS?

Price increase trajectory:	Avg. annual increase:	Price/gallon in 2034
Using the past 25-year price trajectory (relatively stable pricing between 11/83–11/08)	2.8%	\$4.91
Using the past 5-year price trajectory (reflects increased volatility between 11/03–11/08)	9.8%	\$25.47

What this means for society: If we reduce oil consumption significantly or see production increase dramatically, gas price increases may parallel the rate of inflation, in which case, the impact over the long term is not major. It is far more likely, however, that the volatility of the past five years will prevail, and energy costs will play a major role in how the future plays out. This will demand dramatic changes in all aspects of society, including the technology of energy production and distribution, transportation, distribution of the population between suburban and urban areas, work-at-home policies and architectural design.

What this means for museums: Volatile energy prices will have a major effect on museum operating budgets, heightening the tension between conservation and historic preservation standards and energy use. It could play a larger role in decisions about museum expansion. It will also have a major effect on consumer behavior:

- Two-thirds of car travel is currently discretionary. As energy costs rise, travel costs will become an ever more important factor in Americans' decisions about how to spend their leisure time and dollars. This effect may be buffered for local museums that are plugged into their communities. "Life list" museums that are distant but major tourist attractions will face challenges with increased gasoline prices, but not fatally as they continue to offer greater value to balance the higher costs of reaching them. Museums that require significant gasoline consumption and are not major tourist destinations will face enormous pressure.
- Home prices and sales volume in the outer suburbs and exurbs has turned down much more sharply than in close-in suburbs and urban areas, and that trend is likely to continue if gasoline prices continue to rise. Overexpansion of new housing supply in those areas created dramatic oversupply that will take the next decade to absorb, and as those prices continue to drop, they will become increasingly attractive to the growing minority population. Museums in these outer suburb and exurban locations will often find that their almost uniformly Caucasian community has turned significantly minority, due in part to confluence of the home construction bubble and the aftermath of fuel price increases.

In 2034: Museums will educate the public on how past societies coped and adapted to tectonic shifts in their resources. They will help society learn from history as we cope with a new era of more expensive energy, lower consumption, carbon constraint and climate change. Museums have uniformly adopted green design as a mark of excellence, leading by example and integrating green practices into operations. Some museums operate joint storage facilities designed to minimize energy costs while providing appropriate climate control. More museums establish satellite locations to serve outlying communities, reducing their audiences' need to travel.

the threat of recession

The current recession might prove to be a blip that doesn't impact our world in 2034—most recessions tend to run far shorter courses. But could this time be different?

As we trace back the steps leading to the current crisis, we find relaxed credit standards ... leading to overheated real estate and stock markets ... leading to increased consumer spending and debt growth ... leading to a collapse of a bubble ... leading to trillions of dollars of assets lost ... leading to a slowdown in consumer and corporate spending ... dragging the country into recession ... followed by the government subsidizing failing banks and industries.

Did we just describe America in the fall of 2008? Actually, this same scenario played out in Japan in 1989, followed by a deflationary economy that lasted the entire decade of the 1990s. The Nikkei stock index finally bottomed out in 2003. That recession was not a short-term cycle—it had decades-long impact.

What this means for society: Any recession creates some dislocation, but a Japan-scenario recession would be particularly painful for the

United States. In Japan, the prolonged recession drove fundamental restructuring of traditional employment and career expectations and resulted in a significant increase in the poverty rate. A recession extending a decade or more might have even greater social impact in America as the nation's largest generation of adults approaches retirement. More than half of Baby Boomers will retire without the benefit of a pension and hence are more vulnerable to the effects of a long-term downturn on their retirement savings.

What this means for museums: A recession extending well beyond a decade would turn everything upside down. Admissions revenue would be at risk if museums aren't able to provide greater value amidst declining household budgets. Donations, pledges, endowments and government support would be in jeopardy as well. School field trips are already being eliminated in states hit hard by the current fiscal crisis, and this could become the norm rather than a temporary round of budget cutting.

In 2034: Museums are stable oases in the midst of turmoil. Building on their tradition of offering low-cost or free access and programming, museums play an even greater role in sustaining the well-being of their communities during a prolonged downturn. Whether for the retiree managing a lower post-retirement income than anticipated, or for schools with fewer enrichment opportunities for their students, museums are there for their communities—even in periods when financial support from the community wanes.

it's a small world after all

In 1984, the United States was in the midst of transformational change. At the start of the 1980s, the global market was disproportionately U.S. dominated. But the U.S. trade imbalance quickly grew five-fold, driven primarily by an exchange

rate imbalance that fueled a rapid increase in Japanese auto imports and consumer preference for Japanese electronics. Today, the U.S. trade imbalance is six times higher than in 1984, and the U.S. is just one of many players in the global economy. We are now seeing a dramatic increase in the prominence of oil-producing countries and the growing economic powers of Brazil, Russia, India, China (the BRIC nations). Looking forward 25 years, it is clear that the OPEC and BRIC nations will play an even greater role in our lives here in the United States.

What this means for society: As the U.S. trade deficit continues to grow and other countries expand their presence in the American economy, more high-wage jobs will flow out of the country. As the dollars earned by foreign entities are reinvested in the U.S., more of the nation's most prominent assets and companies end up with foreign owners (e.g., the IBM PC division is now owned by the Chinese firm Lenovo, while the Abu Dhabi sovereign wealth fund holds significant U.S. assets ranging from the Chrysler Building to AMD's computer chip fabrication division). As wealth continues to increase in oil-producing and BRIC nations, 43% of the national debt is now held by foreign investors and governments. While the global economy is not necessarily bad for the United States, an increasing percentage of profits will continue to flow overseas.

What this means for museums: As a result of these ongoing trends, the increasing pace of globalization could continue to erode the current base of corporate philanthropic support. At the same time, larger museums will see the opportunities to ride the tide by going global themselves, opening more outposts in rapidly developing countries with an appetite for museums. The increase of wealth abroad (and among émigrés) may create new sources of funding for exhibits and programs about cultures growing in global prominence.

In 2034: Museums play an important role in helping communities with job losses reinvent themselves in the new knowledge-based economy. Responding to society's need for greater global awareness, museums increase their efforts to promote dialog and understanding about other cultures and our place in the global economy. Some museums serve as ambassadors to the rest of the world not just through overseas outposts but through traveling exhibits and more directed Web presence, helping interpreting U.S. culture to countries of growing influence.

the growing divide

Wealth has never been distributed evenly in the United States but rarely as unevenly as today: The top 5% of households generate a third of all earned income in the United States and the top 0.5% (roughly 500,000 American households) generate 14% of earned income. These are the highest ratios of income concentration since 1929, another auspicious year in American economic history.

The current concentration of wealth may be fundamentally unsustainable. Or it may simply reflect that well-educated people with a global outlook have significantly more ways to generate large incomes than those with less education and a more parochial perspective. And this is unlikely to change by 2034. Either way, the distribution of wealth in the U.S. will have an impact on museums.

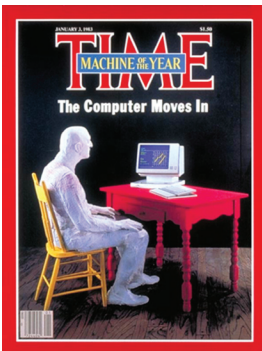
What this means for society: The political effects of an economic divide are a wild card in any speculation about the future. During the past decade, the mean income in America has increased but the median income has declined; in other words, almost all the growth in American income occurred on the highest end of the spectrum. If this trend continues, some Americans will have much more wealth but most will have relatively less. But if the concentration of wealth reverses, it might lead to an erosion of the base of philanthropic support

for nonprofits, undermining the independent sector that currently performs so many vital functions. Extreme polarization of wealth may destabilize society and erode the civic process.

What this means for museums: A growing segment of society with relatively less money could result in fewer discretionary purchases like museum admissions, reinforcing the perception that museums exist only to serve the elite. Concentration of wealth also affects the potential size of the donor base. The recent wave of museum expansion was funded, in large part, by the accumulation of wealth among the highest earners rather than an increase in the number of wealthy Americans. In the wake of the recent economic crisis, many nonprofits are already concerned about their ability to collect on pledged donations. When Japan suffered a long-duration economic downturn in the 1980s, it led to a dissipation of corporate and individual support for the arts. Will the same happen in the United States? Museums may have to reconsider their funding models either way, relying more on donations from the economic elite if wealth continues to concentrate or on earned income and a wide base of donor support if the concentration of wealth reverses.

In 2034: Museums are among the few institutions that bring together people of all economic classes. They are increasingly valued for their ability to redistribute wealth in the form of access to scientific, cultural and artistic resources, mitigating the culture gap that arises from income disparities. Museums promote global education for the nation's children and global perspectives for all Americans. In the process, museums literally enrich America, because income is correlated with education and the ability to profit from economic globalization.

III. PERMANENT REVOLUTION IN COMMUNICATIONS



1982



2006



2034

By 1984, the first signs of a technological revolution were already evident with structural changes that continue to shape how we communicate and engage with others and will still shape our interactions in 2034. Traditionally, newspapers were the glue of most local communities but the total circulation for daily newspapers reached its peak in 1984 and started down the path of permanent decline. In part due to the rise of cable television, viewership for the three major television networks also started its descent. A wider range of entertainment and information options meant that fewer families were starting the morning with the newspaper and ending the evening by watching the same television programs. As a result, the common knowledge of Americans became much less universal and much more fragmented.

Household Penetration	Jan 1980	Dec 1984
Big 3 network audience	91%	80%
Number of TV channels	4	17
Cable TV	17%	40%

As traditional mass communications shifted, a new form of information management emerged, and America entered the golden quarter-century of personal computing. In 1981, IBM introduced the PC and hired Microsoft to develop the operating system. In 1982, two software companies released the first mainstream personal productive applications, the word processor (WordPerfect)

and the spreadsheet (Lotus 1-2-3). In 1983, the Department of Defense opened up broader access to the ARPANET, a distributed computing network designed to survive nuclear attack, and this network of a few hundred connected computers would eventually become known as the Internet.

Just over 25 years ago, *TIME* magazine named the PC as “person” of the year, marking the start of a truly seismic shift in how we work, play and interact with the world. We can’t provide a crystal ball regarding technological advances 25 years from now, but there’s one area in which we can see the seeds of change. Most of us reading this report learned to use technology as a productivity tool and continue to accept new technology as it marches forward. But as we examine the generation of young adults that grew up knowing nothing other than a connected world, we see major structural shifts underway that will reshape the expectations and behaviors of the American adult population in 2034.

digital = practically free

The trend of near-zero variable cost for storage and distribution has bypassed some museums, many of which continually race to catch up with technology. But this trend has already enabled companies such as Google and YouTube to emerge as dominant repositories for digital assets. As a result, we have witnessed a dramatic structural shift in the expectations of the public (particularly among young adults), which now expects anything that can be digitized to be digital—and usually free.

What this means for society: While these expectations are not quite as extreme for older audiences, they are inevitable for younger audiences simply because they have come to expect it from every single entity that they encounter. And that expectation has toppled industries and economic models in many information and entertainment fields from record labels, rock bands, telephone companies, Yellow Pages publishers, classified ads, stock brokerages and travel agencies. It's unlikely that the progression will stop.

What this means for museums: It is highly probable that this structural shift will change expectations for museum engagement as well.

- Already, Google, YouTube and Flickr have established themselves as museums of the digital world and are actively trying to redefine the idea of curating content. Who knows what emerging entities (Web 3.0? Web 10.0?) will encroach even further on the traditional (and future) functions of museums?
- According to research by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, 43% of museum visits in 2006 were remote, predominately via museum websites. This percentage is likely to rise, and the content of remote visits to museums will continue to shift from basic information gathering to more complicated forms of engagement.
- Museums and exhibit planners already confront questions about whether some aspects of the museum experience should be delivered entirely in digital format, if only to reach different audiences. These questions will not go away. Digitizing collections and other assets is a relatively simple challenge compared to what's ahead. While it is hard to predict the likelihood and impact of technical breakthroughs, our

interviews with technology visionaries point to advances in processing power and virtual rendering that will push us to view and engage with representations in entirely different ways.

In 2034: Museums confront many decisions about the collection, presentation and preservation of new forms of virtual objects. Meanwhile, as the world continues to go digital (and progressively virtual)—and as the cost of storage, distribution and processing power continues to plummet—people find themselves further divorced from the real. Yet the fundamental human condition responds to a variant of Newton's Third Law of Motion: The prevalence of the digital, virtual world raises public awareness of the increasingly rare world of non-digital assets that help tell the story of how humans got where we are. Museums play a more critical role than ever as purveyors of the authentic, addressing a human desire for the real as the wonders of technology march us towards the opposite path.

fragmented consumption and distribution of digital information



With the advance of technology across the media landscape, Americans today consume a personalized entertainment diet. Long gone are the

days when the entire country shared a collective conversation about slavery while watching Alex Haley's mini-series *Roots* on ABC. Under more pressure than even the television networks, newspapers have become an endangered species as the Internet ether continues to seep into the air we breathe. Profound structural shifts can be seen in a little-noticed Facebook byproduct. In Facebook's quest to serve as the operating system for a new generation, it has created a tool that generates the first truly personalized newspaper, with almost perfect editorial decisions, edited by a cloud of the members' peers and personal affiliations. Most people under 25 have never learned to pick up a daily newspaper, but consumer surveys by Reach Advisors show that members of this generation still feel pretty well informed.

What this means for society: The role of the expert that has existed for decades or centuries is quickly eroding and has been supplanted in many fields: sometimes by a network of peers (Facebook news instead of newspaper editors), sometimes by the digital masses (Yelp instead of the published Zagat guide), sometimes by a new set of collective experts (Wikipedia instead of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*). This trend has led to an explosion of accessible information; in its own way, it has even expanded civic engagement. But it has diminished the role and responsibility of prior generations of experts (Walter Cronkite, Bob Woodward, Alex Haley) who used to help shape the collective experience of Americans. It becomes increasingly difficult for average users to assess the credibility of information accessed via the Web. Due to self-selection of sources of information and social networks, people rarely engage with those who hold opposing views. This further polarizes society and makes it more difficult to achieve political consensus regarding crucial policies.

What this means for museums: The effects of this structural shift are already emerging, even in some of the most expert-driven areas like medicine. The decline of the expert is already being played out in museums as well with multiple challenges to the authority of the curator. Will curators become irrelevant, like many of the other public expert roles? Or can museums rethink how they curate and interpret their collections, how they make those collections more accessible and how they involve diverse audiences in the meaningful work of museums?

In 2034: The collective experience is more fragmented than ever. But museums provide common experiences for diverse audiences, serving as safe public spaces for civic dialogue. As one of the most trusted sources of information, museums help people navigate the vast new world of information by filtering and validating credible content.

IV. myCULTURE

a creative renaissance

Along with increased computing power and the decreasing costs of technology came the advent of the personal computer as a recording or animation studio, movie-editing suite and publishing house. That was just the beginning. With increased digital connectivity came the advent of much more effective town squares and marketplaces, providing creative participants places to access better tools and information, and enabling creative producers to share and sell their output more efficiently.

Based on Reach Advisors' national survey work with young adults on issues outside of the museum field, we are seeing the emergence of a cultural shift that may prove to be a full-blown creative renaissance. The result will be a generation of young adults with more extensive creative pursuits than any other recent generation. This generation grew up with a broad palette of digital tools and creative resources; as a result, they are demonstrating an extraordinarily high level of creative output *and* creative consumption.

What this means for society: We project that significant new economic value will be produced by these pursuits, thanks to a far bigger base of creative producers, a wider range of creative output (including forms that we can't even envision today) and significantly better distribution opportunities for their creative product—matched by a broader base of creative consumption. Already, marketplaces such as Etsy are supplanting the need for artisans to travel to sell their handmade

works, and creating an audience of consumers who are used to looking for distant artisans before they turn to mainstream retailers.

What this means for museums: Museums have traditionally served as incubators and repositories of creative expression. While many of the trends discussed in this report present significant threats to museums, this is one shift that will allow museums to flourish as facilitators of the emerging creative renaissance.

In 2034: As incubators of creative expression, museums flourish as facilitators of the ongoing creative renaissance. They play a vital role in nurturing, documenting, organizing, interpreting and making accessible the new realm of creative output. Museums play an even greater role as economic engines in their communities, helping harness the value generated by the emerging wave of creative-driven commerce and exchange. They are repositories of knowledge about traditional craft, sources of inspiration for new designs and processes, and through their collections and exhibitions, validators of new artists and new art forms.

shifting conceptions of narrative

For most adults over the age of 30, “narrative” is a passive experience. To be sure, there have been models of self-directed narrative in a wide variety of media, from interactive *Star Trek* games on mainframe computers in the 1970s to fanzines, mix-tapes, the *Choose Your Own Adventure* book

series, even *The Matrix* movies, but these were mainly consumed by small groups of connoisseurs. For Americans under 30, there's an emerging structural shift in which consumers increasingly drive narrative.

A key factor has been the expansion of video gaming, now approaching almost universal consumption by American teens. And gaming is now more likely to be about the user as protagonist, driving the narrative. Some games are simply structured that way, while others enable *modding* (modifications of the software or hardware for unintended purposes driven by the user), and on the edge lies *Machinima*, virtual gaming worlds where players collaborate in person or online to produce and record their own narratives.

Moving one step younger, Scholastic has been shifting many of its new series of books (e.g., *The 39 Clues* for children ages 6–14) in the direction of enabling the reader to serve as the protagonist through websites and games that extend the experience with readers driving their experiences with the book series.

Once again, we're seeing an emerging structural shift where technology is fundamentally enabling and wiring expectations differently, particularly among younger audiences, this time when it comes to the concept of narrative.

What this means for society: One of the fundamental concerns is how the core driver behind this shift, video gaming, affects the development of children and young adults. On one hand, there is an uncannily strong correlation (although not necessarily causation) between the increase in video gaming and the decrease in school test score performance of boys over the past 15 years. On the other hand, video games have become increasingly complex, with engaged

role-playing, complicated problem-solving and components that players can design themselves. It's likely that this shift in narrative structure and expectations will drive a lot of how the next generation of adults expects to engage in the world.

What this means for museums: Over time, museum audiences are likely to expect to be part of the narrative experience at museums. While the overall story might not change, how it is presented may change to allow visitors to take on a role as a protagonist themselves. While this is a dramatic departure from how some museums structure narrative, it provides an opportunity to create deeper, more immersive experiences for visitors. For a glimpse of the future, an intriguing example of the emerging you-as-the-protagonist concept can already be seen at Conner Prairie Living History Museum's "Follow the North Star" program, where participants play the role of a fugitive slave on the Underground Railroad over the course of a mile of rough terrain at night, constantly confronted by friend or foe. We project this kind of immersive, interactive programming will be more of the norm than the exception as the generation coming of age now brings its own children to museums.

In 2034: While some educators still decry the impact of video gaming on academic development, museums provide unique opportunities for today's youth to exercise their gaming skills and satisfy their expectations for immersive narrative. This increases their engagement with museums but also with the community and the world, providing levels of social and global awareness they might not otherwise absorb while sitting in front of a screen.

respite and retreat

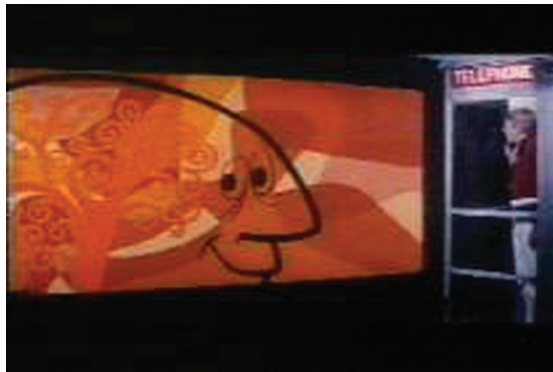
During Reach Advisors' interviews with technology visionaries across the country, it became evident to us that the U.S. will become even more technology-laden and hectic in the future. Just one example:

Many of the technology visionaries projected for us that core telecommunications technologies are coming to the point where cell phones will be small enough to fit inside our ear canals like a hearing aid, with near-perfect voice recognition that will negate the need for a keyboard. When this comes to pass, we will be living in a much noisier world than 1984 or even 2008.

What this means for society: While technological progress has brought much value to society, one byproduct of these emergent structural shifts in communication technologies is almost certainly going to be a world with fewer and fewer places where the public can find respite and retreat.

What this means for museums: At the same time, we're also seeing increasing backlash to the proliferation of technology in our research for museums and among the general public. Instead, our consumer research is finding indications of a longing for a retreat, particularly among women over 50 years old, a sentiment that we expect to expand as technology advances. The challenge will be the balancing act of positioning museums as exciting and engaging places to go, while providing a special spot to disengage from the day-to-day.

In 2034: In an increasingly atomized and digitized world, people still have a core desire for human engagement and authenticity. Museums will be oases of the real in an increasingly virtual world. Along with the outdoors and places of worship, museums represent the best opportunities for getting away from it all.



In 1967, *The President's Analyst* predicted that phones would become small enough to inject directly into the brain. By 2034, cell phones will certainly be small enough to hide in the ear canal.

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AFTERWORD: SHAPING THE NEXT 25 YEARS

With a better understanding of emerging trends that are shaping society, museums can do a better job of preparing for the impact of these trends on their own institutions. The trends discussed in this report are external to museums, requiring museums to react—whether early or late—if they want to benefit from the emerging structural shifts (or simply avoid the harms of inaction).

Responding to these trends may call for actions that seem tangential to or even divorced from the missions of many museums. It would be dangerous, however, for museums to focus on narrowly defined missions and trust that someone else will grapple with these challenges facing society. Whether a museum is in an urban core or a rural area, if its community is struggling, the museum is not going to be able to reach its full potential. A museum's viability is tied to its community's health. The good news, as we suggest in the snapshots the future, is that quite often there are actions that are central to museums' purpose, draw on their unique resources and can help society deal with seismic shifts in demographics, the economy, technology and culture.

This report is not the definitive word on the future—it is the starting point for conversation. We look forward to input from you over the coming year as we debate, refine and expand on these projections. And we look forward to hearing your ideas on what museums will look like in 2034 as they adapt to this new world.

Elizabeth Merritt
Center for the Future of Museums



An Introduction to Museum Accountability

Katherine R. Groninger, PhD

The Museum Scholar, Volume 1, Number 1 (2016)

Abstract This article provides a broad overview of the current state of accountability in the British and American museum sectors by defining terminology, exploring the *public trust*, and contextualizing accountability.

Keywords Museum accountability; third sector; public trust

About the Author Dr. Katherine Groninger specializes in ethical standards and fiscal transparency in UK and US museums. She completed her doctorate on museum accountability at the University of St Andrews, Scotland, and holds degrees in art history from Princeton University and in arts administration from New York University. Kate has spoken at international museum conferences, published in museum journals and books, and worked in the US museum industry, most recently at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Detroit Institute of Arts, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Introduction

Museums are complex organizations maintained on behalf of the public trust. Reliant on funding and community support to thrive, museums must be accountable for financial and ethical decisions to help secure that public trust. To demonstrate compliance with expected standards, institutions are compelled to report and explain their actions. Museum accountability requires institutions to establish an internal structure whereby decisions are made, while being held externally to account for those decisions. Continuous internal and external assessment links a museum's values to its conduct. Achieving accountability requires inculcating ethical codes and establishing

controls throughout the museum. This paper examines the current state of nonprofit museum accountability in the United Kingdom and United States, including methods of achieving fiscal and ethical accountability and the factors that have influenced museum codes and policies to that end. The focus of sound museum governance practice now includes negotiating conflicts of interest, financial mismanagement, and ethical breaches of accountability. These concerns have developed as the museum community has steadily emerged as a professionalized industry.

Two broad, complex sectors dominate the social and economic landscape in the UK and US: the corporate (private) and government (public) sectors. The *third sector* consists of organizations working outside the market and the state, yet draw methods and ideas from both sectors. US third sector organizations are delineated by law, while Britain's framework is more flexible, not based in tax law or common law. Encompassing US nonprofit and UK charity organizations, the third sector is less conceptually understood when compared with the private and public sectors (Salamon and Anheier 1999). Notably, even the terminology associated with the third sector can be misleading. The words *charitable*, *voluntary*, *tax exempt*, and *nonprofit* are misnomers since donated monetary gifts are needed for solvency, volunteers are professionalized, taxes are dependent upon national or regional tax systems, and nonprofits must have income to remain in business. Museums operate in the public domain, and are not directly subject to the market or the state. They do not act for the benefit of private individuals, but for communities at large. They also differ from private trusts that exist for specific beneficiaries. Museums, then, conduct their operations *on behalf of* the public, and maintain their collections *in legacy for* the public to provide a public benefit. To do so, museums rely upon knowledgeable individuals to resolve the complex tasks associated with executing museum functions.

An institution's *governing body* holds ultimate responsibility for all ethical, financial and policy decisions guiding the institution, regardless of the governing body's legal status or official title. Governing bodies take the form of management councils, committees, boards of directors, local councils, boards of trustees, and university trustees, among other governance models. *Governance*, then, refers to board oversight of museum efficacy through policy, strategic goals, ethical directives, and organizational transparency that comply with legal and discretionary regulations (Stone and Ostrower 2007). *Transparency* is a formalized process that balances the public's right to detailed information about an organization with the organization's right to

privacy concerning its dealings. Transparency involves periodically disclosing accurate financial, structural, and ethical information that follows strict, complex guidelines and adheres to approved accounting and auditing standards. Filing accurate financial reports, disclosing governance and policy decisions, demonstrating museum-specific accountability through “best practice” procedures, and other internal controls are factors of museum communication that demonstrate professionalism and affect the public trust in UK and US museums.



The public trust

The *public trust* has a “narrow, legal definition” stating that organizations are held in trust for the public good, and a “broader concept[ual]” definition that encompasses the notion of trust as one of “stewardship and public confidence” in an organization. (MacDonald 1992, 63). The right to solicit tax exempt gifts, the grants, and the tax benefits that the government extends to nonprofits and charities oblige these institutions to answer to the public for the funds received. These are monies that would have benefited the public in other ways, so the use of public funds must be accounted for in a public manner. The law represents the public, yet public expectations and the public trust are vague concepts for the law to regulate. Specific breaches in the

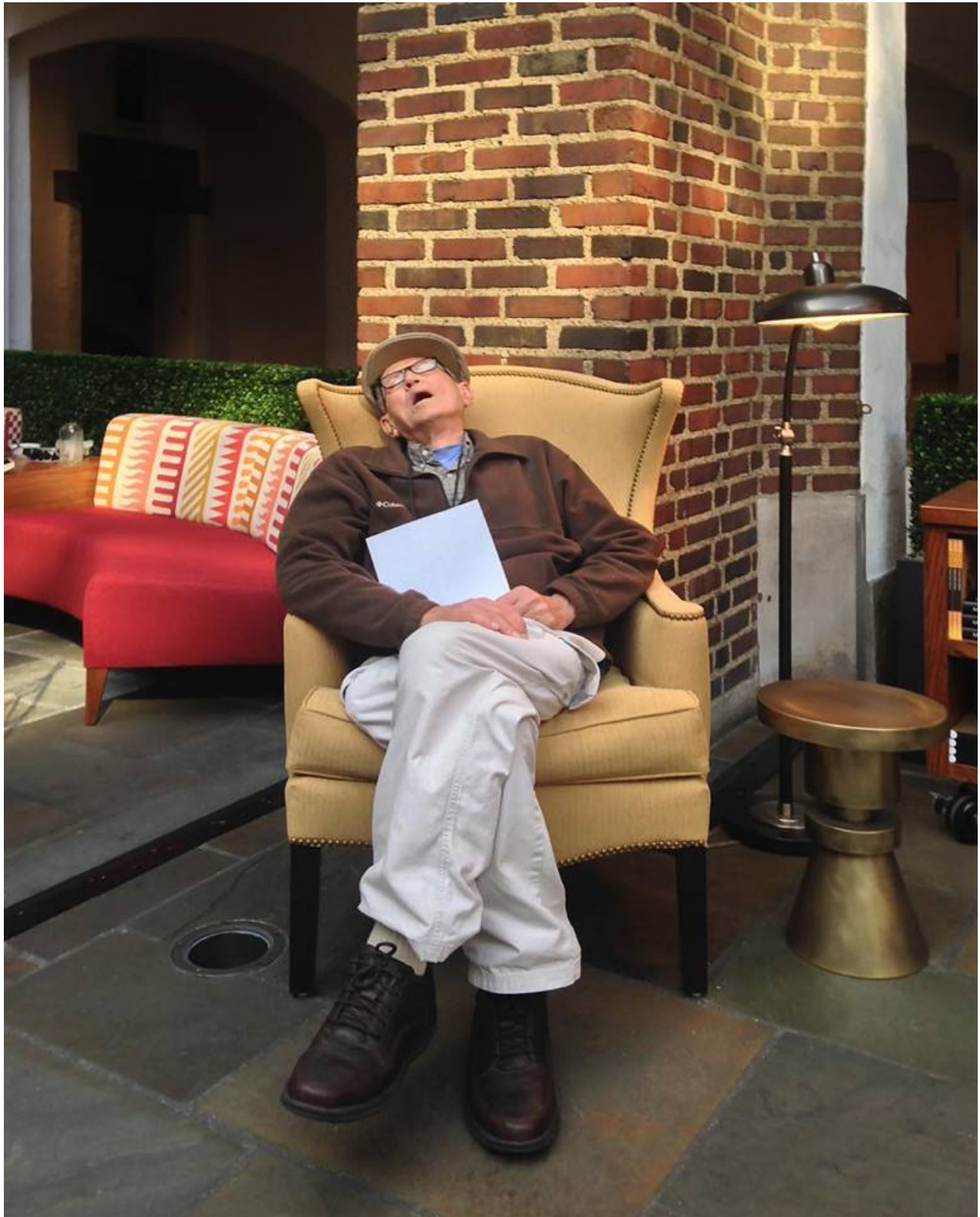
public trust, like fraud and embezzlement, are outlawed, but the public trust encompasses “extralegal” duties that individuals and organizations must fulfill in “an implicit obligation to the public one serves.” (Jos 1993, 364) UK charities were traditionally little regulated, but are now closely linked with government goals. This shift occurred as charities began providing services to meet social needs. In the United States, public and private sector reporting developed during the 1920s-1930s and is entwined with events surrounding the 1929 stock market crash (Lee 2004).

Organizations can “succeed or fail on the notion of trust.”

Organizations can “succeed or fail on the notion of trust.” (Sheppey and McGill 2007, 245) Trustworthiness is predicated on complying with expectations, regulations, and codes of ethics. The public expectation of accountability affects the public perception of an organization. This perception is based in part on the public disclosure of accurate documentation including financial statements. Donors presume the accuracy of financial statements and the adherence to basic policies. Financial statements and policies “are the most public indicators of the state of a company” and the most transparent method for establishing the public trust. (Sheppey and McGill 2007, 79) Institutions that do not comply with established standards can face the perception of distrust and mismanagement, which will deflate an organization’s reputation. As the public trust in an organization increases, the public support of the organization will rise. If a museum’s reputation falters, individual, corporate, institutional, and government donations will evaporate. If standard ethical policies and financial procedures are not in place, it will be challenging for museums to convince grant-making bodies for financial support. The public trust in museums refers to more than the governance and financial aspects

discussed in this paper. “To serve in a museum is to serve an ethos of responsible action toward both its collected objects and gathered human beings.” (Carr 2001, 29) To engender the public trust, museums must also engage in “active principles of fairness, multiple approaches to knowledge, and attention to the reflective trust of learners.” (Carr 2001, 79)

Overall, this paper conceptualizes museum governance and accountability as preventative risk management tools. Museums have been affected by misconduct that occurred in the private, public, and third sectors, and as a result must comply with legislation, government-led recommendations, and expanded stakeholder expectations. Applying principles to museum governance developed from accountability concerns in the private, public, and third sectors, museums are posited as hybrid organizations with elements common to corporate and state entities.



Contextualizing accountability

Governance accountability and transparency are molded by historical factors, driven by social and economic environments. From an institutional perspective (Bielefeld 1992), museums are a product of national cultures,

events, legislation, and internal museum dynamics (Billis and Harris 1996). Scrutinizing museums from historical, legal, economic, and museum-based points of view demonstrates how those external forces have affected museum accountability. Both internal and external factors are examined to acquire the most comprehensive perspective of organizational change (Leavy and Wilson 1994). Deakin (2001) finds analyses of nonprofit organizations are incomplete if the researcher only focuses on third sector attitudes and activities. Both the public and private sectors have helped define third sector expectations (Deakin 2001), and the third sector should heed “the lessons of other sectors, if they are to manage ... emerging [governance] complexities creatively.” (Sandell and Janes 2007b, 3) Because the third sector is less well understood than the private and public sectors, it is vulnerable to impractical management solutions imposed by corporate and government entities (Malaro, 1994). It is essential for museums, functioning as trusted institutions in ever more competitive environments, to continue to form a credible industry within the third sector.

Examining museums through the lens of recent sociopolitical influences enables this sector to position itself within broader interdisciplinary contexts. The accountability standards of other industries can be used to ascertain the relative accountability of museums. Methods to achieve accountability in the private and public sectors can be adapted and implemented in museums of all types and sizes. The museum sector can learn from private and public sector experiences to utilize best practices that benefit the museum. Best practice policies exist to maintain an organization’s standards and to propel the organization forward securely. There is value in best practice methods because stakeholders outside the museum industry understand and respond positively to their implementation, as best practices have been demonstrated to protect diverse institutions from financial malfeasance and ethical breaches.

Museum accountability in the UK

The definition of third sector accountability has been under debate since the 1980s, though public accountability is based upon stakeholder expectations (Rentschler and Potter 1996). Managing the perception of accountability and transparency is equally important to the considerations associated with actually executing organizational accountability. Traditionally, accountability indicated that financial statements demonstrated no unusual, inaccurate, or inappropriate transactions, accounting fully for museum finances (Weil, 2007).

As the third sector and museums morph due to external expectations, accountability is coming to encompass an organization's ethics, efficiency, and effectiveness (Swords). In her 2002 keynote address to the INTERCOM Leadership in Museums conference, former director of the Scottish Museums Council Jane Ryder recommended "remov[ing] the legal distinction between profit and not for profit organizations, accepting that they are both operating to produce a return on capital and to account to stakeholders." (Ryder 2002, Lecture) While the missions of nonprofit institutions form the core of strategic decision making, nonprofits are no less accountable for their decisions and actions than are corporate bodies.

UK museums face public accountability expectations established by central government bodies, local authority councils, grant-making philanthropic groups, the museum community itself, and by individual museums' internal requirements and expectations. By the 1990s, public accountability was a concern amongst UK museums: "Museums have become public property, arousing the interest of the public at large. The question of who should run museums, and how, has moved 'from the professional domain to the public stage' (Cossons 1991b: 186)." (McLean 1997, 31) Twenty years later, public accountability continues to be at the forefront of museum governance and administrative concerns. Governance is no longer only a museum concern, "but is a social and cultural concept." (Ryder 2002, lecture) Now, accountability addresses more than fiscal transparency. Museum operations, museum-specific policy ethics and internal controls, and concerns like conflict of interest and whistleblower protections are under scrutiny. UK funding bodies, including central and local government, also assess programming or operational performance indicators. This paper does not address that type of museum accountability. Value for donated funds, however, is relevant to this study in as much as those funds are properly administered through financial controls that attempt to thwart fraudulent practices.

Comprised entirely of volunteer non-executive board members, UK museum boards differ from their for-profit counterparts that include both non-executive and executive directors. As the board is responsible for governance and plays a large role in the organization's management via executive directors, the corporate structure could be applicable to the museum sector, which has demonstrated trouble balancing executive and non-executive duties. Museum board members occasionally disregard the Museums Association *Code of Ethics* in their decision-making, a practice with which museum professionals find fault. With board representation, museum

professionals and managers could better guide and help non-executive board members who are not trained in specific nuances or requirements associated with running a museum. Similarly, the private sector has considered limiting the number of non-executive board members permitted to serve due to the position's demands and responsibilities. "It may well be time to apply this same principle to [museum board] public appointments on the basis that the risks and the obligations are equally demanding and arguably carry even greater responsibility in the accountability for public expenditure." (Ryder 2002, lecture) While the board's duty is to shape museum policy within legal and ethical frameworks, board members may lack the professional training or knowledge of sector-wide standards required to do so appropriately. This may be problematic given that "the range of issues and pressures confronting museums in the twenty-first century is equal to that of any sector of organized life." (Sandell and Janes 2007, 1)

As UK museum finances face pressures, museum boards are challenged to demonstrate their fiscal accountability and to verify that resources are utilized for the public good. Yet meeting these objectives can betray standard museum practices and ethics. In some instances, local authorities have sold objects from museum collections to cover costs not approved by the Museums Association. Yet even museum sector professionals "who think their institutions might not bear comparisons [with other museums] or meet standards easily, or do not care if they do, might be even less [interested to meet standards]". (Ames 1991, 59) This finding could have important implications for museum oversight bodies that aspire to raise standards in all museums.

Financial controls are now generally accepted norms across the UK museum sector, as "the fiduciary duty of trustees and the outward accountability of museums require the demonstration of sound business practice ... and 'cocoa-tin accounting' [is] no longer acceptable because museums, whether they like it or not, are 'in business'." (Defries 1991, 76) Accountability standards, however, are imposed on UK museums by numerous sources, including diverse funding bodies. These funders have varied requirements and many request proof of internal control standards before donating grant monies. In so doing, "[t]hese bodies dictate policy, and individual museums react accordingly to obtain grants and to obtain status as a museum." (McLean 1997, 31) Due to funders' varied policy requirements, the challenge for acquiring one-time government grants, and the differences in accountability each funder demands, Janes (2009) recommends forming a

centralized museum consortium fund to distribute grants for which “[a]ccountability would be essential, but so would a wide tolerance for mistakes and failures [for meeting grant goals]”. (Janes 2009, 69) Assessing the value of this type of program would require significant public and government scrutiny.

Current state of museum accountability

Despite oversight regulations, recommended ethics and accountability policies, and museum standards, neither the UK nor the US has a unified sector based upon internal administrative policies or ethical patterns relating to public accountability. In many cases, British and American museums do not conform to sector-wide standards. Groninger (2011) demonstrates specific gaps prevalent in museum governance, including internal control implementation and conflict of interest management. These gaps highlight the range of accountability concerns that affect the museum sector, including the low percentage of UK museums with codes of ethics, and the few US museums with whistleblower protection policies. While varied oversight bodies and the museum sector itself have established rules for governance consistency across the disparate museum types, a distinction remains between having standard policies in place and the act of actually fulfilling those standards.

Accountability concerns in the UK reveal themselves to fall primarily within the realm of professional ethics, while US accountability wrongdoing stems from monetary concerns like fraud and embezzlement (Groninger, 2011). Research results further demonstrate that numerous museum professionals do not understand terminology like governance, best practice, or conflict of interest. Many individuals who were queried, particularly those in volunteer-run or small museums as defined by budget, do not understand or recognize the applicability of codes, policies, and ethics to the museum sector or to the museum with which they were associated. These challenges, however, offer a significant insight: many individuals working as museum administrators or board members know little about their accountability duties (Groninger 2011).

Individuals critical of museum change or unaware of accountability measures are as vocal as museum professionals eager to implement contemporary governance ideas. Ethical codes and standard practices threaten many museum employees and volunteers who find little relevance in museum accountability. Data also suggest that though numerous accountability policy

Accountability concerns in the UK reveal themselves to fall primarily within the realm of professional ethics, while US accountability wrongdoing stems from monetary concerns like fraud and embezzlement.

recommendations exist for UK museums, there has been little direction to guide the actual implementation of accountability practices (Groninger, 2011).

Summary

Museums do not exist in a vacuum and the recent development of museum accountability is complex. Couched in corporate culture, government influence, and public expectations, museum governance is an interdisciplinary concern. Yet museum professionalization, including codes of ethics, conflict of interest management, and agreed-upon standards within the museum industry, has received little attention from researchers. An analysis of UK and US museum accountability reveals inadequacies in the museum accountability systems in both Britain and America (Groninger 2011). Case studies demonstrate that opportunities for financial and ethical misconduct remain that directly damage the public trust in museums, and recent controversies exemplify that organizations with accountability fissures can face challenging scenarios. Transparency failings in museums have harmed museum reputations and capacity to fundraise. Accountability is an urgent need that can minimize financial strife, aiding a museum's viability and solvency. Assessing how and why the museum sector is currently governed can point to the locus of museum accountability failings, the first step to improving museum governance, ethics, and accountability.

This paper advocates that museums fulfill their responsibility to demonstrate accountability and transparency. Continuity has yet to exist, however, across the diverse sector in either Britain or America. The range of accountability policies, codes and standards that *have* been implemented have not destroyed museum traditions. Rather, these policies fit unobtrusively within the bounds of daily museum management, serving the public trust and liberating museums from numerous risk management concerns. Museums not only look to the past, they also seek to improve their futures. To do so, museums must become increasingly accountable, fulfilling the public trust.

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**THE
Museum SCHOLAR**

Building a More Human-Centered Future for Museums

Mike Murawski

Highlighting the imperative shift towards a human-centered approach, this paper underscores the role of museums as community-centered institutions. It delves into the necessity for self-inquiry among museum professionals, advocating for a leadership transformation based in empathy, care, and vulnerability. Furthermore, it calls for a reevaluation of traditional power structures and a commitment to fostering human connection and empathy within museum settings.

Let me start with an idea that, for me, is absolutely foundational: museums are human-centered and community-centered endeavors. They are not simply buildings or collections of objects. They are, first and foremost, about people and made up of people. Museums are us.

And the need for a human-centered approach to museum practice has never been more urgent.

Artist Andrea Fraser stated: »Every time we speak of the ›institution‹ as other than ›us‹ we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions.«¹ Fraser's work as an artist explores forms of institutional critique that problematize the museum as a complex social site, a view that can be expanded upon as we envision museums as agents of social change.

Considering a museum as a monolithic entity might make it easier to criticize from the outside, yet gaining an understanding of a museum as ›us‹ certainly sparks a direct sense of the possibility of change from within as well as a clear sense of responsibility for those working in and with museums. As the people involved in the work of a museum, we have a responsibility to understand our role in the system of policies, practices, and power dynamics as well as our role to change that system.

We Are All Agents of Change

A human-centered approach to museums is an important basis for any discussion of museums, social change, and community involvement, since it defines the vision, mission, and work of a museum as the vision, mission, and work of *the people* who are part of that museum. Critiques of museums are critiques of us, and any necessary changes in museums must start with the people of that museum and its community. Each and every one of us has a role to play as an agent of change in shaping a better future for museums.

My own passion for change in museums comes from a place of love that has grown over the past two decades through countless experiences of togetherness, connection, pain, sharing, learning, and healing – both within and outside the walls of these institutions. I've worked with museum professionals and community leaders to advance a more human-centered approach and push institutions beyond being just a collection of objects. I've seen museums being places where people learn from each other, see their lives from a completely new perspective, and come together to heal. I've worked to bring communities into the center of planning exhibitions, programs, and projects and seen institutions begin to be shaped by these communities in meaningful and powerful ways.

Museums worldwide strive to be agents of positive change in their local communities and beyond. It is essential to recognize that becoming an agent of change does not happen because of a single program or temporary exhibition project, and it certainly does not happen with just one person (no matter how passionate they are). The transformation happening right now at so many museums is the result of the passionate dedication of staff across departments as well as rapidly growing networks of community partners. By recognizing the power of human relationships and proactively building communities of change, we can collectively face the many barriers and challenges that prevent positive change.

This work involves an enormous amount of listening, developing trust, and a focus on building relationships – both within a museum as well as with audiences and communities. It involves growing a community of change and advocacy from within and embracing a human-centered mindset in everything an institution does.

As obvious and straightforward as it sounds to think about museums as human-centered institutions, this idea has faced a legacy of rather fierce opposition grounded in outdated traditions and histories. For example, consider the following questions:

- How many museums still have mission statements that prioritize collecting and preserving objects rather than fore-fronting the people-centered work of building community, growing empathy and understanding, celebrating human creativity, and cultivating engaged citizenship?
- How often do museum leaders and boards make decisions that value objects and collections over staff, volunteers, and museum visitors? We certainly saw evidence of this during the pandemic through targeted budget cuts and staff layoffs, and we continue to see evidence of this in pay inequities and severe workplace burnout.
- What if those in positions of power and authority considered human relationships and human impact first and foremost when making decisions about exhibitions, interpretation, programs, facilities, policies, and practices?
- What if the core values of an institution reflected the core values held by its staff?

Becoming More Human-Centered

At its foundation, being a more human-centered museum involves shaping and productively debating a set of core values that reflect a commitment to care, empathy, and human connection. When we put people first – above collections, above

endowments, above budget spreadsheets – we are making a commitment to advance compassion, human potential, and collective well-being as integral elements to our institution's values and culture.

The process starts with individuals engaging in deep/ deeper self-inquiry. What matters most to us? What are the ideas and people that have shaped our core values? If our institutions and workplaces could create environments based on deeper human values, what would that look like? How can we more bravely and consistently align our practice with our core values?

Self-inquiry is crucial to making institutional change, and it requires work. Spend time asking yourself these questions. Share them with others and start larger conversations with colleagues in your department and across your institution.

Through facilitating workshops and talking with museum leaders during the past few years, I have learned how common it is for people to skip this step. We're so anxious to jump into the work of making change happen that we don't take the necessary time to understand who we are, where our beliefs come from, and what is motivating our desire for change. It can even be important to pause and reflect on our own relationship with change itself, thinking about how we react and respond to change happening in our own lives – not just through our museum work.

Community organizer and activist Grace Lee Boggs wonderfully wrote, »Transform yourself to transform the world«.² So the first step may be recognizing the change we need to make within ourselves. Our own life and work can be the first place we start practicing a more human-centered approach.

In his book *Moving Icebergs: Leading People to Lasting Change*, Steve Patty argues that in order to create lasting change within an organization, we need to dive below the surface to engage our deeper values and beliefs. »Every organization«, he writes, »needs to hold candid conversations about values and beliefs, purpose and meaning.«³ Too often, the institutional culture of museums – as well as that of many nonprofits, businesses, and corporations – undervalues these more personal conversations and the vulnerability required to connect with each other in deeply human ways. We avoid talking with each other about our personal core values because it's »too personal« and best left to private reflection outside the workplace.

Being a more human-centered museum, however, means creating an environment where we can all be more human with each other, understand each others' beliefs and convictions, build trust, and treat each other with care, respect, and dignity, *especially* in the face of crisis. This requires rethinking an organization's hierarchy, developing a shared sense of leadership, and engaging in equity across every aspect of the organization. To bring a human-centered approach into museums, we need to question everything and leave the status quo mindset in the past.

Leading Means Being More Human

During the first few months of the pandemic back in 2020, I participated in a reading group on *leadership in times of crisis*. We were asked to read *Who Do We Choose To Be?* by Margaret Wheatley, a teacher and leadership consultant best known for her classic 1992 text *Leadership and the New Science*. One quote early in Wheat-

ley's book resonated with me, and has helped me understand the vital importance of transforming leadership, specifically, as part of the work to change museums. She writes: »I know it is possible for leaders to use their power and influence, their insight and compassion, to lead people back to an understanding of who we are as human beings, to create the conditions for our basic human qualities of generosity, contribution, community, and love to be evoked no matter what.«⁴

Embracing a human-centered mindset in museums asks us to elevate care, relationship building, and collective well-being as integral elements to our institutions' values and culture. It is about putting all human beings, not just visitors or audiences, at the center of our organizational thinking rather than collections, big donors, endowments, curatorial silos, or shiny capital projects. For those in leadership positions, I think this means setting aside ego, stepping back, learning to listen in radical ways, and making decisions based on care and deeply-held human values and doing this all while it runs counter to conventional thinking, entrenched legacies of leadership, and the expectations of funders.

In his 2019 book *Reboot: Leadership and the Art of Growing Up*, leadership development expert and executive coach Jerry Colonna writes about how the habits and behavioral patterns of CEOs have been detrimental to their own well-being and the well-being of others. On page one, he states: »believe that better humans make better leaders. I further believe that the process of learning to lead well can help us become better humans.«⁵

In my copy of Colonna's book, these two sentences are heavily underlined. I remember reading this for the very first time, and just sitting with it. I was in the middle of a particularly challenging decision, and I was looking for guidance on how to move forward. Much of Colonna's book and practice is focused on radical self-inquiry and finding ways to listen deeply to our own hearts.

Being a more human-centered leader – and leading from a place of deeper human values – requires us to resist this pressure to perform the rigid expectations of leadership that are harmful. It requires us to slow down and ask ourselves a series of meaningful questions:

- What is my work to become a better person?
- What is my own power and privilege within society and within the structures of this institution?
- How can I break free from existing and traditional expectations, and lead from my heart and from a place of humanity?

This process of self-inquiry is ongoing, and we need to practice holding space for qualities such as care, compassion, healing, deep listening, emotional maturity, and a sense of interconnectedness with other human beings and with our planet. It is a practice that we can cultivate and grow through journaling, meditation, mindfulness, dialogue with others, building a community of support with those who truly value these qualities, and learning from the work being done outside the field of museums in social justice, restorative justice, community organizing, nonviolent communication, climate activism, and healing practice. These are not *soft* skills, as they have often been called, in order to write them off and devalue them. These are *essential* skills. At a time when our society is in desperate need of care and healing, being a more human-centered leader means making a commitment to creating the conditions in which these qualities – and the people who hold them – can flourish.

An Opportunity for Change

In her widely watched 2010 TED talk entitled *The Power of Vulnerability*, researcher and author Brené Brown talks about connection as a fundamental human experience. »Connection is why we're here«, she says, »it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives.«⁶ At a time when we are surrounded by increasingly fragmented societies and growing socio-political divisions, museums have the potential to be powerful catalysts for empathy and human connection. The challenges of our time have given us the perfect opportunity to radically rethink museums and create a path forward that is deeply grounded in care, kindness, courage, patience, resilience, and love. I've seen these values practiced by activists and changemakers across our field, yet so many institutions still cling to outdated power structures, oppressive legacies, and harmful dominant cultures.

As we move forward, we need to reflect inward as individuals and develop a strong grounding, a North Star. Let's take the time to ask ourselves who we are and how we want to bring our truest and fullest selves to the collective work of transforming museums and into our human responsibility to change our institutions.

I know what museums look and feel like when they begin to live up to their full potential as open-hearted spaces of care, humanity and love. My demands for change are rooted in these experiences. Museums everywhere have the potential to take action and be the places that bring people together and change people's lives.

A different future is possible, and it is up to us to make this happen together.



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