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### Preserving the Past: The Future of Museums

Stephanie Cox  
*Syracuse University*

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# **Preserving the Past: The Future of Museums**

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at  
Syracuse University

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Spring 2017

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## **Abstract**

This project explores the future of the museum industry and seeks to examine the ways in which the industry has changed to adapt to the current competitive environment. It explores the increasing competitiveness inside the industry and the growing concentration of funding that has resulted in an extremely high percentage of unfunded museums.

The strategies that can be effectively employed to ‘modernize’ a museum are examined and several living history museums that have employed these strategies are used as examples of their relative effectiveness/ineffectiveness. An analysis of how the museum industry has morphed over time to create these mega-museums which effectively dominate all their competitors is explored. It appears that they are a product of funding trends within the industry. How the evolution of these mega-museums has created an opportunity for smaller museums to regain market share by duplicating their museum partnerships on a different scale. The possibility that these partnerships may enable small museums to overcome many of the barriers that have held them back (awareness, location, etc).

## **Executive Summary**

The modern museum is struggling to survive in an environment that is more competitive than it has ever been before. In the last 30 years, the number of museums worldwide has nearly doubled and this explosive increase shows no signs of slowing. At the same time that this rapid growth is taking place, the number of museum attendees in many countries has nearly stagnated as visitors turn to other methods of entertainment in lieu of a day-trip to a local museum.

Within the United States, more than 60% of all museum funding comes from the government and private donors, however the amount of funding has failed to expand to match the growing number of museums. As a result, most funding has become concentrated in a select few institutions. History museums, in particular, are struggling to adapt to this environment and are seeking ways to improve the customer experience and expand the number of attendees.

Current trends within the museum industry that have gained significant attention include: audio/visual guides, increased usage of docents, and the use of live interpreters. Essentially, museums are seeking to perfect the customer experience through modernization and increasingly interactive exhibits. While these improvements are possible for mega-museums, they remain far out of reach of most the museum industry. Within the history museum segment, 76% of museums raise less than \$25,000 annually, and this makes many of these modern improvements impossible.

Mega-museums have, however, accidentally discovered something that smaller museums can turn to their advantage. Since the larger museums are intrinsically linked by their funding sources, they have slowly begun to pool their resources and create common branding and marketing initiatives. In some cases, this has occurred as a direct result of museums existing

under government management. Over time, administrations sought to pool their resources and related museums began engaging in marketing partnerships and raising awareness of other museums in the same circles.

Traditionally, museums operate completely independently of one another and seek to gain customers through increasing their market share. This strategy is proving largely ineffective for small, niche, museums that are being passed over by consumers unaware of their presence. Many of these individual museums do not have the funds to raise awareness, yet they are still attempting to duplicate the expensive marketing strategies used by their larger competitors. Smaller museums must cease trying to directly compete with their larger neighbors and change their strategy.

I suggest that these museums engage in a modified form of the marketing co-operation that select mega-museums have begun to use. The strategy can be modified to meet the needs of smaller museums without losing much of its effectiveness. By creating partnerships between museums in a certain area, it becomes possible for a group of museums to raise awareness of the group as a whole. This can be done with minimal effort in many inexpensive ways. For example, a group of museums could decide that they will create pamphlets containing small blurbs on each of the partner enterprises and that these pamphlets will be made available at each of the museums. Or, they might choose to regularly share social media posts in order to reach a larger audience. By aiding each other, rather than directly competing, museums will be able to reach a larger number of potential consumers.

The groups of museums also need to actively focus on creating a brighter future for the museum industry as a whole. Current studies indicate that the typical visitor at a historical museum in the United States is college educated and over fifty while attendance by younger

members of the population is almost non-existent. This will be a death sentence for the entire industry if steps are not taken to try to cultivate an interest in museums from an early age.

The creation of marketing co-operations between smaller museums opens up a potential solution to this problem that larger museums are unable to replicate. Cities, no matter how large, contain an extremely limited number of mega-museums while simultaneously housing several times as many small museums. The sheer number of these museums creates a diverse population that offers a wide range of exhibits and subject-matter. By banding together, small museums can create an invaluable educational resource with significantly more breadth than the programs offered by mega-museums.

I have created an example of an educational resource that a museum co-op could create for history teachers in the Boston School District. This document seeks to provide teachers with an overview of a number of history, or history-related museums, in the immediate vicinity of the City of Boston in order to provide a better understanding of the available educational resources. This type of document could be assembled and distributed at almost no cost by a group of like-minded museums in any city. The intention of these documents is to raise awareness of local museums and to encourage students to take advantage of them, either on their own or through school-sponsored field trips. If a comprehensive list is created, it will also become apparent where there are gaps in a local cities resources and individual museums may be able to benefit by designing programs that meet these needs.

By working together, rather than directly competing, smaller museums in any segment of the industry will be able to benefit from the increased awareness. The emergence of marketing co-ops between museums has the possibility to dramatically change the industry and help museums remain relevant for decades to come.

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## **Introduction**

Societies are indelibly etched by their common pasts, their shared histories, and museums serve to preserve memories of these times. This makes museums an integral part of modern society since they create the identity of today that will in turn shape and affect the decisions of tomorrow. Without museums and their ties to the past, society as a whole suffers.

Unfortunately, the survival of museums is becoming ever more difficult and the question as to how museums should proceed to preserve their future is becoming increasingly important. The modern museum is forced to compete in an increasingly crowded marketplace and must constantly struggle to gain the attention of potential visitors. Many museums are also having difficulty retaining their position as a viable leisure activity as interest in other forms of entertainment grows. For museums to continue to shape society, they must be able to attract visitors and provide an excellent experience that increases visitor engagement and interest.

Many members of the industry have begun attempting to achieve this by undertaking aggressive renovation projects that seek to modernize the museum and thus make the experience more engaging for everyday visitors. As part of these changes, the industry is experiencing an increased use of audio guides, docents, and live actors in history museums. While these changes are generally positively received by visitors, they can be very costly to implement and many museums are unable to afford these “upgrades.”

Museums must discover how best to remain relevant regardless of financial circumstance. To achieve this, museums must be able to look to the future, anticipate the needs of their visitors, and adjust accordingly. There have been numerous studies discussing what museums are currently attempting, and what they should be doing instead. This capstone will attempt to reconcile these views with reality and

to provide a clear answer on what strategies are working for museums today and, most importantly, how museums can attract a larger number of visitors in future.

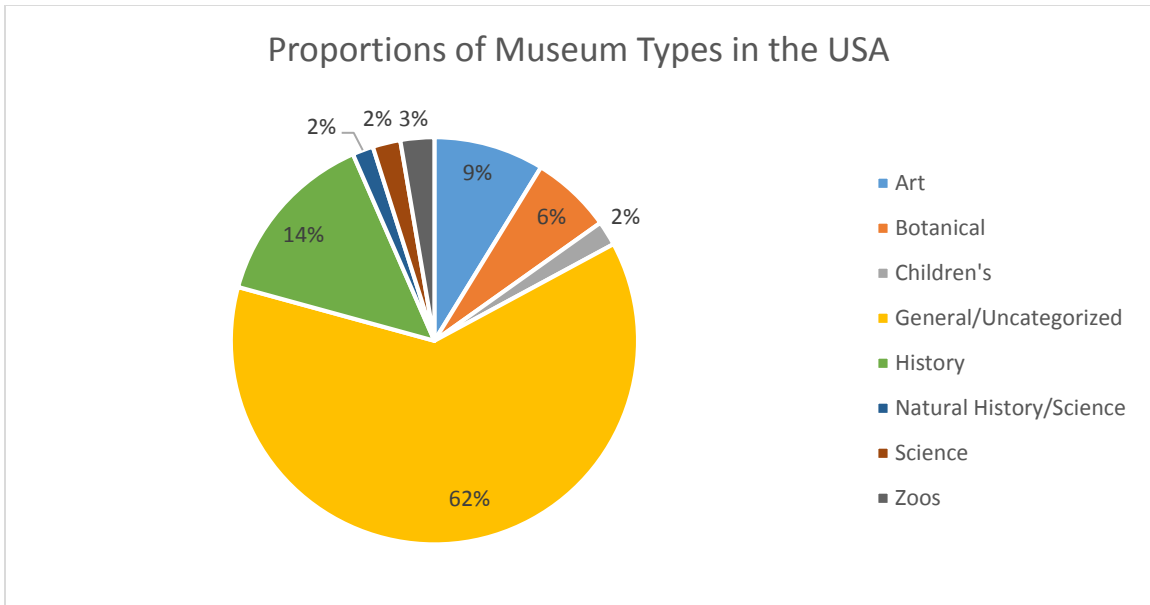
According to *Museums of the World*, there are currently more than fifty-five thousand museums in 202 countries around the world. This list encompasses endless types and variations of museums covering a vast array of topics and themes. In order to provide actionable solutions for museums around the world, this paper will focus on historical museums with an inherent tie to a specific time and place whenever possible. These living museums have unique features that set them apart from other industry competitors and provide possibilities for further differentiation.

## **Chapter 1: The Current State of Museums**

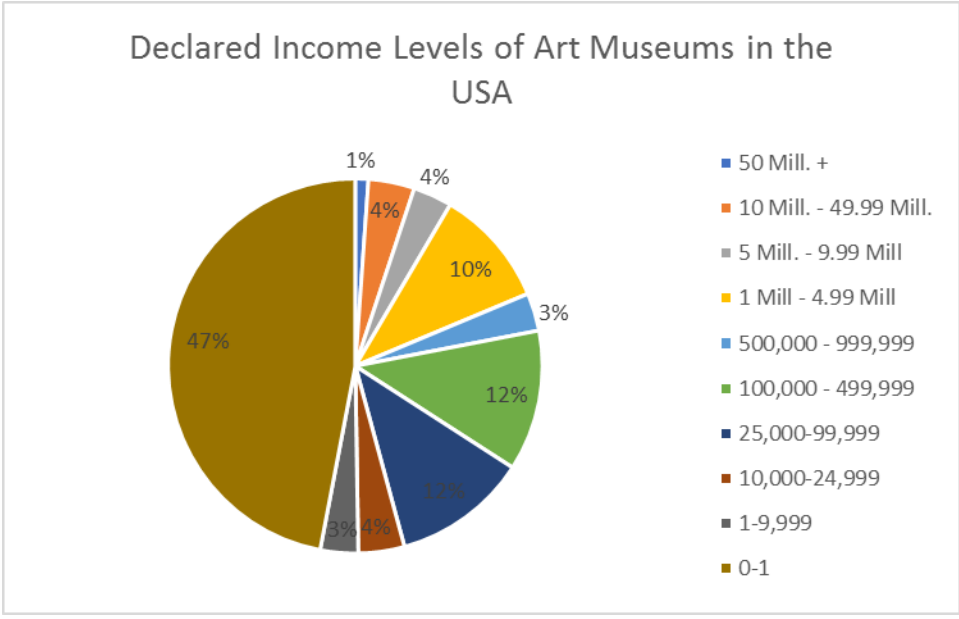
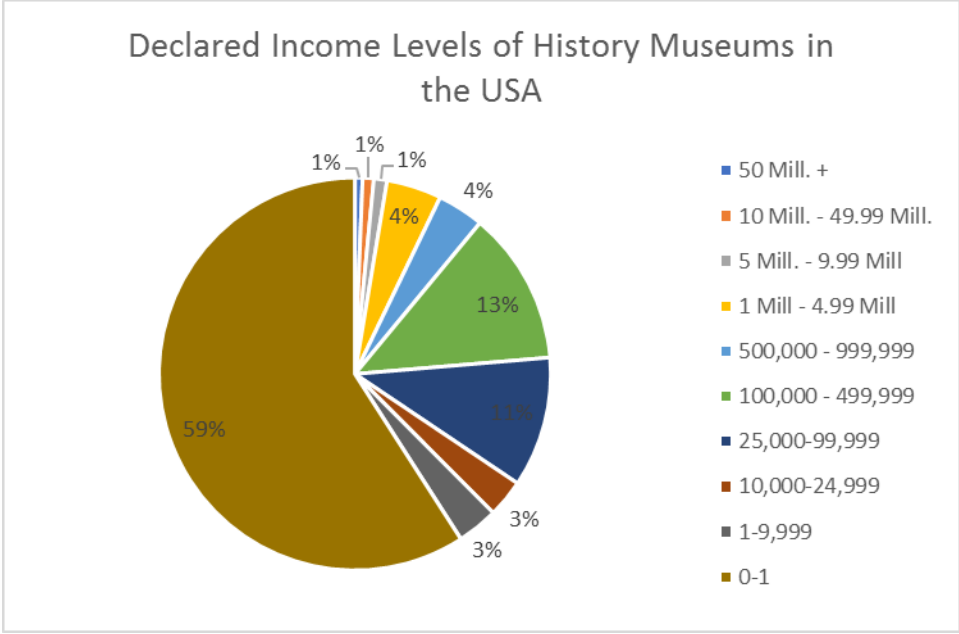
### **How many are there?**

There is an ongoing debate regarding the true number of museums worldwide as every country adheres to slightly different standards when defining what constitutes a museum. These differences result in fluctuations in the number of museums reported worldwide. Records from the mid-1990's indicate that there were approximately 23,000 museums of various kinds around the world at the time. In the years since then, the total number of registered museums worldwide has ballooned to well over 55,000 (Temples). In less than three decades the world has seen the number of museums nearly double and this trend is showing no sign of slowing. The majority of this growth has been occurring in developing nations where interest in the preservation and growth of knowledge is increasing and funds for the construction of these institutions are becoming more readily available. Nations that already have a well-established network of museums are experiencing much slower growth on average.

Data from a study performed by the United States Government Institute of Museum and Library Services indicates that there were over thirty-five thousand registered museums in the United States alone in early 2015 (Museum Universe Data File). This number includes over seventeen thousand Historical Societies and Preservations that were not considered to be a museum category in the global museum study previously cited. If this category is eliminated, enabling a better comparison between the two studies, then there were approximately eighteen thousand museums in the United States in 2015. Though the United States is a relatively young nation by global standards, it accounts for nearly one-third of all worldwide museums.



The pie chart depicted above was generated from data gathered in the 2015 study completed by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. It depicts the approximate proportion of various museum types within the United States following the elimination of the category for Historical Societies and Preservations (Fig. A). The majority of museums within the United States are registered as general museums as they often cover very narrow, niche topics that do not fit into any of the other categories. Out of the three largest defined categories, art museums have been the most thoroughly explored by modern researchers, possibly because of the relative similarity between museums in this category. In comparison, most research on history museums focuses on strategies implemented by one specific museum rather than industry-wide trends.



Wherever possible, this paper will seek to specifically explore history museums and their place in the museum industry as a whole. Within the United States, there are 2,599 museums that have filed paperwork declaring themselves to be historical institutions. 1,741 of these museums reported some level of income to the Internal Revenue Service and this data reveals one of the core problems within the museum industry: only a fraction of museums are generating any level of income. Over half of the history museums in the United States that reported their income indicated that they had not made any

money during the 2015 fiscal year. It is likely that the 858 museums that did not report any level of income also fall into this category, and this would further enlarge the percentage of museums without income.

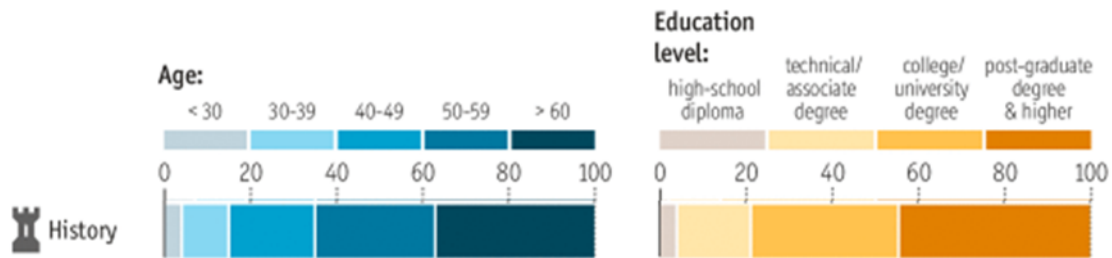
For comparison, art museums within the USA that were sorted into the same income brackets reported significantly higher income levels on average and had a lower percentage of institutions declaring a lack of income. Though the number of art museums in the United States is significantly lower than the number of history museums, their financial status is significantly more stable.

Though art museums may be more financially secure than history museums on average, this data reveals a glaring problem within the museum industry: most these institutions are not generating any level of income and are struggling to survive.

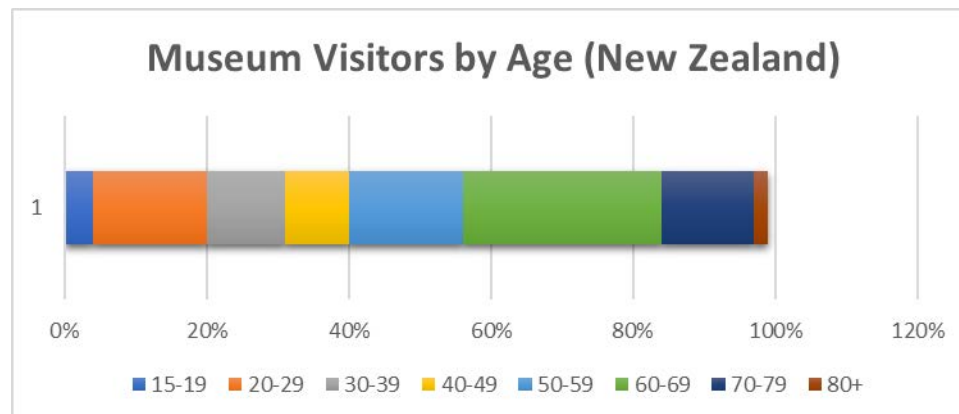
### **Who Visits Them?**

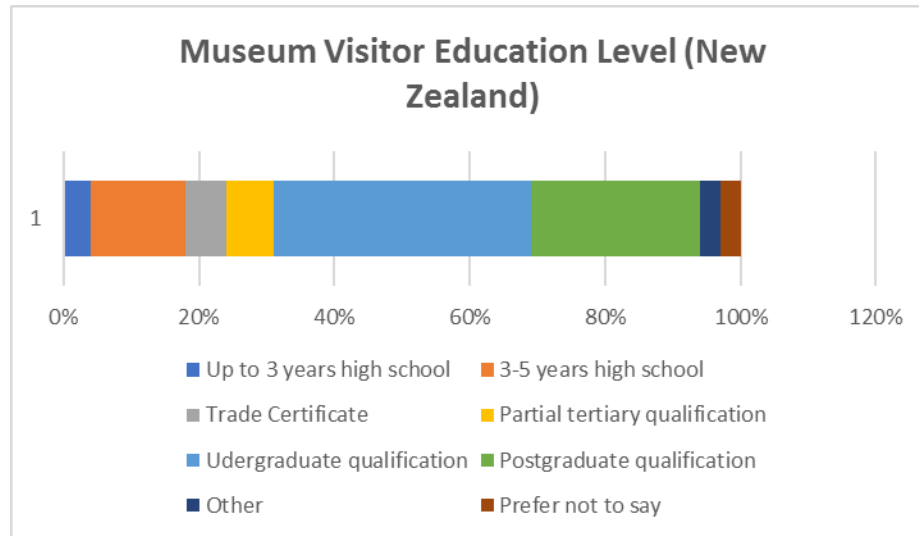
Museum attendance varies widely worldwide and most data is only available by on a country by country basis. Available studies on this subject tend to exhibit a narrow focus on a certain category of museums within a specific country. As a result, it can be difficult to draw universal conclusions from these studies. To provide a better overall picture of museums around the world, I have looked at a variety of studies and attempted to reconcile them and identify common themes and trends.

## Demographics of History Museum Visitors in the U.S.



This first infographic relays data specific to consumers who visited Historical Museum within the United States in 2013 (Temples). It is notable that this specific museum category tends to attract an older audience than many other museum types. This specific study found that more than 80 percent of visitors were over 40 years of age. Visitors also tended to be well educated and over 70 percent had obtained a college degree.





These two charts summarize data for New Zealand museums as a whole and demonstrate that there are similar trends occurring in nations far removed from the United States. Though museum attendance varies substantially depending on the country, the demographics of visitors are often very similar in nature. In this study, 68 percent of museum visitors were over 40 years in age and 63 percent of visitors had obtained college degree or equivalent.

Though the results aren't identical, both studies indicate that the average museum goer tends to have completed some level of higher education and is also middle-aged or older.

### Industry Competition

In many nations, museum visitorship is increasing at a consistent pace due to population growth and steadily increasing education levels. Though this is true, the rapid growth of the number of museums worldwide is outpacing population growth and leading to increased competition between museums vying to attract visitors. It is more critical than ever before that museums remain competitive and attractive to consumers.

One nation that is unique in the regard to the growth of the number of visitors to museums is England. In 2001, Britain passed a law that made all public museums free to any member of the public,



including tourists (10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary). This initiative is currently funded through a combination of private donations and matching government funding. Because of the free admission initiative, in a mere ten years, Britain has effectively doubled the museum attendance seen by the participating museums in the program. Since these museums are typically the large, state owned institutions, smaller museums have not benefitted from the increased attendance levels.

Unfortunately, most museums must face the reality that they are not able to directly influence the education level of the general populace or obtain enough government funding to make their programs free to the public. They can take advantage of the increasingly educated populace and attempt to appeal to this audience through specific outreach programs. Museums today must acknowledge that they are in active competition to draw visitors inside their doors and take steps to remain competitive.

## **Chapter 2: Marketing Museums**

As competition becomes ever fiercer, museums are increasingly engaging in active marketing campaigns in order to spread awareness and attract a larger visitor base. There are endless possible marketing methods that a museum may choose to engage in, marketing is after all highly versatile, however some strategies are becoming more commonly used than others. This section lists and explains some of the more common marketing strategies employed by museums and examines their relative effectiveness and potential drawbacks.

### **Government Initiatives**

Government sponsored initiatives can have an enormous impact on museum attendance, as seen in the United Kingdom's decision to make publicly owned museums free to attendees. This particular example is an outlier simply because of the scale of the project, however thousands of smaller government initiatives exist worldwide, museums simply need to make use of these opportunities. Many countries have launched programs such as "Kids in Museums" or "Museums at Night" that take place on a nationwide scale, but that only occur occasionally (Museums Marketing Strategy). These programs are generally heavily subsidized by national governments and can thus provide an affordable way for museums to take part in community outreach. By providing unique visiting opportunities at a steeply decreased price, museums may be able to interest new visitors who might be otherwise unable to visit.

Unfortunately, taking part in these initiatives often requires that museums meet extensive restrictions and standards. This can make it difficult for smaller museums to take advantage of these opportunities due to the time commitment required to apply for grants, meet these requirements, and implement these programs. Smaller museums are also limited in staff size and may not have the ability to actively pursue these opportunities even if they meet the requirements and could take part in the

program. For this reason, it is often more feasible for larger museums to take part in nation-wide programs as they have the resources to dedicate to their implementation. Smaller museums that do not have the ability to apply for these grants should focus on regional grants that are less competitive and that will still allow the museum some level of outreach.

Taking part in these programs can be a fantastic way to generate free advertising, allow community members to visit the museum at a free or reduced price point, and reach out to previously untapped customer bases.

## **Schools**

Historical museums, in particular, struggle to reach the younger age demographic and may find it difficult to attract this type of visitor. Reaching out to local schools, after-school, and summer programs can be an ideal way for many museums to increase the number of visitors within this age group. Museums should investigate local education standards and see look for instances where the museums subject matter or offerings match the needs of a local school.

In the United States, K-12 educational standards follow a general framework on the state level and are then adapted to suit local needs. Copies of each set of standards can be obtained through the local school districts website or, if unavailable online, by contacting the Board of Education and district Superintendent. A familiarity with local standards will enable museums to tailor their content to better fit various educational disciplines and grade levels. For instance, some museums may have content that fits well with the subject matter covered in certain courses and may thus be an ideal field trip location for that specific group of students.

Museums such as the USS Midway, a decommissioned aircraft carrier in San Diego, CA, are actively partnering with local teachers to design programs that cater specifically to the needs of school groups. This particular museum is large enough to have a dedicated Educational Director, Sara Hanscom, who works to design visitor programs on the Midway. Though this living history museum is only eleven years old, they already have a wide range of programs available for students of all ages and have even begun expanding into programs for other youth groups such as the Boy Scouts of America. This museum has actively involved teachers in the design of each of their programs and the local county Superintendent holds a seat on the board of directors. These intentional decisions have given the Midway the tools needed to design extremely relevant programs that have resulted in a dedicated following of local teachers who regularly return with new classes every year.

Creating programs such as these that specifically complement local course curriculum can be pivotal in helping student attendance levels rise. Additionally, programs like these that reach out to younger members of the community are a phenomenal resource for history museums, which tend to struggle to attract younger visitors. Educational programs also encourage repeat visits outside of school hours and have the potential to create a lifelong interest in museums.

Many school districts are currently experiencing budget cutbacks and this has had a negative impact on the number of field trips that schools are willing to fund annually. As a result, museums may have to take steps to reduce the entrance fee, either by offering group rates or by pursuing outside funding to help alleviate the cost of the trip.

## **Social Media**

The use of social media accounts can be an inexpensive way for museums to keep in touch with their target market and retain customer awareness. Social media pages can be created by museums of

any size for free and can be used to develop an audience over time. Having a presence on sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat can be an excellent way to connect with these younger visitors as they are the primary users of these platforms. The main benefit of developing a social media audience is that it allows for free advertising and outreach. New posts will be distributed to those who have “liked” or “followed” a page and this means that the museum can easily reach an audience that has already expressed interest with little to no effort.

A social media presence also offers museums an opportunity to reach younger members of their local communities. The Pew Research Center has evidence that 90% of U.S. adults between age 18 and age 29 have a presence on at least one social media site. In contrast, only 64% of adults ages 50-64 have a social media account (Social Media Fact Sheet).

The direct impact of social media on museums is relatively new and unexplored area of research, however, some preliminary investigations indicate that “Facebook members were making some actual visits to the museums that they previously may not have made” because of the Museum of London’s active presence on Facebook (Luisa).

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Current Strategies that Museums Use to Enhance the Visitor Experience**

#### **Placards**

Placards are one of the most common tools that museums use to teach visitors about the various objects on display and many museums attempt to provide a placard for nearly every displayed object. They provide the bare minimum of context for items on display and typically contain an items name, where it came from or who the maker was, and an approximate date of origin. While many placards are cursory in nature, it is common for particularly important items with a wealth of history to have information cards displaying several paragraphs on the items significance and background. The primary drawback of placards is that they provide an extremely rigid, minimal information system that does not meet the needs of many visitors.

#### **Pamphlets/Maps/Handouts**

If a museum chooses to offer additional information for visitors to use during their visit, they will often create a disposable handout which will be made available free of charge at an information kiosk. At a minimum, these handouts will include a map of the museum's layout with the most pertinent museum objects/information included. Pamphlets are always used to supplement existing placards, never in lieu of, and can be a substitute for museum guides. Additionally, pamphlets can be an inexpensive way to inform visitors about upcoming events, offer coupons to encourage return visits, and relay additional information about the museum.

A study performed in art museums found that more than 60 percent of visitors would make use of a pamphlet to enhance their visitor experience if it was made available to them at the museum entrance. The pamphlets used in this study provided the "location, title, and a brief description" on a

select number of artworks within the museum (Bitgood, 27). The results from the study indicated that visitors who elected to use the supplied pamphlets visited a higher number of exhibits within the museum and spent over 50 percent more time in total on their visit than visitors who decided to explore without guidance (Bitgood, 27-29).

This research on the ability of pamphlets to add depth to the visitor experience indicates that pamphlets can be an extremely effective tool for museums looking for methods to further engage their audience. They may also be able to serve as a tool to help control visitor flow within a museum if ‘stops’ are numbered and an order is suggested.

A potential downside of incorporating pamphlets into a museums user experience is that pamphlets are designed to be disposable. If purchased in bulk, the per-unit cost should be relatively low however the decision to offer pamphlets to visitors creates an additional variable cost that museums have to fund on a regular basis.

### **Docents/Guides**

Either volunteers or paid employees, these individuals guide visitors through a specific museum and undergo training that enables them to offer a depth of knowledge. Docent programs are one of the most flexible options that museums can use to enhance the visitor experience as they are completely customizable to any situation. Museums can design a tour that meets a need presented by one of their core customer groups and then allow trained docents the personal freedom to further customize the visitor experience. Every museum uses docents in a slightly different way; some museums have every visitor take part in a tour as part of the experience, while others offer these tours for an additional fee. The type of tour also varies vastly from museum to museum and is highly dependent upon the experience of the docent (Gamerman)

With proper training, docents can be a powerful addition to any museum and are capable of guiding and supplementing the visitor experience. At the same time, if a museum cannot find dedicated volunteers, hiring part-time or full-time docents can be a very expensive undertaking. The possible expense of a docent system makes this option untenable for many museums.

### **Audio and Visual Tours**

Audio and visual tours are a newer technology that is slowly being integrated into museums as an additional method to engage museum visitors. They typically have a moderate to high upfront cost to cover all of the necessary equipment purchases, pay for the development of the program, hire narrators, and cover other technology costs. Though upfront costs are high, the development of an audio guide can be used to add an additional revenue stream if museums choose to charge a rental fee for their guides.

Museums using this system typically supplement the information available on their placards by attaching a number to important objects. Users simply enter the number into the keypad on their device and the audio/video tour for that item begins automatically. Larger museums, such as the Louvre, have even begun experimenting with the Nintendo DS as an audio/video platform that includes a built-in GPS system. This particular audio guide includes over 35 hours of content and features several guided tours that make use of the GPS system to provide visitors with tours without adding to the Louvre's operating costs (The Museum Audio Guide).

The latest audio/visual revolution is the construction of mobile apps specific to museums. This is a particularly good option for museums in countries where most the population carries a touch-screen phone. As the device is already owned by the consumer, the museum can benefit from a much lower equipment cost as compared to the traditional audio/visual handheld system. These systems are also far



easier to update and would better enable museums to modify the sound files occasionally and/or add new files for special exhibits (Mobile).

### **Actors/Interpreters**

Living history museums are unique in that they have the ability to feature actors as part of the everyday visitor experience. In “museum theater”, these interpreters are trained to play a role and given appropriate period-wear before integrating into the museum scene. Done correctly, this strategy can add to the environment and ambiance of certain museums.

Colonial Williamsburg is particularly well known for recreating portions of the ‘colonial experience’ for visitors by heavily using this strategy. The staff at Williamsburg tend to have a theater or acting background and undergo rigorous training to prepare for each specific role (Ryalls). These roles are carefully designed by teams of historians who create character backgrounds and scripts which are then carefully fact checked. Individual actors are can then be undergo training for their specific role.

Williamsburg divides their interpreters into multiple categories. First-person interpreters don the complete persona of a person from that time period and strive to act as they would. For example, they will fail to recognize a camera and may respond with bemusement if asked to pose for a photograph or ‘portrait’. Third person interpreters dress in period attire, however, they do not take on a character persona. Generally, these are museum staff members who need to provide some level of face to face service and thus have to play a more modern role.

History museums that incorporate some level of “museum theater” are seeing a positive customer response as many visitors feel that it significantly contributes to their visitor experience. While properly executed programs are increasingly popular with consumers, many museums are unable to even consider creating this type of experience due to limited resources. Unlike docents, who can

operate on a more flexible schedule, integrating actors into a museum requires a dedicated staff. This means that a museum is unable to rely on a volunteer force and must have a reliable source of funding. Programs of this type are extremely costly and are thus typically only seen in larger museums.

### **Special Exhibits**

Exhibits are operated in two specific ways: museums can lend their works to other museums, or museums can borrow artifacts from another museum. Lending out museum artifacts can help expose the public to unique exhibits they might otherwise be unable to see and help raise awareness of a specific museum. This is also a fantastic source of funding for museums with rare artifacts as exhibits are generally rented by other institutions. Museums that have an excess of artifacts should consider creating an exhibit as in order to generate an additional income stream.

Renting, or borrowing, an exhibit from another museum can be an excellent way to temporarily boost museum attendance. Many museums have exhibits that they regularly loan out to other organizations and, as long as the host museum has enough room and can supply the appropriate level of security, anyone can host the exhibit (Traveling Exhibitions). Museums looking to host an exhibit should consider the type of exhibit that they are interested in displaying and research the leading museums in that field to see if they allow any of their pieces to travel for display elsewhere.

The primary benefit of lending out Many museums have a certain amount of floor space that is devoted to traveling exhibits. Generally, a museum will partner with other organizations to exchange pieces of interest and create unique exhibitions that last for several months at a time. This can be an excellent way to draw new visitors to the museum and to keep regular visitors returning frequently. Since organizing these events is often only possible for medium/large size museums, this strategy may not be practical for smaller community museums that do not have enough space (Lord).

This type of traveling exhibit is particularly popular among art museums as their displays are easy to transport and do not generally lose any context if relocated. Living history museums have considerably more difficulty in effectively using special exhibits as many museum pieces may be permanent fixtures in a building or may only be relevant in certain contexts.

## **Speakers**

Hosting a speaker can be a great marketing decision for museums of all sizes. Just like exhibits, these short-lived events can provide an incentive for consumers to revisit a museum and also serve to draw new crowds. Whenever possible, museums should reach out to speakers that are relevant to the subject matter that their institution covers. Outside of this general guideline, museums can invite absolutely anyone to speak at their institution.

One of the great benefits of speaking events is that they are a viable option for smaller museums to use as a marketing tool. By carefully selecting individuals, museums may be able to avoid any speaking fees. For example, authors may be willing to speak on a relevant subject in exchange an opportunity to pitch their latest books. Speakers can be as inexpensive, or as expensive, as a museum wants, it's simply a matter of looking in the right place.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Current Trends in the Museum Industry**

Museums have been placing an increasing focus on improving the customer experience by implementing many of the strategies previously discussed. The idea of museum improvement has been central to many of the mainstream discussions on the future of museums. As with all businesses, museums are looking at the increasingly competitive industry and concluding that they absolutely, above all else, need to offer the best product possible.

This chapter discusses three living history museums from various locations around the world and seeks to describe their specific marketing strategies and their efforts to create an exemplary museum experience. I have personally visited each of these museums and have drawn upon my personal knowledge, online research, and the travel site Trip Advisor to create these conclusions.

Trip Advisor is the largest travel website in the world and currently contains over 500 million user-generated reviews of museums, hotels, parks, restaurants and other attractions from around the world (About TripAdvisor). The website experiences hundreds of millions of unique visitors monthly and is considered the go-to information platform by many in the travel industry. I have thoroughly examined the reviews for each of these museums to draw conclusions on their strengths and weaknesses as they are perceived by their visitors.

#### **Hearst Castle - San Simeon, CA, United States**

Construction of Hearst Castle, the private residence of wealthy newspaper owner William Randolph Hearst, began in 1919 and took twenty-eight years to complete (History of Hearst). Shortly after the death of Mr. Hearst in 1951, Hearst Castle became a California State Park and was opened to the public visitors in 1958. Today, Hearst Castle hosts approximately 800,000 guests annually at a

ticket price of \$12-\$36 per tour (History Behind Hearst). There are six different tours during normal visiting hours and each is governed by a docent and lasts a total of 60-90 minutes. Visitors are treated to an inside perspective of various aspects of life at the Castle and are given the opportunity to wander the sections of the estate that are included in each tour. Since every tour focuses on a different aspect of the estate, Hearst Castle has a built-in system that encourages repeat visits.

Hearst Castles marketing endeavors benefit heavily from being a part of the California State Park system. By dint of this membership, the Castle is included in a variety of marketing materials that are produced by the Park service and distributed at kiosks found at each of the locations. This creates the possibility that visitors to a different state park will find a Hearst Castle brochure and choose to visit the Castle. The Castle also has a non-profit affiliate called Friends of Hearst Castle that focuses on raising awareness of the museum and on bringing in additional donations (CA State Parks). The museum has also recently begun hosting special events such as galas, cookouts, and learning seminars to provide guests with unique experiences and additional incentive for a return visit (Calendar).

**Good - 4-5 Stars (87%)**

Out of nearly 5,000 reviews, roughly 4,300 reviews were positive in nature. In general, those who left reviews praising the museum felt that their visit had been exactly what they expected. They generally felt that their tour guides were “knowledgeable and interesting” and that Hearst Castle was a “definite must see” (Hearst Castle).

**Neutral - 3 Stars (8.5%)**

There was a general sense of ambivalence amongst these reviewers. Most did not have any true issues with their experience, they just did not have an amazing time. Largely, this seems to be due to misjudged interest and the fact that many visitors found they weren’t as interested in the topic as they had assumed they would be.

### **The Bad - 1-2 Stars (4.5%)**

Visitors who left negative reviews had a substantial list of grievances that kept reoccurring. Most visitors were not concerned with the average \$25 ticket price for an adult but were unenthused when they learned that each tour only covered one-fourth of the mansion. Since visitors cannot wander the residence alone, viewing the entire Castle would equate to \$100 per person. Many people were also very unimpressed with the tour guides, partly because they felt that they weren't getting enough value out of the tour. The majority of reviewers also noted issues with the experience as a whole, claiming that many staff they interacted with were rude and that the bus ride to and from the parking lot was unbearable because of the blaring music (Hearst Castle: Reviews).

### **Conclusion**

Hearst Castle seems to be struggling with an inconsistent image and is unsure how to manage this effectively. Interestingly, it appears that this problem may be growing as a number of repeat visitors noted how disappointed they were by the experience and stated that it had been better the last time they had visited (typically 5+ years previously). Many visitors seem drawn to Hearst castle as they believe it represents a bygone time of American opulence and they desire to see what this time was like for themselves. The ticket price, \$25 for a 60-minute tour, certainly seems to reflect this idea, however many felt that other aspects of the experience did not. There is a disconnect between expectation and reality that is causing customer dissatisfaction.

The Castle's reliance on docents was typically viewed as a fantastic arrangement and was touted by many visitors as the key reason their experience was positive. Visitors complaining of mistreatment by employees were not typically speaking of the docents.

*Colonial Williamsburg*

Visitors to Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia are transported back into the 1800's through the use of historical buildings and live actors (Greater Williamsburg). Anyone is free to wander the site and interact with the interpreters, however entrance into the houses and exhibits requires the purchase of a ticket. Visitors to Williamsburg can watch a short film discussing the history of the location and the historical significance of the time that it represents. They are then free to roam the grounds, interact with the staff, and observe various historical reenactments. By relying upon actors to help visitors interpret the historical time period, the museum is able to create a more immersive experience that helps transport visitors into the past (Ryalls). These actors take on a wide variety of roles: they serve as docents in each of the home exhibits, the reenact military scenes, give demonstrations of craftsmanship, and do countless other small tasks to help bring the 1800's back to life.

The use of actors and interpreters to create museum theater is one of the features that many visitors cite as being their favorite part of their visit to Williamsburg. Colonial Williamsburg incorporates some of the most wide-spread utilization of actors and interpreters in the museum industry and this decision has been beneficial: Colonial Williamsburg has the largest income of any historical museum in the United States.

**The Good: 4-5 Stars (87%)**

Many of these reviewers felt that Colonial Williamsburg effectively delivered on its promise to make "history come alive" (Lulabeth). They were impressed by the live actors and felt that this unique aspect of the museum is what made the entire experience worthwhile. A number of reviewers listed small complaints regarding the high ticket price and the fact that some buildings were not open to the public, however they didn't feel this was a large enough issue to truly detract from the overall visit.

**Neutral: 3 Stars (8.3%)**

Visitors who enjoyed their experience overall, but felt that one or two factors kept it from being an amazing visit tended to leave this type of review. The consensus seemed to be that Colonial Williamsburg was “Good but could be a lot better” (Caitlin M.). The two most common complaints were the high-ticket price and the sense of that selling products was more important than recreating the colonial period.

### **The Bad: 1-2 Stars (4.7%)**

Visitors who had a negative experience during their Williamsburg visit seemed to have issues with many elements of their visit. The high ticket price was a common complaint, especially since many visitors noted that they still had to pay full price even when “very few of the buildings were actually open”. Interestingly, most visitors leaving this type of review stated that they were “expecting more history and less commercialism” and seemed annoyed at just how many gift shops were present and how much merchandise was pushed on visitors (Sandi P.). This was an especially common complaint from repeat visitors who felt that the site had deteriorated in quality since they last visited.

### **Conclusion**

Colonial Williamsburg is typically advertised as a highly immersive experience that transports visitors back into the late 1700’s. Visitors who felt that the site delivered on this promise were generally satisfied with their experience regardless of price. Several people were upset by what they felt was the over-commercialization of the museum and believed that Williamsburg was becoming more of a tourist attraction than an actual living museum. Whenever there is a disconnect between what is expected and the perceived reality, a visitor ends up highly irritated with their overall visit.

*Churchill War Rooms - London, England*



This publicly owned museum was first opened in 1984 by Margaret Thatcher and has since been renovated and reopened to the public in 2005 (Mhills). The museum is designed to fit within the original Cabinet War Rooms used by the British command during the Second World War (Foundation). The complex consists of the original underground bunker network which has been outfitted with lifelike dioramas depicting moments from the war, an add-on museum covering the life of Churchill, a cafe, and a gift shop.

Records from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions indicate that the Churchill War Rooms admitted 488,021 visitors in 2016 (Association). To effectively manage this flow of visitors, the museum has implemented a program to help guide visitors through the museum. When visitors enter the museum, they are given an audio guide and brief instructions on its use. The guide serves to enhance the user experience within the bunker through the use of voice actors and soundbites from relevant moments in history. Additionally, since the sound-bites are the primary source of information on each exhibit, visitors are encouraged to move on to the next exhibit as each clip finishes. The decision to incorporate an audio guide into the Churchill War Rooms has enabled the museum to improve the visitor experience by creating a more immersive environment and also helps the museum manage their large visitor numbers.

### **The Good – 4-5 Stars (95%)**

Since 2006, the Churchill War Rooms have received over 13,000 reviews on Trip Advisor. Roughly 95% of these reviewers left a positive review of their experience and praised the immersive atmosphere of the museum. Visitors were generally impressed with the reconstruction of the original war rooms and the ambiance that this created. They also felt that the same information would be far less effective had it been delivered in a location without the same historical impact. Many visitors also

pointed to the audio-guide as an enhancing feature of their tour since the skilled voice actors and soundtracks helped add to the sense of immersion.

### **Neutral - 3 Star Reviews (4%)**

Four percent of reviewers reacted relatively positively to their visit, however, they were unable to give a better review for various reasons. There were two main complaints that kept these reviewers from leaving a better rating. First, price was important to them and they felt that the current cost of \$20 was slightly too high for the experience they received in return. Second, many felt it was slightly too boring, mostly due to information overload. It was noted that they had to rely on the audio guide for most the tour and thus could not easily skip ahead if they thought a certain exhibit might be boring. Without placards with some details on the exhibits, it was difficult for visitors to judge whether they would be missing something interesting if they chose to skip a section to save time.

### **The Bad - 1-2 Stars**

Less than 1 percent of reviewers posted 1 and 2 star reviews of the museum on Trip Advisor. This is extremely positive and indicates that the museum is doing a quality job in creating a customer experience. What is potentially concerning is that many of the reviews focus on similar grievances. As with the neutral reviewers, price was extremely important to these visitors and many felt like they did not receive enough value for the ticket price. The two other consistent grievances were customer service and the inability to check bags (many were not allowed in as a result). Cecile H. Writes that, when she asked for help with the audio guide, an employee responded with the words “how stupid can you be” (Churchill War Rooms Reviews).

### **Conclusion:**

Overall, the ratings for this museum were particularly positive. The War Rooms very effectively leveraged their location to add impact to the story that was being related and this came across in the

reviews. The audio guide also helped to effectively tell the story of the war by using voice actors to read from Churchill's speeches, play air raid sirens, and generally increase the ambiance of the museum. It is notable that, while many visitors appreciated the audio guide, others were put off by the apparent substitution of the audio guide for traditional placards. Many of the more disappointed visitors were somewhat taken aback by the lack of easily readable information in much of the museum. Though audio guides can be an effective tool, it is important for museum designers to acknowledge that some visitors may still prefer more traditional modes of relating information. Finally, it is always of foremost importance that customer service remains important to museum staff. Though most of the tour is automated due to the audio guide, staff should always be willing to graciously assist paying customers as needed. An unfortunate number of the negative reviews for the Churchill War museum were related to extremely poor customer service.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Dauids v. Goliaths**

Museums today are struggling to decide where to focus in order to ensure their survival in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Many museums are currently focusing on implementing a variety of strategies to create a positive visitor experience and are working to integrate innovative technologies to truly optimize the entirety of a museum visit. Creating this perfect experience has become the goal of many museums and is the sole focus of most studies focusing on the museum industry. However, none of these advances matter if museums are unable to attract new visitors and convince previous visitors to return regularly.

As the museum market becomes increasingly competitive; in part, due to the growing number of museums, and in part due to the growing disparity between the levels of museum experiences offered, it is more important than ever before that museums employ effective marketing strategies and engage with potential customers before they even pass through the entryway.

How can this be achieved? How can museums encourage return visits, form partnerships, effectively use social media, and otherwise increase their brand power? Can marketing level the playing field between small/medium sized museums and power-house brand names?

One of the strategies that is currently being successfully employed by mega-museums is the implementation of partnerships between various institutions. These partnerships have emerged organically due to the changes within the industry itself and the growing dominance of state-funded museums.

Historically, museums have always struggled to obtain adequate funding and have relied on four predominant sources of income: government support (24%), private giving (37%), earned income (27%), and investment income (12%) (Bell). Currently, over sixty percent of the total funding of the entire industry comes from the U.S. government and private donors. Over time this has led to a growing disparity between museums as the larger museums tend to receive the majority of the funding and smaller museums are ignored and forced to find other ways of surviving.

These mega-museums have slowly begun to band together as a result of their shared sources of income. For example, the Churchill War Rooms museum in London is part of a group of five museums in the United Kingdom operated under the collective Imperial War Museums umbrella. All five of these institutions are considered national museums that are owned by the state, though they are only partially funded by the government (Jalter). This is typical of many subsidiary museums that are deemed important, but not large enough, or influential enough, to merit 100% state funding. As a result, these museums are forced to seek funding through private donors and to earn their own income.

The Churchill War museum is a unique case among the large museums in the United Kingdom because of its location and design. Nearly all of the world's most famous museums are located in buildings that draw the eye and thus naturally attract viewers. Consider the Louvre, perhaps the most famous art museum in the world, housed within an opulent palace on the banks of the Seine. This museum attracts well over 7 million visitors annually and has gained a reputation as one of the 'must-see' sights for visitors to Paris (Louvre).



In contrast, the Churchill War Rooms are located almost entirely underground and visitors access the museum via an unassuming entrance that is largely overshadowed by the buildings to either side. There is not a flashy entrance to attract new visitors and many people pass by the museum without even realizing it is there.

After the refurbishment of the museum in the early 2000's, additional steps were taken to try to attract new visitors and give the museum new life. The War Roomers were completely overhauled, modernized, and equipped with an arsenal of tools that would, in theory, create an optimal customer experience. Upon entering the museum, visitors are given an audio guide and allowed to meander through the bunker at their own pace. Their journey takes them past life-like displays and recreations which are clearly labeled to match audio segments, all of which are professionally narrated by voice actors and layered with clips from actual recordings of the war. The intention is to create an immersive experience, and the positive customer reviews indicate that the museum redesign largely succeeds in achieving this.

There is a perpetual problem that museums, no matter how well designed, face every day if they are located outside of the public eye: awareness. The War Rooms have largely been saved from being forgotten as a result of their inclusion in the Imperial War Museums and the power that this inclusion gives them. This group of state funded museums serves a dual purpose. First, it makes the management of the museums easier and enables them to pool their resources. Second, the organizational structure enables them to effectively market themselves as a group and thereby increase visitor ship to each individual museum by raising awareness of each of the individual members.

The War Rooms have successfully leveraged this partnership to attract nearly half a million visitors annually. The museum has also worked to become part of other outside partnerships that enable them to reach a wider range of consumers. Since the War Rooms museum is in the city of London, which ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> on the list of the worlds most visited cities, it was clear that the museum should pursue the tourism industry as a potential source of revenue (The World's Most Visited Cities). To reach this audience, which rapidly rotates in and out of the city, the museum needed to find a way to quickly establish relationships with tourists arriving in London. They eventually settled upon a partnership with a tourism agency that would be able to meet their needs.

The global tourism industry is more profitable than ever and this has led to the emergence of thousands of companies that cater to this industry. The Leisure Pass Group Ltd. was one of the companies that launched during the dot-com boom of the late 1990's (Our History). The company created a product specifically for the city of London called the London Pass. This pass is essentially a multi-day ticket that allows a user to get into any of the included attractions. The London Pass reached 1 million customers in 2010, the 11<sup>th</sup> year of the passes existence. Three

years later and the Pass had reached a total of 2 million customers. The Leisure Pass Group has also been rapidly expanding into other cities that have a booming tourism industry and is currently present in Dublin, Berlin, Stockholm, and Paris in addition to London. The sharp increase in sales and the company's ability to expand into other cities indicates that there may be demand for similar partnerships and all-in-one tickets in other cities.

When travelers purchase the London Pass, they are given a guide book detailing all of the attractions that the Pass includes. Amongst the various attractions listed on the pass are 19 museums that are scattered throughout the city of London. Active adventurers can save money by using the pass, but only if they plan to visit a large number of sites and attractions within the city. Because of its inclusion on the pass, the War Rooms can place itself before hundreds of thousands of potential visitors each year. This calculated partnership with an outside organization has been a leading factor in the success of the War Rooms.

State-funded museums like the Churchill War Rooms also have another inherent advantage over non-state funded museums simply because they are part of a larger organization of museums. Examples of this structure can be seen in nations throughout the world. One of the largest, and most tightly knit, groups of museums is The Smithsonian Museum which encompasses dozens of buildings throughout multiple states and houses over 154 million objects covering an endless variety of subjects (Our History). This network of museums also includes over 200 affiliates throughout the United States (Find an Affiliate). The Smithsonian network has grown organically over time as additional buildings were constructed and new collections were created. Today, the Smithsonian brand name is widely known throughout the world and any affiliated museum directly benefits as a result.





Consider this map that the Smithsonian Institute created to display the locations of the Smithsonian Museums in Washington D.C. All the buildings that are highlighted in orange house a specific aspect of the Smithsonian collection such as the Air and Space Museum or the American History Museum. While the main focus of this map is the cluster of buildings located in the national mall, the map also lists other branches of the museum located up to 30 miles away. A copy of the map is included in an information pamphlet that is made available to all visitors at any Smithsonian in Washington D.C.. Within the same pamphlet is additional information on each sub-museum and its contents.

Smithsonian has recognized that visitors to any one of their museums have publicly expressed their interest in museums as a whole and they are therefore more likely to actively visit other museums. By anticipating this need and directing their visitors to other museums in the

Smithsonian network, the Smithsonian is leveraging its connections and brand to benefit partner museums.

Marketing strategies such as this have developed as a logical byproduct of the structure of many museum groups and organizations. Many of these museums have been run by the state for decades, if not hundreds of years, and over time the distinctions between museums have blurred and they have been further absorbed into the collective. Because of this group mindset, these museums naturally began adopting strategies that enabled them to leverage their tight bonds. They have adopted group branding by taking collective names (Smithsonian), forming associations, and creating group marketing materials.

Their preexisting relationships as a result of government support have enabled these museums to thrive and form advantageous relationships that they are effectively leveraging to further increase their market dominance. Nearly all the museums that benefit from this new type of collective format are medium to large sized museums. These museums generally have enough staff to organize programs, put together promotional materials, and engage in marketing programs that are unfeasible for smaller museums with minimal government support.

All of these changes are occurring alongside the internet revolution. Some assumed that this sudden easy access to information might function as an equalizer between museums of all sizes since, if a museum had a webpage, potential visitors could find them. Unfortunately, the world's wealth of information is more accessible than ever, and the resulting abundance of this data has resulted in information overload for many people. This has led to the emergence of companies like Google that specialize in distilling this information and presenting it in an organized form for their users.

Google is currently the most commonly used search engine around the world and holds 77% of the total market (Search Engine). The algorithm utilized by the company looks at “over 200 factors, one of which is the PageRank for a given page” (Serving Results). PageRank essentially judges the importance of a given page by examining the number of links to outside sources. The algorithms that these search companies use essentially filter all available data and present the most relevant results. This generates a search output that favors the more commonly searched for results; in this case, larger museums that are more well known.

Though the internet revolution has made it easier than ever for museums to put themselves in front of potential customers, smaller museums are again at an extreme disadvantage. Many smaller museums may not even have webpages or, if they do, it is likely to be much simpler and more basic. As a result, these webpages quickly become buried at the bottom of any search engine search. That is not to say that a webpage is useless, the existence of a webpage has the potential to aid any museum in reaching new audience members, as they will still be able to occasionally rank among the top search results for those searching for niche museums and using select key words.

As the internet has developed, other potential search tools have been designed to cater to various needs. One of the most relevant developments for the museum industry is the emergence of the travel website which curates the available information within this segment. Trip Advisor is currently the world’s largest travel site and is a commonly used resource for travelers seeking novel places to visit and locals looking for new activities to enjoy. The site relies on reviews published by its members to rank various attractions and activities.

Unfortunately, the result of this sorting system is that less-known museums are either completely unlisted or are pushed to the bottom of the list. Yet again, these museums are unable

to easily reach their target audience. Websites such as Trip Advisor can be great tools that many museums benefit from daily, however, many other museums are excluded from these sites and are thus not even considered in the available list of options that potential museum attendees consider.

## **Chapter 6:**

### **The Survival of the Underdog**

Out of the tens of thousands of museums worldwide, the average individual will visit only a mere handful of these locations. The number of museums is so vast that it is would be impossible for anyone to visit every existing museum. When presented with such a large number of viable options, consumers will do as they have always done, they will ‘shop’ for museums to visit and dedicate their time too.

Museums like the Louvre attract record audience levels every year not only because they house famous pieces, but because the museums *themselves* are famous. We are living in a time where travelers increasingly turn to “Top 10” lists for places to visit and rely on expert opinions. These types of services are useful to consumers because they serve to quickly distil the massive number of options that are available for any type of service. Unfortunately, these same services also effectively bury the lesser known, but not necessarily inferior, experiences. How can the more numerous, smaller museums, survive and thrive in the shadow of their larger competitors?

One of the more promising potential solutions for smaller museums seeking to remain relevant in the modern museum industry is the creation of select strategic partnerships. These types of partnerships have begun to occur amongst the mega-museums of the world, however, few niche museums have attempted to insert themselves into this type of partnerships. In truth, they can’t duplicate the partnership style exhibited by the giants of the industry. The average museum has significantly more limited resources and this must be reflected in the strategies they choose to pursue when seeking to implement partnerships.

## **Strategic Partnerships**

First, the formation of strategic partnerships is a solution that will prove the most effective for museums in a sub-urban to urban area. The world's population is increasingly urban and an ever-growing number of people are relocating to live nearer to cities. This natural evolution is creating an increasingly advantageous situation for urban museums. The goal of any partnership between museums is to increase the awareness and attendance numbers of the group as a whole. This requires that visitors of one museum also be able to visit one or more of the partner museums and proximity is key in order to make this possible. There are endless ways that these partnerships can be formed and implemented, with imagination being the only true limitation; I shall seek to expand on some of the possibilities and how they could be effectively implemented. Though it is completely possible for one museum to be involved in a variety of partnerships with other museums and museums groups, for these examples I am focusing on the possibilities available to one group of museums in a fixed area.

To begin with, museums within a certain area will need to reach out to each other and establish a set of common goals. These parameters will help guide the direction the museums wish to take and influence the extent and depth of their partnership. Some museums may find that they wish to create an extremely tight-knit bond and engage in group branding, as seen with the Smithsonian, however, most museums are likely going to wish to keep their relationship more loosely defined. Once a partnership has been formed, the group can begin leveraging the newfound breadth of their collective offering to engage in a variety of marketing strategies that require minimal involvement.

## **Social Media**

One of the simplest ways for the group to establish a connection in the eyes of the public is through regular social media engagement with their target audience. This can primarily be achieved in two specific ways: agreed sharing of a partner museums content and the creation of a group page. Since social media accounts have been commonplace for years, many museums may have already created one or more accounts on various sites. It is likely however that these accounts are underutilized and that the museum is missing out on possible opportunities for engagement with the target market.

By sharing the relevant posts that each group member makes, every museum will be able to have their content exposed to a much wider audience. This simple change should lead to wider exposure of museum events in the area.

If museums wish to further combine their efforts and appear more unified in the eyes of the public, it is possible to create joint social media pages on each platform. Administrative rights could be shared, thus allowing members of each museum to post to the shared page. This can be a great method by which to present a more unified front, however, it also means that the museum group will have to begin building an audience from zero as the brand-new page will not have any traction.

Museums seeking to make their marketing more effective, and increase their presence across multiple social media platforms should also consider using a program such as Hootsuite that would enable them to manage multiple accounts from one location, free of charge. Proper usage of post scheduling can help an organization maintain a large social media presence with minimal effort.

By implementing some level of social media collaboration, any group of museums should experience a positive return in the number of customer interactions taking place.

Most importantly, social media accounts provide a method whereby museums can easily engage with people who are already interested in the organization. Having a social media page serves as a reminder to ‘followers’ that an organization exists.

### **Educational Partnerships**

Many museums currently partner with schools and other educational programs in order to enhance the learning experience. Often, this is an informal arrangement between a single museum and a local educational group. In urban areas with a larger concentration of museums, there is the opportunity to greatly expand this type of arrangement into an entire network of museums with programs that appeal to a variety of age groups and subjects.

Currently, museums that are actively seeking to create educational programs in order to attract visitors from local schools are forced to design these programs on their own or reach out to local teachers for assistance. These interactions are handled purely on a one-time basis as each individual museum seeks to create a program for their specific museum. Then, once an effective program is created, the museum should reach out to individual schools/teachers to see if they are interested in visiting.

Larger museums, such as the USS Midway, actively pursue the creation of these programs for a variety of grade levels. These museums then leverage their large marketing teams to raise awareness of their programs and encourage visits. Naturally, many smaller museums that do not have excess resources or staff struggle to mimic these results, even though it may be one of the best ways to increase visitor numbers.



Every museum is attempting to appeal to the marketplace on their own and, while large museums are capable of this, smaller museums are not. However, it may be possible for a group of museums, pursuing a similar goal, to create an offering equal to, or greater than, that offered by their larger competitors.

The reason for this is simple: history museums tend to be centered around a single period, event, or historical concept. This means that any one museum, no matter how massive and well-designed, can only cover a narrow range of educational topics. If a group of museums, all covering different topics and subjects, were to band together and create complementary educational offerings they could greatly improve their ability to attract visitors from schools.

The first step in organizing this type of partnership is to assemble a group of interested museums whose subject matter is complementary. These museums need to be in close proximity to the market that they wish to target. This is increasingly important as educational institutions are currently limiting the number of excursions, and duration of them, outside the classroom (Education Next). While museums cannot directly influence the choices, a school will make, they can make it easier for them to send classes to visit a museum.

Once a group of museums is formed, they should begin to put together a resource that teachers can use to learn more about local museums and their potential relevancy to the courses taught within the district. This should not be a random jumble of pamphlets and materials that the museums already have on hand. It needs to be a concise resource that is tailored to provide the information a teacher would need to make a preliminary field trip decision. At a minimum, the document should contain a small amount of information on each museum, information on any tours they offer, and provide an idea of the most appropriate grade level for visitors. The

ideal grade level(s) should be generated based off of the relevancy of a subject to the grade standards in that particular school district.

An example of how this could be executed is included at the end of this paper and contains further information on how to create an effective resource.

### **Marketing Co-Operation**

While educational partnerships are a fantastic option for many museums, it may not be realistic in some situations. Schools place a priority on visiting locations that will maximize the educational return for the time spent and many museums do not fit the standard K-12 curriculum in the United States. This second type of partnership, the creation of an alliance to make marketing easier, is also most effective when formed to appeal to a specific geographic region. Variations of this concept are currently employed by several museums and organizations around the world. Generally, these alliances are the result of a shared ownership or similar affiliation. Many of the largest living history museums that exist today are owned and maintained by the government. As a result, they are automatically placed under the collective umbrella of government sponsored museums and are cross-promoted as part of this collective.

This model can be replicated by other museums in order to create a similar effect and increase the ability to attract visitors across museums. In contrast to the educational alliance, where the majority of new visitors resulting from the program arrive as a result of someone else's decision, most everyday museum visitors arrive because of their own initiative. From this, we can gather that these individuals already have an interest in visiting museums and expanding their knowledge. An agreement that creates an alliance has the potential to allow museums to easily reach their target market by immediately filtering out uninterested individuals.

An open partnership where the only purpose is to attract larger audiences to each museum does not suffer from the restrictions of an educational partnership which may exclude irrelevant museums. For marketing purposes, any museum, of any kind, can be included in the group.

There are numerous ways that museums who wish to form loose partnerships can effectively raise awareness of other local museums in the area. These arrangements might be as simple as merely displaying information pamphlets for other local museums, or as complex as arranging to sell membership passes that allow access to all member museums. Some potential group marketing strategies that museums could explore include:

- Combined ticket sales
- Multi-museum membership
- Museum Open House/Tour Days
- Partnerships with tourism companies
- Partnerships with cities in order to feature the group on the city website

One of the core problems for many niche museums is simply awareness. They do not have the ability to engage in the marketing campaigns undertaken by larger museums and may not even have the capacity to effectively run a website. By partnering with other museums to share their marketing materials, these museums can effectively reach members of the community that may already have a prior interest in their exhibits.

### **Conclusion:**

The museum industry is more fiercely competitive than it has ever been before, however there is reason to hope for a brighter future for small to medium sized museums that are currently outclassed by the giants in the industry. For years, these museums have tried unsuccessfully to compete with their larger opponents by attempting similar strategies and trying to duplicate their ideas. This effort has largely failed and smaller museums have fallen further and further behind as funding sources have disappeared.

By adopting the group mentality that mega-museums are beginning to display, smaller museums may be able to regain their competitive edge. While they may find it difficult to compete alone, together a group of museums will be able to have a larger impact and will find it easier to raise awareness of their existence. If smaller museums begin to pursue this strategy they will quickly discover that they are able to do many things that larger museums cannot.

For instance, while a mega-museum may have twelve possible tours within the museum, they will all focus on some facet of the museum's overall theme. A group of twelve niche museums can offer twelve, highly different, extremely specialized tours. By creating these associations, it will be possible for a group of small museums to create an offering that their larger competitors cannot directly match. Over time this will help smaller museums regain a foothold in the market and begin to attract larger audiences.

This type of partnership can be leveraged in an endless variety of ways in order to create unique offerings, avoid directly competing, and effectively leverage the following of each individual member.


## **Teaching History in the Boston School District**


The following pages are a representation of a possible product that a group of museums could assemble for local teachers interested in expanding education in the classroom via field trips. To generate this list of thirteen museums, I located a list of the museums in Massachusetts on the state website. I then went through the complete list and filtered out every museum that was not within a 30-mile radius of downtown Boston. This distance was set based on Google map projections that a 30-mile distance equaled roughly 45-50 minutes of driving and I felt most teachers would be unwilling to further than that for a half-day field trip.


The list was further narrowed down based on the type of museum. As I intended to create a resource for history and social studies classes, I eliminated most museums outside of these categories. I retained an anthropology museum as it helps to fill the educational gaps left by the history museums.


Each museum was then given an “official description” lifted directly from each museum’s webpage. I also filled in any other pertinent information, such as whether a museum offered tours or programs for students in the K—12 age range. The available information was then compared with the K-12 curriculum standards put forth by the Boston School District in order to make a recommendation as to which grade levels would be most suited for a trip to each particular museum. Price per visitor was not included as each museum had a vastly distinct way of designing group rates and discounts.


This is a sample of the type of resource that would significantly simplify the field trip process and relieve a point of pain for school teachers. Hopefully, the result would be increased attendance at these museums and a greater appreciation for museums among K-12 students.


<p>1</p> 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Adams National Historic Park</h2>	
<p>Official Description: "From the sweet little farm at the foot of Penn's Hill to the gentleman's country estate at Peace field, Adams National Historical Park is the story of "heroes, statesman, philosophers ... and learned women" whose ideas and actions helped to transform thirteen disparate colonies into one united nation."</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided/Self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> 4-5  <i>Time:</i> 60 minutes; 3+ hours  <i>Topics:</i> "Pen and Parchment: The Continental Congress"; "Families of the Revolution: Patriots in the Countryside"</p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grade 5 – Principles of democratic American government</p>	<p><b>Living Museum; Reenactment</b></p>


<p>2</p> 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Boston African-American National Historic Site (FREE)</h2>	
<p>Official Description: "Centered on the north slope of Beacon Hill, the African American community of 19th century Boston led the city and the nation in the fight against slavery and injustice. These remarkable men and women, together with their allies, were leaders in Abolition Movement, the Underground Railroad, the Civil War, and the early struggle for equal rights and education."</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided/Self-Guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> 3-12  <i>Time:</i> 60-90 minutes  <i>Topics:</i> Freedom Rising; Frederick Douglass; Abolitionist Debates</p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 8 and 9 – Public participation and active citizenship; American Government and Constitutionalism, Reform movements, Civil War</p>	


<p>3</p> 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">Boston Tea Party Ships and Museum</h2>	
<p>Official Description: "Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty will lead your group in a reenactment of the historic town meeting held just hours before the Boston Tea Party. Your group will storm down to Griffin's Wharf and destroy the Crown's tea aboard one of our authentic, eighteenth century replica vessels. Finally, you will learn how the Boston Tea Party sparked the Revolution."</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> No  <i>Type:</i> Guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> N/A  <i>Time:</i> 60-90 minutes  <i>Topics:</i> N/A</p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 3,5, 8 and 9 – History of Massachusetts, Public participation and active citizenship; American Government and Constitutionalism, Resistance and revolution, the 13 colonies</p>	


4		<b>Bunker Hill Monument</b>
<p><b>Official Description:</b> “On June 17, 1775, New England soldiers faced the British army for the first time in a pitched battle. Popularly known as “The Battle of Bunker Hill,” bloody fighting took place throughout a hilly landscape of fenced pastures that were situated across the Charles River from Boston.”</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> No  <i>Type:</i> Self-Guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> N/A  <i>Time:</i> N/A  <i>Topics:</i> N/A</p>		<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 3, 8 and 9 – History of Massachusetts, Resistance and revolution, the 13 colonies</p>

5		<b>John Adams Courthouse (FREE)</b>
<p><b>Official Description:</b> “In keeping with John Adams’s passion for justice, community and learning, the John Adams Courthouse offers a variety of free educational opportunities for educators and students to learn about the judicial branch of government, John Adams and the Massachusetts Constitution, legal history, and the historic preservation of a stunning 19th century courthouse.”</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided  <i>Grade Level:</i>  <i>Time:</i> 60 minutes  <i>Topics:</i> “John Adams: Architect of American Government”, “Sacco and Vanzetti” (1920’s)</p>		<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 3, 8 and 9 – History of Massachusetts; Political, economic, and social development of the colonies; local laws; American government and the Constitution</p>


6		<b>John F. Kennedy National Historic Site</b>
<p><b>Official Description:</b> “As a boy, JFK’s parents never expected he would grow up to be President. Yet in his birthplace home he learned values that inspired a life in public service. His mother, Rose Kennedy, recreated her family’s first home to share her memories of those early years with visitors.”</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided/Self-Guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> 2-5  <i>Time:</i> Unknown  <i>Topics:</i> “Boyhood in Brookline”</p>		<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 10, 11, 12 – US in the Cold War, cultural changes in the ‘60s and ‘70s, AP US History</p>


	<b>Lawrence Heritage State Park</b>	
	<p>Official Description: "A restored boarding house with two floors of interactive exhibits tells the tale of Lawrence, one of the nation's first planned industrial cities. Along with stories of Lawrence's mill workers and industry, the workers' role in the 1912 Bread and Roses Strike is relived with images and sounds."</p>	
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> No  <i>Type:</i> Self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> N/A  <i>Time:</i>  <i>Topics:</i></p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 3, 8, 10, 11          History of Massachusetts; public participation and active citizenship; industrialization; urbanization</p>	
		<b>Living Museum</b>


	<b>Minute Man National Historic Park</b>	
	<p>Official Description: "The park commemorates the opening battles of the American Revolution on April 19, 1775 by protecting, preserving and interpreting the significant sites, structures, landscapes, events and ideas embodied by these events."</p>	
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Various - Guided and self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> 3-5; 8-12  <i>Time:</i> 60-90 minutes  <i>Topics:</i> "Rebels, Redcoats, and Homespun Heroes"; "Who Shot First?"</p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 3, 8 and 9 –          History of Massachusetts, Resistance and revolution, the 13 colonies</p>	
		<b>Living Museum; Reenactment</b>


	<b>Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology</b>	
	<p>Official Description: "From towering Native American totem poles and Maya sculptures to finely woven textiles and everyday utensils, the Peabody Museum is among the oldest archaeological and ethnographic museums in the world with one of the finest collections of human cultural history found anywhere."</p>	
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided/Self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> K-12  <i>Time:</i> 60 minutes  <i>Topics:</i> 8 programs for all grade levels. Including – "Amazing Aztecs", "Foragers to Farmers", "Magnificent Maya"</p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 2, 4, 6,7 –          interaction with the environment, great civilizations, cultures of North and South America, human migration and immigration</p>	
		<b>Anthropology Museum</b>



10		<b>Salem Maritime National Historic Site</b>	
<p>Official Description: “When the United States was young, ships from Salem, Massachusetts helped to build the new nation’s economy by carrying cargo back and forth from the West to Asia. The historic buildings, wharves, and reconstructed tall ship... tell the stories of the sailors, Revolutionary War privateers, and merchants who brought the riches of the world to America.”</p>			
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided/Self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> 4-5  <i>Time:</i> 60-90 minutes, 3-4 hours  <i>Topics:</i> Triangle Trade Friendship of Salem” (tall ship) ; U.S. Customs House</p>		<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 3, 4,5,9– the colonial past, North American geography, economic development of the colonies, exploration of the Americas</p>	
		<b>Living Museum, Reenactment</b>	

11		<b>Tsongas Industrial History Center</b>	
<p>Official Description: “The Tsongas Industrial History Center is a hands-on center where students learn about the American Industrial Revolution through activities and tours of the sites where history—and science—happened. Students “do history” by weaving, working on an assembly line, role-playing immigrants, voting in a town meeting, or becoming inventors.”</p>			
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> 3-12  <i>Time:</i> Half-day to full-day  <i>Topics:</i> “Yankees and Immigrants”, “Workers on the Line”, “Bale to Bolt”</p>		<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 10,11 – Urbanization and immigration, Industrialization</p>	
		<b>Living Museum, Reenactment, Workshops</b>	

12		<b>USS Cassin Young (FREE)</b>	
<p>Official Description: “Built for speed and capability, USS Cassin Young engaged in seven Pacific battles in World War II, survived two Kamikaze hits, and served another full decade beyond her expected lifetime. Built in 1943 in San Pedro, California, she is one of 175 Fletcher-class destroyers built during World War II. ... This navy yard built dozens of similar ships during the war.”</p>			
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> No  <i>Type:</i> Self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> N/A  <i>Time:</i> N/A  <i>Topics:</i></p>		<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 10 – The World Wars, Meiji and Imperial Japan, Communist revolutions in Russia and China</p>	
		<b>Living History</b>	

<p>13</p> 	<h2 style="text-align: center;">U.S.S Constitution</h2>	
<p><i>Official Description:</i> "As the memory and educational voice of USS Constitution, the USS Constitution Museum preserves, displays, and interprets artifacts and archival material related to the Ship and her crew through interactive exhibitions, compelling programs, and engaging outreach initiatives."</p>		
<p><i>Educational Programs:</i> Yes  <i>Type:</i> Guided/Self-guided  <i>Grade Level:</i> Pk-2, 3-5, 8-12  <i>Time:</i> 60-90 minutes  <i>Topics Include:</i> "Simple Machines and the USS Constitution", "Uncovering the War of 1812", "Life at Sea"</p>	<p>K-12 Curriculum: Grades 9 – War of 1812, Civil War</p>	<p>Living Museum</p>

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