



A Virtual Summit

December 5-6, 2023

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5

OPENING PLENARY: SMALL IS OUR SUPERPOWER! | Noon – 1:15 p.m. ET

What makes small museums more resilient and creative than many of their larger peers? Why is being small an advantage for many museums? The summit will kick off with a brief overview of small museums data from AASLH’s National Census of History Organizations to show the scope of small museums. Then a group of small museum directors will discuss what they see as the unfair advantage of small museums and why their size is often their superpower.

Allison Campbell, Heritage Outreach Manager, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA

Jenn Landry, Director of Museums, City of Irving, Irving, TX

Cynthia Walker, Executive Director, Brick Store Museum, Kennebunk, ME

Moderated by **Bethany Hawkins**, Chief of Operations, American Association for State and Local History

Using Your Mission Statement to Make Your Organization More Nimble | 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. ET

Mission statements are a central part of museum governance. The thinking and reflection that go into creating them can keep museums focused, dedicated to community service, and operating within ethical guidelines. Revisiting them, on their own or as part of a larger planning process, can help museums adapt and stay relevant. In this panel, participants will hear from leaders of two organizations that have gone through extensive revisions of their missions and strategic plans. They will discuss when and how to adapt your mission to refocus the organization and keep it on a sustainable path forward.

Ann Bennett, Executive Director, Laurel Historical Society, Laurel, MD

Marieke Van Damme, Executive Director, History Cambridge, Cambridge, MA

Moderated by **Sean Blinn**, Chair, AASLH Small Museums Committee, Bridgewater, NJ

Successful Small Museums Are Community Museums | 2:45 – 3:45 p.m. ET

Small museums are intrinsically connected to their communities, constantly conducting audience outreach for engagement and as new projects are developed. Audiences are also continually changing habits, interest, and involvement with museums, perhaps never more so than in 2023. Join these panelists to discuss audience development, outreach to stakeholders near and far, and how museums are growing and maintaining audiences.

Lynne Calamia, Executive Director, Roebling Museum, Roebling, NJ

Ross Jordan, Curatorial Manager, Jane Addams’ Hull House Museum, Chicago, IL

Phillip Thompson, Executive Director, Idaho Black History Museum, Boise, ID

Moderated by **Erik London**, Museum Services Curator, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL

Unearthing Untold Histories: Navigating Sensitive Narratives | 4 – 5 p.m. ET

This session explores the nuanced narratives of challenging histories at three museums. Participants will gain invaluable insights into navigating sensitive subjects in museum storytelling. Speakers will share their experiences with exhibits that address redefined perceptions of Civil Rights lunch counter sit-ins; immigration, identity, and diverse narratives; and an exhibit that re-examines a powerful but enigmatic public figure, inviting public scrutiny. The panel will also address the pivotal role of listening and collaboration in incorporating oral histories and advisory committees.

Rachel Ferrante, Executive Director, Maine Museum of Innovation, Learning and Labor (MILL), Lewiston, ME

Mark Miner, Co-Curator, Beaver Area Heritage Foundation, Beaver, PA

Joy Summar-Smith, Associate Director, Dr Pepper Museum, Waco, TX

Moderated by **Laura Casey**, Museum Services Coordinator, Texas Historical Commission, Austin, TX

Happy Hour! | 5:15 – 6 p.m. ET

Gather online with the AASLH Small Museums Committee and other summit attendees for games and networking. You supply your own beverage.



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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6

PLENARY: CREATIVITY OUT OF CHAOS | Noon – 1 p.m. ET

When COVID-19 hit, some small museums were able to adjust to closures, loss of field trips, remote staff, and more by getting creative. Hear about the programs started to survive the pandemic that were so successful they were kept. Be inspired with these great ideas and think about what you can do in your museum.

James Turk, Board Member, Harrison Township Historical Society, Harrison Township, NJ

Sarah Piccini, Assistant Director, Lackawanna Historical Society, Scranton, PA

Catherine Zipf, Architectural Historian, Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, Bristol, RI

*Moderated by **Aja Bain**, Senior Manager, Professional Development and Publications, American Association for State and Local History*

Deaccessioning for Resilience and Relevance | 1:15 – 2:15 p.m. ET

Over the years, many small museums have been saddled with “wholesale” donations including hundreds of items not relevant to the mission of the organization. These items take up valuable storage and/or program space, drain resources, and prevent the museum from collecting more relevant objects. Maintaining and caring for collections that do not meet our mission is not sustainable, and the outcomes of a well-thought-out deaccessioning process can significantly contribute to the environmental and financial resilience of your organization and strengthen your relevance to your community. In this session, we will explore some tools to make deaccession do-able for small museums and consider how deaccessioning “best practices” in the wider museum field do or do not serve small museums.

Elizabeth Beaudoin, Curator of History, Longmont Museum, Longmont, CO

Anna Tucker, Executive Director, Framingham History Center, Framingham, MA

*Moderated by **Julia Gray**, Executive Director, Wilson Museum, Castine, ME*

Doing More Together: Sharing Staff and Resources to Be More Effective | 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. ET

Resources have always been limited in the museum field, arguably more so for small museums. Small museums have developed systems that are flexible and for better or worse, allow a lot to get done with limited staff and funding. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the value of small museum tools to be nimble and efficient. As we approach a changed world with a mind towards more sustainable organizations, join our speakers to hear about mergers and organizational partnership systems to share staff and resources that make small museum work more effective and efficient.

Kaitlin Bundy, Manager, Somerset County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Somerville, NJ

Rachel Lange, Curator, Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire, WI

Tonya Staggs, Executive Director, Historic Castilian Springs, Castilian Springs, TN

*Moderated by **Sara Phalen**, Director/Curator, West Chicago City Museum/Warrenville Historical Society, West Chicago, IL*

CLOSING PLENARY: WHAT'S NEXT? | 3:45 – 4:30 p.m. ET

Join members of AASLH’s Small Museums Committee as they wrap up the summit with reflections about what we learned and how we can apply it to our museums.



REGISTRATION IS OPEN AT AASLH.ORG