



POINTS OF interSECTion

Interdisciplinary Collaboration
and the Site-Specific Exhibition

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*MFA Museum Exhibition
Planning and Design*

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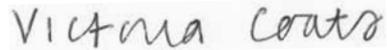
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the intersection of site-specificity, interdisciplinarity and collaboration in the exhibition creation process. It includes a set of adaptable guidelines for creating an interSECT (Site-specific Exhibitions Created Together) exhibition. Using this proposed exhibition framework, existing museums of different (and often disparate) disciplines can collaborate to create interdisciplinary exhibitions about and at sites within their surrounding communities. Harnessing the powers and benefits of these three central concepts, which are detailed extensively, museums will be able to enhance their capabilities and cultural networks while creating stronger connections between their content and visitors' lives. This new examination of places that are already part of the visitors' everyday lives can inspire them to think more deeply about and engage in their communities.



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TO THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of Jordan Klein and Renee Wasser find it satisfactory and recommend it to be accepted.

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THANK YOU

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guidance, kindness and enthusiasm.

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shaping our thinking.

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The idea of place has always been important to me. Every memory I have is inherently attached to a particular place, and the idea that one place can mean an infinite number of unique things to each person that has an interaction with it has been a source of endless fascination. My love for museums has seemed to me to be a natural extension of that, museums being a very particular type of place where a very particular type of memory making happens. With this thesis, I hope that we have been able to find a way for museums to harness that connection to place that I have felt in order to create flexible, creative and unique learning opportunities.

To JP & KM: Thank you for listening to me rant about things that probably made no sense, and making me feel like I was being social on Friday nights.

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My passion surrounding the concept of place has developed through my love of stories and my fascination with the many stories a place can hold. Each particular place can hold stories about an extremely wide range of complex relationships - relationships with time, people, the environment (both built and natural), culture, community and life. How these places can tell their stories is a question to which I hope to find many answers. Through this thesis, we have explored some ways that museums and visitors can help express these stories and create new ones, in hopes of fostering meaningful connections and experiences.

To (Girl) Jordan: With all of my heart, I thank you for being more than a wonderful collaborator, but also my very dear friend. You have been able to pick up where I leave off, and I truly could not have done this without you. Thank you so much for your hard work and for keeping me sane with your reminders to take a break for a concert every so often. I am so lucky to have found someone who is both so similar and so different, and in all of the right ways.

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1

INTRODUCTION

Museums have a long history of interpreting and exhibiting individual disciplines in separate institutions. While this focus enables museums to provide extensive and in-depth interpretation, the separation makes connections between fields of study harder to see and therefore, harder for visitors to understand how they relate to a larger picture.

Museum exhibitions should reflect this larger picture. Scholarly study in the field of Education has cited “enhanced creativity, original insights or unconventional thinking” as benefits of learning within an interdisciplinary curriculum (Ivanitskaya et al., 2002 p. 100; Field, Lee and Field, 1994). There are many ways that museums can harness these powers of interdisciplinary learning. By finding an effective method to do so, museums have an opportunity to create exhibitions that engage audiences in content that is relatable from a wide variety of perspectives and can be applied to their lives outside of the exhibition. This thesis suggests one strategy for accomplishing this interdisciplinarity, by addressing the question:

How can museums create interdisciplinary exhibitions?



NOMENCLATURE

COLLECTION OBJECTS

Artifacts, works of art and other precious objects that make up a museum's collection.

CORE CONCEPT

The larger organizing principle that an interSECT exhibition is developed around. The core concept is broad enough for all collaborating institutions to have a perspective on, but narrow enough to create a focused interpretation.

EXHIBITION AUDIENCE

The targeted group of people for whom the exhibition is developed and designed.

GUIDELINES

A set of suggestions describing aspects of and considerations during the exhibition creation process. Guidelines should be used as a starting point: adapted and evolved to suit each individual project.

INTERDISCIPLINARY

A style of examination that unifies more than one area of study. In the case of this thesis - exhibition work that explores a subject (the site) from the perspective of various museum disciplines.

MUSEUM AUDIENCE

The group of people that the museum reaches through its exhibitions and programming.

OBJECTS

Any physical elements that help tell the exhibition story. Objects can be pre-existing or created for the context of the exhibition - the museums use them as physical evidence of a concept within the exhibition.

PLACE

A particular and distinct location. In the context of this thesis, a specific place is the subject of the interSECT exhibitions.

SITE

A particular and distinct location. In the context of this thesis, the site is the subject and location of the interSECT exhibitions.

SITE-SPECIFIC

An exhibition or interpretation that is about and located within the site where it exists.

SITE USERS

The people that visit the site prior to and during interSECT exhibition, with the intention of using the site in some way. Existing site users are people for whom the site is part of their lives prior to the interSECT exhibition.

VISITORS

The people that visit and interact with an exhibition in some way.

2

FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS

This chapter provides our supporting academic research for the topics that have been identified as integral components of our thesis - interdisciplinarity, place and collaboration. Through a detailed culling of the literature within museums and other fields about each of these topics, we have identified the most important areas of each and how they come together. The through lines between these topics have strengthened our belief that harnessing the powers of all three areas provides untapped opportunities for museums to work together to serve their audiences in new ways through engaging exhibitions. Within each of these topics, examples and case studies that document their previous applications in the museum field have been analyzed to aid in the formation of our Vision For An interSECT Collaboration (Chapter 4).

“Experience has its geographical aspect, its artistic and its literary, its scientific and its historical sides. All studies arise from aspects of the one earth and the one life lived upon it.”

-John Dewey, The School and Society

INTERDISCIPLINARY INTERPRETATION

Interdisciplinarity is a form of examination that can be used to describe a type of research, knowledge or work. It is not a new concept, but is becoming more and more popular as we seek to understand and solve more complex questions and problems.

Defining interdisciplinary studies is important, according to Allen F. Repko, in order to solidify its contributions and create a common language for communication across disciplines. In his book Interdisciplinary Research: Theory and Process, he defines it as:

“a process of answering a question, solving a problem or addressing a topic that is too broad or complex to be dealt with adequately by a single discipline, and draws on the disciplines with the goal of integrating their insights to construct a more comprehensive understanding” (p. 16).

For the purposes of this thesis, interdisciplinarity will be defined as voices from different disciplines coming together to interpret one particular subject.

Why interdisciplinary?

Repko's definition includes a brief summary of some of the reasons to undertake interdisciplinary research. The National Academies outlines these reasons with more specificity and depth, identifying some of the “challenges driving interdisciplinary research” in the 2004 report “Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research.” They are as follows:

1. The Inherent Complexity of Nature and Society
2. The Drive to Explore Basic Research Problems at the Interfaces of Disciplines
3. The Need to Solve Societal Problems

For educational institutions, both formal and informal, that seek to foster innovative and significant thinking, these challenges are important to keep in mind.

Julie Thompson Klein also highlighted the importance of the interdisciplinary research practice in the article “Integrative Learning and Interdisciplinary Studies,” stating that in an interdisciplinary examination, “[a]pplication of knowledge takes precedence over acquisition and mastery of facts alone, activating a dynamic process of question posing, problem posing and solving, decision making, higher-order critical thinking, and reflexivity” (p. 10). Interdisciplinary studies focus more on crafting connections, allowing the students to construct their own knowledge and mental models, than on factual rote learning (Ivanitskaya, et. al. 99). By simply memorizing scientific formulas and historic dates, it is difficult to connect isolated academic information to real-life, when much of comprehension and knowledge comes from understanding how these facts relate to each other and to the individual.

This connection-forging is identified as one of the primary beneficial outcomes of interdisciplinary learning by several scholars. The 2002 article “Interdisciplinary Learning: Process and Outcomes” tracks a variety of scholars’ perspectives on

these benefits. Some of these outcomes include “flexible thinking,” as described by D.B. Ackerman (1989), the “capacity for proactive and autonomous thinking skills” and “ability to devise connections between seemingly dissimilar contexts,” as described by Ackerman and D.N Perkins (1989), and “enhanced creativity, original insights or unconventional thinking,” as described by Field, Lee and Field (1994) (Ivanitskaya, et. al. p. 100).

Other benefits discussed in this article are that of “deep learning” and critical thinking. “Deep learning” is when students internalize the information and create their own meaning; critical thinking is when students learn to evaluate information in terms of truth and quality (Ivanitskaya et. al, p. 101-2). The practice of interdisciplinary thinking and meaning-making can help answer the question many students ask: “When am I ever going to need this in real life?” Education and museum experiences strive to answer this question by providing ample opportunity for individual meaning-making for students and visitors, and interdisciplinary learning is a way to achieve this.

The incorporation of multiple disciplines also offers a variety of “points of entry” for students and visitors, allowing them the opportunity to find a way to connect with the information presented (Museums as Catalyst, p. 21). A student may have

a strong interest in and understanding of art but have a more difficult time grasping scientific content; by seeing how the two disciplines relate to each other, the student can learn the science in a way that makes it personal, important and comprehensible.

It is clear that interdisciplinarity is important and useful, and yet it is not as prevalent as it could be. Cliff Gabriel, deputy associate director of the White House Office of Science and Technology, questioned this issue in the “Facilitating Interdisciplinary Research” report: “There is this long-standing call for this type of research. The question we have to ask ourselves is, what is the problem? Why isn’t this proceeding at a more rapid rate?” The field of education has been incorporating interdisciplinarity more readily, but it is not as prevalent in museums. In order to incorporate interdisciplinary content into museum work, the field will need to look to academic “interdisciplinary studies” for implementation research.

Distinct Disciplines and Integration

In order to properly understand how to incorporate multiple disciplines, we must address disciplines themselves. According to Repko, disciplines are defined as “a particular branch of learning or body of knowledge” (p. 340). He identifies three categories of traditional disciplines - Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities. In addition, he acknowledges the

presence of two non-traditional disciplines - Fine/Performing Arts and Applied/Professional Fields. These categorizations are also useful in defining discipline museums, which will be discussed further.

The inclination to divide and compartmentalize scholarship into “silos” is one with a long history, resulting in a system of specialization and expertise. Specific and focused study of a discipline allows for a more detailed examination and understanding of that discipline, which interdisciplinarity does not afford. Although interdisciplinarian scholars believe interdisciplinarity is integral in education, they also recognize the importance of the individual discipline research. Repko explains this reciprocal relationship between disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity: “by building on the disciplines, interdisciplinarity can then feed back new ideas and questions to the disciplines” (p. 11). Without disciplines, there can be no interdisciplinarity. In the case of museums, this translates to an assertion that the discipline museums can maintain their unique expertise, while also incorporating interdisciplinary examination. This interdisciplinarity allows them to discover new lenses through which they can see their content.

The depth to which discipline perspectives should be integrated is a subject that is debated within the interdisciplinary research

and education fields. Repko defines interdisciplinary integration as “the cognitive process of critically evaluating disciplinary insights and creating common ground among them to construct a more comprehensive understanding. The understanding is the product or result of the integrative process” (p. 263). Many interdisciplinarians identify true integration as an integral, if not defining, component of interdisciplinary studies. They explain that interdisciplinarity is only achieved when the various disciplines are synthesized into something entirely different and separate. Integrationists, as they are called, claim that without this, there is confusion between competing theories. Repko states: “The interdisciplinary mind attempts to creatively fuse those insights together into a coherent whole” (p. 275). Interdisciplinary research, in the minds of integrationists, is the act of “fusing.”

However, some interdisciplinarians acknowledge that interdisciplinarity can exist in many different forms, with different depths of integration (Repko p. 264). This point of view recognizes interdisciplinarity as “any form of dialog or interaction between two or more disciplines” [(Moran, 2010, p. 14), cited by Repko p. 264]. These interdisciplinarians do not believe that integration should be a focus of this dialogue.

When the disciplines are presented “side by side” without any integration it is considered multidisciplinary (Repko, p. 16). In education, the distinction between multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary is an important one. Repko describes this spectrum using the analogy of fruit, where a bowl of fruit is multidisciplinary, and a smoothie, involving the extra step of blending, is interdisciplinarity (p. 17).

In their article about interdisciplinarity in higher education, Ivanitskaya, Clark, Montgomery and Primeau express that “Convergence of disciplines on one relevant theme promotes intellectual maturation through the analysis, comparison, and contrast of perspectives contributed by each discipline” (p. 101). They also explain that this type of study may challenge students’ ideas of “absolute knowledge” and “authority,” showing that there are different perspectives about one subject and that there is more analysis to be done about the subject (p. 107). If the disciplines have been integrated beyond individual recognition, it would be impossible to compare and contrast the perspectives in order to understand how they connect and what it is falling between the gaps.

Interdisciplinarity in University Museums

Interdisciplinarity, as it has been discussed, is prevalent in higher education. It is also prevalent in university museums.

This connection is a logical one, partially because universities are already considering interdisciplinary studies as a field, and also because the university setting provides the fertile ground and resources for this type of thinking and collaboration. As such, much of the literature about interdisciplinarity in museums is focused on the university museum.

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, NY is dedicated to this type of study. A fundamental part of its mission is to “foster dialogue between academic disciplines,” and this is seen in both its exhibition programs and its staffs’ ideologies.

John Weber, Dayton Director of The Tang has lectured and written about creating interdisciplinary exhibitions. He emphasized in a personal interview that an important benefit of interdisciplinary exhibitions is that “you can make more people care about what you care about [...] by showing how it is related to other parts of life” and through this “you can have more breadth, you can get more people excited, and then hopefully they spend more time [...] than they would have otherwise and then get more out of it.” He declares that it is a “way to make a much richer experience” and “to speak about more aspects of life.” These outcomes speak to the goals that university and non-university museums share, in terms of reaching

audiences. For more on the Tang’s Interdisciplinary exhibition programming, see page 26.

Interdisciplinarity in the museum field outside of the university setting is a topic with far less academic study. In the same conversation, Weber attributed the imbalance of this exploration to higher education’s lasting interest in interdisciplinarity, which he traced as far back as twenty to thirty years ago with “varying degrees of intensity and according to institutional culture.” This institutional culture likely dictates interdisciplinarity as a priority for the university museum. Outside the university construct, there is a “self-selection” process where people choose to work within their subject matter and are not often confronted with the need to work with other subject matters the way university museums are.

Interdisciplinarity in Museums and Exhibitions

Some non-university museums do include a sense of interdisciplinarity in their mission statements. A selection of these institutions include The Field Museum, The Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, The Anchorage Museum and The Madison Children’s Museum. However, little scholarship exists on the nature of and methods for this type of interdisciplinary work.

The Oakland Museum of Art and History is also one of these institutions, incorporating science, art and history in order to “celebrate the many facets of California.” These disparate disciplines, although located within one building, live in separate galleries and do not overlap within individual exhibitions. Appropriately, the institution specifically sites their approach to this type of work as “multi-disciplinary” and not interdisciplinary. They also identify this inclusion as “progressive,” as few museums are incorporating multiple disciplines within one institution. This integration, or lack thereof, should be considered within exhibitions, as it is in education.

In the previously cited interview, John Weber advocated for more integrative techniques in exhibitions, warning that “the danger [...] of interdisciplinary work is that you have to read too many little bits of text about too many little disparate objects and it doesn’t cohere in a very strong way.” He warned this can be tiring and confusing for visitors.

Coherence, however, does not necessarily mean integrated beyond autonomy. Deenah Loeb, Executive Director of the Philadelphia City Parks Association, expressed this converse opinion in a personal conversation. She pointed out that disciplines being presented as discrete points of view would



provide a different conversation than full integration and could be an interesting way to examine a subject. The book *Museum as Catalyst for Interdisciplinary Collaboration* also explores this point by advocating for “using juxtaposition,” explaining that including both similarities and differences can shift people “from the familiar to the unfamiliar” and create new understandings (p. 22).

This debate about integration is an important one, and each side should be considered during the exhibition development process. The spectrum of integration within exhibitions is something that must be addressed on a case-by-case basis, based on the needs of the project.

It is vital for museums to consider how to handle interdisciplinarity because, as Julie Klein says, “The answers they seek and the problems they will need to solve as workers, parents, and citizens are not ‘in the book.’ They will require integrative interdisciplinary thinking” (p. 10). In order for museums to serve as supplemental learning experiences, it is imperative that they provide an avenue to this new type of thinking, exploring exhibition content in interdisciplinary ways.



CASE STUDY: MOLECULES THAT MATTER

PROJECT: Molecules That Matter

DATES: September 8, 2007 - April 13, 2008

PARTICIPANTS:

The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College - Saratoga Springs, NY

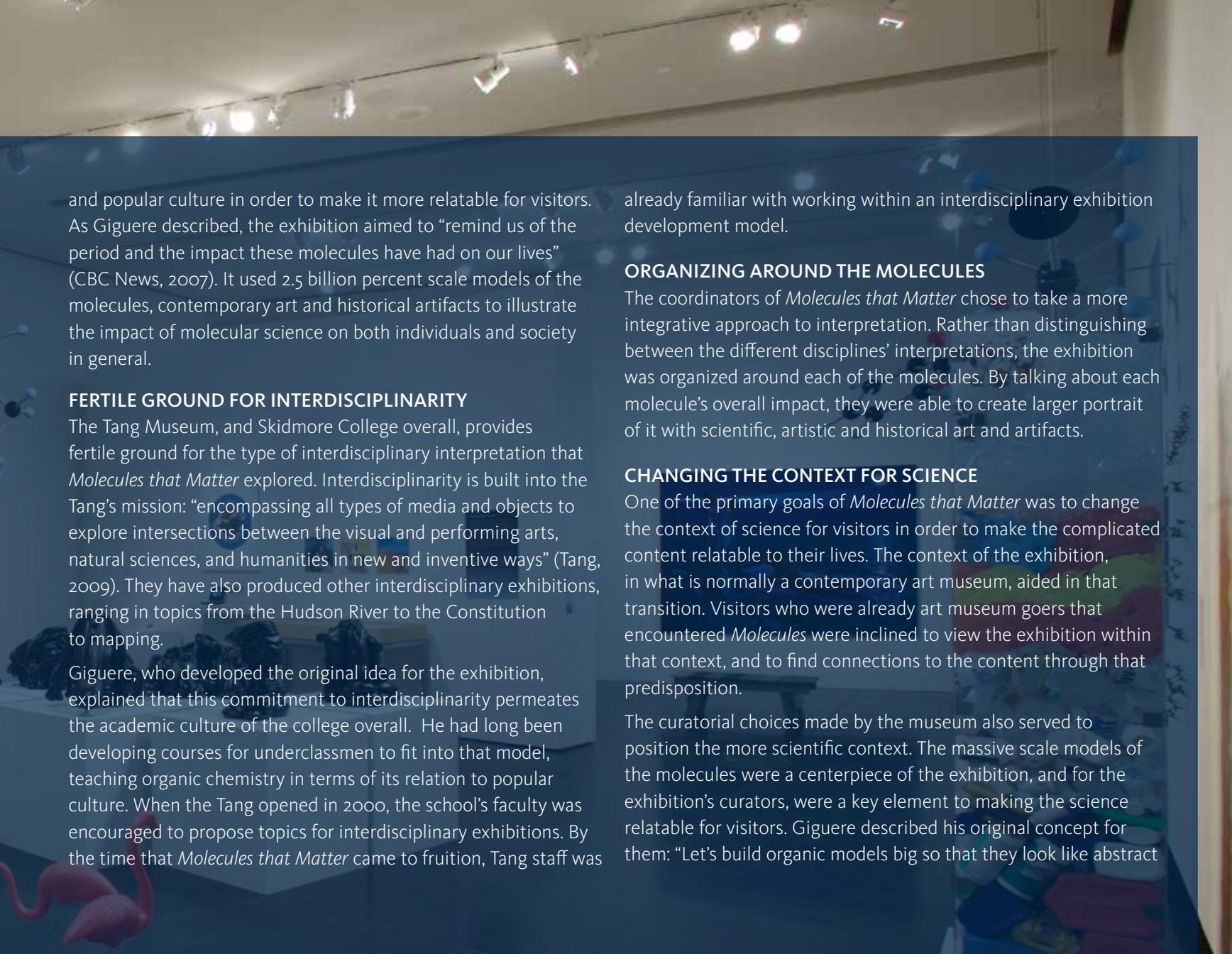
The Chemical Heritage Foundation - Philadelphia, PA

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Molecules that Matter was an interdisciplinary examination of the ten “most influential” molecules of the 20th century, originally hosted at the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College before traveling to several other university museums.

The Tang’s former director, John Weber, collaborated with Dr. Raymond J. Giguere (Professor of Chemistry at Skidmore) and staff from the Chemical Heritage Foundation to select the molecules (Aspirin, Isooctane, Penicillin, Polyethylene, Nylon, DNA, Progesterone, DDT, Prozac, and Buckminsterfullerene), each of which was representative of a different decade of the century.

Molecules that Matter explored the fundamentally scientific content of the molecules through the lenses of science, art



and popular culture in order to make it more relatable for visitors. As Giguere described, the exhibition aimed to “remind us of the period and the impact these molecules have had on our lives” (CBC News, 2007). It used 2.5 billion percent scale models of the molecules, contemporary art and historical artifacts to illustrate the impact of molecular science on both individuals and society in general.

FERTILE GROUND FOR INTERDISCIPLINARITY

The Tang Museum, and Skidmore College overall, provides fertile ground for the type of interdisciplinary interpretation that *Molecules that Matter* explored. Interdisciplinarity is built into the Tang’s mission: “encompassing all types of media and objects to explore intersections between the visual and performing arts, natural sciences, and humanities in new and inventive ways” (Tang, 2009). They have also produced other interdisciplinary exhibitions, ranging in topics from the Hudson River to the Constitution to mapping.

Giguere, who developed the original idea for the exhibition, explained that this commitment to interdisciplinarity permeates the academic culture of the college overall. He had long been developing courses for undergraduates to fit into that model, teaching organic chemistry in terms of its relation to popular culture. When the Tang opened in 2000, the school’s faculty was encouraged to propose topics for interdisciplinary exhibitions. By the time that *Molecules that Matter* came to fruition, Tang staff was

already familiar with working within an interdisciplinary exhibition development model.

ORGANIZING AROUND THE MOLECULES

The coordinators of *Molecules that Matter* chose to take a more integrative approach to interpretation. Rather than distinguishing between the different disciplines’ interpretations, the exhibition was organized around each of the molecules. By talking about each molecule’s overall impact, they were able to create larger portrait of it with scientific, artistic and historical art and artifacts.

CHANGING THE CONTEXT FOR SCIENCE

One of the primary goals of *Molecules that Matter* was to change the context of science for visitors in order to make the complicated content relatable to their lives. The context of the exhibition, in what is normally a contemporary art museum, aided in that transition. Visitors who were already art museum goers that encountered *Molecules* were inclined to view the exhibition within that context, and to find connections to the content through that predisposition.

The curatorial choices made by the museum also served to position the more scientific context. The massive scale models of the molecules were a centerpiece of the exhibition, and for the exhibition’s curators, were a key element to making the science relatable for visitors. Giguere described his original concept for them: “Let’s build organic models big so that they look like abstract

CASE STUDY:
MOLECULES
THAT MATTER



sculpture” (Giguere, 2007). This shift towards viewing what is normally intangible scientific content in a tangible and visual way was an effort to give the scientific content new life.

NAVIGATING INTERDISCIPLINARITY

When presenting content from many different disciplines together, there can be a fear that one or more of the fields of the study will fall through the cracks or not be fully expressed or interpreted. The Tang navigated this territory by creating a layered interpretation of the molecules in the exhibition. Interpretation in the exhibition itself was not extensive. Each molecule had one interpretive text panel that described its development and overall impact, as well as some smaller text panels for select objects.

In order to provide more detailed information, student interns created a series of podcasts and an in-depth web feature that went along with the exhibition. The podcasts included short recordings of personal stories that individuals had about each of the molecules, many of them other Skidmore professors. The web feature provided much deeper content about each of the molecules. For example, the Nylon section of the website alone included 10 sub-categories of interpretation, each accompanied by media. The two web forums allowed the *Molecules that Matter* team to expand beyond the perceived constrictions of trying to incorporate very different perspectives in one cohesive exhibition.

ORGANIZER PERSPECTIVES

While working in an interdisciplinary style was not an entirely new process for either Weber or Giguere, each were able to cite that their own perspectives about each other’s disciplines were shaped by their involvement in *Molecules that Matter*. Weber described that “the exhibition process made him see the world differently and understand the depth of engagement in science.” Giguere explained that difficulties early on needed to be, and eventually were, sorted out: “the effort to translate the information, make it understandable, was the real challenge; [but that he eventually saw] the relationship between art and science” (Hawkins, 28).

“celebrating a multidimensional sense of place encourages recognition of the uniqueness of each individual’s connections with the places that provide rich, meaningful context to our lives”
 -Nicole Ardoin, *Towards an Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place*

IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

By examining a landscape, we can gain insight into many different aspects of life. Consideration of place allows museums to harness the benefits of interdisciplinary learning. As Dolores Hayden expresses in her book [The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes As Public History](#), experiences are “conveyed by [a] building in a way that a text or a chart can never match” (p. 34).

Foundations of Place-based Education

The importance of place as an interpretive tool is evident in the increased interest in place-based learning over the last decade. According David Sobel in “Place-Based Education: Connecting Classrooms and Communities,”

“Place-based education is the process of using the local community and environment as a starting point to teach concepts in language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and other subjects across the curriculum. Emphasizing hands-on, real-world learning experiences, this approach to education increases academic achievement, helps students develop stronger ties to their communities, enhances students’ appreciation for the natural world, and creates a heightened commitment to serving as active, contributing citizens” (2005).

Sobel alludes to three important educational goals that can be accomplished by interpreting place: illustrating interdisciplinarity, creating new possibilities for learning and connecting to existing emotional experiences.

Interdisciplinarity of Place

Clifford E. Knapp advocates for the idea of place as an educational tool in his discussion of Aldo Leopold's philosophies in the article "The 'I-Thou' Relationship, Place-Based Education and Aldo Leopold." Knapp states that "[Leopold] believed in the power of learning about the land through concrete experiences by applying interdisciplinary content" (p. 284). There is an ability to examine different aspects of a site from various angles: place-based education should "integrate self, others, and place and [include] ecological, economic, multigenerational, and multicultural dimensions" (p. 280). Many sites have these layers of information and are ideal for this style of education. As today's education and museum systems often compartmentalize disciplines (as described in the previous section), it is often difficult to see the relationships between these disciplines. The implementation of place-based education is a way to highlight how disciplines are connected.

As Nicole M. Ardoin, describes in her paper "Toward an Interdisciplinary Understanding of Place: Lessons for

Environmental Education," "each field of study seeks to understand how people relate to places and what connection to place means" through their individual discipline lenses (p. 113). The complexity of places may be due to the fact that "the emotional bonds of people and places [that] arise from locales [...] are at once ecological, built, social, and symbolic environments" (Hummon p. 253). These emotional bonds provide ample space for interpretation and personal connection.

Ardoin identifies four "dimensions of sense of place:" the biophysical environment; the personal/psychological, the social and cultural, and the political economic. The "biophysical dimension" incorporates the natural and built environments, and addresses the "context" of the human and environment relationships. The "psychological dimension" encompasses "place identity," "place dependence" and "place attachment," which all center around how individuals connect to places. The "sociocultural dimension" addresses society and the representation of society's beliefs and priorities. The "political economic dimension" discusses the concept of place-making and community impact (p. 115-8).

Ardoin expresses that the problem with the interpretation of "place" by each of these categories is that by separating the

disciplines, people are prevented from forming a more holistic understanding of the places they frequent. This should be rectified by unifying the interpretations in order to foster more complex relationships between people and places.

Place as a Means for Learning

David Sobel was not the first education scholar to advocate for education through the landscape. In 1900, John Dewey wrote about the relationship between schools and experiences within the world in his book *The School and Society*: “I have attempted to indicate how the school may be connected with life so that the experience gained by the child in a familiar, commonplace way is carried over and made use of there, and what the child learns in the school is carried back and applied in everyday life, making the school an organic whole, instead of a composite of isolated parts” (p. 91). Dewey identifies the importance of learning through the world and landscape. He emphasizes that the ability to see and make connections between personal experiences and new knowledge can strengthen the learning experience.

Herminia Din and William B. Crow support this in their article “Blurred Boundaries: Museums Unfixed by Place and Time” by specifically addressing Place-Based Education practices. They suggest that “[r]ather than discussing national or global issues

in an abstract, textbook-centric way, [...] learners should learn about their own surroundings, their community members and their environments first-hand in order to have deep, personal experiences” (p. 46). By being exposed to information within the context of their own lives, people will be able to easily see and create the connections that make the information interesting, relevant and accessible.

Emotional Connections to Place

Places are important to interpret, not only for educational opportunities but also for personal and emotional reasons. In Knapp’s discussion of Aldo Leopold’s ideologies, he discusses the concept of “landfulness” and how it enables people to “relate more closely with their world” (Knapp, p. 278).

It is useful for museums to emphasize places because, as Nicole Ardoin suggests, their significance in our lives is often overlooked because of their prevalence (p. xii). How often do people consider how their lives have been shaped, both personally and globally, by their local subway stations? Rarely, even though that subway station has played a major role. In the article “Foundations of Place: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Place-Conscious Education,” David A. Gruenewald explains this: “As centers of experience, places can also be said to hold

our culture and even our identity” (p. 625). By examining these “centers of experience” we can learn more about ourselves.

Grunewald also discusses the role of places on a more personal level, explaining that “My experience of a site might be very different from yours and thus produce a significantly different place” (p. 622). Personal connection with a place can be very powerful and can vary person to person. Sharing these stories and experiences amongst the people that frequent these places enables them to connect to one another. Exposure to other’s experiences can change a person’s perception of a place, creating a sense of community.

An increased awareness and interest in local places fosters the development of stronger ties to both the geographic and social community. When people care about their local community, it can create more responsible and active citizens. Recognizing that the places around them are important encourages an effort to preserve and improve them.

Museums and Site-Specific Interpretation

The ample research conducted about the importance of place and place-based education expresses the usefulness of examining local sites in order to understand a broader context. In “John Dewey and Museum Education,” George Hein states: “the ‘experience’ in museums is valuable, but, by itself, it isn’t a

complete life-experience” (p. 418). Museums should, therefore interpret sites in order to connect the museum experiences to life experiences.

Some museums have implemented portions of this thinking, as described in “Learning in Your Own Backyard: Place-Based Education for Museums.” There are three institutions identified in the article, The Turtle Bay Exploration Park, Lower East Side Tenement Museum and Bay Area Discovery Museum that incorporate place into their scope in different ways: while the Turtle Bay Exploration Park has exhibitions that address and recreate the existing physical landscape in order to encourage deeper thinking by the visitors within the landscape, the Bay Area Discovery Museum has exhibitions that reference and call attention to the existing site on which the museum is located. The Tenement Museum goes one step further, interpreting the museum’s site itself as the exhibition content. It employs site-specificity and place-based education that “present[s] this story in such a way that the visitors would make connections between the past and the present” (Russell-Ciardi p. 51). These place-based exhibitions highlight that sites can and have been interpreted by museums in interesting and successful ways.

The New York Transit Museum’s centennial exhibition about Grand Central Terminal, *Grand By Design*, combined elements

of each of these projects. It was a site-specific exhibition that addressed the interdisciplinarity of a place and brought the museum experience to the place itself, as Dewey and Aldo implored. The exhibition celebrates an important moment for a landmark building by presenting its cultural significance. This prompts the consideration of what is important to examine and interpret - the extraordinary, the everyday or a combination of the two. Although *Grand By Design* is more aligned with the focus on the extraordinary, it is an excellent example of how places can be used to discuss cultural, historical, economic, scientific, architectural and political aspects of life. A closer examination of *Grand By Design's* relationship to Site Specific Exhibitions can be found on page 38.

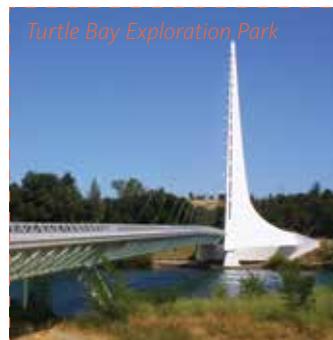
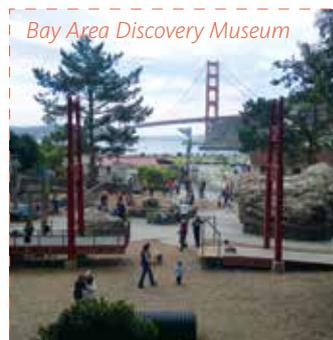
Threshold Fear

With exhibitions that are located in everyday places, interpretation is more accessible both physically and psychologically. In the book Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions, Elaine Heumann Gurian discusses the concept of “threshold fear,” identifying intimidating museum architecture, lack of “mixed-use” spaces and location as some reasons that visitors are reluctant to visit museums (p. 203). By incorporating exhibitions into places of everyday life where visitors already frequent, common

hesitations about visiting museums may be alleviated, allowing museums to reach audiences that do not regularly visit museums.

By changing the physical context of the exhibition, visitors will not need to specifically travel to or allot time for a visit to a museum for an exhibition - it will be readily available to be

incorporated as part of their day. This physical accessibility is an important factor for people that are not usually intentional museum-goers. Since visitors already know how to behave in these places, they will feel more comfortable navigating



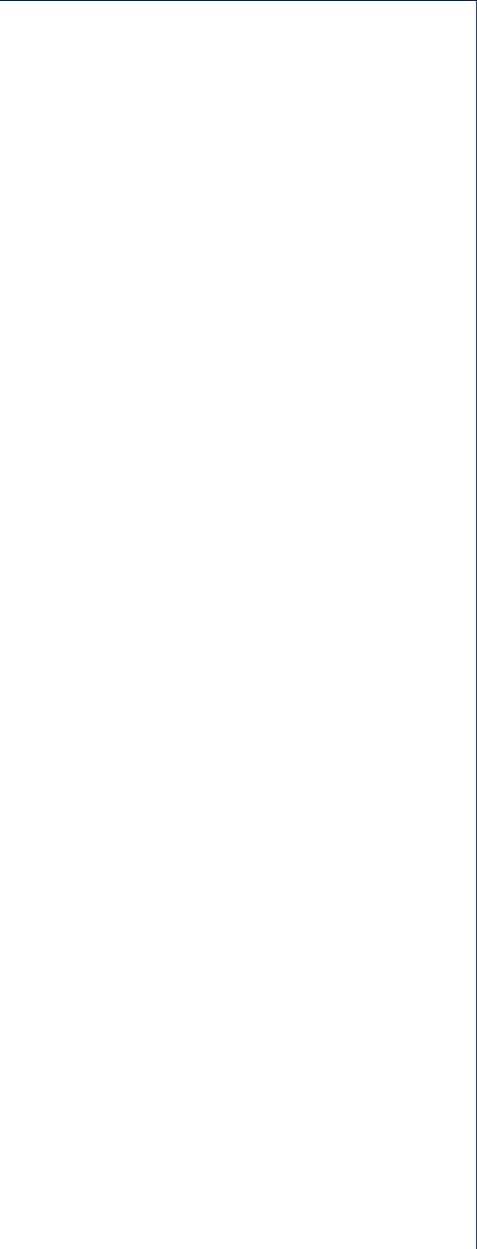
the experience. Lack of advance organizers and unfamiliarity with expected behavior have been attributed as reasons people do not like to visit museums in a variety of museum research, and removing the physical context of the museum may serve to mitigate some of these concerns. Finally, as discussed above, visitors will be comfortable with the content, as it is derived from a subject that is already a part of their lives and carries emotional significance.

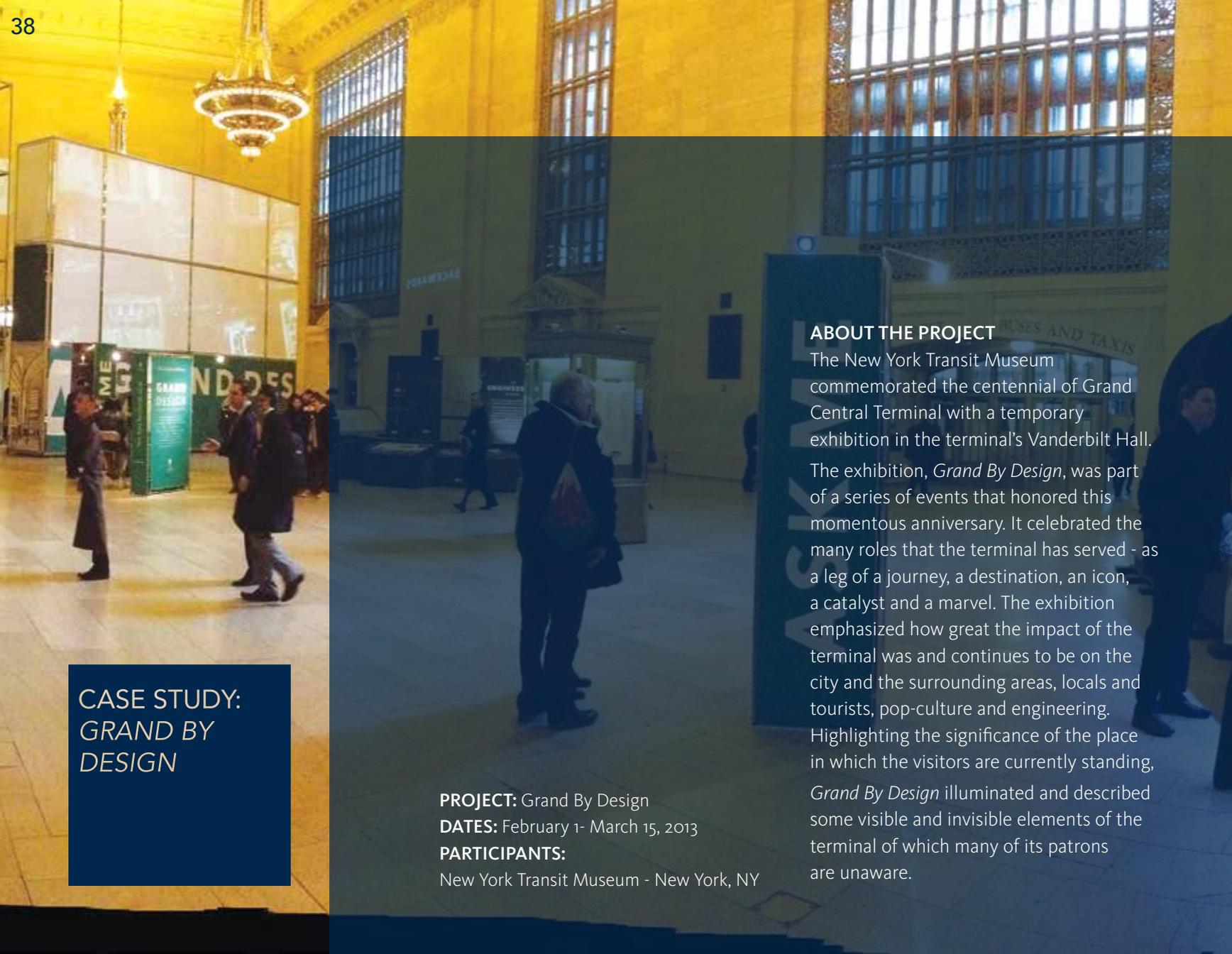
Considerations When Talking about Place

The story of a place is not always an easy story to tell. The interpretation may not be entirely positive and can be difficult to examine. Dolores Hayden describes this concept, expressing that “As a field of wild flowers becomes a shopping mall at the edge of a freeway, that paved-over meadow, restructured as freeway lanes, parking lots, and mall, must still be considered a place, if only to register the importance of loss and explain it has been damaged by careless development” (p. 18). Illustrating the site’s stories, both positive and negative, regardless of discomfort, is an important role for museums to play as muses of change. It can help teach of past mistakes to prevent recurrence and push us to move forward as a society.

Stakeholder’s existing relationships with sites are often deeply rooted, very personal and not always positive. The discrepancies

in perspectives in terms of what actually happened and what the implications were throughout a sites’ history can cause friction. However, these political issues are ingrained in the site and need to be addressed, albeit sensitively. Many museums have experience with presenting controversial subject matter with as little bias as possible in order to preserve their institutional trust and authority. This recognition of multiple perspectives in terms of “what happened” is a consideration that should not be neglected, as it is indicative of the site’s significance and of the complexity of places, in general. By creating exhibitions collaboratively, museums can tap into a wide variety of experiences handling these complicated subject matters. This thesis advocates for the incorporation of the many perspectives in order to more holistically comprehend our world.





CASE STUDY:
*GRAND BY
DESIGN*

PROJECT: Grand By Design

DATES: February 1- March 15, 2013

PARTICIPANTS:

New York Transit Museum - New York, NY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The New York Transit Museum commemorated the centennial of Grand Central Terminal with a temporary exhibition in the terminal's Vanderbilt Hall.

The exhibition, *Grand By Design*, was part of a series of events that honored this momentous anniversary. It celebrated the many roles that the terminal has served - as a leg of a journey, a destination, an icon, a catalyst and a marvel. The exhibition emphasized how great the impact of the terminal was and continues to be on the city and the surrounding areas, locals and tourists, pop-culture and engineering. Highlighting the significance of the place in which the visitors are currently standing, *Grand By Design* illuminated and described some visible and invisible elements of the terminal of which many of its patrons are unaware.

INTERPRETING A PLACE

Grand By Design was entirely about the place in which it is located - Grand Central Terminal. A tremendous number of people pass through the terminal every day. Although this landmark location is novel and exciting to many tourists, many locals do not think of it as more than their subway stop or a central meeting place. The in-depth interpretation enabled visitors to think more deeply about the complex nature of Grand Central Terminal and its widespread significance. Because of the diverse audience that frequents the terminal, the content needed to be presented in a way that would be understandable and relatable to a variety of people.

The exhibition addresses many different facets of this grand structure and system, creating an interdisciplinary story. This story is broken down into sections about the engineering involved in the terminal's planning and functioning, artistry involved in its design, economics involved in the development of midtown, history of long-distance and commuter train travel, and sociology involved in pop-culture references and third-space usages. Although these are not "traditional disciplines" as defined by Allen F. Repko, the story still incorporates many different fields of study. The ability of this exhibition to tell one unified story about these often disparate topics is derived from its focus around a place.

RESPONDING TO SITE'S PHYSICALITY

The exhibition was designed to respond and call attention to the impressive height of the hall and the higher design elements.

Therefore, it was important for the exhibition elements to have a strong vertical component. In order to accommodate this incredible height, the structures had to be properly mounted, but this mounting needed to be accomplished without interfering with the historic structure of the hall. Ensuring the safety of visitors and objects without damaging the existing site was a major consideration, and must be considered in any site-specific exhibition.

The historic nature of Grand Central Terminal also provided challenges about how to draw people's attentions to the building without affixing anything to it. Projections were used to place text and images onto the wall, encouraging visitors to focus on the building, as well as the exhibition within it. This strategic design allowed for highlighting of the site without any physical interference or permanent transformation.

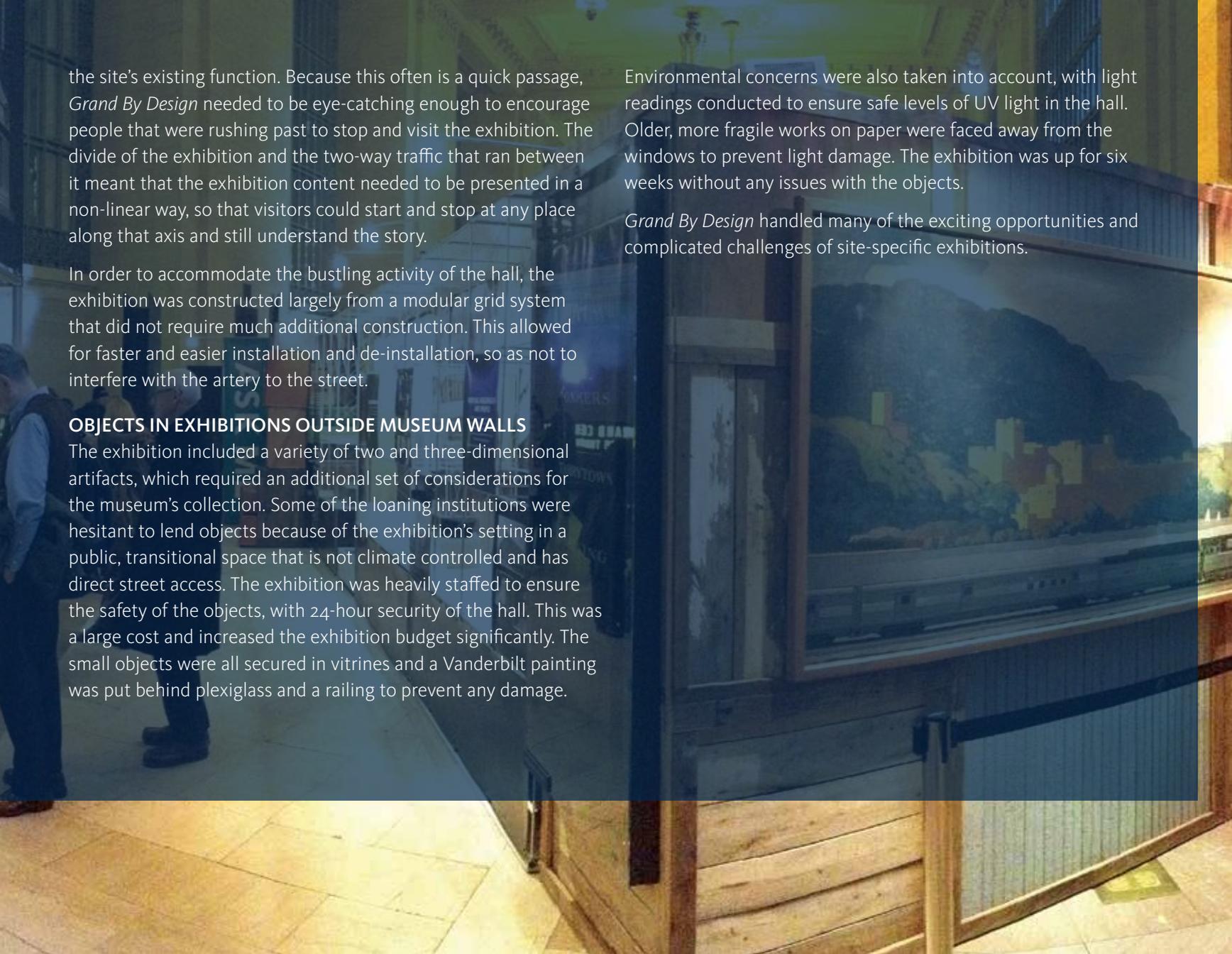
RESPONDING TO SITE'S FUNCTIONALITY

Vanderbilt Hall of Grand Central Terminal functions most often as a transitional or waiting space for the terminal. This was taken into consideration throughout the exhibition's development and design.

As a major connection between the terminal and 42nd Street, the hall provided some challenges in regards to exhibition flow. The path through the hall runs through the center, which required the exhibition to be cut in half, leaving a wide enough pathway for people to pass through easily and quickly, as that is an aspect of



CASE STUDY:
GRAND BY
DESIGN



the site's existing function. Because this often is a quick passage, *Grand By Design* needed to be eye-catching enough to encourage people that were rushing past to stop and visit the exhibition. The divide of the exhibition and the two-way traffic that ran between it meant that the exhibition content needed to be presented in a non-linear way, so that visitors could start and stop at any place along that axis and still understand the story.

In order to accommodate the bustling activity of the hall, the exhibition was constructed largely from a modular grid system that did not require much additional construction. This allowed for faster and easier installation and de-installation, so as not to interfere with the artery to the street.

OBJECTS IN EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE MUSEUM WALLS

The exhibition included a variety of two and three-dimensional artifacts, which required an additional set of considerations for the museum's collection. Some of the loaning institutions were hesitant to lend objects because of the exhibition's setting in a public, transitional space that is not climate controlled and has direct street access. The exhibition was heavily staffed to ensure the safety of the objects, with 24-hour security of the hall. This was a large cost and increased the exhibition budget significantly. The small objects were all secured in vitrines and a Vanderbilt painting was put behind plexiglass and a railing to prevent any damage.

Environmental concerns were also taken into account, with light readings conducted to ensure safe levels of UV light in the hall. Older, more fragile works on paper were faced away from the windows to prevent light damage. The exhibition was up for six weeks without any issues with the objects.

Grand By Design handled many of the exciting opportunities and complicated challenges of site-specific exhibitions.



By its very nature [...] interdisciplinary collaboration challenges one's sense of site, one's sense of object, and one's ideas about the purpose of art. It therefore tests the ability to let go of turf, to sublimate ego, to suspend judgement, and to listen well and deeply
 -Museums as Catalyst for Interdisciplinary Collaboration

COLLABORATION IN PRACTICE

Believing in collaboration is believing in the idea that minds and hands together are able to accomplish more than individuals separately. When people come together to contribute to solving a problem, they are more likely to be able – with their collective brainpower – to reach a solution. Collaboration between disciplines furthers this capability; when each collaborator has different expertise and comes from a different body of knowledge, their collaborative product has the opportunity to be even more complex.

Collaboration in and of itself is not a new idea. The breadth and depth of research that explore the benefits, possibilities, shortcomings and pitfalls of collaboration and collaborative processes is expansive. At a minimum, it can be said that collaboration has been explored within realms of arts, science and business. From a larger perspective, collaboration has been implemented in nearly every field: it is at the core of how we work together.

Collaboration has also been practiced and studied extensively within the context of the museum field, and the range of activities that could constitute a collaboration are expansive. From informal daily operations and interactions to formal exhibition project committees, museum professionals engage in collaboration at some level every day. Few tasks can be completed without a range of voices participating in the conversation in some capacity.

While the ability to successfully engage in collaborations that facilitate the daily operations of museums is of the utmost importance, it is not the primary concern here. Exhibition-based collaboration is an area rich for exploration and experimentation. Before we move forward, we must first define what, in this context, collaboration actually means.

What is Collaboration in the Museum Field?

How we define collaboration in the museum context is a thoroughly debated topic. The scale, formality and structure of work that happens between two or more parties can vary greatly - what do we call a collaboration and what do we not? If it is not collaboration, what is it?

Definitions of collaboration range from straightforward and simple to layered and complex, and many chose to define it by also contrasting it against other co-working activities. In the Spring 2012 issue of *Exhibitionist*, exhibition designer Matthew Isble succinctly and simply defines collaboration as: “To work jointly with others or together, especially in an intellectual endeavor” (p. 26).

While evaluating its Collaborative Consortium, The Pacific Science Center draws a distinction between cooperation and collaboration. Cooperation, by their definition, is much more informal, completed on an “as-needed basis [...] Resources such

as staff time, funds and capabilities are separate and rewards may not be reciprocal” (p. 5). However, collaboration is a much more involved undertaking:

“organizations not only reach some mutual agreement to work together [...] but they do so through a model of joint planning, implementation and evaluation between all involved parties. All parties share responsibility, authority and risk [...] Organizations share in the products and more is accomplished jointly than could have been accomplished alone” (Dierking, p. 6).

Others have broken the collaborative definition down even further, more intricately distinguishing the practice from other levels of cooperative work. In an excerpt from the book [All Together Now: Museums and Online Collaborative Learning](#) published in Museum News, William Crow and Herminia Din define four levels co-working, each with an increasing level of intensity. Starting with Competition, the scale also includes Consultation/Connection, Cooperation and Coordination, ending with the most intensive: Collaboration. They describe that collaboration is different from any of these other processes in that the product could not have been achieved by individual institutions and includes the perspectives of all involved.

These distinct definitions are important to keep in mind when choosing to engage in a collaborative process. It will help to

shape the scope of the project and the expectations of the participants.

This is also not to say that collaboration (especially in its most “involved” form) is a universal solution, a point that these authors include when defining the practice. Crow and Din explain, “it is important to examine whether collaboration is the mode in which you need to be working” (Crow and Din, p. 38). It may be possible to accomplish the task at hand in one of the other modes they have defined; another methodology may be more appropriate to solve the problem.

Benefits of Collaboration

When collaboration is determined to be the appropriate methodology for problem solving, it can result in a wealth of benefits. These benefits have been well documented; most writings about collaboration in museums begin by extolling the benefits of the collaborative process.

The Museum Loan Network summarizes these benefits as:

1. *Engaging new audiences*
2. *Refreshing and augmenting perspectives*
3. *Allowing new understanding and meaning to develop*
4. *Conceiving new ways of operating*
5. *Accomplishing what can not be done alone*
6. *Creating access to resources*
7. *Providing benefits to individuals* (p. 12-17)

During the conference *Yours Mine Ours: Leadership through Collaboration* held at the Smithsonian in 2010, Rob Stein emphasized that the biggest benefit of collaboration between museums was the uniting of institutions with common interests. He indicated that some of these interests might include: creating a culture shift, establishing unique synergies (similar to the idea of “accomplishing what can not be done alone”), creating acceptance of new ideas and learning new things about their institutional identity and processes.

These internal benefits are also included in the introduction to the collection of articles “The Leap: Acts of Creative Partnering” in *Museum News*, which describes that through collaboration museums can learn new things about themselves, both about their particular lens of viewing the world, as well as how others view them.

Challenges in Collaboration

For every writer that promotes the benefits of collaboration for a museum project, another (or often the same one) warns of the complexity and challenges that can be involved in a collaborative undertaking. Gary Burger of the James L. Knight Foundation’s Community Partners program expresses this duality in one breath: “To collaborate, all you have to do is agree on a mutual mission, and it’s all uphill from there” (Museum

as Catalyst, p. 57). Partners must be aware of these challenges, conscious of the process' pitfalls, before moving forward with a collaborative project.

While the following is not comprehensive, many have described these as some of the most prevalent issues that arise in the group dynamics of collaboration:

The Risk of Too Much Compromise

There is a distinct possibility with collaboration that when partners are overly focused on agreement and coalescence, the product can wind up being watered down. Surely consensus is an admirable goal, but not at the loss of provocation, ingenuity and innovation. Harold Skramstad, in his review of the book Exhibition Design, describes this phenomenon as “design by committee,” and advocates finding this balance between agitation and agreement. “At its very best the exhibition design process is what the exhibition designer Barbara Fahs Charles describes as a ‘good dance,’ with the various collaborators bound together by a shared understanding of the exhibition purpose and their individual roles in the process. At its worst the process can become design by committee, where disagreements are resolved by splitting the difference, the mortal enemy of coherence and integrity” (2007).

Group Dynamics, Friction And Conflict Resolution

Group conflict can be one of the biggest roadblocks to successful collaboration. Expecting people with vastly different backgrounds, personalities and working styles to come together seamlessly is a tall order. A collaborative team may be populated by more or less dominant personalities, and ensuring that each voice contributes their part to the extent that they feel comfortable is important.

Exhibitionist dedicated their entire Spring 2010 issue to the idea of friction in the exhibition development process. In it, The Henry Ford Museum's Donna Braden explains “people aren't always rational. Egos, personal agendas, and even language barriers often intrude. It sometimes seems nearly impossible to get people to agree on anything”. She goes on to explain that anticipating these conflicts and developing strategies in advance for dealing with them is the only way to even begin to address conflict resolution: “So my advice is—accept that friction might happen, even embrace this notion! But be prepared” (Braden, p. 6).

Loss Of Institutional Identity

It is important that each collaborative partner maintain their individuality when engaging in collaboration. It is all too possible for the participants (either individuals or institutions)

to lose sight or sacrifice the strength of what they already do when they become overly focused on the success of the collaboration. Also at the *Yours Mine Ours* Conference, John F. Helmer cautioned that museums interested in collaboration had to have an strong existing institutional structure and identity in order for them to be successful: “Often when engaged in collaboration, institutions have to answer questions about themselves that they’ve never had to before.” Participants in the *Museum as a Catalyst* focus groups framed this perspective in a more positive context: “Creating a culture that honors and nourishes collaboration, they pointed out, would ultimately honor and nourish the uniqueness of each museum and its mission” (Museums as Catalyst, p. 54).

Successful collaborations should not feel easy; they are innately challenging endeavors and should feel as such. However, the benefits can outweigh the challenges. As a participant in the *Museums as Catalyst* focus group noted “No one should kid themselves. Collaboration is not fluffy work. It is hard, frustrating, and unremittingly real, but it’s worthwhile and absolutely essential in this new age” (Museums as Catalyst, p. 47).

The Challenge of Forming “Best Practices”

Regardless of the subject or perspective that the literature comes from, there is a resounding message: the collaborative process must be dictated by the particulars of the collaborators and the end goal of the project - there is no prescription for success in collaboration.

The question then becomes, if there is no set way to engage in collaborations, where do we start? If we cannot (and surely we cannot) definitively say what will and will not work in a collaboration, where do we begin?

The idea of “reverse engineering” solutions to complex collaborative problems is one with a popular history in museums. This strategy of drawing from a combination of personal experiences and successful external examples in an effort to analyze successes and failures to garner a starting point for a new project is one that has had many advocates. During the *Yours Mine Ours* Conference, John F. Helmer suggested this outlook specifically. He describes that organizations/partners should look at products similar to what they wish to accomplish and adapt the process that those particular parties used to reach their product.

This is, however, a different methodology from what has come to be known as “Best Practices,” which arose in 1990s within

the field of management as a way “to improve the working of a social institution, typically a business or a non-profit organization, by adopting certain principles of the working of another institution that appears more successful” (Vesely, p. 103). It is a term that caught on quickly and is now used in a variety of contexts (including museums) in an attempt to determine what the most effective way of performing a task with many variables is.

Critics of Best Practices development describe that it has several shortcomings. Most importantly, while they acknowledge that the effort of determining an effective way of performing a task (in this case, collaboration) is useful, the term “best” is misleading. “We are rarely certain that we have really identified the best exemplar of all options which might solve the problem we are facing or the goal we are trying to fulfill” (Bardach, p. 71).

While it is immeasurably useful to look towards past examples for guidance and launch points, we must keep in mind that no set of guidelines – the ones that follow in this text included – are ever going to be the best way of approaching collaboration. They must be considered as starting point for the individual project, adapted and modified as necessary to meet the needs of the collaborative partners and the goals of the project.

State of Museum Collaboration

A 1998 report for the Museums and Galleries Commission conducted by Arnold-Forester and Davies examined the state of collaboration between museums in the United Kingdom at that time. Their study showed that a very high percentage of museum professionals saw collaboration as advantageous (“now, we all feel threatened, so collaboration is much more appealing! There’s a positive expectation from most public sector organizations in respect to networking: it’s the way to make limited resources have more impact and to win friends and influence people. In fact it’s trendy!” (Arnold-Forester and Davies, p. 10)). However, very few indicated that collaboration was an “identified strategy” in their museum’s collections management or forward (strategic) plans.

The authors found that when asking participants about their thoughts on inter-museum collaborations, “many respondents expressed surprise that it might be considered a new, or even questionable form of activity” (Arnold-Forester and Davies, p. 75). Why is it then, that the pages of *Museum News*, *Exhibitionist*, and other well noted museum publications are today ripe with articles extolling the benefits and proclaiming the underutilization of collaborative practice (Isble 2010, Pearson 2012).

Conversations with museum professionals today garner similar responses, indicating that collaborations between museums are beneficial, and that they are “beginning to happen” (Quinn, 2013). For how much longer will collaboration be an emerging trend? The resounding sentiment seems to be that collaboration can, should and will becoming an enduring method of operation.

Types of Museum Collaborations

Museums have begun to learn that looking outside of their own teams for collaborative partners is undoubtedly a useful undertaking. As has been addressed, these collaborations can be classified in many ways, scale and formality being two of them. Many museums’ collaborative efforts fall into categories based on who the collaborative partners are. This is a useful way to distinguish the different types of collaborations that are already happening. Collaborations between museums and non-museums, collaborations between museums with similar disciplines and collaborations between museums with different discipline focuses each involve different approaches, and have garnered different types of projects:

Collaborations Between Museums And Non-Museums – Cultural Connections

Cultural Connections was a collaborative program-development project that involved more than twenty Chicago-based ethnic museums and cultural centers, including the Field Museum. The collaboration developed six public education program events per year for the ten years that it lasted. Each of these events involved comparisons between two cultures, and all six events were organized around an annual theme. These collaborations emphasized the differences between cultures of Chicago and highlighted the roles of the partner institutions within the community.

Collaborations Between Museums with Similar Disciplines – TEAMS (Traveling Exhibits At Museums of Science) Collaborative

The TEAMS Collaborative was a 10-year project that included a group of small science museums. Together, they developed a series of 1,500 square-foot exhibitions about topics related to math or science that traveled between the institutions. A detailed examination of the collaborative process of TEAMS can be found on page 52.

Collaborations Between Museums with Different Discipline

Focuses – Molecules that Matter

Molecules that Matter was an exhibition created by The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, in partnership with The Chemical Heritage Foundation, located in Philadelphia. *Molecules that Matter* took place from September 8, 2007 - April 13, 2008 at Skidmore, before traveling to several other University Museums. The exhibition was an interdisciplinary examination of the ten “most influential” molecules of the 20th century. The Tang and The Chemical Heritage Foundation were able to merge these very different disciplines into one cohesive exhibition narrative. These interdisciplinary strategies are described in detail in the case study of *Molecules that Matter*, on page 26.

There is a wide range of examples of each of these types of collaborations, including different types of partners and projects. It appears that the category that lags behind is collaborations between museums with different discipline focuses. These appear to be less prevalent and more challenging to find a wealth of examples of or literature about. While this is logical – museums that have different discipline focuses are less likely to have a common language to use as a starting point – it is an area rich with possibility, creating new avenues for communication and new possibilities for exhibition work.

**CASE STUDY:
TEAMS
COLLABORATIVE**

PROJECT: TEAMS (Traveling Exhibitions At Museums of Science) Collaborative

DATES: 1994-2005

PARTICIPANTS:

Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum -

Ann Arbor, MI

Catawba Science Center - Hickory, NC

Discovery Center Museum - Rockford, IL

Family Museum of Arts and Science -

Bettendorf, IA

Health Adventure - Asheville, NC

Montshire Museum of Science - Norwich, VT

Rochester Museum and Science Center -

Rochester, NY

Sciencenter - Ithaca, NY

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The TEAMS (Traveling Exhibitions At Museums of Science) Collaborative originally came out of a casual dinner conversation between two small science museum directors at a 1994 National Science Foundation grant-writing workshop. They discussed the disadvantages they found themselves at when it came to applying for exhibition funding as small museums. Through that conversation and many more, they generated the idea for the TEAMS Collaborative, which lasted over ten years (in three phases: TEAMS 1, TEAMS 2, TEAMS 3) and eventually included eight museums.

Together, they developed a series of 1,500 square-foot exhibitions about topics related to math or science that traveled to all of the institutions, as well as other museums nationally. The collaborative's goals were to:

1. Provide high-quality science exhibits for small museums.
2. Build institutional capacity.
3. Provide opportunities for staff development” (p. 7).

The responsibilities for exhibition development, educational programming and expenses were shared between the partner institutions. At the end of the project, the collaborative published a comprehensive monograph documenting and evaluating the process.

POSITIONING THE COLLABORATIVE AROUND FUNDING

The TEAMS project came out of and was sustained by funding opportunities. The National Science Foundation provided three four-year-long rounds of funding that were the catalyst for the project, and re-application for the second and third year grants necessitated that the collaborative show evolution and growth. While the collaborative evolved naturally based on the participants feedback, the participants acknowledged that their continued growth and experimentation was also in part driven by the need to secure continued funding.

TEAMS 1 was positioned around the idea of small museum collaboration and traveling exhibitions (which was appealing to NSF at the time), however the collaborative knew that for the re-application process they would need to show advanced thinking. They did this in two ways. First, three new museums were brought

in to be a part of a mentoring program. They were each paired with an institution that had participated in TEAMS 1 and was within a two hour driving radius in order to “increas[e] the capacity of the new partners to develop interactive exhibitions” (p. 7). Research also became a much bigger part of TEAMS 2, and was focused on incorporating Universal Design into all of the exhibitions, as well as a series of staff workshops that were held at the participating museums. TEAMS 3 also focused on research, using the collaborative as an opportunity to conduct research on how to improve child-to-adult conversations at science exhibits.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND LEADERSHIP

Collaborative members cited a “shared vision, distributed leadership” organizational model as a major reason for the collaborative success of the TEAMS projects. Separation of powers and responsibilities was key in avoiding conflict of interest and ensuring that all TEAMS members stayed energized about the project. Each round of TEAMS had a collaborative chair (serving as a project facilitator) and an administrative/financial manager. Each of these participants was from a different institution, in order to keep power equally distributed. Additionally, each museum took on a different part of the collaboration (tour planning, promotional materials, etc.) as their own responsibility. They found that this delegation of responsibilities ensured equal participation and engagement from all of the collaborative members.

CASE STUDY:
TEAMS
COLLABORATIVE

TEAMS also chose to include an external evaluator, Inverness Research Associates, from the onset of the collaborative. They were involved in evaluation for both the exhibition projects and the collaborative itself, which saw Inverness as a “critical friend who could play the dual role of reminding each member museum of schedule and quality issues needing attention and helping to recognize and celebrate successes” (p. 5). Inverness was also key as an advocate for the exhibition audience. Collaborators found that when they got caught up in the specifics of the collaborative relationship, the evaluator could pull them back to the visitors, which was the ultimate concern of the collaborative.

COLLABORATIVE DYNAMICS

At the end of the TEAMS collaborative, directors of the participating museums sat down to conduct a roundtable discussion with Inverness representatives. They spoke about length about what choices had been made and conditions reached over the collaborative's ten years that they felt had created the healthiest collaborative relationships. Some of the most significant were:

- “list[ing], discuss[ing], and agree[ing] on the principles that will guide the work of the collaborative” (p. 8).
- “select[ing] partners who: 1) have a similar vision, and 2) are eager to share and help meet shared goals” (p. 8).

- Agreeing on a shared language.
- The benefits of long term collaborations where relationships and trust have a chance to form.
- Thinking about how the individual museums can maintain their autonomy while working collaboratively.
- Effective, transparent, reliable communication systems that work for all collaborative members.

Through the many years of the program and a system of trial and error, the TEAMS Collaborative found a model that worked to help facilitate rich science exhibits and a culture of collaboration.

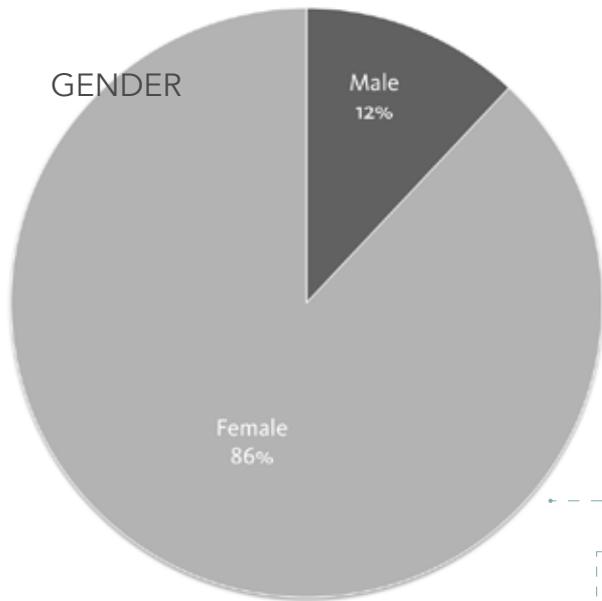
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RESEARCH &
EVALUATION

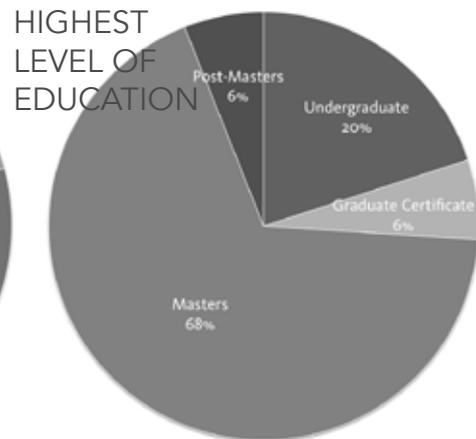
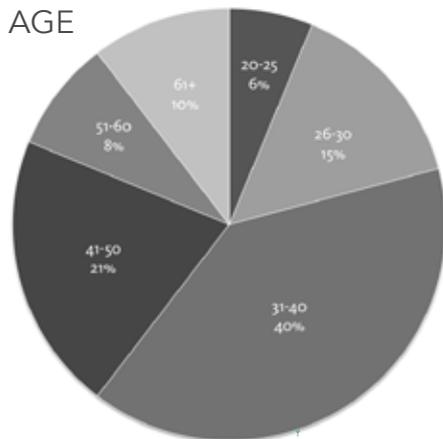
A baseline survey was conducted in order to evaluate several important factors: museum professionals' past experiences with collaboration, their interest in future collaboration, and their thoughts on what conditions and tools are most necessary to create a successful collaboration. The aim of these survey questions was to gain a wide perspective on some of the practical aspects of collaboration that would be necessary to address in the interSECT guidelines for collaboration.

The survey was administered from February 14 to March 8, 2013 through surveymonkey.com, an online tool for creating, conducting and analyzing survey data. The survey was distributed to museum professionals through several online forums, including Museum-L, The National Association for Museum Exhibition, and several groups on the professional networking site LinkedIn. Additionally, several specific museum professionals were asked to complete the survey. The goal for this was that by completing this survey, these specific professionals would have a framework to later review and comment on the first iteration of the interSECT guidelines. This strategy proved to be slightly unreliable, with only one of the targeted professionals completing both the front end survey and the more in-depth review of the guidelines.

51 professionals completed the full survey. The following is an analysis of the results of each survey question, with more in-depth analysis of how specific questions relate to each other in ways that have shaped the interSECT guidelines.

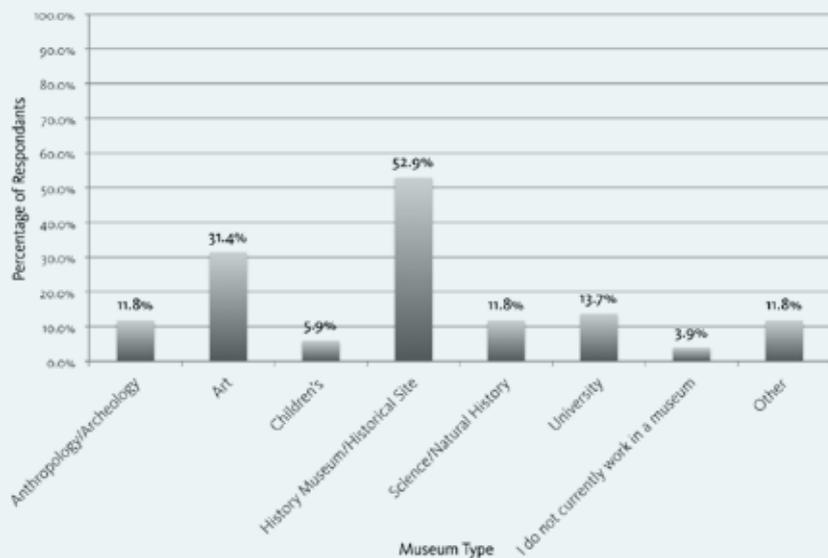


Survey respondents were overwhelmingly female. Of the 51 respondents, 86% were female, while only 12% were male.



The majority (68%) of respondents had received a masters degree. A significant portion (20%) had completed their undergraduate degrees. No survey respondents reported only having completed their high school education.

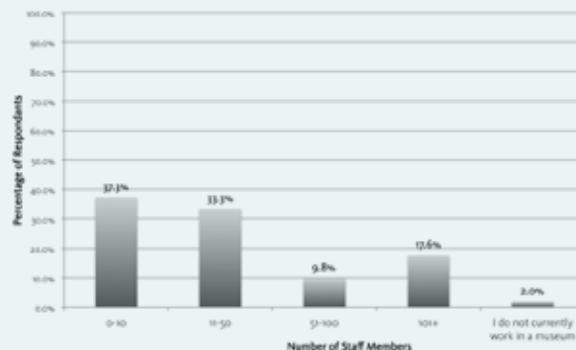
Most respondents were in the 31-40 age range. The age ranges on either side of this (26-30 and 41-50) were the next most common responses. These age distributions correlate well with how long most respondents have been working in the museum field (page 61).



QUESTION 1: WHAT TYPE(S) OF MUSEUM DO YOU WORK IN? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Over half of respondents identified themselves as employees of a history museum or historical site, while 31.4% said that they work at an art museum. Some of the museums identified in “Other” included: Archives, Cultural Centers, and Zoos/Aquariums. The percentage total adds up to over 100% because respondents were allowed to select multiple types of museums.

MUSEUM EXPERIENCE

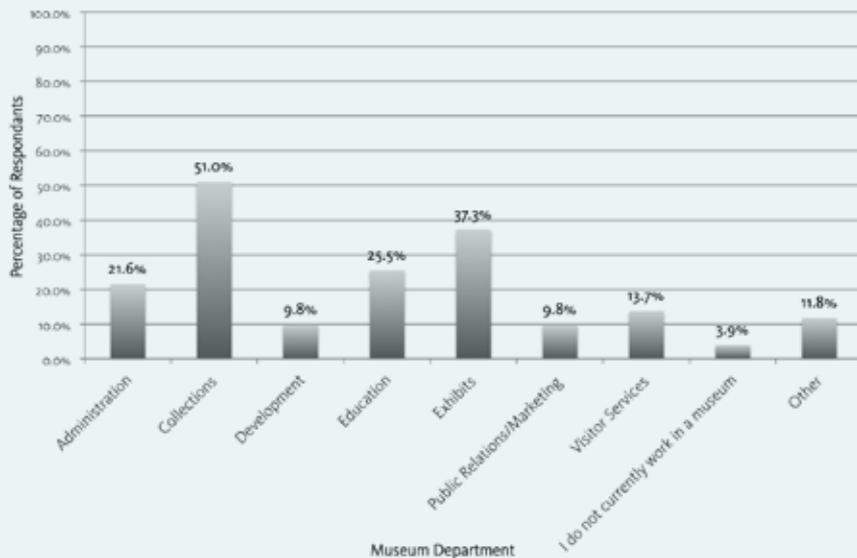


QUESTION 3: WHICH DEPARTMENT(S) OF THE MUSEUM DO YOU WORK IN? (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)

Respondents were asked what departments of the museum they worked in. Over half (51%) worked in collections. Exhibits (37.3%) was the second most prevalent. Respondents were allowed to select more than one category, making the total more than 100%. Most respondents picked more than one department, which likely corresponds to the high number of small and medium sized institutions, where staff are expected to perform multiple job functions.

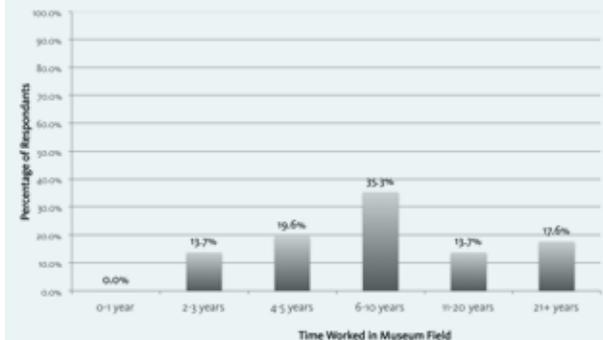
QUESTION 2: HOW MANY FULL-TIME STAFF MEMBERS DOES YOUR MUSEUM CURRENTLY EMPLOY?

The majority of respondents currently work in either small (37.3%) or medium (33.3%) museums. This is to be expected as this is also the majority of museums that exist. 2% of respondents currently do no work in a museum, an option that was provided for professionals that were retired or in between jobs.



QUESTION 4: HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN THE MUSEUM FIELD?

The highest percentage of respondents (35.3%) have worked in the museum field for 6-10 years. After that, there was relatively equal distribution between all other time frames. Zero respondents reported having worked in the museum field for less than a year. This indicates that all of the respondents have worked long enough to have experienced the museum field in substantive ways.

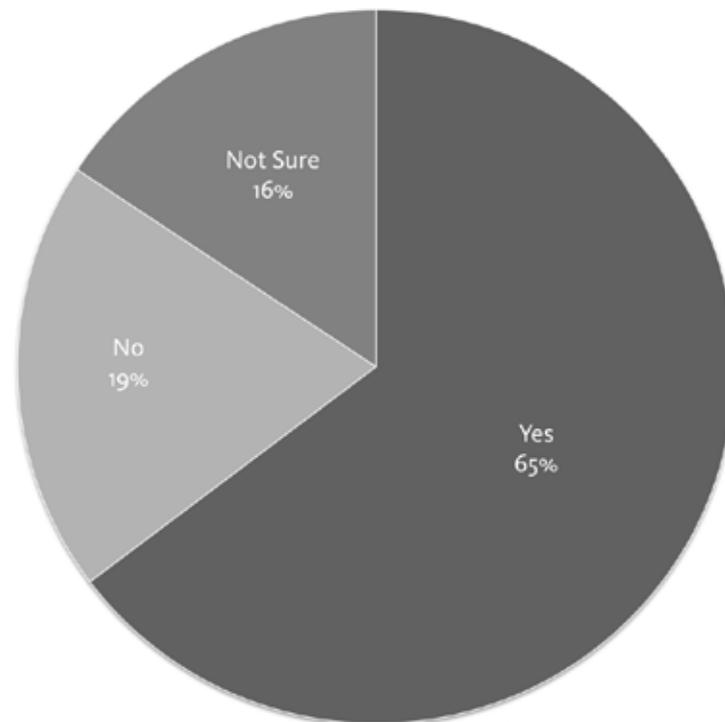


PAST EXPERIENCE WITH COLLABORATION

QUESTION 5: HAS YOUR INSTITUTION EVER COLLABORATED WITH ANOTHER MUSEUM ON AN EXHIBITION PROJECT?

The majority of respondents (65%) cited that their institution had

collaborated with another museum on an exhibition project in the past. This response indicates that collaboration in the museum field is already happening; reiterating that collaboration in and of itself is not new, and is a standard way of practice for many museums professionals. Participants that had collaborated in the past were asked to describe the projects they had collaborated on. As demonstrated below, these products fell into a range of categories and included a variety of levels of collaboration.



CAN YOU PLEASE DESCRIBE THE PROJECT...

“Exhibitions of work drawn from each museum in a ‘consortium’ that then traveled to those museums.”

“Usually just borrow items from them for special exhibits. Also have a few items on long-term loan from one.”

“Level of collaboration ranges from long-term loans to selected partners for traveling exhibitions and development of special permanent exhibitions at other institutions.”

“We have done several collaborative exhibits with other local and regional museums, with each of the museums mounting its own exhibit on the same topic.”

QUESTION 6: IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO QUESTION 5:
WOULD YOU CONSIDER ANY OF THESE COLLABORATIONS
SUCCESSFUL? WHY OR WHY NOT?

Of the 28 respondents of this question, 71% said that the collaboration was successful in some way. Many of them cite specific benefits as support of this claim. Only one respondent explicitly described that the collaboration was not successful and the others did not express a definitive yes or no. This supports the idea that successful collaboration, though hard, is not impossible and often worth the challenge.

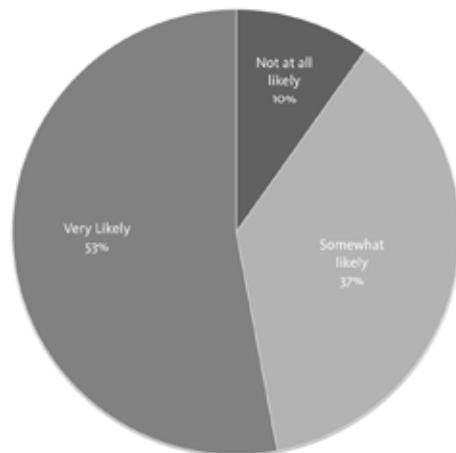
“Yes[...] it expanded the audience and outreach potential for each institution. [...] Also took advantage of shared resources (from money and space to expertise and creative problem solving).”

“Yes to all! Great audience development, interesting multi-disciplinary exploration of a topic, good way to share costs, staff, and other resources.”

“It was one of the more complicated exhibits I've worked on, but it came together very well at the end and the exhibit was definitely a success.”

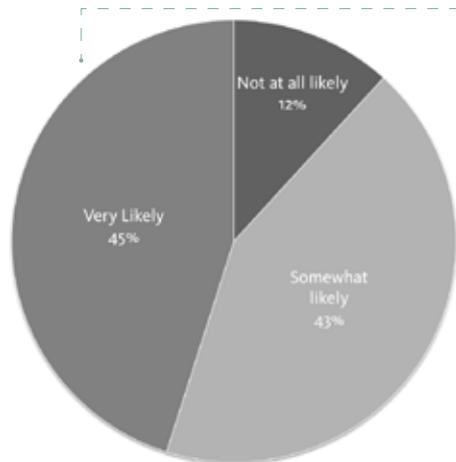
“Before my tenure. The consensus is that it was not a success.”

LIKELIHOOD TO COLLABORATE



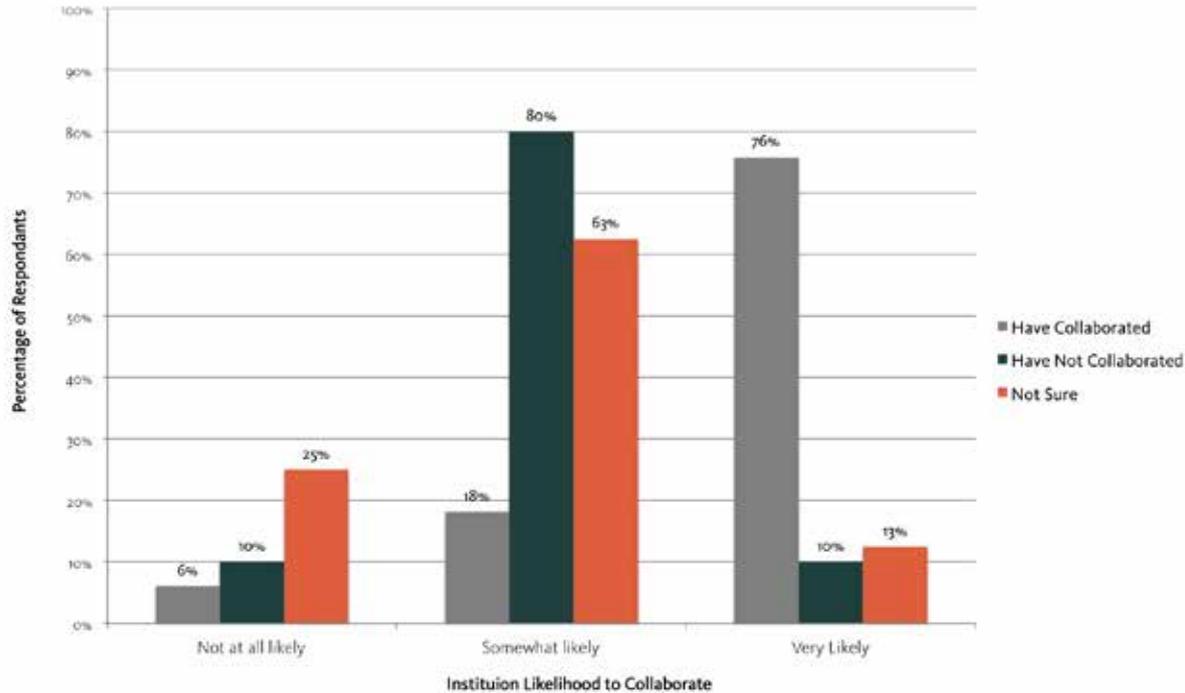
QUESTION 7: HOW LIKELY WOULD YOUR *INSTITUTION* BE TO COLLABORATE WITH ANOTHER *MUSEUM* ON AN EXHIBITION PROJECT IN THE FUTURE?

A vast majority of respondents (90%) said that there was some possibility that their institution would collaborate with another museum in the future, with 53% saying it was very likely and 37% saying it was somewhat likely. Only 10% of the respondents felt that their institution would not be willing to collaborate with another museum in the future. The opportunity for inter-museum collaboration has not been entirely ruled out by many institutions and is a practice that can be explored. The lasting interest in collaboration of museums that have collaborated in the past is examined on the following page.



QUESTION 8: HOW LIKELY WOULD YOUR *INSTITUTION* BE TO COLLABORATE WITH ANOTHER *NON-MUSEUM* INSTITUTION (NON-PROFIT, COMMUNITY GROUP, ETC.) ON AN EXHIBITION PROJECT IN THE FUTURE?

Some respondents identified that their institution would be less likely to collaborate with a non-museum collaborator, with 45% being very likely, 43% being somewhat likely and 12% being not at all likely. Although the differences are not drastic, it is worth noting that there is a difference between the two. This point will be further illustrated in a cross-tabulation on page 66.

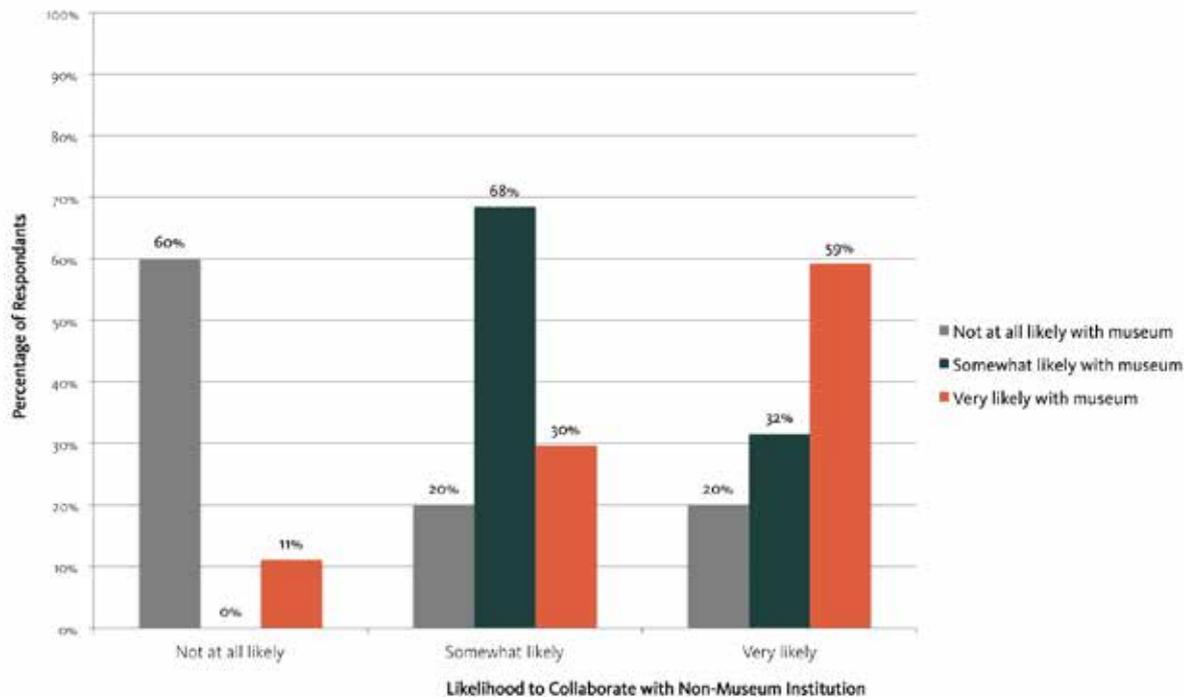


76% of respondents that have collaborated are very likely to collaborate again in the future. This means that a majority of the people that have collaborated have been able to recognize the benefits and feel that is a worthwhile effort. 80%

of the respondents that haven't collaborated are somewhat likely to in the future, showing that many institutions have not completely ruled out the option and may be willing to participate in a collaboration if approached with the right one.

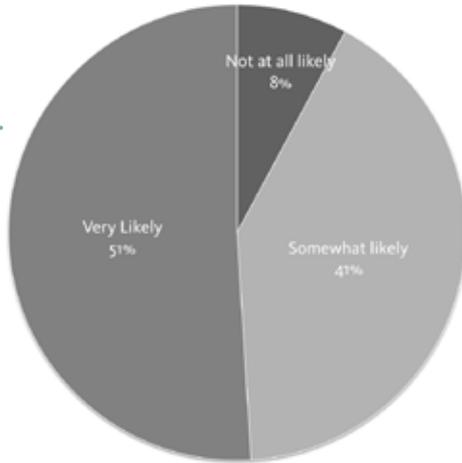
PAST EXPERIENCE
WITH
COLLABORATION
+
LIKELIHOOD TO
COLLABORATE

LIKELIHOOD TO COLLABORATE WITH NON-MUSEUM + LIKELIHOOD TO COLLABORATE WITH MUSEUM



A majority of the institutions that would be likely to collaborate with museums would also be likely to collaborate with non-museums (59%). Similarly, a majority of the institutions that would not be likely to collaborate with museums would also not

be likely to collaborate with non-museums (60%). This means that approximately 40% of each group felt differently about non-museum collaborations than inter-museum collaborations.



QUESTION 9: HOW LIKELY WOULD YOU PERSONALLY BE TO COLLABORATE WITH STAFF FROM ANOTHER INSTITUTION ON AN EXHIBITION PROJECT?

The distribution of likelihood to collaborate for institutions and individuals is more similar than expected. Approximately half (51%) of the respondents expressed that they would be very likely to collaborate with staff from another institution, followed closely by 41% of the respondents that expressed that they would be somewhat likely. Only 8% of the respondents said that they would not be likely to at all. The comparison between institutional and personal interests in inter-institutional collaboration will be addressed on the following page.

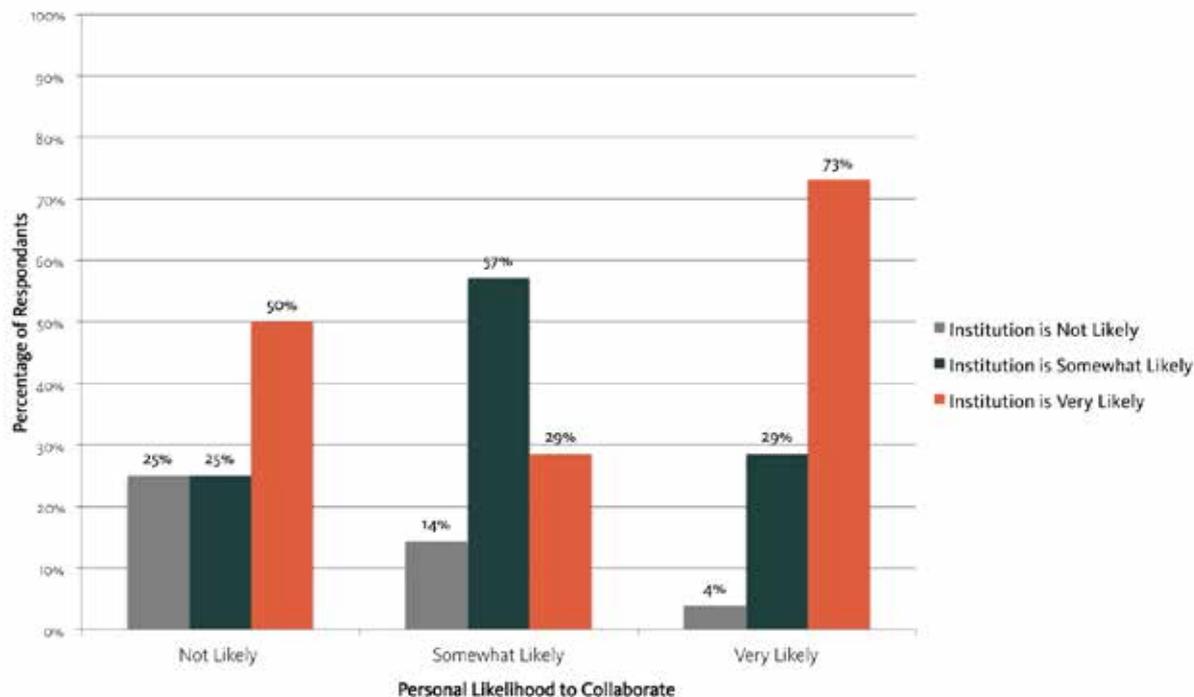
WHY?

“Collaboration & partnerships are the only way to survive in this market. We are a small organization & don’t have the resources to do much, so much is only possible through collaboration and communication.”

“It’s hard to say whether or not my institution will collaborate on another exhibit in the future, but in my experience it’s something that most museums end up doing at some point.”

LIKELIHOOD TO COLLABORATE

PERSONAL
LIKELIHOOD TO
COLLABORATE
+
INSTITUTIONAL
LIKELIHOOD TO
COLLABORATE



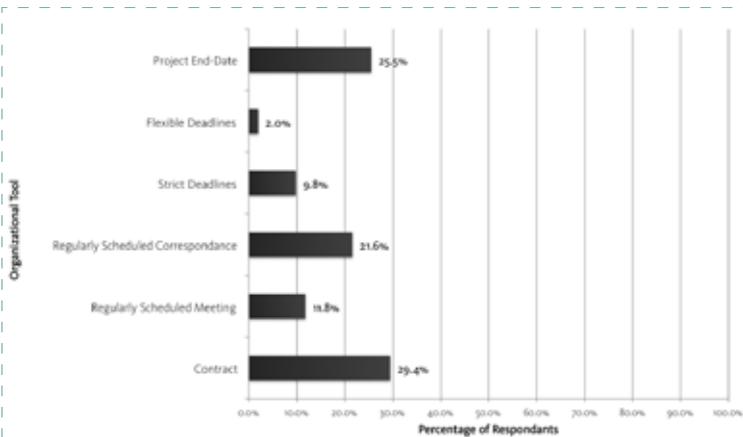
Of respondents that were personally very likely to collaborate, 73% said their institution would also be very likely to collaborate. Half of the respondents that said they would not be likely to personally collaborate said that their institution would be very likely to collaborate.

This shows that sometimes collaboration may be imposed on staff by their institutions, but more often, both individual staff members and the institution have an aligned high likelihood to collaborate.

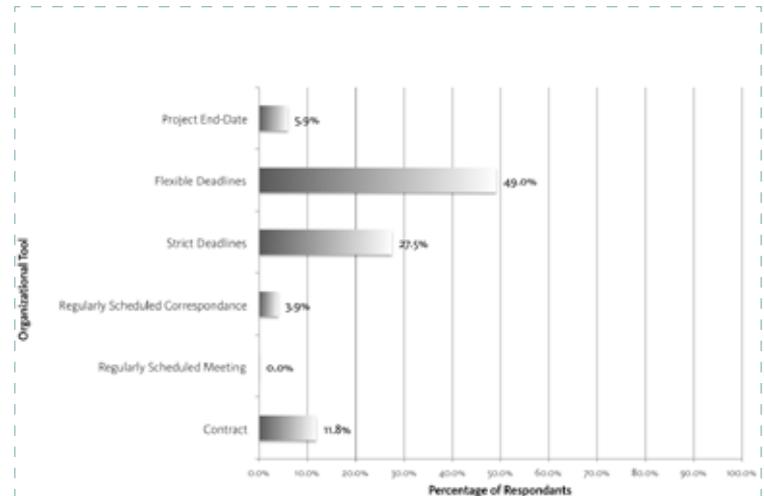
QUESTION 10: PLEASE RANK THE ORGANIZATIONAL TOOLS THAT YOU THINK ARE MOST NECESSARY FOR PARTICIPANTS TO FACILITATE A SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIVE PROJECT? (1 BEING MOST IMPORTANT)

Most of the respondents identified a contract (29.4%) as the most important tool in facilitating a successful collaboration. Project end-date and regularly scheduled correspondence were also expressed as an important tool, with 25.5% and 21.6%, respectively. Almost half of the respondents (49%) felt that having flexible deadlines was the least important tool and very few (2%) felt that it was the most important. This illustrates the importance of agreed upon procedures and schedules in a successful collaboration and will be further broken down on the following page.

IMPORTANT
FACTORS IN
COLLABORATION

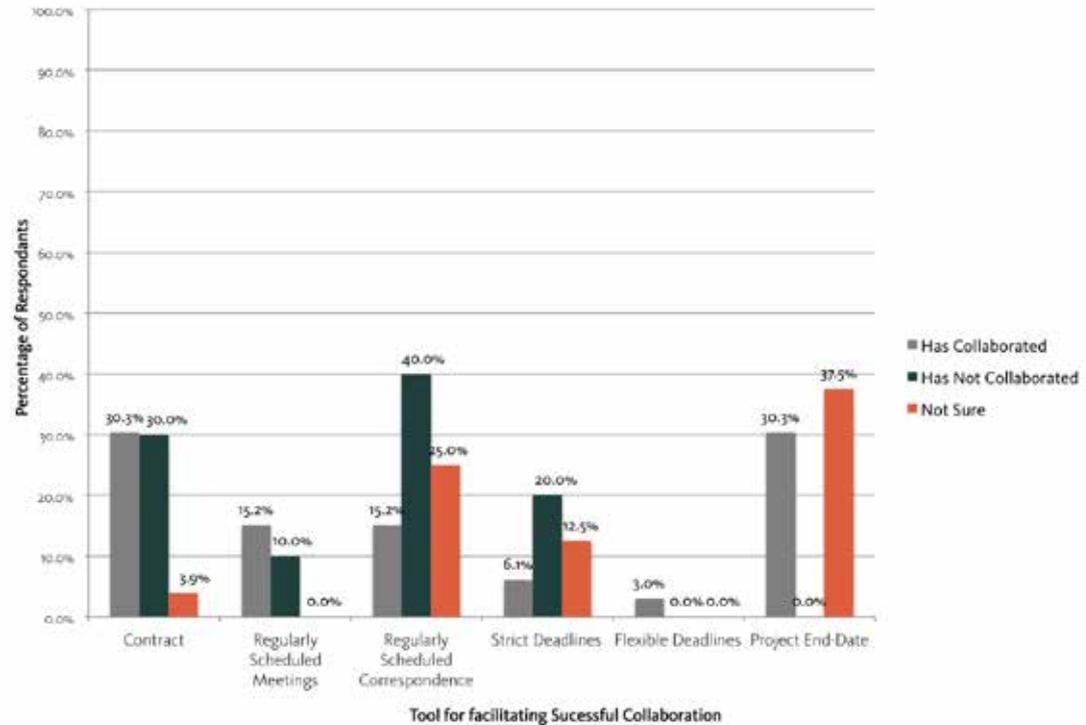


MOST IMPORTANT TOOLS FOR COLLABORATION



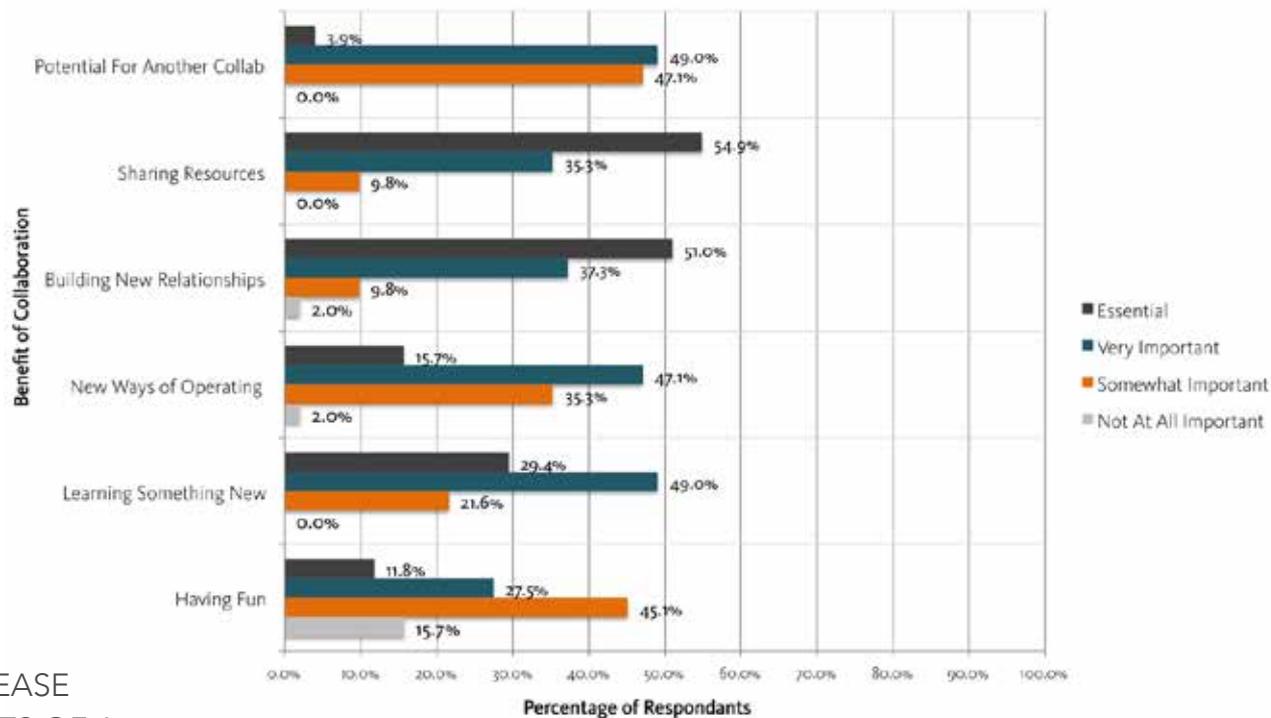
LEAST IMPORTANT TOOLS FOR COLLABORATION

EXPERIENCE WITH COLLABORATION + TOOLS NECESSARY FOR COLLABORATION



Of the respondents that have collaborated, an equal number expressed that a contract and a project end-date are the most important tools for successful collaborations (30.3%). Most of the remaining respondents that have collaborated

were split between regularly scheduled meetings and regularly scheduled correspondence (15.2% for each). This shows the importance structure had in past collaborations for these experienced professionals.



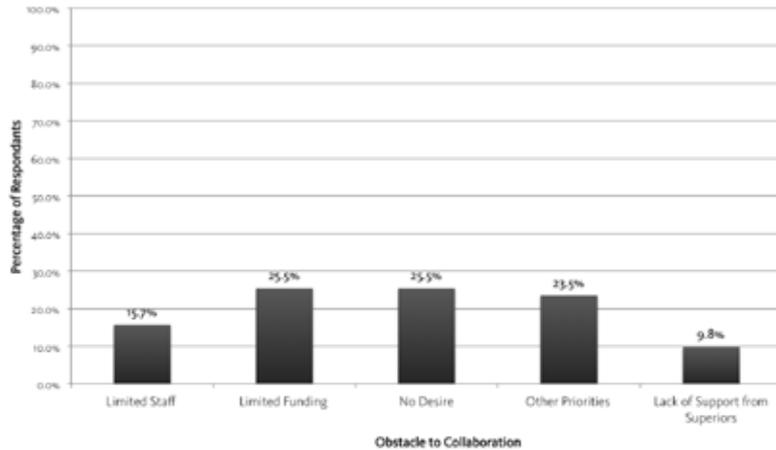
QUESTION 11. PLEASE RATE THE BENEFITS OF A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT ACCORDING TO IMPORTANCE

Many respondents rated “Sharing Resources” (54.9%) and “Building New Relationships” (51%) as essential benefits of collaboration. Very few considered these benefits not at all important, with 0% saying “Sharing Resources” and 2% saying “Building New Relationships.” Almost half of the respondents identified “Potential for Another Collaboration” (49%), “Learning Something New”

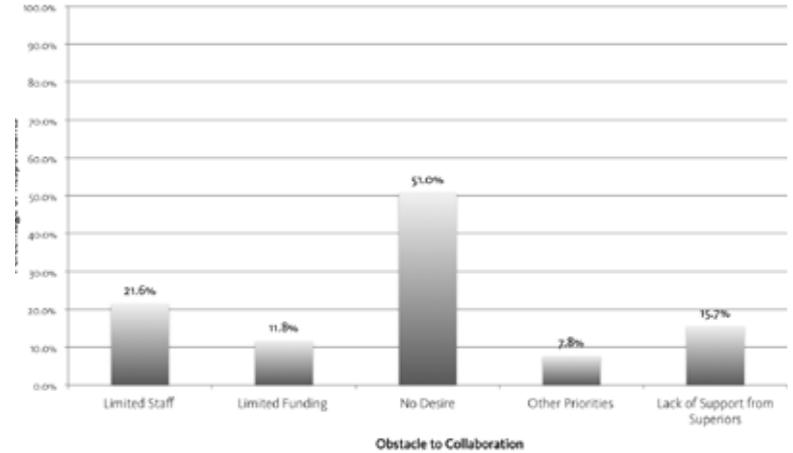
(47.1%) and “Conceiving New Ways of Operating” (47.1%) as very important. “Having fun” was considered somewhat important by most (45.1%), but not essential. This illustrates that there are many different reasons to collaborate and the most important benefits depend on the collaborators’ priorities.

BENEFITS OF COLLABORATION

BIGGEST OBSTACLE TO COLLABORATION



SMALLEST OBSTACLE TO COLLABORATION



OBSTACLES TO COLLABORATION

QUESTION 12. PLEASE RANK THE FOLLOWING OBSTACLES IN TERMS OF HOW GREATLY THEY WOULD IMPACT AN INSTITUTION'S WILLINGNESS/ ABILITY TO COLLABORATE WITH ANOTHER MUSEUM? (1 BEING THE GREATEST HINDRANCE)

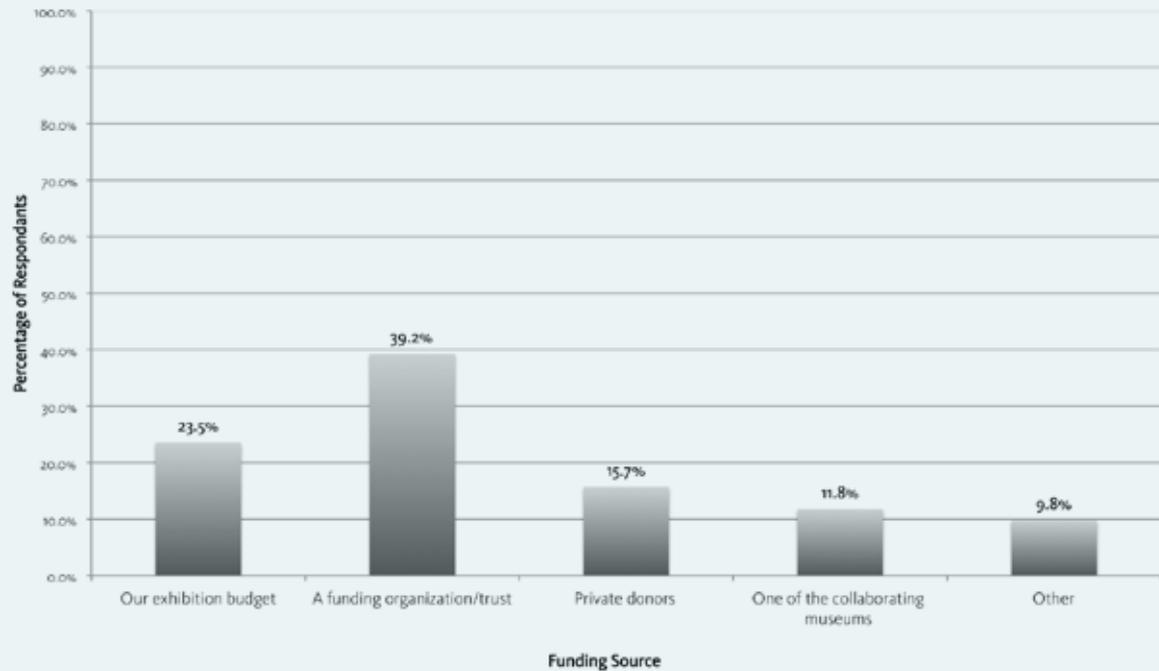
The greatest obstacles to collaboration were almost evenly distributed between “Limited funding” (25.5%), “No desire” (25.5%) and “Other priorities” (23.5%). Most of the respondents said that “No desire” was the smallest obstacle to collaboration. This wide variety of responses demonstrates that the obstacles that can prevent collaboration vary on a case-by-case basis.

“It’s inherently more work and slower. You lose a lot of the nimble, quick project development that we value here....but of course staying in house limits so much else.”

QUESTION 13: ARE THERE ANY OTHER OBSTACLES (NOT DESCRIBED ABOVE) THAT YOU THINK WOULD PREVENT AN INSTITUTION FROM COLLABORATING WITH ANOTHER MUSEUM ON AN EXHIBITION PROJECT?

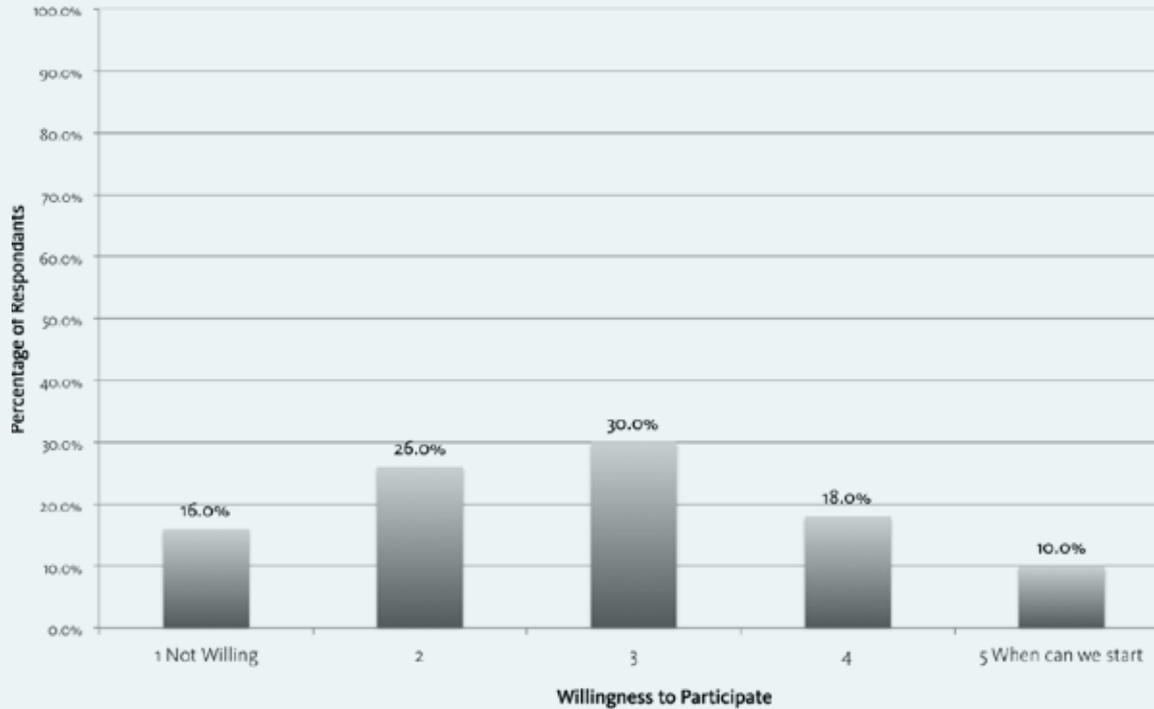
Some of the respondents cited concerns with other institutions, such as competition, reputations and past relationships, as additional obstacles to collaboration. Others cited concerns with collaboration in general - lack of leadership, structure and communication. The most commonly identified obstacle was a lack of goal alignment between institutions.

FUNDING SOURCES



QUESTION 14: IF YOU WERE TO PARTICIPATE IN A COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITION (BETWEEN MULTIPLE MUSEUMS) WHERE WOULD YOU MOST LIKELY SEEK OUT FUNDING SOURCES?

Most of the respondents (39.2%) expressed that they would go to a funding organization or trust when funding a collaborative exhibition. Additionally, 23.5% said they would utilize their own exhibition budget to fund the project. The lack of overwhelming majority may be indicative of the varying strategies that museums take when funding exhibitions.



QUESTION 15: HOW WILLING WOULD YOUR INSTITUTION BE TO DEDICATE STAFF AND TIME TO DEVELOPING/DESIGNING EXHIBITIONS THAT DO NOT TAKE PLACE WITHIN YOUR INSTITUTION'S WALLS?

30% of the respondents responded in the middle, evenly between “not willing” and “when can we start.” The remaining respondents were divided, with 42% leaning towards not willing and 28% leaning towards willing. This distribution of interest shows that while this practice is not for everyone, there are institutions who would be interested in participating in the creation of an exhibition that exists outside of their walls.

WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE IN EXHIBITIONS OUTSIDE WALLS

78 THE interSECT PROCESS

80 MISSION + BENEFITS

82 FOUNDATIONS OF AN
interSECT EXHIBITION

The interSECT Site

The interSECT Team

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90 PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR AN
interSECT EXHIBITION

93 THE interSECT EXHIBITION

Determining the Audience

Site Interpretation

Visitor Inclusion

Design

Objects

Timeline

106 COLLABORATIVE
CONSIDERATIONS





4

VISION FOR
AN interSECT
EXHIBITION

THE interSECT PROCESS

Collaboration allows museums to create something together that is greater than they would be able to create on their own. By harnessing this power to create exhibitions that cross the silos of discipline museums, participating institutions can create interpretation that provides, for visitors, a more complex view of a site. This complex understanding can prompt visitors to feel more connected to places in their neighborhood and to their community, in general. It can also, coupled with a more developed interdisciplinary view, encourage social, civic and environmental responsibility and active participation in their community.

*Creating exhibitions collaboratively includes many moving parts and pieces. Assembled here are guidelines for creating a particular type of collaborative exhibition. An **interSECT** (Site-Specific Exhibitions Created Together) exhibition is developed, designed and produced collaboratively amongst an interdisciplinary group of museum collaborators, and is about and located in an existing site that is outside of the walls of all of the participating museums.*

*These guidelines have been informed by various types of research. Conversations with museum professionals who have participated in collaborative projects in the past, existing collaborative models (including the Museum Loan Network, TEAMS Collaborative, Exhibit Research Collaborative, and Science Learning Incorporated), and the previously discussed survey of 51 museum professionals have all been integral in the formation guidelines. This information served as a starting point towards crafting guidelines to help facilitate an **interSECT** exhibition creation process.*

*The purpose of these guidelines is to ask questions, not to give answers. They suggest elements of the process that need to be considered and possible ways that those considerations can be implemented. These guidelines do not need to be used in a step-by-step manner, as it is likely that each consideration will be needed at varying stages, depending on the collaboration. Because collaboration itself is a challenging and messy process, the **interSECT** process will also be. Bringing together a group of collaborators, especially those with a wide variety of discipline backgrounds, personalities and working styles, will mean that the process will likely get complicated. The ability to harness this messiness and work with it productively will create opportunities for exciting and complex **interSECT** projects.*

*The guidelines are not complete without the perspectives of **interSECT** teams, who will modify, adapt and shape the process in order to both fit their particular process and project. The intention is that they will evolve and change as museum practice does. They should be used as a springboard in order to create rich interdisciplinary site-specific exhibitions.*

THE MISSION FOR interSECT:

The interSECT exhibition process will help facilitate the creation of interdisciplinary site-specific exhibitions that challenge and expand visitors' perceptions of the sites that are already a part of their lives.

For visitors, an interSECT exhibition is...

- an opportunity to see the places they live in new ways
- a way to see that there are connections between disciplines
- an example of how museum content can have real world implications
- a forum for sharing their experiences of a site with the museums and each other
- a place to make personal connections to content

For collaborating museums, the interSECT process is...

- a way to interact with their existing audiences in new locations
- an opportunity to reach new audiences
- a framework to build relationships with other local museums
- a chance to gain exposure for their museum
- a time to experiment
- a way to discover and tell new stories

I. FOUNDATIONS OF AN interSECT EXHIBITION

One museum will need to be the driving force of an interSECT exhibition, recognizing the benefits of interpreting a specific site and wanting to tell that site's story in an interdisciplinary way. Determining the site is the first step of the interSECT process, followed closely by approaching and establishing a team of collaborating museums.

The interSECT Site

The exhibition site is at the center of an interSECT exhibition. It serves as both the basis for the content as well as the physical location of the exhibition. Selecting a site with opportunities for rich interdisciplinary interpretation is essential.

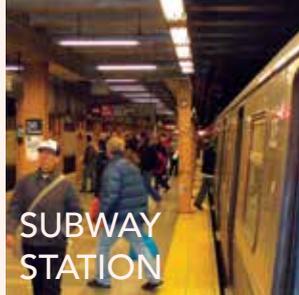
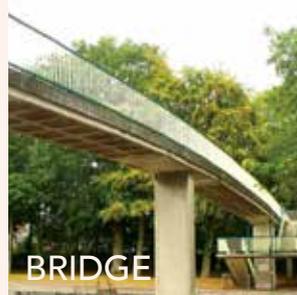
All interSECT exhibition sites should:

-Be outside of the walls of all museums:

Creating exhibitions outside of the museum walls is what allows the collaborators to reach existing audiences in new ways and reach new audiences in places they already use. Bringing exhibitions outside of museum walls also creates a neutral exhibition space for the collaborating institutions.

-Be local: Choosing an exhibition site that is in proximity to the initiating museum (and possible collaborators) creates opportunities for the exhibitions to have an impact on the surrounding communities. If the site is local, the museums' current audiences will be able to access the sites, and new visitors will have the opportunity to recognize that the museums that are responsible for the exhibition are part of their community as well.

THE EXAMPLES

SUBWAY
STATION

BRIDGE



POST OFFICE

COFFEE
SHOPRESIDENTIAL
CORNERCOMMERCIAL
AREA

Possible Types of interSECT Sites

There are a wide variety of types of sites that can be appropriate for interdisciplinary interpretation. The examples here represent a range of types of sites whose inherent characteristics would mean that a variety of exhibitions could happen there.

Variables in Site Selection

Public Access to the Site: While all interSECT sites should be accessible by the public, there are varying degrees of accessibility. Considering how public the museum wants the exhibition product to be (indoor vs. outdoors, 24/7 access vs. specific time access) will help with site selection.

Existing Use of the Site: Every interSECT site should have an existing function in some capacity. While these functions can range, they are what make the site a source of rich interdisciplinary interpretation. Considering the existing function of a site is key to anticipating the logistical considerations in hosting an exhibition there. A bustling train station may present more logistical concerns than a quiet neighborhood park, and while that may impact the site selection, it should not necessarily be a deterrent from using a busy site.

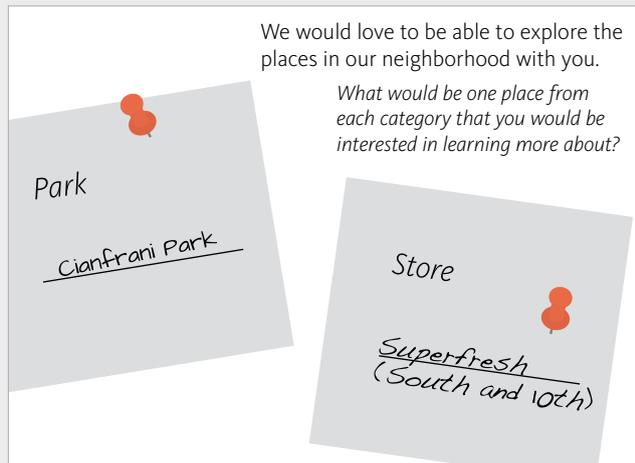
THE EXAMPLES

| <i>Park</i> | <i>Supermarket</i> | <i>Subway Station</i> | <i>Post Office</i> |
|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| recreational | retail | transportation | municipal |
| sit and stay | task and leave | wait and go | task and leave |
| play | accomplish goal | accomplish goal | accomplish goal |
| unique | system | system | system |
| fluctuating visitation | highly trafficked | fluctuating visitation | highly trafficked |
| seasonal | year-round | year-round | year-round |
| 24-hour | limited hours | 24-hour | limited hours |
| non-monitored | always staffed | sometimes staffed | always staffed |

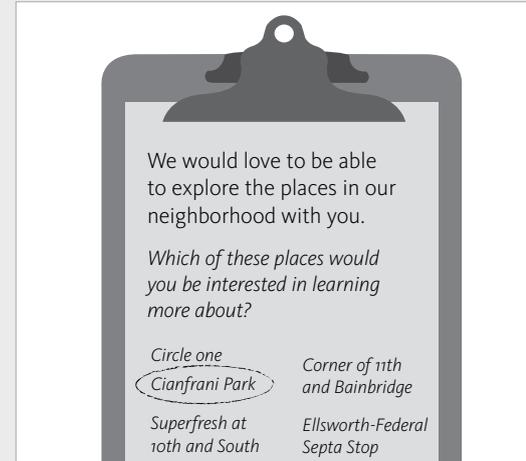
Types of Site Usage

Different types of sites have different existing functions. This table shows some considerations that would have to play a role in the selection of four different potential sites. What types of activities happen, the amount of time people spend there and how many hours the site is open during the day will vary greatly from site to site.

Audience Driven Site Selection: It may be worthwhile to flip the site selection entirely. Placing a call for the museum's existing audience to select from potential sites, choose from a range of types of sites or suggest their own sites might be ways to get the process started. These suggestions can be collected in a number of different ways: via the initiating museum's web presence or in person, through surveys at the museum or in public. Giving the visitors a stake in what the interSECT site is creates an opportunity for them to be more invested in the exhibition from the onset, and assures the museum that the site will be interesting for potential visitors.



Types of sites given, visitors asked to name specific locations



Specific sites given, visitors asked to pick one



Types of sites given, visitors asked to pick one

The interSECT Team

Considerations for the Initiating Museums: When deciding who to approach about being involved in the interSECT collaboration, there are considerations that should be kept in mind.

Discipline Perspectives: An interSECT collaboration enables museums to utilize and build off of the expertise of other institutions. The initiating museum should seek out collaborators that have different discipline focuses than their own, assembling the interdisciplinary team that is at the root of the interSECT collaboration.

Resources: Another factor is what each organization can contribute. It is important to identify what resources the interSECT collaboration will need. Elements such as money, staff and skills will be vital to the collaborations, and it is important to identify which institutions will be able to provide what.

Commonalities: Collaborations can be more beneficial and fluid when the participants have goals and institutional values in common. These commonalities can be as explicit as aligned missions, or as broad a mutual interest in experimentation.

Commitment:

Determining levels of commitment is extremely important when selecting collaborators. Comparable time and resource commitment is necessary by all participants. The decision to participate by the invited institutions should not be forced in any way, in order to ensure that the collaboration will not be unnatural or uncomfortable.

Museum Collaborator Models

The ideal number of collaborators for an interSECT project is 3-5 museums. This range ensures that there is a diversity of voices contributing to the conversation, but not so many collaborators that the conversation becomes overwhelmingly complicated. There are a wide range of discipline specialties within museums, and therefore a wide range of collaborative possibilities. The options here show just a few combinations that might be possible.



Non-museum Collaborators: While considering what will be needed from museum collaborators, there should be some thought about including any non-museum collaborators. For example, non-profit, community, professional and special interest organizations may have aligned values and could be able to provide different resources and perspectives that museums lack. Including non-museum collaborators may make communication easier; museum participants may be less likely to make the assumption that they have complete understanding of their collaborators' processes or goals, and recognize the need for clarity. These collaborations may also be easier because participants would not be direct competitors for audience time and attention. These invitations, like those to the potential museums, should be extended as early in the process as possible. The web to the right shows some different types of non-museum collaborators that could be included in an interSECT exhibition.



Considerations for the Participating Museums: When approached by an initiating museum about participating in an interSECT project, some self-reflection is necessary on the part of the institution in order to determine if the project is a good fit. Some things that the participating museums should consider when deciding to become involved are:

-if and how the project fits within the institutional mission

-if they have enough staff, time and resources to devote to the project

-if the project serves their audience

-if the benefits are worth the effort

The institution should internally identify and articulate exactly why it is participating. If it cannot pinpoint the specific benefits and reasons, the institution may reconsider its involvement or suggest a re-framing of the project.

GOALS

Developing, understanding and working off of a set of mutually agreed upon goals is essential to any successful collaboration. Goals can be developed in a number of different ways: each of the collaborators generating a list of goals that is then merged, one collaborator generating a starting list that is then discussed and modified as a group, or a sit-down brainstorming session. An insterSECT project should include two sets of goals: collaboration goals and project goals.

Collaboration Goals

Establishing collaboration goals ensures that all participants know what the others want to get out of the partnership. If conflict arises later in the process, these collaboration goals are important to refer to in order to keep in mind what everyone had intended at the beginning of the process. It is reasonable to create a minimum of three goals. Possible collaboration goals may include:

- Establishing an effective working process
- Including all voices in the conversation
- Achieving something new professionally

Project Goals

Once collaboration goals have been established and agreed upon, the collaborative partners will then establish goals for the resulting exhibition. **In order to establish these goals, an overall mission statement for the exhibition must first be crafted.** This mission statement should include the overall aim of the exhibition

project, and be detailed in the project goals. These goals serve as the road-map for the rest of the exhibition development process. Since they will be referred to in order to make complicated decisions, all participants must be in consensus about them.

Collaborators should start generating these goals by asking questions such as:

- What do we want this exhibition to do?
- Who do we want this exhibition to reach?
- What do we want this exhibition to say?

Generating these goals can also be done by imagining what a “rich” exhibition at the end of the collaboration would look like. A intersect exhibition would likely strive to do a combination of some of the following:

In terms of content...

- Be coherent and comprehensible.
- Make connections between disciplines.
- Encourage further exploration of the topic(s).
- Promote the concept of interdisciplinarity.
- Allow visitors to connect the content to their own lives.

- Encourage an evolving and impactful relationship between visitors and the site.
- Make clear how visitors can get more information.
- Make clear that existing museums are responsible for the exhibition.

In terms of incorporation of the site...

- Illustrate the place as the exhibition core.
- Speak to and with the people that already use the site.
- Highlight the physical setting where it is located.

In terms of physicality...

- Be aesthetically pleasing.
- Promote physical, intellectual and emotional interaction.

Collaborators should use these suggestions as a starting point for generating their own specific goals - tailoring, evolving and creating new goals that fit their individual needs.

II. PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR AN interSECT EXHIBITION

One of the most common pitfalls in collaborative work is when partners rush into the process without a real understanding of who their collaborators are or what their process will be. Having an agreed upon framework in place for the interSECT process ensures that the collaborating museums understand what this exhibition creation process will be - the framework should be an indication of how the process will work and what their roles in it will be. This working framework should be informed by a discussion about existing working styles, and should allow for some flexibility as collaborative partners can be unpredictable. The process framework should be designed with the specific collaboration and project goals in mind.

Topics that should be included in the process framework are:

■ Language:

Establishing a working language that is understood and agreed upon by all the partners is a way to try to curtail any confusion that may result from collaborators using different terms to describe the same thing. How the exhibition development and design process is described will vary from museum to museum. This is especially true in museums of different disciplines, who may describe (and think) very differently from one another.

How does each museum define words like: Exhibit, Exhibition, Fact, Content, Artifact, Big Idea, Mission, Goal, Interpretation, Interactive, Label, Panel, Prototype, Media, Evaluation?

What are mutually agreed upon definitions that can be referred to throughout the process?

Facilitation:

A project facilitator should be included in the team as early as possible. It is beneficial for this external coordinator to be knowledgeable about the interSECT process specifically so he or she can help guide the collaborators through an unfamiliar process. He or she also ensures that the project stays on task and on schedule. There are a variety of other specific functions that this project facilitator can serve.

Should the project facilitator be responsible for managing logistics?

Should the project facilitator serve as an evaluator?

Should the project facilitator handle conflict resolution?

Should the project facilitator serve as a meeting leader?

Roles:

Establishing distinct roles for each museum ensures that they all remain committed to and engaged in the process. These roles should be based on the museums' unique strengths and specialties.

What are the different roles that the each collaborating museums should serve?

How can each museum use their particular specialties and resources to benefit the collaboration?

FUNDING

The unique qualities of the interSECT process and its resulting exhibitions make it appealing for funders. Demonstrating and furthering collaboration is important to funding organizations, and is at the heart of the interSECT process.

Local organizations may be interested in funding projects like this that directly relate to and impact the immediate community. interSECT exhibitions can foster an interest in locality, enable museums to connect to new and existing local audiences, and strengthen relationships between cultural organizations in a community, all interests of a locally-minded funding organization.

Responsibilities:

How are the project responsibilities divided up?

Are tasks divided fairly?

What are the responsibilities of each job decided in the Roles section?

■ Staff Involvement:

It is important to identify who from the museums' staff will be necessary to create the exhibition. While this is determined partly by who is usually involved in exhibition development, it should also be shaped by the specific project goals.

Who from the participating museums are normally involved in exhibition creation?

Are all of these staff members also necessary in the interSECT process?

Are there any additional staff members who should be involved who are not normally?

■ Decision-Making Strategies:

How will final decisions be made in the exhibition creation process?

Is there an existing decision-making procedure in the individual institutions that will need to be considered in an interSECT exhibition as well?

Who will be required to sign off on decisions?

■ Communication:

It is essential to set a regular interval for check-ins and deadlines and establish a method of communication.

What will the communication schedule look like?

What method of communication will be used?

■ Meetings:

While face-to-face meetings are not necessary to make every decision, they should be a part of the process.

How frequently will meetings happen?

Where will the meetings happen?

■ Process for Reconciling Differences:

Having a system in place for this likely occurrence in advance will ensure that participants know what they can do in the case of disagreement.

How will differences of opinion be addressed?

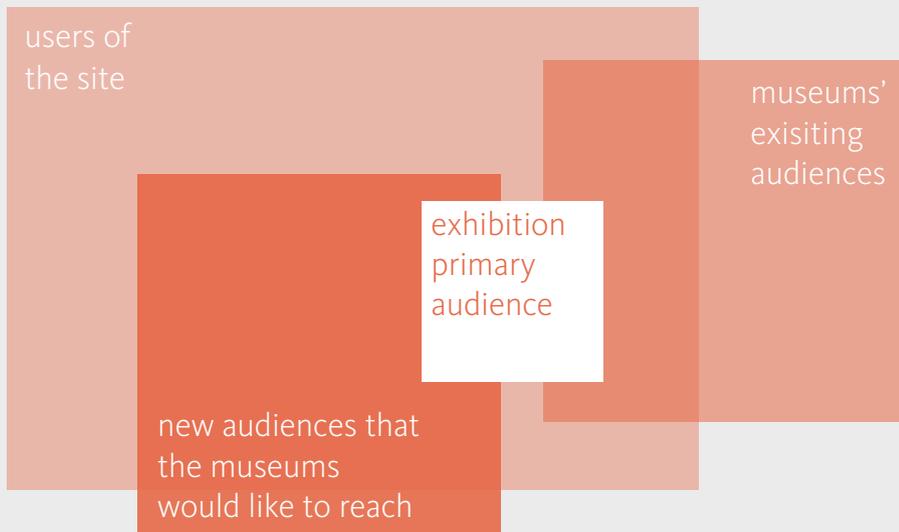
Who will be responsible for addressing or resolving these differences?

III. THE interSECT EXHIBITION

Determining the Audience

The audience of the exhibition will be largely determined by considering the existing users of the site. Because the exhibition will be located at the site, these users' expectations, interests and perspectives must be considered. Understanding those users is the starting

point for deciding who the primary audience of the exhibition will be. These users, in combination with the museums' existing audiences and new audiences that they would like to reach will help define the primary audience.



Determining the Audience

As the diagram shows, there will be some overlap between the site's users and the museums' existing audiences, as well as the site's users and new audiences that the museums would like to reach. The primary audience for the exhibition will include focused segments from both of these groups, illustrated by the smaller white square.

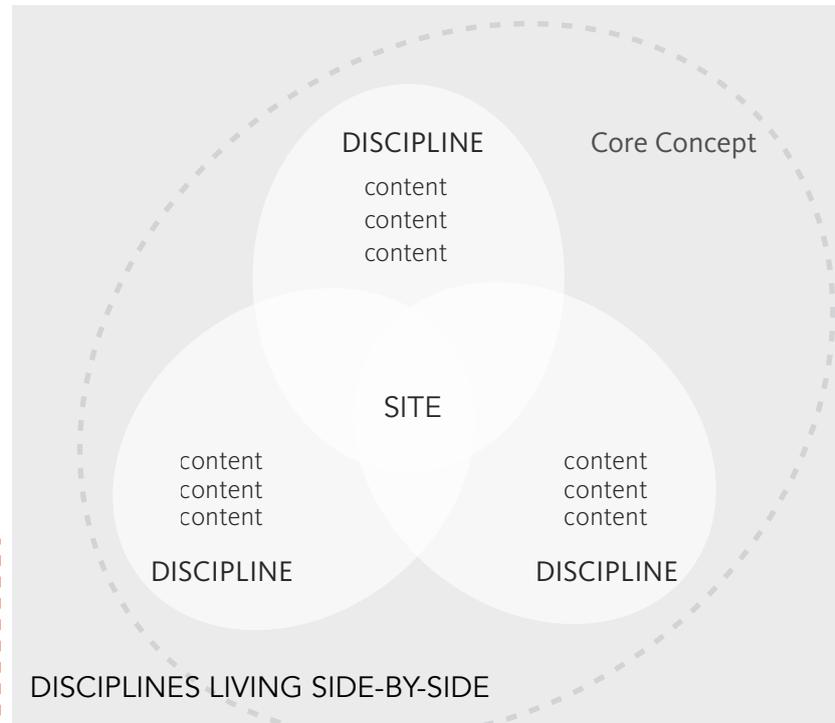
Site Interpretation

Once the interSECT team has been assembled, they must decide specifically how they want to interpret the site.

Interdisciplinary Interpretation: All interSECT interpretation is interdisciplinary in some way. While the method of incorporating this interdisciplinarity may vary, each discipline's perspective should be a part of the exhibition product. The following should serve as a starting point for developing the exhibition content.

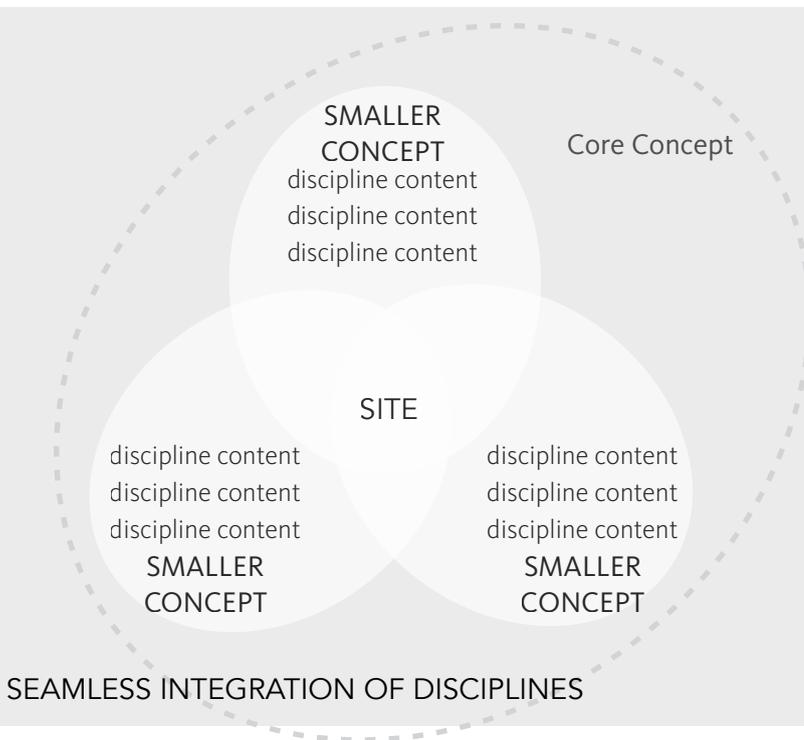
What is the degree of integration of the disciplines?

While interdisciplinarity is a cornerstone of an interSECT exhibition, the type and degree of integration between the disciplines may vary. Should the integration be seamless? Should all of the discipline voices together tell the exhibition story or should the disciplines live side-by-side? If they are side-by-side, should this alignment serve to contrast the disciplines or highlight the similarities between them? It is possible that a combination of different approaches may be the best way to create a rich portrait of the site.



Addressing the Collaboration

It may be worthwhile to directly address why multiple institutions are incorporated. By informing visitors about the different discipline voices involved in creating the exhibition, the exhibition recognizes each participant's unique contribution, while expressing to visitors the idea of interdisciplinarity in a real-life context. The interSECT team may also consider discussing the collaboration itself in the exhibition, demonstrating how the existing network of cultural organizations can have a role in the community.



Integration of Disciplines Models
 The integration of different disciplines into one coherent exhibition can be done in a wide variety of ways. The models here present two different possibilities. In both, the site is at the center of the story and all interpretation is developed within the context of the core concept. On the right, the disciplines live side-by-side in order to highlight their individuality and relationships to one another. On the left, the interSECT team identifies smaller interdisciplinary concepts that each discipline's content helps illustrate.

SEAMLESS INTEGRATION OF DISCIPLINES

Organizing Around a Core Concept
 Generating ideas for interpretation around a core concept will give the participants a place to draw inspiration from. The core concept must be specific enough that it helps spark ideas, but not so limited as to restrict how disciplines can incorporate it into their interpretation.

Examples of possible core concepts:

| | | |
|-------------------|---------|---------------|
| CHOICES/DECISIONS | LAYERS | RELATIONSHIPS |
| FIRST IMPRESSIONS | GAMES | COINCIDENCES |
| | STRESS | PATTERNS |
| | TENSION | SYSTEMS |

THE EXAMPLES

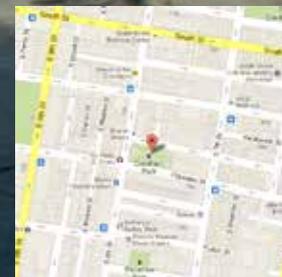
In order to illustrate possible applications of the interSECT process, we have imagined examples at an actual site, using Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's Cianfrani Park as means for interdisciplinary examination. While this example was not developed through the collaborative process that is a major part of interSECT, it is an effort to illustrate the wealth of interpretive opportunities that the process can create. The examples are not, by any means, the only way to create an interSECT exhibition; they are merely inspiration for the type of thinking that could begin to shape a fully realized exhibition.

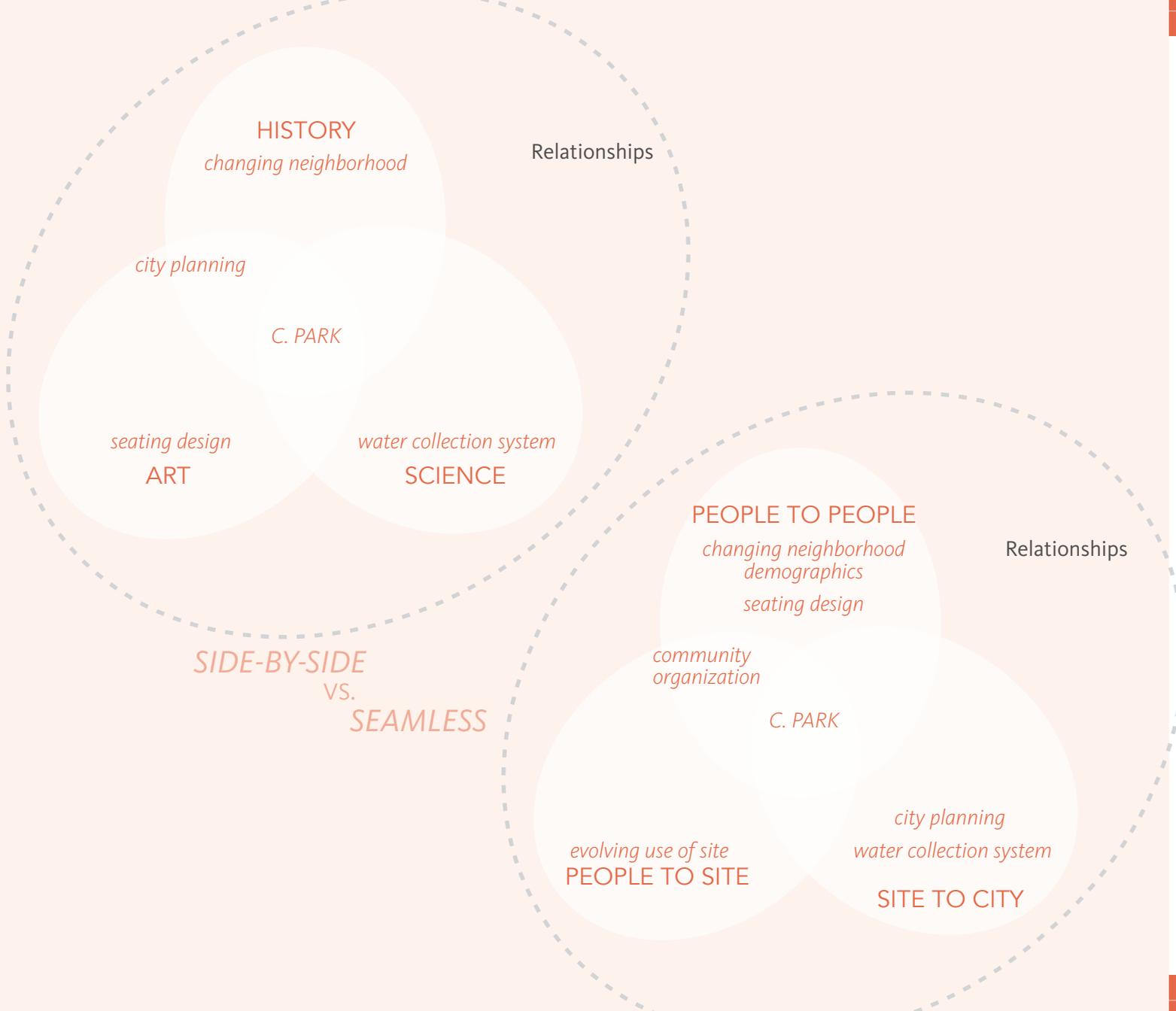
- ***Integration of Disciplines at Cianfrani Park***
Interpreted through the lenses of art, history and science with the core concept of relationships, we have considered two different interpretive models for Cianfrani Park. While they differ in their integration styles, both incorporate stories like the changing immigrant population of the neighborhood, a proposal for a new water collection system and how city planning has affected the design of the park's layout.



Cianfrani Park lies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania's Bella Vista neighborhood, an area of South Philadelphia that for many years was the epicenter of the city's large Italian immigrant population and is now a quiet residential area home to many young families and small businesses. The park was built in the 1960s when James Campbell School was torn down. The park had become extremely dilapidated in the early 1990s, when a neighborhood group was formed to maintain it. Today, The Friends of Cianfrani Park maintain the grounds and host events in order to make the park "the green heart of [their] community, everyone's front yard and urban living room."

CIANFRANI PARK





Audience Inclusion

Creating opportunities for the exhibition audience to engage in the site is at the heart of the interSECT project. The audience should be included in the interpretation of the site as early as possible. There are several ways that this can be accomplished and the collaboration should determine a way that works best for the project.

As a starting point

Museums can provide a prompt about the selected site and collect responses from both the museums' existing audiences and the site's users. These responses can be used as an initial layer of interpretation and the museums can then respond with their own content.

As a culmination point

The exhibition can include an opportunity for visitors to incorporate their input once it has opened. This resembles traditional participatory exhibit elements that encourage visitor response and can create a continually changing experience.

As a collaborator

Visitors can also be included throughout the entire process, as collaborators in the development. This likely means selecting representatives to present the audience voice in the meetings. These representatives would be chosen based on the identified audience discussed previously.

Visitor Generated Exhibition at Cianfrani Park

Asking visitors for suggestions at the park would include the site's existing users as the starting point of the exhibition. A question like: "What are the things you

think are most significant that have happened at Cianfrani Park?" would enable the museums to start thinking about visitors' relationships with the park.



Participatory Activities at Cianfrani Park

There are a range of activities that could involve visitors as creators of exhibition content at Cianfrani Park. An opportunity for visitors to "frame" their vision of Cianfrani Park in a photo, a building activity that address the issue of homelessness, and an opportunity to "map" memories of the park onto a

collective canvas are all possible ways of engaging visitors and making the existing user narrative part of the interSECT exhibition.



Friends of Cianfrani Park as Collaborator

Cianfrani Park has a dedicated community group, The Friends of Cianfrani Park, who have devoted hours to revamping and maintaining the park, and host events there today. Involving this group in the interSECT collaboration from the onset

would mean that the exhibition's audience would have a key voice in the exhibition narrative and that the exhibition can address and advocate for the future of the park and community with the input of the organization.



Exhibition Variables

Design: Because these exhibitions are located outside of institutional walls, careful consideration must be given to the design of the exhibition. The exhibition sites will have existing functions and attention must be paid to the logistical problems that can arise. In order to do so, some questions should be asked:

-What already happens at the site and how does the design respond to that?

-How should design be informed by the physical characteristics of the site?

-Should the exhibition be installed versus transitory?

-How will the design accommodate the practical needs of the exhibition?

-How do visitors physically access the exhibition?

■ Design Choices at Cianfrani Park

The design of the exhibition at Cianfrani Park can be handled in a variety of ways. Playing with how to answer the questions listed to the left creates opportunities for unique designs. While there are many choices that can be made and designs that come from them, these examples show three different possibilities informed by combinations of answers.



Daily set up of exhibit elements can allow for a continuously changing exhibition. Highlighted features and interpretation can vary from day to day for the duration of the exhibition.



Exhibit elements that highlight specific parts of the site can be installed and left for several weeks or months. The structure can sit next to the path, remaining visible while allowing visitors to move along the path without any interference.



A programmatic experience can be set up to last just a few hours. Simple folding tables can serve as a way for visitors to interact with objects from museums' collections and participate in conversations and activities with other visitors and staff.

Timeline: Both the length of the development process and the amount of time the exhibition is open should be determined by the collaboration and take into account the resources available to each participating institution. Considering development processes and exhibitions that last for varying amounts time creates opportunities for experimentation and variation.

Objects: The ability to incorporate the museums' collections into site-specific exhibitions depends largely on the site itself. While not all museums will be willing to bring their collection outside of the museum walls, those that are willing and do decide that their objects can be included must address the significant considerations for the objects' safety.

Museums that would consider incorporating objects from their collections should ask questions like:

Do we have objects that would help tell the story about the site?

Do we have objects that directly relate to this specific site?

Is staff necessary to ensure the safety of the objects?

How will these objects be physically incorporated into the exhibition?

How will these objects be incorporated into the story we are telling about the site?



- **Possible Objects for Cianfrani Park**
 The museums can select many different kinds of objects from their collections to help tell the story of Cianfrani Park. Photographs of the school that sat on the site prior to the park can help express the park's history, while other examples of benches can help illustrate the design thinking that is involved in the development of park design.

Other types of non-collection objects can also help tell the exhibition story. The collaborating museums can determine what these objects may be by asking questions like:

Are there existing elements of the site that can be interpreted as objects?

Should the exhibition audience contribute objects that make up the exhibition?

Should the creation of objects be part of the exhibition experience?

Non-Collection Objects for Cianfrani Park

■ *Objects at the Site*

Objects that already exist at the site can be interpreted as exhibition objects. Bricks from the former school building dug up on site can be used to tell the story of what was once there before Cianfrani Park and the changing relationships between the site and community. Grass-roots preservation and repair efforts like the tree branch supports made from other branches at the park can be interpreted to discuss the community's relationship with and continued maintenance of the park.



Non-Collection Objects for Cianfrani Park

■ *Objects Contributed by Visitors*

Objects can be solicited from visitors both before and during the exhibition. If the collaborators have chosen to work with The Friends of Cianfrani Park, the organization may be able to contribute programs from past park events or a support document for a proposed new water collection system. Individual visitors could also be asked to contribute objects during the exhibition: a locket that reminds them of a relationship begun at the park, or a dog leash that represents the companion they share their relationship to the park with.

Non-Collection Objects for Cianfrani Park

■ *Objects Created by Visitors at the Site*

Programs and events on site can prompt the creation of new objects by visitors. A gardening program that allows each visitor to plant the flower or shrub of their choice, while learning about the plants, generates new objects that demonstrate the relationships between the community and the park. Objects may also be created through an opportunity for visitors to envision the future of their park, writing and drawing their ideas for how their park can evolve and what role it can serve in their community on small pieces of paper. The visitors hang the papers throughout the park as part of the exhibition, encouraging the participants and readers to advocate for the ideas they believe in.

IV. COLLABORATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

Communication and Documentation: It is vital to keep to the communication and decision-making schedule from the process framework. It is also necessary to have open lines of communication between scheduled meeting times. Continuous communication ensures that the collaboration is staying on schedule and on topic. All communication should be documented to avoid miscommunication and forgotten agreements.

In addition to documenting communication, all meetings and decisions should be documented. Documentation of the process should include quantitative information (such as survey data and meeting minutes), as well as reflections and anecdotes. Every participant should have the opportunity to contribute to the documentation. This ensures that all voices are heard and a fuller picture of the process is being captured.

Self Check-In: Evaluation should happen throughout the entire exhibition creation process at regular intervals. This evaluation does not need to be formal. Check-ins should be concerned with how the project is progressing in relation to its goals, as well as how the process is working for the participants.

Possible questions that should be periodically asked include:

Are we following the mission statement we crafted at the beginning of the project?

Are our goals still appropriate?

Are we moving towards our goals?

Are we using the best strategies to reach our goals?

Checking in on these standards consistently as the process continues makes evaluation more of a road-map than a report card.

Additionally, every participant should be asked by the project facilitator: “How is the collaboration working for you?” The success of the collaboration is just as important as the success of the project and this should be reflected in the opinions of each collaborator.

All evaluations should be documented and used to inform the rest of the project. Incorporating these evaluations will ensure evolution and indicate what changes can be made to continuously improve the collaboration.

Summative Evaluation: In addition to check-ins, it is also important to conduct summative evaluation for both the collaborative process as well as the exhibition. Collecting this data makes the interSECT process ultimately more beneficial for both the audience and the collaborators, allowing both the process and exhibition to be improved in any potential future projects. There will likely be a combination of self-evaluation by collaborative partners and external evaluation. The project facilitator may also serve as this external evaluator. Additionally, surveys may be conducted on site for visitors to evaluate the interSECT exhibition. This summative evaluation should be based on fulfillment of the established goals, as well as how well the project reached the designated hallmarks for success.

Hallmarks of Success: The success of an interSECT project will vary based on the specific project, but there are some conditions that will likely be present in a successful project. These hallmarks can exist at various levels for both the collaboration and the exhibition.

For the Collaboration

The success of the collaboration can be defined in both measurable and more intangible ways. The measurable success of the collaboration should be evaluated based on how well the Goals for Collaboration initially outlined by the participants are met. The periodic check-ins can help ensure that this is happening.

There are other less tangible indicators of success that may still be observed. Some of these are internal feelings on the part of the participants and some are external results. These indicators may include one or more of the following:

Internal Feelings

-All participants feel that their voice has been heard and incorporated equally.

-A balance between autonomy and cohesion has been achieved.

-All participants enjoyed the process, felt it was worthwhile and would like to participate in another similar project.

-There is mutual respect between partners.

-The participants feel that the benefits were worth the effort.

External Results

-All collaborators have gained valuable experiences and insights.

-The process' successes and failures were well documented and can be used to improve future practices.

-The participants have been able to engage with new audiences.

-New practices have been learned and shared between the participants.

-Time and resources were effectively used.

-Benefits are shared by all participants.

-New relationships and connections have been built between institutions.

For the Project

For the product of the interSECT process, the exhibition project, there are also various indicators of success. Like the process, the exhibition's success can be measured based on how well it achieves the goals the collaboration established for it. Success of the exhibition should also be largely dependent on the visitors' experiences.

-The exhibition feels unified and not disjointed to the visitors.

-Visitors are able to understand how the different disciplines relate to one another and to the site.

-Visitors have an increased interest in disciplines they had no prior interest in.

-Visitors more thoughtfully consider the sites that are part of their lives.

-Visitors more deeply understand the complexity of their world.

-Visitors have a strong connection with and understanding of the content.

-Visitors feel like their voice was incorporated in the exhibition.

-The content of the exhibition is richer than an individual institution could have produced on its own.

Indicators of Issues: Some friction within a collaboration can help lead to a more impactful product, while too much can lead to its demise. It is important to be able to recognize the latter in order to resolve the issues as quickly as possible.

One of the easiest issues to recognize is a falter in commitment, leading to the neglect of responsibilities. This can cause a domino-effect of missing deadlines, causing the entire collaboration to fall behind and diminishing trust within the collaboration.

Collaboration works best when there is a balance between compromise and conflict. If there is too much compromise, the issue becomes “Groupthink,” where no one wants to cause conflict and the product becomes disappointing, falling short of its potential. On the other hand, if there is too much conflict, it can cause tension and lead to an uncomfortable and unproductive collaboration.

Often too much conflict can arise if there is excessive competition, jealousy and insecurity between partners. These feelings cause

participants to focus only on their personal or institution’s needs, neglecting the collaboration’s needs and resulting in the dissolution of trust.

Strategies for Resolving the Issues: The collaborators should try to outline possible issues that may arise throughout the project at the onset. Being aware of potential problems and brainstorming possible solutions before they are a reality makes the problems easier to solve if they do actually arise. When a participant is not fulfilling its role, it is important to refer to the agreed upon procedure for handling it. The responsibility of enforcement may fall to the facilitator, or it may be handled by the other participants, depending on the designated role of the facilitator.

Fostering Lasting Relationships: The work of an interSECT collaboration does not necessarily end after the exhibition has been dismantled. Regardless of the future of the collaboration, each interSECT partnership should include a follow-up meeting in order to debrief the process and discuss the possibility for a continuing collaborative relationship.

Although the decision to create another exhibition may not be an outcome of an interSECT collaboration, it is a possibility that provides many opportunities for both the collaborative relationships and exhibition audiences. As the group already has an understanding of each institution's working styles and has established dynamics, it is worth consideration to create exhibitions that address different sites. The opportunity to play with variables and decisions made during the first collaboration allows for continued experimentation and different exhibitions. Taking intentionally different approaches to the factors previously described (such as Site, Core Concept, Visitor Inclusion, Design, Collections, Timeline) will keep the interSECT collaboration experimental, fresh and engaging.

Groups should consider that continued collaboration can be very appealing to funding sources as well. The desire to continue the collaboration demonstrates not only that the first iteration was successful in some way, but that the participants are committed to growth and the idea of collaboration overall.

A continued series of interSECT exhibitions is ultimately beneficial for visitors. Increased access to this type of exhibition can evolve their perception of places and expose them to new interdisciplinary interpretation.

5

CONCLUSION

We hope these guidelines will help serve as a starting point for the creation of collaborative interdisciplinary site-specific exhibitions. The interSECT process can foster the creation of this new kind of exhibition, one that broadens institutions' professional networks as well as the audiences that they can reach. While each collaborative group will inevitably have its own personalities and characteristics that require the interSECT process to be adapted, the format established in the Vision for an interSECT Project is an effort to create a broadly applicable framework.

Interdisciplinarity, site-specific interpretation and collaboration are each topics rich with possibility for further exploration in terms of exhibition creation.

As we have cited, each of these focuses provides different and important benefits for museums and can work in tandem (as we have described), individually, or in combination with other practices. While not all museums may be able to participate in a full interSECT exhibition process, we hope that it is apparent that there are benefits of the various components and that these concepts can be used to inform exhibition practices in some way.

These guidelines can serve as inspiration for future processes and projects. We hope that museums will continue to evolve the ideas put forth in this thesis and see applications that can continue to evolve beyond the interSECT framework, enabling the process to grow.

6

APPENDIX

IMAGE SOURCES

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SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Collaborative Exhibition Survey

We are conducting research for our graduate thesis that will explore the intersection of collaboration, interdisciplinarity and site-specificity in museum exhibition development and design. We would very much appreciate your feedback on your (and your institution's) history of collaboration and thoughts about the collaborative experience.

***1. What type(s) of museum do you work in? (Check all that apply)**

Anthropology/Archaeology
 Science/Natural History
 Art
 University
 Children's
 I do not currently work in a museum
 History Museum/Historical Site
 Other (please specify) _____

***2. How many full-time staff members does your museum employ?**

0-10
 11-50
 51-100
 101+
 I do not currently work in a museum

***3. Which department(s) of the museum do you work in? (Check all that apply)**

Administration
 Exhibits
 Collections
 Public Relations/Marketing
 Development
 Visitor Services
 Education
 I do not currently work in a museum
 Other (please specify) _____

Collaborative Exhibition Survey

***4. How long have you worked in the museum field?**

0-1 year
 2-3 years
 4-5 years
 6-10 years
 11-20 years
 21+ years
 I do not work in the museum field

***5. How often does your institution use outside consultants for exhibition development/design?**

| | Never (0%) | Rarely (1-25%) | Sometimes (26-50%) | Often (51-75%) | Usually (76-99%) | Always (100%) | Don't Know |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Concept Development | <input type="radio"/> |
| Content Development | <input type="radio"/> |
| Script Writing | <input type="radio"/> |
| Exhibition Design | <input type="radio"/> |
| Graphic Design | <input type="radio"/> |
| Fabrication/Installation | <input type="radio"/> |

***6. Has your institution ever collaborated with another museum on an exhibition project?**

Yes
 No
 Not sure

Comments (if yes, briefly describe project)

Collaborative Exhibition Survey

7. If you answered YES to Question 6: Would you consider any of these collaborations successful? Why or why not?

***8. How likely would your institution be to collaborate with another museum on an exhibition project in the future?**

Not at all likely Somewhat likely Very Likely

***9. How likely would your institution be to collaborate with another non-museum institution (non-profit, community group, etc.) on an exhibition project in the future?**

Not at all likely Somewhat likely Very Likely

10. How likely would you personally be to collaborate with staff from another institution on an exhibition project?

Not at all likely Somewhat likely Very likely

Why?

Collaborative Exhibition Survey

11. Please rank the organizational tools that you think are most necessary for participants to facilitate a successful collaborative project? (1 being most important)

Regularly Scheduled Correspondence

Flexible Deadlines

Project End-Date

Contract

Strict Deadlines

Regularly Scheduled Meetings

12. Please rate the benefits of a collaborative project according to importance

| | Not at all important | Somewhat important | Very important | Essential |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Having fun | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Conceiving new ways of operating | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Learning something new | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Sharing resources | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Building new relationships | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| The potential for another collaboration | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Collaborative Exhibition Survey

***13. Please rank the following obstacles in terms of how greatly they would impact an institution's willingness/ability to collaborate with another museum? (1 being the greatest hindrance)**

Limited staff

Other priorities

Limited funding

Lack of support from superiors

No desire

14. Are there any other obstacles (not described above) that you think would prevent an institution from collaborating with another museum on an exhibition project?

***15. If you were to participate in a collaborative exhibition (between multiple museums) where would you most likely seek out funding sources?**

Our exhibition budget Private donors

A funding organization/trust One of the collaborating museums

Other (please specify)

16. How willing would your institution be to dedicate staff and time to developing/designing exhibitions that do not take place within your institution's walls?

Not Willing When can we start?

Collaborative Exhibition Survey

***17. Please describe your demographic information**

Gender:

Age:

Highest level of education achieved:

Zip code:

Thank you very much for participating. If you have any further feedback on these topics or wish to be informed about the results of our research, feel free to contact us:

Jordan Klein - jklein@uarts.edu

Renee Wauson - rwauson@uarts.edu



POINTS OF interSECTion

This thesis explores the intersection of site-specificity, interdisciplinarity and collaboration in the exhibition creation process. It includes a set of adaptable guidelines for creating an interSECT (Site-specific Exhibitions Created Together) exhibition. Using this proposed exhibition framework, existing museums of different (and often disparate) disciplines can collaborate to create interdisciplinary exhibitions about and at sites within their surrounding communities. Harnessing the powers and benefits of these three central concepts, which are detailed extensively, museums will be able to enhance their capabilities and cultural networks while creating stronger connections between their content and visitors' lives. This new examination of places that are already part of the visitors' everyday lives can inspire them to think more deeply about and engage in their communities.

