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TECHNICAL LEAFLET BUNDLE
A PUBLICATION OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR STATE AND LOCAL HISTORY

Come One! Come All!

All of us want more people to visit and become involved in our site. The five technical leaflets in this bundle do just that!

BNDL028

Attracting the underserved segments of your community to you museum as visitors, members, and donors could begin with TL 265 and TL 263. These two case studies focus on how to get the younger crowd and the Latino population, demographics typically underserved by history organizations, to engage with your site and how to design programs with them in mind.

TL 259 discusses how the Minnesota Historical Society brought students and seniors together for an oral history project, which resulted in more involvement by both demographic groups in their sites.

TL 254 contains methods for attracting teachers and school groups to your site using collections to help teachers fulfill state education standards. Use their methods to design your own projects and programs.

TL 245 shares the results of a 3-year study on how the USS Constitution extended the amount of time families spent in their galleries while at the same time raising visitor donations. This technical leaflet shows how focusing on your audience can produce dramatic results.

Includes the following Technical Leaflets:
TL 265 - From (A)rts to (Z)ombies: A Young Friends Group How-to
TL 263 – What's the Big Idea? Using Listening Sessions to Build Relationships and Relevance
TL 259 – Creating Intergenerational Oral History Opportunities
TL 254 – Designing Education Programs that Connect Students to Collections
TL 245 – Families First! Rethinking Exhibits to Engage All Ages

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TECHNICALLEAFLET
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#265

From (A)rts to (Z)ombies: A Young Friends Group How-To

By Astra Haldeman

Young friends groups, events, or initiatives seem to be gaining popularity as organizations search for ways to engage young adults. In general, young friends groups are aimed at a particular generation, life-phase, or age group, such as those in their twenties, thirties, and sometimes forties. They include events and opportunities marketed to that target audience, different marketing and fundraising strategies, as well as an identity that is separate from (yet within) that of the parent organization.

For organizations that depend on membership and private donations, as well as public interest and a captive audience, the primary benefit of a young friends group is to ensure there are no gaps in support. It is a way to make sure that in addition to programming for children, teens, families, and those approaching (or into) retirement, your organization also has offerings that specifically meet the needs and interests of young singles and couples—those no longer in college, but who are embedded in your community as business leaders, young families, and professionals. Many are searching for ways to engage this community in a civic, social, and entertaining manner.

To best illustrate a how-to approach in creating a young friends group, I will rely on my experience as one of the founding members of the Abbe Underground, the young friends group created for the Abbe Museum. The Abbe Museum is a medium-sized museum located in Bar Harbor, Maine, with the mission to inspire new learning about the Wabanaki Nations with every visit (the Wabanaki Nations include the Micmac, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes). The Abbe Museum accomplishes this mission through public programming, educational opportunities, and changing exhibitions that educate visitors about both the present and past of the Wabanaki communities.

The Abbe was founded in 1928 at a historic location within what is now Acadia National Park, and opened a second, larger location in downtown Bar Harbor in 2001. With this new location came the opportunity to offer year-round programming and exhibits, utilize larger educational and function spaces, and increase the impact of the museum in the local community, which despite a seasonal economy has year-round needs. One of the current strategic goals of the Abbe Museum is to heighten awareness of the museum in the local community, region, and nation and one of the steps identified to accomplish this goal was to connect with new audiences and engage more with existing audiences. It is from this goal that our project was born.

I. Why does your organization want or need a young friends group?

Before launching an initiative to create a young friends group, it is important to define why your organization is interested in this project and to make sure that desire fits within its mission. You can then defend your decision to your boss and board, your community, and to the potential young friends who ask in the future. So, first, list your arguments.

II. Define Your Audience

Do you need a young friends group, or does your existing audience satisfy the reasons you just listed? Do you have a potential audience from which to create a group? Or do you need to attract the audience that will become your group?

Next, take a moment to define your audience. If you have statistics and demographics that help support your numbers, use them. If not, make rough estimates of your audience demographics. This will help you determine your strongest and weakest groups, based primarily on age. Age is just one of many factors in determining your audience, but it does help illustrate whether groups are graduating through the offerings of your institution, the same way that those age ranges would graduate through their educational and life experiences. In the chart below, use numbers, percentages, or simply satisfactory (+) and needs improvement (-). Feel free to include additional categories that

	0–5	6–12	13–17	18–21	22–29	30–39	40–49	50–64	65+
General Attendance									
Program Attendance									
Event Attendance									
Donors									
Members									
Volunteers									
Board									
Staff									
Other									

apply to your institution, as well as to tweak the age ranges to better reflect the demographics you keep or what interests you.

As we considered establishing a young friends group at the Abbe Museum, we asked ourselves, "Who are we missing?" When we looked back at the previous year, we learned that we had more than 25,000 visitors from every state and more than 30 nations, worked with more than 3,000 schoolchildren, trained 40 teachers, and had a wonderful group of committed volunteers and members, as well as supporters who have been part of the museum for much of their lives. Attendance at programs and events was predominantly retired or middle-aged participants, with the exception of programs focused on families. Most members and volunteers were retired. We were missing the group that fell into the of Rising Adulthood life phase (as defined by William Strauss and Neil Howe): a mix of Generations X and Y, and aged 22-43 years.[1]

III. Define Your Community

Is your audience missing because there is an age gap in your community? What does your community look like? Are there community groups that already exist that you want to attract or with which you want to partner? A young friends group is an opportunity to engage with your community, perhaps a sector with which you have not yet interacted much. Don't pass up this opportunity!

At the Abbe Museum, first we wondered if Gen Y (also known as the Millennial Generation) did not often visit because there seemed to be fewer individuals of that age range living in our community, but the 2010 Census reassured us that was not so. Although Maine is one of the oldest states in the nation, about 27 percent of our county's population was aged 20-44. Other area organizations had initiated similar programs at the same time. This indicated a passion for creating a group for this audience—a Young Pros group was trying to meet regularly and a fledgling

Sample: Why the Abbe Museum Should Host Events Targeted to Generations X and Y

Johannah Blackman

Undergrounders interacting with the Abbe Museum exhibit *Indians & Rusticators: Wabanakis and Summer Visitors on Mount Desert Island 1860s-1920s* during the "Rusticators Relived: A Night in 1912."

1. To maintain a consistent donor, volunteer, and support base, the Abbe Museum needs to cultivate younger generations that will mature into givers.
2. In order to create a young friends group or program, the Abbe Museum first needs to attract Gen X and Y with events to build recognition with this audience.
3. The younger generations who might attend these events are generally not visitors of the Abbe Museum (though many were when they were younger), but they are the group we need to be aware of the Abbe and our exhibitions. They are the group who interfaces most with tourists and recommends businesses around Mount Desert Island. As waitresses, bartenders, crew members, shop attendants, service workers, they are the "frontline faces" of Mount Desert Island.
4. The Abbe Museum is in the process of growing a rental program. Holding events marketed at young residents would improve this program in two ways:
   - It provides a safer, more controlled test environment for the set-up arrangements and activities likely to occur at wedding receptions and private parties.
   - This generation is getting engaged, married, holding bridal and baby showers, etc. and might be interested in renting the museum as a venue.
5. As a nonprofit arts and culture organization, the Abbe Museum has a responsibility to help grow and entice a maturing population into supporters, friends, and lovers of the arts, nonprofits, and cultural organizations. For a variety of reasons, many of the younger residents of Mount Desert Island have not visited the Abbe Museum and events marketed specifically at this group might get them through the door!
6. Specifically for our first event, the exhibition *Twisted Path II* highlighted a number of young Wabanaki artists. These artists are part of the generation that the Abbe is seeking to engage with a young friends program. Young residents and potential friends of the Abbe should be aware of the next generation of artists, and young artists should be aware of the next generation of supporters, businessmen and -women, professionals, and arts lovers.

arts-oriented group, the 545 and Co., was forming. A small college nearby, the College of the Atlantic, attracts students passionate about human ecology and graduates of the college sometimes decide to stay in the area and make it their home. Being a local and staying year-round causes a sense of pride in an area where the economy is seasonally focused. But because of that seasonality, there are fewer activities and distractions in the winter when tourism is quieter and more businesses are closed.

One of the bits of advice which we found very helpful and encouraging is that young friends groups can be difficult to start up because there are so many social activities vying for the attention of that age group. But not in our area! We knew that was a gap we could fill if we focused on off-season offerings because we knew our community. We knew that what was a challenge for many others could be an advantage for us. We wanted to provide year-round activities created for an audience that might be thirsting for them in an environment that invited the opportunity to network and socialize.

IV. Form a Committee

A young friends group is a great way to engage a new audience and attract new volunteers. Engage a group that will be excited with the project, are in touch with the generations you want to attract, and are interested in the networking opportunities a young friends group can create.

To do this, first make some important organizational decisions. Decide how closely events should connect with your mission. Are you willing to give some leeway? What can and cannot be done within the parameters of your collections management and educational goals? From a financial standpoint, do you want to break even with your events and use them as cultivation, or earn from them and use them as fundraisers?

Then, identify potential committee members. Your organization may want a young friends group because it feels that there are not enough young adults engaging with your mission. But chances are, you already have some individuals who have demonstrated interest or might be interested in becoming more involved. Give them a leadership role by inviting them to the committee. Allow them to create a group that interests them and then invite their friends. The best place to start is with those who are already familiar with your organization and what you do.

After establishing that Gen X and Y seemed to be missing from the Abbe Museum's audience, the Abbe Museum's President/CEO (Gen X) tasked me (Gen Y) with researching and implementing a program for our organization—an act of trust that was an enabling force and kick-started the project with energy and excitement. The excitement was contagious, and it was not long before we had formed our founding committee of four, eager to talk about goals, learn more about initiating a group, and form an identity. The inaugural committee included myself, then Manager of Museum Services, and three others: a past seasonal Guest

Responsibilities of a young friends committee or volunteer planning group should include:

- Meet or communicate regularly
- Create core identity of group
- Planning and organizing events
- Inviting guests and spreading the word
- Maintaining the RSVP list so you have an idea of how many guests to expect (this is especially important for smaller organizations)
- Soliciting sponsorship
- Event set up and clean up
- Hosting responsibilities during the event
- Evaluation following each event

Tips as you define your community:

1. Look at census information and learn what your community is like by the numbers.
2. List other similar groups, such as Young Pros or Young Business Leaders, Rotaract, clubs and/or staff of nearby colleges and universities, etc. You'll want to keep these groups in mind for collaboration opportunities, marketing opportunities, groups to invite, and more.
3. List other activities in your community that attract your target group and may distract them or divert their attention from your organization's programs and events.
4. Define the culture of your community. Is there pride in being a local? Would you call it an artistic community? Does your community seem to engage with pop culture? Is it an academic community? Do people seem to prefer indoor or outdoor activities? Is local history important to your community? Is there a community identity you need to tap into, or are you already a part of it?

Look to these sources for potential committee members:

- Young staff members
- Children/grandchildren of board, staff, and volunteers
- Young business leaders in your community
- Current volunteers
- Past/temporary/seasonal employees
- Past/current interns

Services employee; a part-time Events Coordinator; and a new volunteer at the museum who was beginning the process of opening her own gallery. We each had a different connection to the community, and that helped to achieve one of our objectives: allowing friends of friends to meet, network, and form a more tightknit community.

Together we saw an opportunity to provide a space for the networking of like-minded individuals interested in community and culture. That has been one of the group's key strengths. We've focused on friends inviting friends so that everyone feels very connected at each of our events, something important in a small community. In being a museum, we've also given that audience the opportunity to learn more about the area where they live.

V. Define the Group and Its Goals

Once established, have the committee use the information you've gathered above, especially the parameters (from Section IV) and Why's (from Section I), to define the group and goals. Consider these important elements:

1. Will the group be membership- or event-based? Should the group build towards one or the other, for example, hold events to attract potential members?
2. What can you give your target audience? What can they do for you in return?
3. Do you want this group to be the basis for big fundraisers or micro-campaigns? Are there specific aspects of your organization that might interest them most?

Themes found in young friends groups/events:

- Late/Evening (generally 6–11 p.m.)
- Includes entertainment
- Drinks often included or available for purchase
- Funds raised support a *specific* fund or project of interest
- Focus on networking and the opportunity to meet new people
- Events produced specifically for the audience
- Often defined/suggested age ranges, such as: 21-45, 21-40, 21-35, 20s and 30s. All were 21+, likely due to the presence of alcohol
- Ticketing is reasonably priced, but rarely free
- Groups and events support arts/culture/community
- Topics/themes of programs and events tied in to popular culture
- Sometimes, but not always, groups were membership-based and required membership to attend events.

Create a "What Can I Do?" List

Create a small, actionable list of things that young friends can do to help. Explain to them why it is you are soliciting their attentions. Keep goals simple and easy, but also create more ambitious goals for those who want to be more involved.

Research and Reach Out

There are a lot of young friends groups out there. Research those that are nearby or others that belong

Sample: What Can I Do?

- **Spread the word about the Abbe Museum and our mission.** Encourage friends, families, and visitors to explore the Abbe Museum and learn about the Wabanaki Nations from past to present. This simple task is one of the most important things you can do for the Abbe. Our exhibits are created for our visitors, so please encourage people to visit them!
- **Attend our quarterly Abbe Underground events.** Proceeds from Abbe Underground events will go toward the *Greening the Abbe* initiative, to make the museum a more sustainable organization.
- **Become a Member.** Membership with the Abbe Museum is tax-deductible, renewable annually, and provides benefits such as free admission and discounts.
- **Volunteer.** There are so many ways to volunteer at the Abbe! Volunteers help with events, act as guides for groups, lead crafts for kids, welcome our guests, and donate their culinary skills in the form of delicious treats for our many events. You can set a schedule for volunteering, or just help here and there.
- **Join the Underground.** You can help plan future events and activities or just attend them. Email us if you want us to add you to our invite list.
- **Fill a CLYNK* Bag for the Abbe!** Every little bit helps! Want to redeem your returnables for a good cause? You can donate your CLYNK cash to the Abbe Museum!
- **Show off Abbe Underground Gear!** Visit our Café Press Site to buy Abbe Underground Gear. We get 10% of every purchase you make!
- **Stay in the loop!** Subscribe to one (or all!) of our email lists or newsletters.
- **Educate Yourself. Educate Your Peers.**

*CLYNK is a recycling program in Maine that partners with grocery stores to offer cash to customers for their redeemable bottles. In lieu of receiving cash, customers can opt to have their recyclables benefit a community organization of their choice. (www.clynk.com)

Exciting programs and events we found while researching what others were up to:

- CultureHaus at the Denver Art Museum
- Junior Associates of MoMa
- Kansas City's Young Friends of Art
- Nightlife at the California Academy of Sciences
- PEM/PM Evening Events at the Peabody Essex Museum
- The Contemporaries, at the Portland Museum of Art (Maine)
- Young Franklins at the Franklin Institute
- Young Friends of the Brandywine Conservancy
- Young Friends of the Missouri History Museum
- Young Friends of the Philadelphia Museum of Art
- Young Friends of the Saint Louis Art Museum
- Young Friends of the Virginia Museum of Natural History

(There are many more!)

Not all of these are structured as young friends groups, or limited to only young friends—another thing to consider. There is something else we noticed while learning what others were doing. Because of marketing approaches and use of emailed invitations and social media sites, sometimes the information about what others are up to can be hard to find. For example, at the Abbe Museum, access to our young friends site requires a direct url: www.abbemuseum.org/underground.html.

to organizations similar to your own. Have your committee look for groups that would interest them, and learn the themes that occur most often, those that might work well for your organization. Do those on your committee have friends that might be involved with a different young friends group? If so, have the committee ask friends for tricks and tips. Use this research for inspiration and think about what might work well within your community.

VI. Create an Identity for Your Young Friends Group

Don't launch your group without an identity, because for your group to gain any traction, it is important that its message and identity are clear. But at the same time, leave enough flexibility for future input and adaptation, so that the group does not become stagnant.

The definitions and goals created for your group in Section V form the basis of its identity. It is important to decide how active the group will be (will you hold events every week, month, quarter, year?), and which of the What Can I Do's are most important to your group. It is important to select a name for your group, as well as a visual identity that can be used for

Shannon Bean

Abbe Underground members at a benefit Gala Art & Auction Item Preview Party.

marketing, and is consistent with your organization, but different enough to be unique. Use your research of other young friends groups to decide what marketing strategies you prefer, as well as what appeals to you most visually. If your budget allows, consider a professional designer to help you make these decisions and craft your logo.

The Abbe Museum opened in 1928 as an archaeological institution, so we decided to build our identity from that origin and make references to archaeology with our name, logo, and tagline. So we became the Abbe Underground: Younger than Dirt. Our logo is a stylistic reference to stratigraphy that also happens to evoke a sense of place for our audience, as it seems to mimic the landscape of our mountainous island. We also decided that we would market to the twenty-one to forty-year-olds, and host four big signature events each year as opportunities for social networking and engagement with the museum in a fun and unique way.

What marketing strategies would work best for this age group in your community? The way you choose to market is an aspect of your identity, so consider how you want to approach spreading the word. However you go about it, make sure that it has the potential to go viral.

VII. Build Your Group and Plan Your Events

After your committee has selected an identity for your group, the next step is to build the group and plan events. Allow the committee to use the parameters you've given them, but then let them get as creative as they like within those parameters. Remember, you want them to be excited!

Depending upon the size of your organization, you may choose to have your committee manage the event, so you will want to make sure that they know how to take care of your organization, and can help moderate friends and guests who might be crossing boundaries. If you have building and grounds policies, rental policies, collections management policies, etc., make sure that your committee has copies or is familiar with the content.

Of course, always make sure that the committee is aware of your current initiatives, other events, current exhibitions, and fundraising goals. This mission-related content provides them a basis to generate ideas from as they plan the theme and structure of each event.

VIII. Maintain a Relationship

Consider your young friends group an affinity group for your organization, and treat them accordingly because a young friends group built around arts, history, and culture is essentially a membership group with a common interest. In "A Golden Age for Historic Properties," John and Anita Nowery Durel write,

> A distinct advantage of a business model organized around members and affinity groups is that people who are active in an organization over a period of time develop a sense of belonging and ownership. When they participate in small group activities they become friends with other participants and then their commitment is not only to the organization but also to their friends. In time they are eager to give their support when asked because they know that the organization's success will benefit people they care about. This is the heart of fundraising. People give to people. They give to organizations that mean something to them and where they have close relationships.[2]

Consider these details while planning events:

1. What is the purpose of the event? *Remember to always keep the identity and goals of the young friends group always at the forefront, along with the mission of your organization.*
2. What is the cost, if any, to those attending the event?
3. How will guests check in or be welcomed as they enter?
4. What is the name and theme of the event?
5. What refreshments/food, if any, will be served?
6. What entertainment will be provided during the event?
7. Will other activities, such as educational or fundraising opportunities, occur at the event?
8. What is the set-up of the event, as well as the schedule for the evening?
9. Who is responsible for clean-up?
10. What is the marketing and approach to invitations for this event?
11. What are the responsibilities of each committee member?
12. Are there any sponsorship opportunities that might be relevant for this event?

General Tricks and Tips

- Make meetings fun and meeting times accessible. *Remember that most young professionals may not have disposable time off from work. Consider hosting meetings offsite at local hangouts.*
- If your event ends early, consider suggesting what guests can do next to continue the fun. *At the Abbe Museum, we've had great success partnering with local spots to host after parties.*
- Partner with local businesses, allowing them the opportunity to sponsor your events and market to your audience.
- Continually offer actionable goals that are relevant and accomplishable by the group you are engaging, such as micro-campaigns, Internet gifts and small e-appeals, reduced or special membership opportunities, and volunteer opportunities that might fit within their schedules.
- Maintain a mailing and emailing list for this group separate from your general mailing list. *This way, you can easily send invitations to future young friends events to those who have attended past events, expressed interest, and may be likely to forward the invitation to friends.*
- Have a committee you can hold accountable and trust the directions they choose.
- Make sure each event ties to your mission and always provide a call to action specific to that event.

Aim to keep the enthusiasm of your committee members, volunteers, and group strong. Never let the momentum stop. Provide opportunities for your young friends to deepen their relationships with your organization, such as serving on additional committees, extending an invitation to join your board, and providing business partnerships. Invite them to become members, donors, colleagues, and friends. Always remember what you can give to the young friends in your group and what they can do for your organization. Recognize that though some may be just establishing themselves now, your young friends will mature into leaders in your community and will have more capacity to give as they age.

Keep the energy levels and enthusiasm of your committee consistent by planning for transition and overturn. This may be scary for organizations seeking stability, but remember that you are targeting an age group that is likely graduating from college, attending graduate school, finding jobs as they settle into a career, getting married, making new friends, and moving to new locations. You are providing an opportunity for like-minded individuals to meet.

Successes (so far!) of the Abbe Underground

- Sponsorship of our events by new business owners and young professionals.
- Increased number of Gen Y volunteers at museum fundraisers, events, and day-to-day operations.
- Engagement with our exhibits by new visitors who have also brought family, friends, and guests during return visits.
- Engagement with Wabanaki artists, leaders, and educators (a key aspect of our mission).
- Attendance at other, non-Underground programs and events.
- New collaborations with young leaders and business owners.
- New members and donors.
- Support of the *Greening the Abbe* initiative by Gen Y donors, which helped make a case during fundraising efforts for Phases I and II of the campaign.
- And, perhaps most importantly, we have generated excitement and buzz about the Abbe Museum in the community. The Abbe Museum is seen as a positive, community-oriented, year-round institution where guests can have fun while learning.

Some will stay, and some will go. That's okay, as long as you plan for transition. You can't predict the change, but you can prepare for it by creating a group identity that is capable of flexing with the new ideas of staff and volunteers who will become engaged in the future while also maintaining a core purpose. If you are a small organization, don't restrict engagement—allow your committee to constantly invite new members so energy levels always remain high. This also will help you maintain consistency, purpose, and familiarity with the group's goals when others go.

IX. Evaluate and Improve, Constantly

Help your young friends group reflect on the successes and failures of events and allow them to meet with you often to make sure the group fits within organizational goals and strategies. Maintain a guest list for events, so that it is possible to monitor who is returning, who might attend sometimes, and who new guests are. Constantly check in with guests, volunteers, committee members, staff, board, and your community. Learn what your community thinks of your efforts and find ways to improve.

Always stay relevant. Make sure to monitor themes in pop culture, your community and state, and local identity. Young friends groups are an opportunity to allow new visitors to engage with your organization in unique ways.

The Abbe Underground is now in its second year and has generated many positive outcomes for the Abbe Museum. These successes were small at first and continually grow. If you are not met with the immediate outcomes you wanted, don't give up. You are creating an affinity group for your organization, a subculture of your membership, a network of friends—and those don't happen overnight. Measure small successes at first, and then increase those goals as the group matures and develops. Don't rush.

Good Luck! Initiating a young friends group can be a lot of fun, and bring a new wave of energy and ideas into your organization. It is an exciting opportunity, so don't approach it as a daunting task. Enjoy it!

Astra Haldeman is a co-founder of the Abbe Underground, and was the Manager of Museum Services at the Abbe Museum when the group was initiated. Astra holds a B.A. in Art and Anthropology from Washington College in Chestertown, MD, and a PGDipArts in Museums and Cultural Heritage from the University of Auckland, New Zealand. She can be reached at astrahaldeman@gmail.com.

Online Resources:

Abbe Museum, www.abbemuseum.org.

CLYNK, www.clynk.com.

Dilenscheider, Colleen. "6 Sad Truths About Fundraising That I Have Learned as a Millennial Donor." *Know Your Own Bone.* http://on.aaslh.org/KYOB-6Truths, 10 April 2013.

The Millennial Impact Project, www.themillennialimpact.com.

United States Census Bureau, www.census.gov.

Wilkening, Susie. "Why Bother With Young Adults? We've Got the Retirees!" *Museum Audience Insight.* http://bit.ly/Reach-WhyBother, 4 August 2011.

[1] William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1854 to 2069* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1991), 441.

[2] John Durel and Anita Nowery Durel. "A Golden Age for Historic Properties," *History News* 62 (Summer 2007): 10.

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What's the Big Idea? Using Listening Sessions to Build Relationships and Relevance

By Janeen Bryant and Kamille Bostick

The Challenge of Listening and Intentionality

Museums have good intentions. Whether preserving history, educating the public, collecting artifacts, interpreting perspectives, or creating community programming, museums nationwide have long settled into the niche of providing expertise. Too often, "museums tell stories about human experiences or situations that the curators or developers have not experienced personally–historic events, cultural developments, scientific discoveries." Telling contemporary stories with authenticity requires museums to build capacity for understanding based on building relationships and listening.[1]

When Charlotte, North Carolina's Levine Museum of the New South and its two partner institutions, the Atlanta History Center and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, joined forces to look at how to engage Latino audiences, we had to find a way to listen that was both effective and replicable. Our *Latino New South* listening sessions were fertile grounds to learn to listen and how to listen best.

One Museum's Response to Changing Demographics

A major demographic change has swept across the American South since 1990. It is a particular case pointing to a national demographic transformation. Within a generation, the entire U.S. will have no single racial or ethnic majority. Rather this country will be mix of people from multiple backgrounds.[2]

The Center for the Future of Museums of the American Alliance of Museums urges all of America's cultural institutions to engage directly with this demographic transformation, to boldly rethink what audiences they aim to reach, the programs they will undertake, and what tools they will use. The center writes that currently barely 10 percent of core museum visitors are people of color. If that does not change quickly, museums will find themselves marginalized and irrelevant.

An Opportunity for Authentic Listening

Listening has many connotations and implications, many negative. Below are some responses from sessions when we asked museum professionals, "When I say 'listening session' what comes to mind?"

- Inviting
- Assumptions
- Public relations
- Survey
- Necessary evil
- Sense of obligation
- Internal vs. external listening
- Complicated
- Hard
- Group selection
- Focus group
- Control
- Don't want to/Not critical

Unfortunately, the prevailing notion that listening is simply a waste of staff time, resources, and energy permeates the field. Indeed, it is difficult, time-consuming, and hard work, but ultimately rewarding, authentic, and increases institutional relevance. An

CASE STUDY: *The Latino New South Project*

Having learned many valuable lessons from the exploration between Latinos and African Americans with past projects and ignited by a hunger in the community to continue with authentic relationship-building, particularly the process that some call "Latinization," Levine Museum embarked on a multi-year exploration of Latinos in the New South. The *Latino New South Project* is a learning network of three history museums in the southeastern U.S. The Atlanta History Center and Birmingham Civil Rights Institute joined Levine Museum of the New South to conduct on-the-ground research to gain a better understanding of this historic shift.

Our process started in May 2012 as all three institutions grappled with ways to approach learning more about the Latinos in their communities. We began with a research phase in which we recognized that relationships and connections were vital. We began to understand that each city had vastly different stories to tell, if we were only willing to listen. Our innovation team, including museum staff members from our three institutions, Latino community members from our three cities (Atlanta, Birmingham, and Charlotte), and an urban geographer, planned two-day listening sessions in each city. The entire team visited each city to learn more about Latinos and their communities as well as better understand the local context of the receiving communities. Based on our findings, each institution will develop programming to engage Latinos in the activities of their museums and help build bridges between Latinos and non-Latinos.[3]

Levine Museum utilized a process of listening that it had used before to begin to understand the process of what immigrant integration will look like in our city. Having observed the model since its beginning, our partners in the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Atlanta History Center used the same model with a few modifications to fit their respective communities.

As the museum continues to work facilitating recognition of multiple perspectives used by people of different backgrounds to explain the past, evaluate the present, and project the future, we had a core question: Will our cities be welcoming places, creatively involving newcomers, or will our communities fragment? We listened for the answers.

A *Latino New South*

The South did not receive the great waves of European immigration in the early twentieth century and, consequently, is not as adequately prepared to address the shifting demographic makeup within its borders. The southeastern U.S. is now experiencing the nation's highest percentage growth in Latino newcomers and has since 1990. This is a great change for a region long known for its white and black racial landscape. Scholars suggest that this demographic and cultural shift may be the biggest story in southern history since the Civil Rights Movement.

—Dr. Tom Hanchett
Staff Historian
Levine Museum of the New South

Alexandra Vilchez for Levine Museum

Latino leaders in Charlotte share their opinions of how museums can play a role in relationship-building between the community and cultural institutions during a listening session.

What is a listening session?

When we decided to listen to our audience, we wanted to do more than conduct surveys or merely gather feedback on our ideas. The goal was to go beyond just tapping a demographic set for answers but to fully engage in the questioning process and use their thoughts as a way to further future conversations and actions.

For our listening sessions we wanted to create structured events where we could, as institutions, invite stakeholders to share ideas, insights, and input in an open forum.

important component of listening includes involving internal stakeholders (staff, board, members, and donors) as well as external stakeholders, and even those who have never been to your museum.

So how do you listen effectively and authentically?

Planning the Listening Session

Part 1: Set up a Framework

What idea is your institution looking to explore?
Think broadly. What are the issues facing your community? Every institution will have issues emerge from the economic, demographic, ecological, social, and political environment of its community. The issues will be unique to your community.

So what does it take to frame your big ideas?

Ask 1: What issues need to be addressed in your community and how could your museum have relevance to those issues? Where can your museum add value to community conversations and decision making?

Ask 2: Who needs to be in the room for you to deeply understand the experience in your community? Ask stakeholders, "Who else do we need to talk to?"

Ask 3: How can you use listening strategically to approach your big idea?

Ask 4: How will you create an environment conducive to listening and when?

Latino New South

At the start of this process, the *Latino New South* innovation team had to identify the motivating Big Idea for our needs. Here are our answers to the corresponding questions on the left:

Answer 1: What issues need to be addressed?
Inspired by the 2011 study, *All Immigration is Local* by Cornell University professor Michael Jones-Correa, Levine Museum recognized a need to address immigrant integration, or full and meaningful inclusion of newcomers in community life. We were propelled by a belief that museums can play a vital role in that work, and that sharing information between institutions will help our organization find effective strategies to truly engage Latino partners.

Answer 2: Who needs to be in the room?
For us, it was Latinos of all backgrounds as well as receiving community members.

Answer 3: How can we use listening strategically?
It was necessary to think outside the walls of the museum, figuratively and literally. We designed a two-day approach that involved listening to groups all over Charlotte (in Spanish and English).

Answer 4: How will we listen and when?
We decided to do this by starting with relationship building through individual meetings and we needed to start as soon as possible.

Part 2: Formatting the Session

Listening involves little technical knowledge, but much preparation, constant awareness, and plenty of follow-up. In planning for your listening session, adequate preparation and planning are paramount.

PLANNING
Research the dimensions of your topic
Identify barriers to participation
Identify opportunities to aid in participation
Prepare and plan for how you want to capture the information (include consideration of linguistic challenges)
Prepare questions (3-5 core questions are best)
Pilot first session with a group familiar with the museum and be open and honest with feedback
Consider promotional strategies to support session

DURING
Introduce your organization
Address the relevance of your Big Idea
Have participants introduce themselves to each other
Establish expectations of continued engagement
Share findings
Provide participants the opportunity to respond to questions in writing and verbally
Record and synthesize responses

FOLLOW-UP
Thank participants with an email after session (1 week)
Synthesize all transcripts and analyze for themes and suggestions (1 month)
Share findings and themes with key stakeholders (1 month)
Share the findings with participants and invite future engagement (2 months)

Part 3: Formatting the Session—Latino New South *Case Study*

SAMPLE AGENDA

- Welcome lunch
- Facilitated dialogue at each table
- Demographic presentation
- Bus Tour:
  - Compare Foods (grocery store)
  - Cooperativa Latina (credit union)
  - Norsan Multimedia (Spanish media center)
  - Camino Community Center
  - Latin American Coalition/United for the Dream Youth Group
  - Latino community members and teachers[4]

At each listening session, whether it was one person or a group, we provided key findings up to that point. This included demographic information about Charlotte and the U.S., relevant newspaper articles, and the opportunity to react and respond via bilingual paper (feedback) form. Sharing our research, articles, and time with them helped them to share their lived experience, hopes, and thoughts with us.

Checking In

Institutions usually ask: how is listening institutionally aligned or does this make you do more work? The short answer is to always start with the mission. By examining the mission of your institution you will quickly find out if your institution has a commitment to explore new strategies of community engagement and sustainable audience development. If the mission is aligned, listening sessions can be a powerful tool for you.

Alexandra Vilchez for Levine Museum

Dr. Tom Hanchett (far left) and members of the *Latino New South* innovation team, which includes the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and Atlanta History Center, participate in a listening session at Coopertiva Latina, a credit union in Charlotte, NC.

We were able to plug in social media. For instance, the Atlanta History Center had a social media campaign telling their followers about the project and letting them respond. They posted several tweets throughout the listening sessions as well as a follow-up blog post.

We recognized that each of our cities had a different community context; therefore, we knew we were going to examine perception about the museum both in the broader community and Latino community.

An Important Note about Questions

We created the set of questions for the *Latino New South Project* to demonstrate our willingness to learn more about Latinos, share historical perspectives, and to explore new engagement strategies not previously considered. We wrote questions in a simple, easy-to-read format, giving careful consideration to nuances found in translation from English to Spanish. Over the course of three months, the team conferenced at least eight times to draft these three questions:

1. Using a particular instance that you have encountered, would you describe Charlotte as a welcoming city to newcomers?
2. What do you think the perception is about Latinos in the broader community?
3. What role can the museum play in telling the story of Latinos in the Southeast?

Benefits of Listening

• **Authentic Connections.** Particularly with groups that don't typically have a history of engagement with your institution, it is important to ask questions that not only increase the number of people attending programs, but also to foster a relationship dynamic with give-and-take from both sides.

• **Responsive Relationships.** Much different from a traditional focus group (in which participants answer questions and never engage with the results), the institution is asking with the transparent motivation to be responsive to answers. (A museum's actions may or may not address participant suggestions, but they will overtly reference them.)

• **Alignment with Community.** Once you ask real questions and establish transparency, your institution will have knowledge to become more aligned with the community. In our case, listening helped us understand family, the importance of language, and much more.

• **Stretching Staff Capacity.** When interacting with any new individual or group, we are stretched on a personal and professional level. (For example, learning how to conduct basic introductions and point of sale exchanges at the front desk in Spanish is a crucial skill for creating a welcoming environment.)

What Happened for *Latino New South*?

As a demographic grouping, this group has been largely without voice for arts and cultural institutions in the South. Our listening sessions offered a valuable opportunity to build relationships through listening to Latinos and how non-Latinos responded to the welcome Latinos receive in our communities.

We planned two days of sessions, both in and out of the museum.* A group of museum representatives and project partners attended a session at the museum with fifty Latino and non-Latino community members. The museum actively sought out and brought in experts, community organizers, and everyday people to create a space where a multitude of perspectives and backgrounds could engage with us.

The museum representatives and project partners then embarked on a bus tour of the city, stopping to have conversations with a cross-section of participants from diverse areas.

Ultimately, these listening sessions provided a platform for reciprocity between the museum and Latinos in our communities.

**Organizations may not need to do such aggressive scheduling of listening sessions. A series of smaller sessions over time may prove more effective depending on project needs and time constraints.*

Some Frequently Asked Questions

• **What are the greatest challenges to conducting listening sessions?**

First, institutional buy-in is necessary. The board, leadership, and staff must understand how the institution will benefit and the logistics of how to conduct effective sessions. This is why we suggest the first listening sessions happen internally. Second, staff must be committed to conducting sessions and THANKING every participant. All sharing may not shape the final product, but it will inform the process.

• **How is this different from a focus group?**

Listening is a process of empowering your constituents and actually using their input in exhibit and program design. It is about establishing sustainable engagement. Changing responsiveness depends on reciprocity with newly engaged stakeholders and the museum. This is the start of building a long-lasting relationship and cultivating future museum goers.

• **How did you choose participants?**

Build a network by reaching out to traditional stakeholders and ask them for connections. Build relationships with new stakeholders and then go to the community, and create safe and welcoming opportunities to share and LISTEN.

GARNERING INSIGHTS: *Latino New South*

As we held our listening sessions, several trends emerged about the museum's role in creating a culture of welcome in Charlotte.

- Latino community members thought Charlotte was welcoming to newcomers. In contrast, Latino leaders almost unanimously said Charlotte was not welcoming.
- "Levine has a great responsibility to educate our community, letting them know we also make history. They need to get to know us so they can accept us." This respondent explained that he thinks the museum should do more to educate the entire community about Latinos. The receiving community needs to know Latinos so they can accept them. Another interpretation indicates that the museum has a responsibility to play the role to educate ANYONE in the community—to act as a bridge builder and catalyst.

As we listened and heard all of these responses—particularly from Latinos—in our community we realized we have to extend ourselves in new ways.

Seven Insights into Working with Latino Partners

The following insights reflect what we heard from Latino community members during our listening sessions. As such, while some of these insights support traditional and scholarly research on Latinos in the U.S., others do not and are to be interpreted as distinct to this project and the three cities upon which it focuses.

In our listening sessions, Latinos and non-Latinos both asked that museums help receiving communities understand these realities.

Laura Anderson for Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Multiple groups representing receiving and Latino communities as well as staff took part in simultaneous facilitation in Birmingham, AL.

1. Latinos are here to stay

- Few people grasp the huge demographic change in the Southeast since 1990. Latinos have gone from 1-2 percent of the population to around 10 percent or more in many localities.
- Roughly half of Latinos counted by the U.S. Census are already citizens—not just documented, i.e., progressing toward citizenship, but have achieved citizenship. Many are born here in the U.S. and Latino youth are the fastest growing group in many school systems.
- Museums need to convey this new reality. They can both facilitate discussion of the stresses these demographic changes bring, and also point out the opportunities.

2. From many cultures

- Latinos want everyone to know that they come from many cultures. While Mexico has sent numerous immigrants, one-third to one-half are from elsewhere in Central and South America.
- The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" (see also number six below) are U.S. creations. Latinos usually do not self-identify as Latino/Hispanic but rather as Cuban American, Colombian, or from their particular Mexican state, for example.
- They want receiving communities to appreciate these culturally rich backgrounds and are weary of being lumped together as Mexican, or answering questions like "Where in Mexico is Puerto Rico?" They also deeply desire that their Latino neighbors and their own children do likewise.

3. Biculturalism is growing

- Young people raised in the U.S. are typically, English-proficient and bicultural. They embrace U.S. food, entertainment, and so on, but do so without abandoning Latino culture and heritage. Adults, however, do not change as quickly or as completely.
- Latinos are more likely than the overall U.S. population to use the Internet and social

media. This is partly because communities have so many youth who are "digital natives."

- On the part of receiving communities, the perception that Latinos refuse to amalgamate into American culture (e.g., learn English, follow American laws and customs, etc.) is the single most expressed fear for Latino communities. Countering that misconception and fear can be a top museum goal.

4. Extended families are important

- Latinos usually experience cultural offerings as an extended family unit—mother, father, grandparents, several kids, cousins, plus maybe a friend or other relative.
- When choosing an activity, they look for things that will both bring pleasure and renewal or self-improvement and engage all family members.

5. Bridging is essential

- People urged us to get outside the museum, to go to places where people already are.
- They talked of the need for multiple introductions: Latinos to other Latino groups; Latinos to receiving community; Latinos to southern (especially African American) history; receiving communities to Latinos; and so on.
- Latino/African American bridging is especially needed. On the one hand, many Latino immigrants bring anti-black stereotypes spread by American media. And both groups often compete for entry-level jobs. On the other hand, civil rights history can be an inspiring model for immigrant efforts today. We heard that both groups are excited and grateful to learn each other's story, "Something we never heard in school."
- The organization Welcoming America emphasizes that communities become welcoming only when immigrants and non-immigrants *do things together,* and therefore get to know each other.

6. Language is a powerful symbol

- Spanish—words on the wall, personal greetings from a Visitor Services person—is a powerful signal that Latinos are welcome. For young people who are usually comfortable with English, this welcome is symbolic. For older people, it is functional—they do need some Spanish in order to be able to guide their group and teach their children, etc.
- Spanish text also signals to non-Latinos that the South is now increasingly bicultural.
- The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" seem largely interchangeable. In Charlotte, we heard Latino more often; in Birmingham we heard Hispanic more often.
- The term "illegal" offends many Latinos, who say that acts may be illegal, but no person is illegal. We suggest using the terms "undocumented" or "unauthorized."

7. Becoming "documented" is difficult, often impossible

- People in receiving communities often ask, "Why don't immigrants just obey the law and work toward legal citizenship?" Along with "They don't want to learn English," this is the most common negative reaction to Latinos we hear.
- In fact, quotas and convoluted regulations often make legal immigration impossible. People pointed to a graphic, "What Part of Legal Immigration Don't You Understand?" as an illustration of the barriers. At best, it is an extremely lengthy process requiring expert assistance (a leading Charlottean from Mexico talked about the nineteen years it took her to become a citizen).
- These legal problems can split families. Youngsters born here can suddenly find their parents sent back to their home country. Youngsters born in their native country but raised here can suddenly be deported to a strange land they have never known.
- Post 9-11 fears and new "show your papers" laws in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina have greatly increased problems for Latinos. Anyone who looks Latino—even a distinguished India-born surgeon in one case—can be jailed until they prove their legal status.

Conclusion

We have found that listening yields insights otherwise inaccessible to museums. In reaching out to hear thoughts and explore trends, listening also shows stakeholders—new and old—that their ideas and presence are valued.

In the case of the *Latino New South Project*, listening gave Levine Museum of the New South accessibility to participants we had not previously heard from. In addition, it gave voice to a community that heretofore had not been sustainably engaged. Because of our choice to listen, we have been able to create culturally relevant programming, develop culturally sensitive evaluations, witness an increase in our visitation, and learn about issues and practices that help us serve as a welcoming space for our community.

As museums seek relevance and to reflect their communities, we simply cannot afford *not* to listen, especially to a fresh set of voices. Regardless of a museum's size or demographic, a bounty of learning opportunities exists. Those with the most to say may not come directly to us, so we have to seek them out, openly hear what they have to say, and complete an authentic exchange by applying what we hear to everyday practice.

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[3] "Receiving Communities" refers to all non-Latinos, American-born Latinos, and Latino immigrants who have lived in the U.S. for more than twenty years.

[4] We met this group at a local Latino restaurant as it was a safe, comfortable setting. Two sessions were held simultaneously with the community member session being done entirely in Spanish with no translation to English while the teacher session happened on the other side of the restaurant.

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Creating Intergenerational Oral History Opportunities

By Maren Levad and Aleah Vinick

American students score worse on national tests of American history than any other subject. In 2010, only 17 percent of eighth graders and 12 percent of twelfth graders rated as proficient or above in U.S. history. How do we as historical institutions increase student interest and proficiency? One strategy is to encourage students to have conversations with the people who experienced important events of the last century. Real people can help history seem not so distant. However, research also shows that these intergenerational conversations are not happening organically.

In a 2010 Generations United poll, almost 40 percent of respondents said they had no regular interaction with people of a different generation. Look around and you'd probably come to the same conclusion. Most of us aren't living in multiple generation households. Most children aren't spending their summers playing bridge with their elderly neighbors. And most seniors aren't chatting up the teenager on the bus about vampire vs. werewolf love triangles.

What *is* happening is youth organizations and schools are looking for ways to better engage students in history, and seniors are looking for meaningful and substantial volunteer opportunities in their communities. That's where structured intergenerational oral history programs can foster these important relationships.

Sharing Community Stories Initiative

The Minnesota Historical Society's (MNHS) *Sharing Community Stories* Initiative empowers seniors to build relationships with students through oral history interviews, and looks to them to collect and present community history. In the past two years, twenty-six deep, intergenerational learning programs have taken place in communities across the state. *Sharing Community Stories* participants have preserved local stories through narrative-based plays, photography shows, documentaries, and even a cookbook. Working with partners including senior centers and schools, MNHS staff trained participants in oral history interview techniques and a creative partner led the group as they turned their experience into a lasting piece for the community. After completing these projects, 96 percent of youth participants said that *Sharing Community Stories* projects increased their appreciation for Minnesota history, while 96 percent of older adult participants felt that, through *Sharing Community Stories*, they were able to play an important role in passing along their community's history.

This technical leaflet will explain how we engage communities in an intergenerational oral history project.

Where to Begin

Due to the commitment and intergenerational nature of these projects, it takes a dedicated group from the community to make a successful project. That is why it is important to begin a project by speaking with local community leaders to see what stories or topics will interest participants in that community. Through these conversations you can discover who your champions will be—those with enthusiasm who are networked or have access to possible participants and/or locations you can use as meeting spaces. Neighboring historical societies, schools, libraries, youth organizations, and senior centers are great places to start.

Once you've found community partners, together you can decide what story needs to be preserved. You can make recommendations such as what era to focus on (for example, it is more difficult to find interviewees who lived in the Depression than who lived through the first moon landing) or universal themes like growing up or marriage. However, *you must always listen to your community partners.* They are the ones who know what will ignite a community and what will flop ("Didn't we do a play about that last year? No one came."). Without our project partners, we would never have known about the importance of preserving the history of commercial ice-fishing in one town, or the love of dance in another. A different, more general topic selection in those communities could have resulted in fewer participants and less local interest.

Intended Outcomes and Evaluation

With any project, it is important to have the intended outcomes clear to all partners before it begins. This helps when creating your evaluation plan and keeps the group on target. A few possible intergenerational project outcomes are:

- Students demonstrate improved knowledge of the history of their community.
- Students will learn a life skill as identified by the project (how to complete a team project, how to organize their research into an exhibit, how to use a specific type of technology).
- Seniors and students have positive perceptions of each other.
- Seniors feel validated, that their life experiences are an important part of the community's history.

With outcomes determined, the next step is to create an evaluation plan. Pre- and post-surveys are an excellent way to measure changes in knowledge and attitude. If you have the time or the budget for an evaluation team, interviews can assist in getting in-depth feedback from participants. Decide how your outcomes would be best measured and what makes the most sense with the timeframe and expected participant impact.

Once you have completed your program and collected your evaluation, don't forget the important step of looking at how effective your evaluation tools were and modifying them for the next project. In our first year with *Sharing Community Stories* we developed an array of evaluation tools including a pre- and post-test, participant surveys, group interviews, and comment cards for the community event. After the final evaluation report was written we sat down and looked at our plan.

Pre- and Post-Tests: We discovered that due to the participant-driven nature of our programs, it was difficult to predict the exact information students would learn for our pre/post tests. For instance, if we asked a question about three items needed for traditional Ojibwe winter trapping—but on the day of the trapping lesson our elder became ill and his sister came to teach beading instead. The question becomes moot.

Minnesota Historical Society

The St. Paul Theater Project culminated in a performance of their short plays. A final event is a great way to show off the participants' hard work and celebrate the stories shared with the whole community.

Students still learned important Ojibwe heritage, just not the element we expected.

Youth and Adult Surveys: Conducted at the end of the program, we found these surveys measured our outcomes well and provided us with great quantitative data we could use in reports and grant applications. The only issues we had with this tool was that some elders had difficulty reading or completing the survey, so we found it was important to have a staff member on hand to fill out the survey with them if needed.[1]

Interviews: This was another tool that did not work for our program. We discovered that students had difficulty staying serious with a recorder in the room and we ended up with a lot of taped giggling. The interview was also the fourth method of evaluating students, which seemed too much for them to take.

Comment Cards: Placing community comment cards out at the final event (and having a staff member or volunteer asking visitors to fill them out) turned out to be our best source of anecdotal quotes, perfect for our website and marketing materials. One example: "I wish this didn't have to end, I've had a great time discovering just how fun dancing can be. I'm thankful that the Historical Society has given this opportunity to learn this social art, which I otherwise would have never experienced."

In the second year of our program, we chose only to use the participant surveys and community comment cards, but add in partner surveys as well. For our program, we found this to be the best mix to provide us with both quantitative and qualitative data.

Final Product

Once the topic has been selected, it's time to decide how the oral history interviews should be preserved. Traditionally, an oral history follows a strict set of rules, and is transcribed and archived in a formal manner (for a full guide to oral history and transcription, see MNHS's Oral History Office guide at http://j.mp/MNHSOralHistory). In our experience, formal interviews and transcription can be barriers to younger children and ESL students, as they often find the process intimidating or tedious. You and your partners should decide what kind of project is appropriate for the age, interests, and skill level of the participants. Some final projects could include: a podcast of the interviews, a "Then and Now" photography exhibit of the town, a historic walking tour, or a cookbook with essays about the area's food heritage.

Scheduling Overview

With partners, topic, and final product in place, the next thing to determine is the project's schedule. What does an intergenerational program look like? It could be an intensive week, a six-month effort with participants doing independent work, or a month-long in-class project. What the specific schedule looks like will depend on two main factors: 1) participant availability and 2) time requirements to complete the final project. Classroom students may need to cover a subject in just one week. A documentary project will require ample time for learning technologies and editing. For a quiz to decide if a long- or short-term intergenerational oral history project is right for you, see the sidebar.

No matter which timeframe you are working on, there are a few essential components to any intergenerational oral history project.

1. *Take time to work on interview skills.* Interviewing is not a skill that comes naturally to most students or seniors. It takes practice, research of the time period or topic, and good listening skills. With students, show clips of good and bad interviews (YouTube and

POTENTIAL PARTNER Checklist

Although partnerships vary from person to person, here are a few things to think about when considering a possible program partner. Hopefully when you apply this checklist to your potential partners they'll score at least three out of four!

✓ **The organization's mission is harmonious with your expected project outcomes.**

A goal of intergenerational projects is to foster real understanding between youth and seniors and improve young adults' social studies skills. A senior center that is purely residential with little emphasis on programming for senior or community involvement is not going to be a natural fit for this project.

✓ **There is a dedicated staff member at the organization who:**

- Can contribute time to the project
- Has her/his supervisor's endorsement to include this project as a work responsibility
- Has demonstrated enthusiasm for the project

✓ **The organization and/or staff member has experience with community-based programming.**

Perhaps an educational partner has facilitated other community service projects in the past? Your senior partner oversees a foster grandparent program?

✓ **You have worked with this partner in the past and/or the organization comes recommended by people you respect and trust.**

At times, this partnership is going to come down to communication and interpersonal dynamics. Make sure you feel committed to the organization and contact personnel!

PARTNER INFORMATION CHART

Important questions for each partner to answer before the project begins

Who are you? What is your mission?	What do you want from this partnership?	What can your organization bring this partnership?	Who does your organization serve (your audience)? How?	What are your audience's primary needs?	Factors to consider about this audience.
Example: Aleah Vinick, Minnesota Historical Society. Our mission is to foster among people an awareness of Minnesota history so that they may draw strength and perspective from the past and find purpose for the future.	I want to reach community members who may not identify MNHS as a community resource and/or learning destination.	• Physical space (classroom, etc.) • Supplies • Hands-on history learning opportunities • Some marketing support • Some funding	We serve all Minnesotans by collecting and preserving our state history. We also serve the state by providing educational opportunities for all ages in a variety of formats.	Our audience needs accessible exhibits and public programs that help them to make a real, personal connection to Minnesota.	Transportation, cost, scheduling conflicts can all be barriers to potential visitors to our museums and sites.

Once you've found community partners, together you can decide what story needs to be preserved. You can make recommendations. However, you must always listen to your community partners. They are the ones who know what will ignite a community and what will flop.

Saturday Night Live are great sources for what not to do) and discuss what worked and what didn't. Work as a group to brainstorm possible questions, starting with basic questions and working up to deeper questions. Finally, run mock interviews as a group or in teams to build the students' confidence for their real interview.

2. ***Seniors and students should meet* at least *twice*.** More opportunities for student and senior interaction foster strong intergenerational dialogue. If seniors are involved in the creation of a final project, working alongside their student partners, the program's impact will increase. It can be difficult to recruit active seniors who have the flexibility to commit to a long-term project, but at the very least, seniors and students should have at least one chance to meet and speak more casually before the interview. Have a meal with both groups a day before the interviews. Plan an art workshop or bus tour of the community. The more comfortable the groups are with each other, the more productive the interviews will be. If the only time your participants interact with seniors is the interview, your projects' impact on intergenerational relationships will be negligible.

3. ***Empower the seniors.*** Seniors who know the project goals and feel prepared are the best participants. You might choose to run a Heritage Circle, where seniors each prepare a five-minute presentation about a specific topic from their life with artifacts and have students travel around the circle to hear each senior's presentation. Set up an activity seniors are comfortable with (canning, acting), give instructions, and let seniors and students work together.

4. *Preserve your work.* As stated earlier, create something from the information gathered in the interviews. By turning interviews into plays, podcasts, or murals, students analyze and synthesize what they've learned in a creative and enjoyable way. The final project is also a great way to preserve what was learned with the whole community for the long term.

5. *Celebrate the work.* Participants always appreciate an opportunity to share the outcomes of their hard work with a final event. An exhibit opening or listening party allows parents, community members, and media to honor the work as well as celebrate the lives and stories of the seniors.

Challenges with Intergenerational Oral History Projects

Although all projects are as unique as the communities that host them, issues can arise. At the project's outset, it might be worth thinking through a few of the most common problems with this type of community based programming.

- *Recruiting Students and Seniors:* Once you have a great project and the right partners, it's time to find the participants. You may already have a school or senior group committed to the project through your community partners. But often, you will have to recruit the participants. Depending on your own connections in the community, this can be a straightforward and easy process. It can also

SHORT-TERM VS. LONG-TERM QUIZ: Which is right for you?

You should do a long-term independent project if:

- **You have a partner you can trust.** This project is much more hands-off for you (as you don't have constant contact with the group), so make sure your partners can help project participants to schedule meetings, work on their products, and check in with each other.
- **You have a labor/time-intensive final project in mind.** It takes a lot more time to record and edit film or create an exhibit than it does to create a collage.
- **You don't want to recruit participants.** Long-term projects work much better when your community partners have a built-in group of people to work with who are comfortable with each other or committed to their organization: a class of fifth graders, for example, or a young filmmaker's club.
- **You're working with a group of children or seniors who are fairly mobile** and can commit time to scheduling one-on-one meetings with their collaborators.
- **You are a good communicator.** You will need to check in with partners often to make sure the project is progressing on track.
- **You are laidback, yet diligent.** Weeks can go by with very little happening for the group as a whole. It's important for you keep track of what's going on, and be sure you're available to assist and advise if some of the participants get off track.

You should work in a one-week "camp" mode if:

- **You have a new partner.** You'll get to understand their working styles during planning meetings. Since you prepare the activities together, and before the project begins, you'll have less to worry about when it commences.
- **You have a final project that requires less development time**. A painting, podcast, or even a mural can be created over the course of several days, and requires little technical skill.
- **You want to reach members of the general public.** You might find a variety of people to help with this project and over a week of intensive contact. They'll build new relationships with each other.
- **You're working with a group of youth or seniors who need transportation and/or a lot of guidance.** You'll basically be providing a door-to-door experience for these participants, and they won't need to do any work independently to complete the project.
- **You err on the "control freak" side.** You'll be around to monitor everything that happens.
- **You have a chunk of time to finish this project and that's it.** It's one week, and then with the exception of some follow-up, you're done!

Minnesota Historical Society

At the *Design Diaries* final catwalk show, having a professional photographer present to capture the teens and their mentors helped to create a sense of "wow" for the participants. These photographs are on our website and marketing materials to help recruit new community participants.

be arduous. It may result in you cold-calling senior centers, schools, youth organizations, and theater groups. You will learn very quickly which teachers are overwhelmed, when the school basketball season begins (and therefore no other projects can occur), or when all the seniors travel south for the winter. Acting like a journalist, you will need to chase every lead, every, "I'm not interested, but you should talk to…" Eventually, you will find your group. Keep in mind that if you planned on doing your project in October, but all your students are in the fall play—you may need to swap your project to a different timeframe. Know ahead of time how flexible you can be on dates, meeting times, and timeframe. Then you will know when issues arise, if you need to find a different timeframe or group of youth.

- *Appropriate Permissions:* Anytime you work with youth and non-staff adults, permission slips are going to be involved. At the very least, you will need permissions that allow you to use photographs and final work (e.g., artwork or a script) for your own media and marketing. Seniors will need to sign oral history releases if the story is being preserved or transcribed (see http://j.mp/OHReleaseForm for an example). If you have volunteers working with youth outside the classroom, do not neglect the issue of child safety. Will the adult volunteers ever be alone or unsupervised with youth? Then you need to consider a background check for your adult volunteers. Will you be walking to a special field trip? Then, you will need a field trip slip and even a medical slip alerting you to medication needs may be required if not already on hand with your youth group through a school or troop.

Permissions will make you feel prepared for any unexpected issue, but they can overwhelm and even offend your participants. Older adults in a small

SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Exhibit Project: Sessions are one hour in class, with exception of the field trip.

Session One
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and History Center Staff
Topic: Oral History Interviews. History Center staff will do an hour-long training in class on oral histories.

Session Two
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and Seniors
Topic: Meet and Greet Heritage Circle. Seniors will bring artifacts and pictures. Students will listen to story presentations and engage with the artifacts.

Session Three
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and Seniors
Topic: Formal Interviews. Students will be paired with seniors and conduct formal interviews with digital recorders.

Session Four
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and Exhibit Developer
Topic: Exhibit Development Intro. Exhibit Developer will instruct students in basics of exhibit development including: selection of text, artifacts, and layout.

Session Five
Location: Museum (Field Trip)
Participants: Students and Exhibit Developer
Topic: Museum Exhibit critique led by Exhibit Developer.

Session Six
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and Exhibit Developer
Topic: Students will select artifacts, talk about stories, determine layout of the exhibit.

Session Seven
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and Teacher
Topic: Complete Panels in class.

Session Eight
Location: Classroom
Participants: Students and Exhibit Developer
Topic: Participants review and make final changes to panels before printing.

Final Event
Exhibit Opening at the local library

community may not appreciate you asking for a background check, or being asked to sign unfamiliar forms like an Oral History or Photo Release form. Have a conversation with your community partners to decide the best balance of safety and sensitivity. The school may have a blanket field trip form for the students on file already. It may work best for a community partner to sit down and fill out the forms with each senior. Decide what works best on a community-by-community basis.

- ***Issues of Ownership:*** If your final product requires you to work with an artist or writer, it is important that you discuss the rights to any created piece before the project begins. A final script may be seen as a work-for-hire or a shared piece that can be performed by the artist, the community partners, or your museum. Whatever you decide, make sure to get it in writing. Another issue is the ownership that interviewees feel with their own life stories. If you are creating a radio play from the stories, what kind of creative license will the playwright or students be allowed? You never want a senior in the audience to feel betrayed or that their story wasn't honored appropriately. Clearly communicate in the recruitment process if interviews will be used *word-for-word* or if the project will just be *inspired* by their stories.
- ***Documentation of the Project:*** Documenting the oral history project is important to marketing your project and celebrating the work with the participants. A staff photographer, documentary videographer, or even young people with cameras can make a big impact on future funding and recruiting. Some participants are uncomfortable in the presence of cameras. Prepare participants *before* they arrive so they can dress in a way they would want to be seen on camera. If students or seniors cannot be photographed or filmed for any reason, place a large sticker on their shirt to alert cameramen and editors, so they can avoid or remove that individual in the final editing process.
- ***Ultimately, this project must be entirely about the participants.*** It is up to you as the facilitator to be flexible, listen, and create an environment that allows for comfortable, intergenerational conversation. If you can provide that, the rewards are worth all the work and unexpected challenges. At the end of one of our projects, one youth shared that what she enjoyed learning most was, "American history is awesome." Enough said.

Maren Levad, Museum Outreach Specialist, is one half of the "dynamic duo" behind the Minnesota Historical Society's *Sharing Community Stories* initiative. A graduate of George Washington University's Museum Education program, she's taken on tornadoes, volleyball schedules, and one very camera-shy town in her quest for intergenerational story sharing. Maren can be contacted at maren.levad@mnhs.org.

Aleah Vinick holds a Master's degree in Social Studies Education and a Bachelor's degree in American Studies. In recent years, her work has focused on building the Minnesota Historical Society's profile in towns and cities around the state through intergenerational projects designed to preserve unique community stories. Aleah can be contacted at aleah.vinick@mnhs.org.

Additional Resources

Examples of Intergenerational Oral History Projects

www.mnhs.org/communitystories

http://tellingstories.org/index.html

http://storycorps.org

www.thetellmeproject.com/learning-zone

www.firstpersonamerican.org

Student and Beginner Resources

DeBlaiso, Donna, Charles F. Ganzert, David H. Mould, Stephen H. Paschen, and Howard L. Sacks. *Catching Stories: A Practical Guide to Oral History.* Ohio: Swallow Press, 2009.

Hart, Cynthia and Lisa Samson. *The Oral History Workshop: Collect and Celebrate the Life Stories of Your Family and Friends.* New York: Workman Publishing Company, 2009.

Minnesota Historical Society, www.mnhs.org/ohpodcast.

AASLH Resources

Allen Bogart, Barbara. "Using Oral History in Museums." Technical Leaflet #191. Nashville, TN: AASLH, 1995.

Sommer, Barbara W. and Mary Kay Quinlan. *The Oral History Manual*, 2nd edition. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2009.

_____. "A Guide to Oral History Interviews." Technical Leaflet #210. Nashville, TN: AASLH, 2000.

[1] Data sample from this tool: Results indicated that project activities not only increased youth participants' appreciation of Minnesota history (96 percent), but also made learning more enjoyable (88 percent), and gave students a sense of pride and accomplishment (86 percent).

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#254

Designing Education Programs that Connect Students to Collections

By Jody Blankenship, Mike Deetsch, Stacia Kuceyeski, and Megan Wood

Collections are the primary competitive advantage that history organizations have over other educational institutions. Collections allow visitors to make tangible, authentic, and personal connections to the past. However, history organizations must deliberately create opportunities, and are required to consider several factors. For grade K-12 school audiences, typically these center on the educational environment within a community and include: federal educational mandates; state learning standards; local curricula; school district calendars; the structure and availability of pre- and inservice teacher training; and the knowledge, skills, and interests of the local education community.

While designing educational programs that connect students to collections is not complicated, it involves thoughtful consideration of several variables, many outside of an organization's control. This technical leaflet will provide a list of issues to consider when developing programs that connect students with collections. These include:

1. Aligning programs and services with priorities and restrictions within the larger educational community;
2. Identifying your organization's resources (as they align with these priorities and restrictions) and making them attractive to educators; and
3. Developing programs around these resources that will create the most value for students.

In addition to identifying the issues, this article includes tips and examples on program planning methods, evaluation, and adjusting programs based on evaluation data.

Aligning Programs with Priorities: Restrictions, Curricula, and Standards

Students examining photographs at the Ohio Historical Society.

In the last decade, teachers, principals, and school districts have come under increasing pressure to quantify student academic progress. School districts must show they are meeting annual yearly progress as shown on state standardized tests. *No Child Left Behind*, the most recent iteration of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* mandates student performance standards in reading, writing, and math. It contains no requirements for the disciplines that make up social studies. What does this mean? In order to remain relevant, history organizations must make a strong argument to teachers that historical collections and content have educational value and are necessary for student success in social studies, but also in such areas as reading, writing, and the emerging area of twenty-first century skills. In this section we will address how to become familiar with local education standards and curricula and how to enter into the educational community through organizations, institutions, and individuals. The first step to making your organization relevant to the educational community is to become familiar with the local needs. There are several steps you can take to do this.[1]

1. Know the state content standards and where your programs align.

While most teachers may value a program based on how much students enjoyed the experience and what they learned, before they are able to participate in your programming they will need to show their principal how the programming aligns to state standards. The National Council for Social Studies has issued new national standards, but these are generally less important to teachers than state and local requirements. When it comes to aligning programs to standards, **do not overpromise,** rather, accurately represent what content and skills the field trip or event will address. When it comes to standards alignment, more is not always better.

2. Find cross-curricular connections.

Often it becomes necessary to show where your programs and services fit within the reading, writing, arts, science, or math standards. Many states do not test social studies, and the unfortunate reality is, *what is not tested is not taught*. Cross-curricular connections make it easier for teachers to justify participating in programs and services. Continue to do what you do best; do not force a connection or change a program just to align it to more standards. Make sure you're taking full advantage of cross-curricular connections where they already exist.

3. Know the curriculum and pacing guide of the schools you serve.

If you routinely work within a geographically defined area, talk to local teachers in these districts about their curriculum, making special effort to know when in the school year they cover content related to your institution. By knowing the pace of your local districts, you can schedule programming at opportune dates. This "just in time" assistance can position your organization as a reliable and necessary resource for the teachers at a time when they most need your assistance.

Knowing state education standards and the aligning programs to them is a first step. Once this is complete, it becomes necessary to promote these resources to the education community. To do this efficiently and effectively, enter the education community through various means including the state education agency, statewide education organizations, and individual teachers. The education community can be intimidating when you first begin to enter into it because of its unique vocabulary and culture. Try one or more of the following to help you get started.

First, **look to your state education agency for guidance with state standards.** Social studies specialists, consultants, or curriculum directors are often open to discussing your institution's connection to the state standards. They are consistently searching for resources to share. Often state educational agency consultants in other disciplines (arts and humanities, literacy, math, and science, for example) will also be eager to help you make cross-disciplinary connections. In addition, making your organization or site visible to the state education agency may help open other doors.

Second, **get involved with the professional organizations that connect with teachers.** Each state will have a council for social studies (visit www.socialstudies.org to find your state contact) or history education (visit www.nche.net for your state coordinator). These organizations provide service to social studies teachers statewide and can help you better connect with the network.

Third, **build credibility by finding a teacher to work with or forming a teacher advisory committee.** The latter is a useful body to look to in order to inform planning and marketing of programs and services. Additionally, the committee can also advocate for your inclusion in district, county, and state-level curricula and standards. You will have greater success promoting programs working within an established web of relationships. Use this web not only to promote programs and services but also to improve program effectiveness by asking teachers to test and advise your work. Audience participation in program development will simultaneously create audience ownership and more tightly align your work to audience needs.

Identifying Your Organization's Best Collections

Once you are familiar with the educational community, now see what collections and content your institution has that may be of interest to this audience. As a collecting institution, history organizations offer a unique and valuable service to schools through their collections—including archive, library, and object collections, as well as buildings and landscapes. Teachers are always on the lookout for easily accessible primary sources to use in their classrooms. Teachers, however, are busy people. They are not likely to visit your institution and pore through manuscripts, photographs, or objects to find the perfect complement to lesson plans. They need interesting, standards-aligned primary sources that can be easily accessed. The following section will address:

1. How to identify collections for educational use
2. How to use collections in educational programming
3. How to make collections and resources accessible to educators

1. Identifying Collections

Who are you serving and what do they need? Your institution may have an amazing collection of photographs, but if it cannot make a case for how they align to educational standards, the collection is not valuable to teachers. Select collection items based on grade level, reading level, and interest. For example, your state's constitution is written at a certain reading level and contains too much text for a second grade student, but the manuscript may fit nicely into a high school course.

People are interested in things to which they relate so consider items students at different grade


Ohio Historical Society

Teachers analyzing maps at the Ohio Historical Society.

· EVALUATION ·

Evaluating programs and services is useful beyond refining offerings to better meet participant needs. Evaluation allows your organization to build a case for the educational value of programs for use in marketing and promotion. Your institution can also use evaluation to foster relationships with volunteers, using results to show their impact on the organization, that programs are reliant on them, and they help shape and nurture a young person's experience.

When evaluating programs and services, collect information from a variety of sources. Ask any staff or volunteers how they felt about the program. That immediate feedback can often be the most valuable. Send a survey or give a survey to the teacher or other adult chaperones (if appropriate). With school programs, teachers are the ultimate audience; they bring the students back year after year. By showing teachers that feedback is important, they will feel you are more invested in providing high quality services. If possible, get feedback from students. This can be as easy as asking students for thumbs up or thumbs down or as complex as distributing pre- and post-visit surveys.

Once information is collected, analyze it. (It is good practice to only collect information if it is actually going to be used.) Often, evaluations show several things. They:

- Identify components that worked and were popular with participants;
- Identify components that did not work and were least helpful to participants;
- Identify components that receive both praise and criticism without majority agreement; and
- Collect criticisms from participants unhappy (providing an outlet for those who need to vent).

When it comes to this type of feedback it is easiest to respond to obvious successes and failures. Use the evaluation as an opportunity to change.

There are often parts of programs that half of the room loved and the other half did not. How do you respond to this? Often the best answer is to go back to the goal of the program or field trip. In these situations it becomes necessary to use professional judgment. Are there small changes that would make it more effective for more participants? Was it worthwhile enough for those who liked it to keep it? At the end of the day no program will ever make everyone happy, but there is a difference between being reactionary and taking a critical look at offerings, using evaluation as a tool.

levels can connect to. What your institution's archivists and curators find historically significant and interesting may not necessarily capture who interest of a fourth grader. (Think about the customers that visit your institution regularly—genealogists, researchers, etc.—they are all following their own personal interests and passions, not yours.)

If you are unsure what types of items would be the best for students, consult local teachers. Visual items (photographs, posters, artwork), manuscript collections (maps, journals, letters), and objects (toys, clothing, home goods) work well for almost any grade level. You may, however, need to make some modifications or add supplemental aids to assist in translation. For example, always have a transcript for handwritten materials, and if the text includes words that may be out-of-date, provide a vocabulary list.

Finally, when identifying collections, be creative! Sure, your institution may have marquee pieces trotted out for every donor, dignitary, marketing piece, and event—and these items are great to use—but do not forget about hidden gems, items that students and teachers see every day but take for granted. These have strong stories, are personal, and memorable for different reasons.

2. How to use collections in K-12 programming

Once you have identified some great items, digitize and make them available to teachers online, on CD-ROMs, or other means. Teachers use digital images from online repositories, and making collections accessible online is a great way to get them in their hands. *However, collection items on their own are not valuable to educators unless you contextualize them.* For example:[2]

- **Item Analysis Activities:** Show a primary source from your collection and ask questions or provide a worksheet that helps teachers and students analyze and interpret the item. This spiral curriculum model helps students understand the historical value of col-

· LOGIC MODEL ·

The National Science Foundation pioneered logic models. Their purpose is to assist in the creation of focused, efficient project plans. Logic models force program planners to keep a program's primary goal in mind at all times and eliminate activities and costs that do not directly contribute to accomplishing the goal. They are the perfect tool for developing educational programs.

A simple Google search yields dozens of formats. Choose the layout that is most applicable and appealing. All logic models have the same basic components:

1. **Goal:** The goal is the entire point of the project, or what will ultimately be produced. Keep the number of goals limited. One goal is ideal. (While a goal may lead to additional indirect goals, the point is to remain focused.)
2. **Objectives:** Objectives are the short-term building blocks of a goal. Where a goal may be complicated and subjective or abstract, objectives are straightforward and tackle only one piece of a goal. A project may have as many objectives as necessary to complete the goal.
3. **Actions:** Actions are what you actually do to bring about the objective. A single objective may have multiple actions.
4. **Outputs:** Outputs are what results from the action, and, like objectives, are straightforward (e.g. a lesson plan or a brochure). An action may not have an output, but most will have them. If an action does not have an output, be sure to note how you will measure the completion of the action.
5. **Outcome:** Outcomes are the resulting behavior or attitude changes in the intended audience. They should clearly connect to the accomplishment of the objective. Imagine the logic model as a circle where the beginning is the objective and the end is the outcome leading back to the objective.
6. **Timeline/Deadline:** Timelines are necessary to show how actions relate to one another in a sequential manner, and allow for "if/then" scenarios to evaluate success and change course or strategy, if necessary.
7. **Evaluation:** Evaluation refers to how one measures the success of an action in relation to the objective. The evaluation method may be as simple as completing an action, meeting a revenue target, or a combination of participant surveys, focus groups, and other methods.
8. **Budget:** Budgets should reflect all costs including direct, in-kind, and staff time necessary to complete an objective and the related actions. Budgets, like timelines, allow project managers to monitor the success of a program in terms of return on investment, or in other words, whether the project is accomplishing enough to justify the costs.
9. **Person/Party Responsibility:** Identifying the person responsible for completion of an action is necessary to hold the project team accountable. It is also a way to monitor success, create buy-in, and fend off failure by making changes to responsibilities if one party is unable or incapable of completing an action.

· CREATING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES ·

One way to highlight programs and services for the educational community is to host professional development opportunities for teachers at your facility. If you choose to provide such programs, be sure they align to state education standards and offer true professional development and not just a commercial for your organization.

- **Contact Your Local School District.** Many times school districts have professional development days. See if the district will allow teachers to attend workshops at your facility. (Some districts strictly manage such activities, so they may only be willing to use your space.) Other districts allow partners to develop content, providing an opportunity to customize content to your organization. No matter the situation, ask the district to distribute information about professional development programs that your organization has created independently. The district will likely help you promote your programs to teachers.
- **Remember Logistics.** When planning professional development programs, keep in mind the hours teachers normally work. Staying within these hours both shows respect for teachers' professional and personal responsibilities and shows that your institution is aware of how the educational environment functions. While teachers typically work long hours that include work at home, programs should align to the formal school day. Food is important, so have a plan if your program spans the lunch hour. Make treats and beverages available at all times.
- **Create an Agenda, and Keep to It!** When drafting an agenda, think about what you would like if you were attending a professional development seminar, and do that.
- **Think about Incentives.** It would be great if people were driven to attend professional development only because they wanted to improve their knowledge of the field, but sometimes attendance is motivated by the "swag." It is easy to offer teacher contact hours. Talk to the school district to see if they will offer continuing education units to teachers who attend. Give the teachers copies of the activities.
- **Ask Teachers What They Think.** Evaluate your programs. Ask teachers what they liked and what can be improved, and then use this information to make programs better. Also, ask what topics or skills teachers would like covered in additional opportunities.

lections items by challenging them to first describe the item, then analyze it, and finally interpret it.[3]

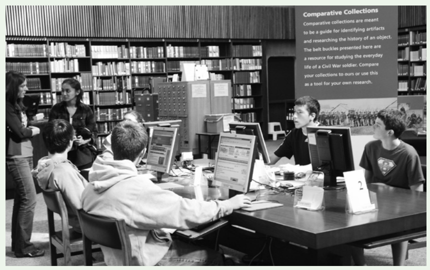
- **Multiple Perspective Activities:** This activity, modeled on Mark Carnes's *Reacting to the Past* curriculum, involves creating packets of primary sources that reflect different perspectives on a particular event. Participants are divided into groups and are assigned a particular perspective about the issue. Utilizing the sources in each packet, groups construct an argument promoting the viewpoint represented in their materials. Finally, groups present their arguments and debate the issue. Besides modeling how to interpret different types of primary sources in combination (linking visuals, manuscripts, and objects), this activity and ensuing mediated discussion helps students understand issues of perspective, context, and complexity—all critical components in the study of history.[4]
- **Compare/Contrast Activities:** These activities are great for utilizing items such as maps, street-scene images, and objects. Participants can compare maps of a particular city over a period of time, highlighting certain neighborhoods or buildings. Starting with a current map, work backwards through time, tracking chosen buildings, streets, or neighborhoods. As students work through the visual landscape transformation, contextualize social, political, and economic changes by adding items that deal with everyday life of people living in the location. Discuss and highlight the continuous change throughout the activity. This helps the audience to understand cause and effect and change over time in a more gradual and relatable manner.

Keep in mind that state education standards may not emphasize local history content, and it may be difficult for teachers to see your organization's relevance, especially if standards seek to address national and global history. For example, a standard about World War II in the European theater may not immediately conjure up connections to a small midwestern town. However, connecting the war to the support infrastructure built on the home front opens up a wide area for study and discussion. Students find it interesting and relatable to make local connections to national events. Your institution will most likely have military uniforms, war bonds, newspapers, letters, diaries, and images of changes to the local landscape in relation to the war effort that can illustrate the impact of the event and the interconnected nature of society.

· HISTORY DAY ·

National History Day (NHD) is geared towards students in grades 6-12 who compete with other students across the country through research projects. The Ohio Historical Society (OHS), NHD's state affiliate and state program coordinator, works with grade 6-12 educators to prepare students for the district, state, and national contests. In 2007, the OHS National History Day staff sought to increase participation in the program. In order to achieve this goal, staff provided services that helped improve student social studies skills. The objective was to improve skills in historical research through the NHD program. Specifically, we believed we would achieve this goal by improving students' ability to read and analyze primary source materials.

OHS created two programs. First, an outreach presentation for both teachers and students delivered in schools. The second was a field trip to OHS that focused on using the society's Archives/Library Reading Room to develop primary source research skills.



Ohio Historical Society

Students participating in a History Day workshop at the Ohio Historical Society.

Program Design

OHS staff developed the in-school program as a slideshow that included basic NHD information and digitized primary sources that corresponded with the annual program theme. Staff worked with students to define and clarify the definition of primary sources and how to analyze them.

The onsite program built on the in-school program and reinforced existing knowledge while also providing an opportunity to experience history research and analysis in a museum/archival facility. Staff designed it in three parts, which students rotated through sequentially. Part one involved an in-depth explanation of NHD and reviewed and reinforced the material covered in the school-based program. Part two took place in the museum's exhibitions and used questions relating to the NHD theme to challenge students to think about how artifacts and other primary sources on display could be used when creating NHD projects. Students spent part three in the Archives/Library reading room where they learned how to use an archive and the materials housed within to locate existing research and begin their own.

Evaluation

Onsite program evaluation involved a simple teacher satisfaction survey that sought to identify the most and least beneficial components of the program. In-school programs involved a student pre- and post-test at the beginning and end of the school year. The test measured students' ability to distinguish between primary and secondary sources, develop thesis statements and bibliographies, and change their attitudes about the value and relevance of history and social studies.

Responding to Evaluation Results

The evaluation indicated that onsite programs, especially the archives component, needed to be more active. In subsequent years OHS re-engineered the program to allow students to experience multiple types of archival material, including cycling through stations using guided questions in order to examine the sources. A follow-up evaluation showed that the revised program resulted in students gaining a greater knowledge of primary sources available in an archive and greater confidence in using such facilities for research purposes.

In-school program evaluations resulted in new, more flexible program preparation. Staff over-prepared for classroom visits in order to accommodate differences in student abilities. Additionally, we developed an outreach request form that allowed teachers to address student skill levels and intended learning outcomes for the day, providing staff a better idea about the type of classrooms and students they were likely to encounter at the visit.

A greater variety of digitized primary sources augmented the in-school presentation. Evaluations revealed that middle school students responded to sources differently than high schoolers and urban students related to different sources than rural students. In order to help students understand how to analyze primary sources, they needed to feel connected to or see relevance in the source. OHS staff varied themes and materials in order to gain more flexibility and a stronger connection to student interests. Finally, staff made regular use of the Ohio Historical Society's Teacher Advisory Committee in order to solicit teacher feedback on programs and services before implementation.

Moving Forward

In the five years that these services have been offered, the OHS staff continues to change and refine onsite and in-school programs in order to better meet the goal of improving skills in history and historical research through National History Day.

3. **Making Collections Accessible to a K-12 Audience:** While you may be able to use small groups of items from your collection for specific student or teacher programs, don't forget about one of your largest and most visible collections-based resources, exhibitions. Many history organizations have a diverse set of artifacts and archival material on display within their exhibitions. Making use of collections on display to connect children to objects can be challenging but not impossible—especially considering that many exhibitions were designed for visitors to steadily move through the space linearly in order to "experience" history. However, make sure that programming content is derived from the entirety of the collection. Some programs may benefit from specific periods of history that are chronologically unrelated while others take advantage of this flow.[5]

Remember, history institutions' abilities to use collections in order to bring history to life is the *competitive advantage the field has* over *similar educational organizations*—one can take an art class or read a book about history anywhere, but participating in activities within an authentic, collections-rich environment provides an incredible opportunity to make tangible connections to the past.

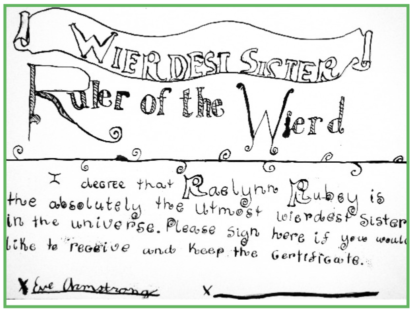
Developing Programs around Collections

When working within exhibitions, create programs that keep the following three components in mind: (1) *the learning outcome* (content and skills attainment), (2) *the collection items* that relate to and illustrate the learning outcome, and (3) *the instructional techniques* to connect students to collections and content within exhibitions. (Activities may draw directly from the history discipline or from related fields such as art, for example, observational drawing, storytelling, etc.)

Participants do not have to experience your institution's entire collection; depth is more important than breadth. However, your goal should be to develop a number of programs that collectively connect with every aspect of your institution. This not only diversifies programming content, but also encourages students to participate in multiple programs.

The Kentucky Historical Society regularly uses the arts as its primary vehicle to connect and engage students with its collections in the study of history. The arts provide participants with a very distinct way of engaging with and interpreting collection items, including: (1) thematic interpretation, (2) direct translation, and (3) re-contextualization of the subject. Each of these methods is a unique form of interpretation that overlaps the disciplines of history and art.

1. **The thematic interpretation** of an artifact or a document is a way of taking the content, topic, or subject and repurposing it into another medium or format. For example, students may learn about military awards and certificates, specifically how and why they were given to various service people. Understanding the function of a certificate given to a sailor after crossing the equator—a significant milestone in a sailor's career—the students are then asked to create a certificate to give to someone for a designated event or accomplishment. This method of interpretation is closely linked to the ability to "develop… explanations of historical events and processes based on…interpretation of evidence." In this instance, a student is able to analyze a primary source (evidence) and interpret (explain) it through an unrelated event. Here is one example of a student creating a certificate for her younger sister—for being the weirdest sister in the world.[6]



Kentucky Historical Society

Camp ArtyFact student work.

2. **Direct translation** is a way for students to recreate an artifact or other part of the collection with as much accuracy as possible. Similar to a pastiche, students study objects in the collection and create their own versions, often to scale and with many of the features imitated in the design. This process of investigation is History 101, because students are required to **describe** an artifact ("What does it look like? What is it made from?"), **analyze** ("Who used it? How might it have been used?"), and **interpret** ("Can you replicate the object using the materials you have? How are your versions different from the original?") While it is not always possible, encourage students to use the same materials used in the collection item for the art project.
3. **Re-contextualizing** is a way for students to take a topic from the past and place it in a contemporary format. While each of the aforementioned approaches attempts this to a degree, re-contextualization challenges students to take the historical

Kentucky Historical Society

Camp ArtyFact student work.

content and repurpose it into an unusual (but plausible) vehicle or format while staying true to the original content. For example, this image documents a student taking information and pose from a nineteenth-century gubernatorial portrait to create a campaign button using the same pose and information related to that governor. This requires students to engage in a deep study of artifacts, understanding their importance and context in order to offer alternatives.

These provide three approaches for students to interact with history through hands-on experiences that require them to describe, analyze, and, finally, interpret collections. In fact, many museums and historic sites already provide hands-on experiences to get at just this. While these approaches originated from camp programs at the Kentucky Historical Society, based on staff member experiences at other museums, they can easily be repurposed to fit a school's needs and interests.[7]

Conclusion

One cannot overstate the importance of collections within the value and role of history organizations as educational institutions. Not only do collections allow visitors to make a tangible, authentic, and personal connection to the past, but the skills attained through carefully designed educational activities and programs are transferable to most other disciplines and industries, and allow students a more complete liberal arts experience. Creating education programs that require interaction with collections sharpens students' ability to (1) **Think Critically**, (2) **Understand Context and Complexity**, and (3) **Learn to Effectively Communicate and Collaborate with Others**.

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[1] *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001, Public Law 107-110, 107th Congress (8 January 2002), www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/107-110.pdf.

[2] These samples are not intended for every audience; adjust as necessary to meet audience needs and intellectual levels.

[3] Jerome Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).

[4] A full description of this curriculum is available at: www.barnard.edu/reacting/index.html.

[5] For example, an institution may employ Comparative History methods in studying civil rights propaganda in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries or it may be advantageous to take a chronological approach when examining the treatment of African Americans following the Civil War and implementation of Jim Crow.

[6] Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically?," *Perspectives Online* 45:1 (2007), (accessed December 14, 2010).

[7] The Brooklyn Museum's Gallery/Studio Program has been using many of these approaches for years and served as inspiration for KHS's new approach.

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TECHNICAL LEAFLET #245
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Families First! Rethinking Exhibits to Engage All Ages

By Anne Grimes Rand, Executive Vice President; Robert Kiihne, Director of Exhibits; and Sarah Watkins, Curator USS Constitution Museum

The Problem: A nationwide survey of 5,500 museum-going families in 2007 indicated that history museums are the least popular with today's families. When families chose among eight different types of museums, only twenty-three percent chose to visit history museums.[1]

The Opportunity: The likelihood of visiting a history museum or historic site increases in families with grade-school-age children who are beginning to learn about history. There is a window of opportunity for museum professionals to entice families to visit, especially by developing special programs and exhibits that target this audience. If museum professionals share effective techniques for engaging an intergenerational audience, history museums can appeal to more families. This demonstrates their value to the local community as fun and exciting places for hands-on learning.

Proposed Solutions: At the USS Constitution Museum, we wondered if there were simple, low-cost techniques to encourage family learning and conversation in the galleries that might work in different history museums.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services provided the necessary resources to explore this question through a 2004 National Leadership Grant. With the assistance of a steering committee, a study of best practices, and a prototype gallery where staff interviewed over 2,000 families, we learned a great deal about how to encourage families to laugh and learn together in a history museum. This technical leaflet is a summary of findings from three years of studying intergenerational interaction within the USS Constitution Museum's prototype exhibit in Boston. A more detailed explanation of the project findings is available at www.familylearningforum.org. While the content we tested explored seafaring in the age of sail, the techniques identified in this article and on the website are adaptable to a wide range of history museums. The goal of this publication is to share replicable techniques and approaches that have proven to be successful at engaging family audiences in history.

Family Learning in Museums

Families are the first learning community that a person experiences. When families visit a museum, there is an opportunity to engage the family in compelling experiences. John Falk and Lynn Dierking in *Learning from Museums* observe that "museum exhibitions and programs, when done well, support opportunities for families to participate in and become more effective communities of learners, allowing group members to share, watch one another, have a new and novel experience, reinforce something they already knew, or see something in a new way.… All of this contributes to a highly personal experience, which is all important if meaningful learning is to occur." The experience of visiting an exhibition together, exploring the past, comparing it to the present, and solving problems together builds a shared memory that lasts long after the visit to the museum.[2]

Family learning in a museum may take many different forms. When visitors engage with one another, as well as the content of the museum exhibit, family learning is likely to occur. The Children's Museum of Indianapolis describes the characteristics of family learning in this way:

- Family learning is a playful, fun, and social experience.
- Family learning is influenced by the ages of the children and adults in the group.
- Families all learn in different ways.
- Families find value in their own personal observations and experiences; they learn by working, talking, and solving problems together.[3]

Increasing family visitation has benefits in both the short and long term. Falk and Dierking report that the adults who are most likely to bring their families to a museum are those who visited museums with their parents as a child. Engaging a family audience today will increase present visitation *and* build a pattern of family museum visitation into the future. Exhibits and programs that engage visitors of different ages and learning styles create greater opportunities for learning within a museum. Engaged visitors spend longer discussing the activity or exhibit, and their satisfaction increases. When visitors are engaged in a compelling experience, they are more likely to stay longer, make a donation, plan a return visit, or become a member.

I. Putting Families First

When the USS Constitution Museum put families at the center of exhibit development, it led to a radical shift in our thinking and creative process. Families first meant social interaction was as important as conveying content. If visitors are bored, very little content will be delivered, much less remembered a week later. If visitors have a great experience they will remember content long after leaving.

Families first also meant that we could not assume we knew what was best. Instead we let families tell us what they are interested in, how they want to learn about the topic, and what makes the topic compelling, memorable, personally relevant, and enjoyable. We discovered that designing a thematically organized exhibit facilitates family learning more than a chronologically organized exhibit. Thematic organization allows families to bounce around naturally

Photos Greg Cooper courtesy USS Constitution Museum

The prototype gallery at the USS Constitution Museum offers hands-on opportunities for visitors of all ages to sample life at sea.

and bypass areas altogether. By encouraging positive group interactions and using humor within the exhibit, families were more receptive to learning.

Allowing families a voice in the exhibit development process had an unexpected benefit for the exhibit's in-house steering committee. The USS Constitution Museum's planning team included members of the curatorial, exhibits, and education departments. We learned that letting the visitors decide eliminated a lot of interdepartmental debates. Testing ideas with the visitors was also very freeing. Instead of getting too invested in any one idea or arguing over whose idea is better, we let it go and directly asked the visitors what they thought.

II. Crafting a Compelling Experience

Use Interactive Elements to Convey Key Messages

Certain exhibit concepts or stories that are important to the museum may be difficult for visitors to grasp. There may be few if any artifacts or images to support these concepts. These concepts many be perfect candidates for interactives. Visitor tracking studies at the USS Constitution Museum demonstrated that families stop at interactives more than any other kind of exhibit.

In 2005, the museum tested an interactive that illustrated just such a topic with family visitors, recruiting a crew for the USS *Constitution* in 1812. There are almost no objects or images related to recruiting, but understanding why someone would join the crew was vitally important to the exhibit team. The recruiting station is a simple two-sided tabletop interactive with questions on one side and a related image on the other. Questions are slightly humorous and relate to a person's skills, health, and sailing experience, foreshadowing the exhibition to come. Questions include: Have you ever swung in a hammock? Are you willing to do it next to 200 of your closest friends who haven't taken a bath in a while? The exhibit team hoped to encourage conversation about what it meant to be a sailor in 1812.

Families at the USS Constitution Museum consider the life of a sailor in 1812 and discuss questions such as, "Are you willing to work a four-hour shift before breakfast?"

The USS Constitution Museum designed interactive exhibit elements that met the PISEC criteria, [see sidebar] then subjected them to rigorous formative evaluation. This resulted in a series of interactive experiences that encourage family participation and conversation. Tracking studies show that families spend three times longer in this hands-on exhibition than in our larger, more traditional history display. Satisfaction is higher and visitors are absorbing exhibit themes while laughing and learning together.

PISEC

The Philadelphia/Camden Informal Science Education Collaborative (PISEC) identified seven characteristics to promote family learning.[4]

- Multi-sided—the family can cluster around the exhibit.
- Multi-user—interaction allows for several sets of hands and bodies.
- Accessible—the exhibit can be comfortably used by children and adults.
- Multi-outcome—observation and interaction are sufficiently complex to foster group discussion.
- Multi-modal—appeals to different learning styles and levels of knowledge.
- Readable—text is arranged in easily understood segments.
- Relevant—the exhibit provides cognitive links to visitors' existing knowledge and experience.

Try this test: *Take the PISEC criteria into your galleries and see how many criteria your exhibit elements meet. Are there simple modifications you could make to meet more of the PISEC guidelines?*

Multi-sided Exhibits Take Up More Space, But That's OK!

One PISEC characteristic that can be extremely effective comes at a cost. Multi-sided exhibits take up a larger footprint, easy for a cavernous science museum, but a challenge for history museums with limited gallery space. Creating an exhibit element that is multi-sided also reduces available wall space, but it's worth it!

The benefit is changing how visitors use your museum. Families gather around multi-sided exhibits, interacting as a group rather than as individual museum-goers. The resulting conversations can be the highest form of visitor engagement.

Integrating Learning Styles

Museums are free choice learning institutions. Understanding the different ways people prefer to learn can help us broaden our exhibit's appeal, increase visitor engagement, and spur new methods of exhibit interaction. People do not learn by reading alone. Museums are an ideal environment to teach using a variety of learning styles. Addressing a different learning style need not equal dollar signs. For example, charts or visual representations can sometimes present information in a way that appeals to visitors with strength in math or logic.

Try This Test: *Print a list of learning styles, such as Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, and see how many of these techniques you employ in your exhibitions. This is a great exhibit-planning tool to see if you are creating experiences for different types of learners.*[5]

III. The Power of Prototypes

Prototypes can take many forms. The form depends on what the final exhibit will be and upon where you are in the process. Show a few versions of a label on a clipboard and you can quickly find out if families interpret the label as your exhibit development team intended. A paper and cardboard mock-up can test an idea with staff and a few family, friends, or visitors. Observing visitor flow near a neatly posted paper directional sign can show if your signage will do what you need it to, before investing in expensive, ineffective signage. Even a cheap plywood and laminate version of an interactive that can be tested on the floor is much less expensive than a finished version—especially if the final version is not successful.

Exhibit prototypes can test:

- Functionality—Will it work?
- Clarity—Do visitors understand how to interact with the exhibit?
- Comprehension—Do visitors understand the exhibit's key idea or story?
- Interest—Do visitors want to engage with the exhibit? Do they unexpectedly show interest in certain elements?

Be Prepared to Revise Exhibits

Information gained from prototyping and visitor observations will most likely lead to exhibit design changes—changes that will improve the visitor experience and opportunities for learning. A favorite idea among the exhibition development team may not work and may need to be abandoned. You must know what you are prototyping for, and be open to unforeseen outcomes.

Prototyping (a form of formative evaluation) is an iterative process. *Draft. Test. Modify. Repeat.* Many times during prototyping, the audience may suggest changes and additions exhibit developers had not considered that improve the product significantly. To get an overall feel for visitor satisfaction, it can be helpful to ask visitors to rate each interactive (like a movie with a five-star scale). The USS Constitution Museum kept modifying each exhibit element until the average visitor ranking reached four-and-a-half stars. The museum has come to see formative evaluation as making their family audience a partner in exhibit development.

FORMATIVE EVALUATION

Formative evaluation is conducted when you have something to show your audience.

You might try testing:

- A draft of text panels, instructions, or even object labels
- Graphics (charts or illustrations)
- Interactive prototypes (ideas in a 3-D form—cardboard & masking tape are okay)
- Rough cuts of media pieces

Visitors scrub the deck with a holystone and discuss the life of a sailor in 1812. At the suggestion of visitors we added sand and made a more satisfying and authentic experience.

IV. Engaging Text: Short & Sweet

Developing content for a family audience at the USS Constitution Museum challenged us to convey history in a way that appeals to both adults and children. Some people felt this would mean "dumbing down" the story. Instead it led us to think thematically, choose information that best supports the themes, and layer content in creative ways.

We knew that our visitors did not want a book on the wall. So we gave ourselves the goal to limit our text panels to fifty words. Fifty words is brutally short, but it forced us to focus. For each panel, we asked ourselves, what is the main point we want to convey?

The short segments of text carry the themes in an engaging, conversational manner that reflects the perspective of the speaker (a crew member). These labels were unlike any we had ever written. Once we gained confidence in this new method, we discovered that label writing could actually be fun. Instead of dry, academic report writing, these labels turned into a creative writing exercise. We learned to have fun with word choice (i.e. "buddy" instead of "friend"). By simply changing the voice from third- to first-person, the same content suddenly came alive. Some of our NEH-sponsored scholars were our toughest critics going into the process and our greatest supporters upon its completion.

The Proof is in The Numbers

The museum tracked and timed family visitors through two exhibitions: our traditional *Old Ironsides in War and Peace* exhibition and our family-focused prototype exhibit *A Sailor's Life for Me?* We found that family visitors spent an average of seven minutes in *War and Peace*, a 3,000-square-foot exhibit with many long text panels totaling nearly 4,500 words, sensational objects, and a few interactives. *A Sailor's Life for Me?* is only 2,000 square feet and contains about 1,500 words of text, but families spent nearly twenty-two minutes in the smaller exhibition. Just as important, families also talked to each other significantly more than in the *War and Peace* exhibition.

Using Questions and Quotes—A Research Study

Which technique is more effective to promote conversation?

The museum wanted to identify questioning techniques that encourage family conversation, so we tested three types of labels. We asked if visitors preferred:

- An actual historic quotation from a sailor
- A historic question that put them back in time, "What would you do in this situation?"
- A contemporary question bridging past to present such as "Have you ever been in a similar situation?"

Three hundred families commented on label text accompanying the cut-out figures in a pilot study before the prototype exhibit opened. A first-person context label accompanied each of three cut-out figures throughout the study.

Historic Quotation: "The most disagreeable duty in the ship was that of holystoning the decks on cold, frosty mornings." —Samuel Leech, 1810

Almost half of of the family members interviewed preferred the historic quote labels and sixty-three percent of males prefer historical quotations. Visitors stated they preferred historic quote labels because the content was accurate and authentic, provided a personal connection, and provided historical perspective.

Historical Question: *"Can you imagine being a sailor starting off your day with a cold saltwater scrub rather than a hot shower?"*

One-third of visitors and forty-seven percent of females prefer historical questions. Visitors expressed that these labels fulfilled their need for thought-provoking content and that the questions' open-endedness was more engaging.

Contemporary Question: *"What is the chore you dread the most? How often do you have to do it?"*

Fewer than two in ten visitors preferred the contemporary question. Due to this low response, we eliminated the contemporary question from the rest of the study after the pilot phase.

Summary: *When shown three types of labels, visitors showed a strong preference for both historic quotations and historical questions.*

What happened when visitors encountered these labels within the exhibit? Which were more effective at encouraging conversation? Staff observed over 550 visitors and recorded their behavior in tracking and timing behavioral studies. Visitors engaged in conversation with the historical question labels three times more often than with the historic quote labels. This highlights the importance of using different research tools to understand visitor preferences and behavior. The findings are not contradictory, as a visitor may prefer to read an authentic quotation to learn about the past directly; however, if an exhibit developer's aim is to encourage family conversations about the topic, the historical question is a more powerful technique.

Summary: *Posing a question is three times more likely to encourage visitor conversation than simply presenting information or a historic quotation.*

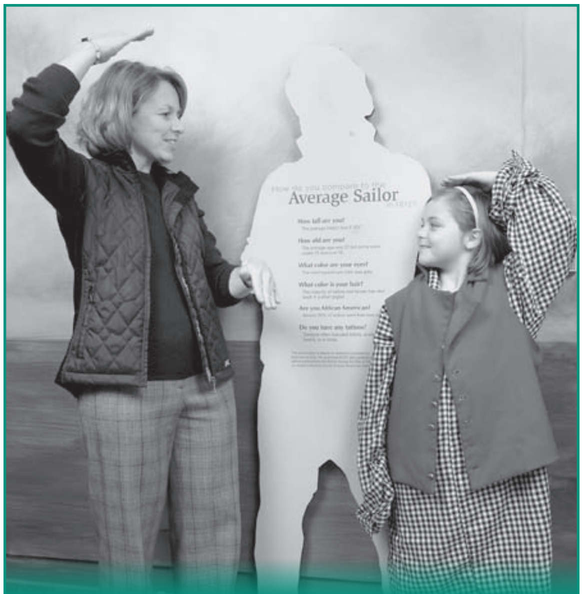
Peopling History

Our exhibition set out to reinterpret the USS *Constitution* by offering the human perspective. This interpretive strategy resonated with our family audience. By personalizing the story and telling it through people, our visitors connect on a personal level and can feel empathy for what the sailors went through and as a result are better able to imagine themselves in the sailors' shoes. To help bring the crew to life, full-scale photo cutouts visually "people" the exhibit and the text is written as if visitors are hearing sailors' stories first-hand. Because we illustrate a diverse range of crewmembers and the families they left behind, minorities, women, and children who may not expect to see themselves in our exhibition can make emotional and intellectual connections.

Sailors from 1812 share their experience through first person text and invite museum visitors to consider how their life today compares to 200 years ago.

The audience research we conducted focused on how to present personal narratives in engaging ways to foster personal connection between visitors and stories.

We tested different types of interpretive labels



How do you compare to an average sailor in 1812? Simple, direct questions compare today's visitors to sailors in 1812 and make statistical information relevant and fun.

accompanying a photo cutout and learned that sixty-four percent of visitors preferred labels written in the first-person as opposed to a third-person curatorial voice. Visitors reported that they preferred the conversational voice because it felt like the historical cut-out was speaking directly to them.

When asked about the first-person approach, one visitor to our prototype exhibit commented:

> "*When I come to a history museum I want my family to hear it from the people who lived it, not a secondhand dry account. History should be alive and this type of label gives you a chance to be a part of that.*"

V. Steal this Idea!

Here is a collection of simple, cheap, effective, and tested techniques that have worked in other exhibitions and may be applicable in your museum.

Making Work Fun

Children visiting Conner Prairie living history museum will sweep the floor, make the bed, or wash dishes when asked to by costumed interpreters. At other museums, children churn (imaginary) butter in Indianapolis, build a (foam) stone wall at Sturbridge Village, carry buckets of (imaginary) water at the Wenham Museum, and scrub the deck at the USS Constitution Museum. These full-body kinesthetic experiences are both an outlet for energy and a moment to pause and reflect on the similarities or differences between the past and the present. These activities set the seed for a conversation at home, when water rushes effortlessly from the tap, or butter comes neatly wrapped in paper.

Try a Board Game

Board games are a familiar form that can take advantage of successful pre-visit family interactions. They can also offer seating, a welcome rest within a museum visit. Through the roll of a dice, games can also highlight the role of chance in determining the final outcome. Games can be used as a summary element, to review content presented in the exhibition. Games have proven to be effective, engaging, and inexpensive. Families sit, smile, and converse, laughing and learning together.

Involve the Senses

An exhibit is more likely to be effective if a variety of exhibit techniques address a range of senses. Smelling the pine tar in the ship's rigging or the salted cod carried in barrels creates a more vivid experience than simply reading about life at sea. When visitors climb in a hammock or get on their knees and scrub the deck, it is a full body experience. These are the activities eliciting the most comments in exit interviews at the USS Constitution Museum, and the elements most frequently recalled, even years after a visit. The Chicago History Museum created an exhibit for children called *Sensing Chicago.* Based on front-end and formative evaluation with children, the exhibit uses the senses as a window to history—smell the fire of 1871, hear the roar of the crowd at a baseball game, or climb into a giant foam roll and see what it feels like to be a famed Chicago hot dog with all the trimmings.

Try This Test: *Walk through your exhibitions and see how many senses you engage.*

Discovery

A surprise element hidden within an exhibit becomes a family's discovery. Discoveries can trigger conversation and encourage visitors to slow down and take a closer look. Simply hiding a light-sensitive document or small item like a coin can enhance its importance; the discovery becomes a moment to share with another family member. In food barrels at the USS Constitution Museum, visitors discover a rat eating the sailors' food. In exit interviews, it is one of the elements most frequently mentioned by visitors. Offering a surprise is a reward that can encourage closer exploration of an exhibition.

Flipbook / Questioning Interactive

The flipbook is a simple tabletop activity that consists of pages with questions or information viewable from one side of the table and a related image viewable from the other side of the table. At the USS Constitution Museum, we used this format to let visitors play the roles of recruit and recruiter, asking one another fun questions related to their suitability as a possible sailor in 1812: "Are you willing to eat bread as hard as a brick?" This questioning interactive engages both young and old visitors. It invites the audience to rest for a moment and consider the content. It links your visitors' experience to the past, providing an opportunity to compare and contrast life today with life in a past time. The flipbook works because it requires conversation. You cannot really do the activity alone. Almost any content could be adapted to this form. Many families spent significantly longer with the interactive than needed to finish because parents discussed the questions with their children.

Comment Boards

Rather than limiting the flow of information from museum to visitor, comment boards or books offer visitors an opportunity to share their thoughts and state their opinions. It moves an exhibition closer to a discussion rather than simply a presentation from an all-knowing authority. Visitors like to see what other visitors have written. Comment boards can be very helpful tools for exhibit developers to see if key messages are reaching visitors. Positive comments are also a powerful tool to demonstrate the impact of the museum experience; to motivate staff, volunteers, and board members; and to leverage future funding.

VI. Conclusion

At the USS Constitution Museum, the focus on family learning has revolutionized the organization. The audience is seen as a partner in exhibition development rather than a passive user of the end product. This mindset has spread through the institution, as we test sample signage and even fundraising appeals with members of the target audience. This approach can be liberating, as decisions fall to the audience, rather than to the team member with the strongest argument. The exhibit galleries have come to life with the active participation of museum visitors young and old. Instead of the quiet, reverential tone of a staid art museum, our galleries include conversation and active participation. We have even found visitors swinging in hammocks and singing sea songs.

Who will be promoted first? The Constitution Challenge game quizzes visitors on the content presented in the exhibit and introduces the element of chance (bad weather, bad luck, etc.).

SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

Are exhibits and programs ever really finished? Summative Evaluation addresses questions such as:

- Do visitors understand which way you intend them to go?
- Can they find instructions or key text panels?
- Do graphics make sense in place?
- Are there elements of the exhibit everyone seems to miss?
- Does your audience understand the major themes of your exhibit or program?
- How much time does the average visitor spend in the exhibit or program?

Try this test: *Visitor tracking, timing, and behavioral coding are simple, effective, and honest. Grab a copy of the floor plan and observe your visitors in the exhibition. Where do they stop? What do they interact with or read? Do they talk to each other about your content? How much time do they spend in each part of your exhibit?*

Trustees and staff have taken notice of two key facts:

1. Visitors to the hands-on prototype *A Sailor's Life for Me?* spend three times longer in the gallery than visitors to the traditional *War and Peace* gallery.
2. Voluntary contributions per museum visitor have increased from an average of thirty cents between 2000 and 2005 to fifty-one cents per visitor since the installation of the hands-on prototype in 2006.

Since the USS Constitution Museum does not charge admission and relies heavily on voluntary donations, an increase in visitor satisfaction that results in a sixty percent increase in per-person donations is significant. With more than 250,000 visitors to the galleries in 2007, donation box revenue topped $150,000. The Board of Trustees voted to adopt a new strategy: The USS Constitution Museum will provide a hands-on, minds-on environment where intergenerational groups seeking an enjoyable, educational experience can have fun and learn as they explore history together.

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