MUSEUMS
ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PARTNERS FOR PROSPERITY

By Dr. Peggy Wireman

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License
Preface

This book is an updated and completely revised version of *Partnerships for Prosperity: Museums and Economic Development* (AAM, 1997).

Some of the material from the original book remains. Although I updated the longer examples, in some cases I kept an example without updating it because I felt the point was valid even if the museum has changed direction.

This version provides new material to reflect changes that have occurred in the museum world as well as examples from other nations. It reflects my desire to learn from museums around the world and to make the material more relevant to them. Many of the ideas came from my visits to museums in over 30 countries.

To make the book most user-friendly, I did not include footnotes and kept references to a minimum. Most of the examples come from my own interviews with the museums or conversations with museum professionals.

There are many excellent museum books. I have referred those that I relied upon most heavily or thought particularly useful for those wanting a more depth presentation of an area. I used the Internet extensively but did not site websites since they change so frequently. The information I provide should enable the reader to substantiate my data.

You can read this material, share it with others and download it. Under the license agreement you may not change it or sell it.
Acknowledgements

I owe thanks to participants in numerous conferences of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the International Council of Museums (ICOM) conference in China in 2010 and the Intercom conference in 2016. Many of the ideas, information and examples came from presentations at those meetings. Participants at those meetings have been both encouraging and enormously generous with sharing their knowledge.

Ole Winther provided the foreword. Carla Bonomi, Kathy Dwyer Southern, and Phaedra Livingston facilitated ICOM’s willingness to make the book available to their extensive worldwide network.

I owe special thanks to Phaedra Livingston who partnered with me during the first phases of the revision. Her enthusiasm, common sense, knowledge and wisdom are gratefully acknowledged. Her suggestions were invaluable. She is a delight to work with.

I want to thank the following people. Patricia Williams provided major support for enlisting the AAM as publisher for the first book and crucial support for the revision. Mary Kay Ingenthron provided support and invaluable suggestions.

Catherine Bloomer read the entire book providing her usual insightful help. Anne Hunt provided review and suggestions on several chapters plus years of encouragement and hospitality.

This book would never have happened without the American Alliance of Museums staff that hosted conferences that provided much of the material and published the original book.

A number of people were involved in the creation of the original book, and I will not repeat the acknowledgement section of that book here. However, I do want to mention H. Nicholas Muller, III, then head of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin funding from the Technical Assistance and Research Division, Economic Development
Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce and the excellent public services of Richard E. Hage and Anthony J. Meyer.

I want to thank the research staff of the Pinney Public Library in Madison, Wisconsin, for proving the effectiveness of the inter-library loan system.

The following helped update the material about their museums: Despina Gakopoulos, Jaclyn Reynolds, James Willaert, Dotty Gooding, Duane Brodt, Sandy Cummings, Steven Cotherman, Zoe Ocampo, Ennis Barbery Smith, Donna Lednicky and Rosario Ramos.

Milana Cox tackled the headings and formatting with dedication and professionalism. Niomi Pearson read the entire manuscript, made excellent editorial suggestions and put the entire document into final form. Her help was invaluable.

Finally, I want to thank the staffs and those involved in the many museums I have been privileged to visit in some 40 countries, the artists and others whose work they represented and the hospitality of many people during my travels.

The responsibility for any errors and omissions is mine.
Foreword

The English poet John Donne is the author behind the famous sentence, that “No man is an island”. I would argue that the same goes for museums. Every museum in the world is connected to its community – it might be big and international or small and local. Nevertheless there is always a surrounding community, users or guests, a board, trustees and a political level that relates to and support the work of the museum.

As the museum sector keeps evolving and adjusts its place in an ever-changing global society it is important that all museums are aware of their individual role and contribution to society. No museum is an island.

As this book will demonstrate, not only do museums make significant contributions culturally but also are important contributors to the economic development of an area attracting tourists and encouraging local businesses.

This book will help museums all over the world to be precise on how they contribute. It will help museum professionals to be able to communicate directly with their local authorities and trustees on how to develop a strong role in society both culturally and financially.

The book touches upon a number of key discussions for museums all over the world and I hope – no matter where you live – you’ll use the this book to ensure your museum an even stronger position in your community.

The late Stephen E. Weil once wrote, that museums are not about something – they are for some one. Finding you way to be a museum for some one is important, and I believe that this book will be a great help in this.

Ole Winther
Chair, INTERCOM
ICOMs international Committee for Management.
Table of Contents

Preface - Pg.2
Acknowledgements - Pg.3
Forward - Pg.5
Table of Contents - Pg.6
Introduction - Pg.12

Chapter One - Pg.15
Demonstrating your Museums’ Contributions to Economic and Community Development…. What to tell Your Government or Business Community

I. An Overview of Trends in Economic Development - Pg.16
II. Tourism and the potential role for museums - Pg.19
   1. Money and jobs
   2. Ways museums attract tourists
   3. Tourists spend money
   4. Types of tourism
III. What do Tourists Want? - Pg.25
IV. Demonstrating a Museums' Economic Contributions - Pg.27
   1. Museums spend money
   2. Sources of outside money
      a. National and state money
      b. Foundations, corporations, nonprofit organizations (NPOs), non-government organizations (NGOs)
      c. Endowments
      d. Trustees or members who live elsewhere
e. Sales to visitors from outside the area
f. Sales of museum products or services outside the area
3. Museums provide jobs
4. Museums support local businesses
   a. Examples of goods purchased locally
   b. Examples of services purchased locally
5. Museums enhance the quality of life, build community pride, and enhance public education

IV. Claiming Credit for Your Economic Impact - Pg.33

Chapter Two - Pg.36
Potential Advantages for Museums

I. What Is the Museum's Role? Know Thyself - Pg.36
   1. The Collection
   2. The Mission
   3. The Audience
   4. Finances
   5. Trustees, staff, and volunteers

II. Advantages to Increased Participation - Pg.41
   1. More visitors
   2. Increased revenue
   3. Ability to fulfill educational mission
   4. Ability to fulfill research and curatorial missions
   5. Collection development
   6. More respect and support from the community

III. Things to Consider - Pg.43
   1. Losing sight of collection responsibilities
   2. Museums are not theme parks
   3. Museums are not Wall Street
   4. Shifts in direction require support from trustees, staff, and volunteers
   5. Do not overwork the collection
6. Security problems
7. Loss in quality of experience because of crowds
8. Financial loss
9. Overselling museums’ community or economic development contributions

IV. Structuring Participation - Pg.50

Chapter Three - Pg.55
MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY

I. Building Community - Pg.55
   1. Importance of museums
   2. Community development’s rich history

II. Approaches to the Museum’s Role in the Community
Pg.58
   1. The example of libraries and malls
   2. Promoting positive community relations
   3. Taking leadership: social issues, sustainability and becoming green
   4. Questions for neighborhoods regarding food
   5. A Place to address controversial issues
   6. Coming to grips with the negative aspects of a community’s history and museums as places of reconciliation

III. Museums as Places to Educate the Young - Pg.73
IV. Museums as Places to Address Diversity - Pg.77

Chapter Four - Pg.86
Product Development: Increasing Attractiveness for Tourists and Your Community
I. Visitor Services - Pg.88
   1. Helping the inexperienced museum goer

II. Attractive Exhibits - Pg.90
   1. Exhibiting works by local artists that illustrate the region's natural or human environment.
   2. Displaying live animals
   3. Reflecting the museum's mission in the gift shop and restaurant
   4. Remembering Silence
   5. Self-directed audio tours are quieter than docents
   6. Making it interactive
   7. Have something for people with different interests
   8. Using storage to advantage
   9. Change exhibits regularly
  10. Hours

III. Sponsoring Events, Festivals and Products - Pg.102

IV. Make Sure Local People Know About Museum Treasures - Pg.103

V. Share Treasures, Glamour, and Prestige - Pg.106
   1. Treasures
   2. Glamour and prestige

VI. Develop Local Assets - Pg.107
   1. Oral history
   2. Storytellers
   3. Craft persons
   4. Programs, slide shows, video presentations, and computer activities
   5. Sponsor festivals, art fairs, and concerts

American artists

VII. Be a Part of the Local Community - Pg.113

VIII. Target the Market and Market to the Target - Pg.114

IX. Think About the Visitor (Customer) - Pg.114
Chapter Five - Pg.117
MARKETING THE MUSEUM

I. The Museum's Purpose - Pg.117

II. Trends in Tourism - Pg.119
1. Tourism turns gray
2. Does the museum want to capture the bus tour market?
3. Use the marketing systems of other groups
4. Short trips
5. Tourism is more international
6. Tourism is more segmented

III. How to Find Market Information - Pg.123
1. Who are the existing customers?
2. Surveys
3. Focus groups
4. Use data from other organizations

IV. Developing a Marketing Plan - Pg.130
1. Goals
2. Product mix and positioning
3. Place
4. Promotion

Chapter Six - Pg.144
PARTNERSHIPS

I. Possible Partners - Pg.144
1. Other Museums
2. Partnerships with local civic groups
3. Partnerships with economic development organizations
4. Partnerships with regional organizations
5. Partnerships with other cultural organizations
6. Partnerships with the private sector
7. Partnerships with charitable organizations
8. Partnerships with neighborhood groups
9. Partnerships with schools and libraries
10. Consider carefully

Chapter Seven - Pg.160
CELEBRATIONS, EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND PRODUCTS

I. Renting Museum Facilities or Grounds - Pg.161
   1. Preservation of structure, objects, and grounds
   2. Compatibility with museum mission and image
   3. Compatibility with existing programs and facilities
   4. Legal, personnel, and insurance considerations
   5. Museum's responsibilities
   6. Businesses’ responsibilities

II. Sponsoring Events, Festivals, and Products - Pg.165
   1. Know the market
   2. Use the museum's uniqueness
   3. Support the vendors
   4. Relate events to the mission
   5. Joint venture

III. Selling Your Products - Pg.170
   1. Offer Educational Programs
   2. Calculate Costs, Benefits, and Risks Carefully, and Keep Accurate Records
   3. Your Shop and Restaurant as Products

Conclusions - Pg.176
About the Author - Pg.178
Introduction

This book is designed to help a museum determine the appropriate roles to play in the economic and community development of its community and how to achieve them.

The author realizes that every museum exists in the context of its own country’s traditions about museums, political and administrative arrangements, constraints and possibilities and financial structures. Especially when considering examples from the U.S. remember an old story about international development.

An expert from Texas arrived in a foreign country talking endlessly about how Texas grew grapefruit. Whenever villagers asked questions or raised concerns, the Texan responded, “We grow great grapefruit in Texas and this is how we do it.” Six weeks after returning to the U.S., the expert received a telegram. “The grapefruit have all died. What do you do in Texas now?”

With this warning, we present examples from the USA and around the world, beginning with a heritage collection in Laos.

A newspaper reporter asks five questions: who, what, where, when, and how. Asking these questions about your museum may help determine how the examples in this book might be useful.

Who are you for? Future generations who will see the art you are preserving? Regional tourists? School children? International visitors? Local residents? Who are the people your museum must involve for finances or survival?

What? What is your mission? To preserve your local or country’s heritage? To create local pride? To educate school children about science? To create a sense of national identity? To help migrants adjust to their new locality? What are the political or administrative restraints or opportunities for your museum?
Where? Where are you located, and how does this affect your operation? Are you someplace tourists normally visit or will you need to make special efforts to attract them? Are you on a busy street with no place for a tourist bus to park? Do you extend your impact by reaching out to people beyond your building via traveling vans or the Internet?

When? When are you open? Most museums close on Mondays so the Louvre remains open on Mondays and closes Tuesdays giving Paris visitors’ opportunities seven days of the week.

How? If you want to have economic or community development how can you accomplish this? Does it mean making your museum more accessible for tourists or increased marketing? Does it mean broader outreach to underserved minorities or those with disabilities? Does it mean changing your fee structure or opening hours? Does it mean broadening your membership or trustee base?

Consider how these questions apply to a museum in Laos that integrates a number of the principles for success. The staff takes a very strategic, planned approach to the fulfillment of the museum’s mission. The Centre demonstrates a remarkable integration of different objectives and attention to details.


Why? The Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre were created in 2006 to preserve and celebrate the Laoan culture. The mission is to promote pride and appreciation for the cultures and knowledge of Laos’ diverse peoples, support ethnic communities to safeguard their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and promote their sustainable livelihood development.

What? The museum showcases artifacts from 30 of the nationals 49 ethnic groups. The Centre’s exhibitions feature text, photographs, and objects from villages throughout the north of Laos. Temporary exhibits highlight specific ethnic groups, themes and arts from northern and southern Laos. There are activities for children, visits to schools and summer programs. TAEC has a self-guided activity center that includes
games, activities, books, and videos with additional information about
the ethnic diversity in Laos.

When? Open Hours: Tuesday - Sunday from 9 AM - 6 PM.
TAEC closes for 10 - 14 days in September for maintenance and
exhibition change. Holidays are according to the Lao calendar.

Where? TAEC is located in the central part of Luang Prabang, a
UNESCO heritage site. The location is at the foot of Phousy Hill, a
landmark in Luang Prabang. Many tourists visit this area of Luang
Prabang. TAEC has relationships with tour operators who include
TAEC on tours for visitors to Luang Prabang.

How? The staff takes research and documentation seriously. Each year
they visit villages, some of which are only accessible by foot. Each trip
is well prepared. After correspondence with the appropriate regional
government personnel and village headman, they arrive with researchers
and videographers for periods lasting from several weeks to several
months. They document artifacts and conduct interviews with elders and
others about their history and current lives.

Staff also collects artifacts for the Centre. They work with village crafts
persons providing training when appropriate and make arrangements to
sell traditional items in the Centre’s shop. Fifty percent of the shop’s
income goes back to the villages.

TAEC is a founding member of Fair Trade Laos. Recently the Centre
opened a boutique in the main street of town across from a hotel. The
TAEC Heirloom Collection features one-of-a-kind textiles, carvings and
silver from master artisans, each with a certificate of authenticity. It also
features modern clothing designed by villagers based on traditional
designs. While the Centre is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday to
Sunday, the boutique is open every day and stays open until 9 p.m.

TAEC maintains an on-line presence through our website, on-line shop,
and social media.

I hope that this and the other examples in this book will suggest
possibilities for your museum.
Chapter One
Demonstrating Your Museums
Contributions to Economic and
community Development
…Or What to Tell Your Government
Business or Community

According to the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a museum “is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”

In Cities, Museums and Soft Power, Gail Lord discusses the importance of “soft power,” the contributions museums can make to the desirability of a community as a place to live, a magnet for attracting creative residents or entrepreneurial businesses. The impact of this soft power can range from fostering civic or national pride to serving as a place where citizens can discuss controversial issues, acknowledge the contributions of previously ignored ethnic groups or come to grips with unpleasant aspects of their history. Chapter Three will discuss a number of possible soft power contributions.

This chapter focuses on your contribution to economic development that in many cases goes unrecognized. Spelling it out is important. The museum community is large but not always noticed. People in the USA assume they will see a
Starbucks selling coffee everywhere, creating business in that locality. But few realize that if you include small museums, there are as many museums in the USA as Starbucks. It may be necessary to make your existence and collective contributions visible. This is especially true in countries where there has not been major discussion of museums as an economic development tool.

In some nations museums are part of the national government but may not receive the funds needed to operate effectively. In other cases museums need to turn to local governments to receive either funding or infrastructure such as improvements to the road leading to the museum. Sources of funding from local wealthy donors to international organizations want to know why they should fund you rather than another institution or cause. So it is important to fully document your case.

For those already active in economic development, this chapter will refresh your memory about ways to claim credit for your contributions. For those who have not yet focused on your economic contributions, it will serve as an introduction to the potential and provide data to share with those in power in your government or business community.

I. An Overview of Trends in Economic Development

Economic development has various definitions. It can mean the creation of jobs, increases in community or individual income, increases in the taxable base, or increases in wealth for individuals or a community. It can also mean the creation of the infrastructure needed for economic growth such as roads, an educated workforce or a community attractive for residents, businesses and tourists.
Planners often consider the following questions: Who benefits and who loses from specific economic development activities? What types of jobs are created and for whom? Building an industrial park with polluting factories damages the ecosystem and reduces the attractiveness of the area for tourists. Consolidating a business operation or replacing workers with a machine may increase wealth for some, but cost the jobs of others.

Trends in economic development rest on responses to changes in the country's economic, social, political and demographic conditions. They also depend upon shifts in the "state of the art" or in the "conventional wisdom" of individuals and institutions that actively work to promote economic growth. These "economic development practitioners" might be business organizations such as chambers of commerce, state, local or national departments of development, concerned individual businessmen, political leaders, national governments, nonprofit organizations, or non-governmental organizations.

In the U.S. Fortune 500 companies have not been the main sources of new jobs for decades; many of these companies have reduced their work forces. People starting new businesses or expanding small businesses create most of the new jobs. Many economic development practitioners have stopped trying to lure firms from outside their areas, which too often resulted in unhappy giveaways of tax benefits or community-financed buildings. Instead, they now focus on strategies to help individuals start new businesses and/or expand existing ones.

Many jobs now can be successfully completed in people's homes or even in several different nations. Incoming orders
can be received by modem and fax and products delivered by overnight mail or the Internet. Towns and rural areas are becoming increasingly attractive locations for businesses and for self-employed individuals, especially those who are semi-retired.

To the extent that the local museum contributes to an area's general attractiveness, it also contributes to its ability to attract these new residents.

Increasingly people work in service jobs. Some, such as lawyers and investment counselors, pay very well. Many service jobs including those in the tourism industry do not pay well and may be part-time or seasonal. In some cases, however, they are the best alternative available. Museums themselves may offer the type of full time and volunteer jobs that can develop skills used by better-paid workers in the new service economy: store managers, public relations experts, and fundraisers. These jobs can train workers in skills, such as customer service or computer services that international firms are now outsourcing to people living in many countries. Museums also can help to create spin-off businesses through selling local crafts in their shops.

The USA population is aging, as is the population of some other countries. Certainly in the USA most women, including those with young children, are now employed outside of their homes. Many families have two incomes, but little free time. And the population, as in many other nations, is increasingly becoming culturally diverse.

Many older people are looking for places to retire. Others seek second homes, which they can now afford because of their households' double incomes. Those with increased leisure time swell the tourism market. Those with less leisure
time seek places for short getaways. Minorities represent a surprisingly large portion of the market.

II. Tourism and the Potential Role for Museums

1. Money and jobs

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reports that travel and tourism in 2014 accounted for 10 percent of the world’s GDP and 277,000 total jobs, one in 11 of all jobs. The WTTC numbers include both leisure and business travel. They include direct expenditure, indirect expenditures and induced spending. Direct expenditures are those spent by travelers in industries that deal directly with tourists such as restaurants, hotels and airlines as well as government expenditures for museums and parks. Indirect expenditures include spending by industries to create tourism assets such as new visitor accommodations or transportation equipment directly related to tourism. It also includes government expenditures on tourism promotion and public services. Induced contributions are the spending of those directly or indirectly employed by the tourism and travel industry.

While the measurements of the WTTC may include items that seem only vaguely related to museums such as the expansion of an airport, the point is that the overall economic impact of the travel and tourism industry is huge. According to WTTC tourism is expected to continue growing in most countries.

The question here, however, is to consider how tourist potential affects your museum and what measures you might take to maximize your contributions to the local economy. While in some cases your potential impact to increasing
tourism to your area may be small, your museum may still make an overall contribution to the economy of your area through your soft power.

In other cases, however, museums have had a clear, measurable and major impact upon their local economies. An often-quoted example is the creation of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain. It increased tourism to the area by 54 percent creating some 4,000 new jobs.

The success of this project does not, however, mean that your community should build a unique structure or even start a museum. You may not have the funds necessary to build a new structure designed by an internationally famous architect. Moreover, Bilbao’s success did not rest entirely upon the creation of the new museum. Rather, the museum was part of a large and coordinated citywide effort at revitalization. The revitalization included redesigning the entire city with involvement of universities and attention to the public transportation system.

2. Ways museums attract tourists

People flock to Paris, the Taj Mahal and the game parks in Africa. Everyone in the USA knows that people take their children to Washington, D.C. to see the National Air and Space Museum, the National Gallery of Art, and the dinosaurs in the National Museum of Natural History. Who would have thought that 131,000 people would go to San Antonio to see "Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries"? But they did. Local people came, too, making total attendance 265,000. Visitors to the exhibition spent $80 million. Compare that figure to the $2.5-million exhibition cost.
Who gained from the $80 million? Retail stores-$15 million; restaurants-$27 million; hotels-$40 million; the state government through hotel/motel and sales taxes) - $5 million; and the San Antonio city government--$2.8 million in hotel and transit taxes. The city's share almost equaled the cost of its annual budget for all arts programs.

Smaller museums may not have collections that could serve as a destination attraction for thousands of people. Nevertheless, a small museum may contribute to tourism development in several ways.

A museum can join with museums in nearby towns to create an attractive regional package. Many towns are like Fall River, Massachusetts, in that they can claim a few attractions, but are not destinations. Fall River is the site of several museums and is off the beaten track. But instead of competing with neighboring towns, Fall River joined with them. They created the Americana Trail, a recreational and vacation guide to coastal New England. During its first four years, this collective effort brought $2.5 million into Bristol County.

A museum can sponsor, or help sponsor, special events that turn an area into a destination site, even if only for a day or weekend. Forts Folle Avoine’s Rendezvous Weekend focuses on the history of the Ojibwe Indians and the fur trade. Each July, the museum sponsors an annual Forts Folle Avoine Rendezvous Weekend. More than 300 people, dressed as fur traders and American Indians, camp on the museum grounds or stay in local hotels. The normal number of summer weekend tourists to the museum is about 500. But during the Rendezvous Weekend, the total ranges from 2,600 to 3,000. The economic impact for the community is between $125,000 and $175,000, depending upon the method
Visiting a museum can increase the amount of time a tourist stays in the community. The longer visitors stay in an area, the more money they spend. The longer they linger at attractions, the more likely they are to remain in town to have lunch or dinner or even to spend the night.

According to Marion Munson, owner of the Time Out Restaurant in Washburn, Wisconsin, the new local museum helped her business. "It's a total asset, which has brought more people downtown," she says. They go over to the museum and ask, “Where's a good place to eat?”... They come to the activities at the museum and they stay the weekend. They say, 'as long as we're going to the museum at 7:00 [for an event], why don't we go downtown early, do some shopping and have a bite to eat, then go over to the museum?'

Thus, museums can contribute to economic development of any community. In many cases, they could make even larger contributions by consciously planning their efforts and working cooperatively with local business people and officials concerned with economic development.

3. Tourists spend money

They buy food, tickets, gifts, souvenirs, and lodging. Economists count tourism as an export industry because tourists spend money that was made elsewhere. Similar to a manufacturer that exports a product to another place, tourists bring new money into a community.

The money that tourists spend in the community is re-spent
by those who receive it. A visitor who purchases a product made in the community increases the income of that business. When the tourist spends money on lodging, the hotel owner may use the money to renovate and paint, and the painter may use that income to buy a television set. The hotel owner, the painter, and the television store have all had increased business. This is the indirect or multiplier effect of tourist spending. The multiplier effect refers to the number of times a tourist's money is re-spent on locally produced goods and services within a community.

The impact of this indirect effect of tourist dollars depends upon how much leakage occurs. Leakage consists of the portion of the new spending used to purchase goods and services produced outside of the community. In the above example, the painter may have spent part of his fee on paint produced elsewhere. And only a small part of the money used to buy the television set would have stayed within the community as overhead or profit for the store. The store manager probably sent most of the money to a television wholesaler located outside the area.

The issue of leakage is particularly important for museums counting on international visitors as their economic development contribution. Too often, international visitors come as part of organized tours arranged by businesses in their own country. The firm often provides its own tour guides and returns profits to the country of the tour originator. Accommodations and meals may be at international hotels that send profits overseas. Cruise ships frequently remain in a locality for short periods, even hours, with an emphasis on programmed tours and shopping at a few selected places.

Calculating the indirect addition of tourism spending in a community can be either very simple or very complicated,
and either quite accurate or very questionable, with experts disagreeing about measurement techniques and accuracy. Some approaches employ studying records from all the affected businesses over a period of time and use sophisticated, computerized models for the calculations. Another method simply uses a standard multiplier, which typically varies from two to four, again with experts disagreeing about what multiplier to use. The correct multiplier will vary according to the type of industry or business being studied and the dynamics of the local community. In some cases, universities or state departments of development will base multipliers for an area upon previous studies.

4. Types of Tourism

People travel for many reasons. Economists and the travel industry place many types of visitors under the category of “tourist,” including business travelers and people visiting relatives. People traveling for pleasure do so for a variety of reasons. Some are sports enthusiasts, seeking golf courses, beaches, or hunting grounds. Some haunt museums. Many travel to visit family or friends. Others may seek the excitement of a city or the solitude of an isolated forest. Others want zoos, aquariums, or gardens. People often want to see new places in their country or to visit other countries.

Heritage tourism, eco-tourism, and cultural tourism are all especially relevant for museums. People like to learn about their roots—the history of their family, community, and nation. They also enjoy learning about the heritage of other groups and nations.
Eco-tourism describes not something to see but an approach to seeing it. It relates to the concern of environmentalists that tourists should not destroy sensitive natural environments or the culture and social structure of an area's people. Recently people have also been interested in agricultural tourism, visiting farms and small communities.

Cultural tourism may include heritage tourism programs as well as musical performances or art exhibits unrelated to the local history. Cultural and heritage tourism has been increasing and such tourists tend to be especially lucrative.

The concepts and use of the terms overlap. Cultural tourism activities may include: (1) visits to institutions including museums, historic sites, theaters, and dance or music performances; (2) visits to heritage districts to learn about ethnic food, other customs, language, or clothing; and (3) events such as festivals, fairs, competitions, and exhibitions.

When considering what your museum has to offer, do not forget the possibilities of niche marketing. There are travelers who will go to railroad or motorcycle museums. Bird watchers, those interested in ethnic history such as African American history or Swedish heritage, and enthusiasts of particular sports will travel to places and exhibits that highlight their interests.

III. What do Tourists Want?

Tourists want different things, and with a different intensity. Some people plan their trips around a particular museum or cluster of museums, while others might visit the museum as part of a package tour to a city. Some may just simply drop in if they happen to be the city for vacation or business.
The tourist industry uses the term "destination attraction" to describe a site that serves as the sole or main reason people visit an area. Individual museums rarely serve as destination attractions for the majority of people. However, combined with other attractions, they can be a powerful draw. Sometimes a number of museums will collaborate on a package of related events and programs. When the San Antonio Museum of Art hosted its major exhibit on Mexico, other museums in the city exhibited Mexican art from their collections and developed related programs. A well-organized publicity campaign promoted all the different events, and more than 131,000 out-of-town visitors were drawn to the city.

Combining several museums into a destination attraction can be a powerful approach as sometimes a museum on its own may have limited appeal. This may be particularly important for smaller towns, rural areas and places off the beaten track including places not normally visited by international tourists. Thirty-eight museums in northwest Wisconsin created a map of the museums in a 12 county area. Some of the museums would not be strong attractions by themselves. Collectively, however, they related the entire experience of northern Wisconsin's history--from pre-historic Indian times through the fur trading period and the later development of the logging, shipping, and mining industries that supported the growth of the region's cities and industry.

While some travelers may visit a locality to visit a particular museum or collection of museums, packaging different types of cultural attractions, for example a museum and a concert, or related food events may appeal to a broader audience. Even more effective packaging may pair non-
cultural attractions such as sports events and shopping malls with cultural ones. Tourists who are not highly motivated to visit an area solely to see a museum might still like a package that gives them something to do on a rainy day or in the evening. Once in town they also might extend their visit or return in order to include a museum visit.

IV. Demonstrating Museums' Economic Contributions

1. Museums spend money

Every time a museum pays its employees or buys supplies locally, it helps the local economy. If a museum attracts visitors from another state and they buy lunch or something in the shop, that brings new money into the community. When a museum buys goods or services with money obtained from outside the area, it is acting as an "export industry," similar to a local manufacturer that sends products to other states or nations.

2. Sources of outside money

   a. National and state money

   In the USA the federal government directly funds the Smithsonian Institution and museums operated by the National Park Service and the Department of Defense, among others. Their expenditures benefit the nearby communities. The U.S. federal government also provides funds directly and indirectly to museums throughout the country through programs in such diverse agencies as the Departments of Education and Transportation, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and
Library Services. In recent years, however, federal government support for museums has been declining and competition for state funds is increasing.

b. Foundations, corporations, nonprofit organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

An NGO is a non-governmental organization. The government may provide funds, but the NGO maintains an independent position. They are also known as civil society organizations. They play a major role in many places such as India. In many countries leading NGOs are women’s organizations.

A non-profit organization (NPO) uses its extra funds for the purpose of the organization, rather than dividing it between the shareholders and the owners of the organization. Examples of NPOs are public arts organizations, trade unions and charitable organizations. Many of the cultural institutions in the USA are non-profit organizations.

Support from these sources brings outside money to a community. Sometimes the organizations are local, but their contributions and endowment income comes from non-local sources, such as former residents.

c. Endowments

Money from endowments comes from investments, generally in businesses or financial instruments outside the community. This income flows back into the museum's community.

d. Trustees or members who live elsewhere

Another source of outside income comes from people who formerly lived in or were regular visitors to the area. One
town of 800 in Wisconsin had a number of summer cottages owned by people from Minneapolis, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Racine. The local museum cultivated a core of eight to 10 loyal trustees who lived in these cities. Jointly, they contributed approximately $60,000 to the museum budget every year. The museum, in turn, spent these funds locally.

The Madeline Island Historical Museum, LaPointe, Wisconsin, located on one of the Apostle Islands in the northern part of the state, also benefits from part-time residents. The year-round population is 187. But in the summer, it swells to 3,000, including seasonal homeowners and tourists. The museum's director considers himself lucky. The museum has "a patron network that's been built up from the '50s. The friends and family of the founders have a feeling of ownership in the museum," he says. "A number of the same people give $100 or $200 every fall. It's an old museum tradition. We're now dealing with their kids, who give . . . in memory of their parents and grandparents. It’s a generational tradition." It is possible that museums in localities that receive international visitors and especially those that have hosted exchange students might be able to tap them for similar support.

e. Sales to visitors from outside the area

Museums do earn money. They generate income from admissions, memberships, parking, restaurants, publications, royalties, sale of products online, and their gift stores. The U.S. Museum Store Association has 800 paying members. A 2009 survey indicted that the annual sales in their stores ranged from less than $1,000 to over $8.3 million with one-half of the museums earning $214,000 or less. When visitors purchasing these admissions and gifts come
from outside the local community, they help make the museum a part of the community's export industry.

**f. Sales of museum products or services outside the area**

At one time the Forts Folle Avoine, a historic site and museum near Danbury, Wisconsin, had a director who was an archaeologist. Each year, he and his staff conducted archaeological surveys, which are required for builders using federal government funds. The 15-30 projects that his team conducted annually netted between $95,000 and $225,000, money that the museum spent locally.

### 3. Museums provide jobs

Types of jobs typically found in a museum:

- Director and management staff
- Curators and other professionals who care for and interpret the collection
- Educational directors, guides, interpreters
- Security personnel
- Maintenance and janitorial staff
- Ticket takers
- Shop manager
- Shop clerks
- Exhibit designers and builders
- Volunteer coordinator
- Membership developers, marketing directors, and fundraisers
- Media experts including social media
- Computer experts
4. Museums support local businesses

a. Examples of goods purchased locally

- Material for building expansion, renovation, or exhibit construction
- Paint
- Office supplies
- Art supplies
- Film and development
- Food
- Crafts for the shop
- 8. Materials for costumes
- 9. Computers and other office equipment
- 10. Furniture

b. Examples of services purchased locally

- Carpentry
- Brick masonry
- Telephone services
- Heat and electricity
- Bookkeeping
- Catering
- Photography
- Computer maintenance and consultation
- Artistic design
- Management of endowment funds or investment advice
- Media expertise including social media
- Advertising
- Marketing and public relations expertise
5. Museums enhance the quality of life, build community pride, and enhance public education

Museums can help create an ambience for a town through exhibits, special events, and outreach to schools and other organizations. By displaying and celebrating a community’s heritage, a museum can acknowledge the importance and validity of local residents' contributions and lives. Many museums host numerous school visits, which sometimes function as an important part of the school system’s curriculum.

These contributions make the town or region a more desirable area. They also assist economic development by attracting second-home owners and retired residents, encouraging new businesses to locate in the area, and helping current businesses remain in the community.

Museums also help local employers recruit new managers. From Amarillo, Texas, to Wausau, Wisconsin, employers take prospective management candidates to museums "to let them know they are not being dropped into a cultural wasteland," said one director.

V. Claiming Credit for Your Economic Impact

The American Alliance of Museums claims, “On a national scale, museums are economic engines” pointing out that they employ over 400,000 people, contribute $21 billion directly to
Almost 80 percent of the USA leisure travelers participate in cultural or heritage activities and they spend 63 percent more than other leisure travelers. The arts and culture industry contributes over $135 billion to the economy and supports over four million jobs. Government support for the arts produces seven dollars in taxes for each dollar spent.

If you search the American Alliance of Museums Economic Impact you will obtain this information but also a basic template for creating your own economic impact statement. It includes the number of employers in your museum, the annual budget spent for goods and services in the community, the number of annual visitors each year and the number from out of town, the number of school children served and the admission fee.

The site provides examples of economic impact statements from a range of different types of museums. Some have created their own analyzes of their impact. But others simply site the national numbers. Organizations and government institutions in your area may have numbers about the impact of tourists and even about the impact of museums.

The C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa is a division of The University of Memphis. It has 13 employees, a budget of $224,109, 12,000 visitors with 20 percent coming from outside, serves 4,800 students annually, and has 8,000 hours of assistance from volunteers, interns and students. The statement does not calculate its own impact directly but provides data on the impact of tourists on the local area obtained from the Memphis Convention and Visitors Bureau.

On the other hand, the Please Touch Museum, a children’s museum in Philadelphia, claims that its direct expenditures of
$35 million and indirect spending of $46 million provides an $81 million economic impact. It also creates 857 jobs and provides $3.5 million in tax. The Association of Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums claims that its 671 members in the USA have an average of 9 full time employees and serve 106,616 visitors.

The Shedd Aquarium in Chicago uses data from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums to bolster its own statistics on its economic development. It also includes material on other aspects of its local impact as part of its economic impact statement including partnerships with other organizations and school visits.

Other impact statements cover the impact with a state or regional area. Although small museums can make their own case, they can also claim credit for being part of a larger impact.

As important, even small museums contribute to the overall health and viability of a community. Possible roles to consider will be discussed in Chapter Three.

References


Museum Store Association. FAQs

Chapter Two
Potential Advantages for Museums
Any museum considering becoming more involved in community development and/or economic development will want to consider carefully the benefits and costs, as well as the most appropriate ways to participate. Those already working on these issues who want to incorporate the potential benefits of their town's museum should be aware of its institutional concerns and limitations, as well as the potential advantages of collaboration. The questions raised in this chapter will need to be addressed by the museum and understood by potential partners.

I. What Is the Museum's Role? Know Thyself

1. The collection

What does the museum have to offer? Who will want to see the collection? How many and what kinds of people will the collection attract? Does it include items such as painted African masks, illuminated Arabic manuscripts or fading photographs that would limit display possibilities or restrict the number of viewers? What balance between protecting and sharing its collection does the museum desire or accept?

2. The mission

What is the museum's mission? Are certain activities, such as research or education, stressed more than others? Is your museum’s mission to help educate the largest number of children about the concepts of science or to preserve a small town's history.

The director of one historical society on the West Coast of the USA said a major part of his mission is to preserve and index
local newspapers, thus making them accessible to historians. Though both time-consuming and expensive, this may not attract many visitors.

Some museums' missions dovetail with community and economic development more comfortably than others. Some museums have added these to their mission statements. For other museums, that may be undesirable or unrealistic.

3. The audience

Who is the existing audience? If the museum leadership does not understand the current audience, how will they expand or add new audiences? How many visitors does the museum want? Who does the museum want to attract? What kind of an experience should they have? How long should they stay? From where do they come, and where does increased visitor potential exist?

How much will this audience pay for admission or spend in the store? Does your museum want to reach people in the community who are unlikely to ever come to the building because of perceptions, incomes or transportation problems? The answers to these questions relate clearly to questions of mission, collection, and personnel.

The more carefully a museum's leaders think through these issues, the more likely it is that they will select community and economic development activities consistent with their institution’s mission and operations. Many museums devote considerable resources to education of children, not only within the museum building but also increasingly within the schools themselves. Museums also contribute by making the area a nice place to live.
Mzuzile Mduduzi Xakaza, the director of the Durban Art Gallery in Durban, South Africa, was concerned that the community did not support its artists. Residents who were not used to viewing and appreciating art did not see it as something for them. They considered art to be for educated people and tourists. So he decided to take art to the public. He obtained a grant to hold a competition for a large statue that would be placed in a roundabout traffic circle in the center of town. The competition was a terrific success as it created publicity. The local ceramic artist selected produced a sculpture that combined traditional pottery skills and motifs with modern design.

In terms of defining desired audience, one director gave a heated response to the notion that the tourism market for Wisconsin's museums should be higher-income, professional, well-educated people, those likely to be found drinking wine at an upscale hotel rather than having beer at a campsite. He said that those people already knew about museums; his mission was to expand the interests of less educated people. That is a legitimate concern. But if this director's mission is used as a basis for allocating marketing resources, it will not provide as much revenue as resources targeted to the museum's most favorable tourism market.

Another approach reaches out to travelers via displays in airports. The airports both in Mumbai, India and Madison, Wisconsin display important art. Airports are a good place for outreach since they reach travelers and have built-in-security.

4. Finances

Recently, the interest in the connection between museums and economic development has increased dramatically. One reason is the current climate of budget reductions at all levels of
government; another is the rising cost for many basic museum operations.

Does the museum depend on the support of national, state, regional, international or local government? For example, many historical museums in the USA are county institutions (An important unit of government in the USA.). While there was a constant stream of government support in the past, this is no longer secure in the USA.

Does your museum expect to lose substantial support from national grants? Is competition with foundations, non-governmental organizations or other sources growing because of the increase in the number of museums, cuts in government funding for social and cultural programs, and a general movement away from funding operating expenses? Does the museum need more staff because the pool of volunteers, traditionally female, has eroded as older women pass on and younger women now work or attend college full-time? Could new retirees replace these volunteers?

The answers to these questions will help determine the benefits to an institution for participating in local community and economic development efforts. If a museum needs goodwill from local city government representatives, hosting an annual event honoring important events or persons in the town's history may prove more useful than sponsoring an exhibit of rare European prints. But if the local government is anxious to attract tourists, the opposite may be the case.

5. Trustees, staff, and volunteers

If you do not include trustees, staff, and volunteers in development planning, you are asking for trouble. Remember that a museum's very limited resources include staff and volunteers. Both often perceive new activities as taking
attention from existing projects or priorities. The new activities may demand different skills, actions or behaviors from them.

An historical museum serving as a community center that provides morning coffee for older volunteers will have a different atmosphere if it begins attracting bus tours of people who must be attended to promptly and efficiently. Such shifts create resistance and disagreements, which are best addressed candidly up-front. At the very least, trustees, staff, and volunteers should be informed about the reasons why it is appropriate for museum resources and time to be spent on the new activities.

Undertaking community and economic development activities, however, gives existing trustees, staff, and volunteers’ countless opportunities to develop new skills and relationships. They also likely have useful contacts and expertise. Their friends, neighbors and organizational contacts can be tapped to help design and implement new activities. They may know people who are marketing experts, grass roots activists, and members of different ethnic, racial, tribal or religious groups that are unknown to museum staff.

II. Advantages to Increased Participation

1. More visitors

Museums house collections with treasures that can fascinate people. Some have outstanding examples of world-famous
masters, such as the paintings by El Greco in the Toledo Museum, Ohio. Even without such treasures, a museum’s collections properly exhibited will help people understand themselves and their culture.

Few museums have more visitors than they want. Even museums that experience occasional crowding may want larger audiences at certain times of the year or a wider cross-section of people.

2. Increased revenue

More visitors increase revenue through admission fees, food purchases, and shop purchases. New visitors become prospects for recruitment as members, participants at seminars or festivals, donors, and funders. Rising visitor numbers will impress local governments and businesses and make them more receptive to increasing financial and other support. Trustees and foundations want to know "how many people you serve." In an era of budget cutbacks, continued national, state, and local support for museums will depend upon whether a large number of people believe that museums make a significant contribution to the community.

3. Ability to fulfill educational mission

If more people come, more people will learn. To expand their audiences, museums may provide many learning opportunities--from text labels and audio-visual materials to formal programs. If the museum's programs and exhibits are designed to provide
successful learning experiences for individuals with different interests and learning styles, the educational mission is more likely to be fulfilled. If increased attendance results in more funding, either directly or indirectly, that may create additional resources for educational opportunities.

4. Ability to fulfill research and curatorial missions

The greater the number and variety of people who appreciate a museum, the more likely funds for fulfilling goals will become available. This particularly applies if the exhibits themselves can display some of the curatorial and research function. The Logan Museum of Anthropology at Beloit College, Beloit, Wisconsin, renovated the museum with the visitor in mind. The director "brought upstairs what used to be downstairs," and turned the storage and workspace into an exhibit. Glass walls permitted the visitor to see the rows of Indian pottery on the shelves and watch the students and curators as they cataloged and cared for the objects.

5. Collection development

People who visit museums may have items or even entire collections to donate.
6. More respect and support from the community

By participating more actively and visibly in local community and economic development efforts, a museum positions itself to be recognized as an important partner in the community's life and future, rather than simply a nice place for an occasional visit.

III. Things to Consider

1. Losing sight of collection responsibilities

Museums have multiple roles, but they typically revolve around collecting, preserving, and interpreting. Collections take staff time and attention, and require money. Visitors and funders often do not understand the cost of managing collections beyond those they see on exhibit. Preservation often requires expensive environmental controls and hours of painstaking labor. Museums will need to show their collection management efforts to outsiders, and explain the importance of funds for these activities. This will help create understanding of the museum's need to set realistic limits on its other activities.

2. Museums are not theme parks

The mission of any museum goes far beyond entertainment. Most museums would agree that enjoying the museum experience enhances visitor learning. But if taken too far, the desire to "sell the product" can dilute the exhibits' historical accuracy and artistic integrity.
Carefully employed, however, entertainment techniques can further a museum's educational mission by making the museum user-friendly. A famous and successful restaurant owner in Chicago claimed that he served flaming steaks because "it pleases the customers and it doesn't hurt the food." A museum, however, is not a restaurant, but an institution of trust. Museum traditions call for accurate scholar-ship and intellectual honesty, even when treating controversial subjects. Nevertheless, a message based on good research and intellectual integrity can be enhanced using modern technology and a variety of delivery methods in a manner that does not change its content. A number of museums now create logos representing their brand. London’s Tate’s twitter @Tate is the most followed brand in the United Kingdom.

3. Museums are not Wall Street

Making money is not a museum's main mission. If a museum neglects curatorial tasks to take on more and more moneymaking projects, it eventually could find that it has nothing left to display. One museum professional says that if he shifted his budget to provide more programs, "my collections would suffer, my educational role would suffer, and my research would suffer. In the long run, I'd suck the heart out of [my museum], and pretty soon I'd be marketing a shell."

A balance is necessary. The correct balance will differ for each museum. A historic home, for example, should take into account the wear and tear on the building. "The house itself is an antique and [in] everything we do here, even the cleaning products [we use], we have to regard our environment as an
antique," said Rachael Martin, director of the Fairlawn Mansion and Museum, Superior, Wisconsin.

Martin’s trustees “see the museum the same way everyone in the community sees the museum, the programs, [and] the visible aspects." But they quickly became "enlightened" about "nuts and bolts" when she provided behind-the-scenes tours.

Martin also constantly under-took more subtle education projects, such as distributing short articles dealing with aspects addressed by trustee committees. One of her more successful strategies was holding trustee meetings in various rooms of the museum. Sitting in a meeting for several hours, the trustees "gawk around a bit," gradually gaining a more intimate appreciation of the room. Trustees would comment, “Oh, look at all the work going on in this room. I didn't notice the floors were in such bad shape. That's a good way to fix them.”

To provide trustees with additional confidence in her recommendations for preservation work, Martin sometimes invited experts widely respected in the community, such as an architect, to committee meetings.

4. Shifts in direction require support from trustees, staff, and volunteers

Trustees, especially those of small museums, sometimes donate important parts of collections and want them displayed "like when grandma had it." Volunteers who have been handling
major responsibilities may feel that an exhibit display is "their turf." A number of museums are adopting business practices, such as strategic planning, to examine how the various parts of the museum function, consider changes, and build new agreements among all participants.

In 1986, the Outagamie County Historical Society, Appleton, Wisconsin, adopted a five-year plan, which was revised in 1992. Within ten years of adoption of the first plan, the society completed restoration of both the Outagamie Museum and the Charles A. Grignon Mansion, an 1837 Greek revival home; opened a prize-winning exhibit, "Tools of Change"; and mounted an exhibit about Houdini. The society also raised $5.6 million, half of which was used for an endowment supporting four positions.

Then-director Donald R. Hoke said that the strategic plan was crucial to achieving these successes: The plan represents "decisions about what you want to get accomplished . . . . [It] defines what you do when you [go to work] in the morning and [helps to] allocate scarce resources."

Creating such plans forces trustees and board members to focus, make decisions, and consciously affirm values and approaches. Often, the basic mission declared in the articles of incorporation has not been re-examined in years. Frequently, even trustees who use business techniques in their own operations must be helped to realize that museums need to employ the same techniques.

Strategic plans also reduce confusion and potential conflict, particularly for new staff and volunteers. They also clarify what a particular museum is not. This enables staff to respond to an enthusiastic board member with a pet project or a volunteer
with a gift of an unneeded artifact by asking them how it relates to the strategic plan.

5. Do not overwork the collection

Some objects, such as rare Japanese prints, painted African masks; ancient Chinese calligraphy or an Arabic manuscript should not be exposed to light on a constant basis, as ultraviolet waves will fade the colors. The Chazen Museum of Art in Madison, Wisconsin, responds to this problem by having temporary exhibitions at regular intervals that display different prints from the museum’s extensive collection of Japanese works.

Many smaller historical museums have such limited funds that their objects, especially photographs and negatives, are rapidly deteriorating due to lack of proper care.

Occasional displays of selected objects, or photographs of them, especially ones that include an explanation of conservation needs and techniques might actually contribute to preservation by stimulating interest and funds.

6. Security problems

Security problems are real whether you have one volunteer or thousands of visitors. Increasing the number and complexity of exhibits and events, as well as the number of volunteers and visitors, increases a museum's risks. Museums have suffered theft of objects and store merchandise by staff, volunteers,
researchers, students, and visitors. Carefully checking credentials and references of new staff and volunteers, good supervision, detailed planning of traffic flow, exhibit design, and control can alleviate problems. Directors of other museums, especially those with similar collections or sizes, can provide suggestions. Don’t forget that the greatest security threat to your objects may be a leaking faucet dripping from the ceiling or bugs nibbling at paper etchings. The International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Committee for Museum Security (ICMS) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) all have materials on security.

7. Loss in quality of experience because of crowds

An extensive study of visitor reactions to 11 major art museums found that people experienced exhilaration, awe, and excitement. One visitor described a work as "the most breathtaking piece of art I have ever seen in my life. I just sat there and looked and looked and looked. It was totally incredible…. I got chilled; that isn't even the word for it."

Such an in-depth experience becomes difficult when someone else's head is between the visitor and the painting. This can present a serious problem, especially for art museums. It helps to post labels at a distance from the picture. One solution is to route traffic flow far enough away from the paintings so that more than one person can see them from a proper viewing distance at a time.

Museums frequently are not successful in this effort. The organizers of a major exhibit of Impressionist works placed a guide string on the floor about one foot in front of the paintings. Although the string prevented people from moving closer, it also encouraged them to walk exactly one foot in front of the
painting--which neither provided good viewing positions for the large Impressionist works nor permitted viewing by more than one visitor at once.

An exhibit of Japanese screens had security devices that beeped every time a viewer came within several feet of the objects. The noise from the beeps destroyed the atmosphere of quiet contemplation evoked by the works of art. The location of audio-tour outlets also influences how many people can appreciate the picture at the same time and whether anyone can see the entire painting without a head in the way.

Marketing the museum's other exhibits and activities, such as slide shows occurring outside the exhibit area, can help even out visitor flow. Many museums also limit the number of people permitted in an exhibit at one time.

8. Financial loss

Not all economic development activities prove financially successful. Before participating in a venture, those responsible for economic development should analyze the project and clarify expectations with everyone involved.

Planners also should keep good records and conduct a dispassionate follow-up evaluation to determine which activities to undertake again.

9. Overselling museums’ community or economic development contributions

The major roles of museums are collection, preservation, research, and education, whether or not they benefit the local
economy. Community development efforts are complex, frequently controversial and can take decades. Not all museums can become major tourist attractions. Even those that do may not contribute as much to the local economic as some other types of enterprises. If the museum oversells its potential contribution it runs the risk of losing support. Museums' contributions, however, can provide part of an argument for financial support. If, after careful weighing the pros and cons, a museum director decides that promoting the museum's role in local community or economic development would be beneficial, different options exist.

IV. Structuring Participation

Having determined its level of involvement in community or economic development, a museum can then work out how best to proceed. In most cases, the community will have many individuals and organizations already involved. Key players often include non-profit organizations, local units of government, non-governmental organizations, economic development planning districts or organizations, business organizations, downtown revitalization committees, the planning departments or staffs of local colleges or universities, Agricultural Extension Service staff, banks, owners or directors of major businesses, and service clubs such as the Rotary International.

The first step is to identify the major existing players and find how they operate. In many communities, the players in community or economic development are numerous, overlapping, and sometimes competitive. Wisdom dictates proceeding cautiously and learning as much as possible before jumping in. This approach allows you to identify how the
museum can make its best contribution given its own mission and goals.

Start by contacting other area museums and providers of cultural services to explore cooperative alliances. Members of your board, staff, and volunteers can serve as good sources of information. In some cases, the director and a board member may approach an organization together if the board member already has a contact.

When making these contacts, think broadly. Talk to the owners of art-related businesses such as galleries and antique dealers. Plan participation so that local businesses and others do not perceive your efforts as unwelcome competition.

After learning what community or economic development efforts are in the works, the museum's leadership must realistically assess its potential contribution. Should it become an active member of an existing team? Can the museum supply new leadership? Or will its best choice be to remain an outsider or play a limited role margin?

Remember that museums may have some hidden assets. In many smaller communities, the museum's director, staff, board members, and volunteers are among the most educated persons in the community. They may have planning and organizational skills of particular value to a community development or economic development effort. They may have seen the latest methods in strategic planning, evaluation, and computer technology at national conferences, or may have read about successful examples in professional journals. They may have computer expertise and have research and Internet savvy.

Museum staffs have knowledge and expertise that might be shared. They understand how to use computers, conduct
research, and create artistic presentations of objects or images. Museums also have space that might be used for parties, meetings, seminars or other purposes.

Museums often command respect similar to that granted religious institutions and universities. Museums may be considered sources of objectivity and neutral analysis. If various community fractions are arguing, merely hosting the meeting in the museum may provide a neutral "turf" and help resolve issues.

Museums often have staff with expertise on local history and on the diverse heritage of the region that can provide insights and perspective to community discussions. Many museums now highlight the contributions that indigenous peoples and minority groups have made to their local areas. For years, the Black Historical Museum, Sherman, Texas, represented only the culture of the community’s Caucasian residents. An outreach effort to the public, libraries, and older members of the African-American community, combined with research into the museum's own collection, resulted in an exhibit called "The Black History of Grayson County," which opened with a record crowd.

At one point the Texas Association of Museums developed an excellent publication, Action Plan: Multicultural Initiatives in Texas Museums, which provided detailed and extraordinarily insightful and sensitive suggestions to museums concerned with their roles in multicultural leadership. I was astonished to read the long list of ethnic slurs that had been used to demean various groups during the USA’s long history. It included almost every indigenous and immigrant group in the USA’s history. Many other nations have numerous ethnic, tribal and religious differences and histories of derogatory terms and treatments that some museums might want to address.
In 1994 at a time when many people were reluctant to even mention AIDS, the Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, united 25 organizations in a collaborative effort to educate the public about HIV/AIDS. They created a museum exhibit consisting of life masks and oral histories. "Project Face to Face" attracted 17,927 visitors and reached many more through extensive media coverage and programs developed by collaborating organizations. All of the many letters to the local paper about the exhibit were positive. One young visitor wrote in the gallery comment book, "I leave this place greatly changed. This exhibit . . . allowed me to actually realize how AIDS affects everyone."

As it becomes a more active community and economic development player, a museum will need to consider its role carefully to avoid becoming a target of community resentment. Often, the respect granted museums as places of knowledge is mixed with contempt for their staffs, who are seen as "ivory tower," non-practical people who know nothing about reality or business. One way for museums to overcome this is by learning business terms, approaching projects in a business-like manner, articulating the museum’s business contributions, and becoming an active partner in community life. The next chapter will consider ways in which museums can make themselves more attractive to tourists as well as local residents, thus participating more fully in economic and community development activities. Approaching community and economic development in a business-like manner is the wisest way for a museum to use its limited resources.
Chapter Three
MUSEUMS AND COMMUNITY

I. Building Community

1. Importance of Museums
Museums contribute to enhancing their community in many different ways besides tourism. They make the community a nicer place to live. They provide a sense of history, a means of connecting with the past. They build community pride in accomplishment and an understanding of regrettable aspects of the area’s past.

A number of nations including China, Korea, Brazil and the United Arab Emirates and Cambodia use the arts as part of their national image. The arts can provide a positive portrait to the international community. They can also assist in providing a shared national identity in places with different ethnic groups or those who experience a rapid influx of migrants.

In recent decades in the USA and elsewhere a number of museums have broadened their missions from collecting and displaying objects to becoming a more integral part of their community life. What is appropriate for a particular museum depends upon the mission, the collection, the staff and the institutional arrangements. In countries where the government runs the museums and staff are civil servants there may be less possibility or motivation to innovate than in non-profit or private museums in the same country. Museums in universities may be restricted by a variety of organizational requirements.

There is some evidence that even people who do not visit their museum respect it and like having it in their community.

When the Detroit Institute of Art was facing the possibility of selling its paintings because of a financial crisis, citizens voted to raise their property taxes to keep the museum open and save its pictures. Voters supported the museum although many of them had probably never entered the museum’s doors.
Richard Harwood, who heads the Harwood Institute for Public Innovation, suggests that museums are well positioned to take leadership in their localities. They enjoy trust and have the power to convene people from throughout the community. They have the ability to be catalytic. Museums are rooted in knowledge, know how to examine facts and causes and evaluate evidence.

Museums desiring to take a leadership role in the improvement of their communities can draw upon a long history of community development activities, experience and knowledge both within the USA and in many countries. Advice abounds. Tapping into it is beyond this book but the Internet should point you to information and resources. Wikipedia provides an overview of different approaches to community development.

2. Community Development’s Rich History

In the USA community development efforts have ranged from cleaning up a park to operating major housing and businesses. Some organizations have operated solely as grassroots efforts while others have received substantial funding from foundations and governments. A similar picture exists in other nations.

Harwood suggests talking to people about their aspirations, not their complaints. Focus on what is achievable, and what people can agree to put into action. Set clear goals and celebrate success.

Museums often tell the story of a place and its people. They can help a community examine its history, celebrate its successes. They can help create an empowered narrative.
Museums may well have objects that demonstrate a community’s strengths over time, the skills and knowledge of its people. Harwood emphasizes the importance of “the narrative that the community tells about itself.”

Part of a community’s narrative revolves around whether people can trust each other, whether they will work together, whether they can compromise, negotiate conflict. Community development efforts can change that narrative. For example, in one community in Chicago people of very different incomes shared a common fence. For a summer people from both sides of the fence met together to undertake a project to paint the fence. The group did not last when Chicago’s cold winter made it impossible to meet out-of-doors and there was no convenient public place to meet. The income gaps made meeting in each other’s homes uncomfortable. But a year later people felt differently about living there. “When I meet a neighbor at the bus stop, I’m not afraid.”

Start small. Cleaning up an alley, planting flowers or creating a community garden, building a children’s playground are examples of successful projects that required little skill or money. People of all ages will turn out to help create something for children. What could a museum contribute? You probably have someone capable of facilitating a meeting and developing a systematic plan. Your exhibit designers have envisioning and building skills. The person who does your marketing can create an attractive flyer encouraging people to come to a meeting.

Such an approach can lead to multiple meetings rehashing the same issues since different people arrive at each meeting. If they do not feel heard, they will drop out and badmouth the process so listen to everyone and do so with respect. Regular attendees will become bored, resentful about listening to the
same discussion over and over and quit coming.

I once used slides to overcome this problem. At the first meeting I asked people to close their eyes, and tell me what they would see if the neighborhood was the way they wished. Then I asked them, what would you hear? What would you feel? We listed their responses.

I took slides to illustrate the aspects of community life they wanted. At the next meeting I started by showing the slides and asking if I had accurately captured the vision of expressed at the previous meeting. I then asked if the new people agreed with the vision and if they had anything to add. Once their suggestions were added, the meeting moved forward quickly. The visual display avoided a repeat of the previous meeting.

Involve everybody. In many communities an active effort may be needed to involve newcomers, tenants or those who do not speak the local language fluently.

II. Approaches to the Museum’s Role in the Community

Gretchen Jennings advocates for an empathetic museum. Such a museum would see itself as part of the larger community with responsibilities for civic affairs. It would not only address the community’s issues but also stand ready to help in emergencies by providing resources and a place for people to share their concerns.

The essential museum would have connections with diverse groups, insure the diversity of staff, make sure presentations and materials do not inadvertently send unspoken messages.
Some museums have collected the items left as a result of tragedies such as 9/11.

The Empathetic Museum group has recently developed an evaluation rubric (called a Maturity Model) that museums can use to assess their progress in developing institutional empathy. You can find this instrument at http://empatheticmuseum.weebly.com/.

Elaine Heumann Gurian has argued for creating what she calls the essential museum. Traditionally museums have been viewed as temples, place to house objects whose choices and displays tended to represent the power structure of a country or its previous colonial history. Gurian suggests that museums instead should become active partners within the civic life of their communities. Such a museum would provide a different arrangement of objects and feel of the space to facilitate more active participation by visitors. It would conduct more outreach to the community.

1. The Example of Libraries and Malls

Gurian suggests that libraries provide a model of more community-based and user-friendly places than many museums. Admittedly, they do not have the collection, preservation and research roles central to museum missions or the security needs. However, some of what makes them effective could suggest ideas for museums.

Libraries attract a diverse population for a variety of reasons. Walk into the local public library in my neighborhood in Madison, Wisconsin. Toddlers are watching videos or playing games on the computer. High school students are doing
homework on the computers. Grey-haired adults are reading the daily newspaper or magazines. Other adults are browsing books, using the computers, looking at the current art display on the walls or going to a class on literature in the back room. Every day 800 to 1100 people use this library. The library conveys a welcome to all, allowing people to select whatever appeals to them regardless of “literary” merit.

What does this library do that might be copied by museums? They are located near people’s homes. My library is open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. week days, shorter hours on weekends. They have extremely helpful staff including several reference librarians. They have books appealing to a wide readership but will obtain books from other libraries if they do not have a desired book. They display art of area residents, frequently that of children. They have events for both children and adults. They sell leftover or donated books cheaply. They stock not only books but also books on tape, compact disks and videos. Some libraries provide meeting rooms for community organizations or events.

Gurian points out that libraries in the USA were not always like this. In the past they were places to pick up and return books quietly. Talking was discouraged. The shift in activities and treatment of users resulted from a conscious effort by the national library association to encourage libraries to be more welcoming and responsive to the needs of lower-income and less educated people in their communities.

While shifting to a library model may not fit all museums, some aspects might be duplicated. Is it possible to place some of your collection in a branch in a neighborhood? Or create a traveling exhibit in a van? In some places museums have co-located with libraries. Even museums that do not embrace the library model, should consider them as potential partners.
Libraries have science materials and art books. They display art and could display reproductions from a museum’s collection or current exhibit. Or they could loan reproductions. The library in Columbia, Missouri, for example, loaned reproductions of Degas statues.

The library, however, is not the only model that Gurian uses. She also discusses the attributes of malls. As libraries, malls are places where people can freely browse and self-select what they wish to look at. Gurian suggests that the effect of having a variety of objects to consider all attractively displayed could be duplicated in a museum with more attention to open storage and more extensive display of a wider variety of objects that might be of interest to visitors even if not the most important from the view of the curator. Thirteen museums in Jakarta, Indonesia hosted and exhibit in a mall.

Gurian suggests that small museums may be the most relevant for this type of museum. The objective would be to serve as a place for interaction and facilitate self-directed learning. This could be accomplished by making displays relevant and providing ready sources of information such as computers with Internet connections. Relevance could be achieved by incorporating stories, especially those of local people into displays, hosting performances of dances, poetry readings, storytellers as well as discussions.

In Gurian’s opinion the new model of museums would include the following:
“Spaces both for small group interaction and for private contemplation that don’t interfere with others.
Help desks that are in a physical location that can be easily seen, but do not require the visitor to interact.

Front doors convenient to public transportation and foot traffic
as well as parking for the automobile. Hours of operation that suit those in the neighborhood. Acceptance of behavior, clothing choice, sound level, and styles of interaction that are consistent with norms of courtesy within the individuals’ community. Unobtrusive security systems.”

2. Promoting Positive Community Relations

Museums could foster positive relationships among members of its community. Consider the variety of relationships that exist in a local area. They can range from stranger to casual acquaintance, to friends, to families.

Gurian suggests that museums provide a service to a community simply by being a place where people can be with strangers in a safe environment.

This is especially important in areas where safety is an issue or where people may not see those of a different racial or ethnic group in their own neighborhoods or work places.

Museums can foster casual acquaintances that perhaps develop into friendship among volunteers including docents, regular attendees at events such as cocktail hours and courses. They promote both friendships and relationships among kin through being a friendly and entertaining place to visit. Many people visit museums as a social event to enjoy with friends or families.

Museums can promote the use of its facilities as a place for social interaction through having exhibits that appeal to a variety of ages and interests and through providing spaces for sitting and talking, coffee shops and special events.
Another possible way museums can contribute to building healthy relationships is to have people with a variety of backgrounds on their own advisory committees and their boards and by providing neutral spaces for outside community groups and boards to hold meetings. Through regular interaction around community business, people can develop what I have termed intimate secondary relations.

Intimate relations are those with close friends or family, people who know all about you. Secondary relations describe the type of interaction between a customer and a store clerk. The relationship is basically anonymous. The personal lives of the participants are unknown and don’t matter. People meeting for a committee meeting often have relationships that are similar to both intimate relations and secondary ones. At least in cities in the USA, people working together on a committee for public business often know little about each other’s personalities or personal lives.

They do not share the intimate knowledge known to family and friends. However, when people interact regularly as members of a committee they do develop some intimate knowledge of each other’s personalities and behavioral characteristics. They come to expect good judgment from that person, humor from another.

Such relationships can, however, build trust among people who might otherwise never know each other. They can serve as bridges between different racial and ethnic groups, religions, political affiliations or positions, neighborhoods or those of different income levels. They promote an understanding of and sympathy for different people that can crisscross a geographic area. They can provide networks of people who trust each other enough so they can undertake joint actions to solve a problem. Meeting in a public space, as opposed to a person’s home or a
meeting place owned by one group, is crucial to the
development of such relationships. Museums may be a place
where groups can hold their meetings that will be accessible
and comfortable for all participants.

3. Taking Leadership: Social Issues, Sustainability and
Becoming Green

Museums can take leadership in community betterment. In the
USA a number of cities have developed cultural plans to make
their area attractive not only to residents but also to business
executives looking for a place to start or relocate their business
and tourists.

Your museum can take a lead role in developing such a plan.
Depending upon mission, resources and inclination, museums
can be leaders in addressing social problems in their
community. Some offer special programs for those with
disabilities or serve as childcare centers.

Museums have served as sites for summer camps, pre-school
and after-school programs. The Newark Museum, Newark,
New Jersey, created Prime Time, a program from 3 p.m. to 6
p.m. held in three elementary schools. Developed in
cooperation with the public school district, it provides
museum-based activities related to the school curriculum.
Lois Silverman also has emphasized a broader role for
museums within their societies. In The Social Work of
Museums she suggests that the perspective of social workers
can help museums focus on the range of needs of human beings
and their communities: as individuals, as pairs, as families and
as communities. Museums not only provide a place for those in
each of these categories to enjoy the objects and either solitude
or relationships but also a place to consider basic human needs:
food, housing, health, and getting along with others.

In considering the appropriate role of your museum ask what it provides or could provide for individuals to promote friendships or couple relationships, and for community interactions in harmony. For addressing the human needs of people in your community what does your museum have to offer? Are objects, expertise or programs dealing with food and its production available? With the body, the development of science or medicine? With health issues, birth, and death? The Kenya National Museum, Nairobi, hosted an exhibit “Take a Positive Step” with data about treatment for HIV/AIDS and other infections and mental illness.

It provided computers with links to additional data and brochures with information about local sources of help.

Once you have identified your expertise ask yourself and others in the community questions. For example, the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina, once had an exhibit dealing with food and gave free admission to those bringing canned goods for the hungry. But think more broadly. The list below was designed for neighborhoods in the USA but similar questions could be asked for your museum’s community.

4. Questions for Neighborhoods Regarding Food:

1. Who lives in the neighborhood? What are the ages, family compositions, and incomes of neighborhood residents?
2. Does the neighborhood have an adequate grocery store or the capacity to support one that provides fresh fruits and vegetables at reasonable prices? For a family of four, following health experts’ guidelines for eating several pieces of fresh fruit a day translates into about 50 pieces of fruit a week.

3. Is access to a local grocery easy for those for people without cars or non-drivers? Do sidewalks exit with gentle grades and curb cuts so that a pedestrian pulling a grocery cart can do so relatively easily? Are the sidewalks kept free of ice and snow?

4. If no appropriate grocery store exists, does public transportation lead to one?

5. Are private vegetable gardens permitted or do they violate landlord, homeowner association or condominium regulations? Does zoning permit commercial, backyard or community gardens, or raising small livestock such as chickens and rabbits?

6. Do community gardens exist? Are they permanent or on leased land?

7. Do food and drink choices at schools (including those sold in vending machines) encourage healthy eating habits? Does the school system include information on food production, preparation and nutrition in its curriculum?

8. Do neighborhood stores and restaurants provide healthy food or only fried or sweet choices? What percentage of their shelf space or menus is devoted to healthy food?

9. Does any local organization provide data and courses
on healthy food preparation?

10. Do zoning and health regulations permit joint cooking or communal meal preparation? Do regulations or neighborhood sentiments allow extended families or a number of unrelated individuals to share living quarters and hence meal preparation? Do they permit assisted living facilities?

11. Do farmers’ markets or community kitchens exist?

12. Does a mobile meals program provide food to homebound residents?

13. Given the wage levels of neighborhood workers and the poverty rate, are there people eligible for food stamps who not receiving them? Does any group assist people in applying for food stamps?

14. Does the neighborhood host a food pantry or soup kitchen?”

These are questions that a museum might want to consider when deciding whether there is an appropriate food-related role for them to play. Could they mount a relevant exhibit? Offer to provide background data and facilitate community meetings. Provide space for a community garden on their grounds?

Another way museums can provide leadership is through
becoming a green museum and by providing community leadership on issues of environmental sustainability. According to Elizabeth Wylie and Sarah Sutton museums are positioned to demonstrate the advantages of being green as well as educating communities about the importance of environmental sustainability.

Museums have discovered that in addition to helping the environment, being a green museum can save money. The concept of a green museum has three aspects. One is how a new building or expansion is constructed. New museums or expansions can use sustainable architecture, technology and materials. Is the new building constructed in a manner that conserves energy in operation? Does it use materials that can be replaced easily such as bamboo rather than hundred-year old rare woods? Does it include solar panels or places on the roof for gardens?

The concept also applies to the internal operation of the museum. Is the lighting energy efficient? Are materials used in exhibits and operations environmentally friendly and recycled? Are cleaning materials biodegradable? Is the staff trained to be conscious of the financial advantageous of operating in a green manner and knowledgeable about ways to achieve it?

Museums have taken leadership in exploring the idea of creating a sustainable local environment. Science museums, zoos and natural history museums are especially equipped to offer ideas and knowledge. Paying attention to sustainability can include exhibits, programs, giving community lectures or school programs. Staffs often have expertise about the physical universe that could be shared with local committees concerned with such matters. They can provide accurate factual information.
How do you eat an elephant? The answer is one bite at a time. Becoming environmentally responsible can start with something as simple as printing on both sides of the paper or unplugging computers at night. It could end with an entire community becoming aware of climate change and the actions they can take as individuals and a community to lessen their negative impact.

Start with your mission. Does it include attention to green both within the museum and in terms of community education? Build a staff team to address the issue. Becoming green involves all aspects of the museum from curating to the restaurant, the shop and exhibits. Calculate cost savings. Evaluate results.

Draw upon existing resources. Many museums in different countries are now participating in the green movement. For example, the National Trust in the United Kingdom and the national museum association of Australia both have policies on sustainability. Arts Council England is putting sustainability into its funding programs. The American Museum of Natural History developed a traveling exhibit on climate change in cooperation with three museums in the USA, and museums and organizations in Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Korea, Denmark, the United Arab Emirates and the Abu Dhabi Authority for Culture and Heritage.

Tackling sustainability or social issues can lead to controversy. In the USA recently a number of science museums have expressed concern about having people on their board of directors who deny that human activity contributes to climate change. They have also become increasingly concerned about the role of business sponsors when they create exhibits on subjects such as oil. Will the sponsorship by certain
corporations influence your museum’s ability to consider presenting negative as well as positive aspects of an industry?

5. A Place to Address Controversial Issues

Museums today are one of the few institutions in the USA widely granted trust. This means that they can serve as a place for treating controversial issues. Although sometimes museums stumble into controversy inadvertently, those considering deliberately tackling a controversial subject need agreement at all levels of the museum that this an appropriate issue for their museum to tackle and figure out that they are capable of surviving any political flack.

Museums in the USA have held exhibits and discussions on issues as controversial as guns and birth control. Success depends upon careful planning and assurance that presentations are considered accurate and fair.

One of the best exhibits I ever saw was the McCormick Freedom Express mobile museum, a bus designed for school visits to educate children about the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution. (Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof: or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press: or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances.) The bus contained audio-visual presentations that enabled the user to explore the debates about the amendment while it was being considered by the Founding Fathers in the 18th century including what prominent opponents and supporters said. It then presented a number of legal cases involving the meaning of the amendment. They included cases on a range of free speech and other issues. In each case you could click on the
audio-visual materials to read the background of the case, the arguments for and against, and newspaper coverage. You could vote on how you thought the case should have been decided. You could read the opinions of different Supreme Court Justices and learn how the case was finally decided.

6. Coming to Grips with the Negative Aspects of a Community’s History and Museums as Places of Reconciliation

Around the world some museums have served as places to acknowledge and come to terms with unfortunate events in their area’s past. The National Center for Civil and Human Rights in Atlanta, Georgia, the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, and other museums and exhibits about the Underground Railroad reflect the USA’s long struggle with its history of slavery and its aftermath. (The Underground Railroad was the name for the network of secret routes used by slaves fleeing from the South to freedom in the North and to the network of houses where they could obtain food and lodging.)

Native American museums as well as exhibits in other museums celebrate the history and continuation of the culture of the indigenous people who inhabited the USA before Europeans arrived. They acknowledge the horrors experienced by native people as they were killed and forced from their lands.

Holocaust museums have been founded in a number of cities in the USA. Germany maintains former concentration camps as memorials and places of witness.

The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a
worldwide network for places of memory dedicated to create a
deeper understanding of the past and a more just future.
It includes members in 55 countries.

One example of such a site is the Killing Fields Memorial
Museum, Khmer, and Cambodia, which was founded by Dara
Duong a survivor who lost five family members. He lived in
refugee camps for over 10 years, eventually resettling in the
USA. According to the website he “wanted to share the story
of his life under the Khmer Rouge with the world, so it would
not happen again.” He also wanted the children of Cambodian
immigrants in the USA not to forget Cambodia’s history,
culture traditions and literature.

For migrants around the world, acknowledging their history
and culture and displaying it to their children is important.
Many Cambodians relocated to the USA. Seattle, Washington,
has the Cambodian Cultural Museum and Killing Fields
Memorial. The Cambodian American Heritage Museum and
Killing Fields Memorial are located in Chicago, Illinois.

Another approach has developed with the creation of Women’s
Museums. There are more than 26 Women’s Museums
throughout the world scattered throughout North and South
America, Asia, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. There is an
International Congress of Women’s Museums (IAWM).

The web page of the Museo de la Mujer, or Women’s Museum
in Buenos Aires, Argentina, explains that the Museum
“examines the changing role of women throughout history and
scrutinizes the challenges which are faced by women across the
world today.” It provides exhibits, classes and a place for
discussion of crucial issues. Issues addressed have included
violence against women, prostitution and traffic of women,
sexuality and eroticism, gender stereotypes, ethnicity, and political participation. The Japanese Museum on War and Peace (WAM), in Tokyo serves as an action center and witness against violence against women and sexual slavery.

Ole Winther raises the question about how museums should respond not only to controversial issues but also to violence. In a talk, “Museums Caught in the Crossfire” he questions:

- “Will fear stop museums from collecting very political objects?
- What can we do to prevent that –and should we?
- Or the even bigger question: Is it okay that museums leave out part of history?
- If museums do not insist on being the collective memory of society – who will be it then?
- Can it be too soon to exhibit objects?”

III. Museums as Places to Educate the Young

Museums have a long history of contributing to the education of children. This occurs partly through school field trips to museums, sometimes the only occasion that some children ever have the opportunity to visit a museum. This not only contributes to the children, but also makes it more likely that they will visit museums as adults. More recently museums increasingly are establishing cooperative partnerships with schools that involve careful collaboration in designing museum visits to make them more useful and in some cases development of classroom presentations and curriculum.

For success such partnerships must be carefully designed and
implemented. They must be built on the strengths of the museum’s collection and staff, structured to meet the goals and administrative constraints of all partners and provide an enjoyable experience for children leaving them feeling that museums are a desirable place to visit.

Museums desiring such partnerships should start with analysis of what your museum has to offer. Can you show children the history of their town or how to look at a beautiful picture? Do you have staff or docents who can make a museum experience fun and stimulating for children? For which ages? Are there activities the children can do, sensory experiences? Will your docents be able to adjust their talks to the amount of time children can listen without becoming bored and handle questions easily?

Next, what are the educational practices and needs of the school system, especially the teachers? In the USA recent emphasis on national testing has led to teachers’ complaints about feeling obligated to “teach to the test” and a need to ignore anything that will not provide their students answers to expected test questions. In some other countries, learning is very structured, sometimes consisting of rote learning. In such a case cooperation with the school system may be impossible but perhaps an afterschool program would be.

Does the content of your museum’s collection fit with the lesson plans of the school and into a specific part of the curriculum? Is staff both capable and willing to work with school children and cooperate with teachers in program design? Does the school district have funds to bus children to the museum especially if this involves frequent visits? Do you normally charge entrance fees and do you need to waive them? Will what you have to offer assist the teachers in preparing the students for tests required by the government or necessary to
obtain admission to a high school, college or other institutions of learning? These and other questions must not only be considered by all branches of your museum that will be affected, including trustees, but also carefully discussed with the appropriate school officials, teachers and any other organizations in your community that should be involved in the planning of partnerships or at least informed about them.

In the USA, a variety of national, state and local laws govern education and affect curriculum and testing. Local school boards, teachers’ unions and parent associations also play a role. What organizations in your community are relevant and what is the best way to approach them?

Your goals may differ from that of the school or the teachers. These differences need to be clarified before starting a partnership. You will need pre-trip and post-trip activities and consultations. You need written agreements.

You need to develop mutually agreed upon evaluation measurements that will show how well your partnership is working for both partners.

Effective school partnerships require a long-term investment. It takes time to develop the relationships needed. Procedures need to be designed to accommodate new school faculty and turnover of museum staff or the partnership will die when personnel changes. Unless such steps are taken with attention given to every detail from brochures announcing possible programs sent to school administrators to post-event evaluations, your community outreach efforts could run into problems.

Although the following example was not a school program, it
illustrates the problem. I once directed a neighborhood center in a low-income, multicultural area with very limited resources. In preparation for a museum visit, the museum sent someone to give a slide show to the middle-school aged children (about 10 to 12 years old). Their room was so quiet I actually went downstairs to see if there was a problem and found a room full of eyes glued to the speaker. However, the next afternoon, a rainy, cold end of the school week, we went to the museum. Without funds for our own transportation, we arrived after waiting for the public bus cold, wet, without having normal after-school snacks. The exhibit was on artifacts from the Belgium Congo. The docent was an older white woman who lectured to this group of primarily African American youth about the white man’s burden! She kept scolding one young man from getting up and actually going to look at the art.

The children were so restless and ill behaved that we almost cancelled a long-scheduled museum trip to another city the next day. But instead we broke the children into groups of four, each with an adult, and they happily roamed the museum.

The new media provide numerous opportunities for collaboration with schools. They enable exposure to the riches of the museum within classrooms. They make presentations by staff available and offer interactive possibilities.

School partnerships do not have to be limited to primary and secondary schools. The Center of Science and Industry (COSI) in Columbus, Ohio, operates as a center of science rather than a stand-alone museum. They have partnerships both within the building and outside. Ohio State University has a public television station at the museum and research labs that interact with visitors in an exhibit area, Labs in Life.

Distance learning is now possible. Kim Fortney points out that
for success the program should be developed with audiences similar to those targeted and are relevant to the curriculum. It needs a strong marketing program, which clearly describes the hardware/software requirements for use, good program leaders, and ideas for interactivity. Advance conversations with teachers are needed as well as resource materials, pre-and post-conferences and program evaluations.

IV. Museums as Places to Address Diversity

Museums traditionally have tended to attract only a segment of the local population. Typically this includes tourists and higher income persons that have post secondary education. For several decades museums in the USA have attempted to become more diverse both in their exhibits and programs as well as through making themselves available to a larger community.

Where to start? Start with your mission. Make sure it reflects an intention to reflect diversity both within the museum and in outreach efforts. Next, look at your staff, your committee, your board, your docents, and your volunteers. Consider not only their racial, tribal, ethnic and sexual diversity but also their attitudes. If additional diversity is needed, are there groups representing the group you desire to include that could help you recruit?

Be gentle with yourself and your staff. History shows us how difficult inter-group acceptance and cooperation is. The effort to address the issue directly and honestly is not easy, but many museums have done it successfully.

What to consider? Recognize the wide range of groups in your area that might have faced discrimination or at least negative commentary or attacks. The Texas Association of Museums
some years ago developed a manual for addressing diversity. It listed the different groups that had settled in the USA and the derogatory names that people had used for them. It included the indigenous Native Americans and the immigrants from each country that has come to the USA since the 1600’s. What are the groups in your area that others disparage? What are your attitudes and the attitudes of your staff towards these groups?

Move beyond blame and guilt. The USA has and continues to struggle with diversity. I remember my 90-year old grandmother complaining about “those damn Irish,” referring to schoolchildren she had known seventy years before. This despite the fact that she was about to vote for the Irish John F. Kennedy for President! The point is, unless examined, attitudes persist.

Addressing issues of diversity is not simple or easy. The discussion that follows is not the definitive statement on the subject but only one attempt to raise issues and stimulate thought. It focuses on Caucasian-African American issues but the points raised could apply to other groups such as those with Hispanic heritage or Muslims.

Frequently in the USA whites are asked to acknowledge that they are racists. Often whites and blacks mean different things by the term. Whites tend to consider their own attitudes. Thoughtful whites might ask themselves; do I react to that person differently because he has a black skin?

Blacks may resent individual instances of hostility, prejudice or discrimination but when questioned about racism they are likely to focus on institutional racism. They point out that racism has been an ongoing part of the institutions that govern USA society and affects their lives regardless of individuals’
personal attitudes. For example, prestigious universities often reserve places for those whose grandparents attended the university at a time when non-whites would not have been welcome. This means there are fewer places available to the grandchildren of non-whites.

Institutional racism exists when those of different races or ethnic backgrounds are treated differently by organizations such as bankers, the police or the media through rules, procedures, selection and training of staff and their supervision. When examining diversity, look at both individual attitudes and institutional arrangements.

For a museum this would include mission, composition of board, staff, docents and volunteers. It would include exhibits, educational programs, social media presentations, brochures and outreach programs. One young black woman who had a master’s degree said, “If I walk into a museum and I don’t see anyone who looks like me or there are no pictures on the wall of anyone who looks like me…I don’t know if I’m welcome.”

One approach for the issue of racial/ethnic differences is to consider the development of negative attitudes towards a group. When one white objected to being labeled as racist, Dr. Richard Davis pointed out that no one who grew up in the USA was unaffected by the conversation about race. Acknowledging this is more fruitful than focusing on who should be labeled as racist. If you ask someone if they are racist, they are likely to respond with anger or guilt. But if you ask them “what was the conversation about race when you were growing up?” it becomes an inquiry likely to be approached more openly. If someone examines the views they received when growing up, they can consider whether those views are accurate and how holding those views affects them now.
Beverly Sheppard has worked with diversity issues in schools. She cautions against using approaches that don’t work. Approaches that don’t work include focusing on ethnic groups only on certain occasions, pointing out the differences between that group and a majority group, considering a group’s objects out of context and highlighting a few heroes of the group. An African American teenager complained to me that she was sick of hearing only about Martin Luther King every year during in Black History Month.

Sheppard points out that ethnicity are not a quaint custom but pervades everything from objects to family relationships and beliefs. She suggests several approaches that might work in multicultural education.

Simply presenting facts does not work. Presenting facts might foster awareness or understanding but will not change attitudes. Developing tolerance and acceptance of others who are different requires challenging people to ask questions and examine their own attitudes and beliefs. Sheppard suggests that moving students or others from awareness to understanding and knowledge to tolerance and finally to acceptance requires more than factual data. It requires asking questions and presenting material in a way that encourages people to examine their own beliefs and place them in a broader context, without feeling attacked or at risk.

Western art museums frequently display art as something separate from the culture or intention of the artists. A renaissance Madonna is admired for the beauty of the composition, the vividness of the colors. Viewers from Europe and North American will likely unconsciously place the picture in context. They understand that the artist was most certainly a practicing Christian and that the piece may have been created
for a church. But presentation of an African mask simply as an abstract piece of art leaves the Western viewer without an appreciation of the sacred or political nature of the piece or the way it was used.

When considering cultural diversity, point out similarities. What differs’ among cultures is not basic needs like the need for food, rearing children, love, and spiritual expression but the way in which those needs are met. How do children in different societies learn to become adults? How do women in different places attract mates? How does the way another society dresses compare to the way we dress or how we dressed in past history?

Cross-cultural comparison of objects and their functions can also be used. What do different peoples see as beautiful? How are formal elements of art such as color or form used in different cultures?

Sheppard stresses the importance of involving people from the cultures being exhibited or used in an exhibit or a program in the design. This will not only make the results more accurate, avoid pitfalls that unintentionally insult people, but also serve as a means of outreach. Groups can be asked to contribute items or their stories. Oral histories will enliven an exhibit. Stories create appreciation of the circumstances and lives of an individual or a group. It is no accident that major changes in the treatment of African Americans in the USA were made after widespread ownership of television brought the stories into people’s living rooms or that police brutality recently became highlighted after the use of cell phones served to document it.

Working with people from the affected cultural group can help navigate the issue of what to call a group. When working with
a group of teenagers I went around the room and asked who wanted to be called African American and who wanted to be called black. About half chose each term. Addressing the issue openly and discussing it enabled us to create a sense of safety and respect whichever term I used. Otherwise every time I spoke one-half of the group would have been offended or simply not listened.

Working with people from a cultural group provides a way to determine which objects and ideas should be presented and how. Traditionally museums have conveyed the ideas of the most powerful group in a society, often a colonial power or former colonial power. The Canadian Museum of Human Rights, Manitoba, Canada, used an advisory group of indigenous people in designing the museum. They wanted to create an “environment of trust and respect…{not focusing on} who is right who is wrong but how {you} see the world.” The museum organizers wanted “to hear your stories…in your voice to share with visitors.” Although the mission of the museum is broader than stories of Canada’s indigenous people, aboriginal issues are addressed in each gallery.

The museum also reaches out to those with disabilities. The web site prominently features #VoiceOverPhoto explaining how to use an I-Phone to make exhibits more accessible to those who are blind or have low vision. Currently the museum is hosting an exhibit “Sight Unseen: International Photography by Blind Artists”.

Museums wanting to become more sensitive to various physical and mental conditions will find resources on the Internet. A quick search on museums and blind led me to the Typological Museum in Zagreb, Croatia, that focuses on raising awareness of the lives of the blind and partially sighted people. The website includes a list of ways to make the
museum more accessible for those with limited vision. A search on museums and autism came up with www.autisminthemuseum.org a clearinghouse of best practices.

Addressing diversity appropriately reinforces Gurian’s approach of the museum not as a temple but as a forum, a place where people see what matters to them and can interact about issues important in their lives.

References


Chapter Four
Product Development:
Increasing Attractiveness to Tourists and Your Community
From the point of view of economic and community development, a museum is a product—something that attracts visitors. Like any business manager, a museum director must consider how well the product will sell. The director must make sure that people interested in the product know about it and find it easily accessible.

Today, the mass market is divided into several specialized segments. Some visitors will not want to look at, read about, or listen to a lecture about an object; they want to experience it. Active programs might appeal to them. For example, the USS Silversides & Maritime Museum, Muskegon, Michigan, offered visitors the opportunity to spend a night on their submarine: "Eat in the mess, sleep in the bunks, and live as the submarine sailors did during World War II."

The Hong Kong Museum of Art has a display of antique bells with earphones letting you listen to the sounds of the different bells. The different sizes of these ancient bronze bells determined their tone. An audio recording reproduced the sounds that the bells would have made with their various tones.

Technology attracts many visitors, especially young ones. An exhibit on the technical difficulties of restoring an historic building would be of more interest to many than touring the house's elegant rooms. Science museums, especially ones that emphasize high technology and use interactive exhibits and videos will appeal, as will interactive exhibits in other types of museums.

The Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, provided a map connected to a computer inviting the user to move a pointer to her hometown and then find out about its history.

People interested in walking and ecology, might be attracted to
the Cable Natural History Museum, Cable, Wisconsin, which sponsored an outdoor walking tour. Others might like exhibits that appeal to their patriotism, such as the extensive exhibit on the 50th anniversary of World War II held at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, Manitowoc. The museum and local veterans groups co-sponsored a dance that recreated a 1946 celebration for returning veterans.

An in-depth analysis of the visitors at the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan, emphasized the differences between sophisticated and non-sophisticated visitors. The study indicated that visitors with the highest educational and professional levels approached their visits differently than those with blue-collar jobs and less education. The more sophisticated visitors focused on the objects or exhibits that particularly interested them, ignoring orientation videos and tours. Other visitors, less comfortable with museums, wanted directions to the high points, suggestions about how to view the exhibits, and short labels written at a 10th grade level that assumed no prior knowledge of the subject.

This chapter suggests 12 ways a museum can make itself more attractive and available to visitors. The suggestions have evolved from interviews with museum directors and economic development professionals in the states of Washington and Wisconsin; attendees at national and regional conferences on museums, economic development, and tourism; as well as from my observations at hundreds of museums on four continents. Consider how these suggestions and examples will appeal to people with different interests and ways of learning.
I. Visitor Services

Visitor service starts before anyone enters the museum. Is the museum well advertised with clear directions for car and bus access? Are there posted signs with entrances and parking lots clearly noted? Are the parking facilities available, convenient, and well lit? When visitors enter the museum, will they feel welcomed or over-whelmed? Does the museum staff at the entrance reflects diversity or are there at least posters or pictures that do? A young educated black woman from Cincinnati, Ohio, remarked “when I enter the museum and there’s no one at the desk that looks like me or no pictures representing me, I don’t know whether I’m welcome.”

Are staff and volunteers accessible, friendly, and knowledgeable? Are restrooms and food areas clearly identified, clean, and pleasant? Could a visitor to a large facility leave after an hour without seeing the most important holdings, simply because she did not know the museum displayed them?

Are there signs and labels in more than one language, especially those for directions to exhibits, food and restrooms? As I recall, the anthropological museum in Ankara, Turkey, had labels in Arabic, German and French meaning visitors from Europe and perhaps elsewhere were likely to be able to read one of them. The Shaanxi History Museum impressed me not only for the excellent collection but also because of the flow and signage. Statements in red, some in English, made finding specific areas of interest easy. Maps in several languages steered visitors to their areas of interest, especially important for those on tight time schedules. The Traditional Arts and Ethnology Center in Luang Prabang, Laos, provides exhibit labels in Laosan, Arabic and English. They recruit volunteer translators through their newsletters and through a
volunteer website called Global Giving. Translators can then work offsite via email.

The Centre now has folders with explanations about current exhibits available in French, Japanese and German.

Do you provide audio-tours, again in more than one language and suitable for visitors of all ages. When I purchased my ticket to “The Exhibit the Emperors Were Dying to Get Into” in Provo, Utah, I was handed the adult audio-tour. I also took the child’s audio tour to see how they had handled the issues of concubines and explanation of Buddhism for children who were probably Christian.

1. Helping the Inexperienced Museum Goer

The Toledo Art Museum provides an example of making their museum “user-friendlier” for those not accustomed to visiting art museums. They have a number of large pictures on the wall that explain the ways to look at and interpret art.

“Reading Visual Language, like learning to read a book or learning to see art (or any image) is a process….” The signs show elements of art: color, line, shape, space and texture. It visually portrays principles of design: emphasis, balance, proportion, rhythm, movement, variety, unity and harmony. Then another picture will discuss the use of form, ideas, symbols and interpretation. Others discuss each element with suggestions that ask the viewer how the picture or symbol relates to their lives.

A nearby display contains gold pieces from 15th century Tibet, ancient Greece, the Baule society of Cote d’Ivoire in Africa, and Renaissance Italy. A sign asks the viewer to consider how
gold was used similarly and differently in each case.

II. Attractive Exhibits

The local museum’s exhibits often frustrate both community residents and economic development professionals. A stuffed bird “dead on the table” as one director complained, does not attract visitors.

What makes an exhibit attractive to tourists? In recent decades the museum profession has transformed its approach to exhibits. The traditional approach made the visitor dependent on guided tours or labels provided by experts for all information. Today, audiotaped guides, interactive exhibits, videos, and computer information stations enable visitors to set their own pace. This enables families to visit together with each member able to focus on what most interests them. Making the exhibits accessible to people of a variety of backgrounds, languages and ages is especially important in places with many migrants and places such as countries in the Middle East where people are especially likely to attend events as families.

While some of these new exhibit principles are time consuming, many of them can be adapted by museums with small budgets. A small museum with one professional staff member may have outstanding exhibits, while a larger museum may display a major collection so badly that it is difficult to see or appreciate the objects.

The High Desert Museum in Bend, Oregon, developed excellent approaches that can serve as models for almost every museum. The museum contains a series of interconnected dioramas
portraying life in the High Desert at different times in history. A gift shop with related items, paintings and sculptures available that depict the desert and its inhabitants. The museum is set on 135 acres of pine forest and the outdoor exhibits include a 1904 sawmill and homestead which is where one will find the home of two horses, a pair of donkeys and some chickens clucking about. A pioneer wagon and homestead as well as a wildlife observation area – (indoor/outdoor exhibit pavilion) on managing the ponderosa pine ecosystem are also included. Visitors can see live animals, otters, porcupines and badgers, birds of prey and a Desertarium with reptiles and amphibians.

The museum benefited enormously from the work of a former founder who developed a compelling vision and raised considerable funds to implement it. Many of these elements could be adopted, perhaps on a smaller scale and with less expense.

Paying attention to the unique features of the region's ecology. The Cable Natural History Museum, in the small town of Cable, Wisconsin, emphasized the ecology of its area. Unlike the High Desert Museum, it did not have a multi-acre site. But the museum developed a self-guided five-mile walking tour on land 10 miles away owned by one of its supporters. The tour's guidebook identified and discussed many concepts also exhibited in the museum. The director estimated that 1,000 to 1,500 people walk the nature trail each year.

1. Exhibiting works by local artists that illustrate the region's natural or human environment.

The director of the High Desert Museum identified appropriate works of art and then asked wealthy individuals to
purchase them for the museum. While not all museums can afford expensive collections of bronze sculpture or oil paintings, many might be able to find benefactors willing to purchase less expensive forms of art, such as photographs. Or they could host shows of the region's artists.

An additional advantage to incorporating art into any museum is that it appeals to visitors who are not interested in historic or technological exhibits. Encouraged by several people, I visited the excellent Maritime Museum in Astoria, Washington. Though I had very little interest in ships or naval technology, I found the museum's marvelous paintings and photographs of ships entrancing.

2. Displaying live animals

Not every museum can afford an otter pool. But some could manage a small aquarium or terrarium. A museum may not want to encage birds, but it could place bird feeders outside a window. Any museum considering this approach needs to research applicable laws and regulations, and select animals that can be cared for and exhibited without harm given its facilities and staff schedules.

3. Reflecting the museum's mission in the gift shop and restaurant

Although many museum stores in the USA sell items unrelated to their specific mission (paying the appropriate federal "unrelated business income tax"), many also report that their best-selling items are books that expand upon their exhibit themes.
The past director of Forts Folle Avoine, an Ojibwe village and reconstructed fur trading post in Danbury, Wisconsin, advocated a close relationship between the museum's store and its mission and holdings. Staff "set up and stocked [the store using] the same philosophy as our visitation experience," stressing quality and authenticity. The store sold crafts handmade by members of the local Ojibwa tribe. This approach proved successful; the sales compared favorably with stores in similar museums. "You have to pay the price to start with, if you get into a tourism market your net profits are higher in the near term, but soon your store has a reputation of being merely another tourist shop." The store drew repeat customers looking for special gifts for weddings and holidays including someone who had driven 120 miles simply to shop.

The National Museum of the Native American Indian in Washington, D.C. celebrates the Native Americans throughout the North and Southern hemispheres. Their cafeteria reflects this with foods from a number of difference nations and cultural traditions.

If you are anticipating foreign visitors be attentive to their different dietary needs. Hindus do not eat beef. Muslims and orthodox Jews do not eat pork. Millions around the world are vegetarians.

4. Remembering silence

The audio for the first diorama at the High Desert Museum consists of quiet sounds similar to those that might be heard at a marsh in the early morning: the songs of birds and gentle winds rustling in the grass and trees. The sound effects provide the visitor with an enhanced awareness of life in the desert.
Any exhibit intended to inspire a sense of awe needs to provide visitors with space, time, and some degree of solitude. It also requires attention to the placement and sound levels of audio-visual presentations. I have visited several museums where the audios from several exhibits could all be heard at once making viewing and fully experiencing one exhibit difficult.

5. Self-directed audio tours are quieter than docents

Sometimes museums limit the number of people, who can enter an exhibit at a time, but good exhibit design and space management also can help to accommodate the audience while creating a feeling of solitude. The National Gallery, London, placed a rare *Leonardo da Vinci* drawing in a circular enclosure with limited seating and dim lights. This design encouraged quiet contemplation.

6. Making it interactive

Interactivity can be accomplished with low technology approaches. The High Desert Museum's outdoor area has seeds displayed in plastic cases with signs asking visitors to identify them. Visitors lift a piece of wood to discover the answers hidden underneath. Interactive exhibits can appeal to people who learn best from experience rather than from reading or lectures. Such exhibits are especially important for visitors who do not speak or read the language spoken in the museum’s location or for whom reading is difficult. In the USA a large number of people do not speak English as their first language and millions of others read only at a secondary school level. In many countries people grow up speaking a variety of local languages and a number of countries are experiencing an influx
of migrants as workers or those wishing to relocate who speak different languages.

7. Have something for people with different interests

The High Desert Museum appeals to those who like history, animals, technology, the natural environment, or art. Similarly, the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, Banff, Canada, uses approaches that can be easily adopted by almost any historical society. I had not planned to visit Banff's museums, but became ill during a ski holiday and wandered into one. The Whyte Museum featured the history of Banff and, in one exhibit, the history of tourism in Banff. I was not inclined to learn about the city's history and even less interested in its tourism experience. But the museum had recreated the turn-of-the-century lobby of a famous local hotel, complete with registration desk, fashionably dressed lady, trunk with foreign travel stickers and a child playing with a doll. More important, the people portrayed represented a real family that had vacationed in Banff regularly. The exhibit included photographs of the family and letters they had written to friends. I found myself with my nose pressed against the glass for 20 minutes despite my initial lack of interest.

Other exhibits in the museum also used historical figures to enliven history. In one, a mannequin dressed as a trail guide stood surrounded by guns and other equipment, each with a label explaining the necessity of the particular piece of equipment. Behind the mannequin, photographs and text told the life story of a real Banff trail guide. Other mannequins portrayed the area’s Native Americans, climbers, photographers, and railroad builders.
None of the exhibit areas were large; one was tucked into a corner of the room. Together, however, the 19 figures provided a vivid and captivating portrait of the history of the town.

These small exhibits used elements that most museums could employ:
Real people as examples
Photographs
Letters

Other museums using a similar philosophy have employed:
Quotations from people who remember the individual
Real people on tape or video
Docents who personally remember, "How it used to be"

When asked a question about an exhibit on fish seining, a volunteer at the Ilwaco Heritage Museum, Ilwaco, Washington, responded briefly, and then related a Tom Sawyer-type adventure from his childhood. (The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is well known to American children.) The volunteer and some buddies had stolen a boat and lived on an island where they camped for a week until a fisherman told them their families thought they were dead. This story gave the visitors a memorable example of the atmosphere of the town 40 years earlier and made the exhibits more interesting and effective.

Many museums experts stress the importance of creating a story. At one point the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, Madison, Wisconsin, had dioramas that represent six wars. Each one contained seven themes: weapons, medicine and food, soldiers' leisure-time activities, strategy and tactics, clothing, and the roles of women and minorities. This approach provided depth to each exhibit as well as a historical perspective of the changes in these factors over time. It encouraged visitors to reflect upon the soldiers in their own family history.
Arminta Neal suggests that the first job of a local historical museum is to tell the local story in depth. Her questions for museums include: Why is the town where it is? Who came here first? Who were the first non-Indian settlers? Why does the town still exist?

Does the museum appeal to several generations? Living history programs enliven past events for people of all ages. A visitor to Forts Folle Avoine, Danbury, Wisconsin, reported that her nephews stomped rice to loosen the hulls and tried their hands at throwing hatchets into a log. The 12- and 16-year-old boys found the experience fascinating, she said, "and you know how hard it is to interest [teen-agers] in anything."

At the Madeline Island Historical Museum, La Pointe, Wisconsin, visitors can feel the difference among fox, beaver, and coyote furs, as well as the texture of a finished beaver hat.

The 19th-century furniture at House, Greenbush, Wisconsin, must be protected from visitors handling it. Children are allowed to climb on one bed, which is covered with a modern reproduction of an 19th-century quilt, and feel the texture of a cornhusk mattress. During the Autumn Celebration Event, guests can press cider from fresh apples.

Since most people spend "no more than 30 to 45 seconds viewing a single display," a museum must focus its attention on the key parts of the story. The Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas, has a collection of old and colorful Texas military uniforms. But what caught my eye was the display of flag reproductions showing that a soldier fighting for a different government wore each uniform. The land that later became Texas was once a part of several different countries and governmental structures. I saw the entire history of Texas in one quick glance and gained a richer understanding of the
State's varied past.

8. Using storage to advantage

The High Desert Museum's collection includes valuable leather-bound books. The director enclosed an area approximately 10 feet by 3 feet, and set up a 19th-century gentleman's library. This transformed shelves of stored books into an interesting exhibit.

9. Change Exhibits Regularly

Changing exhibits will attract more visitors, especially for museums located in areas that draw repeat seasonal visitors. If people know that the museum will offer something new, they will come again and again. Changing exhibits increases the chances that people who have relatives or friends visiting will bring them to the museum. Faced with the prospect of having to look at the same exhibit over and over again, they may not return. Since visiting family is a major reason for travel, making the experience attractive to the host families encourages visitation.

Exhibit changes require significant effort, but they do not necessarily require extraordinary amounts of cash. The Hermann-Grima House, a historic house in New Orleans, Louisiana, offered tours during the Christmas season. One year, the staff decided to decorate the house as it would have appeared on a 19th-century wedding day. From the museum's collection, they retrieved a wedding dress, examples of appropriate gifts, special tablecloths, and trousseau clothing, all laid out near the festively decorated bridal bed. They set the dining room table with china and food appropriate for a
wedding reception.

The exhibit was highly successful. Several bridal magazines featured stories about it, providing the Hermann-Grima House with free publicity all over the southeastern USA.

For their next effort, the museum tried a funeral display. The house was decorated as for a family in mourning. A funeral tour showed mannequins in mourning clothes, special dolls for children, and refreshments for guests. The exhibit, a serious historical statement, was based on two years of research. But the out-of-pocket costs were less than $200, primarily for black cloth.

The Ilwaco Heritage Foundation, Ilwaco, Washington, built a reproduction of the town's main street in 1900. The street included a home, school, church, funeral parlor, barbershop, post office, and saloon. The initial construction was a major and expensive task. But the small museum then had an exhibit that could change every year, with little additional cost, through changing the date in the model town by a decade. While the clothes on the mannequins, posters on the wall, and magazines in the barbershop needed to change; the desks in the schoolroom could authentically remain the same for half a century. According to the director, summer visitors returned each year to see the new interpretation.

10. Hours

Regular, posted, and publicized opening hours inform local visitors and the economic development community that the museum has a professional attitude, even if volunteers operate it. Stay open the hours that you have advertised. Few tourists have sufficient interest in a museum to track down a volunteer who will "open on demand." While such an approach might be
appropriate for a museum geared only to preserving local objects and sharing them with local residents, it will not provide access to tourists. A museum with such a limited mission should consider expanding it.

When setting hours, a museum should take into account the expense of reprinting brochures and other publicity pieces, as well as the inconvenience and bad publicity caused by outdated and inaccurate materials. Once posted, hours should remain constant as much as possible. Changing them affects not only the museum's literature, but also the information given to tourists, tour operators and other organizations or published in joint publicity pieces.

Consider the needs of tourists. Often tourists travel during national or local holidays. Make sure your hours accommodate their visits. One Labor Day weekend, I planned a visit to northern Wisconsin as a combination camping trip and museum tour. I drove to a museum I very much wanted to see only to find it closed. I then remembered that the USA has three major holidays between late spring and fall, all including Mondays. Following the standard operating procedure of closing on Mondays shuts museums' doors on three of the most important days in Wisconsin’s very short tourist season since few tourists brave Wisconsin’s winter snows.

Museums typically are closed in the evenings when business travelers might welcome doing something other than working or sitting in a hotel room watching television. Many families also look forward to evening entertainment. A museum's potential market may suggest closing a few mornings or afternoons to allow some evening hours. Some museums have started afternoon music and cocktail events to attract young workers.
Remember that sports enthusiasts devote themselves to their sport during daylight hours but might be interested in seeing the museum once the sunsets. A major ski resort opened a museum that exhibits the history of the sport. Unfortunately, its 1-4 p.m. hours compete with prime ski time.

Clearly, a director must consider a number of factors before adjusting hours, including staff and volunteer availability and the real demand for visits after hours. A museum attempting to become a more active economic development partner, however, may want to discuss this matter with the local business organization, visitors’ bureau or whatever organization in your area promotes economic development or tourism.

If a museum is open only during the summer, the director may want to talk to the chamber of commerce (major business organization in USA) about whether opening on certain days during the winter or other seasons, even if for a few hours, would prove helpful. Some chambers of commerce sponsor special weekend festivals or events that might benefit from the added attraction of a reception or other activity at the museum.

When attempting to attract travelers on motor coach tours, attention to hours and timing becomes critical. Tour operators plan their itineraries very carefully. They may need to come half an hour earlier or later than the normal hours in order to fit a museum stop into their schedule. Moreover, buses can be late. If someone on the tour becomes ill, the departure was delayed, or the driver got lost, staff may need to extend the opening hours. One tour operator arrived at a museum 10 minutes late, only to be refused admission. Other operators have encountered clear and unpleasant suggestions that the visitors should hurry because the museum staff wanted to go home. Although this
reaction may be understandable, it does not encourage the tour
operator, or his colleagues, to schedule another visit.

III. Sponsoring Events, Festivals, and Products

Museums can raise funds by sponsoring or co-sponsoring a
wide variety of events, limited only by imagination and
resources. The small Swedish-American Museum in
Swedesburg, Iowa, a village of less than 100 people, raised
money by selling traditional Swedish cookies and coffee during
museum tours and providing traditional Swedish meals for bus
tour visitors. The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma,
taped more extensive resources for its annual fall gala. The
formal black tie dinner dance for more than 400 people
included a silent auction that offered items not available on the
open market, such as a week on a private yacht or a ski
vacation at a private home in Aspen, Colorado.

Museum-sponsored events have included lectures, field trips to
local and foreign places, concerts, and historic re-enactments.
Product development ranges from reproductions of museum
objects to T-shirts, from dolls to educational games. Items vary
with the museum's mission, collection, staff, and other
resources. This will be discussed in further detail later in
Chapter 7.

IV. Make Sure Local People Know About Museum
    Treasures

    Whom do tourists ask when they want to find something? They
ask the person with whom they are talking--the hotel desk
clerk, gas station attendant, clerk in the corner grocery, or the cashier at the fast food drive-in. Foreign visitors, or those from another area of a country where difference languages are spoken, will ask whoever speaks their native tongue, generally the hotel clerk. I have found that local people throughout the world often did not know the location or even the existence of a museum, though it was only half a mile away. Even when a local person knows the location of a museum, he frequently often provides incomplete and confusing directions and inaccurate information about opening hours. Poor directions may get you to your destination, but only if you are familiar with the local, often unmarked, streets. When I was in Oregon City, Oregon, the desk clerk gave me the correct route number, but did not tell me whether to turn north or south.

The problem may be even more profound in larger towns. While on business in a major USA city some years ago, I had a three-hour break in the middle of the day.

I figured that city had to have a good art museum with some excellent art. But it took two hours and a visit to the chamber of commerce to find out that an art museum did indeed exist, and how to get there.

Sometimes local people know that the museum exists, but have no idea what it contains or why it might interest a visitor. When camping in the Apostle Islands in northern Wisconsin, I took a U.S. Forest Service boat to the camping site. The staff provided a detailed 45-minute lecture on the area and its various islands. The Madeline Island Historical Museum has excellent collections and a first-rate video presentation that illustrates the history of settlement and shipping in the area, all related to the speaker's points. When the boat passed Madeline Island, however, the lecturer merely commented, "There's a museum on the island in case you're interested in that kind of thing."
What can the museum do? Invite local people who are likely to come in contact with potential museum visitors. They may not respond to a regular invitation, but they might bring their children to a holiday event. If the museum provides hospitality training to incoming summer employees, local businesses might send their summer employees to participate. This gets their employees into the museum and provides a chance to inform them about the museum's holdings.

The High Desert Museum held a community day with admission on a "pay as you wish" basis. According to the marketing and public relations coordinator, the museum wanted to "make sure that everyone who lives in the area has seen [the museum. We] hope they will recommend it to others who are visiting, and bring friends and family." The staff wanted to attract newcomers to the community as well as former visitors who did not realize that exhibits changed on a regular basis. They also targeted low-income families, especially those with several children, who found the normal $6.25-per-adult and $3.50-per-child fees a deterrent. The well-publicized event, funded largely by donations from the local business community, drew 1,500 people, approximately 1,000 more than normal daily attendance for that month.

The Cable Natural History Museum, Cable, Wisconsin, arranged with local realtors to provide a year's annual membership to the museum as a gift to anyone who bought a house. The museum provided the memberships to the realtors at a reduced rate, and the realtors were able to offer their clients an unusual gift when they have purchased their new home.

Signs, and other means of identification designed to help tourists, also help local residents. The Hermann-Grima House,
New Orleans, can be seen from the famous Bourbon Street, but tourists did not venture through the seedy block in between. The museum tackled this problem by placing a large banner across the front of the building.

The Art Museum of South Texas, located on the waterfront in Corpus Christi, looked similar to adjacent warehouses. The famous architect who constructed the building felt that highly visible outside signs would detract from the architectural effect. But when the museum placed a 20-foot-square banner across the side of the building where it could be seen by all pleasure boaters, attendance rose. When the banner was removed, attendance fell. The museum now has several banners identifying the museum and its current exhibits.

The art museum's first banner cost $2,000, but smaller museums could create a banner using staff or volunteer labor and only spend money on materials. Keep the message simple, the lettering large, and use waterproof material for the banner and its lettering.

V. Share Treasures, Glamour, and Prestige

1. Treasures

What is in the collection that local residents and businesses would find useful? Do people know what kinds of things might be available? Most historical society museums have
photographs of the town from previous periods. Restaurants and hotels could use reproductions of those photographs as decorations. Maps and photographs at the museum may provide information that a developer needs to determine the exact location of the flood plain or the site of a hazardous waste dump. Fairlawn, a restored 19th-century mansion in Superior, Wisconsin, provided reproductions of old photographs to local restaurants at a nominal cost. Staff also serve as informal consultants to contractors and interior decorators restoring Victorian homes in the area.

2. Glamour and prestige

Dancing around the dinosaurs is fun! At their annual meetings, both the Texas Association of Museums and the American Alliance of Museums have hosted cocktail parties and buffet suppers in museums. Food included regional and ethnic specialties, and there is often entertainment by local dancers. Many museums have settings for parties that can lead to new collaborative and funding opportunities.

The sweeping staircase at the entrance to the Philadelphia Museum of Art makes an impressive setting. The museum rents its facilities to its corporate members and to nonprofit organizations for events ranging from board meetings to receptions. According staff, such functions bring "quite a few people to the museum for a relaxed, sophisticated experience [giving them an] understanding of what the museum has to offer."

The French Legation, a historic house in Austin, Texas, rents its garden for events. Someone once threw a reception for the state legislature. The next morning, the director had telephone calls from three state legislators, who thanked her and asked if
they could arrange to hold a party for their wives there. Think what a difference this appreciation of historic homes will make the next time the legislature addresses a bill involving historic preservation.

Fairlawn rents its lovely facilities for weddings, meetings, and private dinner parties. The fees help the museum's budget, but the director expressed the most enthusiasm for the positive public awareness: "Anyone who comes here once, I . . . consider them an ambassador."

It is not just traditional museums that have attractive space for hosting events. The Olbrich Gardens in Madison, Wisconsin, is a partnership between the city and the Olbrich Botanical Society. It has free admission but rents a section of its gardens for weddings.

VI. Develop Local Assets

1. Oral history

All communities have people who have participated in historic events. The interpretative center in Stevenson, Washington, included a video of interviews with five local residents, including a woman describing her experiences teaching school during the Depression in the 1930s and her life on the home front during World War II. In another wartime exhibit, the Veterans Museum, Madison, Wisconsin, displayed a video of a local World War II veteran who described his feelings during the Battle of Buna in New Guinea. Part of the time the video focused on his face, but most of the time film clips of the battle accompanied his voice. It made the battle vivid, showing how it connected to the experiences of Wisconsin's men.
2. Storytellers

The public programs coordinator at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, used her background as a children's librarian to incorporate storytelling into the museum's offerings. She provided stories to the museum's guides, and trained them in storytelling. The museum also benefitted from the storytelling skills of a retired librarian who provided guide services.

In addition to enriching the visitor experience, storytellers can attract new and different audiences, especially ones with varied ethnic backgrounds. Storytelling can be used to highlight the history of families, to engage families in telling their own stories, history, and information about where they or their ancestors came from, and how they came to live in their present homes. The possibility for those in diverse communities and with new migrants is tremendous, whether those seeking permanent employment, temporary workers or those fleeing turmoil in various nations.

One exhibit that effectively used storytelling incorporating both excellent display principles and technology was a basket exhibit at the Audry Museum of the American West. The highlight for me was seeing baskets by a particular artist while holding a personal audiovisual guide with a video of the artist describing her work. Since many of the artists are elderly, this documentation will be valuable for future years. The museum used 13 contemporary basket makers as consultants for the project.

The exhibit also contained an electronic display where visitors could glance at all the baskets, highlighting individual ones for
further data, maps of the areas where different types of baskets had been produced, displays of materials used. The written materials were excellent and large enough and placed well enough to enable visitors to read them without blocking views of the baskets. Although some videos played on an ongoing basis, the volume level was low enough not to interfere with quiet contemplation of the baskets. The overall experience created displayed quiet respect for the grasses and other materials used in making the baskets and the landscapes where they grew, the slow passing on of ancient traditions and knowledge by the elders, and the variety of design and expression created both by different tribes and individual weavers. My only caveat would be that there was no announcement at the front desk or on the materials indicating that the personal audiovisual guide was available. Many of the visitors that day only found out about it when my sister, a basket maker, told them.

Incorporating storytelling into museums can take a variety of forms. Visitors to one museum's exhibit on fur trading could lift a telephone receiver and listen to a fur trader tell his story. In cooperation with the local school district, the museum hosted a national storytelling conference and sponsored a storyteller-in-residence, who presented programs for children at the museum and in the school classrooms.

The Children’s Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana, has an exhibit on the holocaust. They have reproduced the attic where Anne Frank and her family lived during World War II before being taken to the concentration camps. An actor portrays Anne’s father, pointing out the space and describing how they lived. Children watched with full attention.

In the USA a museum searching for storytellers should start with the public library, which will have information about
local storytellers and their regional organizations. Universities will have historians and probably experts on national or folk art. Many countries around the world have rich traditions of storytelling and oral history.

3. Craft Persons

Often museums provide opportunities for the development of local craft persons. Museum shops provide an outlet for their goods. Museums can deliberately seek out local craft persons by contacting state, regional, and city arts councils and organizations, which often maintain lists of local artists. College art departments may also help.

Craft persons can share their skills and increase their income by conducting workshops for the museum. This can lead to increased sales for the institution as well. A museum might actually help to create a marketable skill. At the opening of the End of the Trail Interpretive Center, Oregon City, Oregon, there was a woman selling dolls and pioneer dresses. She told me that she learned how to sew two years ago when she was a volunteer interpreter so that she could make her own costumes. Now she sells costumes on a regular basis.

The Traditional Arts and Ethnology Center in Luang Prabang, Laos, not only includes traditional crafts in its museum store, but also works with artists in villages to design products with more modern designs geared towards the international visitor. The museum opened a boutique across from a major hotel catering to international visitors.

4. Programs, slide shows, video presentations, and computer activities
From an educational point of view, these presentation techniques help fulfill the mission of increasing understanding among members of your community as well as outside visitors. From an economic development point of view, they encourage visitation and keep people in the museum longer, making it more likely that they will stay in town for a meal or overnight. Videos and computers have special appeal for younger visitors who grew up with television, cell phones and learn computer skills at school.

Well-designed programs sometimes can pay for themselves. The development of a video, slide presentation, or computer program is the type of showy project that often appeals to funders or businesses. However, expensive is not necessarily better. I saw two presentations about the local environment in Washington State: an extremely elaborate and expensive video on Mount St. Helens and a multi-slide presentation on the history of the Columbia Gorge. The latter was actually more enthralling. The excellent slides and the slower presentation allowed the images to sink in, and the script sensitively presented the complexities of the local environment.

The Washington State Historical Society's museum in Tacoma incorporated computers in its exhibits in a major way when they designed a new museum. A 40-by-60-foot map of Washington linked to seven computers. Visitors could type in a location and watch a television camera move across the map to the designated area. The computer then provided answers to a range of historical and demographic questions about that area. The museum's exhibits contained journals where visitors could access the journals and diaries of historical figures. Such exhibits will appeal especially to individuals with an interest in technology and to visitors with experiential styles of learning, who may not be attracted by the usual historical displays with
Multimedia presentation techniques permit users to shape their experiences rather than simply respond to a static environment. Visitors select whether to learn a little or a lot about an object, whether to spend five minutes or an hour investigating a subject.

5. Sponsor festivals, art fairs, and concerts

The opening of the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center, Stevenson, Washington, featured a juried exhibit of local artists' work depicting the Columbia River Gorge. The museum followed this with "Spirit of the Winds," an exhibit by Native American artists. Sales helped the artists, and the art attracted new audiences.

From October through May, the Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin, (now the Chazen) hosted classical music concerts in its largest gallery. These "Sunday Afternoon Live from the Elvehjem" concerts attracted several hundred people, and were broadcast live on the state public radio network. During the intermission, the museum's director hosted a discussion about current museum exhibitions.

For over 20 years the Los Angeles County Museum of Art has provided free jazz concerts on Friday evenings in the entrance plaza from April through November with an opportunity to purchase refreshments and a light supper. Over 42,000 visitors attend annually. The friends of the Hong Kong Museum of Art provide free Sunday afternoon concerts at the museum.

Forts Folle Avoine, Danbury, Wisconsin, hosts an annual July event with costumed historical re-enactors from all over the country, who camp on its grounds for a week. Everything in the
camp represents the period between 1680 and 1840. The event grew from 57 to 110 campsites in four years, with 3,500 attending during a single weekend.

**VII. Be a Part of the Local Community**

The extent and exact nature of a museum's participation in local affairs is determined by its mission and staff abilities. Museum leaders can set limits, but if they want to be considered a part of the local team, they will need to contribute time and money. Join the local chamber of commerce, other business organizations or those promoting tourism; buy an ad in their chief promotion piece. Sponsor a booth at the local fair. If the director does not have time to attend the key business-related service club, one of the board members already may be a member. Perhaps she would represent the museum and keep museum personnel informed about the club's activities.

Often a museum's hesitation comes more from lack of vision or flexibility than from lack of resources. In one small town, a museum director complained bitterly that the chamber of commerce would not purchase a $50 museum membership even though the museum attracted so many tourists. The next day the director of the chamber of commerce complained, just as bitterly, that the museum would not buy a $50 ad in the annual publicity piece, even though it attracted people to the museum! Each director gave reasons why he could not contribute, including "if we contributed to them, we'd have to contribute to everything in town." A clear cooperative statement of mutual support and some flexibility would have enabled them to work out an exchange pleasing to their boards and supporters.
VIII. Target the Market and Market to the Target

A museum needs to address two different considerations simultaneously. Based on mission and collection, who is the most likely and who is the chosen audience? Who is the local tourist industry attempting to attract? Are these two target markets the same? Is there an overlap? Chapter 5 discusses marketing in more detail.

IX. Think About the Visitor (Customer)

As museums expand their markets and come under rising pressure to operate in a business-like fashion, visitor satisfaction will become more important. Management techniques that build strong teams and eliminate waste will be noticed. Science and technology centers have demonstrated leadership in adopting such business management practices as conducting visitor surveys and adopting a team approach to management. If professionally conducted surveys seem too expensive, talk to a marketing professor at your local college to see if the museum's needs could dovetail with potential student projects (see the discussion on surveys in chapter 5).

But the real key is to mobilize the entire organization to view customer service as vital, according to Roy Shafer, past president and CEO of the Center of Science and Industry, Columbus, Ohio. He pointed out that all museum personnel either serve the customer (visitor) directly or serve someone who is serving customers.

COSI developed a game plan to identify how to ensure that every individual who came in contact with the institution received good service. Initially floor teams included staff from exhibits, programs, and support services, all wearing the COSI team "look"-a polo shirt or sweatshirt with the COSI logo.
Each team member, from those on the front-line to those normally behind the scenes, including the CEO, wore the shirts while at work. And each one hosted visitors on a regular basis. Once a month, the team members spent time performing the task of other personnel, such as learning how to clean Plexiglas or trying to match invoices with purchase orders. They learned directly that each person’s performance affects overall product and customer satisfaction. The museum also had an annual bonus award system called Performance Plus, in which customer service played a major factor. COSI no longer uses all of these measures but still pays careful attention to customer satisfaction and team building among staff.

The Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina, benefited from outstanding customer service in an unexpected manner. The curator of decorative arts spent one afternoon a week answering questions and evaluating people's collections. One day a woman phoned to inquire about reading materials and about glazed ceramics in the Mint's collection. She called again several months later, and again four months after that. When she invited the curator to visit her collection of tin-glazed ware, he accepted immediately. Impressed both by the curator's knowledge and the way he responded to her, the woman offered her 32-piece ceramics collection to the Mint, an addition that filled gaps in the museum's 1,600-piece collection of European ceramics. The collector had called a number of museums quietly making similar inquiries, before selecting the place where she felt her collection would be most valued and that best disseminated information about ceramics.

X. Learn from Other Nonprofits

While visiting small museums in one state, I found that more than a third of the directors were concerned about their
volunteers or board members. Typical complaints included board members who lacked understanding of the museum's curatorial role, volunteers who were unreliable or started projects that did not correspond with museum priorities, and trustees unwilling to change antiquated exhibits.

Non-profits and non-governmental organizations often have similar problems. When I was in Honduras helping non-profit environmental groups with business development, much of my time was spent addressing dynamics of board and volunteer relations. Museum staff could potentially find the literature on non-profit and other forms of management useful.

References


CHAPTER FIVE
MARKETING THE MUSEUM

I. The Museum's Purpose
Proper marketing starts with a re-reading of the museum's mission statement. Who does this museum serve? Does it exist primarily as a source of pride for the town's residents, or to promote historical understanding among school children? Does it attract occasional visitors from a nearby city for special events, or does it have a collection that merits national and international attention? Does the museum have, as many visitors as it can handle, yet needs more financial support from government, the university or the business community?

The market should not drive the mission nor should a museum's direction change with every market fluctuation, but museums make a mistake by ignoring market realities. Before you design a marketing plan, ensure that trustees, staff, and key volunteers have an answer and the same answer to the following question: What does this museum want to sell and to whom?

In the question, what does the museum sell and to whom, what represents the product. This product might be pride in the community, a chance to experience a representative collection of world art, or to offer an understanding of national or local history. Businesses would consider the “to whom” to mean customers. For a museum it generally means visitors or patrons, but it also could mean county or city government members. Businesses often divide customers into market segments. A museum's typical market segments include drop-in visitors, school groups, and motor coach tours, visitors to the museum’s web site and social media, and tourists including international visitors.

If a museum does stand for several different ideas, do they complement each other or do they create conflict? Are different staff members promoting different core ideas? What is the appropriate balance for the various priorities? Does the staff
agree on the idea but not on the message? Or perhaps they don’t agree that it’s the appropriate medium? How can you ensure that all elements of your marketing plan support the museum’s goals?

Successful selling to each market segment requires different approaches. Thus, the first step in developing a market plan is to start with a clear statement of what the museum "sells" and to whom.

Then consider your stakeholders. Who cares about your museum and whose support is necessary for successful operation? The list might include trustees, donors, volunteers, members, schools, and those who attend frequently. But it also might include various levels of government, tourist organizations, hotels willing to refer visitors, convention or visitors’ bureaus, universities with museum studies programs and others.

Next, consider the environment. What are outside factors affecting you? You might want to conduct what is known as a SWOT analysis, that is, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. For example, many museums now are attempting to increase tourist visitation, reasoning that they have penetrated local markets and that tourism offers the best area for rapid growth.

II. Trends in Tourism

1. Tourism turns gray

In the USA and many other industrial countries, a significant proportion of the population is aging. Older people often have
more income and leisure to travel including long trips within their own country or overseas. They are prime prospects as museum visitors, gift shop customers, and donors.

There are 70 million grandparents in the USA. They control 75 percent of the country’s wealth. Their average age is 48. They are online with 70 percent using search engines to find information and 63 percent shopping online. They provide 45 percent of the nation’s cash contributions to nonprofit organizations and 42 percent of consumer spending on gifts. Sixty-six percent travel with their grandchildren.

This group provides enormous program, attendance and shopping possibilities for museums. Exhibits or activities that are appropriate for grandchildren and grandparents to enjoy together, always important, become especially relevant during summer vacations and Christmas and other traditional holidays.

Older adults are interested in health issues, current events, history, learning new things and art. Their ability to travel off-season provides another reason for museums to reach out to older people. This may be an important target market but you must make your product user-friendly for them as discussed in Chapter Four.

Does the museum have a marketing strategy that appeals to the older tourist? A number of organizations have developed successful strategies for marketing to older people. Successful approaches include depicting older people as attractive, active, doing things with other people, and enjoying themselves.

2. Does the museum want to capture the bus tour market?
The potential impact is huge. Nationally about one-third of motor coach tours are for school groups. On the other hand, many cater to an older, often affluent market.

A study of the impact in the State of West Virginia showed that the average day trip brought about $3,800 to the local economy and an overnight stay brought in $7,706. Some 115 different industries were impacted either directly or indirectly. In one year $40.3 million was spent by motor tour guests in West Virginia: $10.2 on food and beverages, $10.2 on admission fees to attractions, $7.2 million on retail purchases and $6.1 million on accommodations. This $40.3 million resulted in 1,300 jobs, an economic impact of $37.3 million and $3.95 in state and local tax revenues. In addition the motor coach operators spent $3.2 million on fuel, parking or repairs.

If a museum wants to enter this growing market, it should examine its operation carefully to determine whether it can appropriately serve bus tours and develop a plan for attracting them. The potential benefits are there, but they usually take a number of years to realize.

3. Use the marketing systems of other groups

Some museums offer Road Scholar programs that provide offer educational and travel experiences for Baby Boomers (term for those born during the period of increased births in the USA immediately following World War II) and for those older. A museum serving as a Road Scholar site provides classes and outings for participants, arranges for local lodging and meals, organizes evening educational or enrichment activities and provides an on-site coordinator during the week. Museums
often find that they gain increased publicity and community goodwill. Local media often consider field trips and other Road Scholar activities as good material for feature stories.

By participating, museums can gain access to a national market almost ideal for their potential programs. Road Scholar enrolls more than 100,000 participants each year and markets its programs via e-mail, print catalogs, online, radio and television. Participants typically are retired professionals and their spouses who travel, listen to public radio and watch public television, particularly programs on art and history. There has also been a steady increase of solo travelers, particularly sole female travelers. Multi-generational programs are popular with grandparents and with families.

4. Short trips

In the USA tourism has shifted from the traditional annual two-week vacation to more frequent, shorter trips. Dual income families often lack time even for normal housekeeping chores. Scheduling a long vacation becomes difficult when a family must juggle two work schedules. Many families also lack funds for long trips.

The trend towards shorter trips, closer to home, provides opportunities for museums to collaborate with hotels and restaurants to promote weekend getaway holidays. The Art Institute of Chicago, for example, cooperates with hotels that offer weekend packages including tickets to exhibits. During a Monet exhibit, one hotel sold all its weekend packages more than a month before the exhibit closed. The exhibit brought in 55,000 new members, $140 million in income and contributed $393 million to the local economy. Partnering with hotels also
might prove successful for smaller, rural museums located in a restful countryside, especially one with access to outdoor recreation.

5. Tourism is more international

The tourism market is expanding both in terms of where tourists come from and in terms of places they visit. China and Japan have been major sources of tourists for some time both for the USA and other countries. Latin American travelers are increasing as well as those from the Middle East. As discussed in Chapter Three, this has implications for signage, brochures, labels and the food choices in museum restaurants.

In the USA foreign visitors account for a significant percent of the entire tourism business, they tend to spend more money and time than domestic travelers. Seventy-five million visitors spent almost $221 million in 2014.

Many states operate tourism offices abroad and even more advertise in foreign markets. Your state or regional tourism program probably can provide information about foreign visitors who might have an interest in your museum, as well as suggestions for the best way to include it as an attraction in promotions done by the state or other groups.

6. Tourism is more segmented

This means you will need to identify your target market, make sure that your product includes the approaches discussed in Chapter Four that will appeal to it, and design an appropriate
marketing plan. If, for example, you want to attract younger visitors, on-line approaches will be most effective.

III. How to Find Market Information

1. Who are the existing customers?

After identifying a target audience and taking into consideration how changing national trends might influence its potential size, how can a museum access more specific data on where to locate potential visitors? Analyze current customers. From a marketing viewpoint, learning about current visitors can help in several ways. Turning current visitors into repeaters expands visitation. According to one marketing expert, "it costs five times as much to sell to a new customer" than an existing one. Expanding the market to people who fit the profile of current visitors will prove more cost effective and easier than attracting an entirely different audience. Finally, clearly articulating the differences between visitors and non-visitors can show whether the museum needs new marketing approaches or special efforts.

What if a museum has not generated any information about its visitors? Most of the smaller museums in northwest Wisconsin and southwest Washington do not collect data on where their visitors live. Forts Folle Avoine, Danbury, Wisconsin, managed to obtain reliable addresses, complete with zip codes. Most museums put their guest books by the front desk in full view of a volunteer or staff member, said former Director Edgar Oerichbauer. "If I walked into your museum and you treated me insensitively, I wouldn't want to write that with you looking over my shoulder." So he put the museum’s guest book in an area where no staff could see what visitors were writing, near a bulletin board with listings of museum events and a rack with
tourism information about the state. These informational areas attracted visitors on their way into or out of the museum. About 35 percent also stopped and signed the guest book.

According to Oerichbauer, many museums have "glitzy books with one line . . . a book that you would find at a wedding reception." Such books discourage people from making comments or providing a full address, he said. By contrast, half of the signers of Forts Folle Avoine's book provided comments and 90 percent gave their full addresses. The addresses told Oerichbauer where his advertising worked and where it did not. And based on the theory "if they came once, they'll come again," the data also provided a mailing list for annual events. In addition, staff reviewed the mostly favorable comments but paid special heed to the suggestions and complaints that came from five percent of the signers.

Data about visitors forms the essential base for marketing, planning, and public relations purposes. Every museum should develop a means to obtain this information. One expert said that "analysis of attendance records is the most accurate and reliable measurement of the market for museums" Properly designed, a simple form for recording daily attendance can provide data on such variables as the ages of visitors; weather conditions; times, days, and weeks of highest attendance; visitors to special events; school visits and bus tours; and, at the very least, zip codes.

With minimal effort, zip codes can be recorded when tickets are sold. The National Aquarium in Baltimore used a cash register that enabled ticket sellers to record address information when ringing up the sale. The ticket seller at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum, Manitowoc, merely jotted down the information on the half of the ticket that the museum keeps.
Zip codes contain a wealth of information. A number of information service companies compile statistics from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, consumer surveys, and other sources for data on the characteristics of residents for every zip code in the nation. These companies normally sell this data to businesses, but similar information can be found in other publications including some available for free from the Census Bureau including ages of residents, family composition and race. Talk to the reference librarian at your public library or university.

Using zip codes can result in inaccurate data if the demography of an area changes or if the boundaries of the zip codes shift. Ask a successful local businessperson who uses market research to serve as an adviser to the museum and assist the staff person, board member, or intern conducting the analysis. Another good source is the nearest public or university library with a government documents reference librarian. These librarians, trained to locate and interpret the data in government documents, have detailed data from the Census Bureau and other government agencies, usually in both printed and computer disk form. Many nations have similar sources of information.

Museums can group together the zip codes of the largest number of visitors. By locating the county that visitors live in or near, a museum can determine whether to send announcements to the daily newspapers, suburban shoppers’ guides, or other media. The National Aquarium in Baltimore found zip code research helpful when requesting financial support from the city and four adjacent counties. It justified funding requests by detailing to each county how many of its residents used the aquarium.
2. Surveys

If collecting data from each visitor is neither feasible nor reliable, a museum can conduct periodic surveys. Even museums that do collect basic visitor data should conduct occasional visitor surveys, which provide additional information and supplement the self-reported visitor information.

Before undertaking any survey, however, the museum should answer two fundamental questions: How will the museum use the information and how can it ensure that this survey produces both valid and reliable results? Answering the first question carefully will shape the design of the survey and obviate the need for a second survey to glean additional information. Besides delaying projects, repeating surveys costs money and vexes respondents. If the intent is to convince the county council to continue funding because museum visitation benefits local businesses, the survey should determine how many visitors come from outside the community, their incomes, and how much money they spend locally. On the other hand, a museum seeking an educational foundation grant for a program to increase its attractiveness to minorities requires data on race and ethnicity. In designing the survey, ask staff, trustees, and key volunteers, "What decisions might we make differently if we knew x?" After crafting the survey questions, read each one carefully, asking, "If the answer to this question were x, how would that affect the museum's policy or actions?" If the answer will not provide any guidance for future actions, do not ask the question, or reword it so the answers will be relevant.

The survey should be both valid and reliable. That is, the information gathered should be an appropriate measure of what
you are interested in and the data collected should measure it accurately.

Ensure that the survey reflects what information the museum needs and targets visitors of various backgrounds at different times of the day and year to ensure that results are meaningful. The individuals who answer the questionnaire should represent the average visitor, not the exception. For example, the Henry Ford Museum & Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Michigan, conducted an audience study that found that widows visiting during the winter months were different from widows who visited other times of the year. If the surveyor had interviewed only winter visitors, the data for widows would have been misleading.

If no one on the museum staff has expertise in survey research, consult a marketing expert or a sociologist at a local college. Talking to staff at other museums of similar size or browsing through the methodology books in the sociology section of a university bookstore also might prove useful.

Ted Silberberg suggests that to make your data most useful you need to compare your numbers with those of other museums. Compare your results with the overall museum marketplace, performance of other museums of the same type and that of museums and other attractions in the same area. Some of this information can be gained from websites of the museums that match yours. But you may need to send a questionnaire to a museum comparable to your museum on key aspects such as budget, size and type. Silberberg suggests that without comparable data you are not in a position to make strategic decisions about what you might do better or how you might do it.
Silberberg also suggests surveying non-visitors about why they don’t visit. You can reach them in malls, hotel lobbies or online.

3. Focus groups

Convening focus groups is another approach that helps to determine what factors might increase visitation. Asking current visitors to discuss why they came, whether and why they plan to return, and the reasons why their friends do not visit the museum can provide valuable information. Focus groups also can suggest issues to explore with staff, visitors, and non-visitors. They can help a museum re-examine mission, determine how to attract non-visitors, and discover how to develop better interpretive materials and educational programming.

Sophisticated focus groups such as those convened by major manufacturers testing an ad campaign, are far more elaborate and expensive than most museums can afford. However, you can incorporate the same principles in a less extensive manner. As in a survey, identify the participants, ask staff, board members, and trustees to develop questions, and analyze the questions carefully. The focus group should be conducted by someone with good facilitating skills, who is familiar with the basic how-to books on the subject.

The discussion can be audiotaped and transcribed rather than videotaped. Videotaping might prove disconcerting to participants. The focus group's validity and reliability begin with the composition of the participating group, the appropriateness of the questions asked, and a good analysis of the results.
A museum also can conduct focus groups to determine how to attract non-visitors. One museum’s professional interviewers asked participants to provide names of non-visitors with certain demographic characteristics.

A museum should develop criteria for participant selection that will provide participants similar to those in the target audience. If you cannot afford professional help, consider whether people with characteristics similar to those desired might be willing to assist. For example, would members of an African-American sorority participate? A labor union? A professional society or college alumni organization? Your museum could use its zip code data to locate neighborhoods with high concentrations of the people it wishes to contact. Or it could arrange a trade with a neighborhood association, perhaps allowing the group to hold its next volunteer thank-you party at the museum.

4. Use data from other organizations

In addition to gaining information about potential future markets from visitors and non-visitors, museums may find that other community or government organizations have data useful for analyzing market potential. Museums with similar collections or locations may have data about their visitors that might predict likely responses from your potential audience. Nearby museums with different types of collections may have conducted useful analyses of the geographic area's demographics or data. State departments of tourism or economic development may have useful information. Museums in states that do not have this data should look to an adjacent state for assistance. In addition, local businesses, visitors and convention bureaus and economic development organizations may have relevant information. Museums should invest some
time locating existing data before spending considerably more time and money collecting it themselves.

### IV. Developing a Marketing Plan

#### 1. Goals

Having determined the target audiences, the museum can design a marketing plan to attract them. A simple museum marketing plan usually contains five general components: (1) specific goals, (2) objectives, (3) strategies, (4) a timetable, and (5) measurement, also called evaluation. The development of the plan should involve all of the key actors in a museum. Solid marketing, like the tip of an iceberg, rests on a broad and deep institutional base, much of it unseen. Everybody working or volunteering for the museum and its board should be familiar with and have a copy of the final written plan.

A plan does not have to be long, but it should be written. This avoids or greatly reduces misunderstandings or disagreements that may emerge as projects get underway. Otherwise, problems that surface during program implementation may hurt feelings, erode cooperation, and lead to wrong or inappropriate information being given to individuals or the media. Marketing plans also require at least an annual revision.

The process of stating specific goals will force everyone to agree on target markets and the reasons for attracting different visitors. The Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, North Carolina, launched a five-year plan whose goals included "To reach individuals or groups from outside the traditional definition of museum audiences, and implement the strategy of the 'museum as a refuge,' which makes access to the collection and staff
consultation available to organizations that deal with senior citizens, non-traditional families, people with disabilities, or people with serious illnesses, to make use of the contemplative, social and healing aspects of art in addition to the typical focus on aesthetic issues." Afterwards this museum, internationally known for its ceramics collection, could appropriately create a major exhibit about HIV/AIDS with life masks and oral histories in keeping with its new expanded mission.

A museum might establish different sets of goals, objectives, strategies, and measurements for each of its target audiences, whether they be local community leaders, school children, summer cottage owners, tourists, specific minority groups, geographic areas or even those attracted to the museum’s web site or Facebook. Objectives might change with the seasons. For example, towns in southwest Washington needed to attract more visitors during early spring and late autumn, times of unpredictable weather. Four museums in the area collaborated on a brochure called "Rain or Shine."

Reaching multiple audiences, however, may create marketing pitfalls. Sending different messages to different groups may dilute the impact of one facet of a marketing effort. You also run the risk of sending conflicting messages. In Guerrilla Marketing, Jay Conrad Levinson urges businesses to center their efforts on one idea. He tells clients to write out the idea using as many words as necessary, and then reduce it to seven sentences, and then seven words. If museum staff cannot do that, they may not clearly understand the mission. Finally, test the message with outsiders to see if it successfully conveys your desired meaning.

2. Product mix and positioning
The four elements of the traditional business-marketing plan include product, place, promotion, and price. Often, museums have more control over these elements than they realize. To develop a marketing plan, you should understand how to employ and modify each of these elements so that they best support your marketing goals.

Product mix and positioning are two business approaches useful for museums considering how to make themselves more attractive to the desired audience. At one point, for example, the director of the Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas, noting the changing demographics of the museum's neighborhood, was determined to alter the existing approach, which primarily targeted children. He instituted a series of lectures and tours that tapped the interests of young professionals and older, childless couples, thereby expanding the museum’s clientele.

The opposite approach was taken by the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Museum, Wausau, Wisconsin. The director wanted to attract more families and encourage them to visit again and again. Staff created a "Kids' Club" based on children's attraction to trading cards. Each month, club members who visited the museum obtained a card with a picture of a museum object on one side and information about it on the other. The museum provided workbooks with activities based on each month's trading card. Club members also received a free membership to the museum, attended regular club meetings, and received a newsletter with advance notice of new exhibits and other activities for children. Visitation jumped 20 to 25 percent. According to the director, the "kids take ownership." Instead of parents "dragging their kids" to the museum, children began "dragging their parents."

A museum should consider each of its services as a separate product: exhibits; workshops; special events; the store; publications, products such as games or tee-shirts; even the
different aspects of an exhibit, such as a painting and the video presentation about the artist’s life. Today the museum’s web site, materials posted on-line and social media such as the museum’s Facebook page should be specifically marketed. Each of these "products" will appeal to different segments of the potential market.

All museums have some product mix. The museum should consciously understand and consider its product mix as part of its marketing strategy so that its events support the overall marketing goals and objectives. They can plan and market events that appeal to diverse audiences and at times most convenient for them. For example, both minorities and new immigrants may be attracted to family festivals on ethnic heritage. Young professionals will come to an after-work event, especially one that enables them to have a drink and mingle with other young people.

Exhibits also can be developed or timed as part of a marketing approach. When the Memphis Pink Palace Museum and Planetarium, Memphis, Tennessee, learned that the "Ramses the Great" exhibit hosted by the city would not display any mummies, the museum developed a complementary exhibit on the process and religious significance of mummification and the scientific methods used to learn about it. Attendance at the Memphis Pink Palace Museum exhibit benefited from the extensive publicity the city provided for the "Ramses” event.

The appropriate product mix depends upon the museum's mission and on how it seeks to position itself in the marketplace. In business terms, a museum--except during school visits--is part of the leisure-time market. It competes with every other activity a potential visitor might choose during leisure time. A museum should understand its current position within the leisure-time market, and consider where it wishes to
be. Is the museum a viable alternative to a theme park, taking a history class at a community college, reading a book on the history of science, or watching a television program on ecology?

How does attendance at the museum compare to that of other museums in the city or area? How does attendance compare to similar museums in different cities? If the museum does not attract audiences as large as others in the area or with similar collections, what is that museum doing wrong? How are the successful ones achieving their goals?

Whatever your mission statement, determining which activities fulfill the needs of your desired audience will identify who is competing with you for their time, energy, and money. Once you identify the competition, you can better determine how to position the museum as something slightly different, with better quality, service, or price.

3. Place

Most museums have little option regarding location. However, they can reduce the negative aspects of an existing location or building appearance. As mentioned in Chapter Four, one museum on the waterfront next to warehouse distinguished itself by placing a large banner across the wall facing the river. The graphics constantly reminded sailors and other pleasure boaters that the building housed exhibits of potential interest to them.

Think about the positive aspects of your museum such as the grounds that make it appropriate for receptions, parties, or other events. Staff at historic houses and other museums can learn
from the public relations and marketing efforts of Biltmore Estate, a privately owned historic home in Asheville, North Carolina. Biltmore regularly publicizes the flowers that bloom in its extensive garden. Visitors return again and again to see the garden during different seasons. Commercial photographers use the gardens as background for their models, and the catalogues in which the photographs appear often cite the Biltmore Estate. Film crews also use the grounds and house as a scenic backdrop, paying for the privilege. Film credits mentioning the estate provide further publicity.

Another marketing approach incorporates off-site exhibits or traveling vans that extend a museum's reach to any venue it may deem appropriate. The Maryhill Museum of Art, Goldendale, Washington, presented an exhibit of objects from its Native American collection at Skamania Lodge, a golf resort and conference center in a nearby town. Approximately 20 objects, displayed with proper care and security, illustrated how the region's Native Americans used local plants and animals as inspiration for the designs on pottery and other objects. The exhibit included an invitation to visit the museum, the location of the museum and a description of its holdings. Another example is from The Chhartrapati Shivaji Maharai Vatsu Sangrahalay (CSMVS) museum has used buses to take art to neighbourhoods throughout the city and suburbs of Mumbai, India.

A van from the Carson County Square House Museum, Panhandle, Texas, took slide shows and trunk programs to schools within a 150-mile radius. The trunks contained real artifacts and provided students with a variety of educational activities. The pioneer trunk focused on the hardship of a pioneer journey. Students could pack a wagon, encouraging them to carefully consider the importance of each object to pioneer life. Another trunk contained a calendar made from
animal hide, which was used by the Kiowas to record their history from 1863 to 1892. It illustrated how people used symbols rather than written words to record events. Other trunks contained objects on the history of the Plains Indians, the Spanish influence on ranching, and ways Christmas is celebrated around the world. The outreach program reached 1,000 teachers and 15,000 students annually, compared to 5,000 on-site visitors.

Place now expands worldwide: to anyone, to any place and to anybody with Internet access to your web site or social media posts. One research group selected ten museum websites as outstanding. They included London’s Tate; the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Franklin Institute of Science Museum in Philadelphia; Pennsylvania, the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C.; the Stax Museum of American Soul, Memphis, Tennessee; Museum of New Zealand Te Pap Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand; the Museum of Modern Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in Santa Barbara, California.

In designing your web site consider making it interactive. Matt Bower’s online “Typology of Web 2.0 Learning Technologies,” provides an overview of a number of tools and ways Internet technology can be used for learning.


According to Rosemary Rice McCormick in Marketing Cultural Heritage Tourism, your web site is your best marketing tool. People who are interested in cultural tourism are especially likely to plan their travel using the Internet.

Be sure your site is user-friendly and up-to-date and test it regularly. Include welcome in several languages in the design.
If you have audio tours in different languages, say so. And be sure to include post dining and shopping options, including the ability to purchase on-line.

Make sure your site works in smartphone and tablet formats. Include key works to optimize search engines. Before you develop your own smartphone apps see if a tourism organization will include you in theirs. Provide links to your travel and tourism partners.

Consider also the best ways to steer people to your web site, Facebook page and other on-line activities. If there are national or local lists of museums, make sure your museum and its web site is on them.

Earlier we discussed the fact that your current users are your most likely source of future visitors and involvement. They are also perhaps your best source of promotion and marketing outreach. Facebook users are heavily focused on communicating with family and friends. Thus, a post about your event comes from someone the user knows and trusts.

The Internet allows you to share pictures of your treasures with people who could never travel to your museum. It provides a source of enticement for those vaguely interested but who might become more interested if they received a picture that touches them from a friend.

When designing your social media efforts, remember to carefully consider the staff time and knowledge involved with each social media avenue. Blogs, for example, engage the audience but require not only daily posts but also staff responds to the posts of others. If you use Facebook post only daily least you tire your audience, but Twitter users expect you to be on-line all day.
4. Promotion

Promotion includes anything and everything the museum does to let people know that it exists, why they should come, why they should support the museum, and why they should take pride in its role in their community. In the business world promotion traditionally includes public relations and paid advertising. Again, the first step involves defining goals and creating a plan for reaching the specific audience indicated in the marketing plan. Simply obtaining increased newspaper coverage does not necessarily do the job. Which newspapers reach the desired audience? Would radio be a better medium? Should a museum use flyers, brochures, bus cards, buttons, a Facebook page, a website or other means? How much free promotion can a museum generate? The museum should develop the most cost-effective strategy given its budget and staff skills.

State departments of tourism or economic development may provide free materials, research, or technical assistance. They might have the addresses or e-mails of people who have asked for information about historical or cultural attractions.

State tourism departments may publish a biannual auto-tour book, both a fall/winter and a spring/summer recreation guide, and calendar of events. Convention and visitors bureaus also publish data on attractions. They promote this material throughout their state and in other states. Many countries have national or other organizations that may have similar data.

Placing information about the museum and its special events in such publications may be the easiest and most effective way of
getting the message to your targeted audience. However, the museum must provide accurate and detailed information in the prescribed form in time to meet publication deadlines. Deadlines will be months before the projected time to mail materials and the start of the actual tourism season. Museums desiring to capitalize on this free publicity should schedule dates and hours of operations and major events almost a year in advance in order to meet these strict deadlines.

Tourism departments may have promotion and ad programs that might be used by museums or museums might be able to include their activities as part of the department’s efforts. They may provide tips on marketing. An issue of one state’s tourism department addressed how to write press releases, feature stories, cover letters, and photo captions. Another discussed developing an effective media kit. The department provided these newsletters free of charge.

If your state tourism or economic development offices do not provide these types of services, investigate statewide organizations, chambers of commerce, or convention bureaus. A few telephone calls may provide free or low-cost market data, lists of media contacts with addresses and telephone numbers, and other material useful to a museum.

After you have identified potential resources, work with them to develop an appropriate media-marketing program. This requires at least four steps. First, create a list of the media likely to reach the target market effectively. Second, develop appropriate press releases and media kits. The Biltmore Estate, Asheville, North Carolina, for example, developed an elaborate media kit including a book detailing the history of the house, press releases on different aspects of programs and the maintenance of the mansion, a schedule of events, and excellent, 8-by-10-inch black-and-white photographs. Third, make follow-up
phone calls to your media contacts. Fourth, arrange on-site tours for journalists, which the tourist industry calls familiarization or FAM tours. Debbie Geiger, an expert in heritage tourism marketing, said that the feature stories that influence travel decisions almost always come from journalists who have actually visited the site.

A museum should try to obtain free coverage from publications or other media used by the target audience. Free coverage not only fits your budget, but also is more influential than paid advertising. According to one expert, a number of major research studies indicate that word-of-mouth recommendations and editorial stories have the most influence on people's travel decisions. Do not underestimate the actual dollar value of free coverage. Compare the columns of press generated by public relations efforts with the cost of that space in paid advertising.

The Biltmore Estate's public relations manager said, "The most effective part of public relations is through generating news stories." The public appreciated articles about how staff cleans the 19th-century house make Christmas decorations, care for the silver, and restore 16th-century tapestries.

To obtain free coverage, a museum must develop and sustain positive media contacts over a period of time. You can do this by developing a talent for determining what stories the media will deem newsworthy, having accurate and complete facts, and providing useful information to the right media contact in a timely manner. Do not, for example, call newspaper reporters about your Christmas tour just before the reporter's normal deadline time. Do not provide magazines with information about your Fourth of July event in June, as their summer issues have already gone to the printer. Do not send photographs of poor quality or without signed releases from each person pictured.
If the museum director, staff, or key volunteers do not have public relations expertise, talk to local business people who do. Invite the local newspaper editor to lunch at the museum restaurant or another nearby establishment. Talk to the public relations director at the local college as well as to faculty members who teach the subject. Get their reading list, go to the bookstore, and browse through the recommended reading.

Fairly simple lists of standard "do's and don'ts" exist. Marketing is not rocket science, but it does require definition, diligence, imagination, and common sense.

Be clear and be consistent. Create a single symbol or brand for the museum that conveys the desired message, and use only that symbol in all promotion efforts.

Businesses do this. How many do not know the significance of McDonald's golden arches, now familiar in 119 countries? Develop a phrase (slogan) that captures the essence of the visitor experience at your museum, and use it again and again. An advertising agency providing help to the Cheney Cowles Museum, in Spokane, Washington, created the slogan "Dutch Treat" for a special exhibit of old masters from the Netherlands. The phrase, which was used in all the museum's publicity, helped attract a record audience.

Once the museum leadership approves a market plan, it should maintain it for a reasonable length of time. Results will not be immediate. It’s a long-term investment. Be careful not to decide the plan is stale just when it’s likely to become effective.

Museums should consider contractual relationships with other institutions to maximize their public relations efforts like the one in the following example. The Indianapolis Symphony
Orchestra uses the grounds of Conner Prairie, Fishers, Indiana, for summer evening performances from mid June through early September. The museum increased both visitation and gift shop sales due to the crowds, all this just by offering the act as a venue. More important, Conner Prairie receives free, summer long publicity throughout the Indianapolis market area. Chapter 6 includes more examples of relationships & partnerships that provide strong public relations and other benefits.

Successful marketing requires a commitment of time, energy, and money. Often, you can find ways to cut costs and use donated services. But outstanding marketing efforts require intent, dedication of resources, and professional knowledge and experience.

References


Steckel, Dr. Richard, Robin Simons, and Peter Lengsfelder. *Filthy Rich and Other Nonprofit Fantasies: Changing the way nonprofits do business in the '90s*. Berkeley

**Chapter Six**

PARTNERSHIPS
Museums can increase their community contributions and economic potential by forming partnerships. Many types of organizations make good partners, including other cultural, heritage or environmental groups as well as local community or economic development organizations, civic groups, nonprofit organizations, non-governmental organizations, libraries, private businesses and schools. In many countries NGOs (non-governmental organizations) and women’s groups will be the best partners. In some places collaboration with religious groups may be appropriate.

I. Possible Partners

1. Other museums

Smaller museums often do not have the money to produce professional quality brochures. Five museums on the southwest coast of Washington State collaborated on a joint brochure called "Rain or Shine: Explore the Museums and Centers of Pacific County, Washington." By pooling their funds and ideas, they produced 3,000 copies of an attractive two-color brochure. Working alone, the museums could not have afforded a two-color publication or as many copies. They also saved money on postage and labor since each museum's outreach programs benefited them all. By the time the brochure needed reprinting, several other area museums wanted to participate, providing further savings and cross-marketing opportunities.

2. Partnerships with local civic groups

The SS Meteor Museum in Superior, Wisconsin, is located in the world's only remaining whaleback freighter. Local and tourist visitation, however, did not generate sufficient operating revenue until the museum collaborated with the
local junior chamber of commerce (an organization of young business persons) on an annual 14-day haunted house tour. The ship and its dock provided an ideal setting, according to organizer David Miner: "It's dark, cold, windy. It squeaks. It makes noise all by itself. We don't have to add a lot of special effects to make it work."

The junior chamber of commerce provided 72 volunteers for each evening tour and the two matinees. Museum staff maintained the ship, created the marketing promotions, and built the props. Local merchants, individuals, and the media donated services and materials, or offered reduced rates. The museum and the junior chamber of commerce split the profits. Through this event, the museum not only generated revenue, but also built solid community links.

3. Partnerships with economic development organizations

A project sponsored by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin to explore the potential for involving museums in regional economic development efforts initially encountered several stumbling blocks. Originally, the organizers planned to interview museum directors and economic development planners, and then host a conference focusing on the potential of museum and economic development partnerships.

Unfortunately, all the interviewees declined to attend. The museum directors said that they would allocate their limited travel funds to attending the annual Wisconsin Federation of Museums meeting. The economic development practitioners simply shrugged, saying, "What? Museums?"
It was obvious that the museums and economic development practitioners did not talk to each other. Members of the chambers of commerce (business association) and other economic developers complained that the museum directors did not understand tourism needs and did not participate in community efforts. Museum directors complained that they attracted tourists but did not receive any recognition.

The project had to change to succeed. With funds from the project's budget, the organizers invited 15 leaders to a roundtable discussion at a resort in an historic house. At first, the discussion centered on people's complaints, and there was little identification of any mutual cooperative efforts. A suggestion that museums interpret the region's 300-year history and market themselves together in a single package elicited no agreement.

Finally, an hour before the end of the two-day roundtable, one museum director said that he would not object to featuring his museum on a poster-style map with other museums, and the group decided to proceed with that project. The participants also agreed that the roundtable was in fact valuable; people made contacts and started relationships. They asked for additional dialogue.

A committee of museums and economic developers was formed to establish criteria and guide the development of the map project. Initially expected to feature between 15 and 25 museums, the final map covered a 12-county region and had information on about 38 museums. The printing of the map was paid for by a grant from the International Business and Economic Development Council (ITBEC), an organization of the 12 counties. ITBEC also funded a public relations campaign for the map.
Museum directors began to talk to each other and to economic developers and attend workshops on economic development. The State Department of Tourism and Heritage Tourism Program sponsored a workshop that taught museum directors more about marketing, and encouraged them to develop future joint efforts. A regional approach to marketing had begun.

What made it work? The prestige and personal reputation of Nicholas Muller, then director of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, who encouraged people to participate in the initial interviews. He also provided credibility for the roundtable. The organizers telephoned the roundtable participants several times to encourage attendance. The resort provided an elegant setting for the meeting. The schedule enabled directors to leave their offices late one day and return before their offices closed on the day the conference ended. Outside funding meant that the roundtable and the project could proceed without any initial financial investment by the museums or economic developers.

Although this extensive effort may not be necessary in many places to bring museums into partnership with economic development actions, in some places extensive actions will be needed.

The Wisconsin effort had some initial success but limited long-range direct effects. Lessons learned: a. outside money can spur action, b. use the prestige of your contacts whether sponsors, board members or others, c. if you want people to attend call them and then call them again and then call them the day or night before the meeting, d. and most important,
institutionalize ways to maintain the success of your efforts.

4. Partnerships with regional organizations

Generally, effective community as well as economic and tourism development succeed when community organizations cooperate. Extensive tourism development requires infrastructure such as parking, as well as long-range planning and the support of various groups such as government officials and citizens.

Museums can maximize their economic development efforts by joining ongoing efforts. The investment will build community goodwill and create an understanding of the museum's contributions among government and business leaders. In some cases, the job of serving on appropriate chamber of commerce committees or the tourism board can be delegated to a museum board member or volunteer.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street program has helped revitalize hundreds of small towns throughout America, employing historic preservation as a key component in economic development and downtown revitalization. The program emphasizes cooperation among a broad-based coalition of merchants, public officials, and civic groups to form an organization that then can develop approaches for improving the visual quality of downtown areas, strengthening and diversifying the economic base.

Wisconsin's Chippewa Valley Museum played a major role in a multi-phased program. The museum helped to produce a self-guided history walking tour of the downtown area for the Eau Claire Main Street program by providing research and photographic materials. "Unlike most walking tours that
stress architecture," according to Schuh, former executive director of Eau Claire Main Street. The guide described the history of the community and the role that downtown businesses played in its development. Museum staff also helped identify historic sites and properties and provided information and photographs for a directory called Timber Trails in the Chippewa Valley, which identified heritage attractions tied to the area's lumber industry.

Schuh gave most of the credit for the overall success of the effort to the museum's director who chaired the Momentum Chippewa Valley Tourism Development Committee. According to Schuh, she persuaded organizations in three counties to develop the joint project, which eventually received funding from the Wisconsin Heritage Tourism Program and local contributors.

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission (SPHPC) is another powerful example showing how a partnership can lead to results far beyond the resources of individual museums or communities.

In 1988, the U.S. Congress established the commission to preserve, promote, and interpret the industrial and cultural heritage in a nine-county area. (Counties are a basic unit of local government in the USA.) The commission is a partnership among federal, state, county, and local units of government; the private sector; and community and heritage organizations. It interprets the history of the region’s natural resources and their extraction, industrial and technological development, and the changing patterns of immigration. The commission identified three heritage corridors that best illustrated this history, each one highlighting different historic and scenic sites and resources. It promoted the area through interpretative materials, displays, and highway signs.
that identified the 500-mile-long heritage route. It established standards for inclusion that addressed a site's relevance to the overall story, the adequacy of its facilities, as well as its preservation standards.

The commission also encouraged counties to develop related heritage routes as side tours. Each of the nine counties produced brochures that identified heritage resources of local or regional interest. For example, the Indiana County brochure highlighted, a town that was founded in 1818 and contains a number of historic buildings. The brochure recommended a visit to "the museum operated by the Historical Society of the Blairsville area . . . to travel back to those significant days of our transportation heritage." It also described other sites of potential interest to tourists including several parks and recreation areas.

Museums and historical societies played a major role in the commission's effort. Members of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, the Pennsylvania Heritage Affairs Commission, and county heritage committees also served as members of SPHPC. Museums such as the Altoona Railroader's Memorial Museum and the Johnstown Flood Museum ranked high among the corridor attractions.

Many other regions in the USA have developed heritage corridors. Some have built new interpretative centers, such as the gigantic End of the Trail covered wagon center in Oregon City, Oregon. These efforts can provide museums with increased publicity and visitors.

Museums desiring inclusion in multi-site projects should get involved as early as possible. For example, a number of
museums in southwest Washington had only a vague awareness that there was a plan to promote attractions located near a major highway in the area. Had they communicated with economic and tourism developers, they could have participated in and helped to shape the planning.

Sometimes a planning organization or a town chooses to create its own museum or interpretative center rather than expand or modify an existing one. This can dilute the curatorial and research resources of existing museums, especially if the interpretative centers rely on multimedia exhibits that do not require careful restoration and preservation. In addition, these institutions often do not budget for exhibit upgrades or replacements.

The proliferation of museums in an area can inundate the market unless each institution provides a different approach to the overall story. To resolve this issue, the Oregon Trail Coordinating Council helped museums and interpretative centers develop different emphases, while sharing resources and marketing.

The Oregon Trail is a 2,200-mile (3,500 km) historic east–west large-wheeled wagon route and emigrant trail that emigrants used while walking for months across much of the western part of the USA from the Missouri River to where they hoped to settle in Oregon. The eastern part of the Oregon Trail spanned part of the future State of Kansas and nearly all of what are now the States of Nebraska and Wyoming. The western half of the trail spanned most of the future States of Idaho and Oregon.

An interpretative center at Flagstaff Hill, Oregon, is located near Baker City in the eastern part of the state. It provides visitors with an opportunity to walk beside Oregon Trail ruts
and view the Powder River Valley. The valley is described in pioneers' diaries as the first point of fulfillment of their Oregon Territory dream.

On the other side of the state is the End of the Trail Interpretative Center, constructed as three giant covered wagons. Visitors can see what 19th-century travelers packed into their wagons, as well as learn about the early settlement of the region.

The Tamustalik Interpretive Institute on the Umatilla Indian Reservation presents the history, culture, and tradition of local native groups and the impact of Euro-American contact on the indigenous people. It shows how traditional tribal values affect contemporary life. The Columbia Gorge Discovery Center at the Dalles in Stevenson, Washington, focuses on the critical decision made by settlers at that point: whether to cross the dangerous Columbia River on rafts or climb the tall mountain.

The approach taken in designing the different interpretative centers meant that visitors could enjoy any of them separately, but find fresh presentations and insights if they visited them all.

5. Partnerships with other cultural organizations

Thirty-five years ago Conner Prairie, an interactive history park in Fishers, Indiana, just north of Indianapolis, teamed with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra for a summer outdoor symphony series called Marsh Symphony on the Prairie. Since then a sophisticated contractual relationship has been in place. Conner Prairie provides the venue, which is a lovely outdoor
space offering great parking, restrooms, and gift shop while the symphony whom perform several summertime concerts at the venue takes care of managing the marketing, ticket sales and publicity of the concert series. Therefore things like buying radio and newspaper advertising during the eight-week session are the Symphonies responsibility.

Symphony staff mailed brochures to mailing lists, place brochures in racks throughout the city and insert brochures in alternative newspapers. Conner Prairie invites concertgoers to experience the outdoor museum before attending Symphony on the Prairie.

Although only one-fourth of those attending the concerts first visit the museum, the Marsh Symphony on the Prairie promotions heighten community awareness of Conner Prairie throughout the summer, the museum benefits from rental fees.

The symphony's indoor facility – Hilbert Circle Theater holds 1,800 people; when at Conner Prairie, they can accommodate and have attracted crowds in excess of 15,000 for a single event. The concert series is a moneymaker for the symphony that doubles normal winter attendance at each performance.

Your museum may not have the space for a large musical event, but perhaps it could host a quartet or other smaller ensemble. For many years the Chazen Museum of Art at the University of Wisconsin in Madison collaborated with the public radio station. The Chazen sponsored a regular Sunday Afternoon at the Chazen featuring quartets and other small groups that was broadcast on radio throughout the state. During the brief intermission, the museum director talked about the items in the museum, thus reaching a
broader audience than would otherwise learn about the museum’s treasurers.

6. Partnerships with the private sector

Increasingly, at least in the USA, museums look to the private sector for help in sponsoring exhibits and for becoming savvy about business operations. A corporate sponsor of an exhibit has an opportunity to have its name prominently displayed to every visitor to the museum and on publicity about the exhibit.

Museums may also look to corporations to provide advice as board or trustee members. But both partnerships can raise serious questions for the museum.

At least in the USA, museums are one of the most respected institutions in society. They generally are considered to be neutral portrayers of truth, not proponents of religious, political or other ideologies.

The agendas of a corporate sponsor, as well as some other partnerships, can erode this neutrality and eventually the trust of the public. It behooves a museum to consider all corporate and business partnerships very carefully to make sure that they do not erode the museum’s mission or public trust.

Some years ago the Denver Children's Museum undertook a number of highly successful ventures in cooperation with the private sector. For example, they contracted with Citicorp to produce a book on money and the economy, which the bank could give to its customers. Citicorp carefully reviewed the text, forcing museum staff to re-
examine interpretations and presentations. The debates resulted in a missed deadline, but led to a product that effectively presented more complex economic issues to children than the museum staff had believed possible.

7. Partnerships with charitable organizations

The Mint Museum of Art in Charlotte, North Carolina, houses an internationally recognized porcelain collection. Staff worried that "Service in Style: Regal Soup Tureens," a traveling exhibition organized by the Campbell Museum, Camden, New Jersey, would have limited attendance and "reinforce a public stereotype of museums being a high-brow sanctuary of the wealthy," according to their public relations coordinator. To avoid this, they used the famous remark of 18th century French Queen Marie Antoinette who when told people were rioting because of lack of bread responded, “If they have no bread, let them eat cake.”

The Mint paraphrased the remark, well-known to USA audiences, turning it into "let them eat soup," and mounted a major campaign that focused attention on the needs of homeless and hungry people in the area.

The museum offered free admission from November 1 through Thanksgiving (a major USA holiday on the 4th Thursday of every November) to anyone who brought a can of food for the Metrolina Food Bank. (In the USA local food banks provide free canned goods and other food to low-income persons.)

Publicity for the event incorporated the Mint's well-known painting of the coronation of Queen Charlotte--with a
Campbell's tomato soup can substituted for the coronation crown. The Leader newspaper, local radio station and a major business provided sponsorship. Flyers were sent to 6,000 churches and press releases to 463 media outlets asking them to publicize the event. The results? Twice as much media coverage of the museum, a record-setting 21,426 visitors during the six-week exhibit, and 5,000 pounds of food donated to the food bank.

8. Partnerships with neighborhood groups

The Chicago Historical Society had a multi-year collaboration with four neighborhoods. The society's collection contains photographs and other materials that reflect the history and variety of Chicago's neighborhoods. The collaboration reflected the board's desire for increased outreach and greater emphasis on the city's diverse ethnic history.

The project started with the Douglas/Grand Boulevard area on Chicago’s South Side. Formerly called Bronzeville, the area served as a center of African-American life through the 1940s. The project director, who had previously worked with community organizations, created a committee of neighborhood residents and groups to collaborate with the society's educational and curatorial staff. Working together, they produced an exhibit that was displayed first at the society and then at the DuSable Museum of African American History, which is located near the neighborhood. The exhibit included items found in residents’ attics as well as a video presentation produced by local teenagers.

As part of the overall project, one group interviewed young and elderly residents for a neighborhood oral history project.
Another group worked with local teachers to develop related curriculum materials for the schools. Educational and cultural events, such as films, lectures and performances, were presented in schools and other neighborhood facilities during the year-long effort.

Related programs at the DuSable Museum included a symposium on economic and social life during the Bronzeville era; a three-part discussion on the literary works and writers, such as Richard Wright, connected with the area; a movie series; jazz, blues, and gospel concerts; and a series of genealogy workshops. Positive comments from a museum volunteer, the museum guard, and workmen who were involved in its installation demonstrated the community’s pride in the exhibit.

9. Partnerships with schools and libraries

Both are extremely important as potential partnerships for museums especially since they represent opportunities to affect children and for community outreach. For suggestions about how your museum might be involved, see the discussion in Chapter Three.

Note that the conditions for success in school partnerships apply to those with any institution where you want long-term success. Review the discussion in Chapter Three to determine steps you need to take in developing partnership with any organization.

10. Consider carefully

Even an appropriate partnership may not prove wise if it
takes away attention from more important objectives. The Denver Children's Museum once produced a children's exhibit for a sheep producers association that included activities dealing with sheep shearing and the process of turning raw wool into fabric. Although children liked the show, staff questioned whether it had kept them from producing other exhibits that were more educationally valuable.

Staff at the museum was also concerned about promoting products incompatible with the best interests of children, a problem that arose when a soft drink manufacturer wanted to advertise in a museum-produced school newspaper. And they were concerned about maintaining control over exhibit and product content during the production of the Citicorp publication. Museum partnerships, like any others, will thrive when they rest solidly on objectives that meet the needs of both partners. Partnerships should draw upon the special abilities of each organization, and participants should have a clear understanding of objectives, tasks, roles, responsibilities, benefits, and the terms for potential dissolution. Putting these factors in writing clarifies issues and can help to resolve problems before they become sources of friction.

More recently museums in the USA have been concerned about their ability to present the scientific evidence about climate change if they have board members or influential donors who dispute the data. The problem also has occurred in creating exhibits funded by donors with a vested interest in how the subject matter treatment of their product or manufacturing techniques affects their image. So pick your partners carefully to make sure that each partnership reflects the museum’s institutional integrity and best interests.
References


Chapter Seven
CELEBRATIONS, EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND PRODUCTS
Community events such as festivals further both a museum's mission and the area's community and economic development. They attract tourists and almost always make the community a more attractive place to live, adding to the community's ability to retain businesses and attract new ones. They build community pride and provide opportunities for community members to enhance their skills and meet people who may not move in their social circles. Newcomers, including immigrants, will welcome such opportunities.

Such events may be particularly important as a means of outreach to those whose native language is not that of the museum’s locality. They may also be especially relevant in countries where outdoor festivals and celebrations are an important part of the normal culture. In many places, one example being Dubai, people attend events as a family. Festivals tend to be attractive to people of different ages and education and be less formal or intimidating than entering into a museum. Lower-income families without the financial resources to pay museum fees can still participate in the out-of-doors activities.

Events and festivals can serve as some of a museum's most effective fund-raising strategies by generating both direct profits and indirect support. They can assist a museum by promoting memberships, donations, and planned giving, increasing publicity and attendance, and encouraging greater commitment from volunteers. Studies indicate that contributions to charitable organizations from volunteers more than double contributions from non-volunteers. Major donations and planned giving, including bequests from wills, life insurance and annuities, pooled income funds and various kinds of trusts, almost always come from members or
donors who have contributed regularly for three or more years. Events should broaden the base of a museum’s support.

But these efforts also can backfire, resulting in adverse publicity, angry volunteers, and exhausted staff. One cynic familiar with nonprofit organizations quipped, “A successful fundraiser is one that doesn't lose money.” In fact, when determining whether your event will break even, take into account non-cash assets such as staff time, goodwill, and other resources that might have been employed more profitably. Since a particular festival or event often loses momentum after three or five years when volunteer and public interest decreases, museums need to track results carefully and switch to an alternative event at the appropriate time.

Museum staff can participate in festivals and special events including those hosted by other organizations in a variety of ways. Staff roles can range from serving on a planning committee or helping to publicize a community-wide event to operating a large festival. Determining the appropriate level of involvement requires a cost-benefit analysis that examines mission, financial rewards, and community relations.

I. Renting Museum Facilities or Grounds

Most museums embody elements of elegance and prestige. They provide a special ambience for a wedding, corporate board dinner, or party. Museums and historic homes have provided locations for symphony and chamber music concerts, regional art shows and weddings as well as photographing commercial models and shooting movies. Whether renting proves appropriate or profitable opportunities for a particular museum depends upon a number of factors. You can avoid several problems by developing a written rental policy. Staff,
key volunteers, and the museum's lawyer and insurance agent should review it before it is adopted. Contracts should contain provisions for cancellations and for the resolution of problems and disagreements.

1. Preservation of structure, objects, and grounds

The Hermann-Grima Historic House, New Orleans, hosts’ receptions on its grounds, but restricts the location, size, and frequency to avoid damage to the lawn and other facility problems. The Philadelphia Museum of Art provides space for entertainment events of nonprofit groups and members of its Corporate Partners program, but prohibits food and drink in areas where art is on display. Wade House, Greenbush, Wisconsin, had to line its cook stove's chimney after staff began hosting dinners cooked over the open hearth by guests.

2. Compatibility with museum mission and image

Hosting a major USA Civil War re-enactment makes sense for Wade House. Greenbush sent several of its sons to fight in the Civil War. In addition, one of Wade’s daughters served as a nurse, and the others provided support from the home front.

The same event, however, would appear out-of-place in an urban art museum. If a museum’s marketing plan conveys one image while its special events suggest another, target audiences may find the mixed message confusing. But this is less likely if the museum is not sponsoring an event but only renting its space to another organization. Still, some restrictions are needed.
3. Compatibility with existing programs and facilities

Is participating in this event the best way to use staff time? Will the event detract from regular programs or turn away loyal visitors? Will it require modifications such as more parking spaces, additional dishes, or new plants? Who pays for these changes? Does the event disrupt regular museum activities? Biltmore Estate in Asheville, North Carolina, rents its facility for movie productions, but tries to schedule shootings during its slow season since filmmaking requires re-arranging rooms and disrupts normal tours.

4. Legal, personnel, and insurance considerations

What are the zoning or other government requirements? Do you need a special permit? Can liquor be served? What kind of liquor can be served? Should you get a license? Your insurance agent may recommend that the museum or its clients obtain additional coverage. If additional guards are required, who will hire, supervise, and pay them? What restrictions and arrangements would apply if the renter wants to sell or auction items, as might occur at an annual fund-raising charity ball? After considering all these items, a museum may want to limit the types of events, as well as their size and timing, or enforce other restrictions. The fee schedule should reflect direct and indirect costs and provide funds as a reserve for the depreciation of plant and equipment. A properly designed rental policy will enable museums to preserve their missions, objects, grounds, and images. Such a policy also helps you to balance demands on staff and volunteers with the needs of regular visitors and programs.

Finally, each museum must determine the role it will play during the events. Some museums simply lease their facilities.
Others cater events or arrange for catering. Still others arrange the entire event for the renter. During an exhibition of Dutch masters at the Cheney Cowles Museum, Spokane, Washington, local businesses were invited to host private corporate evenings at the museum. The proposal letter sent to the companies included the following lists of responsibilities:

5. Museum's responsibilities

- Free admission for event guests to the "A Sumptuous Past" exhibition
- Receptionist during event hours, security guard during event hours
- Professional staff person during event hours, trained docents during event hours
- Museum custodian during event hours
- Visitor orientation
- Tables (up to eight 6-foot rectangular tables and two six-seater round tops)
- Chairs (up to 45 folding chairs)
- Supervision of and assistance to caterer for event
- Free access to Dutch Hypoteek Bank exhibition
- Free access to exhibition of museum's collection of Dutch masters

6. Businesses’ responsibilities

- Obtain banquet permit under business name
- Arrange and pay for all catering
- Rent additional furniture, if necessary
II. Sponsoring Events And Festivals

Museums can raise funds by sponsoring or co-sponsoring a wide variety of events, limited only by imagination and resources. The small Swedish-American Museum in Swedesburg, Iowa, a village of less than 100 people, raised money by selling traditional Swedish cookies and coffee during museum tours and providing traditional Swedish meals for bus tour visitors. The Philbrook Museum of Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, taped more extensive resources for its annual fall gala. The formal black tie dinner dance for more than 400 people included a silent auction that offered items not available on the open market, such as a week on a private yacht or a ski vacation at a private home in Aspen, Colorado.

Museum-sponsored events have included lectures, field trips to local and foreign places, concerts, and historic re-enactments. Product development ranges from reproductions of museum objects to T-shirts, from dolls to educational games. Items vary with the museum's mission, collection, staff, and other resources. Museum board members, businesses and their supporters can often donate valuable items.

1. Know the market

At one point a museum in Wisconsin raised money through an ice fishing contest. The former director said "People here won't pay $25 to come to a dinner, but we made an average of $7,000 to $10,000 from our annual ice fishing contest."
For 12 years, several thousand people went to the museum to try their luck at catching tagged fish or to watch others fish. The event ended after insurance became a problem and the state banned tagged-fish contests.

2. Use the museum's uniqueness

The SS Meteor Museum, Superior, Wisconsin is a whaleback freighter. In late October, the museum capitalized on the cold, dreary atmosphere of the ship to create a very profitable haunted house tour.

Wade House, Greenbush, Wisconsin, boasts a working open-hearth kitchen, has original owner Betsey Wade’s cookbooks, had a staff member with a degree in folk studies and an interest in historical food preparation methods. Deciding to "play to our strengths," the museum hosted Yankee Harvest Dinners. Wade House Historic Site had hosted participatory meals in the Wade House Inn for several decades. Today Wade House provides two different seasonal programs. Hearthside Suppers, offered November-April, features an historic menu that includes roast meat, soup, sides, and dessert. Breakfast at the Inn is offered during the summer months and includes such period recipes’ as “Toad in a Hole”. The programs are popular and the museum receives several requests a year for private dinners.

Guests spend the day cooking historic dishes in a traditional manner, while costumed staffs provide explanations, guidance, and copies of the recipes. People gladly pay $55 each for the Hearthside Suppers and $45 for the Breakfast at the Inn. Many come every year, some in costume.

3. Support the vendors
In 1987, Wade House's arts-and-crafts fair attracted six vendors. By 1995, the event had become a juried event with 125 crafts persons presenting handmade crafts created in a traditional manner. It attracted 4,500 visitors in one day. Today the Arts and Crafts Fair is the site’s largest fundraiser. Only the Civil War Weekend brings in more visitors.

The museum's director attributed the success to "treating the vendors very well. We spend a lot of money on postage and the telephone because we want . . . personal contact."

The museum had to convince vendors that the Wade House event would merit their participation. When the vendors arrive at 6 a.m. Wade House Staff greets each one individually. Staff are very careful to put them in the locations that they like." Before the event closes, vendors are asked if they want the same spot for their booth the next year. "We always do written evaluations, even if it's just a page.

What went well? What didn't go so well? What equipment is needed? “Staff also informs the vendors with any feedback.

Three booths receive an award for quality of product attractiveness and complimentary booth space for the next year’s event.

4. Relate events to the mission

Part of the mission of Conner Prairie, Fishers, Indiana, is to teach 19th-century American history and keep traditional crafts alive. Its collection includes samples of needlework. When a local needlework store approached the museum's staff for
assistance in sponsoring a workshop, they agreed. In its third year, the event attracted 2,000 persons in a four-day period, earning between $20,000 and $25,000 for the museum, primarily through sales in the restaurant and gift shops. The announcement for the event included lists of nearby attractions to visit, shops with related items for sale, hotels, and restaurants, thus providing assistance to local businesses.

5. Joint venture

The "Wade House Civil War Re-enactment" takes place throughout the grounds. Wade House was built in 1850 as a stagecoach stop. The building also served as a recruiting station for Civil War enlistments. Original owners Sylvanus and Betsey Wade had two sons who fought in the war, a daughter who served as a nurse and a son-in-law who was a surgeon with an infantry regiment. The area around the Wade House Inn, the sawmill and blacksmith shop are kept in their historic context. Civil War camps and events are located throughout the grounds outside of this historic “core.” In 1995, Wade House's annual Civil War Weekend attracted almost 1,000 participants and about 10,000 visitors. The director credited the program's success to "some really good advice from some people who know what re-enactments are all about." Although still successful, this re-enactment along with others in the USA has seen a decline in attendance. In 2015 the event had 520 registered enactors and over 5,000 visitors.

This illustrates the need for constant reassessment of such events as well as the constant need for attention to the aspects needed for continued success.

Today, Wade House relies upon help from more than 75 volunteers, local Civil War organizations, and some 30 part-time and four full-time staff to produce the event. A group of
Civil War "re-enactors," serves as an advisory committee for the event and re-enactors help plan and implement the events. Those helping, come from the different units representing artillery, infantry, cavalry, medical and civilians. They plan the battle re-enactment and assign spaces for campsites and horses. In order to interest re-enactors several years in a row, the committee alters the locations of the battle and campsites each year. Participants contribute hundreds of hours of volunteer time, pitching tents, bedding horses, and helping to clear the area where the battle is staged. Local business and civic organizations, government, and individuals sponsor the event.

The Civil War Weekend gives visitors an opportunity to talk to "925 intensely motivated people wanting to share history," said one director. "I defy anyone to come to this event and not learn some history." It is the sites largest mission based program.

To manage this complex event, the director keeps detailed computer records. Initially the enormous logistics included arranging for $1,100 of black gunpowder, water and straw for 50 to 60 horses, a hospital for emergency medical services, toilets, parking, and rations (each participant received cabbage, carrots, coffee, and sugar, typical fare for a Civil War soldier). The re-enactors like all armies, "travel on their stomachs." Today, units are paid a “bounty” also called a “powder bonus” to help defray the cost of participating in events. In place of the food rations, Wade House now hosts a Civil War Dance for the participating re-enactors on Saturday evening, complete with snacks and live music.

According to a director, basic customer service is what makes this joint venture work. Continued success depends upon delivering what you promised, providing courteous treatment, and paying attention to logistical details. Without a strong program, the event would lose momentum, he says. "Big events
will disappear in two years because you didn't take care of something as seemingly trivial as the firewood." Staff also spends much of their time seeking good commanders for the re-enactment units and taking care of the participants: "We really go out of our way to make them happy [and] they really appreciate it."

III. Selling Your Products

A number of years ago, the Children’s Museum of Denver at Marsico Campus developed a number of successful entrepreneurial ventures. Staff began these efforts by analyzing their mission and identifying the services and products that they had a unique ability to provide. The first project, a specially designed traveling exhibit called "Sensorium," gave children the opportunity to participate in music, drama, art, and dance activities. The rental cost for "Sensorium" was $1,500 for a four-day period; the exhibit was marketed primarily to shopping malls anxious to attract families. In three years, "Sensorium" netted the museum $25,000.

The museum then published several books as corporate premium items, gifts offered by businesses to attract customers. These included A-Maze-ing Denver, a children's game incorporating Denver landmarks, which was sold to a real estate firm; The Baby sitter's Guide, sold to a chain of day care centers, a bank, and a home builder; and The Frontier Flying Fun Book, which was sold to Frontier Airlines. Museum staff also created a children's newspaper, which they gave to elementary schools throughout the Denver area, creating a circulation of 100,000 that attracted advertisers. At one point, the newspaper netted $18,000 a year for the museum.
Richard Steckel, former executive director of the museum, suggested adopting the following principles:

1. Obtain seed funds for production costs from a corporate marketing partner.
   2. Sell the product wholesale to a corporation, which will then distribute it to individuals.
   3. Determine an accurate pricing structure that includes direct development costs, indirect costs (staff time, overhead), and profit.
   4. Maintain quality control. The museum's reputation as an expert in family education requires control over quality and content.
   5. Diversify. Provide a variety of products in case one does not succeed.

Just as important, the products must reflect the museum's mission, and the museum's organizational climate and staff must encourage entrepreneurial approaches. A product also should meet a specific need of the targeted corporation. The museum saw its mission not just as supporting children's education in a narrow sense but also as developing children’s positive self-images. Printing the Babysitter's Guide enabled the museum to share its expertise about activities that promote positive interactions between child and adult. And by distributing the publication through other organizations and businesses, the museum was able to reach a much broader audience than museum visitors.

A museum should select its entrepreneurial activities carefully. Museums often face moral or ethical dilemmas about which products and sponsors are appropriate. Entrepreneurship may only be appropriate for certain products, at a specific point in a museum's development, for some museums, or under certain
leadership. For example, after Steckel left the museum, the museum shifted priorities and decreased its entrepreneurial efforts.

1. Offer Educational Programs

A number of museums have begun offering educational and travel experiences. One example is Elderhostel, now Road Scholar, for persons ages 55 and over and their companions. A museum serving as a program site provides 22-112 hours of instruction, arranges for local lodging and meals, organizes evening and other entertainment and provides an on-site coordinator during the week. Museums often find that they gain increased publicity and community goodwill. Local media usually consider field trips and other program activities good material for feature stories.

By participating, museums can gain access to a national market almost ideal for their potential programs. The Road Scholar organization sends its program announcement to more than 800,000 persons quarterly, about half of which participate in a program. They are typically retired professionals and their spouses who travel, listen to public radio and watch public television, particularly programs on art and history. A high percentage of people who participate in such programs re-enroll. Multi-generational programs also are becoming popular with grandparents and grandchildren.

2. Calculate costs, benefits, and risks carefully, and keep accurate records

The success of all potential fund-raising activities depends upon the situation and abilities of the museum. Whether the Road
Scholar program is appropriate for a particular institution and whether it will need subsidies, break even, or prove profitable, depends upon the museum’s mission, staff and the way the program is operated. Conduct careful calculations and maintain accurate tracking of costs and income to determine the financial consequences of the program’s operation. Also, consider whether in your case special programs would affect attendance figures if people start visiting only during the event times.

The success of all potential fund-raising activities depends on the museum. The Museum of Chincoteague Island, Chincoteague, Virginia, has offered Road Scholar programs for over 10 years. In 2015 the museum offered 22 programs that served 300 people.

The Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas, hosted Elderhostel programs for six years. During the first five years, the program did not make money, although it did help pay the salaries of two staff members. During this period, however, citing the large number of program participants provided credibility to the Witte's applications for grants for educational diversity. In the long run, other benefits might occur. For example, a participant might become a donor or leave the museum a bequest.

The Chicago Historical Society operated several Elderhostel programs a year, but only broke even, and these calculations did not include the costs of staff time. This did not worry staff, however, because the program provided effective outreach to an audience their mission required them to serve.

On the other hand, Conner Prairie, Fishers, Indiana, decided that the effort to continue hosting a needlework workshop weekend required a larger investment of staff time than could be justified, given the final profits. Staff modified their approach, developing a smaller, more cost-effective event.
Mark Lane, former director of the Witte Museum, cautions museums to carefully research all the critical factors before adopting a fund-raising project or event. He strongly urged considering the "downside" or possible losses, and balancing them with the potential "upside." Since most events have significant start-up costs, the greatest benefits come from projects that can be repeated, with each event building on the expertise gained from the previous one, as well as those that re-use contacts, equipment, volunteers, and rekindle the good will generated by the previous year's event.

Special programs, like product development, can serve a variety of purposes. Each museum must determine which events best optimize its mission, increase its target audience, and support its financial goals.

3. Your Shop and Restaurant as Products

Your restaurant could be an attraction by itself depending upon food, décor and placement. Some museums locate their restaurant in a location so that people can enter without paying to go into the museum and at hours that the museum is closed. When the Madison Children’s Museum designed its new building, it placed its snack bar next to a widow facing a busy street with a clear indication that you could enter without producing into the museum.

Your shop can become a destination. You can develop and sell products based on your collection. International visitors are especially likely to want locally produced crafts and paintings. The Amgueddfa Cymru Shop at the National Museum Wales promises to find any image from their collection you want, use print on demand and deliver it to you within 14 days outside the
UK. Technology may enable visitors to browse your collection through a computer in your gift shop, and then print their desired poster within minutes. You can also sell your products including reproductions online.

References


**CONCLUSION**

Your museum can make a significant contribution to your community. You can enhance the community as a place to live, help educate its children, serve as a place to experience awe, discuss controversial issues, celebrate your community’s history and diversity and address both current problems, troublesome aspects of the past and visions for the future. You can also contribute to the economic development of your area.
through attracting tourists, encouraging local businesses such as those creating art and crafts, and sharing your management and marketing skills with others.

To maximize your contributions first focus on what is your unique mission. How does the mission of your museum fit in the best way with the overall needs and desires of the community and its economic development future? Define your contribution goals in terms that honor your collection, skills and mission.

In reviewing the examples and ideas presented in this book, remember that what worked in one country or community may not work in yours. Just because it worked in the USA does not mean it is appropriate for you, but it may be. Always question whether the idea fits or how it might be modified to be successful given your museum, country and circumstances.

Remember that your museum is part of a larger community. Draw upon the many resources that are now available through partnerships with other museums even those far away. Tap the papers, lectures, blogs and other resources available on the Internet. There are national and international organizations that host meetings, trainings and provide materials. You can consult with similar museums via the Internet and Skype, arrange for joint programs or collection exchanges.

Remember that you are an inspiration to your visitors and to those that access your collection via the Internet.

On a personal note, this project began many years ago when I was fortunate enough to spend six months traveling in Asia. It has continued with contributions from many museums both those I visited directly and presentations at the conferences of
the American Alliance of Museums and the International Council of Museums.

I look forward to receiving comments about the material, examples from your museums and suggestions. Please send them to me at: museum.wireman@gmail.com

About the Author

Dr. Wireman has an undergraduate degree and masters degree in history from the College of Wooster and the University of Minnesota and a Ph.D. in sociology from American University.

She has published six books including two on neighborhood and community development and social policy. She has
lectured/consulted in eight countries on community development and museums including AAM conferences and the ICOM conference in China. Her background includes grassroots community organization, non-profit management, running an economic development grants program for the U. S. Department of Commerce and directing the Wisconsin Small Business Development Center and consulting on museums and community development. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

Email: museum.wireman@gmail.com