



*Empowering New York State's Museums to Succeed*

# The State of New York's Museums: 2011

## A Museum Association of New York White Paper

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### **PREFACE**

The Museum Association of New York (MANY) is pleased to provide this overview of trends and issues concerning the museum and heritage organization community in New York State. Our industry faces many operational and programmatic challenges: layoffs, program cutbacks, and funding losses plague many institutions in a sector known for leveraging every dollar it receives.

The Empire State is famous for many things: iconic monuments, baseball, great architecture, Niagara Falls, Wall Street and much more. But no list of New York highpoints is complete without its world-class museums. There are 1,900 museums and heritage organizations in the state, along with 112 zoos, botanical organizations and nature centers. Some are internationally known; others are all-volunteer organizations. Together, they build community identity, jump-start the economic engines of cities, towns and villages, and educate families, senior citizens, and more than 6.6 million students annually.

Seventeen thousand people work in New York's museums, jobs that generate more than a billion dollars for the state's economy annually. And museums are not just the province of Manhattan. Every county has at least one, underpinning the state's tourism industry, and resulting in a robust 68 million visitors to the state annually.

## New York State's 1,900 museums and heritage organizations

- Drive local and state economies
- Steward vast and exceedingly diverse collections
- Educate millions of adults and children every year
- Partner with a broad range of public and private entities

This white paper is informed by the input of more than 100 MANY members and stakeholders who participated in regional briefings across the state in the fall of 2010, and 60 respondents to an online survey that was conducted in January-February 2011.

Additionally, a number of MANY's board members and colleagues agreed to read and comment on the paper's final draft. They are, with our thanks for their critical insights, Bob Beatty, Vice President for Programs, American Association for State and Local History; Michael Botwinick, Director, Hudson River Museum; Eileen Goldspiel, Director of External Relations, American Association of Museums; Beth Levinthal, Director, Hofstra University Museum; Jane McNamara, Director of Grants & Programs, New York Council for the Humanities; and Elizabeth Merritt, Founding Director, Center for the Future of Museums, American Association of Museums.

My sincerest thanks to Sheila Healy of Public Strategies, LLC, MANY's government relations consultant, who helped me co-facilitate the member briefings, and to Joan H. Baldwin, the author of this white paper, who sifted through dozens of pages of briefing notes and survey comments to provide a comprehensive and cogent analysis of what we heard and read.

Anne W. Ackerson  
Director

## The State of New York's Museums: 2011

For many of New York's 1,900 museums and heritage organizations, 2010 was undoubtedly a difficult year. With hindsight, it is clear that the State's museum community weathered the most dramatic economic downturn since the Great Depression. In its role as both strategic resource and community builder, the Museum Association of New York (MANY) conducted a series of briefings around the state, followed by an online survey, in an attempt to discover which organizations had weathered the storm and which had not, and most importantly, why? MANY wanted to give the museum community a snapshot of itself so that museums large and small, history organizations, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums, could begin to understand what had happened and to learn from each other. MANY combined information gathered during last fall's state-wide tour with the online survey, to paint a picture of its community. Knowledge is power and understanding what has happened, not just to individual organizations, but to the museum community as a whole can help.

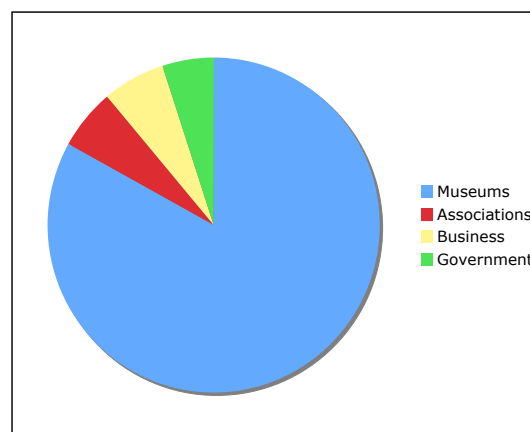
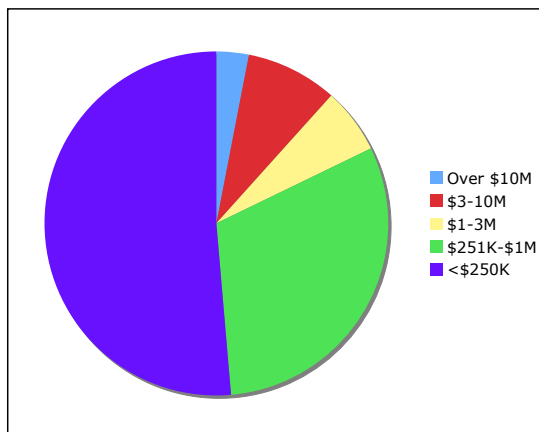
### Where the Information Came From

During the course of its briefings, MANY spoke to 111 museum staffers and volunteers, representing 68 museums and five associations in a series of invitational meetings across the state. The majority were MANY members ranging from directors to curators, educators to development staff, trustees to government officials. They included representatives from 43 history museums, six art museums, seven science museums, five children's museums, five college and university museums, and two living collections. Participant organizations represented a wide range of budget sizes from very small to very large, with organizations having operating budgets less than \$250,000 in the majority.

### Participant Profile: MANY Briefings 2010

Range of Operating Budgets Represented

Types of Entities Participating



The entire MANY membership email distribution list (450) received its online survey. After two weeks 61 institutions or 13 percent of the membership had responded. They represent the wide range of MANY's membership from all-volunteer or single-staff rural heritage organizations to medium and large urban art museums, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums. The survey, which was loosely based on one developed for nonprofits in Australia, grouped questions under seven topic headings ranging from the economy to programming and community value, governance, membership, social media, environmental issues and innovation. For those interested in seeing the survey, there is a link included in the resource section at the end of the paper.

### **The Economic Climate in New York State and Beyond**

With their answers riddled with words like "lean," "trim," and "cut" it is no surprise that the majority of MANY's survey respondents feel the current financial crisis will shape their operations throughout FY2011/12, affecting endowments, budgets, individual giving and sponsorships. Many organizations report cutting staff positions, a process that for some began as early as 2008. One director of a major upstate history organization said, "What worries me most is the prospect of having to stay at this basic level for the next three years or so...it's a grim prospect. Can we maintain our excellence and our reputations?"

In fact, New York's museums are experiencing the same climate as their sister non-profits. In a 2010 survey by the NonProfit Finance Fund, 90 percent of those surveyed expected 2011 to be as or more difficult as the preceding year. In this survey only 65 percent of organizations had three months of cash on hand. In a recent *NonProfit Quarterly*, Dr. Paul Light, the Paulette Goddard Professor of Public Service at New York University's Robert Wagner School of Public Service, linked the ongoing fragility of the State's real estate market to nonprofit health, suggesting that not only does a weak housing market set off a chain reaction resulting in lower income, but a poorly performing real estate market makes investors anxious. Light wrote, "If nonprofits want a simple indicator of the future, they should pay attention to the foreclosure trends. The numbers are still going up. 2011 looks like a record year. More foreclosures mean less revenue, of course, but also underpin despair and nervousness. It's a very bad sign."

The museum community breathed a cautious sigh of relief when Governor Andrew Cuomo released his 2011/12 Executive Budget February 1. The \$133 billion budget included proposed cuts that were not as Draconian as some had predicted. The New York State Council on the Arts [NYSCA], which many feared would be consolidated into another agency or eliminated all together, took the same 10 percent hit that many State agencies received. This makes the fifth continuous year of reductions for NYSCA, taking its budget back to levels not seen since 1996-97. In just the last five years, NYSCA's budget has fallen a

precipitous 40 percent. The Executive Budget spared the Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums [ZBGA] Program and the Environmental Protection Fund. NYSCA and the ZBGA Program are the only two State sources of general operating support for museums and heritage organizations. MANY estimates that museums and heritage organizations receive approximately \$18-20 million per year from all State sources or .0150 percent of the State's project FY2011/12 budget.

This year's cautious optimism comes at a price. Many of the state's museums—like other nonprofits—report an increased demand for services. In addition, a number of groups are still waiting for State funding that may or may not arrive. In 2009, the State comptroller's annual report on State contracts reported that 92.5 percent of its contracts with nonprofits were late and that the State had delayed paying numerous nonprofits for multiple years. While museums and heritage organizations represent a relatively small percentage of that number, there are organizations that have been squeezed by the State's budget crisis. One briefing attendee reported that her organization was still waiting for \$30,000 from a now-defunct program, and for organizations with little or no endowment to fall back on, a missing state grant can be the tipping point. Again, Dr. Paul Light sees a real danger in the perception of the state budget crisis, "I think that people are underestimating just how weak State and local governments are in terms of their budget flexibility. There is an awareness out there of the current budget situation in states and the fact that the federal government is not going to rescue the states." So once again the museum community must figure out how to do more with less.

And last, but by no means least, there is the question of tourism – the State's second largest industry – a loosely defined amalgam that includes everything from race tracks and water slides, wine country and maple syrup, cute upstate towns and Madison Avenue. The MANY community of 1,900 museums, heritage organizations, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums plays a central role in this sector. The industry—as distinct from the State's efforts to promote it—ranks seventh among New York's private sector employers. In 2009, visitors to New York spent \$45.8 billion, generating \$6.6 billion in tax dollars. Governor Cuomo's FY12 budget proposes \$3.6 M for the I Love NY program – far below the double digit budgets California, Pennsylvania and Florida allocate for tourism marketing and promotion – and \$3.8M for local assistance to tourism promotion agencies. Yet the MANY community frequently goes under-promoted as compared to waterslides, vineyards and B&B's. The tourism industry focuses mostly on the commercial part of the equation and neither understands what museums do nor what they contribute to the tourism economy. While there are terrific examples of successful collaborative cultural/heritage/tourism efforts, MANY finds these to be more the exception than the rule.

## **Educational Programming & Community Value**

Given the economic news, it is no wonder that 60 percent of MANY's survey respondents predicted that program funding would be harder to come by in 2011/12. Their coping strategies are as varied as the museum community as a whole. Some see new leadership as the solution: They are hiring a new director, a new consultant or a new marketing firm. For others, no program is launched without its own underwriting. "Every program is being asked for a sponsor as numero uno in the planning process," writes a respondent while another suggests "More targeted fundraising to specific programs. More staff time to cultivating relationships with potential funders. More dollars spent with grant writers. Building community-based relationships."

For others, the answer lies in cooperation and a bit of entrepreneurial risk-taking. A Buffalo briefing participant from a small, upstate historical society reported her attendance skyrocketed when she and nine partners took a New York State Thruway billboard. With 10 partners, the cost was \$75 each and the benefits enormous. "Part of the game is letting people know you exist," she said. Another upstate participant discussed the possibility of a shared collection storage facility. Museum educators are old hands at working cooperatively, with schools, home-schoolers, and after-school programs, but in the wake of the new economy, their reach has broadened. Where a decade ago two Albany museums would have each delivered a similar program to overlapping school districts, today one designs the program and the second delivers it. In the end, both benefit, and so do the city's students.

At MANY's Rochester briefing when an attendee reported that there are too many school districts that do not communicate with each other so museums end up selling their programs over and over again another suggested that regional museums work together to identify and market their education programs. Those who responded to MANY's survey are also working cooperatively. "We are developing more collaborative programs [with other cultural organizations] so funders are helping to sustain multiple organizations with one gift," writes one organization while others report that they are looking to build partner relationships instead of one-time underwriting for a single project.

For smaller museums and heritage organizations, however, reducing programming to save money means also reducing visibility which in turn makes soliciting donors harder. For many that has meant a return to basics: mission, collection, community, and last, but not least, a need to define value. For all the talk of needing new revenue-generating business models, the heart of what museums do is based squarely in their educational and preservation roles. They have a higher purpose: To hold collections in the public trust and to educate the public about those collections. The best of New York's museum community is always in a process of reinvention, utilizing the touchstone of mission to revitalize what they do best because opening the doors, paying the fuel bill and caring for

collections is not enough. The struggle to keep operating does not necessarily build community, fulfill mission or get people in the door. As arts blogger Deborah Ragsdale put it recently, “One cannot assume that an organization that is balancing its budget is achieving its mission and providing cultural and social value to society; nor can one assume the opposite.”

In MANY’s discussions with constituents, however, the question of value often took a back seat to more pressing problems of rising healthcare costs, shrinking State dollars, the cost of energy, and the need to expand programs as staffs and budgets shrink. Museums and heritage organizations are not shoe stores that can count the number of shoes sold to see if they are successful. But that does not mean measuring value is a mushy formula that only involves wondering if a museum’s mission has had an impact. In any nonprofit, but especially in museums, there are many aspects of accountability—financial, educational, governmental—and mission. Museum boards and leaders must measure and balance thoughtfully moving with care through the tripwires of a balanced budget, an invested community, and a cared-for collection. Getting these often conflicting measures of success right is a constant challenge. As Alnoor Ebrahim wrote in a recent article for the Harvard Business Working Knowledge program, “Is it feasible, or even desirable, for nonprofit organizations to be accountable to everyone for everything? The challenge for leadership and management is to prioritize among competing accountability demands. This involves deciding both to whom and for what they owe accountability.”

Almost all of New York’s museums and heritage organizations have the added regulatory oversight of the Chartering program, which weds the State’s museum community to the New York State Board of Regents. This process is largely benign except when it is not: Museums are mandated to deliver educational programs, yet receive no direct funding from the State Department of Education (SED). New York’s Board of Regents defines educational and public programming as, “the full range of mission-related educational activities in which the institution engages, to promote understanding and appreciation of a subject, and to support life-long learning.” Chartering regulations go on to say that the state’s museum community “shall use its collections to present programs, publications, and exhibitions that are consistent with the organization’s mission, based upon the highest standards of scholarship and offered to as broad a segment of the population” and requires that school programs “shall be based on the appropriate State learning standards, and with input from teachers and/or other educators.”

In the for-profit world if a business cannot sell its goods, it modifies the product or goes out of business. SED-chartered museums—at least in New York—do not have the option of opting out of educational programming. New York is the only state in the country that incorporates its museums and heritage organizations through the SED. Value is imputed from the outset. Museums are teaching institutions. This makes the necessity for steady income—whether grants,



endowment or visitation—imperative. More than a few briefing participants commented on the ironies of museum education in New York State where school districts no longer have money to bus students on field trips, but the SED requires museums to provide programming based on the State’s learning standards. One Rochester focus group participant said, “We can’t get students into our organizations. Local funders still talk about the importance of kids going to museums, but the reality is there are so many barriers to doing this,” while another added, “Teachers tell us all the time they have no funding and no time to get kids into museums.”

This year museums may see a small ray of hope from the P-12/Office of Cultural Education [OCE] Collaboration, an informal movement afoot within SED. Born from a desire to raise performance in chronically under-performing schools utilizing Race to the Top funding, the movement hopes to link SED’s curriculum with programming produced by museums, libraries, public broadcasting and archives. Talks between OCE staff and outside stakeholders, including MANY, are still in the early stages; however, one recent Collaboration agenda stated: “Cultural competence is an essential component of a well-rounded education [and] a necessary component of a standards-based curriculum model. In order to gain understanding of the diverse cultures of the past and present society, every P-12 student in New York State shall have regular and significant access to the cultural riches of NYS; contact with historians, scientists, curators, artists, performers, and other professionals; opportunities to express creativity through art and science.” These two sentences capture a new and exciting vision that has been unarticulated far too long. But whether they can pave the way for the MANY community, which is regulated by SED, to gain a permanent seat at the SED table remains to be seen.

In the wake of the financial crisis it is more common than ever to hear non-profit leaders talk about business models, but to quote Clara Miller of the Non-profit Finance Fund, “There is one business model: reliable revenue that meets or exceeds expenses.” Gone are the days of underwriting a major program or even a whole museum with hefty State dollars. Today’s directors need to understand their institution and how it meets their community’s needs or as one MANY briefing participant put it this fall: “If you’re not designing your business plan around what you’re doing locally, you’ll fail.”

As if all that were not challenging enough add to it the jockeying for money, members and audience, and being a museum leader is no picnic. For some communities—and not just rural upstate towns—museums and their sister non-profits are all competing for the same group of people, a generally well-heeled, older, well-educated demographic who serve as trustees, donors and attend events and programs. In many instances they compete against one another for foundation funds, donor gifts, State money, and membership. One briefing participant posited that while competition is healthy, organizations need to know when it is time to come together and work for [and with] each other. She

wondered whether working together regionally may be the answer since each region has its own distinct issues. In addition, collaboration also highlights redundancies making cooperative ventures more efficient.

## **Membership & Governance**

The MANY survey as well as its fall briefings also asked about membership—a primary revenue stream for many organizations—questioning participants about their biggest membership challenges in the coming year. Fifty six- percent of respondents said they are increasing efforts to attract new members, but only thirty one-percent reported worrying about member retention. A few organizations who had existed without a membership program noted that they planned to create one. Several mentioned that memberships were slow in the new economy. One said it was a struggle to “retain the lower level member who seems to be caught up in the economic downturn,” while another remarked, “We find that members at the \$25 - \$50 level have remained consistent but members at the \$100 level are now donating at the \$50 level.” Several survey-takers linked programming to membership: “We stress the amount, variety and quality of programming to keep members coming back,” wrote one. Another, whose institution had cut programs, responded that it was a challenge to attract new members with a reduced program schedule. More than a few found that members, regardless of their level of giving, took up a great deal of time. Briefing participants on Long Island identified a number of challenges for membership ranging from disengaged weekenders with no interest in local communities to new immigrant groups where there are barriers of both money and language.

While membership is a challenge for most groups surveyed, the good news is that for many New York museums—including those in MANY’s survey and briefings—staff reductions were a 2010 problem. A number said they expect no staff turnover in 2011; however, among those predicting job losses this year, a third identified mid-level positions as vulnerable, followed closely by leadership positions. For those expecting their staffs to remain constant, some actually credited the recession saying “No one moves around in an unstable economy.” Other organizations reported that they are still in a hiring freeze which means even if staff members leave, their positions will be absorbed by remaining employees. In a hopeful sign, several organizations report they are giving raises again and a few are adding positions.

MANY also questioned the museum community about governance, asking “Is your institution engaged in improving governance this year?” and more specifically “what strategies are you using to improve governance that would be helpful to other museums and heritage organizations?” Of the 27 organizations who chose to comment on the question 16 reported they are working on it, while a third of the total respondents reported they will engage in improving governance this year. The definition of “improving” was elastic. Some

organizations are looking to a new director to be a change agent, a number are revitalizing their boards, and many reported that they are just starting strategic planning, a process that for some seemed to suggest good governance. Sadly though, strategic plans, like diets are a means not ends and boards will need to be extremely nimble to weather whatever storms lie ahead.

As boards become more pragmatic, the question of the business model rears its head. "We are working on an integrated business strategy and planning process which incorporates metrics to evaluate performance," wrote one, but another clearly felt less sanguine about business as panacea, writing "Many trustees have begun to apply business principles to governance. This helps our museum be realistic about our grim financial outlook, but it also leads to a blind spot as to how reducing spending reduces programming and visibility -- and how that process makes it more difficult to solicit donors." In a recent article in Nonprofit Times Michael Peregrine made the point that successful boards in the new economy will "balance near-term issues with long-term organizational visibility." Museums need to be conscious of this when revitalizing boards. New board members may not realize they will be called upon to deal with so many business-related issues.

## **Going Green and Being Social**

Apart from governance and staff, MANY also wanted to know how New York's museums, heritage organizations, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums were dealing with two themes in 21st-century life: the environment and social networking, and how their approach to these issues impacts overall organizational health. Specifically, MANY asked whether respondent organizations would institute environmentally-friendly programs and/or upgrades in 2011. Sixteen-percent said they would not. Fifty four-percent responded that they would, while 29 percent said they did not know. When asked whether going green has benefited their museum, a number said that being environmentally conscious allowed them to serve two masters, saving money while being responsible. Several specifically mentioned saving energy although one noted, "We plan to seek grants to improve energy efficiency, but our need for capital improvements is so great that this is less of a priority than we would like it to be."

Some reported making small changes: moving from incandescent to compact florescent bulbs; eliminating paper invitations or announcements in favor of online communication; surveying mechanical systems and/or replacing boilers. A few are actively engaged in green building projects while another group noted that being green was not a choice, but part of their mission. "It contributes to lower operating expenses and mission message," noted one respondent while another suggested it was a possible bridge to cooperation with other nonprofits. "Aligns us with organizations for which this is the main thrust; gives us access to their constituencies."

Suggesting that technology and social networking have changed the way many museums and heritage organizations do business, MANY's survey asked how respondents and their stakeholders planned to utilize these mediums in the coming year. Not surprisingly, just about everyone—a whopping 96.6 percent—use social media for program information and updates while 89.8 percent also use it to announce exhibition and events. (The survey did not distinguish between the various forms of communication—email, Facebook, Twitter.) Social media is also playing an increasing role in membership development—54 percent—and a big role in relationship building and networking opportunities—75 percent.

When the survey asked what form of communication museums and heritage organizations use and why, the answers grew more complex. Everyone—it seems—is using email, sending e-blasts, e-invites, e-newsletters. Nineteen percent are also upgrading or improving their Web sites, making them more attractive and more interactive. A larger group, approximately 53 percent also use Facebook and Twitter. For some it is a way to connect with a younger demographic. Several expressed concern about its value in the long term. “We are exploring Twitter, continuing with Foursquare, and working on a geo-caching project. All of these methods connect us with distinct audiences who are often new to the museum, but we worry that e-followers from these groups do not convert into repeat visitors or members,” one wrote.

With some 250,000 people registering each day to use Facebook alone, it is a rare museum, heritage organization, zoo, botanical garden or aquarium that feels it can ignore social networking; however, it is not clear whether MANY's survey takers are using Facebook or Twitter to their full capacities (likely not). In addition, except for the question of how to convert Facebook fans to actual members or visitors, none of the survey respondents talked about problems with social media. No one mentioned whether their organization had created a social networking policy for either the organization or the staff. Nor did anyone complain about the significant amount of time social networking can take.

## **Innovation & Social Enterprise**

At the conclusion of its survey MANY asked its constituents how they innovate, where they get their ideas, and whether positioning their organization as a solution to economic and social issues is a position they would take in 2011. Most organizations—some 70 percent—as well as MANY's briefing participants—said they look across the cultural sector when surfing for ideas and innovation. Fewer than half (49 percent) look in the nonprofit world and fewer still (29 percent) look to higher education. Asked about the challenges of adapting ideas from elsewhere in the humanities to the world of museums, a quarter of the group summed it up in one word: Time. A focus on innovation—which requires

leaders, staff and board members to invest time in working on ideas is a precious commodity that rarely makes it to the top half of the agenda.

Shrinking over-tasked staffs and disinterested boards also seemed to be a drag on innovation. One survey-taker said, "With only two staff members any change that requires significant amounts of time is often put to the back burner," while another commented on the challenge of "making those ideas work on a smaller scale and within the confines of limited staff time." And a third simply said, "Building the board to assist in this direction."

Distinct from the small-staff-not-enough-time argument was another undercurrent of frustration, causing one respondent to write, "As much as funders such as NYSCA say to think outside the box, they still want you in the box," and another to add, "It's hard to engage outsiders much less insiders since most do not take a small museum seriously." Some survey participants actually sounded as though museums with their albatross-like collections were the problem: "It is hard to think like an entrepreneur when a certain amount of your operating expenses is related to the collection," wrote one. Another questioned the relevance of innovation when it came to the specific challenges and responsibilities of museums regarding collections care and ethics." This responsibility is a counterweight to the late Stephen Weil's argument that the new and potentially dominant museum would draw its strength not from the collections it held, but from the things it did or "the Museum as Social Enterprise would draw its legitimacy from what it does rather than what it is."

And as for museums and heritage organizations positioning themselves as participants in their communities' search for answers to economic and social problems, 42 percent of survey takers said this would be very important for their museums in 2011 while an additional 38 percent said it would be somewhat important. The remaining participants either did not think it was important at all (11.5 percent) or said it was not important to their mission (8.2 percent).

For those who believe their institution has a social message, MANY asked what it was. For some it was global: All museums matter and therefore theirs does too: "Museums matter and keep our history alive for future generations," wrote one. "Museums are integral to society in that they foster a greater understanding of other cultures which is so important in today's global marketplace," wrote another. Some organizations have tapped into interests in their region and tied them to their mission. "We're focusing on agriculture this year, more so than in the past. A positive change that is definitely market driven. All of our new partnerships this year will be in sustainable-ag initiatives." Others understood the question as a call for inclusiveness. They answered that they were adopting bilingual exhibit labels; that they existed for everyone, regardless of race, class, or gender.

For others relevancy was a changing programmatic topic that provided a way to connect with community. One wrote, "Our message will be focused on Diversity Awareness and the ways in which it is vital for local audiences to be aware of global cultural ideas and values." A second said, "We are looking at "greed" as a social and cultural phenomena. We want our visitors to differentiate and recognize the difference between survival, ambition and greed." Several saw their role—whether through programming or exhibits—as an important community organization: Their organization is a community anchor or an economic engine.

Interestingly, no one mentioned audience. With the exception of the organization moving its focus to agriculture, everyone seemed—and admittedly these are short answers—to suggest that social enterprise was about the museum or heritage organization doing something and then seeing how the community reacts rather than identifying who or what matters in their town, city, region and finding ways that their collection can impact that message. Stephen Weil's idea that good museums make a positive difference in people's lives was not the first thing respondents wrote about.

### **An Agenda for New York's Community of Museums, Heritage Organizations, Zoos, Botanical Gardens and Aquariums for 2011/12**

So where is New York's community of museums, heritage organizations, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums as the second quarter of 2011 rolls toward us? And what trends and themes will dominate discussion? First, we know that the economy's vise-grip will continue to plague the community. With a problem so global, if there are answers they seem to lie in smart, agile leadership that knows its communities intimately. Second, we know that good governance is not about luck; it is about people—the right ones. Good leaders are skillful communicators who create partnerships, collaboration and raise money because a community believes in what a particular museum or heritage organization is doing. Third, we see examples across New York State where museums big and small are taking risks whether they are first-time partnerships on small projects or big organizational collaborations. And we see many museums taking an innovative look at their collections, interpreting and exhibiting objects in new ways for a new generation of museum-goers. Last, we know that going green and the new social media are not really new any more. Everybody is participating, but again they are means, not ends. They can reduce costs, build membership or increase attendance, but only if they create community first.

MANY believes in New York's 1,900 museums. By working cooperatively within the museum field and engaging in collaboration across other disciplines, the community will remain a cornerstone of New York's cultural life.

This 2011/12 Agenda for Building Community extends MANY's earlier work with public and private organizations statewide by building partnerships and collaborations that will bring the community together, acting with one voice, meeting challenges and creating opportunities.

**For MANY:**

- Serve as a model for partnership & collaboration with sister organizations, state agencies and private organizations.
- Extend membership so that the community speaks with the most inclusive voice possible.
- Honor collaborative partnerships within MANY's community and where possible serve as a matchmaker, drawing like organizations together.
- Promote the lessons learned from risk-taking.
- Continue to work collaboratively with regional, state, and national organizations to promote and highlight the MANY community's successes and innovations.
- Continue to support NYSCA as a strong, independent entity, and its Museum Program as the primary State underwriter of operating funds for museums in New York State.
- Serve as a catalyst to address the complex questions surrounding deaccessioning, providing a voice for extraordinary collections imperiled by fiscal crisis, bankruptcy or dissolution.
- Encourage the NYS Board of Regents to embrace museums and heritage organizations as full partners with schools, libraries, archives and public broadcasting under the big tent of the University of the State of New York.

**For NY state's museum service agencies/regional and national professional associations:**

- Commit to continual data-gathering that can be used to articulate the value of museums and heritage organizations to education, economy, tourism and quality of life.
- Reinforce the message that museums and heritage organizations are community partners with responsibility for civic health.
- In New York State, help ensure that SED and the University of the State of New York have a deeper understanding of the museum community it regulates, the challenges it faces, and that it acknowledges innovation, imagination and success of museum education programs across the State, recognizing that the educational contributions of museums are equal to those of libraries, archives and public broadcasting.
- Continue to support NYSCA as a strong, independent entity, and its Museum Program as the primary State underwriter of operating funds for museums in New York State. Dollars invested in these programs are a good investment. The fact that they are unrestricted allows museums,

heritage organizations, and their sister organizations, to leverage public money against private gifts.

- Whenever possible, create a seat at the table for museums during discussions and planning for educational initiatives, economic development and tourism. When that is not possible, create a new table that provides a similar or better service, but differently.

**For the museum community:**

- Work together to promote the MANY community to New York State Tourism so that it understands what the State's 1,900 museums, heritage organizations, zoos, botanical gardens and aquariums do.
- Support and collaboratively market programming.
- Embrace and utilize new technologies to innovate, share and build community.
- Know your legislators in Washington, Albany and locally. Make sure they understand what you do, and more importantly, why.
- On the national level, work together with other state and museum agencies (AAM, AAMD, AASLH, etc.) to assure the integrity and strength of the museum community nationwide.



## Resources

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