

SAVING HISTORICAL MUSEUMS FROM THE GRAVE:  
MAKING MUSEUMS MORE RESILIENT

Rebecca Dickman  
April 29, 2016

## Introduction

In the past ten years, over fifty museums have closed in the United States. These have ranged from large history museums to medium-sized science centers to small niche museums. They were located in both urban, suburban, and rural areas. Fifty museums closing is a very small number compared to the 35,000 museums in the U.S. in 2014, but any museum closing is unfortunate.<sup>1</sup>

This paper will cover the problems history museums are facing and introduce resilience as a goal for museums to work toward. Museums can make efforts to become more resilient by collaborating with other institutions and serving as an active partner in their community. Following are five case studies of successful museum collaborations and examples of what some museums are doing to serve their community. Next is an explanation of how social capital can be used to build and maintain collaborations. Finally, the paper will cover the factors leading to a successful collaboration and potential barriers to collaboration, along with a call for museum professionals to do more research on the topic of collaboration.

Museum studies professor Martha Morris writes, “Museums are living through extraordinary times, suffering from strained budgets, a drop in philanthropic support, dwindling government funding, shrinking endowments and a wide variety of internal challenges.”<sup>2</sup> Museums have closed because of decreased funding, competition from other forms of entertainment, and some community members seeing them as irrelevant. Researchers Geller and Salamon found that 85% of surveyed museums during the 2008-09 recession reported financial

---

<sup>1</sup> Giuliana Bullard, “Government Doubles Official Estimate: There are 35,000 Active Museums in the U.S.,” *Institute of Museum and Library Services*, May 19, 2014, [http://www.imls.gov/government\\_doubles\\_official\\_estimate.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/government_doubles_official_estimate.aspx) (accessed April 22, 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Martha Morris, “A More Perfect Union: Museums Merge, Grow Stronger,” *Museum* (July-August 2012): 44.

stress.<sup>3</sup> Museums are increasingly fighting for visitors because the competition “for entertainment and educational opportunities in a digital age has multiplied exponentially,”<sup>4</sup> according to Richard Moe, former president of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Museum professional Nina Simon notes, “Over the last twenty years, audiences for museums, galleries, and performing arts institutions have decreased, and the audiences that remain are older and whiter than the overall population.”<sup>5</sup> Being seen as irrelevant to many people in the community is a problem because museums do provide educational, artistic, and heritage benefits to the public. According to the American Association of Museums, “Museums have the capacity to contribute to formal and informal learning at every stage of life,” while being “forums for presenting and testing alternative ideas and addressing controversy.”<sup>6</sup>

Of the fifty-plus museums that have closed in the past ten years, three were general history museums: The Heritage Center Museum in Lancaster, PA, the Phoenix Museum of History, and the Women’s Museum in Dallas. All three museums closed due to financial difficulties. The Heritage Center Museum faced over \$1 million in debt and the Women’s Museum had a \$1.3 million deficit; they also both had to pay for the upkeep of old buildings. Both the Heritage Center Museum and Phoenix Museum faced a reduction in funding from state or local government. The Heritage Center noted that it was receiving less money from grants. The Phoenix Museum also suffered from a lack of attendance and community support.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Stephanie Lessans Geller and Lester M. Salamon, “Museums and Other Nonprofits in the Current Recession: A Story of Resilience, Innovation, and Survival,” *Journal of Museum Education* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 130.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Moe, “Are There Too Many House Museums?” *Forum Journal* 27, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 55.

<sup>5</sup> Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, under “Preface: Why Participate?,” <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read> (accessed December 12, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Ellen Cochran Hirzy, ed., *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1992), 10-13.

<sup>7</sup> Megan Lello, “Lancaster’s Heritage Center Museum Designing Plan to Combat More than \$1 Million in Debt,” *Witf*, August 2, 2011; Jahna Berry, “Phoenix History Museum Forced to Close June 30,” *Arizona Republic*, June 22, 2009; Christina Rosales, “Women’s Museum at Dallas’ Fair Park to Close,” *Dallas Morning News*, October 6, 2011;

History museums face different problems than other kinds of museums. First, many have difficulty attracting visitors. Anderson, Crago, and Welsh report that “local history museums remain the least attended and the most undercapitalized museums across the nation.”<sup>8</sup> They also note that “the average history museum has only 3 percent of the attendance of the average science museum and only 8 percent of that of an average children’s museum.”<sup>9</sup> Potential visitors may see science and children’s museums as more entertaining and educational, especially for children.

Second, the abundance of history museums is a problem that other kinds of museums do not necessarily face. One issue that museum professional Gary Smith sees for history organizations is “the sheer numbers of such organizations. Often these exist within the same community and each competes for audience and funding. We are concerned that there are too many organizations for all of them to remain sustainable.”<sup>10</sup> According to the Institute of Museum and Library Services, history museums make up 7.5% of all museums in the U.S.; when you add historical societies, historic preservation, and historic sites and homes, it jumps to a staggering 55.5%.<sup>11</sup> There are more history museums and sites in the U.S. than all other types of museums combined. Even though there are more history museums and sites available for people to visit, people choose to visit science and children’s museums more often: this is a problem for history museums.

---

Lisa A. Anderson, Jody A. Crago, and Peter H. Welsh, “A New Day for Local History: No Longer an Island,” *History News* 66, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 20-25.

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, Crago, and Welsh, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Gary N. Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, *Summerlee Commission on the Financial Sustainability of History Organizations: Summary Findings and Recommendations*, 2015, 3-4.

<sup>11</sup> Bullard.

## Becoming Resilient

In order to avoid closing the museum doors, professionals in history museums need to consider making their organization sustainable and resilient. Smith writes, “A sustainable organization is one that, through beneficial circumstances and good professional practices, generates enough financial and community support to guarantee its continued existence on an indefinite basis.”<sup>12</sup> He looked at many organizations and found that sustainable ones had some characteristics in common: “Governance leadership that transitioned from the founding generation to the third generation at minimum,” the organization “operate[s] within generally accepted best practices and from a set of adopted core documents,” it has “effective boards that understand their roles and carry them out,” boards and staff members are “especially purposeful about their activities...[they] agree on the business plan and work together to execute it,” the organization has “dependable support from a city, county, or state government,” and “funds come from a variety of sources.”<sup>13</sup>

Similar to the idea of sustainability is resilience. Sustainability is the ability of a system to function into the future without being forced into decline, while resilience takes into account the fact that change will happen.<sup>14</sup> Resilience is defined by ecologists Brian Walker and David Salt as “the ability of a system to absorb disturbance and still retain its basic function and structure.”<sup>15</sup> Museum scholar Robert Janes defines it as “the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.”<sup>16</sup> Resilience is a fitting goal for museums in order to survive the

---

<sup>12</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 8-11.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Welsh, “Resilience as a Strategy for Museums: Or, Getting By with a Little (or a Lotta) Help from Your Friends” (PowerPoint presentation, annual conference of the Kansas Museums Association, Lawrence, KS, October 16-18, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Brian Walker and David Salt, *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006), 1.

<sup>16</sup> Robert R. Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance, or Collapse?* (London: Routledge, 2009), 141.

shocks of funding shortfalls, declining attendance, and less support from their communities. Public administration scholar Alisa Moldavanova writes that “institutional resilience can be described as adaptability, flexibility and change, innovation, capitalizing on failure, and turning challenges into opportunities.”<sup>17</sup>

To become resilient, history museums should collaborate with other institutions. Morris argues, “With a proliferation of museums of all kinds throughout the country, communities should be taking a close look at what number of institutions is sustainable,” and “the reality is that competition may force collaboration if organizations want to achieve long-term sustainability.”<sup>18</sup> History museums can work with other museums or cultural institutions. A cultural institution is:

A public or nonprofit institution... which engages in the cultural, intellectual, scientific, environmental, educational or artistic enrichment of the people. “Cultural institution” includes, without limitation, aquaria, botanical societies, historical societies, land conservation organizations, libraries, museums, performing arts associations or societies, scientific societies, wildlife conservation organizations and zoological societies.<sup>19</sup>

By collaborating with other cultural institutions, museums can expand their services, share their strengths with other institutions, receive help to mitigate weaknesses, and potentially save money.

Another way for history museums to become more resilient is to become an active partner in the community. Smith found that “sustainable organizations are also key members of their community, and often visionary as they search for new approaches to preserving and sharing the significant history under their responsibility.”<sup>20</sup> He writes, “A successful history

---

<sup>17</sup> Alisa Moldavanova, “Two Narratives of Intergenerational Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Thinking,” *American Review of Public Administration* (2011): 6.

<sup>18</sup> Morris, 49.

<sup>19</sup> Oregon Legal Glossary, “Definition of Cultural Institution,” WebLaws.org, [http://www.oregonlaws.org/glossary/definition/cultural\\_institution](http://www.oregonlaws.org/glossary/definition/cultural_institution) (accessed May 2, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 6.

organization is at the center of community activities, is a leader in the community, and a vital part of its history.”<sup>21</sup> Historic house museum scholars Franklin Vagnone and Deborah Ryan “believe that House Museums need to take bold steps and expand their overall purpose not only to engage communities surrounding them, but also to become deeply collaborative with the type and quality of experience guests receive.”<sup>22</sup>

To prevent their demise, history museums can do two things. First, they can collaborate with other local museums and cultural institutions, historical or not. They can share their strengths with other organizations and receive help to overcome weaknesses. Second, history museums can work with their local community and respond to what their community needs. People will be more likely to visit and get involved with the museum if they perceive the museum to provide a benefit to the community.

### **Collaboration**

One way to increase museum resilience is through collaboration with other museums and cultural institutions. Smith notes, “Concern over the large numbers of history museums, historic house museums, and historical societies has led to suggestions that more groups consider combining forces, by either formally merging or by entering into strategic collaborations.”<sup>23</sup> Museum administrators Anderson, Crago, and Welsh argue that each institution has its own strengths and weaknesses and should partner with others to use its strengths and mitigate weaknesses. They think this should be done on a regional level.

---

<sup>21</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 10-12.

<sup>22</sup> Franklin D. Vagnone and Deborah E. Ryan, *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2016), 38-39.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 16.

They suggest

A coalition of regional museums that work together, utilizing the staff and other resources of each organization for the betterment of all the museums in the coalition. This type of collaboration goes much further than just marketing or ordering supplies in bulk. It entails staff from one organization working on another's projects."<sup>24</sup>

Cary Carson, former administrator at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, says, "I foresee that the first important step into the next brave new world for history museums will only come when institutions in a particular region of the country band together and pool the stories they now tell separately."<sup>25</sup> In his article "The Mindful Museum," Janes says that museums need to become more interdependent.<sup>26</sup> Back in 1992, the American Association of Museums warned that "museums cannot operate in isolation in a world of shifting boundaries;" they "have the potential to create partnerships in their communities with organizations that serve the public in informal settings, such as libraries, civic groups, and social service organizations."<sup>27</sup> Through collaboration, museums can offer more services for less money and effort by sharing expenses, staff, and knowledge.

Collaboration could lead to a higher quality museum. Collaboration among museums on an event or program may result in a higher turnout of visitors and more revenue for all involved. Or, if a museum works with another institution that has strengths in exhibit design and curation, the museum may be able to improve their exhibitions. Creating a timely or relevant exhibition may interest more people to visit the museum, who may then be motivated to donate to the museum, return to the museum, or tell their friends about the museum. Assessing the quality of a collaboration could be assessed by comparing the number of visitors, amount of time visitors

---

<sup>24</sup> Anderson, Crago, and Welsh, 22.

<sup>25</sup> Cary Carson, "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian* 30, no. 4 (November 2008): 24.

<sup>26</sup> Robert R. Janes, "The Mindful Museum," *Curator: The Museum Journal* 53, no. 3 (July 2010): 335.

<sup>27</sup> Hirzy, 10, 21.



stay at the museum, and donation amounts to the number of visitors, time visitors stay, and amount of donations after a collaborative venture has begun.

Museum scholar Chieh-Ching Tien writes about creating museum clusters, “Geographic concentrations of interconnected museums which work closely with local suppliers, tourist attractions and public sector entities.”<sup>28</sup> She argues that “the cluster-based approach helps museums identify new market opportunities, become aware of best practice and be more innovative.”<sup>29</sup> By working together, museums can save money through economies of scale.<sup>30</sup> One example Tien gives of a museum cluster is a group of museums in Danshui, Taiwan. It includes four museums: Fort San Domingo, Danshui Customs House, Huwei Fort, and the Shisanhang Museum of Archaeology. There is one director in charge of the museum cluster, while each museum maintains its own manager. The museums share three teams: administration, education, and operations. The museums share in marketing and sell tickets that allow patrons to visit all three museums. They create various special offers to attract different target audiences.<sup>31</sup>

Another example of a museum collaboration is the East Valley Museum Coalition. It formed after the Phoenix Museum of History closed in 2009. Administrators at local history museums worried about their own museums’ futures, so they turned to collaboration. Lisa Anderson (President and CEO of Mesa Historical Museum), Jody Crago (Administrator at Chandler Museum), and Peter Welsh (former Director of the Arizona Historical Society Museum) met to discuss what could be done. They wrote, “In seeking solutions, we were attracted to the idea of collaboration because many of our institutions have strengths in specific

---

<sup>28</sup> Chieh-Ching Tien, “The Formation and Impact of Museum Clusters: Two Case Studies in Taiwan,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 25, vol. 1 (2010): 69.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 80.

areas and weaknesses in others. We were curious to find a way for each institution to share strengths and mitigate weaknesses with strengths from other institutions.”<sup>32</sup>

The coalition’s collaborative efforts have included sharing collections and exhibitions. The Mesa Historical Museum gave their agriculture-related artifacts to the Chandler museum because the story of agriculture in the region could be told better on its ranch museum. When the Mesa Historical Museum moved to a new location, the old building was turned into a joint collections facility. The museums collaborated on the exhibit “Play Ball: The Cactus League Experience.” The Mesa Historical Museum started the exhibit in their building using 100 objects in a 1,000-square-foot space. However, when other museums showed interest in the exhibit, the Mesa Historical Museum collaborated with them to extend the exhibit to other facilities. Instead of simply making it a traveling exhibit, the Mesa Historical Museum allowed each of its partners to tailor the exhibit to their museum. For example, at the City of Mesa’s Arizona Museum for Youth, the exhibit became more interactive because the target audience was families. The Historical Museum curated the exhibit while the Museum for Youth designed the exhibit. The Mesa Historical Museum also helped the Museum for Youth promote and put on educational programming for the re-imagined exhibit.<sup>33</sup>

When the local newspaper the *East Valley Tribune* was sold, the new owners offered the collection of more than 500,000 old newspaper clippings and images to a partner museum. The newspaper had subsumed smaller papers in the East Valley and reported news from towns throughout the area, so museum staff members thought the collection should not belong to just one museum. The staff members talked to staff members at other coalition museums and

---

<sup>32</sup> Anderson, Crago, and Welsh, 22.

<sup>33</sup> Srianthi Perera, “Sharing History is the Way of the Future,” *The Arizona Republic*, July 21, 2013; Anderson, Crago, and Welsh, 23.

together they decided to take possession of the collection. The newspaper archive now resides at the Chandler Museum, but each of the coalition partners are providing resources for storing, cataloging, and digitizing the collection.<sup>34</sup>

The East Valley Museum Coalition has changed their name to the East Valley Cultural Heritage Coalition. The group has added an archaeology organization to the coalition and may add schools in the future. The group has not formed as a non-profit organization yet, but they are an affinity group to the Museum Association of Arizona, which serves as their fiscal agent when applying for grants as a group.<sup>35</sup>

The Chattanooga Museums Collaboration is a partnership among the Tennessee Aquarium, Creative Discovery Museum, and Hunter Museum of American Art; it is called a “museums” collaboration even though the aquarium is not a museum. The aquarium started collaborating with the Creative Discovery Museum in 1996 after the museum set unrealistic visitor number targets and faced a deficit after its first year in 1995, forcing the interim director to look for help. The Hunter Museum joined the collaboration in 2000 when an individual who served on both the aquarium and Hunter Museum boards suggested the institutions work together. The three institutions quickly expanded their collaborative ventures, because they are located close to each other and all want to improve the quality of life in the area.<sup>36</sup>

Because the aquarium is the largest and best funded of the three institutions, it offers support to the two other institutions in the areas of human resources, finance and accounting, information technology and marketing. Human resources staff members continually work to build trust between the three institutions by holding socials and joint training opportunities.

---

<sup>34</sup> Jody Crago, phone interview by author, March 31, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Heather DeGaetano, “Brookings Paper: The Chattanooga Museums Collaboration,” Hunter Museum of American Art, <http://www.huntermuseum.org/brookings-paper/> (accessed April 29, 2015).

Cooperative marketing includes purchasing radio and television ads, creating print ads, and joint ticketing. Purchasing goods for the gift shops is done together. Charlie Arant, Tennessee Aquarium CEO, said, “The best thing about this partnership is that each of the involved institutions gets more time and money to spend on their mission...I believe that many institutions could benefit from this type of partnership. It really is true that a rising tide lifts all boats.”<sup>37</sup>

One example of smaller museums working together is the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums in Colorado. The coalition has seventeen museum members and started in 2002. As stated in the coalition’s narrative entered for the Collaboration Prize,

The idea to form this group and its purpose was first introduced by Barbara Harrison of the McAllister House Museum. Her concept was to form an alliance of local non-profit museums in order to help one another, increase attendance at each museum and better use advertising dollars to the advantage of all members.<sup>38</sup>

The coalition has grown to do even more than just collaborate on advertising.<sup>39</sup> In addition to advertising together, the coalition hosts professional development opportunities for staff and volunteers. The coalition has an advertising board and banner that goes to various events throughout Colorado. They also have printed brochures together featuring all of the member institutions and create a monthly calendar of events. By advertising together, their potential audience can learn that there are multiple things to do in the region, so they will be more willing to visit. Workshops for staff and volunteers have included “Historic Tourism” and “Storage Techniques on a Budget for Small Museums.”<sup>40</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> DeGaetano.

<sup>38</sup> Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums, “Narrative,” Foundation Center, <http://collaboration.foundationcenter.org/search/narratives.php?id=4190> (accessed May 3, 2015).

<sup>39</sup> Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums, “Home,” Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums, <http://www.coalitionofpikespeakhistoricmuseums.org/> (accessed May 3, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums, “Narrative.”

One or more staff members from each museum belong to the coalition, with two at-large representatives included as well. Each monthly meeting rotates between the member museums; this allows staff to tour other museums and meet other staff and volunteers that they might not have met before. The meetings allow people from the various museums to talk about their plans and upcoming events so events can be coordinated and not end up being a competition.<sup>41</sup>

A brand new collaboration is being developed in Douglas County, Kansas: the Douglas County Heritage Alliance. On March 30, 2016, representatives from six historical organizations, along with a county commissioner, the assistant county administrator, the county heritage coordinator, the executive director of Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area (its office is in the county), and the director of the museum studies program at the University of Kansas met to form the alliance and identify common strengths and needs. Some needs included creating field trip partners to draw schools from farther away so their whole day is filled, having tour guides that would know about all the county historic sites, attracting major donors and private foundations, and marketing. A joint event calendar, regular e-newsletter that includes all the organizations, and a joint Facebook page were suggested as marketing tools. Some local strengths include the opportunity to use a large scanner at the University of Kansas' Spencer Research Library, funds from the local transient guest tax, and a helpful convention and visitors' bureau in Lawrence.<sup>42</sup> The alliance is beginning its efforts with a collaborative traveling exhibition that will visit all six member organizations.

These collaboration examples demonstrate that museums can partner with other institutions on many programs and cost-saving measures. It seems the most common collaborative effort by museums is marketing with other institutions, such as printing brochures

---

<sup>41</sup> Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums, "Narrative."

<sup>42</sup> Personal notes from Douglas County Heritage Luncheon, March 30, 2016.

that advertise all of the local cultural institutions or creating a radio advertisement together. Another common effort is to partner with other institutions for staff and volunteer training. Museums also coordinate events, exhibits, and programs with other institutions. Offering reciprocal admission to each other's institutions is another option. Partnering with other institutions allows for reduced group purchasing rates. Some collaborative ventures are radical, such as sharing staff members with other institutions, or sharing collections space. Collaboration can be as simple as creating brochures with one other institution, or it can extend as far as becoming involved in the institutional structure of multiple other organizations.

In conclusion, collaborating with other museums and cultural institutions is one option for history museums to become more resilient. Museums continue to face funding shortages, more competition for visitors, and falling into irrelevance. By using collaboration, museums can use their strengths and mitigate their weaknesses, making them less susceptible to closing their doors when a big change happens. Collaboration also allows museums to expand their services to draw in more visitors, increase their relevance, and potentially save money.

### **Levels of Integration**

Many museum professionals recognize collaboration as a way to increase museum resilience. However, developing a collaboration between two or more museums and cultural institutions can take many forms. Evaluation researcher Rebecca Gadjia writes,

Most collaboration theorists contend that collaborative efforts fall across a continuum of low to high integration. The level of integration is determined by the intensity of the alliance's process, structure, and purpose. For example, a network or round table is low on the relationship integration continuum because its process and structure is limited to communicating information and exploring interests. Toward the other end of the spectrum, a partnership/consortium/coalition is considered to be of moderately high integration because its primary purpose is to cooperate, which suggests that the group plans together to achieve mutual goals while maintaining separate identities. Other forms

that collaborative efforts take are support groups (low integration), and task forces/councils/alliances (medium integration).<sup>43</sup>

Gadja has developed an instrument to measure the level of integration a collaborative effort is at, the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR):

The SAFAR represents multiple levels of integration and their varying purposes, strategies/tasks, leadership/decision-making, and inter-personal and communication characteristics that are described extensively in the literature on strategic alliance development. The Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric is an assessment tool that can be utilized by program evaluators to evaluate collaboration and can be used in each stage of alliance development as part of a comprehensive evaluation plan that includes the assessment of collaboration over time.<sup>44</sup>

The earlier examples of collaboration vary in their level of integration. The museum cluster in Danshui, Taiwan is at the #5 Unifying level. The four museums have joined together under one head administrator and share staff members organized into three teams: administration, education, and operations. The Chattanooga Museums Collaboration is in the #4 Merging level. The three museums have merged their resources to support something new, extract money from existing systems, and have a long-term commitment. There is a sharing of resources linked to each organization's strengths and weaknesses. There is a formal structure in sharing staff members and purchasing. The East Valley Museum Coalition is at the #3 Partnering level. The member organizations share resources (money, collections, volunteers) to address common issues, while the organizations remain autonomous. Tasks are jointly developed and maintained, each organization maintains its own leadership, and there is evidence of productivity. The Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums is at level #2 Cooperating. The organizations have identified a mutual need for advertising and staff/volunteer development and are working together to meet these needs. There is a "go-to hub" of people made up of one to

---

<sup>43</sup> Rebecca Gadja, "Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluate Strategic Alliances," *American Journal of Evaluation* 25, no. 1 (March 2004): 68.

<sup>44</sup> Gadja, 70-71. A copy of the Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR) can be found in the appendix, on page 31.

two staff members from each member institution. Each institution has some investment in the coalition. The newly formed Douglas County Heritage Alliance is at the #1 Networking level. They have met once to explore interests, but currently have no tasks. There has been minimal group decision making and communication between members has only occurred once.

### **Work with Local Communities**

Another way for museums to become more resilient is to work with and serve their local communities. Smith argues that “a successful history organization is at the center of community activities, is a leader in the community, and a vital part of its history.”<sup>45</sup> Museum administrator David Fleming believes, “Museums have to connect with and have an impact upon the public. If they do not do that, there is not much point in having the museum in the first place.”<sup>46</sup>

As towns and cities in the United States become more diverse, history museums must adapt to serve minority groups. Smith writes, “As communities across the country diversify both culturally and ethnically, museums must develop an appeal to their present community. Otherwise, their collections and programs will be increasingly out of step with the modern public.”<sup>47</sup> Vagnone and Ryan warn, “Understanding the inclusion of *others* is a contemporary demand” that museums “must embrace if they are to remain relevant. Embrace rather than ignore the changing demographics around your site, seek diverse perspectives on how your” museum “can evolve into a more widely welcoming site.”<sup>48</sup> History museums glorifying the dominant Anglo male-centered story of America must adapt to serve all ethnic groups and genders to be relevant in today’s society.

---

<sup>45</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 12.

<sup>46</sup> David Fleming, “The Emotional Museum: The Case of National Museums Liverpool” in *Challenging History in the Museum*, Jenny Kidd, et al., eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2014), 26.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Vagnone and Ryan, 141.



Many scholars have called out the historic house museum for being particularly unwelcoming. Moe argues, “Most house museums fall into a single category of historic resources that is often flippantly described as ‘the homes of dead rich white guys.’”<sup>49</sup> In their critique, Vagnone and Ryan write that many potential visitors believe “Historic House Museums have nothing relevant to contribute to conversations. Many people perceive House Museums as elitist, insular, self-referential, and culturally old-fashioned.”<sup>50</sup> They also argue that

in their infinite wisdom, a great many House Museums place visitor and community concerns at the bottom of the barrel. This fundamental mindset of House and history first, visitors last is truly what needs to be inverted! Visitors and, especially, the surrounding communities should take primacy. In our desire to deify museums and historic sites, we risk alienating those very people we feel should flock to appreciate us.<sup>51</sup>

Historic house museums, along with all historic museums, need to become more welcoming and relevant to community members, who are potential visitors and supporters.

In her book *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon asks, “How can cultural institutions reconnect with the public and demonstrate their value and relevance in contemporary life?”<sup>52</sup> She answers by writing,

I believe they can do this by inviting people to actively engage as cultural participants, not passive consumers. As more people enjoy and become accustomed to participatory learning and entertainment experiences, they want to do more than just “attend” cultural events and institutions....When people can actively participate with cultural institutions, those places become central to cultural and community life.<sup>53</sup>

Simon argues museums should use participatory activities to get visitors involved, but in a way that still aligns with the mission of the museum. Museums should not introduce participatory activities just for the sake of it; they should be committed to hearing from visitors and creating

---

<sup>49</sup> Moe, 59.

<sup>50</sup> Vagnone and Ryan, 40.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Simon, under “Preface: Why Participate?”

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

something new with them. According to Simon, “Instead of being ‘about’ something or ‘for’ someone, participatory institutions are created and managed ‘with’ visitors.”<sup>54</sup>

With this shift to include visitors and community members as important collaborators, many museum professionals may be hesitant to give up some of their authority to the masses. However, the museum staff will continue to have the content knowledge, but can allow visitors to add their own interpretations to artifacts and exhibitions. In their book *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski argue,

What the museum ‘lets go’ of is not expertise but the assumption that the museum has the last word on historical interpretation. The museum instead is trying to prime the pump of interpretations, hoping that they will keep flowing on their own without the museum having to do all the heavy work and that new ideas will surface that the museum would never have come to on its own. This scenario involves letting go of the notion (usually illusory in any case) that one can or should control all outcomes in the museum. The staff becomes adept at living with, even relishing, uncertainty and unpredictability.<sup>55</sup>

To become more resilient by serving a community’s needs, museums are tackling tough subjects and issues. Museum scholar Lois Silverman notes, “Today, the world’s museums are embracing starkly bolder roles as agents of well-being and as vehicles for social change,” and they are “moving to adopt the definition now espoused by the International Council of Museums... ‘A museum is a non-profit making, permanent institution in *the service of society and of its development.*’”<sup>56</sup> According to Robert Janes,

The choice now [for museums] is between more of the same, or embracing mindfulness in pursuit of greater societal relevance. The sustainability that museums seek cannot be achieved through education, entertainment and connoisseurship, but by sustained public benefit through the quality of the work they do, sustained community support through the

---

<sup>54</sup> Simon, under “Preface: Why Participate?”

<sup>55</sup> Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds., *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World* (Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 13.

<sup>56</sup> Lois H. Silverman, *The Social Work of Museums* (London: Routledge, 2010), 3.

commitment of the local community, and an appropriate degree of financial commitment by the main financial stakeholders.<sup>57</sup>

Museums need to involve more people and face difficult subjects in order to become more relevant to contemporary society, thus more resilient.

Museums are in a special position where they can welcome people from different backgrounds to raise awareness and create dialogue about controversial subjects. Karp and Kratz introduce the idea of the “interrogative museum,” which they developed from one of their core principles of “exhibit the problem, not the solution.”<sup>58</sup> By this they mean curators should create exhibitions to provoke dialogue instead of merely lecturing to visitors. According to museum thinker Graham Black, the museum’s

ability to act as a center for dialogue within and between communities is at the heart of the museum’s capacity to play an active role within contemporary society...It can, for example, reduce tension between communities by developing approaches to display and programming that engage users with the lived experiences of others.<sup>59</sup>

One example of a museum acting as a center for dialogue is the Chicago History Museum. When the Chicago History Museum renovated its building in 2006, it also redesigned its adult education programs. The museum changed its program planning from being exhibition-centered to being community-centered. Museum educator D. Lynn McRainey writes, “Finding a place for the past in the present is critical for creating public value and relevance for a history museum. Programs designed as forums and gathering places for dialogue about current events can bring historical context to contemporary issues.”<sup>60</sup> The museum uses various formats for programming, such as panel discussions, forums, and city tours. One program is *In the K/now*, a

---

<sup>57</sup> Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World*, 184.

<sup>58</sup> Ivan Karp and Corinne A. Kratz, “The Interrogative Museum,” in *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges*, ed. Raymond A. Silverman (London: Routledge, 2015), 281.

<sup>59</sup> Graham Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century* (London: Routledge, 2012), 227.

<sup>60</sup> D. Lynn McRainey, “New Directions in Adult Education,” *Journal of Museum Education* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 36.

monthly forum for discussion on timely topics, such as environmental issues, politics, and immigration. Having a program each month allows the museum to keep up with important events and news stories.<sup>61</sup>

Another museum scholar who would like to see museums become more important in their communities is Douglas Worts. His “personal hope is that museums increasingly will maximize their potential to be culturally relevant by being much more responsive to the needs and realities of their communities and mindful of the impact... that their work has on those communities.”<sup>62</sup> He was a member of The Working Group on Museums and Sustainable Communities in Canada, which involved nine members who worked together to engage “the museum community in Canada in a process of awareness, reflection, learning, knowledge-sharing, capacity-building, and action related to their role in creating a ‘culture of sustainability.’”<sup>63</sup> One of their goals was to identify and use cultural indicators to determine how successful museum public programs were in meeting the needs of the community. To measure how many and how well needs were being met, they created the Critical Assessment Framework.<sup>64</sup> Museum staff members can use the framework to think about how their proposed program will meet the needs of the individual, community, and museum. At the individual level, staff should consider how well the proposed program will encourage visitors to become interested in a new topic, reflect, or challenge their ideas. At the community level, staffs need to think about how well the proposed program will meet a need in the community, encourage dialogue between different groups, or create links with other community groups. Finally, staff

---

<sup>61</sup> McRaine, 40.

<sup>62</sup> Douglas Worts, “Measuring Museum Meaning: A Critical Assessment Framework,” *Journal of Museum Education* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 47.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>64</sup> A copy of the Critical Assessment Framework can be found in the appendix, on page 32.

members need to consider how well the program will challenge assumptions held by the museum staff, include different perspectives, and act as a catalyst for change.<sup>65</sup>

One type of museum that is already committed to this community connection is the ecomuseum. Ecomuseums started in France, but are also popular in China, South America, Mexico, and Canada. Museologist Georges Henri Rivière defined an ecomuseum as

an instrument conceived, fashioned and operated jointly by a public authority, and its local population...It is an interpretation of space...It is a laboratory, insofar as it contributes to the study of the past and present of the population concerned and of its total environment...It is a conservation center, insofar as it helps to preserve and develop the natural and cultural heritage of the population. It is a school, insofar as it involves the population in its work of study and protection and encourages it to have a clearer grasp of its own future.<sup>66</sup>

Characteristics include the adoption of an area that may be defined by political boundaries, language, religion, or other categories; cooperation between different groups; involvement of local people; and holistic interpretation.<sup>67</sup> Museology professor Peter Davis claims the “key factor which makes an ecomuseum different from the traditional museum is community involvement.”<sup>68</sup> More museums should become ecomuseums and dedicate more of their efforts to working in and with the community.

### **Social Capital**

To create and maintain these collaborations, museum staffs, volunteers, and board members need to build relationships with community members. Educational researchers Bruce B. Frey, Jill H. Lohmeier, Stephen W. Lee, and Nona Tollefson write, “The core of collaborative

---

<sup>65</sup> Worts, 43-46.

<sup>66</sup> Georges Henri Rivière, “The Ecomuseum: An Evolutive Definition,” *Museum* 37, no. 4: 182-183, quoted in Peter Davis, *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place* (London: Leicester University Press, 1999), 79-80.

<sup>67</sup> Davis, 92.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

relationships among groups is the collaborative relationships between individuals who are part of those groups.<sup>69</sup> Museum professional Beverly Sheppard writes:

The up-front development of a partnership requires sensitivity and time to explore possibilities. Transparency and honesty are also essential....Taking the time to build relationships allows partners to get to know one another's staffs, programs, facilities, and audiences as thoroughly as possible and begins the process of building trust, which will anchor the project when the inevitable hard times arrive.<sup>70</sup>

Building these collaborative relationships requires social capital and can build social capital.

Political scientist Robert Putnam says that "social capital refers to connections among individuals--social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them."<sup>71</sup> Social capital scholar John Field argues, "The central idea of social capital is that social networks are a valuable asset. Networks provide a basis for social cohesion because they enable people to cooperate with one another--and not just with people they know directly--for mutual advantage."<sup>72</sup> Social capital allows people to accomplish more by working together than what they could alone.

Social capital is necessary to creating and maintaining collaborations between various cultural institutions. Collaborations come about because of people, whether they are volunteers, board members, or professional staff, who talk with their colleagues and get the ball rolling. They use professional networks to find possible institutional partners to work with. Trust between the different institutions has to already be present, or quickly developed, for the collaboration to succeed. Collaboration only works when people communicate with other people and are willing to take a chance working together.

---

<sup>69</sup> Bruce B. Frey, Jill H. Lohmeier, Stephen W. Lee, and Nona Tollefson, "Measuring Collaboration Among Grant Partners," *American Journal of Evaluation* 27, no. 3 (September 2006): 390-391.

<sup>70</sup> Beverly Sheppard, "Meaningful Collaboration," in *In Principle, In Practice: Museums as Learning Institutions*, eds. John H. Falk, Lynn D. Dierking, and Susan Foutz (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 184.

<sup>71</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2000), 14.

<sup>72</sup> John Field, *Social Capital*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 14.

These collaborations allow for the continued development of social capital among the various cultural institutions. For example, in the narrative entered for the Collaboration Prize, the Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums stated that “we find that with a representative from each member employing their input that our management structure continues to grow stronger and yield very positive outcomes. Everyone remains ‘on the same page’ and no one is left in the dark. Therefore, each member benefits through increased cooperation and mutual support.”<sup>73</sup> Most of the collaboration examples found in museums throughout the United States have staff representatives from each of the member institutions meeting frequently to stay up-to-date on what is happening in the institutions and the community. This gives staff members the opportunity to plan events together or to make sure not to compete on a certain topic or day. Individuals can share concerns and ask for advice from other professionals working in non-profit cultural institutions. Further developing social capital over the course of a collaboration helps to strengthen mutual trust, which could lead to collaboration in other areas.

Vagnone and Ryan urge historic house museum staff members to

expand your mission to include community engagement. Work to embed your HHM (historic house museum) into the neighborhood in relevant and meaningful ways. Hit the sidewalk. Attend community meetings. Participate in the life of the surrounding community to build social capital. Make a list of local non-profits and government agencies and call on the leaders of each of them. Share the mission of our HHM and explore how there might be existing programs to which your House could contribute. Initially focus on contacting those organizations that have the most overlap with the interests of your HHMs and the families who once occupied the home.<sup>74</sup>

By making connections with other organizations and people in the community, history museums can build social capital, which will lead to a more resilient institution.

---

<sup>73</sup> Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums, “Narrative.”

<sup>74</sup> Vagnone and Ryan, 66.

## Factors Leading to a Successful Collaboration

The project Building Strong Community Networks, with which Heart of Brooklyn was involved, created a list of ten points to keep in mind for a collaboration to succeed. First, the collaboration must be embraced by everyone in the institution, regardless of position. Second, staff who participate in collaborations must feel supported. Third, collaboration should come about because of an urge to be relevant. Fourth, community-based collaboration should work toward needs in the community. Fifth, training across institutions needs to develop required collaborative skills in staff members. Sixth, the institutions should invite community input into decision making. Seventh, the institutions involved must share ideas to lessen risk. Eighth, the collaboration must involve community members. Ninth, collaboration requires shared goals. Finally, measuring success should be done in various ways.<sup>75</sup>

Another factor in the potential success of museum collaboration is being geographically close with institutional partners. Museum scholar J. Aldo Do Carmo Jr. found that “On one edge, a museum may collaborate with its geographically close peer, no matter if the disciplines are not the same. On the other, a museum may collaborate with geographically distant peers, if this is in the same discipline or discussion.”<sup>76</sup> All of the collaboration examples in this paper are of institutions that are located geographically close to each other. The “‘strong ties’ required to create and run [a] collaborative ‘joint-project’” partly depend upon being geographically close.<sup>77</sup> It makes sense for museums to collaborate with other cultural institutions that are located nearby;

---

<sup>75</sup> Institute for Learning Innovation & Heart of Brooklyn, *Building Strong Community Networks: A Position Paper* (Edgewater, MD: Institute for Learning Innovation, 2011), 34-35.

<sup>76</sup> J. Aldo Do Carmo Jr., “Collaboration among Museums: Forms and Configurations of Collaborative Behavior,” Academia.edu, [http://www.academia.edu/767229/Collaboration\\_among\\_Museums\\_Forms\\_and\\_Configurations\\_of\\_Collaborative\\_Behavior](http://www.academia.edu/767229/Collaboration_among_Museums_Forms_and_Configurations_of_Collaborative_Behavior) (accessed May 13, 2015), 14.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.



stakeholders can meet frequently to discuss projects. Also, institutions can work together on more collaborative projects, such as co-hosting events or sharing staff.

Money is a factor in the success of a museum collaboration. Smith recommends writing a business proposition when entering into a collaboration. Many times organizations are too casual while planning a partnership, which could set up the collaboration for future disagreement and even failure.<sup>78</sup>

Finally, when beginning a collaboration, museum staff members must look to partner with organizations that have similar goals. Are they complementary organizations? Do they provide complementary value to the community? Working with similar organizations will help the collaboration to work toward shared goals.<sup>79</sup>

### **Barriers to Collaboration**

Museum professionals may see collaboration as a panacea for museums' problems, but it is not: it comes with its own set of challenges and problems. Sheppard writes, "Meaningful collaboration is very difficult. Such efforts require strong institutional commitment at all levels--sufficient time and resources, artful communication, and a clarity of vision. The work can be arduous, the risks great, and the effort far beyond the original conception."<sup>80</sup> The Institute for Learning Innovation and Heart of Brooklyn warn that "all parties should recognize that collaboration is accompanied by significant institutional risk."<sup>81</sup> Amy Ryall writes that "we must accept that a collaborative relationship contains within it elements of conflict and not be intimidated by that. We must accept that the relationship might be messy, uncomfortable,

---

<sup>78</sup> Gary Smith, phone interview by author, March 30, 2016.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Sheppard, 182.

<sup>81</sup> Institute for Learning Innovation & Heart of Brooklyn, 35.

awkward, critical, [and] emotional.”<sup>82</sup> Crago said that participating in the coalition is extra work for everyone involved. It takes an incredible amount of time for the leaders of the member institutions to develop trust with each other and in the coalition.<sup>83</sup> According to Smith, disagreements regarding money can happen in collaborative ventures and a collaboration may be threatened if leadership changes at one or more of the member institutions.<sup>84</sup> Museum professionals need to be cognizant of these potential pitfalls before starting to collaborate with other organizations.

The Building Strong Community Networks project compiled a list of internal and external barriers to collaboration between cultural institutions. Internal barriers include the ever present problem of funding, lack of time, lack of specific expertise by staff members, rigid institutional structures, and the museum not having collaboration as a priority. External barriers include competition for limited resources (such as grants and donations from businesses), public perception of a collaborative venture, and differing goals and structures between the museum and another institution.<sup>85</sup>

Collaboration may be difficult to implement in some places and will not work for every museum. Some museum professionals are entrenched in old ways of thinking and do not see a need to change the status quo. They may resist efforts to lessen their authority in the museum. Collaboration will not solve resiliency problems in every museum, because each museum is unique. For example, Karp and Kratz warn that “the uncertainty and openness of collaborative work can lead to dead ends, failures, and confounding obstacles at points in the larger process.”<sup>86</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup> Amy Ryall, “Part 2: Challenging Collaborations” in *Challenging History in the Museum*, Jenny Kidd, et al., eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2014), 82.

<sup>83</sup> Jody Crago, phone interview by author, March 31, 2016.

<sup>84</sup> Gary Smith, phone interview by author, March 30, 2016.

<sup>85</sup> Institute for Learning Innovation & Heart of Brooklyn, 28.

<sup>86</sup> Karp and Kratz, 287.

A museum should seriously consider if it has the time and resources to devote to a collaborative project before starting one with another museum or cultural institution.

### **Conclusion**

To keep museum doors open, museum professionals at historical museums must rethink their strategies. Decreased funding to museums and increasing competition from other educational and entertainment activities will not be going away any time soon. To become more resilient, museums can collaborate with other cultural institutions to save money and compensate for weaknesses, and work with their local communities to become more relevant. Amy Ryall states, “The very reason why museums exist has changed dramatically in recent times. They are no longer repositories of, and for, the great and the good. In order to develop through difficult times, to remain relevant and for the case for museums to be made, we must formulate a new narrative, one which has collaboration, with all its difficulties, pressures and rewards, at its heart.”<sup>87</sup>

If museum professionals ignore the call for resilience, they risk museums becoming obsolete institutions full of artifacts, but empty of visitors. Janes argues that

as some of the most conservative institutions in contemporary society, many museums will be unwilling or unable to grasp the import and necessity of rethinking their current successes and failures. This is not a bad thing, for the disappearance of myopic museums may well be beneficial, as the public and private resources allocated to museums diminish. There may, in fact, be too many museums, even now.<sup>88</sup>

This leads into another question: are there too many history museums in the United States and should some of them close their doors? This then opens up discussion on which museums should close. Which museums are worth saving and which ones are not? Should this be evaluated on attendance numbers, the amount of artifacts accessioned, or the quality of the

---

<sup>87</sup> Ryall, 82.

<sup>88</sup> Janes, *Museums in a Troubled World*, 25.

museum visit experience? Smith argues, “Museums that have served their purpose of preserving the history of their community but have not successfully transitioned leadership, built a contemporary constituency, or are supported financially by the current community may be candidates for closing.”<sup>89</sup> Researchers in museum studies need to think about the future of museums if the status quo continues.

The current state of research on the topic of creating resilient museums is lacking. Many people who work in museums realize there is a problem of museums closing, but few have written about it. There is not a comprehensive list of the museums that have closed during the past ten years, let alone explanations as to *why* they are closing. There is plenty of room for more researchers to study how museums can best adjust their mindset and practices to continue as resilient institutions.

---

<sup>89</sup> Smith, Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village, 27.

## Bibliography

- Adair, Bill, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, eds. *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*. Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011.
- Anderson, Lisa A., Jody A. Crago, and Peter H. Welsh. "A New Day for Local History: No Longer an Island." *History News* 66, no. 4 (Autumn 2011): 20-25.
- Berry, Jahna. "Phoenix History Museum Forced to Close June 30." *Arizona Republic*, June 22, 2009. <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2009/06/22/20090622phxmuseum0622.html> (accessed October 5, 2014).
- Black, Graham. *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Bullard, Giuliana. "Government Doubles Official Estimate: There are 35,000 Active Museums in the U.S." *Institute of Museum and Library Services*, May 19, 2014. [http://www.imls.gov/government\\_doubles\\_official\\_estimate.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/government_doubles_official_estimate.aspx) (accessed December 15, 2014).
- Carson, Cary. "The End of History Museums: What's Plan B?" *The Public Historian* 30, no. 4 (November 2008): 9-27.
- Coalition of Pikes Peak Historic Museums. "Narrative." Foundation Center. <http://collaboration.foundationcenter.org/search/narratives.php?id=4190> (accessed May 3, 2015).
- Davis, Peter. *Ecomuseums: A Sense of Place*. London: Leicester University Press, 1999.
- DeGaetano, Heather. "Brookings Paper: The Chattanooga Museums Collaboration." Hunter Museum of American Art. <http://www.huntermuseum.org/brookings-paper/> (accessed December 9, 2014).
- Do Carmo, J. Aldo Jr. "Collaboration among Museums: Forms and Configurations of Collaborative Behavior." Academia.edu. [http://www.academia.edu/767229/Collaboration\\_among\\_Museums\\_Forms\\_and\\_Configurations\\_of\\_Collaborative\\_Behavior](http://www.academia.edu/767229/Collaboration_among_Museums_Forms_and_Configurations_of_Collaborative_Behavior) (accessed May 13, 2015).
- Field, John. *Social Capital*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2008.
- Frey, Bruce B., Jill H. Lohmeier, Stephen W. Lee, and Nona Tollefson. "Measuring Collaboration Among Grant Partners." *American Journal of Evaluation* 27, no. 3 (September 2006): 383-392.
- Gadja, Rebecca. "Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluate Strategic Alliances." *American Journal of Evaluation* 25, no. 1 (March 2004): 65-77.
- Geller, Stephanie Lessans, and Lester M. Salamon. "Museums and Other Nonprofits in the Current Recession: A Story of Resilience, Innovation, and Survival." *Journal of Museum Education* 35, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 129-140.

- Hirzy, Ellen Cochran, ed. *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 1992.
- Institute for Learning Innovation & Heart of Brooklyn. *Building Strong Community Networks: A Position Paper*. Edgewater, MD: Institute for Learning Innovation, 2011, [http://www.heartofbrooklyn.org/\\_literature\\_104901/Building\\_Strong\\_Community\\_Networks\\_Position\\_Paper](http://www.heartofbrooklyn.org/_literature_104901/Building_Strong_Community_Networks_Position_Paper) (accessed April 29, 2015).
- Janes, Robert R. "The Mindful Museum." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 53, no. 3 (July 2010): 325-338.
- , *Museums in a Troubled World: Renewal, Irrelevance, or Collapse?* London: Routledge, 2009.
- Karp, Ivan, and Corinne A. Kratz. "The Interrogative Museum." In *Museum as Process: Translating Local and Global Knowledges*, edited by Raymond A. Silverman, 279-298. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Kidd, Jenny, et al., eds. *Challenging History in the Museum*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Co., 2014.
- Lello, Megan. "Lancaster's Heritage Center Museum Designing Plan to Combat More than \$1 Million in Debt." *Witf*, August 2, 2011. [http://www.witf.org/news/2011/08/lancasters-heritage-center-museum-designing-plan-to-combat-more-than-\\$1-million-debt.php](http://www.witf.org/news/2011/08/lancasters-heritage-center-museum-designing-plan-to-combat-more-than-$1-million-debt.php) (accessed October 5, 2014).
- McRaney, D. Lynn. "New Directions in Adult Education." *Journal of Museum Education* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2008): 33-42.
- Moe, Richard. "Are There Too Many House Museums?" *Forum Journal* 27, no. 1 (Fall 2012): 55-61.
- Moldavanova, Alisa. "Two Narratives of Intergenerational Sustainability: A Framework for Sustainable Thinking." *American Review of Public Administration* (2014): 1-20.
- Oregon Legal Glossary. "Definition of Cultural Institution." WebLaws.org. [http://www.oregonlaws.org/glossary/definition/cultural\\_institution](http://www.oregonlaws.org/glossary/definition/cultural_institution) (accessed May 2, 2015).
- Perera, Srianthi. "Sharing History is the Way of the Future." *The Arizona Republic*, July 21, 2013 (accessed April 29, 2015).
- Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2000.

- Rosales, Christina. "Women's Museum at Dallas' Fair Park to Close." *Dallas Morning News*, October 6, 2011. <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/community-news/dallas/headlines/20111004-womens-museum-at-dallas-fair-park-to-close.ece> (accessed October 5, 2014).
- Sheppard, Beverly. "Meaningful Collaboration." In *In Principle, In Practice: Museums as Learning Institutions*, edited by John H. Falk, Lynn D. Dierking, and Susan Foutz, 181-194. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007.
- Silverman, Lois H. *The Social Work of Museums*. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Simon, Nina. *The Participatory Museum*. <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/read/> (accessed December 12, 2014).
- Smith, Gary N., Summerlee Foundation, and Dallas Heritage Village. *Summerlee Commission on the Financial Sustainability of History Organizations: Summary Findings and Recommendations*. Dallas: Summerlee Foundation, 2015.
- Tien, Chieh-Ching. "The Formation and Impact of Museum Clusters: Two Case Studies in Taiwan." *Museum Management and Curatorship* 25, no. 1 (2010): 69–85.
- Vagnone, Franklin D., and Deborah E. Ryan. *Anarchist's Guide to Historic House Museums*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2016.
- Walker, Brian and David Salt. *Resilience Thinking: Sustaining Ecosystems and People in a Changing World*. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006.
- Welsh, Peter. "Resilience as a Strategy for Museums: Or, Getting by with a Little (or a Lotta) Help from Your Friends." Powerpoint presentation, annual conference of the Kansas Museums Association, Lawrence, KS, October 16-18, 2013.
- Worts, Douglas. "Measuring Museum Meaning: A Critical Assessment Framework." *Journal of Museum Education* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 41-48.

## Appendix

Level of Integration	Purpose	Strategies and Tasks	Leadership and Decision-Making	Interpersonal and Communication
Networking  1	Create a web of communication  Identify and create a base of support  Explore interests	Loose or no structure  Flexible, roles not-defined  Few if any defined tasks	Non-hierarchical  Flexible  Minimal or no group decision making	Very little interpersonal conflict  Communication among all members infrequent or absent
Cooperating  2	Work together to ensure tasks are done  Leverage or raise money  Identify mutual needs, but maintain separate identities	Member links are advisory  Minimal structure  Some strategies and tasks identified	Non-hierarchical, decisions tend to be low stakes  Facilitative leaders, usually voluntary  Several people form "go-to" hub	Some degree of personal commitment and investment  Minimal interpersonal conflict  Communication among members clear, but may be informal
Partnering  3	Share resources to address common issues  Organizations remain autonomous but support something new  To reach mutual goals together	Strategies and tasks are developed and maintained  Central body of people  Central body of people have specific tasks	Autonomous leadership  Alliance members share equally in the decision making  Decision making mechanism are in place	Some interpersonal conflict  Communication system and formal information channels developed  Evidence of problem solving and productivity
Merging  4	Merge resources to create or support something new  Extract money from existing systems/members  Commitment for a long period of time to achieve short and long-term outcomes	Formal structure to support strategies and tasks is apparent  Specific and complex strategies and tasks identified  Committees and sub-committees formed  High	Strong, visible leadership  Sharing and delegation of roles and responsibilities  Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	High degree of commitment and investment  Possibility of interpersonal conflict high  Communication is clear, frequent and prioritized  degree of problem solving and productivity
Unifying  5	Unification or acquisition to form a single structure  Relinquishment of autonomy to support surviving organization	Highly formal, legally complex  Permanent re-organization of strategies and tasks	Central, typically hierarchical leadership  Leadership capitalizes upon diversity and organizational strengths	Possibility of interpersonal conflict very high  Communication is clear, frequent, prioritized, formal and informal

**Strategic Alliance Formative Assessment Rubric (SAFAR).**

Source: Figure from Rebecca Gadja, "Utilizing Collaboration Theory to Evaluate Strategic Alliances," *American Journal of Evaluation* 25, no. 1 (March 2004): figure 3.



### Critical Assessment Framework—Museum Projects and Initiatives

(Rating performance without criteria is subjective. Discussions are useful and will generate criteria.)

When considering a new public program initiative, ask how well the program will:	Poorly to Well					N/A
	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Personal Level (members of community)</b>						
Contribute and/or generate new insights						
Capture imagination						
Stimulate curiosity						
Encourage personal reflection						
Enhance ability to think critically and creatively						
Provide opportunity to examine and clarify values						
Demonstrate relevance and make connection to daily life						
Affirm, challenge, deepen identity						
Help develop a sense of place						
Help deal with complexity and uncertainty						
Increase responsible action						
Stimulate intrinsic motivation						
<b>Community Level</b>						
Address vital and relevant needs/issues/opportunities within community						
Generate information and connection at the personal, community, provincial/territorial, national, and global level						
Engage a diverse public						
Provide an outlet for the voices of diverse groups						
Encourage social interactions and debate						
Act as a catalyst for action						
Stimulate intergenerational interactions						
Link existing community groups to one another						
Initiate or enhance long term collaborative relationships						
Create partnerships that empower community groups						
Enhance the credibility of all involved						
Result in products & processes that have tangible impacts in community						
Generate information applicable to museum & community decision making						
<b>Museum Level (employee and institution)</b>						
Challenge personal and institutional assumptions						
Be guided by clearly articulated goals, objectives and outcomes						
Use the most effective vehicle for achieving goals ( <i>Note: differentiate between goals, outcomes and strategies.</i> )						
Identify and value staff skills and resources						
Empower, transform and affect all who are involved						
Create a community of learning within staff						
Engage key players/champions/detractors early in process (ext./int.)						
Include multiple perspectives						
Engage different learning styles						
Integrate different dimensions of sustainability						
Integrate scientific, local and traditional knowledge						
Act as a catalyst for partnering community organizations						

Source: Figure from Douglas Worts, "Measuring Museum Meaning: A Critical Assessment Framework," *Journal of Museum Education* 31, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 49.

