

SUMMARY OF "NEEDS" COLLECTED AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND STATE MEETINGS 2002-2007

A Conversation about Small Museums

Roundtable presented at AASLH Meeting in 2006

Facilitated by Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, Carol Harsh and Karla Nicholson

Question: What can AASLH do for small museums? What are the needs of small museums?

- Research
 - How much to charge? What's the value received?
 - What are the new models for a successful volunteer program?
 - How many small museums have failed and why?
 - How many are operating on the brink and what do we stand to lose? What's at risk?
 - How many museums are the only "game in town"? only museum?
 - What are the characteristics of a successful small museum?
 - What's the feasibility of mergers?
- Revive the importance of local history
- What can we do to make the experience at small museums valuable to schools?
- New leadership in small museums to help make the transition from a personal legacy to community legacy
- Information on building collaboration
- Training (affordable)
- New view of small museums/New paradigm (old dog, new tricks)
- New options/ways to adapt to new social structure
- Information on changing age-group demographics/changes in communities
- New definition of volunteerism
- Marketing strategies

A National Voice for Small Museums

Roundtable presented at Small Museums Association Meeting in 2007

Facilitated by Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko, Kate Marks, Jeff Buchheit, Lisa Mason-Chaney, Ken Hickman, Ann Korzeniewski

Question: What are the needs of small museums?

- Knowing where to get help
- Cost of Performance Management – would like a "laddered" cost for small museums
- Knowing where to find money - turning ideas into money
- Change of leadership rate is higher in small museums – support
- How to ask individuals for money
- Professional development and affordable memberships
- Promoting small museum relevance at the big conferences
- How to navigate Washington D.C. as a small museum
- Board training
- Facilitators
- Sessions for folks working for government entities
- Larger outreach to students, coursework, student memberships

Small Museum Needs Roundtable: A Informal Survey of the Environment

" This small vs large dilemma is perhaps the most significant issue that AAM will need to address and resolve. The most consistent differences between members is not in institution type but in budget size"
[*AAM Institutional Research Final Report*, 2002]

"Of museums with budgets of \$250,000 or less, 45% do not have access to

- internet
- e-mail
- standard office software

59% do not have websites."

[*Report on the Status of Technology and Digitization in the Nation's Museums and Libraries*, 2002]

"In this phase of the research, we discovered that while Texas museum service organizations understand the needs of Texas museums well, it is beyond their capacities, missions, and resources to fulfill that need."
[*Texas Needs Assessment Survey*, 2001]

Over the last year Janice Klein [2002-2003], Chair of SMAC-AAM, led four roundtables on the needs of small museums. The first roundtable was held in August 2002 at AAM and included invited participants from local museum organizations. In February 2003 a roundtable was held as part of the one-day meeting of the Field Service Alliance in Columbus OH. Roundtables were also held at the Association of Midwest Museums Annual Meeting in Minneapolis MN (November 2002) and the American Association of Museums Annual Meeting in Portland OR (May 2003). Participation in the last two roundtables was open to anyone who was interested. (Participants lists for each roundtable are attached).

Participants were provided with information from all previous meetings, as well as a copy of the Executive Summary from the *AAM Institutional Research Final Report* (June 2002) and the Museum Section from the IMLS 2002 *Report on the Status of Technology and Digitization in the Nation's Museums and Libraries*.

Each of the roundtables built on previous discussion in five areas:

1. What is a "small museum"
2. What are the unmet needs of small museums
3. What resources currently exist to meet these needs that may need to be better utilized
4. What resources need to be created
5. Where do we go from here

The following is a composite of information gathered in each of these areas at the roundtables, as well as through e-mail responses to posting the minutes of the first two meetings on the State Museum Association listserve (SMA-L).

1. What is a "small museum"

1. Budget size
 - \$350,000 maximum (SMAC-AAM)
 - \$250,000 maximum (IMLS)

- Either of these is "enormous" for many small museums
- 2. Staff size
 - 1.5 (IAM Survey)
 - less than 10 (SMAC-AAM "rule of thumb")
- 3. Physical size (building, collections)
 - large building, collections may still have small staff
- 4. Number of visitors
 - Include website?
- 5. Staff wears multiple hats
- 6. More volunteer-based; reliance on volunteers to do staff jobs
- 7. Not open on a regular schedule or has only limited hours
- 8. Community based
- 9. Attitude – small museums are perceived as unprofessional by the larger institutions and by the general public
- 10. Self-defined – a museum in a small market may have a greater importance in the community and therefore see itself as a larger museum
- 11. The Pat Miller Plunger definition

2. What are the unmet needs of small museums

1. Money
2. Technology
3. RESPECT
 - Recognition – importance of their role to the community and state
4. Training
 - nuts and bolts
 - i. conservation
 - ii. security
 - iii. policies/procedures
 - additional responsibilities (e.g., tourist information)
5. Access to training
 - not enough money
 - intimidation
 - only staff member (can't leave museum)
 - distance
6. Board development and training
7. Governance and management continuity
8. Lack of repeat visitation
9. Difficulty in representing multiple perspectives due to homogeneity of governance and support (funding, membership)
10. Community resistance to change
11. Aging of volunteers
12. Information sharing, networking, finding(or creating) local museum community
 - collaborations
 - "re-assurance"
 - "how-to" (exchange of skills)
13. Programming and exhibit sophistication

- public expectations
- need to change periodically
- 14. Transition to professionalism
- 15. Time to complete grants, etc.
 - Perception that it is "too much"
- 16. Awareness of standards

3. What resources currently exist

1. Field Services and on-site services (extension service, state offices, state historical societies, state museums)
 - the most helpful existing resources
2. AAM
 - Standing Professional Committees
 - Professional Interest Groups
3. Regional museum associations
4. State museum associations
5. Focus at state, regional and national conferences
6. Community colleges and Museum Studies programs
 - technology classes and students
 - libraries
 - interns
7. High school job fairs (for volunteers)
8. Mentoring programs
9. Publications
 - bibliographies
 - Technical leaflets
10. State/local grant programs
 - particularly "mini-grants"
11. Federal grants (CAP, MAP)
 - question about success of TAG program
12. Local businesses, community foundations, tourist bureaus
13. Distance learning
14. Management seminars
15. Associated organizations
 - Museum Computer Network
 - ASTC
 - ACUMG

3b. Why are existing resources under-utilized? (Why don't museum professionals pursue training/degrees, attend courses, workshops and conferences?)

1. Expensive
2. Sense of "not belonging"
 - prejudice from "some" professionals against those without enough training or experience
 - i. that small museum staff is unprofessional

- ii. small museums only house junk ("if you've seen one historic house you've seen them all")
 - needs to be collegial (same level), non-threatening ("dress more casual")
- 3. Time
- 4. Access
- 5. Staff of some museums "fall into" museum work; do not intend to make it a career
- 6. Information not readily available
- 7. Support of Board not always present; no understanding of the need for professionalism
- 8. Small museum professionals need to understand that attendance at meetings gives them a broader view of the role of museums and ways of doing things
- 9. Little for small museums at larger meetings; not really focused on "small" museums even when identified that way
- 10. Need representation of small museums in museum organization governance
 - reserve slots for small museums

4. What resources need to be created

1. Directory or clearing house of information and organizations
 - "we don't know each other"
2. Collaborations between larger and small institutions
 - teach larger museums about
 - i. providing services (e.g., loans) to small museums
 - ii. resources and assets of small museum
 - provide recognition and rewards to larger museums for assistance
 - N.B. needs to be a way for smaller institutions to maintain identity in collaborations
3. Money to get to existing resources
 - use MCN model (waive registration fee for small museums)
 - more scholarships
4. Rewards and recognition for increased professionalism
 - professional credit for meeting attendance
5. On-line training
6. More on-site training
7. Training for Boards of small institutions
8. Training as part of other activities (e.g., Exhibits USA HELP)
9. Small museum track at larger meetings
10. AAM "Sunrise" Nuts and Bolts sessions as a coherent curriculum
11. Assistance in grant-writing
12. Encourage participation of local/regional small museums in larger meetings
13. Regranting of federal money on state level (like libraries and arts councils)
14. Creation of individual state "office of museum services" dedicated to the enhancement of museum services
15. ADVOCACY
16. Mentoring
17. Buddy system at meetings
18. Development of standards (good, better, best) other than accreditation

5. Where do we go from here?

1. Gather more information
 - On state museum association activities
 - From Field Service officer liaisons
 - From individual museums and staff (SMAC member survey)
 - i. Ask same questions as roundtable discussion
 - ii. Room for narrative
 - On best practices
 - On existing collaborations
2. Disseminate information on
 - CD Roms
 - Networking
 - i. Listserves
 - ii. websites
3. Article for *Museum News* on large-small museum collaborations and specific strengths of small museums.

Roundtable 1: AAM Headquarters, August 2002

Jeff Buchheit, Assistant Director MAP, AAM
 Margo Carlock, Director, Virginia Association of Museums
 Kim Igoe, Vice President of Policy and Programs, AAM
 Katherine Marks, SMAC-AAM Board, SMA Board
 Beth Merritt, Director, Museum Advancement and Excellence, AAM
 John Suau, Director, MAAM
 Max van Balgooy, Director of Interpretation and Education, NTHP
 Tara White, Program Office, AASLH
 Janice Klein, Chair, SMAC-AAM

Roundtable 2: Association of Midwest Museums Annual Meeting, November 2002

Martin DeWitt, Chair, MAM, Director and Curator, Tweed Museum of Art
 Chen-Chih Chen, Taiwan Museum of Art
 Bob Tesye, Milwaukee County Historical Society
 Larry Hutchings, Carver County Historical Society
 Chris Burda, Science Museum of Minnesota
 Christine Henry, Program Officer, IMLS
 Jennifer Kolb, Wisconsin Historical Museum
 Claudia Jacobson, Vice Chair, WAM, Registrar, Milwaukee Public Museum
 Heather Berry, AAM
 Janice Klein, Chair, SMAC-AAM

Roundtable 3: Field Service Alliance Annual Meeting, February 2003

J.D. Britton, Ohio Historical Society
 Melissa Davis, Humanities Tennessee
 Katherine Dill, Indiana Historical Society
 John Harris Indiana Historical Society
 Katie Hoy, Humanities Tennessee
 Kristina Markel, Ohio Historical Society

Tom McKay, Wisconsin Historical Society
Pat Miller, Illinois Heritage Association
Karla Nicholson, Kentucky Historical Society
Connie Rendfeld, Indiana Historical Society
Andy Verhoff, Ohio Historical Society
Tara White, AASLH
Janice Klein, Chair, SMAC-AAM

Roundtable 4: American Association of Museums Annual Meeting, May 2003

Ruth Meyers, FAMDA
Jeannette Thomas, IMLS
Lee and Elana Mitchell, Mitchell Nostalgia Museum (IL)
Janet MacGregor, North Museum of Natural History and Science (PA)
Helmi Merkley (CA)
Katie Anderson, Rome Area History Museum (GA)
Caroline Kennedy, LAM, West Baton Rouge Museum (LA)
Susanne Lambert, UMA, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art (UT)
Jane Burbank, Maturango Museum (CA)
Ann Sievers, St Joseph College Art Gallery (CT)
Janice Klein, Chair SMAC-AAM

Small Museums Planning Meeting
Conclusions and Next Steps
October 30, 2003

The group concluded that one need is to:
Form a Sustainable Coalition

The purpose of this Coalition is to support the projects described below. In order to get these projects started, we will apply for an IMLS National Leadership Project grant at the March 1, 2004 deadline. This grant application will request funding for three years of support for a coordinator to guide the projects described in the ensuing pages, as well as funds for implementation of aspects of these projects.

Task assigned to:

- Small Museum Association (which has agreed to be the agency submitting the grant) - led by Ann Korzeniewski
- The grant-writing team will consist of
 - Jack Nokes, Texas Association of Museums
 - Margo Carlock, Virginia Association of Museums
 - Terry Davis and Karla Nicholson of American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)
 - Mary Alexander, Museum Assistance Program of Maryland

Due Date: March 1, 2004

Also in support of the Coalition, another action step is to form a Communications Taskforce consisting of:

- Karla Nicholson, AASLH
 - Janice Klein, Small Museum Administrators Committee of the AAM (SMAC-AAM)
- To coordinate communications to the field regarding the work of the Coalition.

AAM will prepare a news release about the conclusions reached at the October 30th meeting, and send it to the Taskforce for approval and dissemination.

Projects to Help Small Museums

Project 1: Research

- a) Survey of Needs Surveys
Assigned to: AASLH (Terry Davis)
Due date: February 2004
Task: Survey of all the needs surveys that have been conducted by state museum associations (and others) about the needs of small museums, and compile the results
- b) Survey of Resources
Assigned to: E. Able office of the AAM
Due date: February 2004
Task: Compile a list of all the resources/services provided by the national, state, and local museum service associations and related organizations. (See also meeting summary of types of resources/services provided by museum associations).

[Note that these two research projects will precede application for any funding.]

The results of these surveys may be shared at the PLASMA meeting at the AAM Annual Meeting in May, 2004 (and PLASMA may be invited to join the Council of Regions, Council of Standing Professional Committees, and Council of Affiliates when they meet with the AAM Board).

The results may also be shared at the Field Services Alliance meeting in Nashville, March 7 – 9, 2004

Project 2: Clearinghouse of Information and Resources for Small Museums

This may be created in the form of an on-line resource indexing all the resources/services identified in the survey described above. It would help small museums find resources, services, funding sources, training, etc. AASLH has RFP responses already submitted for such a project, which can form a basis for budgeting and planning.

Details to be worked out after project coordinator is hired.

Project 3: National Meetings of Service Providers

This series of meetings will bring together service providers that help meet the needs of small museums. Purposes include:

- Providing structure and input for the steering committee of the Coalition
- Gathering more data on needs of small museums
- Getting input on proposed projects: whether they are feasible and meet the observed needs

- Increasing the capacity of service providers to deliver effective services to small museums.
- Find out what barriers service providers experience to serving the needs of small museums

Meetings may include:

Independent of a grant award:

- Meeting at the 2004 Small Museums Association conference in Ocean City, MD, in February 2004
- Meeting at the AAM Annual Meeting in New Orleans in May, 2004. This may be a joint meeting of the 3 AAM Councils, as well as members of PLASMA (state museum associations)
- "Listening sessions" at regional and state meetings (Fall 2004, and ongoing)

Possibly dependant on grant funding:

- A national meeting open to all national, regional, state, and local service providers

Various of these meetings will include representatives of small museums to provide input on the research, conclusions, and planned projects.

Assigned to:

- Jack Nokes, Texas Association of Museums
- Mary Alexander, Museum Assistance Program of Maryland
- Patricia Miller, Illinois Heritage Association
- Monta Lee Dakin, Mountain Plains Museum Association

Project 3: Advocacy Program

The advocacy program will help:

- educate foundations and government agencies about the needs of small museums
- make the case that more funds are needed that are specifically targeted to and accessible by small museums
- pursue creation of grant funding that is not project-based, and is non-competitive or easy to get, and are structured to encourage small museums to learn grant-writing skills

This program will develop advocacy strategies that are expected to play out over time, rather than yielding an immediate result. It may also become involved in marketing and public awareness campaigns.

Assigned to:

- Jim Vaughan, National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Terry Davis, American Association for State and Local History
- Teri Knoll, California Association of Museums
- Monta Lee Dakin, Mountain Plains Museum Association

Project 4: Training Module/Resource Pack for Meeting the Needs of Small Museums

This could be part of a larger package of what is provided to small museums, derived from material in the Clearinghouse, or designed to supplement it. Part of this project could be the development of "graduated standards" documents.

More detail to be developed after a project coordinator is hired.