

Welcome to Room 2: How do these ideas translate to practice? What are museums actually doing to attract diverse audiences?

Greg Stevens: Hi everyone!

Amelia B: Hi Greg!

Greg Stevens: Hi Amelia!

Angelique Harrell: Hi Greg!

Schroeder Cherry: hey there, Greg!

Greg Stevens: so, what do we make of all this?

Greg Stevens: Hi Schroeder

Greg Stevens: My issue is that Diversity is much bigger than race and ethnicity

Jessica Wimbley: Hi Greg, One of my questions or comments I guess, is I feel that shifting the gaze of the museum which includes allowing the viewer to curate his/her experience of the museum, or interpret museum holdings.

Greg Stevens: Good comment Jessica

Greg Stevens: does the shift lessen the experience?

Jessica Wimbley: I think this is where tech comes into play, it is a mediation that greatly allows for individuality but in a shared virtual space

Greg Stevens: agreed

Claudia Ocello: But tech is not available to everyone

Greg Stevens: I think technology is democratizing the situation.

Angelique Harrell: I think it can improve the experience...and I agree through technology

Greg Stevens: Hi Claudia,

Greg Stevens: so how can we get tech to more people?

Diane Gutenkauf: I think a fundamental component of museums reaching diverse audiences is that museums must do basic audience research to understand how they're connecting with visitors, and I don't think most of us do that

Greg Stevens: good point Diane

Jessica Wimbley: I think it becomes more inclusive- one of the issues when Fred Wilson was mentioned, is that a lot of museum really do reveal a colonial gaze in terms of how the work is talked about, and even placed in historical context, this gaze, also needs to become more integrated

Claudia Ocello: I argue for less tech, or tech only when appropriate - there are so many other ways to reach the visitors -

Jessica Wimbley: but how do visitors reach museums?

Elizabeth Bazan: It also seems that we must also research our communities, because perhaps our audience is limited, and we want to reach out further

Greg Stevens: Interesting comment Jessica, anyone else?

Greg Stevens: Ah Elizabeth, but recall Gregory said that "community" is really about geography, not a Group

Angelique Harrell: technology allows for the multi-lingual readings that most museums lack

Claudia Ocello: I keep thinking about John Falk's latest book, about visitor identity - has anyone else read it?

Greg Stevens: not yet, but tell us some?

Auntaneshia Staveloz: I think the argument of the digital divide is one that has diminished over the years due to the spiking trends of technology being more available to populations across race, ethnicity and socio-economic groups. I think that we should probably focus our efforts more on coming up with ways to better utilize these resources that have become almost second nature to a very broad population.

Julie McGee: What heretofore" professional museums practices" actually hinder the very engagement we seek?

Greg Stevens: Julie, can you explain?

Jessica Wimbley: Auntaneshia, I think in the future of museums report, it also mentioned how tech, has also been a bridge between generations as well

PHIL KATZ: Indeed, the latest report from the Pew Internet Project shows a sharp decrease in the digital divide

PHIL KATZ: There's a link in the latest Research Roundup on the Center's website

Angelique Harrell: Working with students of all ages, in an inner-city environment, the one thing my students have in common is technology

Claudia Ocello: But the divide is also generational, isn't it

Greg Stevens: and tech is where people are

David de la Torre: Hi Greg, et al. I am involved with a new cultural center dedicated to Mexican and Mexican American heritage in Los Angeles, LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes. We intend to use technology to reach our audiences especially young people. This means in the museum itself and through the Internet. I think the use of technology has to be a part of our program development for a number of reasons. Bi-lingual labels is a given for us.

Angelique Harrell: true, but if students are interested, it may be enough to become that family, leisure activity

Greg Stevens: Hi David! Great to se you

Auntaneshia Staveloz: I think that sometimes we become too complacent with how we approach the idea of audience development; and instead of stretching our thinking about new ways to engage diverse populations we seem to just regurgitate the same practices and just insert the target population at that given time

Angelique Harrell: what do you propose?

Auntaneshia Staveloz: I also think that part of the issues surrounding a somewhat lack of uptake in approaching some of the newer media is the lack of funding support that is made available to museums/cultural institutions nationwide.

James Chung: Auntaneshia, quick comment on digital divide. From our other research outside the museum field, we're seeing that the divide is biggest not by ethnicity, but by age. Significant drop off over the age of 70, and significant shift under the age of 30. For a current museum survey in the field (online), we're finding no issues among visitors to children's museums. Almost all the user challenges are among older visitors still using their original AOL browser! We'll post more on that to our blog.

Angelique Harrell: there's grant money to be had in digitization projects.

Greg Stevens: David, I think also of the Museum of National Mexican Art in Chicago. Their target audience is the Mexican community in which they are located. Not "Latino" broadly, but Mexican

Claudia Ocello: But why is digitization the solution? What about bringing people in the door physically?

Jessica Wimbley: I work at a small college museum, and we have programmed an exhibition called "In Front of the Real Thing" which allows local artists access to our collections in storage to use as influences in making new work. It was a great way to get people to engage with our collections, and in essence curate his/her experience with our objects, and stimulate creative practice

Angelique Harrell: it's not the only solution.

Angelique Harrell: programming, I think, is just as, if not more so important

Claudia Ocello: I'd be curious to hear about solutions beyond digital that people are putting into practice

Jessica Wimbley: use the web was key in artist picking work, but then they got to see the and interact with the actual object

Claudia Ocello: That sounds interesting

Angelique Harrell: web viewing entices people to visit museums to see the real thing

Claudia Ocello: OK, but once we get them in the door are we doing the same old same old?

Jessica Wimbley: It really does, and the idea that people can go thru and pick what is of interest and what they want to see gives them more ownership in his/her experience

Angelique Harrell: I think Gregory made a valid point - why change how we treat visitors? An individual is an individual

Greg Stevens: yes!

Angelique Harrell: it's the programming that will get diverse groups in the doors, once there...they're museum-goers

Greg Stevens: and more so because of the increasing "mix"

Claudia Ocello: I go back to Falk's book about visitor identity and motivations for visiting - Falk defines 5 categories of visitors

Claudia Ocello: He is rethinking how people learn - it's not just the physical, social and socio-cultural context anymore

Claudia Ocello: He's overlapped identity onto it - which he claims is not either you look at visitors or you look at how museums work with them - it's the intersection that creates learning and more museum visitors

Greg Stevens: Right.

Angelique Harrell: I know in that regard, VTS has become very popular in various institutions in MA

Greg Stevens: For example, how do you address the needs of a gay Latino senior?

Angelique Harrell: I think the target audience has become elementary students and up, and education is therefore an important part

Greg Stevens: well sure, you want to get them while they're young

Claudia Ocello: But those audiences aside, how can you get in the person who is the "casual visitor" or just the general public, especially a population that is growing in your area?

Greg Stevens: James Chung and Susie Wilkening talk about this in their Book Life Stages of the Museum Visitor and their AAM webinar of same name

Claudia Ocello: Yes, I'm also reading that book!

Greg Stevens: <http://www.aam-us.org/getinvolved/learn/understandingmuseumaudience.cfm>

Greg Stevens: Book is great

Cecilia Garibay: The issue with the 5 categories is that they are all about people who go to museums now. It doesn't necessarily look at the values and experiences of non-museum goers, which I feel museums have the potential to serve.

Greg Stevens: Agreed

David de la Torre: technology is but a tool. Though target audiences are always a concern and part of marketing plans we should be engaged in attracting the broadest possible audiences through development of engaging programs that happen on site at our institutions as well as in cyberspace.

James Chung: Claudia, feel free to get in touch if the book triggers any questions.

Greg Stevens: It does boil down to relevant programming

Claudia Ocello: Why can't there be a facilitator or a Professional Hobbyist who is from Mexico with their family?

Claudia Ocello: Thanks James, we are using it as one of the textbooks for our Museum Ed class at Seton Hall University

Greg Stevens: and a mission that reflects diversity

Greg Stevens: Great chat everyone!

Claudia Ocello: thanks for moderating, Greg, and thanks all for the chat

Greg Stevens: Thanks for joining us

Greg Stevens: Thank you Claudia

Auntaneshia Staveloz: I agree with the sentiment of individuals are individuals and that we need to attract people by their interest and levels of engagement. We need to meet people where they are and gauge their levels of interactivity and willingness to engage in our institutions. I think that bodies in the door is the ultimate goal for the large majority of our institutions, but I wonder if this is an increasingly outdated way of thinking? I put the question out there.

Jessica Wimbley: Great chat everyone; I hope to meet some of you at the conference!

Greg Stevens: great to "see" you