

ABSTRACT

To Survive or Thrive: Exhibit Development in the Age of Covid

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In 2020, the Texas museum field was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic and the national protests that broke out after the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police. Using three cultural institutions as case studies (the Pearce Museum at Navarro College, Baylor Libraries, and Rienzi House and Gardens at Museum of Fine Arts Houston) and a survey, this thesis examines the impact of these two events. Each institution had its own struggles to overcome as they dealt with both events. Each institution had to decide: to survive or to thrive., Their decisions can serve as inspiration that can help influence the museum field no matter the differing circumstances.

To Survive or Thrive: Exhibit Development in the Age of Covid

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
DEDICATION	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction.....	1
CHAPTER TWO	11
Exhibit Development through Evaluation	11
CHAPTER THREE	23
Case Study #1 – The Pearce Museum	23
<i>Before Spring 2020</i>	23
<i>Spring 2020 and Beyond</i>	46
<i>Corsicana Community</i>	48
<i>Conclusion</i>	50
CHAPTER FOUR.....	53
Case Study #2 – Baylor Libraries	53
<i>Baylor Libraries – Before March 2020</i>	53
<i>Baylor Libraries – Post COVID-19</i>	62
<i>Baylor Libraries – Diversity/Inclusion</i>	68
<i>Conclusion</i>	71
CHAPTER FIVE	73
Case Study #3 – Rienzi at MFAH	73
<i>Rienzi Museum Fine Arts, Houston – Before March 2020</i>	73
<i>Rienzi – Post COVID-19</i>	84
<i>Rienzi – Diversity/Inclusion</i>	94
<i>Conclusion</i>	96
CHAPTER SIX.....	98
Survey Analysis	98
Section A:.....	99
Section B:.....	99
<i>Questions about Individual and Institutional Demographics</i>	100
<i>Questions about Development and Communication</i>	103
CHAPTER SEVEN	114

Conclusion	114
APPENDIX.....	121
<i>Survey Results</i>	121
<i>Section A</i>	121
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	128

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 6.1. How long have you worked in the Museum Field?.....	100
Figure 6.2. Question 7 A: How many staff members (full- and part-time) are employed by your institution?.....	101
Figure 6.3. Question 8 A: How does your institution communicate to the general public? Mark all that Apply.....	102
Figure 6.4. Question 7b: What tensions exist between your exhibition staff and outside professionals/consultants?.....	108

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DEDICATION

To the Museum Field

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

A great amount of work goes into designing exhibits for every museum, from deciding whose voices are heard to what information is presented to visitors. Fair, as exhibits are one of the chief tools available to directly interact with visitors. Complications arise during the development process, particularly when deciding what museums wish to display and how. No two institutions share the same process in design, as Michael Spock has eloquently stated: “Exhibition development is like rocket science... complex, difficult, and time-consuming.”¹ Some institutions follow a rule as something close to scripture, while another merely sees as a suggestion for what could be done rather than should be done. For example, many museums are markedly different in how they approach representation of indigenous voices in their exhibits. Eric Hemenway, Director of Repatriation, Archives and Records for the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indian, a federally recognized tribe in northern Michigan, gave his opinion on the matter during a guest lecture event in Spring 2020. He stated that “having equal space and resources is critical. I have worked on some exhibits where the tribes have only one panel out of dozens. In other cases, it’s the opposite where the museum gives tribes ample space and voice.”²

¹ Kathleen McLean, “Introduction: Best Practices Should Be a Tool, Not a Rule,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004) 2.

² Eric Hemenway, Guest Lecture, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, February 17, 2020.

Hemenway has spent the better part of his forty-three years alive working alongside museums as they follow their repatriation protocols and acting as a consultant to prospective exhibits. The barrier for what value he contributes varies incredibly in his own state, where he and his workers spent ten years at Mackinow Island to become familiar with one another enough to revamp the oldest house on the island into a cultural center.³ Museums have difficulty letting people interact directly with their process, and, unfortunately, it takes years for steps to be taken so that the people who are most directly impacted by their exhibits to have their voices properly heard. When they are finally heard, it is nothing more than token representation to check off a box, like putting one panel up when there could be dozens.

Hemenway's experience sadly is not wholly unique to Native American representation in museums. Latinx and African Americans have battled for decades to ensure that their history is discussed in a healthy and respectful manner. One of the most famous examples for African American communities comes from the 1969 exhibit by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, titled *Harlem on My Mind: Cultural Capital of Black America, 1900 – 1969*. It was an art exhibit designed to embrace the African American community without the direct involvement of the African American community. When they did ask for help from cultural advisors and were told to put in art and writings by African Americans, "their counsel was ignored."⁴ Their decision to ignore sound advice led to their failure to realize what was wrong with what they were displaying as well. The

³ Ibid.

⁴ Holland Cotter, "What I Learned From a Disgraced Art Show on Harlem," *New York Times*, published August 19, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/20/arts/design/what-i-learned-from-a-disgraced-art-show-on-harlem.html>.

Met's photographs for the exhibit clashed directly with the community of Harlem's interpretation of art. Both the art world and "Harlem's[...] communities did not accept photography as a form of art."⁵ Not only did the Metropolitan explicitly ignore the advice from their community, but they also displayed the "art" of Harlem in a very disrespectful manner. By displaying photographs, they conveyed the message that the art they produced was no better than common photography, a medium that no respectable artist in the late 1960s took seriously. This implied that Harlem was tiers below artists around the rest of the world according to the Met, creating a form of artistic segregation as the Civil Rights Acts broke down the legislative barriers. Protest and outrage quickly followed the unveiling of the exhibit, with popular signs asking, "Harlem on Whose Mind?" directly outside the Metropolitan and other art institutions.⁶ *Harlem on My Mind* motivated people to ensure their own voices were heard and to fight against racial exclusion. It opened the door for African American voices to be heard in museums across the country, but it did so by showing how little representation existed. While "unexpected" compared to what the Met's Director Thomas Hoving had originally envisioned, this was the reality of how minority voices were handled in museums.⁷ Although there has been progress in how African Americans are presented in museums, much work remains as evidenced by the events of the summer of 2020.

⁵ Bridget R Cooks, "Black Artists and Activism: Harlem on My Mind," *American Studies (Volume 48) No. 1*. (Mid-American Studies Association: 2007), 8. <https://www.csus.edu/indiv/o/obriene/art112/readings/harlem%20on%20my%20mind%20exhibition%20review%202007.pdf>.

⁶ Holland Cotter, "What I Learned From a Disgraced Art Show on Harlem," *New York Times*, published August 19th, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/20/arts/design/what-i-learned-from-a-disgraced-art-show-on-harlem.html>.

⁷ Ibid.

On May 25, 2020, Minneapolis police officers detained George Floyd, an African American man. Officer Derek Chauvin kept his knee on Floyd's neck for more than eight minutes. Floyd died before paramedics arrived.⁸ His death, while not the first and unfortunately not the last at the hands of police officers, inspired protesters across the nation to demand change. What had been brewing since the murders at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015 had finally reached begun to overflow.⁹ For years the oppressed have been told to wait for change to happen of its own accord and to let the system work itself out in due time. Now the realization has occurred again, just like it did years ago in Birmingham that "this 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never'" and if change is going to happen, then it needs to be "demanded."¹⁰ People desire change and are acting to create it since those in charge are clearly not willing to do so on their own merits. Efforts have increased across the United States as people seek to change things for the better in various ways. The NAACP renewed their efforts in asking the Mississippi State Legislature to remove the Confederate battle symbol that was "embedded in the heart of the Mississippi flag."¹¹

⁸ Evan Hill, Ainara Tiefenthaler, Christian Triebert, Drew Jordan, Haley Willis and Robert Stein, "How George Floyd was Killed in Police Custody," *New York Times*, published May 31, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html>.

⁹ Jason Horowitz, Nick Corasaniti and Ashley Southall, "Nine Killed in Shooting in Black Church in Charleston," *New York Times*, published June 17, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/18/us/church-attacked-in-charleston-south-carolina.html>.

¹⁰ Martin Luther King Jr. 1968. *"Letter from a Birmingham Jail."* [Atlanta, Ga.]: Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, 5.

¹¹ NAACP and Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP Renew Demand for Removal of Confederate Symbol from Mississippi State Flag. Press Release. (NAACP: June 26, 2020). <https://www.naacp.org/latest/naacp-mississippi-state-conference-naacp-renew-demand-removal-confederate-symbol-mississippi-state-flag/>.

Four days later, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves signed a bill doing just that.¹² Others who saw the killings pushed harder to take down Confederate monuments.¹³ Their efforts described by Civil War Historian Kevin Levin, led to “the most sustained push to remove Confederate monuments from public spaces in recent memory.”¹⁴ Through their efforts, long standing monuments like the Confederate Soldiers Monument in Denton, Texas were removed from public view.¹⁵ As events like these took place across the country, and in this tense landscape museums are figuring out how to react appropriately and accordingly. In the wake of Floyd’s murder, museums across the country issued statements of unity or solidarity. Unfortunately, in some cases, these well-intentioned statements were more about words than action. The failure of museums, such as the J. Paul Getty in Los Angeles, to acknowledge Floyd or the Black Lives Matter movement continues to demonstrate that more needs to be done. The Getty Museum crafted a statement but failed to acknowledge George Floyd’s death or the Black Lives Matter movement, demonstrating that more must be done to recognize their inherent problems.¹⁶

¹² Mark Berman, and Ben Guarino, “Mississippi Governor Signs Bill Changing State’s Flag, Abandoning Confederate Symbol,” *The Washington Post*, June 30, 2020. https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/mississippi-flag-confederacy-removed/2020/06/30/f47df152-baed-11ea-8cf5-9c1b8d7f84c6_story.html.

¹³ Chris Lefkow, “Pressure Mounts to Remove Confederate Monuments Amid US Protests,” *Agence France-Presse*, June 5, 2020. <https://www.barrons.com/news/pressure-mounts-to-remove-confederate-monuments-amid-us-protests-01591377909>.

¹⁴ Kevin Levin, “Confederate Monuments Are Coming Down With No End In Sight,” *civil war memory*, June 21, 2020. <http://cwmemory.com/2020/06/21/confederate-monuments-are-coming-down-with-no-end-in-sight/>.

¹⁵ Ryan Higgs, “Confederate Monument Removed from the Square,” *Denton Record Chronicle* (Denton, TX), June 25, 2020. https://dentonrc.com/news/confederate-monument-removed-from-square/article_5c08cdbf-e801-5cc8-a373-78bd4042c873.html.

¹⁶ Alex Greenberger and Tessa Solomon, “Major U.S. Museums Criticized for Responses to Ongoing George Floyd Protests,” *Art News*, June 2, 2020. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/museums-controversy-george-floyd-protests-1202689494/>.

Museums need to figure out how to make strides forward by not limiting and ignoring the voices of those they represent. Figuring out how to embrace their audience in exhibit designs will be the real step forward for many as that will show their visitors progress is being made rather than the current trend of embracing movements when it is most accommodating.

The protests over the summer have caused a massive paradigm shift to take place. However, this was not all that had happened over the summer of 2020. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization Director-General alerted the world to begin taking COVID-19 seriously and to acknowledge that it should “be characterized as a pandemic.”¹⁷ Before long, reality set in for the population of the United States as major sporting events ranging from collegiate to professional were taking measures to suspend or outright cancel the remainder of their planned seasons.¹⁸ For the state of Texas, schools, non-essential businesses, including museums, were shut-down following the issuing of Executive Order GA-08 on March 19, 2020.¹⁹ With the country shutting down to help protect the overall safety and well-being of its constituents, museums were left in a precarious position of figuring out how to navigate this new normal. How were they going to be able to survive prolonged periods of closure, particularly during the months when they were expecting huge spikes in attendance and thus revenue? To directly

¹⁷ Tedros Adhanom, *WHO Director-General's Opening Remarks at the Media Briefing on COVID-19 March 11th 2020*. (World Health Organization; March 11, 2020). <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>.

¹⁸ Victor Mather, “How the Coronavirus Is Disrupting Sports Events,” *New York Times*, March 11, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/sports/coronavirus-sports.html>.

¹⁹ Greg Abbot, “Executive Order by the Governor of the State of Texas” (Executive Order, Austin, Texas, March 31, 2020) page 1.

answer this, the CARES Act was passed by the US Congress on March 27, 2020, giving museums the ability to stay open financially.²⁰ This solved the then-temporary problem of how museums were going to keep paying their staff and stay in operation, but in doing so, it made them realize other emerging issues. How will they be capable of teaching their visiting audience while keeping their health and well-being at the forefront? This has created difficulties across the United States, with Texas being no exception. In April 2020, Governor Gregg Abbot decreed that as part of the state's phase one re-opening, museums could open on the May 1, 2020 but "interactive areas of museums must remain closed."²¹ Figuring out how to adapt to the growing demands of visitors has been a difficult topic for museums for years, and COVID-19 has made it challenging in accommodating those needs alongside the health challenges of public access. Not only does the new paradigm demand museums take their visitors' voices more seriously than ever before, but they now must also figure out how to do so in a global pandemic. This is the reality of the year 2020 for museums.

Initially this thesis was going to discuss the development of communication between visitors and exhibit staff in the state of Texas, examining how far museums in the state have progressed in addressing issues of colonization through representation and what is shown on the exhibit floor. This is still a large part of the project's DNA, but the thesis has grown beyond examining how Texas museums cooperate with their audience

²⁰ American Alliance of Museums. "Museums Included in Economic Relief Legislation," March 27, 2020. <https://www.aam-us.org/2020/03/27/museums-included-in-economic-relief-legislation/>.

²¹ "Governor Abbott Announces Phase One To Open Texas, Establishes Statewide Minimum Standard Health Protocols." *Gov.texas*. The State of Texas Governor, April 27, 2020. The State of Texas. <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-phase-one-to-open-texas-establishes-statewide-minimum-standard-health-protocols>.

in balancing proper representation and medical needs. “Without trust, a collaborative partnership is simply not possible.”²² These words from Amy Lonetree, author of *Decolonizing Museums*, were the initial inspiration for this project. Lonetree’s thesis is still relevant even as the current health crisis shines a new light on the collaborative partnership between museums and their visitors. This requires work from both sides to arrive at the other side, and that is why this paper exists now in its current form.

To better understand what is being done in the museum field of Texas, I selected three potential case study candidates that I believed would best shine a light on what is being done to advance the field in the Lone Star state. As I waited for confirmations of their participation, I created a survey to gauge what was occurring across the entire state and to serve as a point of reference for the case studies. Under thirteen minutes in length, the survey asked museums to answer questions about their staffing, how they addressed their audience, their practice of hiring outside exhibit design firms, and other questions originally designed to assess the importance of outside voices in their exhibit development process. With the advent of COVID-19, the survey also served the purpose of being used to discover how museum values have changed, months into the current pandemic, and how the protests of 2020 have impacted museums. As case study candidates began to agree to take part in my research, I had to rework my research method. Instead of visiting each location and gaining firsthand experience in the layout of exhibits, how docents interacted with visitors, and meeting in person with directors and staff, I conducted a series of telephone or Zoom interviews for each location. The

²² Amy Lonetree, *Decolonizing Museums: Representing Native America in National and Tribal Museums* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), xiii.

interviewees ranged from directors, heads of education, curators, marketing heads, and past directors. Each gave their own experience and insight into what their institution was going through before COVID-19.

With all this information acting as the spine of the thesis, its structure began to take hold. In the second chapter, I will lay out a baseline for exhibit development and how outside voices assist in the process. While each museum interviewed and surveyed may not share the same philosophies about what is most important, I think it is important to outline the basics of exhibit development. This provides a basis for understanding what exhibit design was like before the pandemic and the representation issues plaguing the industry thus creating a level field of understanding before exploring each institution. Chapters three through five will focus on my case studies in the following order: the Pearce Museum at Navarro College, the Baylor Libraries, and Rienzi House and Gardens at Museum of Fine Arts Houston. Each case study chapter will be divided into three sections: “Before Spring 2020,” “Exhibit Design Philosophy Post-COVID-19,” and “Changes to Community Involvement.” Using this structure, each institution’s history, how they attempt to accommodate the ever-changing needs of their audiences, and how they have changed their exhibit development process has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. Chapter six focuses on the results of my survey. In Chapter seven I discuss these findings and make recommendations.

COVID-19 has changed how the world operates daily. The museum field had already begun undergoing changes to fix the representation issues that had been plaguing the industry before the current health crisis. Understanding which voices are responsible for presenting information to the visitor becomes more and more critical with each

passing year, and no year more so than this one when museums are forced to re-focus how they present information.

CHAPTER TWO

Exhibit Development through Evaluation

As noted in the introductory chapter Michael Spock has compared exhibition development to rocket science. While focused on science museums, this statement rings true for every type of museum. Expect the unexpected and the version that goes on the exhibit floor will most certainly not be its last. Development would be simpler if there was a single universal principle, but after many sessions and papers at professional conferences, no one process has been identified that considers each “custom-designed environment with its own particular experiences, its own unique lens on the world, and its own specific set of audiences.”¹ No two situations are the same and for many museums, it comes down to what the staff has learned through the years in relation to their location and their audience. That is why no proper guide exists for exhibit development. The easiest way to recognize these qualities is by seeing how the institution values their evaluation process. Evaluation can be examined through the four unique phases: front-end, formative, summative, and remedial. These phases are a roadmap and allow for an easier process identifying the good and bad practices in exhibit development. What meaningful involvement did scientists and outside consultants have in this process?² Was there a memorable experience for the visitor and developer? How did it relate towards the

¹ Kathleen McLean, “Introduction: Best Practices Should Be a Tool, Not a Rule,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004), 2.

² Ibid.

intended audience? Because these critical aspects of development that can all be found throughout evaluation, I will focus on each phase to demonstrate how critical they are for proper development. Through this chapter I will also highlight how communication remains critical to the evaluation process, showcasing how much value should be put on communication between the museum and those that will be impacted by their new exhibit. Outside voice matters at each point in evaluation and to ignore such counsel has proven detrimental to an exhibition's impact as demonstrated by *Harlem on My Mind*. Communication in development does not stop at the initial surveys asking if people would like to see this in the museum. It continues onward to initial installation and beyond.

Through evaluating the current needs and goals of the proposed exhibit, a multitude of benefits start to appear. The clearest of these is the monetary aspect as evaluations save money for their museums.³ No matter how well intentioned any exhibit may ultimately be, there comes the debate over how much needs to be spent on it from design to implementation. Evaluation saves money, especially in unfortunate situations when more funding may be required to spend on the project post-implementation.⁴ In addition, evaluation provides avenues for museums to explore innovation by assessing “new aspects of the visitor experience.”⁵ Innovation is not made in a vacuum; it is made in a living, reacting world. For innovation to happen in exhibits, it needs to be put to the

³ Donald Hughes, “Evaluation,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004), 29.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Sue Allen, “What Does Evaluation Have to Do with Best Practices,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004), 31.

test and questioned constantly from all those around. By doing so, it allows for itself to be better while also helping museums everywhere. If evaluation can breed new ideas, then it can breed collaboration. Evaluation helps “induce principles of learning and design that may not be obvious at any one institution.”⁶ This can lead to other museums learning lessons from others, for all the good and the bad. These are some of the greatest benefits that evaluation provides for museums. A comprehensive, four step process allows museums to “actively seek ways to engage the public in all their diversity and [hopefully] provide a catalyst for deeper engagement.”⁷ Divided into front-end analysis, formative evaluation, summative evaluation, and remedial evaluation, proper evaluation affects all aspects of design. There are a multitude of ways to go through these steps, just like in exhibition development itself, but each institution, whether publicized or not, shares common themes for all four steps.

Let us begin with front-end analysis or the concept development phase.⁸ This is typically part of the brainstorming session for most exhibits. What are the “goals for the ‘big idea’” and “what is the story we want to share and why” to the visitors.⁹ An understanding of the institution’s reality, or “what visitors, volunteers, and staff perceive” when they think about the museum.¹⁰ This first step hinges around understanding the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 207.

⁸ “Process and Phases,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 271.

⁹ Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 209.

¹⁰ Ibid.

audience and what the museum could be doing to better serve them. Does it serve our mission while also successfully telling the story addressed to the audience? These ideas make up the basis for how the project begins and doing so early on allows them to be a constant reference point at the other stages. Whenever something feels amiss, the developers can glance back at front-end analysis and think “are we still adhering to what we wished to do from the beginning, or has it changed?” The theme for the upcoming exhibit is not always the easiest aspect to figure out, but once the staff discovers what they need, that is when the creative process begins.

Some institutions characterize this as the charette, a term used to describe “an intensive group work session sustained over multiple days[...] to determine possible exhibition directions or to ensure consideration of wide range of approaches.”¹¹ Typically, this process is used to “spark imagination and pose interesting challenges” that museum and visitors wish to tackle and how to implement their idea into an exhibit.¹² There exists a litany of routes to take advantage of during this process, from rapid brainstorming sessions, sketching out ideas, conceptual design, to mind maps.¹³ Identifying what should be tackled in the exhibit takes thoughtful consideration from all involved, be it community or museum staff. When identifying how to tackle the problem during these brainstorming sessions of front-end analysis, it is important to not

¹¹ Polly McKenna-Cress, and Janet Kamien. “Methods and Techniques,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 215.

¹² “Questions From the Field About Evaluation,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004), 33.

¹³ Polly McKenna-Cress, and Janet Kamien. “Methods and Techniques,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 216 - 224.

discourage ideas this early. They may not ultimately lead to the finished product, but they could. The job here is to figure out what everyone sees as important for the exhibit regardless of what is realistically feasible for your museum.

Next in the process comes formative evaluation, “collecting data on visitor engagement during development of an exhibit, program or other project in order to make changes and improvements before it is finalized.”¹⁴ This can be characterized as the hard data section of the evaluation process, deciphering the qualitative and quantitative data to make the best visitor experience from initial discussion, visual, or physical interactions.¹⁵ Gathering this hard data may be difficult while operating a prototype of the exhibit itself, due to all the ensuing factors that come with its operation (from making sure it works properly to its presentation). There are ways to go about gathering and analyzing the hard data gathered from surveys, interviews, and focused observation on how visitors interact. Outside of installation and fabrication, this can be one of the more intensive aspects of exhibit development due to how it exposes the idea to the world. Staff see flaws that may not be readily present during creation, or they may find out that visitors are not nearly as invested in the concept as they are.

An example of this can be seen in the Dmansi project, part of the Science Museum Exhibit Collaborative in 2008, which focused on “the curiosity people have about how humans today compare to” early human fossils from 1.8 million years ago.¹⁶

¹⁴ 14. Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 211.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ “Dmansi” in *Science Museum Collaborative: A Qualitative Exploration of Six Exhibit Ideas* (The Science Museum Exhibit Collaborative: 2008), 23.

Although the concept and idea were fascinating, it did not work well when put into a digital medium, where it became just another screen activity not all that different from what visitors could do at home on their own computers.¹⁷ In the formative evaluation stage, museum staff have a pretty good idea about the implementation and have shared it with stakeholders and directors.¹⁸ Formative evaluation is important. Learning that a planned design failed may be heartbreaking. Still, it is better to find that out in this stage rather than later after the exhibit has been fully created.

Reasons like these are why prototyping the exhibit remains critical for the museum staff “to really ‘see’ the exhibition experience and how it is coming together.”¹⁹ How is the attracting power doing in drawing visitors over?²⁰ Once they have been brought over, what is the holding power in keeping them at the exhibit?²¹ Formative evaluation requires a key understanding of qualitative and quantitative data to be the most successful during this step of development. Surveying what visitors think about how the proposed idea was executed and if it matches what they thought they would be getting out of the experience by asking critical questions. How well did it accomplish its goal, and did it have any staying power? Did it just flop and need to be completely re-designed?

¹⁷ “Dmansi” in *Science Museum Collaborative: A Qualitative Exploration of Six Exhibit Ideas* (The Science Museum Exhibit Collaborative: 2008), 24.

¹⁸ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, “Process and Phases,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 279.

¹⁹ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, “Process and Phases,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 277.

²⁰ Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 213.

²¹ Ibid.

These are important questions and aspects that can only be properly gained in this stage before final designs are hammered out. While further evaluation and change does occur after an exhibit is put onto the show floor, this step is all about getting ahead of any unforeseen problems that may arise before premiums need to be paid.

In between evaluations, there is an important part of development that needs to be finished before any summative phase can begin: fabrication and installation. This is where the design and overall cost of the project come into focus. Design can become quite centralizing in exhibit development, making it no surprise that many locations treat the whole process as exhibit design. What will be the best way to show the stakeholders and the development team what the new exhibit may look like? Full renderings that convey the proper spacing of the exhibit and how visitors will properly take in the experience?²² Three-dimensional models that can be wheeled out to impress potential funders?²³ While models and drawings may can be great pageantry tools, they give real ideas to the team to figure out how this exhibit will exist in their museum. With this much spacing, let's try to draw out how this will fit in this corner of the museum. The staff can start to realize where their project's budget will go, from fabricating the exhibit itself to infrastructure updates.²⁴ If electricity is going to be needed for the exhibit, and there is no wiring to support it in that corner of the museum, then that is something to add to the

²² Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, "Process and Phases," *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 279.

²³ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, "Process and Phases," *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 280.

²⁴ Ibid.

development to-do list. A lot of the required information comes from these decisions, such as the ideal materials and how much media and technology are expected for fabrication to go off without a hitch. Ideal being the operative word as their original vision may get hamstrung by budget cuts as fabrication becomes more expensive.²⁵ From there, the museum creates the exhibit through their in-house staff or an outside firm depending on the skills required for the project. The fabricators can focus on creating the exhibit materials properly with the assurance that when finished, the building is prepped and ready to house the exhibit.²⁶ Installation quickly follows and is a race to the finish before the eventual release date arrives. Putting everything in its proper place may not be seamless, but it is a delicate process before the general public sees the first final version of the exhibit.

The “final” version of the exhibit comes after the staff conducts the third phase, summative evaluation. Even though this is the third step in the process, summative evaluation is described as the “final report on the overall effectiveness (degree of success) in achieving the goals of the project.”²⁷ Fabrication has long since finished, and installation has put the exhibit on the museum floor. Outside of small, needed tweaks that may be gleaned from utilizing a soft opening, this exhibit is largely final.²⁸ It is now time

²⁵ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, “Process and Phases,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 282.

²⁶ Ibid, 288.

²⁷ Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 214.

²⁸ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, “Process and Phases,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 292.

to see in the eyes of both the museum’s visitors and funders if the goals laid out in front-end analysis were met.²⁹

Figuring out if the initial goals were achieved can be quite difficult depending on the project. Developers who took part in the project, the museum, and funders may not be so quick to cast bad judgement on their months long endeavor.³⁰ This perceived ethical dilemma casts a large shadow on the entire project. If the idea is going to bring some degree of criticism and/or shame to the institution, is it even worth recording the final evaluation? Should it just be noted down and hidden from the public record?³¹ This reaction is not unheard of and defeats the entire purpose of summative evaluation. This report can be specifically used to provide “useful information to help guide the design of future projects.”³² Emphasis on projects. Not the museums or projects in an individual’s career, but projects. Being able to develop something and report on the success or failures of it can advance the field. The report should not be treated with secrecy. While it could open the institution up to scrutiny on how closely or not it adhered to some principles, that is still not the point.³³ Sue Allen put it plainly in saying that “we all share responsibility for learning more from and for each other” and we cannot if we are afraid

²⁹ “Questions From the Field About Evaluation,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004), 33.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Sue Allen, “What Does Evaluation Have to Do with Best Practices,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004) 31.

³² Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 214.

³³ Sue Allen, “What Does Evaluation Have to Do with Best Practices,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004), 32.

to show the results of development.³⁴ Summative evaluation is often described as final since it is the last official thing that happens during development, but that does not mean it should be. It is the report that should be the most widely seen in figuring out if all the months were worth it, so other institutions, be they science centers, museums, or even libraries, can learn from the successes and failures of their colleagues.

We now turn to the last step of the evaluation process in remedial evaluation, which can be difficult to gauge depending on the institution. The best way to describe this step is with the question: “what needs to be fixed after it is installed to make it work better?”³⁵ At multiple times, I have cited how proper evaluation often leads to the process of being able to save money so that there are minimal, if any, changes done to an exhibit after fabrication and installation. Post-installation changes are expensive, and budgeting for them can be quite the hassle.³⁶ It might be ideal to advise museums to save ten to twenty percent of development budget for remedial improvements but often that is not feasible.³⁷ Sometimes that budget is required to be used to finish the development in the scenario that the budget goes over the initial estimates. It is still important to plan for some form of remedial improvement on the exhibit for both the short-term problems as they appear and for the exhibit’s long-term health.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 214.

³⁶ Donald Hughes, “Evaluation,” *Are We There Yet?: Conversations about Best Practices in Science Exhibition Development* (San Francisco, California: Exploratorium, 2004) 29.

³⁷ Nancy Cutler, “Evaluation,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 214.

³⁸ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, “Process and Phases,” *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 293.

Taizo Miyake described the exhibit's opening as "not a deadline but a birthday."³⁹ The opening may be a joyous affair, but it is not going to be smooth sailing and come with its own set of growing pains. That is why it would be more accurate to describe the exhibit in more modern terms rather than a highly finished product; the exhibit is more akin to a living organism.⁴⁰ A high degree of polish still goes into making the exhibit as close to perfect as it can be before being put on the museum floor, but now there is the expectation that further care will be required, and it is not the worst thing in the world. With remedial evaluation, the institution expected this and was ready for it in some manner to preserve the exhibit's integrity. A visitor coming to the museum to see what the exciting new exhibit is that was made with their input, only to be greeted by something that is not working properly due to insufficient funds can sour the whole affair. The exhibit was made through their given input and done for them. Remedial evaluation ensures that the exhibit will still be working no matter what time they decide to drop by and see it, be it two days after opening or two months.

Throughout this chapter, I have highlighted the four steps that come into the evaluation process. At each interval, the degree of polish and effort highlight the level of care that institutions give to their exhibits. From front-end to remedial, communicating between an institution and its intended audience remains one of, if not the most vital components to a successful exhibit. Ignoring audience input can lead to disastrous effects as the past has shown us but gaining their input does not always guarantee success.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet A. Kamien, "Process and Phases," *Creating Exhibitions: Collaboration in the Planning, Development, and Design of Innovative Experiences* (Somerset: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013. Accessed October 2, 2020), ProQuest Ebook Central. 294.

Sometimes an exhibit can still fail. If it does, it becomes important to share the reasoning with fellow institutions so that the failures can help ensure that others do not fail their visitors by trying an idea that did not work. This was the world of exhibit development for many museums at the beginning of 2020. This was the world in which the three case studies found themselves before COVID-19 and racial and community tensions began to affect how exhibit development would move forward.

CHAPTER THREE

Case Study #1 – The Pearce Museum

Before Spring 2020

Founding Director Dr. Julie Holcomb (Jan 2001 – June 2008)

Charles and Peggy Pearce were a wealthy couple that no one suspected of being anything more than retired ranchers.¹ They became involved in assisting the local Navarro College despite having no affiliations outside of location.² They donated several paintings and funded projects for both the college and troubled youth of Corsicana.³ In addition to their philanthropic efforts, they became avid collectors of Western Art, filling up four separate houses with their collection, including their vacation home in Santa Fe, New Mexico.⁴ Their interest in the Civil War grew due to the fascination Mrs. Pearce developed for Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain after reading Michael Shaara's novel *Killer Angels*.⁵ Charles and Peggy traveled around the country from Civil War site to Civil War site. When they saw that a letter written by Chamberlain from the battlefield at Antietam to his wife Fanny, came up for auction in 1991, Charles purchased the letter

¹ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

as a present for Peggy.⁶ The impact from reading this letter outweighed all the prior research the two had conducted, and the two realized they wanted more of this.⁷ Their collection grew rapidly, and it became apparent that they needed to do something with it all, even if they did not quite know what.⁸ Then they got the idea of creating a museum.

The Pearces approached Navarro College's Dean of Libraries and Special Collections Darrell Beauchamp about donating their collection to the college. Their donations of Western Art and Civil War documents were invaluable to Navarro's collection, but Beauchamp recognized the need for someone to care for their impressive collection full-time. He talked to the Pearces about hiring someone to oversee the collection. The Pearces agreed and used the timing to its fullest. They were in the process of building a new home in Corsicana, so they donated their old home to the Navarro College Foundation, who in turn sold it. The Foundation used the proceeds to hire Julie Holcomb as College and Special Collections Archivist.

Interviewed in October 2000, Holcomb started in January 2000. In the two months since her interview, fundraising for the museum had already begun. She was tasked with creating a traveling exhibit for an event at the Texas state capitol in Austin to support the Foundation's effort to secure one million dollars from the state legislature so they could begin work on the building.⁹ The exhibit she developed showcased a group of documents from Grant, Lincoln, Lee, and Davis, fondly referred to as "The Usual

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pearce Museum. "An Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Pearce." May 9, 2013. Corsicana, Texas. YouTube, 4:13. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzrNlnw-w00>.

⁸ "Chuck & Peggy". *The Pearce Museum at Navarro College*, Accessed January 6, 2021: <https://www.pearcemuseum.com/about/mr-and-mrs-pearce/>.

⁹ Ibid.

Suspects,” which were displayed in six coffin-style cases had been used to exhibit the documents in Navarro’s library.¹⁰ Charles Pearce was adamant in displaying the original documents at the capitol and at each subsequent stop the traveling exhibit made.¹¹ Beauchamp and Holcomb spent the following year traveling with “The Usual Suspects” to promote the museum and the collection, from appearing at the Texas state capitol to being featured in a special program at Texas A&M Commerce.¹²

After Navarro College received an appropriation from the state of Texas through the Texas Historical Commission for the museum, the Pearces also donated to begin the development and construction of the museum.¹³ With the initial money raised, Beauchamp and Holcomb began the work of designing and building the museum. Early on, then-President Richard Sanchez, assumed that they could use an earlier design for the museum and have Beauchamp and Holcomb develop and construct exhibits.¹⁴ This was a scary proposition as neither of the two possessed experience in exhibit development.¹⁵ After chatting with colleagues, Beauchamp and Holcomb came to the conclusion that in order to do the collection proper justice, they would need to bring in exhibit designers.¹⁶ After hearing proposals from three different firms, the Navarro College Foundation, with

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

the approbation of the Pearces, hired Museum Arts, an exhibit design firm in Dallas, Texas.¹⁷

The development process with Museum Arts went through a great deal of give and take. Charles Pearce, Beauchamp, Holcomb, and Museum Arts each had different ideas for what they wanted to include.¹⁸ Museum Arts came in with great ideas but did not know the content of the collection as well as the Pearces, Beauchamp, and Holcomb.¹⁹ Charles Pearce originally envisioned a trail of blood to accompany the visitor through the museum, with the trail becoming larger as visitors reached the end of the war.²⁰ This would serve as a visual to symbolize the loss of life suffered during the Civil War. While novel, the idea proved too expensive due to the high price of custom weaving the rug.²¹ This would also render the floor becoming a permanent exhibit, limiting future development by requiring staff to design around the trail.²² Museum Arts designed a compromise using lighting that bathed visitors in red light, getting progressively darker until they reached the end.²³ Looking back, Holcomb regrets that slavery as cause the war was not made clearer.²⁴ In the development process, she argued for its inclusion in

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

multiple locations, from the introductory video to the exhibits.²⁵ Ultimately, a compromise was reached that incorporated a small section about slavery, featuring a collection of historic restraints, photographs, and texts that discussed the role of slavery in the coming of the Civil War.²⁶ The decision to limit slavery to a small exhibit at the beginning of the exhibit space reflects the impact that local opinion can have on the exhibit design process.

The final design of the museum was the result of a collaborative process that included the Pearces, Beauchamp, Holcomb, members of the Navarro College Foundation Board, and leaders in both the college community and the local community. The Civil War Museum begins with a video overview of the history of the Civil War with the script utilizing quotes from documents in the collection.²⁷ Exiting the theater, visitors follow a timeline of the war beginning with the small exhibit about slavery. Five berms, one for each year of the war (1861-1865), were placed along the timeline. Utilizing photographs from the Library of Congress's collections, the berms highlight the events of each year. In front of each berm are several small exhibit cases featuring reproductions of documents from the collection. The cases were bolted to the floor limiting any future changes to the layout of the museum. After the 1863 berm, visitors enter the Battle Experience theater, which is a theatrical recreation of the Battle of Gettysburg. Exiting the Battle Experience Theater, visitors are confronted with a medical exhibit, featuring a

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Image 31," *The Pearce Museum at Navarro College*, Accessed December 31, 2020: <https://www.pearcemuseum.com/visit/virtual-tour/>

recreation of a field hospital and a short video that discusses medicine during the war.²⁸ Along the timeline, visitors encountered a variety of temporary exhibits, most in permanently mounted cases.²⁹

The area housing the Western Art collection did not have as many design issues. The gallery was designed as a tribute to the Pearce's Santa Fe home.³⁰ Adobe walls and doorways highlight the New Mexico architecture.³¹ The only design issues, during development and afterwards, came in relation to lighting.³² Pearce envisioned the lights changing throughout the day to mimic the rising and the setting of the sun.³³ This was abandoned, in part, due to the challenge of implementation.³⁴ The second instance came when Museum Arts decided to replace all the bulbs in the gallery while Holcomb was away.³⁵ The resulting bulbs generated very high levels of ultraviolet light, some might say brighter than the Texas Sun.³⁶ Holcomb had them quickly fix to prevent any damage caused to the collection. Although some of the Pearce's visions for the two galleries were difficult to implement and impractical for care the collection needed, the Pearces'

²⁸ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3rd, 2020.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Image 14," *The Pearce Museum at Navarro College*, Accessed December 31, 2020: <https://www.pearcemuseum.com/visit/virtual-tour/>

³² Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

involvement led to a museum design that reflected their desires for the exhibition of their collections.

The Collection

The Pearces also had a clear vision for the development of the two collections. With plans for the museum underway, they set to work expanding the collection and establishing their acquisition goals. For the Civil War, their decision was to collect broadly.³⁷ This is not a southern museum, but an institution focused on telling both sides of the conflict from common soldier to well-known politicians.³⁸ This translated well onto the floor but took time to develop in the archives. Like other Civil War military collections, the Pearce Museum focused on a male-centered narrative, evidenced by the 2003 finding aids for the Webster Papers highlighting the military engagements of the collection with no mention of the familial entries.³⁹ The finding aid largely ignored the bitter and difficult life surrounding Harriet Stevens Webster and her family following Timothy Webster's enlistment and subsequent death at Petersburg.⁴⁰ Document processing coinciding with preparations for the museum's grand opening can cause issues like this to occur. When the museum is not properly established, it is difficult to give the collection full attention. Over time, the institution's acquisition rate slowed, allowing

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Julie Holcomb, "The Timothy O. Webster Papers, and the Pearce Civil War Collection: Using Military Collections for Women's History," *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* 14 (Summer 2018), 376.

⁴⁰ Julie Holcomb, "The Timothy O. Webster Papers, and the Pearce Civil War Collection: Using Military Collections for Women's History," *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* 14 (Summer 2018), 375.

staff the ability to properly process the collection. Mary Hayes was hired as project archivist for the museum and helped standardize the archiving process.⁴¹ This allowed for time to process the collection, allowing for volunteers and interns to properly transcribe materials and see recurring themes in the collection.⁴² The collection, already invaluable to many Civil War military historians, grew in its ability to serve a wider audience. For instance, it served those who wished to know the daily life of women like Harriet Webster or the presence of runaway slaves in Union encampments as documented in the Woodcock Papers.⁴³ The Civil War Collection's significance grew like its size as more time was devoted towards its care and development. Initially documents from 1861-65 were prioritized, but the Pearce Collection eventually expanded into the antebellum and Reconstruction period.⁴⁴

The Western Art collection focused on contemporary pieces that told stories when viewers looked at them.⁴⁵ Charles had a discerning eye for talent and often collected from up-and-coming artists.⁴⁶ The Pearces focused on collecting contemporary Western Art from new and established artists rather than collecting classic artists such as Charles Russell and Frederic Remington.⁴⁷ Purchases were guided by the tastes and choices of the

⁴¹ Julie Holcomb, "The Timothy O. Webster Papers, and the Pearce Civil War Collection: Using Military Collections for Women's History," *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* 14 (Summer 2018), 377.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 376.

⁴⁴ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Pearces. For example, Charles preferred art that had a strong narrative. He also dismissed art that was he viewed as too cute, featuring young children or animals. As a result, there were few still lifes and landscapes in the collection, and women were often underrepresented.

Staffing

After the museum opened in the fall of 2003, Beauchamp and Holcomb's responsibilities changed. Holcomb, who as archivist had been on an eleven-month contract, was named director of the museum and given a twelve-month contract. Beauchamp remained involved in collection development but spent less time in the daily operation of the museum due in large part to the college's decision to build a new library. Holcomb, however, continued to report to Beauchamp until 2005 when the college made several changes to its organizational structure. Between 2005 and 2008, Holcomb's supervisor changed at least three times.

Between 2001 and 2008, the staff of the museum increased steadily through a combination of funding sources. For example, the Pearces offered to fund an increasing number of interns if Navarro College would provide housing and a meal plan.⁴⁸ The Pearces also provided the funding for a temporary processing archivist, Mary Hayes. That position was eventually converted to a budgeted position funded by the college.

In addition to interns and the processing archivist, Beauchamp and Holcomb utilized a variety of sources for staffing. Prior to Holcomb's arrival, Beauchamp had organized an Elderhostel program that brought in senior volunteers for weeklong service

⁴⁸ Ibid.

projects each summer. Again, the college provided housing and meals. The Elderhostel program lasted almost ten years giving tremendous support to the collection. Elderhostel volunteers transcribed letters, designed educational programs, and researched collections and exhibits.⁴⁹ Volunteers from the local community served as docents in the museum and as archival assistants transcribing and cataloging archival collections and works of art. Several paid positions were added during this same period, including a volunteer coordinator, an art curator, and an administrative assistant. These positions were funded from the museum's budget. Occasionally, Holcomb was able to hire work study students to assist with the work.⁵⁰

Navarro College

The conflicting priorities between the museum and the college were particularly apparent in the marketing of the museum. Late in Holcomb's tenure, the college hired a new marketing director who with the support of the college president made significant changes to the workflow and design of all marketing pieces. For example, all marketing materials had to prominently feature the college's logo.⁵¹ This resulted in frustrating attempts to develop marketing pieces for the museum, such as the rack card the museum staff attempted to create. Measuring just four by eleven inches, the card could not contain all the text and logos required to satisfy all stakeholders, including the Pearces, the

⁴⁹ Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

⁵⁰ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

⁵¹ Ibid.

benefactors of the Cook Education Center (the building which housed the museum), and the college marketing staff.⁵² The rack card scenario highlighted the dysfunction between the college and the museum.⁵³

Peggy Pearce passed away in early 2005, and Charles Pearce died in 2008. Darrell Beauchamp resigned in 2006, having accepted directorship of the Briscoe Western Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas. In 2007 and 2008, the museum experienced several changes in staffing including the resignation of the processing archivist, the original art curator, and the administrative assistant. Holcomb left the Pearce Civil War and Western Art Collection in the summer of 2008 to accept a teaching position at Baylor University. During her tenure at the Pearce, the collection grew from three thousand documents and about thirty pieces of art to nearly twenty thousand documents and two hundred pieces of art. While it is important to mark the museum's growth, the Pearce Museum was moving into uncharted waters for the institution. In the span of a few years, the museum founders had died, and the original two staff members of the collection left. Navarro College would gain more direct control of the museum as these staff overhauls took place.

Director Allison Chew (2014 – 2015)

Originally hired as an intern in May 2008, Allison Chew became the art curator just a few months later. Chew became director after the second director, Holly Beasley-Wait, resigned in 2014 over conflicts about a new exhibit.⁵⁴ Navarro College's board

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

decided to move the Robert Reading Arrowhead Collection from the college's old library structure to the Cook Education Center, where it was to be added to the Pearce Museum's responsibilities.⁵⁵ The museum staff and Beasley-Wait were cut out of all discussions, leading to her decision to leave. Chew was thrust into the director's position and had no idea what to do as the new addition was constructed for the building.⁵⁶ The Arrowhead collection is highlighted prominently on the museum's website and expanded the scope of the museum to the prehistoric period of Central Texas.⁵⁷ While expanding on available content, the Reading Collection served as a tool "for the college to fulfill its mission" rather than promote the existing mission of the Pearce Museum.⁵⁸

As director, Chew continued projects that she worked on during her time as curator with a heavy focus towards education and the art collection.⁵⁹ As curator, she received certification from TAM for education and outreach to create art-based lessons for course credits using the Western Art collection.⁶⁰ Navarro history professors worked alongside her to expand the history education.⁶¹ History students led visitor tours around the museum and took a test at the end to receive class credit.⁶² Chew found that many

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Hunter-Gatherers of the Blackland Prairie Exhibit." *The Pearce Museum at Navarro College*, October 28, 2014. <https://www.pearcemuseum.com/collections/hunter-gatherers/>.

⁵⁸ Belcher, Bob. "New Digs: Arrowhead Collection now in Cook Center." *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX), Oct. 28, 2014.

⁵⁹ Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

students enjoyed the program so much that they became regular volunteers at the museum.⁶³ She decided to establish a scholarship program for volunteering students.⁶⁴ The education initiatives helped build the audience base for the museum. Many came for the Civil War Collection, and now, new incentives were created for the college audience to experience the “hidden gem” of the campus.⁶⁵ By the time Chew left, the Pearce Museum had increased the totals of visiting students to 2000 a year.⁶⁶

Chew was the first intern with a primary focus on art when she was hired. She worked on photographing the collection and helping decide what direction the museum would take after the passing of Mr. Pearce in 2008.⁶⁷ The museum no longer had his eye for art and had to decide what went into the collection. Everything from the level of the artist to evaluating if this was being purchased for the collection or to be properly put on display needed to be reconsidered.⁶⁸ The gallery space for the Western Art Collection was no longer solely for the use of the Pearce Museum after these changes.⁶⁹ Navarro College’s art department became a regular feature in the gallery, showcasing projects by students via their Artist in Residence Programs.⁷⁰ While this would lead to the Pearce Museum gaining opportunities for future art shows under Director Zembala, it was a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “Art at NC.” *Navarro College*, Accessed January 6, 2021: <https://www.navarrocollege.edu/academics/art.html>.

marked shift from the original vision for the gallery.⁷¹ Chew's art influence helped lead to Beasley-Wait starting up the annual Western Art Show and Sale during her time as director. The show and sale brought more attention to the museum's Western Art collection and created healthy fundraising opportunities.

Exhibits

The rest of the Chew's focus, from curator to director, centered on updating the building and the permanent exhibits, which had remained essentially the same for ten years.⁷² The Civil War section fell under her jurisdiction, as there was no official Civil War curator.⁷³ As Chew had overseen the art gallery, adding the other half of the museum to her responsibilities made sense. Lighting in both galleries changed during her time. The red lights of the trail of blood were removed, largely due to visitors not noticing the effect unless it was specifically pointed out.⁷⁴ Both galleries were changed to full LED lighting to limit the harmful effect of the previous ultraviolet bulbs and because most of the display cases did not have UV protection.⁷⁵

Updating the Civil War exhibits was taxing for Chew and her staff. They needed to rotate objects like the cloth with Lincoln's blood on a more regular basis and try to

⁷¹ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

⁷² Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

open the space up for new creative exhibits.⁷⁶ The U-shape display cases in the center of the Civil War gallery did an excellent job, but it was designed with a specific travel pattern in mind, progressing from the start of the war to the end.⁷⁷ Traffic problems became more evident as the museum saw increased student attendance, so they had to figure out the direction of their tours in the confined spaces available.⁷⁸ Chew had brought in designers to see what their options were while using table display cases in the interim.⁷⁹ The designers were unable to come up with a solution that the Foundation and the museum staff liked, so the Pearce Museum continued with what was available.⁸⁰

Their efforts expanded the museum's reach to researchers and created new exhibit content that engaged different levels of the community. Chew oversaw the editing and publication of the four-volume book, *The War: Day by Day*, while she was still curator. Using the museum's collection, the book had a letter or diary entry for each day of the duration of the Civil War.⁸¹ While simple in design, the book made part of the collection easily accessible without forcing the need to journey to the archives.⁸² The experience continued from her and then-archivist Jennifer Coleman's approach to the gallery.⁸³ They had already made efforts to move away from "The Usual Suspects" that Beauchamp and

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

Holcomb originally used and started focusing far more on the average soldiers and people.⁸⁴

This approach led to one of their more popular exhibits. During the creation of *Day by Day*, they discovered a love letter a gentleman had written home to his beloved Mary.⁸⁵ As fate would have it, he was one of a half dozen suitors that she had during the Civil War.⁸⁶ While fascinating by itself, Chew and Coleman used this letter to create Valentine's Day mystery exhibit where visitors tried to figure out who made the best case to Mary through their letters.⁸⁷ They asked the Theater Department if they wanted to get involved as well, and soon they had a cast of students doing live readings of the letters in character for Valentine's Day to make the case to their beloved Mary.⁸⁸

Chew may have not been able to fully update the Pearce Museum to new standards, but she managed to expand their audience through new outreach opportunities while showing off more of their collection. Chew resigned in 2015 to accept a position as director of the Martin Museum of Art at Baylor University.⁸⁹ She had a short but impactful tenure built on her initial experiences as an intern.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Director Ann Zembala (2015 – Present)

Ann Zembala returned to the museum field years after stepping down from running the Institute of Industry in Baltimore, Maryland (now the Baltimore Museum of Industry).⁹⁰ Initially, Zembala arrived to interview for the curator position but was told that Chew would be leaving within a week and that they would instead be interviewing her for the position of Director of the Pearce Museum.⁹¹

While education initiatives for all audiences were a big focus during Beasley-Wait's time, the K-12 focus had begun to suffer near the end of Chew's tenure.⁹² Zembala began work on redeveloping their programs and tried using their available budget to hire a full-time education staff member.⁹³ Due to issues regulating pension and hour approval, she decided to make it two part-time positions instead and hired two retired teachers.⁹⁴ In addition, she created three more part-time positions to handle the responsibilities of the front desk, gift shop, and school tour coordination.⁹⁵ With this new staff, they began redeveloping their K-12 education. The staff worked closely with teachers in the community and received the same response across the board: teachers wanted to see a larger focus on Texas history.⁹⁶ With the Hunter-Gatherers exhibit added,

⁹⁰ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

the museum's scope now expanded to ancient Texas history.⁹⁷ While fascinating, this does not come up in Texas curriculums nearly as much as more recent Texas history does. Staff efforts took the U-shaped exhibit in the Civil War gallery and used it to highlight the different themes of the Civil War for students.⁹⁸ These exhibit cases quickly became a focus, highlighting the state's role in the war, titled "Texas in the Civil War."⁹⁹ Staff were limited in their ability to accommodate teacher requests, as the issues in the original exhibit design that plagued Chew also plagued Zembala.¹⁰⁰ Cases bolted down to the floor proving counter intuitive to modern exhibit design caused the Zembala to reach out to yet another design firm.¹⁰¹ The required cost was far too much for the Foundation and the College to approve, so they settled on leaving the Civil War gallery redesign for another day.¹⁰²

Their focus shifted back towards making do with their available resources. School tours were made more accommodating as the inclusion of the Hunter-Gatherer's gallery made visiting the Pearce Museum an all-day affair for the classes.¹⁰³ There were now multiple points for tour groups to start their journey: the theater, the Civil War gallery, the Western Art gallery, and the Hunter-Gatherer gallery. A fifth starting point was added after the work of two involved docents who approached Zembala about creating a

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

traveling trunk to take to schools in order to educate kids about Ulysses Grant and Robert E. Lee.¹⁰⁴ While a neat idea, she knew that one of the two gentlemen was an amateur actor and suggested that instead of a trunk they work on a living history of the two historical figures.¹⁰⁵ In Baltimore, Zembala had a troupe of actors that were a great hit with visitors and saw no reason why that would not be the case here.¹⁰⁶ The two men were ecstatic about the idea, and the popularity of the program has led to two different versions of their reenactment: one featuring a conversation between the two figures and another interpreting the Surrender at Appomattox Court House.¹⁰⁷ The living history show created a lot of flexibility for the museum in tour groups and has become a regular fixture at the Pearce Museum.¹⁰⁸

Art Shows

Christina Lucas, Curator of Exhibits and Collections, has the largest art focus of the present staff members and oversees organizing new temporary displays and exhibits in the Western Art Gallery. When the museum was originally constructed, Museum Arts used a fixed hanging system that required displays to be nailed directly into the wall. Anytime an exhibit changed, nail holes had to be repaired. With the installation of a flexible hanging system, temporary exhibits became much easier to host.¹⁰⁹ She

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

expanded on the art show opportunities that developed under Beasley-Wait with opportunities coming to the Pearce Museum from all across Texas.¹¹⁰ In 2017, she organized a Texas Invitational, which invited artists to submit their work for a massive winter show.¹¹¹ The success led to a cold call about hosting the American Plains Show in 2019.¹¹² The show and sale was on display until January 2, 2020 and garnered great success for the museum.¹¹³

The Foundation and College Board

Charles and Peggy Pearce established The Pearce Endowment to possess ownership of the collections at the museum while the College owned the building.¹¹⁴ When the decision would be made on what to purchase, Charles would donate the money required to the Foundation and they would pay the invoice for the object, be it document or art.¹¹⁵ An endowment was made for the Foundation specifically for acquisitions to the collection after he died.¹¹⁶ The endowment declined during the 2008 crash and caused all

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ “Pearce Museum hosts ‘American Plains Artist 34th Annual Juried Show & Sale’ through January 2020.” *Art+Seek*, Accessed January 6, 2021: <https://artandseek.org/calendar/event/100180/pearce-museum-hosts-american-plains-artist-34th-annual-juried-show-amp-sale-through-january-2020#:~:text=The%20Pearce%20Museum%20at%20Navarro,the%20American%20Great%20Plains%20region.>

¹¹⁴ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

purchases by the museum to be put on hold as the museum had to figure out how they would move forward.¹¹⁷ This led to a new collections policy underneath Beasley-Wait that oversaw the museum as it transitioned without its founder.¹¹⁸

Further changes followed in the museum's relationship with the college after Charles's passing. In the past when the college would try to force a decision, Charles would intervene and stop their actions.¹¹⁹ During Holcomb's tenure, Sanchez regularly deferred to Charles. His deference and the Pearce's actions were layers of protection that the museum regularly relied on.¹²⁰ After his death, those protections disappeared with each new action and person put in charge. The Foundation and the College Board's influence grew as President Sanchez retired in 2013.¹²¹ The leadership afterwards emphasized the need to project the image of a strong, happy Navarro family.¹²² Like the rack card decisions, there would be no actions to promote the Pearce Museum without it being in the best interests of Navarro College.¹²³ Chew, while overseeing the construction of a new collections space the museum had no say on, sat down with then-President Dr. Barbara Kavalier and the marketing director to state that a proper identity needed to be

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ "Past Presidents of Navarro College." *Navarro College*, Accessed January 1, 2021: <https://www.navarrocollege.edu/about/presidential-history.html>.

¹²² Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

¹²³ Ibid.

established for the museum.¹²⁴ Chew said, “If you say Pearce and show that red N, it does not say we are anything beyond Navarro College.”¹²⁵ After several conversations and meetings, a branding book was established for the Pearce museum alongside its official name.¹²⁶ It was officially dubbed The Pearce Museum at Navarro College, complete with a new logo that used a star to evoke Civil War generals.¹²⁷ Not everything was agreed upon by both parties, but the current standard for what represents the Pearce Museum was created.¹²⁸

Financing for staff salaries and for the museum itself had to be established. In years prior, the Pearces financed the compensation for interns at the Pearce, and considerations had to be made going forward.¹²⁹ The majority of staff salaries are covered financially by Navarro College.¹³⁰ Another endowment, separate from the acquisition endowment, was set aside to handle select staff salaries concerning the museum’s collections.¹³¹ Over time, those positions merged into a single role, titled Curator of Exhibits and Collections, with over two-thirds of their salary covered by the Pearce endowment.¹³² In addition, the museum cannot actively fundraise due to the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

¹³⁰ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the Author, July 22, 2020.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

security provided by their endowments.¹³³ Small scale grants to procure a traveling exhibit are within the museum's bounds to apply for, but anything of a larger nature is directly handled by the Foundation.¹³⁴ Plans to develop a proper fire suppression system and necessary maintenance upgrades fall under their jurisdiction.¹³⁵ The Foundation's role in fundraising plays a part in the lower priority Navarro places on the Pearce Museum.¹³⁶ Funds are harder to procure from the college for projects even though they are still promoted as a prestigious asset.¹³⁷ The museum cannot do any long-term financial planning because of this, and when it has the funds, it has to spend them before the end of the fiscal year.¹³⁸ The financial situation was also difficult in past years due to limited numbers being available until enrollment was officially finished.¹³⁹ This was seen as poor financial planning, and two year ago, proper budgets were laid out across Navarro ahead of time so departments and the museum no longer needed to work on a one-year planning schedule with unknown resources.¹⁴⁰

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Spring 2020 and Beyond

COVID-19

The Pearce Museum closed alongside the rest of the state of Texas on March 16, 2020 and continued paying all three full-time employees and their five part-time employees until their re-opening on May 12.¹⁴¹ They were told two days before that they would all be able to return, and Zembala quickly made sure that all staff were aware with the short notice.¹⁴² For a week, the staff were back in position with their new guidelines that took guidance from the museum community in Texas.¹⁴³ At the end of the first week, the Dean of Libraries, Tim Kevil, arrived and questioned Zembala why all of the part-time members were present. Due to a failure in communication, Kevil did not address that all part-time staff at Navarro were furloughed.¹⁴⁴ This included maintenance workers, cafeteria workers, and museum staff.¹⁴⁵ Now the museum operates with three full-time staff members: the director, the curator of collections, Christina Lucas; and administrative assistant, Jessica Kindon.¹⁴⁶ The faculty at Navarro was largely unhappy with these developments and were worried about continuing classes in the fall.¹⁴⁷ The college had little choice in the matter as over 60% of students said they would not seek to

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ "Museum Guidelines." *The Pearce Museum at Navarro College*, May 14, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

continue their education at Navarro if they were not able to continue their classes in-person.¹⁴⁸

Exhibits and the galleries at the Pearce Museum have been hit by the reduction of the amount of content available to visitors. When Navarro had begun setting up budgets ahead of time for departments and the museum, a section of the museum's budget for the fiscal year was dedicated towards exhibit maintenance and new exhibits.¹⁴⁹ COVID-19 came, and one of the first sections of Zembala's budget to be slashed was her exhibit funds.¹⁵⁰ Then there are docents. Docents, just like part-time staff, were not allowed back into the facility.¹⁵¹ This meant the popular living history exhibit between Generals Grant and Lee cannot be performed for visitors until it is deemed safe.¹⁵² The museum has also shut down the Hunter-Gatherer wing of the museum due to the hands-on components in the gallery.¹⁵³

Growing its online presence and taking advantage of free resources has been a large focus of the museum in the COVID era. Kindon oversees the online presence of the Pearce Museum through all their social media accounts.¹⁵⁴ She has worked since late March to stay engaged with their audience. She has created Civil War trivia and artists of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

the day, and other small things to keep the museum in the public eye.¹⁵⁵ Her approach has also highlighted the air conditioning benefits available at the Pearce Museum during the hot summer months, promoting smart but safe tourism.¹⁵⁶ From there, efforts were made to expand their content to those that could benefit from it. Zembala is trying to get the Navarro Audio/Video department together with her docent core so that they will be able to provide online resources to teachers.¹⁵⁷ This includes tours and a professional recording of their live history program.¹⁵⁸

Corsicana Community

The Pearce Museum's relationship to their community is directly tied to their relationship with Navarro College. The rack card fiasco for Holcomb shows how difficult it is to separate the museum from the college.¹⁵⁹ Chew's efforts in creating a brand book for the museum were derived from that fact that the museum needed to make that much needed identity.¹⁶⁰ To the people of Corsicana, those efforts mean little as their views of the museum are the same as the college.¹⁶¹ It is that place at the end of town that no one

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Julie Holcomb (Founding and Former Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, August 3, 2020.

¹⁶⁰ Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

¹⁶¹ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

wants anything to do with.¹⁶² This is in spite of Navarro College and the Pearce Museum regularly winning awards for “Best Place to Work” and “Best Museum” in the *Corsicana Daily Sun* yearly best of issue.¹⁶³ Despite the negative sentiment shared by some, the museum still works to ensure that it reaches out to the community through coordinated efforts in promoting college activities and events highlighted by their robust volunteer members.¹⁶⁴ The efforts started as coffee meetings for people to voice how they were feeling and express what they were seeing while out on the floor.¹⁶⁵ This eventually turned into a forum that allowed volunteers an avenue to have a sense of agency in how the museum functions by talking directly to the director.¹⁶⁶ The evolution of their involvement has them serve as a shadow board that can be utilized and serve as community liaisons for Zembala.¹⁶⁷ Projects with Women’s Art League of Corsicana, Pioneer Village, and the Chamber of Commerce only get as far as they do because of the involvement between the director and these liaisons.¹⁶⁸

This support network has been difficult to rely on since the pandemic hit. These important community allies of the museum’s operation cannot work directly with Zembala, and one of her best ways of interacting with the community has been directly

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ “Best of the Best,” *Corsicana Daily Sun* (Corsicana, TX: August 7, 2019), 9.

¹⁶⁴ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

¹⁶⁵ Allison Chew (Director of the Martin Museum of Art) in an Interview with the author, August 20, 2020.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

cut off. The largest impact they have is through the college, which has reinforced negative connotations for the Pearce. Originally, the Pearce Museum and Starbucks were the only locations on campus enforcing mask policies until Navarro made it mandatory in July.¹⁶⁹ This left the museum in an awkward position, as stood alone in its message and sent mixed signals from the college about the approach to the pandemic.¹⁷⁰ The silver lining has been that, while the college has not necessarily stood in solidarity, the Pearce Museum has had great success through their TAM partners.¹⁷¹ A former colleague of Zembala's lives in Ennis, Texas, and directs the Summerlee Foundation, which provides grants for history museums in need.¹⁷² While appreciative of the connection, the importance is only further highlighted by the message of these grants to help facilitate pay for staff during this trying time.¹⁷³

Conclusion

The Pearce Museum at Navarro College has undergone several changes since its initial inception in late 2000. Some of this is to be expected with the departure of its original director and the passing of such an involved founder. Charles and Peggy Pearce were heavily involved in the primary care of the collection since donating the initial documents and works of art to the college. Their active approach and the morning coffees

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

with Beauchamp and Holcomb to discuss museum matters were instrumental in the early years. Removing the Pearces, Beauchamp, and Holcomb in the span of a few years left a hole that Navarro College was more ready to fill. New collection policies were drafted, and a renewed focus was given to using the museum to advertise and bolster the Navarro brand. It evolved into a tourist destination for schools and history aficionados due to their robust performances, art shows and sales, and archives. There were issues in budgeting and maintenance before Spring 2020, but their model of supporting Navarro had become quite clear.

Deeper ties to Navarro College complicated matters further for the Pearce Museum, as stated. When Charles was alive, he could help fight the pushback when Navarro was trying to side with donors in a matter that involved his museum. After his passing, Navarro thrust the Robert Reading Collection onto Beasley-Wait and Chew responsibilities with no ability to decline the matter. The museum had an identity crisis and work had to be done to reconcile these grievances under Chew. Yes, the Pearce needed to support its parent organization, but it needed to reclaim the identity that had been lost after the Pearces died. Not all the museum's issues are perfectly solved with this new "independence," as mixed signals are still present between the college and museum. While their full-time staff received continued support, little else did as the college ignored mask mandates until it legally could no longer. Battling for attention from the parent organization can be difficult, and it is only made more so when that affects community perception.

The museum's direction after spring 2020 follows this pattern, albeit it at a safer rate. Art shows and sales are still ongoing, with the "Western Artists Roundup Show and

Sale” wrapping up its stay in the Western Art Gallery in early January 2021.¹⁷⁴ The American Plains Show stayed from October to early January. They are still opening new exhibits, highlighting the day-to-day life of soldiers and family members from their Civil War collection.¹⁷⁵ In late July, their plan was to continue following procedures as safely as possible while being up front with their audience about what would be asked of them. Their response has seemed to have paid off, and they are operating as they have in years past, albeit with a reduced staff and budget. They found a module that worked for them and are continuing to make it work in a new world.

¹⁷⁴ “Upcoming Exhibits.” *The Pearce Museum at Navarro College*, Accessed January 6, 2021: <http://www.pearcemuseum.com/>.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER FOUR

Case Study #2 – Baylor Libraries

Baylor Libraries – Before March 2020

Libraries History

The Baylor University Libraries has seven primary libraries: W. R. Poage Legislative Library, Jesse H. Jones Library, Moody Memorial Library, The Texas Collection, Crouch Fine Arts Music Library, Armstrong Browning Library, and The Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society. Each came into the scene at different times and serve different purposes for students and faculty. In this chapter I will focus on the Poage, Moody, and Jones, which are located adjacent to each other.

Moody is the general library that serves as the main student hub for practical and social needs while studying at Baylor University. The Moody Foundation, named and established by the influential Galveston family, donated a one-million-dollar gift to Baylor that made the library a possibility.¹ The groundbreaking occurred in 1964 and the institution opened four years later. Due to the foundation's instrumental impact in constructing the building, the library was named in their honor. Since its initial construction, Moody has gone on to become the central hub of the campus libraries in 2016, directly connected to the Jones library and adjacent to the Poage. Moody's third floor houses the Crouch Fine Arts Music Library, which includes much of the reference

¹ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

material for graduate students in Baylor University's music program.² In addition to Crouch, the University's computer rental service and digitization efforts are centralized on the library's lowest floors. Moody is very active due to all the services it offers, making it the most populated of the libraries before and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Poage, which focuses on political science, was named after longstanding Congressman William R. Poage, who was a local fixture in the Waco area long after his graduation from Baylor.³ Dedicated in 1979, Congressman Poage wanted the library to serve as the premier location for graduate and faculty research at Baylor. Today, it operates as a special collections library holding Baylor's collections of political materials and the Bob Bullock Archive.⁴ Even though it has moved away from Congressman Poage's original wish, its second floor houses the Graduate Research Center (GRC). Built during the libraries redesign in 2016, the GRC fulfills his wish as it is specifically advertised to be "designed to support and inspire [students and faculty] in their academic endeavors."⁵ Due to the natural traffic of graduate students in the Poage, the Graduate Student Association at the University takes advantage of the location once a year for their introductory mixer.⁶

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ "About." *Baylor University*, Accessed December 5, 2020: <https://www.baylor.edu/library/index.php?id=974440>

⁵ "Graduate Research Center," *Baylor University*, Accessed November 14, 2020: <https://www.baylor.edu/library/index.php?id=970541>.

⁶ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

The Jones Library opened in 1992. It was originally designed to serve as the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) arm of the libraries.⁷ Over the years, it has retained the location for science periodicals and journals for the university, but it has grown to serve as the primary study location for students.⁸ Large sections of the main floor are dedicated to seating and open spacing.

Exhibit Staff

Erik Swanson has served as Exhibit Curator and Coordinator for Baylor Libraries since 2017.⁹ Swanson earned his M.A. from Baylor's Museum Studies program. While in the program, he served as a graduate assistant at the Poage Library.¹⁰ After graduation, Swanson accepted a one-year position at the Poage under then-acting Dean John Wilson.¹¹ He was tasked with creating and organizing a permanent exhibit about the library's collection of papers from Congressman Chet Edwards. Swanson's position was renewed. When the position for Exhibit Curator and Coordinator became available, Swanson jumped at the opportunity.¹² For the last three years, Swanson has worked for all of Baylor libraries, but he works primarily out of the Poage.¹³ Swanson works with the graduate assistant from the Museum Studies program. He also works in conjunction

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

with the larger libraries staff, predominantly with the Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications, Eric Ames. Outside of marketing the upcoming exhibits, Ames assists Swanson by offering his department's abilities, budget willing.¹⁴ The largest example of Ames's assistance comes in helping create the visual content that goes on the panels throughout the libraries.¹⁵ The visuals often appear from his own research or the graphic design content that the marketing department creates.¹⁶ Ames also serves as a sounding board for Swanson, as the two are able to converse about available collections objects and where they would best be displayed.¹⁷ In addition to coordinating exhibit development, Swanson's job also requires him to assist or lead exhibit development for the Keston Center, the Texas Collection, and occasionally the Arming Browning Library. Of those mentioned, the Keston Center and Texas Collection are given highest priority to ensure that what is done for them is done correctly and in a timely manner. For those two, he serves more as helpful resource for the institutions to facilitate their visions than directly designing for them.¹⁸ This has been the standard of cooperation between the departments at Baylor and Swanson during his tenure, offering help when requested and not being afraid to ask for assistance when there is a free moment.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Exhibit Space

In the Baylor Libraries, there are two primary locations that are used for exhibit space: the exhibits lounge and corridor near Moody Libraries south entrance, and the stairwell connecting the first floor to the garden level below.¹⁹ Each area had only enough room to house a single exhibit at a time. In past years, the exhibit lounge corridor housed four glass cases that stood in the middle of the corridor, allowing visitors to see what was on display from all sides.²⁰ At the end of the corridor before the elevators was a board that served to showcase faculty and student work, titled, “Creations.”²¹ Advertised were high-grade research topics, often thesis, dissertations, articles, or books.²² The stairwell was largely ignored due to previous Dean Pattie Orr believing that it was “not viable nor wise” to mount panels on the walls.²³ Her opinion took a long time to change on that stance before becoming fully embraced by her successor, John Wilson, and the current Dean Jeffry Archer.

Since then, the exhibit orientation in the libraries has changed significantly. Instead of putting displays in the middle of the corridor, the focus shifted towards placing exhibits alongside the glass walls.²⁴ This allowed the staff to focus on displays that are not constricted by needing to be viewed equally from all four angles and giving more

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

creative freedom to Swanson.²⁵ The board that once advertised student work has changed to a trifold display that can be viewed from multiple angles to advertise current events and exhibits in the three major libraries. A greater focus has been added to utilizing space wherever possible throughout the libraries as well. Instead of centralizing what few exhibits existed in the one corridor, art and displays have spread across every area. Wilson was in large part responsible for this, as he was very open about what could go in which locations. He once casually remarked that something would look nice on “that barren wall there” in the office section of the Garden level.²⁶ A piece of art was soon placed that said wall. Now, the corridor connecting Moody and Jones is used for exhibits as well, displaying framed pages from the St. John's Bible on its walls.²⁷ His attitude gave Swanson and Ames freedom when it came to figuring out what to display and how to advertise their new exhibits.

The collaboration between Wilson, Swanson, and Ames led to what was on display and how they worked with their partners pre-March 2020. This is highlighted by how little self-promotion the libraries team was doing for themselves. Instead of using their main space to promote their collections, it was utilized to promote the campus wide celebration of “Baylor 175.” Six banners hung from the exhibit lounge corridor’s ceiling, showcasing a specific event from Baylor’s history to the current day.²⁸ Displays were put

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

in the center of the corridor, highlighting different objects and artifacts from across campus to coincide with the anniversary.²⁹

Sensitivity in the Libraries and Baylor

Swanson has seen how Baylor addresses race in the Libraries exhibits, both through his involvement as a temporary worker and as a full-time staff member of the university. During his time as a temporary employee, when the exhibit corridor still utilized glass display cases in its center, he was tasked with editing labels for an upcoming Civil War exhibit.³⁰ There were four cases, and each case centered around a theme. One of them was titled “Texas Homefront” and focused on what life was like at home while Texans served on the frontlines. While editing, Swanson noticed that not a single label in the Homefront or other cases touched on slavery.³¹ He brought it up to his supervisor and was told that the topic “was too controversial to include” for the exhibit they wanted to display.³² In his position as a temporary employee, Swanson could do nothing but follow instructions. The exhibit opened in February and the backlash towards Baylor was immediate and without mercy as people blasted Baylor for creating a Civil War exhibit “that didn’t mention slavery.”³³

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, Swanson was able to help facilitate and participate in what he calls “his proudest moment in exhibits.”³⁴ He was contacted by the mathematics department in 2018 to create an exhibit designed to honor the first African American professor at Baylor, Dr. Vivienne Malone-Mayes.³⁵ She had been denied admission to Baylor only to return years later as a professor. Her gravestone had recently been vandalized, and the department saw this an opportunity to make things right in more ways than one. A bust of her was commissioned. It was re-commissioned by Swanson after the first attempt failed to capture her likeness.³⁶ Dr. Vivienne Malone-Mayes’s bust was displayed during a ceremony on the third floor of the Sid Richardson Building in February 2019.³⁷ Her daughter, Patsyanne Wheeler attended, commenting that after years of largely being ignored, her mother’s legacy at Baylor was properly respected.³⁸ This event marked change in progress in only just a short couple of years.

Baylor’s insensitivity in the past has extended towards religions in the Waco, Texas area. The St. John’s Bible, which was acquired last year and is currently on display in the quiet open spaces of Jones Library, demonstrated this in part. The University wanted to commemorate the arrival with a ceremony to dedicate and bless their Heritage

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Phillip Ericksen, “Baylor unveils bust honoring its 1st black professor, 24 years after her death.” *Waco-Tribune-Herald*, February 26, 2019. https://wacotrib.com/news/higher_education/baylor-unveils-bust-honoring-its-1st-black-professor-24-years-after-her-death/article_5cebf78d-1f27-566a-816f-e09d2a96617d.html.

³⁸ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

Edition of the St. John's Bible.³⁹ The ceremony included scripture readings from the volumes "of the Heritage Edition, music by the Baylor Chamber singers and a reflection by Stephen Reid, Ph.D."⁴⁰ The committee in charge of planning the event hoped to include more diversity in religious speakers.⁴¹ Their intended goal of including Jewish, Muslim, and Catholic faiths was to illustrate the "breadth of how the Christian Bible touches on other faiths."⁴² The committee's motion was denied by a few strong voices, believing that only the Baptist viewpoint should be honored.⁴³ With their chance for inclusion denied, the event turned into a standard Baylor affair, with little fanfare and opportunity for those outside the Baylor bubble to become involved.

These events display Baylor's efforts to change its persona, with different degrees of success. Baylor has struggled to adequately address racism, sexism, bias, and sexual assault. To properly handle these issues, Baylor has seen significant changes in leadership in the past fifteen years, in the President's office, the Provost's office, and the Board of Regents. The current President Dr. Linda Livingstone began her position on June 1, 2017 following the University's efforts to move past its failed handling of sexual assault scandals.⁴⁴ Swanson's tenure since 2017 has seen three different Deans of Libraries:

³⁹ Baylor University. September 23, 2020. "University to Dedicate and Bless Baylor Libraries' Heritage Edition of the Saint John's Bible."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28th, 2020.

⁴² Eric Ames, Email message to the author, December 11, 2020.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Matthew Watkins, "In aftermath of rape scandal, Baylor hires its first female president." *The Texas Tribune*, April 18, 2017. <https://www.texastribune.org/2017/04/18/aftermath-rape-scandal-baylor-hires-its-first-female-president/>.

Pattie Orr, John Wilson, and Jeffrey Archer.⁴⁵ There has been a significant amount of overhaul in key positions across Baylor. If Baylor wishes to be a large tier one institution, then it needs to address the sensitive topics of racism, bias, and sexual assault head on.⁴⁶

Baylor Libraries – Post COVID-19

Initial Response

Baylor University took a measured approach towards the pandemic with room for students and faculty to adjust to the changing landscape. They decided to extend spring break by an additional week and make classes the following two weeks entirely online.⁴⁷ Only three days after that initial statement, Baylor University issued another directly from President Livingstone that the university and all its departments would go online for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester on March 16, 2020.⁴⁸ Baylor Libraries followed suit and remained closed to the public from March until June. It partially re-opened during the summer semesters for graduate students on July 7.⁴⁹ While the libraries were closed, the staff posted a virtual tour of the Crouch Fine Arts Music

⁴⁵ Eric Ames, “Reflecting on 10 Years in Leadership: A DPG Exit Interview with Dean of Libraries Pattie Orr.” *The Baylor Collections Blog*, May 11, 2017. <https://blogs.baylor.edu/digitalcollections/2017/05/11/reflecting-on-10-years-in-leadership-a-dpg-exit-interview-with-dean-of-libraries-pattie-orr/>.

⁴⁶ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28th, 2020.

⁴⁷ Baylor University. March 11, 2020. “COVID-19 Extends Spring Break, Prepare for Online Instruction.” Dr. Linda A. Livingstone.

⁴⁸ Baylor University. March 16, 2020. “Baylor to go online remainder of semester, Commencement postponed.” Dr. Linda A. Livingstone.

⁴⁹ Baylor University. June 29, 2020. “Moody/Jones Libraries Limited Re-Opening on July 7,” Jeffrey Archer.

Library on their official YouTube channel.⁵⁰ Although its purpose was to act as a substitute for the introduction that graduate students in music had received in person, the video also demonstrated the new social distancing measures that would be coming to the libraries.⁵¹ In August, Baylor opened the libraries to all students and faculty with regulations designed to protect the health of students, faculty, and anyone that may be on campus.

COVID-19 Exhibit Impact – Available Space

After the libraries and Baylor University shut down in March, exhibit spaces were left alone until the libraries figured out how students would properly navigate these areas in accordance with Baylor’s COVID-19 guidelines.⁵² Once decisions were made, the only exhibit area to suffer drastic redesigns was the Exhibit Lounge Corridor. This was in part due to the other areas of the libraries naturally supporting social distancing standards due to the low visitor retention of their exhibits and the system of delivery by mounted displays on their walls. The lounge and corridor had to be completely redesigned, as the south entrance of Moody became the only way to access the library to help control the flow of traffic and limit risk of contamination. To increase available space, several tables and chairs were eliminated to accommodate the ideal six-foot distancing. Remaining seating was eliminated, with tables supporting a maximum of two people. The walkways

⁵⁰ Eric Ames, “Virtual Tour: Crouch Fine Arts Library (CFAL).” July 2, 2020. Moody Library, Waco, Texas. YouTube, 2:48. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TR-OxMf_fTA.

⁵¹ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

⁵² “Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information.” *Baylor University*. Accessed December 5, 2020: <https://www.baylor.edu/coronavirus/>.

created function well while demonstrating the limitations of creating fixed traffic flows in a previously designed area that encouraged freedom of movement.

While the lounge proved difficult in keeping to the new standards, the corridor proved simpler to fix even though it meant it could no longer support exhibits. Where before displays and foam boards would be pushed alongside the glass walls, they were instead removed completely to create room for people to walk without fear of interaction. Several tables were placed in the middle of the corridor, sectioning it off much like lanes in the road to help direct foot traffic so that when students were on one side of the table, you were only going in one direction. Signage utilizing Baylor's mascots was added onto the tables to continuously reinforce mask protocols.

The right half of the corridor, when walking from the lounge to the heart of Moody, still possessed a few items next to its glass wall. These objects were there to fully support COVID protocols more than any focus on exhibits. One item was a population tracker, showing how full each floor of the library was before students committed to spending time in the building. Behind the tracker were two tables with seating for one person each behind a plexiglass barrier. The only aspect remotely related to exhibits in the corridor were the banners from "Baylor's 175", which had not been changed since they were put in place in the Spring.

No other areas needed to be changed to follow Baylor University COVID-19 Guidelines.

Impact on Available Resources

In prior years, the plan for exhibits has been to have a set rotation for each semester in the corridor while the stairwell has a slightly longer life cycle.⁵³ COVID-19 has altered this schedule across all libraries under Swanson. This is best illustrated in the loan called, “Borrowed Light: Giclee Prints from Saint John’s Abbey,” a collection of six framed prints reproducing the vibrant colors of the original art of the “first hand-illuminated, Medieval-influenced Bible created in more than 500 years.”⁵⁴ The original loan only authorized the items to be on display in the hallway between Moody and Jones for a year until September 2020.⁵⁵ Eric Ames had been in contact with them in late July to try to get an extension on the loan deadline, citing that the artifacts did not gain as much exposure as desired due to the shutdown in the months of April and May.⁵⁶ The extension buys more time for Swanson and Ames to gain assistance on developing what will go in its place in accordance to their new Dean Jeffrey Archer’s wishes.⁵⁷

In the previous section, I detailed how the stairwell design space had largely been left alone during the COVID-19 redesign of Moody. This included the content displayed on the stairwell wall; the architectural blueprint panels that had up since spring were still up when the fall semester began. Plans had been made for the next exhibit to take its place during the summer, but the ability to physically replace the objects mounted on the

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “Borrowed Light: Giclee Prints from Saint John’s Abbey,” *Saint John’s Abbey and University*, 2019.

⁵⁵ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

wall was not an option for Swanson. It would not be until September 23, nearly two full months after the re-opening on August 20, that the exhibit would be changed.⁵⁸ The exhibit to replace the blueprints was similar in scope. A series of nine panels giving a cartoonist's rendition of Baylor "Drawn to Campus: A 1939 Cartoon Map of Baylor University" is the first new exhibit in the library since the pandemic began. It also incorporates Baylor's new diversity initiatives, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

COVID-19 has also impacted Swanson's budget for exhibits. While his budget has never been particularly large, university-wide budget cuts because of the pandemic have made his budget even tighter.⁵⁹ A new financial management system has simultaneously streamlined and complicated the process for ordering materials and supplies.⁶⁰ This has mostly affected the exhibit team through the process to order new materials. Exact quotes are required from the manufacturers providing the material, and that quote must be sent to the budget office and receive final approval from their Dean.⁶¹ The process has become fully streamlined by becoming the only way to proceed.⁶² With assistance from the marketing department and his own assistants at Poage, this budget situation has caused everyone to learn how to do more with less as the pandemic marches on.

⁵⁸ Erik Swanson, Email message to author, September 24, 2020.

⁵⁹ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Online Presence

Consolidating the many organizations that fall under Baylor Libraries has been a long goal that has gathered a large amount of momentum during the pandemic. Each library on campus had its own YouTube channel. Often, they were created and ignored. The Texas Collection's YouTube has consistent traffic with their audience but had not received any new material for over four years.⁶³ Ames has worked to shut down the various channels and move their content over to a single Baylor Libraries channel. His efforts have largely been successful in consolidating the YouTube channels and their other social media accounts. The efforts are to ensure that new content can be produced to market the libraries without flooding the channel from one institution. It also establishes a regular cycle to help encourage excitement for the individual locations and makes it easier to find library-related content in one centralized place.⁶⁴

Increasing and consolidating Baylor Libraries' digital footprint has been the name of the game for much of the Summer as they march towards the Fall semester. In past years, Swanson would be working on his involvement for a civics class in middle school called iEngage that spends one day of the week-long course at the Poage library.⁶⁵ Due to the pandemic, Swanson and the Baylor Education department have created lesson plans for K-12 teachers using the resources at the Poage.⁶⁶ The plan is to use their work as a test subject before expanding their efforts to all Baylor libraries.⁶⁷ Swanson had been

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Erik Swanson, Email message to author, November 16, 2020.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

utilizing Word Press to create a virtual traveling trunk for the class to use. It was not too elaborate but ensured the information was still delivered faithfully on a digital medium.⁶⁸ Instead of relying on expensive software, like what was done in years past, Swanson managed to increase Baylor's footprint through the free resources available. This has also led to him creating projects under the guidance of the Texas Collection. Their most popular views come from their blogs and their flicker collections. With Swanson's success elsewhere, he was able to quickly create more of what was already popular in a new format.⁶⁹

Baylor Libraries – Diversity/Inclusion

Baylor's Response

On May 29, four days after the death of George Floyd, Baylor University issued a statement from President Livingstone reminding everyone that in the face of such horrific acts everyone needs “to come together as a people” to stop these actions from happening again.⁷⁰ Unity was reinforced not just by her call to students and faculty, but by citing the statement she and the directors of the Big 12 Conference issued earlier that day. A few days later, President Livingstone announced upcoming changes to policies for the new academic year and beyond to show that Baylor was working to “augment the many

⁶⁸ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28th, 2020.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Baylor University. May 29, 2020. “President Livingstone’s Statement on Racism and Violence.”

trainings, dialogues, guest speakers and activities already taking place across” campus.⁷¹ At the end, her address highlighted these critical areas of improvement: the increase in diversity training, diversity among staffing, and the fair treatment of all.⁷²

More news followed in the coming weeks as tensions escalated across the country. The Board of Regents issued a Resolution on Racial Healing and Justice on June 26, which publicly acknowledged the university’s historic ties to the Confederacy and its role in slavery.⁷³ The acknowledgement referenced the need to look at the historical context for locations across campus to show full transparency. The commission would report their findings and submit them to the Board of Regents for consideration.⁷⁴ Full details on the individuals involved and tasks given to the Commission on Historic Campus Representations was announced on July 6.⁷⁵ Much of the information was a re-issue of the board’s goals during the June 26 announcement. Its purpose was to announce that, alongside its original goals, it would make plans for the complete involvement of Baylor and its founders’ history in slavery and racial injustice. The report had a final deadline on December 20, 2020.⁷⁶ Baylor’s transparency in its efforts to promote their message of racial healing since are evident.

⁷¹ Baylor University. June 2, 2020. “Our calling to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly.” Dr. Linda Livingstone.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Baylor University. June 26, 2020. “Baylor University Board of Regents Acknowledges University’s History, Ties to Slavery and Confederacy; Unanimously Passes Resolution on Racial Healing and Justice.” Board of Regents.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Baylor University. July 6, 2020. “Baylor University Announces Charges, Members of Commission on Historic Campus Representations.” Board of Regents.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Baylor Libraries Response

While the libraries official response is that of the university, their inclusivity and diversity initiatives began before the unfortunate events of the summer. This is largely due to the hiring of Dean Archer back in January 2020.⁷⁷ His initial press release highlighted his success at McGill University Library and Archives in Montreal, Canada in user experience and marketing. There, he worked tirelessly with people from the First Nations to ensure that their input and voices were heard across the board.⁷⁸ His years of experience in inclusion initiatives give him avenues and perspectives in how to apply them to the libraries.

Archer's insight and experience has led to the inclusion of bilingual exhibit labels in the library. The previously mentioned "Drawn to Campus: A 1939 Cartoon Map of Baylor University" exhibit contains an English panel describing the exhibit next to its Spanish language counterpart, created by Latinx graduate student Katerin Collazo.⁷⁹ The previous display featuring architectural blueprints offered no such context for students, leaving it entirely as an English interpretation. It is a small step forward towards progress, but it is a step in the right direction to further collaboration.

In addition, Dean Archer initially wanted to change the "Borrowed Light" exhibit in the hallway between Moody and Jones once the loan had ended. He wished to replace it with objects more connected with the Latinx community here at Baylor.⁸⁰ The

⁷⁷ Baylor University. January 6, 2020. "Jeffry Archer Appointed Dean of University Libraries at Baylor." Lori Fogleman.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Katerin Collazo, Email to the author, September 24, 2020.

⁸⁰ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

extension on the current exhibit has given library staff more time to gain input of Latinx students before moving forward with the new exhibit. Their plans are currently on hold due to a lack of appropriate materials in their collection.⁸¹ Increasing Baylor Libraries' collections to gain the ability to display inclusive and diverse exhibits is one of their goals in the next few years.⁸²

Conclusion

Baylor University has seen significant change in several key positions the over last few years, with the Libraries operating under the direction of their third dean since 2017. The culture that surrounds exhibits has been in constant flux while the core staff in charge have remained the same in Eric Ames and Erik Swanson. Real progress has been made during Swanson's tenure as Exhibit Coordinator and Curator while clearly acknowledging the limitations of the current structure. COVID-19 did little to affect their development plans outside of delaying their loan return dates.

The racial and community tensions over the last year have cause Baylor to continue looking inward. The university's introspective process has been on-going since the sexual assault scandal first broke in 2015.⁸³ Baylor has been careful and deliberate with their statements, acknowledging their history when they would have preferred to ignore it all together. Certainly, it might have been easier to ignore. The people in charge,

⁸¹ Erik Swanson, Email message to Author, November 16, 2020.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Sarah Mervosh, "Baylor sex assault scandal: Everything you need to know to understand what happened." *The Dallas Morning News*, December 22, 2016. Accessed December 5, 2020: <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2016/12/22/baylor-sex-assault-scandal-everything-you-need-to-know-to-understand-what-happened/>.

like Dean Jeffrey Archer, appear to be doing and saying all the right things. Time will tell if this is indicative of the efforts Baylor created since the inauguration of President Livingstone or if this will last past the next administrative change. Eyes turn towards the report that was delivered by the Commission on Historic Preservation in December. The University's response on the report will speak volumes. The exhibits department at Baylor will keep producing content for the libraries and searching to improve on their fledgling diversity initiatives as the rest of campus discovers how to proceed.

CHAPTER FIVE

Case Study #3 – Rienzi at MFAH

Rienzi | Museum Fine Arts, Houston – Before March 2020

History

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) first opened its doors in 1924, seven years after the initial dedication.¹ It has served as a hub for the development of the arts in the city of Houston, Texas. Its campus includes: The Bayou Bend Collection and Gardens, Glassel School of Art, the Sarofirm Campus, which houses the newly designed Nancy and Rich Kinder Building, and Rienzi House and Gardens (Rienzi). Each serves a different role in sharing history and art with the community of Houston and beyond. In this chapter, I will focus on Rienzi. To understand the relationship between Rienzi and MFAH, I will begin with a brief history on the first house museum gifted to MFAH: Bayou Bend.

Ima Hogg and her two brothers commissioned a pair of Houstonian architects to design a house adjacent to their planned garden community of River Oaks in 1926.² It was completed in 1928 and named Bayou Bend in 1929.³ The house served as a

¹ “Museum of Fine Arts Houston.” *Texas Art Gallery: History, Collection Highlights*. Accessed December 12, 2020: [http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/museums/museum-of-fine-arts-houston.htm#:~:text=Museum%20of%20Fine%20Arts%20Houston%20\(MFAH\)&text=First%20opened%20to%20the%20public,the%20museum%20district%20of%20Houston](http://www.visual-arts-cork.com/museums/museum-of-fine-arts-houston.htm#:~:text=Museum%20of%20Fine%20Arts%20Houston%20(MFAH)&text=First%20opened%20to%20the%20public,the%20museum%20district%20of%20Houston).

² David B Warren, “Introduction,” *American Decorative Arts and Paintings in the Bayou Bend Collection: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), XVI.

³ *Ibid.*

repository for the Hogg family collection. Bayou Bend boasts an impressive collection of Americana due to their collecting efforts since the early 1920s.⁴ Ima Hogg collected in earnest and was approached by collectors, friends, and professionals, who told her that she should consider creating a house museum rather than just donating the collection. She acted on their advice and willed the collection, gardens, and house to MFAH in the event of her death.⁵ Bayou Bend and its fourteen acres served as the example for how the museum would operate years later when acquiring Rienzi.⁶

Harris Masterson, the primary collector of the Rienzi collection alongside his wife Carrol Sterling Masterson, served on the MFAH board in the 1970s when Ima Hogg died.⁷ He learned first-hand how involved the process was to accept such a massive collection and house. This led to him approaching then-MFAH Director, Peter C. Marzio, and ask if he would want his house in the collection.⁸ Masterson's house was not just suggested by Masterson to give MFAH another house designed by Houstonian and Bayou Bend architect John Staub.⁹ It was to add Masterson's lifelong collection to the

⁴ David B Warren, "Introduction," *American Decorative Arts and Paintings in the Bayou Bend Collection: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), XIV.

⁵ David B Warren, "Introduction," *American Decorative Arts and Paintings in the Bayou Bend Collection: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), XIX.

⁶ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Katherine S Howe, "Harris and Carrol Masterson and Rienzi," *Rienzi, European Decorative Arts and Paintings: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Northburgh, London: Scala Publishers, 2008), 5

MFAH's collection.¹⁰ During World War II, Masterson served in London, where he developed a fascination with British porcelain. His interest soon grew to include European decorative arts.¹¹ His collection, while serving as a counter to the focus of American Decorative Arts seen at Bayou Bend, offered an opportunity that no one else in Texas, let alone Houston, was doing in the 1990s.¹² Upon his death, MFAH gained a massive collection of European art that they would not have been able to acquire on their own, and a beautiful house and gardens to utilize.¹³

Masterson died in 1997, and the museum officially opened to the public on March 9, 1999.¹⁴ The extensive renovations required to make the house safer for both art and guests has not dulled the impact Rienzi has enjoyed as part of MFAH's museum system.¹⁵ This can be attributed to the care given by the museum to secure its lasting impact. The house is in the active and elegant historic River Oaks neighborhood. This keeps attendance high but poses limitations.¹⁶ Due to the active traffic and prestige associated with the neighborhood, there is little that Rienzi can do in forms of signage to

¹⁰ Katherine S Howe, "Harris and Carrol Masterson and Rienzi," *Rienzi, European Decorative Arts and Paintings: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Northburgh, London: Scala Publishers, 2008), 3.

¹¹ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

¹² Jonathan Wright, "A Debut in Houston." *Town & Country*, March 1999, 88. *Gale Academic OneFile*. <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A54099618/AONE?u=txshracd2488&sid=AONE&xid=b89c7a82>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Katherine S Howe, "Harris and Carrol Masterson and Rienzi," *Rienzi, European Decorative Arts and Paintings: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Northburgh, London: Scala Publishers, 2008), 16.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

tell visitors that they are about to approach the museum.¹⁷ Their parking lot is not incredibly large either. Some busy days require guests to valet park and the museum to request police escort to accommodate visitors.¹⁸ It stands in remarkable contrast to other homes due to its design and featured collections, signifying it as a residence unlike any other in Houston.¹⁹ MFAH takes full advantage of this fact and the European focus in their event planning. While visitors can enjoy Independence Day celebrations at Bayou Bend, they may attend Rienzi's Bastille Day event two weeks later July 14.²⁰ Their summer 2020 exhibition exuded a jazz atmosphere that embodies the 1920s in, "Hats Off: Halston Hats from the Masterson Collection."²¹ These are two events that feel wholly unique to the art community of Houston. Their smaller size of four acres compared to Bayou Bend's does not impede the unique services that only a house museum focusing on European decorative arts can offer.

In addition, the house is afforded a unique opportunity for renovation and improvement by the actions of its founding director, Katherine S. Howe. After the passing of Masterson in 1997, Howe invested a lot of time researching other house museums across the nation.²² In doing so, she discovered the idea of closing the house for a month to allow the building the opportunity to rest from the constant traffic of

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

¹⁹ Katherine S Howe, "Harris and Carrol Masterson and Rienzi," *Rienzi, European Decorative Arts and Paintings: The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Northburgh, London: Scala Publishers, 2008), 6.

²⁰ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

visitors.²³ The month of closure, August, has worked in Rienzi's favor for years due to this decision. There is no need to march visitors in during the hot month, and it is the perfect time for renovations.²⁴ Most house museums are always open, making it difficult to schedule time for necessary repairs and improvements. If the need ever arises to fix the windows, the floors, or the skylights, they can schedule these changes during August without hurting the potential income.²⁵

Staff

Rienzi, outside of its auxiliary employees such as security and garden curators, staffs seventy-five docents and five full-time employees: Director, Chief Educator, Assistant Curator, Assistant Educator, General Assistant.²⁶ Their current director, Christine Gervais, has worked at the house and MFAH in various capacities since 2002 before taking over as director in 2016.²⁷ She has defined herself as someone who is consciously aware of the curator rut someone like herself can fall into after working at a location for eighteen years.²⁸ Her method to combat this is to say yes to the ideas her staff gives here. Her thought process is simple, "It is easier to say yes and if the idea does not work, then they deal with the situation."²⁹ This is highlighted by her handling of Rienzi's

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

gardens shortly after she took over the director position. Gervais was surprised to see how much was being spent on the upkeep and maintenance of the area when so little programming and foot traffic was utilizing the space.³⁰ After considerations, her staff found creative avenues to use the space more liberally through parties and events, titled, “Rienzi Films.”³¹ She recognized their success but was not shy in conceding their failings, particularly for the films. Rienzi is located underneath the Hobby airport flight path in Houston, and the visual clutter created by Rienzi Films obstructed incoming pilots during these nights.³² As the days turned longer, it became hotter and far more expensive to justify the costs for keeping food and drink vendors at the location.³³ She was not afraid to cut the event but open to making it a more special celebration in the future if the timing and circumstances allowed.

In addition to her current primary role at Rienzi, Gervais serves as a Curator of Decorative Art for MFAH. Her recent work has her collaborating with Dr. Kaylin Weber, The Lora Jean Kilroy Curator of American Painting and Sculpture, on the reinstatement of the American Galleries.³⁴ The existing content in the galleries was moved into the new building that opened on November 21, 2020, and new content would need to replace it.³⁵ This has been high on the wish list for the two and, under continued support from MFAH

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

Director Gary Tinterow, their reinstallation efforts have expanded to multiple areas of the main building in accordance with their vision.

Stephanie Niemeyer serves as chief educator underneath Gervais, with her official title as Manager of Learning and Interpretation. She has worked at Rienzi for seven years and currently runs her small department of two.³⁶ Niemeyer creates and facilitates programs that promote curiosity, as her goal is to make sure visitors “walk into the museum curious and leave it curious.”³⁷ She also organizes and trains their robust docent core.³⁸ At every location Niemeyer has worked, she has overseen the docent training. It has always been her calling as she wants to ensure that all teaching in the galleries is respectful, careful, and thoughtful.³⁹ Every other year a new batch of docents is trained and prepared under her guidance. They meet once a week for six months during this period to cover everything from the house, general art history that relates to the house, education theory, touring techniques, and public speaking.⁴⁰ Upon delivering their final tour to Niemeyer, they promptly graduate and are available for public tours.⁴¹

Niemeyer takes her role with of docents seriously, from their training to checking in on their well-being. She recognizes that many take on this opportunity due to their status in life as a retiree of society and widow/er.⁴² This is an opportunity for them to stay

³⁶ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

connected and be a part of something. Niemeyer also sees docents as an opportunity for visitors to see themselves.⁴³ She reaches out to areas across Houston to find out if they, no matter what religion, ethnicity, or disability, are interested in joining Rienzi as a docent.⁴⁴ It has been very important to her to make sure that her docents reflect the community that they serve. If someone is deaf, is there a docent that is proficient in ASL?⁴⁵ If the group speaks primarily in Arabic, can a docent tour in that language?⁴⁶ Expanding the docent program to include more than older white women has been a challenge that Niemeyer has tackled with gusto. She wants those who visit to be excited by the content and the people presenting.

Cultural Sensitivity

Many expectations come from Rienzi's location. The River Oaks community was created by the Hoggs, houses Bayou Bend and Rienzi, and is the wealthiest district in Houston.⁴⁷ In addition, European decorative arts elicit the idea of high-class white society even before visitors witness the vast British porcelain collection or the bust of Marie-Jeanne Bécu, favored mistress of King Louis XV.⁴⁸ This is further reinforced by the audiences that visit MFAH and Rienzi. The organization's latest strategic plan that began

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁴⁸ "Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory Bust of Madame du Barry." *Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*, Accessed December 12, 2020: <https://emuseum.mfah.org/objects/59565>

in 2015 and ended in 2020, has focused on increasing audience diversity, particularly Latinx communities in Houston.⁴⁹ Through the audience research firm of Slover Linett, they have gathered the most important priorities for their new audience if they wish to better attract them.⁵⁰ They emphasize the importance of a warm welcome, relevance, choice in arriving and how to experience the museum, connection, and the notion of experiencing the museum in solidarity or a group setting.⁵¹ Their findings have informed them about what they do best and what should be the priority to address in their upcoming exhibitions.⁵²

Their efforts to address these issues are highlighted by the expansion of the American Gallery on the main campus under Gervais and Weber's vision for the space. The original space gave a compressed tour of American Art from the Hudson River School to Georgia O'Keeffe.⁵³ With the expansion of MFAH through their new building, these materials are moving to the new building and allow new collection items to take their place. Armed with new data and their own desires, the two have been able to ask "Where are the women? Where are the immigrants?" in the stories they are telling.⁵⁴ What is the best way to present that with the collections available? The solution is to

⁴⁹ Caroline Goeser (W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of the Department of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, September 2, 2020.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

contrast the romanticized and the real.⁵⁵ The first gallery displays this by utilizing MFAH's collection of Frederic Remington paintings and arts depicting his views of the Native American contrasted by their collection of Native American art.⁵⁶ Their method sounded effective in theory but needed further refinement. Gervais and Weber asked for help from the W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of the Department of Learning and Interpretation, Dr. Caroline Goeser.⁵⁷ Their plan, while well intended, led to some pitfalls. The gallery dedicated to contrasting Remington and authentic Native American art was initially designed around having the Remington sculpture in the center surrounded by Native American art.⁵⁸ This tells the audience that the artwork creating a false reality is the most important piece rather than the objects they were using to tell the real story.⁵⁹ Gervais and Weber agreed and went on to improve their initial designs.

MFAH has aimed to serve the majority of Houston for years, as seen in their efforts to provide a great experience for those who have a hearing impairment and those on the autism scale.⁶⁰ The University of Houston (UH) student body includes a large number of deaf students and has built a successful American Sign Language (ASL) department to better serve them.⁶¹ UH is ranked as the top Texas university for ASL,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Caroline Goeser (W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of the Department of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, September 2, 2020.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ "Tips for Visitors on the Autism Spectrum." *Museum of Fine Arts, Houston*. Accessed December 12, 2020: <https://www.mfah.org/blogs/inside-mfah/tips-for-visitors-on-the-autism-spectrum/>.

⁶¹ Caroline Goeser (W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of the Department of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, September 2, 2020.

according to one online metric.⁶² MFAH works closely with UH, offering programs for their students to enrich themselves and ensuring that when their students come to visit, their experience is welcoming.⁶³ MFAH's efforts had been highlighted as recently as the Texas Association of Museums (TAM) conference in May 2020 by Rienzi's Learning and Interpretation Coordinator, Ryan Hernandez.⁶⁴ In a video panel created for the conference, Hernandez highlighted what the museum was doing for deaf visitors.⁶⁵

In addition to these efforts, Rienzi has worked to provide a welcoming experience for those dealing with Alzheimer's Disease as well as the expanding programming to reflect the variety of lifestyle choices present in Houston. The most common method to tackling the issue has been a member of the staff asking if this can be done, and Gervais saying "Sure!"⁶⁶ Gervais mentions a particularly notable example from the annual Board of Trustee's meeting in 2019, where she highlighted the events of the year through statistics and memorable pictures.⁶⁷ One of the pictures Gervais chose showed the punch party, which was hosted in the gardens every year. Many participants wore extravagant outfits and costumes to enjoy the night.⁶⁸ The picture shared by Gervais displayed a

⁶² "Best American Sign Language (ASL) Colleges in Texas." *Universities.com*. Accessed December 12, 2020: <https://www.universities.com/find/texas/best/american-sign-language-asl-degrees>.

⁶³ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23rd, 2020.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ryan Hernandez, Sharon Hill, and Chelsea Shannon. 2020. "Breaking Barriers to Language Access: Bridging the Deaf Community and Your Institution Through Collaboration" Presented TAM Virtual Conference, Online, May 15, 2020.

⁶⁶ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

group of men dressed in eighteenth-century drag having the time of their lives.⁶⁹ After the meeting, a board member spoke to Gervais about how the picture resonated with him, seeing how much fun that group was having at Rienzi. He asked if there was anything that could be done at Rienzi for the gay community. Gervais did not know why they had not done anything before. While she does not know the details of what the inclusion will entail, she knows that the board member has been in contact with education staff across MFAH to put something together.⁷⁰

Rienzi – Post COVID-19

MFAH's Good Fortune and Initial Response

MFAH's strategic plan originally targeted how they would approach increasing the diversity of their audience. Their plan was set to end in June but before it was finalized and set in motion, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.⁷¹ They knew what their new audience valued, but they now needed to figure out if that audience valued these same factors during the current crisis.⁷² They contacted the audience firm Slover Linett once more to see if they could contract them for more polling and found out that the firm was currently partnering with Culture Track to gather data for Art Institutions across the country on how visitors were interacting and engaging.⁷³ The information was presented

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Caroline Goeser (W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of the Department of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, September 2, 2020.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

in a panel hosted by Visitors Studies Association through two panels in September. Not all their information was agreed upon, with large variances in recording Hispanic visitor population.⁷⁴ It did highlight much of the same information MFAH had previously gathered. From April through May when the survey was fielded, people wanted more connections and fun in their lives.⁷⁵ Objectives that, the culture track panel felt, were easily attained from the cultural experience of visiting a place for the arts.⁷⁶ Their data only reinforced that the values that were held before had only grown in importance as the pandemic continued. Current exhibitions and programs will need to be changed to adequately fit the new online formats, but the goals behind them stay the same for MFAH.

Compared to many museums across Texas and the country, Rienzi held strong in late July after the abrupt shutdown of COVID-19. This goes beyond attendance numbers and their ability to make a profit. The year for MFAH ends in June before the next wave of programming and events officially hit.⁷⁷ With shutdowns in mid-March, there was initial worry among staff that layoffs may be coming, but none did. MFAH, not just Rienzi, continued supporting and paying all staff as of July 23, 2020.⁷⁸ This is attributed due to their location and the actions of their Chief Financial Officer Eric O. Anyah.

⁷⁴ Jen Benoit-Bryan, Madeline Smith, Kriti Mira Adhikari. 2020. "Culture Track Part 1: Findings and Methodologies for Culture and Community in a Time of Crisis" Presented at Visitor Studies Association, Online, September 9, 2020.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Being in Houston and the center of oil wealth in Texas has its perks for MFAH. Donors lined up across the board, allowing for all branches of the museum, from Bayou Bend to Rienzi, donating in large sums to meet each location's end of the year goals.⁷⁹ It gave the museum plenty of cushion and opportunity to weather the coming storm. This was further reinforced by Anyah's actions. After examining the previous year's market trends, he made conscious efforts to prepare MFAH for an incoming situation.⁸⁰ While no one could have predicted the impact of the COVID-19 shutdown, his crisis preparation allowed room for adjustment before the flood of donations poured in for the institution.⁸¹

Rienzi's Response

Gervais has served on the return-to-work taskforce since early May in efforts to ensure that all members of the community will be in safe positions once they are physically capable of returning to work.⁸² This has led to many intense conversations around MFAH about aspects that are important but not what anyone thought they would be discussing at this point in their careers. Through the taskforce's efforts, strict protocols were put into place for Rienzi. These included mask requirements, routine temperature checks, and most importantly, only allowing eight people in the house in an hour.⁸³ It was awkward early on as the taskforce was split on many ideas and topics, be it visitor limits

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

or hand sanitizing stations.⁸⁴ The efforts of all individuals involved have made the MFAH and Rienzi a safe experience.

Gervais feels that the effort that has gone into making the house safe has been clearly shown by those who want to come and visit. This is backed both by raw numbers and the feelings from her staff. Visitors still call ahead and are greeted on the phone by Hernandez, who goes over any questions that they may have.⁸⁵ After she has answered all their questions, most callers appear in the house shortly after. This personal touch has shown Gervais how deeply committed Rienzi is to safety of visitors and staff. Her belief of, “It is staff safety, which is our family and people, and the public. We try to figure out the comfort level that everyone is willing to reach” shows from Rienzi’s continued efforts.⁸⁶ Statistically, Rienzi’s attendance numbers have been remarkably strong. Before Houston’s latest surge of cases following the July 4 holiday, Rienzi was recording attendance that was 50% of the amount from one year ago.⁸⁷ Following the cases, their numbers have dropped to 30%, which is not unexpected in Gervais’s eyes.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Docents

COVID-19 has affected the docent program in several manners; the most immediate has been the delay of a full class of docents graduating.⁸⁹ When the shutdowns began in mid-March, five of the twelve docents still had to yet to complete their final tour, leaving the class in a state of limbo.⁹⁰ One docent was able to give a virtual tour via PowerPoint to Niemeyer, but this was not ideal by any means and an awkward situation to be put in for both her and the docent.⁹¹ Their situation only worsens as the pandemic continues and Rienzi is not allowed to let their core of seventy-five docents tour their facility. Keeping docents actively engaged has been a significant struggle. They desperately want to come back, but due to necessary regulations, that is not feasible.⁹² Niemeyer, realizing the deeper connection this position holds for many of the current docents, repurposed the Rienzi dispatches to also be given to their inactive docent core to keep them involved in the museum and field as their extended layoffs from touring grows ever longer.⁹³ The dispatches are a simple method for Rienzi to share the latest articles, books, and videos about their collections and research amongst themselves.⁹⁴ This encouraged the docents to not only stay up to date but have an opportunity to interact

⁸⁹ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁹³ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

⁹⁴ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

where they previously could not. These dispatches serve another function by showing the docents that they are still thought of as cared by Rienzi during this difficult time.⁹⁵ This situation was dropped on them all, and it is important to Niemeyer that the communication channels stay open between docents and museum for both personal and professional purposes.

These temporary measures prove useful but also highlights another pressing issue for Rienzi's docents. All active and near graduated docents will need to undergo some form of new training before they can return to their touring duties.⁹⁶ For example, docents will need to be trained in mask enforcement and social distancing protocols.⁹⁷ Additionally, Niemeyer plans to enlist the aid of a theater teacher to teach docents how to properly project through a mask.⁹⁸ Projection is critical because the tours in Rienzi are constructed to be conversational.⁹⁹ Gervais and Niemeyer want the docents and visitors to discuss the collection, and that is difficult when one side cannot properly hear the other, let alone all the nonverbal cues that are hidden behind face masks.

Online Presence

The pandemic has led to online growth for new and existing programs at Rienzi and MFAH. The simplest but most important success in this sector is the expansion of online

⁹⁵ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

ticketing, a long-requested service that was finally implemented for the house museum during the pandemic.¹⁰⁰ For years it had been a low priority of requested features, in part due to the museum creating personalized exhibition tickets for each new exhibit.¹⁰¹ Due to health and safety concerns for visitors and staff, MFAH moved this item to the front of the queue, and it became a featured service for all locations. Now if visitors wish to visit any part of MFAH, they can purchase a ticket from the safety of their home.

Expanding existing programs and events through online mediums has been all encompassing at Rienzi. In the past, each department of MFAH was asked to provide content for the museum’s social media accounts.¹⁰² Focus was centered on featured exhibits, such as the “Hats Off” show or the upcoming exhibits.¹⁰³ This had primarily been handled by Hernandez, the youngest and most tech savvy of the five employees. This is where Rienzi had a great stroke of luck on the outset of the pandemic. Not only was she already skilled in the platform, she was aware of the content their audience was craving.¹⁰⁴ For those stuck at home working by themselves or, like her, caring for a toddler and needing entertainment to keep the family occupied.¹⁰⁵ Hernandez had the opportunity to promote and create content that she knew visitors would be interested and

¹⁰⁰ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

invested in, allowing Rienzi to expand its social media presence beyond promoting exhibits that its visitors would not be able to see in person.

School children and teachers have benefited immensely from the new initiatives created through MFAH, Rienzi, and their partners at Art Connect. The pandemic delayed the arrival of an upcoming *Soul of the Nation* exhibition and symposium from Spring to Summer 2020 while the pieces of art were still in San Francisco.¹⁰⁶ With the delay of the artwork, MFAH repurposed the event. The symposium turned into a weeklong online event of panels, highlighting national artist and cultural work from local Houstonians.¹⁰⁷ Teachers across the country are now able to access their recording and information from any of the five days in their classrooms to support their lessons.¹⁰⁸ MFAH took the experience from their symposium to develop programs alongside Houston Independent School District (HISD) for teachers to utilize.¹⁰⁹ Every year in the fall, third graders arrive to tour the campus, from MFAH to Rienzi. The current pandemic has cancelled all fall programming, making this impossible. In conjunction with Art Connect and HISD's Fine Arts department, MFAH is creating a virtual tour or field trip for students to experience the education that the otherwise could not experience.¹¹⁰ Their initiative

¹⁰⁶ Caroline Goeser (W.T. and Louise J. Moran Chair of the Department of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, September 2, 2020.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

requires no outside grants, and their goal is to make sure “every student has equitable access to art education.”¹¹¹

Equitable access extends to the adult education programs that affect Rienzi and Bayou Bend, and the largest benefactor of this equity may be their Book Club. Years past, Bayou Bend and Rienzi educators would come together for a book club that meets periodically throughout the year.¹¹² The focus would shift between a book picked by Bayou Bend, for an American focus, to one selected by Rienzi for European efforts. These discussions took place in person but were moved online using Zoom video conference software at the onset of the pandemic. During this transition, the book club reached new levels of success for MFAH and Rienzi. Their audience grew significantly, with individuals now participating in their discussions not just in Texas but from other countries, such as Brazil.¹¹³ The pandemic shifted the means of communicating but gave a platform for those who otherwise did not have the ability to talk.

This has caused a myriad of complications to occur from both technical and personal standpoints. For any program or event that is being planned, far more time and resources have been devoted towards the assignment than ever before.¹¹⁴ The most significant example of this comes in the handling of a concert with the University of Houston. Originally it was planned to be a live, one night event in the gardens with no recordings

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

whatsoever.¹¹⁵ Now, the entire event will be recorded to be shared online for free so that the intended audience can view and enjoy it safely.¹¹⁶ This required the MFAH lawyers to get involved. Moving from an unrecorded, live event to a recorded, online event raised copyright issues that had to be addressed. Fortunately, this problem was caught ahead of time before damages could occur.

It is a victory that their content can be viewed by anyone with a stable internet connection regardless of personal economics.¹¹⁷ It is also a victory that they have been able to connect with people across the world in ways they could not before. Gervais and the staff at Rienzi are not comfortable resting on these successes, however. Now their focus shifts towards measuring the successes of these projects beyond views or clicks.¹¹⁸ What demographics are being targeted? How long were they engaged with the material? How do you mark their attendance in online participation? This is the next hurdle in her eyes: “How people are taking it in and what we can do better.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

¹¹⁸ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

MFAH's Actions

The goal of the American Gallery's renovation was always to diversify the voices on display, according to Gervais.¹²⁰ As the assignment grew in scope, it became clear that if she and Weber were going to do the subject justice, they would need more space. Director Tinterow approved the use of available spacing with no hesitation.¹²¹ From June to July alone, much conversation was generated between Gervais and Weber about the opportunity to address American Japonism near a large Tiffany Window.¹²² Gervais noted, "If there was ever a time to tackle cultural Japonism, now would be the time," and the two, alongside a colleague from MFAH's Asian Art department, went to work.¹²³ Their goal was to show the progress of the reaction to these objects over time and the subsequent art that Americans created.¹²⁴ This collaboration was just one of many as the departments involved in the American Gallery renovation grew exponentially. Nine departments across MFAH are taking part in providing their collections to assist Gervais and Weber in telling a more cohesive and inclusive story.¹²⁵ The departments are as follows: American Paintings and Sculpture, Decorative Arts, Bayou Bend, Native American Art, Photography, Prints and Drawings, Asian Art, Hirsch Library at the

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

MFAH, and Rienzi. Director Tinterow has given them plenty of room to make the most of their opportunity to correct a topic that the museum had been ignoring for far too long in their eyes. Getting all who can help involved ensures that no stone is left unturned, and new approaches are not excluded. This has extended towards their online realm as well as the physical.¹²⁶ Gervais attended a meeting hosted by Yale University and saw that there was a dedicated American Sign Language signer translating for the audience. Gervais asked if they could start doing that as well for their own content with University of Houston’s help.¹²⁷ Hernandez has pushed for similar avenues by making sure subtitles and a Spanish translation are available for all new digital content.¹²⁸ Small, simple steps that involve the community directly with museum and show them that the museum is thinking of them as they create new content.

Gervais and her staff have been asking for years what more they can be doing. MFAH has never shied away from these topics.¹²⁹ The topics have only become a larger focus in the months since.¹³⁰ Their focus on addressing and not shying away from representation in their galleries has always a chief focus and has only grown since spring 2020. The adjustments and delays COVID-19 created for the *Soul of a Nation* “added a level of importance” to the exhibit, strengthening the impact between MFAH and the

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Stephanie Niemeyer (Manager of Learning and Interpretation) in an interview with the author, July 30, 2020.

¹³⁰ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

community as local voices joined this historic art from the Civil Rights movement¹³¹ The people behind the exhibition in its original form and what arrived at MFAH gave opportunity that only they could as the sole southern location hosting the exhibit.¹³²

The momentum from these developments are massively important and what the museum does now should speak for how it moves forward.¹³³ The projects that have been developed because of the current situation need to find a life beyond it.¹³⁴ Gervais says in constant meetings with the head of HR and her staff, “Things shouldn’t just be for now, develop things that have legs.”¹³⁵ There is no point in letting the opportunity and lessons learned go to waste.

Conclusion

MFAH has been very fortunate over the last year despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial tensions surrounding our country. They have been working for years on how to better approach their lack of diversity in audience and breach past the stigma associated with the wealthiest district in Houston, from the work at the Board of Trustees down to their individual museums at Rienzi. The people in charge are willing to say yes to an idea even if it fails. Rienzi and MFAH’s structural freedom has allowed them to tackle topics despite complications. COVID has shut down many opportunities

¹³¹ Kaitlyn Miller, “MFAH Speaks to the BLM Movement Through Soul of a Nation,” *Houstonia*, June 6, 2020. <https://www.houstoniamag.com/arts-and-culture/2020/06/mfah-soul-of-a-nation>.

¹³² Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

that they originally planned on to increase their engagement and involvement. Through their partnerships in the University of Houston, HISD, and Art Connect, they have managed to thrive in a terrible situation. Not everything is perfect, as their current docent limbo situation highlights. Their resources are above many other museums found within my thesis, but they are not resting on their laurels. They very well could have gone through with their initial findings from Slover Linett but instead chose to ask for another survey to see if these same points of interest mattered when lives were put on hold. They are taking a bad situation and finding the positives. This is fine in the interim, but the next steps are just as important as the current ones. Gervais worries that what they have learned and done will be forgotten when they return to the normalcy they had experienced before the pandemic. It is their job to remember these lessons, build on them, continue asking questions, and make corrections. COVID-19 has given them more freedom and opportunities to reach further than ever before. They need to remember what that feels like when it becomes easier to connect with all people face to face and not just through a virtual screen.

CHAPTER SIX

Survey Analysis

During the months of May and June of 2020, I created a survey to gather general information on how museums throughout Texas communicated about their exhibit process. My questions ranged from how they initiated the creative process to how involved their audience, both current and potential, were in voicing their interests. I asked nineteen questions to polled participants, split between two sections covering the demographic of the individual and specifics of the museum to figure out the differences between institutions. As my thesis goals changed to seeing how the museum world was handling the COVID-19 pandemic and increased racial tensions, the survey results grew more important. The central theme of communication became more critical to museums as the months moved on, and the survey proved a great baseline for other institutions during these crises. Of the forty plus institutions polled, only ten locations filled out the Qualtrics survey and the majority managed to do so in late August. With the current crises still ongoing, the information gathered was still quite substantive. The full results from the survey can be found in the Appendix. Here I will focus on the survey findings and discuss the information in a digestible format. As we move into the next chapter, we will jump into examining what all the data from the case studies and surveys can tell us.

At various points through the following paragraphs, I will refer to specific questions from the two sections of the survey. The questions related to demographics will

be denoted with an a, while the questions targeting communication will be denoted with b. To avoid repeating what specifics each question asks, they will be listed out here.

Section A:

1. What is your job title?
2. How long have you been at your institution?
3. Where did you get you get your education (Please list all your degrees)?
4. How long have you worked in the museum field?
5. What other museum positions have you held during your career?
6. Is your museum accredited by AAM?
7. How many staff members (full- and part-time) are employed by your institution?
8. How does your institution communicate to the general public? Mark all that Apply:

Section B:

1. What departments participate in your exhibit design/conception meetings? Mark All that Apply
2. How many people are you comfortable with in a creative meeting to ensure all voices are heard?
3. When starting a new project/exhibit, do you employ the same exhibit design staff with little or no variance?
4. Why or why not?
5. When developing new exhibits, do you hire an exhibit firm to assist in the installation process or do you keep it in house?
6. If "Hire an Exhibit Firm" is selected, please write who you've contracted.
7. What tensions exist between your exhibition staff and outside professionals/consultants?
8. How does your institution identify current vs potential audience?
9. When considering new exhibitions, do you survey your audience to learn of topics of interest from them, or do staff come up with topic to pursue?
10. How do your geographic surroundings affect what information is presented at your museum? Do you have a geographic limitation on your interpretive mission?
11. Recent AAM accreditation requires museums to include information on minority voices when walking through their institution. When your museum is looking to incorporate said voices, do you focus on an individual or the community's story?

Questions about Individual and Institutional Demographics

Question 1a

Some of the survey's most dramatic response came from the response to the first question. Respondents' job titles ranged from museum directors, heads of curation, learning and interpretation chairs, to visitor services. With the difference in positions, there was a splendid opportunity to hear how communications and exhibits were being handled from outside the predictable sources. A major goal of the survey was to hear from staff at all levels of the museum, and it is encouraging to see that even in this difficult situation that goal was still accomplished. There were a few repeating titles even if distinctions can be made between institutions, such as the few directors and curators who participated. It was a promising start to the demographic situation.

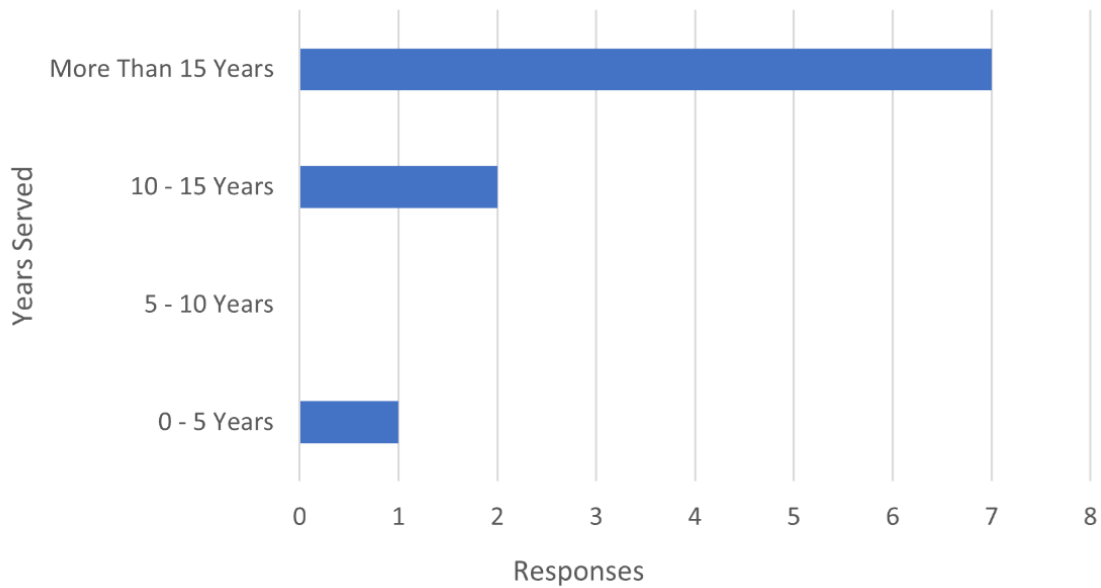


Figure 6.1. How long have you worked in the Museum Field?

Questions 2 – 6a

All participants had different paths to their current positions, and it helped reinforce that even among multiple directors, these people had a variety of experience. It did not matter if they had only been at their current location for two years or twenty-five or whether they had a bachelor’s degree or a doctorate. Those answering knew the field and were not in only one position for most of their careers. This showed that even if they were not there long, they were still capable of answering the specific institutional question that was the focus of the survey’s second section. They were all highly qualified individuals working at AAM accredited institutions.

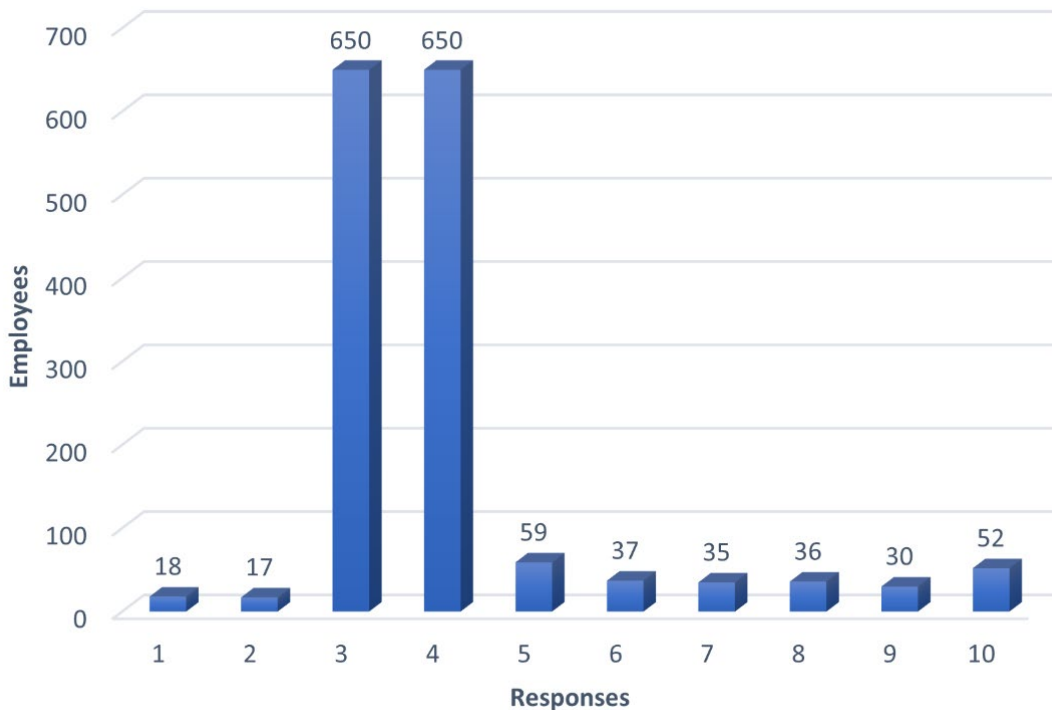


Figure 6.2. Question 7 A: How many staff members (full- and part-time) are employed by your institution?

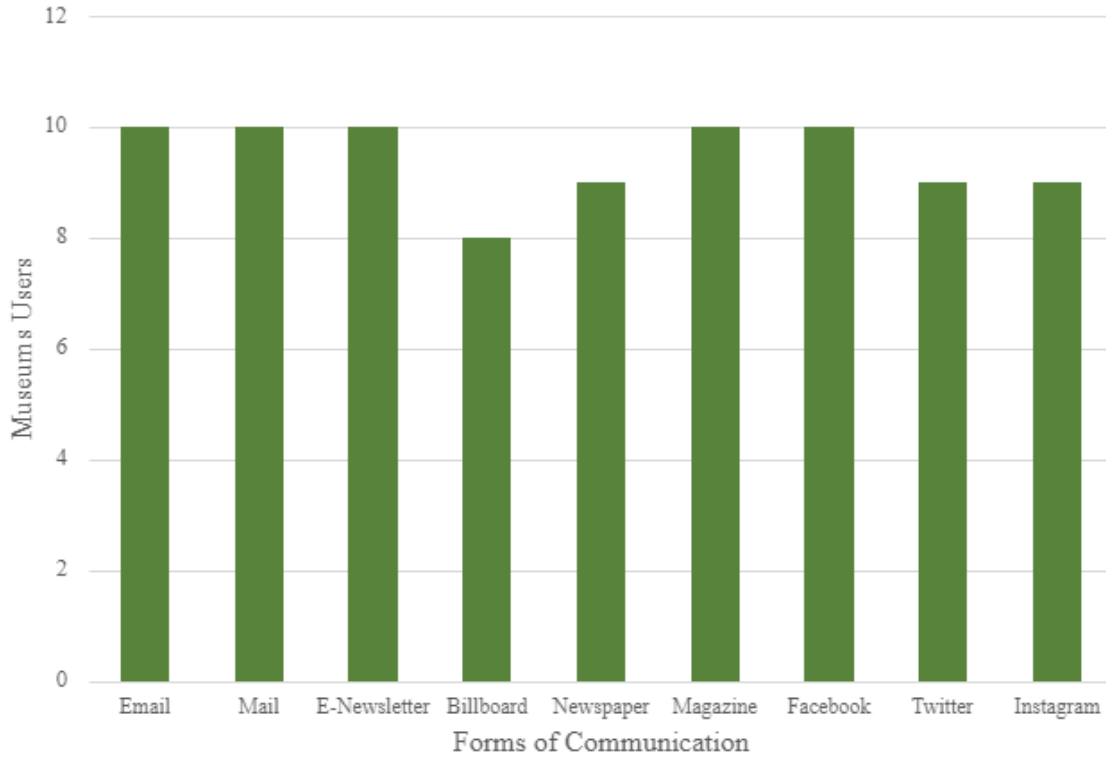


Figure 6.3. Question 8 A: How does your institution communicate to the general public? Mark all that Apply.

It is important to note that for museum staff, due to the phrasing of the question, most recipients responded with their full staffing numbers. Only two locations split their total (shown on bars 9 and 10) between full and part-time.

If I had more time, I would be inclined to ask if the lukewarm attitude towards billboards, in Question 8 A, was in any way related towards the travel reductions many experienced during the pandemic. I would be curious to see if that were a side effect or a conscious decision to relocate resources elsewhere.

Questions about Development and Communication

Question 1b: What departments participate in your exhibit design/conception meetings? Mark all that Apply.

I gave five options and had them mark all that apply. The first four were static, detailing volunteer, education, curation/exhibit, and collections departments while the fifth was tasked as other, allowing the participant to mark what other departments participated. Only two departments had 100% participation between those polled and that was education and exhibits, with collections being behind by a single response.

Considering how integral the departments are to one another; it is not surprising to see their dominant representation. After all, the role of the educators has been described as one that translates “researched content and exhibits into activities, presentations, tours and various other creative formats to a diversity of audiences.”¹ Collections only being nearly universally involved is not as striking as it could be. While ensuring your exhibits can show off what is housed in on-site or off-site storage is important, some meetings do not require them to be involved in the early stages. They are involved throughout the creative process in making sure the museum has the proper tools to facilitate their ideas, but they are not mandatory during the conceptual phases. Volunteer departments were represented on the lower end with only two marks. This makes sense with the same reasoning rationale for collections; you do not know if you will need any volunteers or how many you will require until later in the project. It is important to note the impact COVID-19 has had on the volunteer departments of museums. As described in the case

¹ Bingmann, Melissa and Anna Johnson, “Museum Education and Museum Educators,” in *The Museum Educator’s Manual: Educator’s Share Successful Techniques Second Edition*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017) 11.

study chapters for the Pearce Museum and Rienzi, their volunteer staff are on standby and are not part of their immediate plans until they can return safely to their respective museums. That is a possible factor at play, even if speculative.

The last option for question one included interesting write-in options that spoke to what the polled museums value in their development meetings. Four participants marked the “Other” option for the survey, specifying they also include departments such as archives, facilities, security, visitor services, marketing, exhibit maintenance, and operations in their meetings. One institution not only values the initial concept meetings, but how well adding another exhibit can be handled by their overall maintenance staff. Another includes their facilities and security teams to know what kind of burden, if any, this may add onto their jobs. A third decided it was not enough just to specify their volunteer departments but also their entire visitor services. The other option, while only selected by four people, added greater depth to this question. I am thrilled to know that similarities exist between institutions in the conception meetings, but it is exciting to know what each location values in addition to these “core” departments. Not every museum has the same number of staff and seeing how this relates to who each institution selects to participate in these meeting is fascinating. Take one of the larger museum’s surveyed and how its numbers do not directly relate to how many departments are involved. For having 650 staff members, that participant only noted the three core departments were involved in their process. Another museum with 37 staff members at their institution marked all four options and even wrote in a couple more in the “Other” option. It is a refreshing reminder of what can and cannot be taken at face value. Sharing

the same core options and the decision of the institution to explore beyond them is different for each location, no matter the available staffing.

Question 2b: How many people are you comfortable with in a creative meeting to ensure all voices are heard?

I listed five options for the participants to choose from but only two were selected. Either they were comfortable with six people maximum in their meetings, or they selected the “Other” option and wrote in their preferred number. One participant did not specify, but the other answers given ranged from specific numbers of eight to whatever fit the scenario best. This question quickly became a text answer without meaning to, with respondents opting to write paragraphs instead of a numeric value. Some recipients viewed their responses as an opportunity to show the heart that their smaller institutions carried. For only having 36 employees, the participant emphasized that “I like to have as many staff members as possible. This helps them voice their questions and concerns. It also helps the staff to buy in to the project.” For them, the amount of people in the meeting was not a concern of trying to control the room and making sure the project did not become too unwieldy. It was about making sure the new project was one worth pursuing and that when they start it, they had the chance to get those involved to buy in and support it. This was a fascinating approach and not an answer that I was expecting for a question that was designed to collect numbers or responses like “depends on the size and complexity of the project.” The responses continued to surprise me and showed that when given the option for elaboration, the recipients were more than willing to oblige.

Questions 3 – 4b: When starting a new project/exhibit, do you employ the same exhibit design staff with little or no variance? Why or why not?

Of those polled, only two selected the “No Variance” option for vastly different reasons. One felt their staff possessed specialized skills and were already capable of “creating the best boundaries for further discussion with a wider group.” Due to their confidence in their employees, they were less inclined to change how they operated. The other stated that their museum does not have a large enough design staff to facilitate any room for variance at all. It is outside the realm of possibility, so they cannot entertain the idea. With the same amount of people working on the project, it is as if their team is working in an echo chamber. A fascinating perspective compared to the museums that stated staff issues, they checked the variance option. Many cited that because of these issues, they were only able to have variation if money allowed them to do so. This sentiment was shared across the board. They were more than happy to have the opportunity for variance if all their requirements were met. Among those who selected variance, there was one strong proponent for it, and their reasoning stemmed from how they viewed the process of exhibit development. Whereas one respondent specifically lamented the size of their design staff, this responder criticized the usage of the word design. They believed that the process encompasses more than that and should be “about exhibit development.” To them, you will never know what you will need until you begin developing the project. For instance, you will never know if there is a need to bring in expertise, be it inside or outside the museum. Design brings an air of finality to the project akin to the fabrication and installation stages. Their argument rings true when discussing the final stages. It can be a little late for “Variance” to help at that point, even if there are specific points in the evaluation process that are design to accommodate the

need for changes. A small but significant choice in words further expands the difference between institutions and how they view their respective process.

Questions 5 – 6b: When developing new exhibits, do you hire an exhibit firm to assist in the installation process or do you keep it in house?

This question paired well with the previous two choices, showing that, although the majority wish to seek some sort of variance in who participates in their process, their preference is to seek that variety through in-house development. While there were only four responders to question six because of this majority, some surprises still appeared. Roto Studio and Pony Allen were mentioned twice, with many highly rating their experiences with Roto and commenting that Pony was fair, as in so-so. I had asked for them to name who they had contacted, but the individuals commenting on how well the firms performed was a bonus. Another revelation came from a wonderful response illustrating the communication through their respective museum. While mentioning that “The Executive Director handles” oversees the selection of exhibit firms, they believed that their preferred partner was Exhibit Concepts. Knowing the inner workings of how the firm operates does not fall under their job description, but they still had a fair idea about who in their museum handled these matters. They do not know everything, but they knew enough to have an idea rather than assume that their museum prefers to “Keep it in House” and hope they were right. For the survey’s original goals, this is the type of information that I was looking for. In the thesis’s current version, the answer shows how willing their Texas museum is for help in bettering their institution. The bonus? Even if it is not that individual’s job, they knew about the effort their museum was putting in if the money and resources properly allowed.

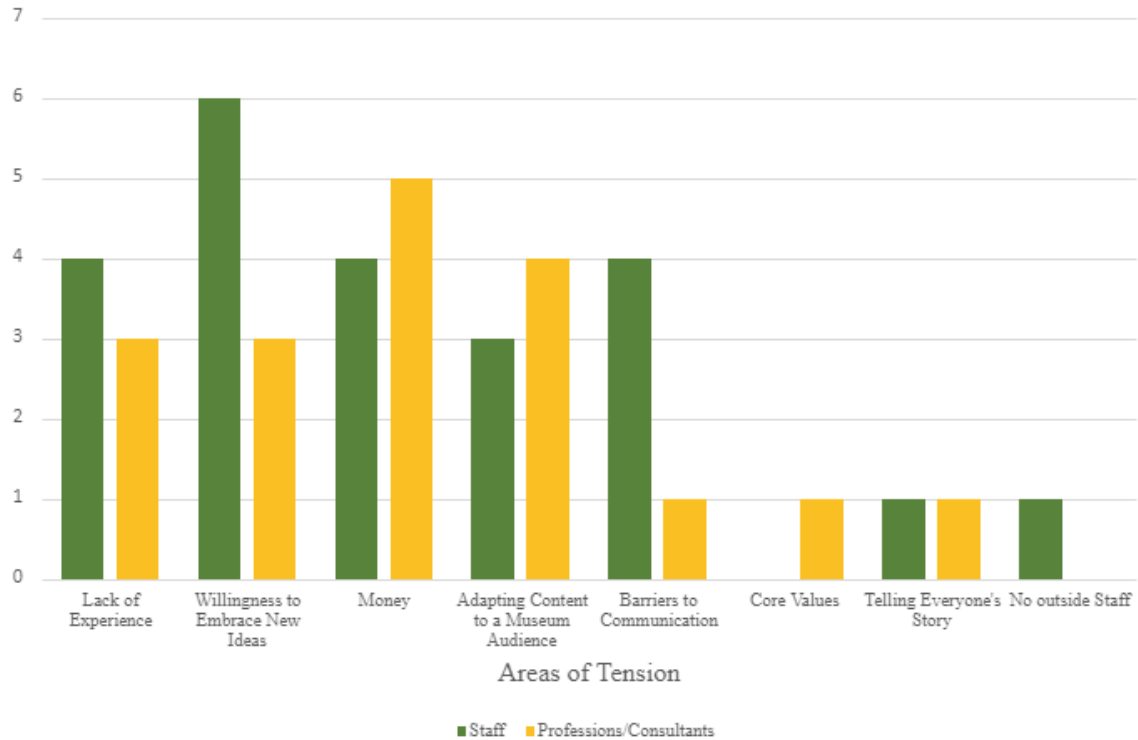


Figure 6.4. Question 7b: What tensions exist between your exhibition staff and outside professionals/consultants?

Question 7b: What tensions exist between your exhibit staff and outside professional/consultants?

For this question, I had designed the answers to be side by side, allowing responders to mark the issues that they saw in both their staff and consultants, rather than choosing one or the other keeping with the trend established from Question 3b, one recipient answered in the write-in section that they do not use outside consultants for exhibition development. While most were consistent, one answer stood apart. An eleventh responder decided to only answer this question before submitting their survey and marked that they had issues in both in their staffing and consultants regarding experience. It was fascinating for that respondent to point out issues in experience and that alone. Alongside these two, it is important to note that one polled museum marked

that both their staff and outside help suffer when it comes to telling everyone's stories. In hindsight, I regret not making this an option in the original survey due to how the thesis has developed since its conception. The individual going out of their way to signal the issue in the other category is wonderful to see, not because of the issue in tensions rising from handling the topic but from acknowledging the existence of the issue at all.

Outside of those mentioned, a trend emerged in the marked choices. Problems were not uniform across the board. Six was the highest number of people who marked the same option. The similarities came from the issues that demonstrated high tensions among both staff and consultants. A lack of experience, willingness to embrace new ideas, and barriers to communication were the largest problem areas with staff. The number of staff selected compared to consultants was not close for the latter two options. Barrers had a 4:1 ratio of staff to consultants. The nature of the survey kept these issues in a general sense rather than delving into the specific instances in which these problems occurred. While that would be interesting to know, it is too much for the survey's original goals considering the number of questions being asked.

On the consultant side, areas were they led were not surprising. Money, adapting content to a museum audience, and core values were selected. In each category, only lead staff in these problems by a single selection. Money is a precious resource to get outside help for these consultants, but it is equally important for your own staff. Adapting content for a museum audience seems like it would be an obvious win for consultants, especially for a location like a science museum. Staff have just as hard a time adapting their research collections for the general audience as other professionals. This answer provides some context to those that previously selected that they prefer to develop via in-house

staff. If problems are prevalent in the museum already, it does no one any favors to invite more potential problems to the equation. As much flack as an outside firm or consultant may carry, it is nothing that is not already present in the museum.

Question 8b: How does your institution identify current vs potential audience?

Most locations utilized different forms of surveys and evaluations to identify their current and potential audiences. Others used an outside evaluation firm or researchers to compare the visiting demographic to the city's makeup. Another uses the traffic that floods into Waco through I-35. How they are going about identifying these groups is remarkably similar in execution and reasoning. They have a great understanding of who visits their museums because of their focus on families or adult programming. They recognize their failings just as easily. One response illustrated this perfectly: "A majority of our audience is middle-aged and white[...] our potential audience is extremely diverse, providing much opportunity for growth". They know what needs to be fixed, and while it is going to take some time on their end, they are committed to making their museum accommodating for the audience they have been neglecting.

Question 9b: When considering new exhibitions, do you survey your audience to learn of topics of interest from them, or do staff come up with topics to pursue?

This question quickly turned into a yes or both answer for those polled. Their approach largely mirrored how they were planning to gain potential audiences versus their current audience. If they were planning on expanding out to new markets, then they were curious about their new markets' interests. Some kept it simple, saying that the curatorial staff selects the topics that they wished to take on. For the simplicity of the

answer, there were two responses that showed differing evolutions in their museums' processes. The first mentioned that they relied heavily on consultation in the past, but the practice had fallen out of practice with newer exhibits and installations. The second highlighted that they used to have staff and board selected topics, but their choices were largely unpopular with visitors. Now their plan is to utilize diverse focus groups to help kickstart the exhibit planning process from community desire. Their answer was quite refreshing after many left their answers as yes, no, or both.

Question 10b: How do your geographic surroundings affect what information is presented at your museum? Do you have a geographic limitation on your interpretive mission?

When I originally selected museums to case study, I wanted to discuss the affect that their location in the state of Texas had on the subjects they approached. My thought process was seeing how they were representing communities, tribes or otherwise, that lived in the institution's surrounding area. Due to this, I created a question in the survey discussing the impact of geography to use as a comparison. This is no longer as important to the current thesis since the case studies are no longer in different locations across the state. Much of the information gathered from this question reinforces the information in the previous two questions. Simple answers of "We seek to offer balanced and diverse representations of the history" and "Greatly!" were the simplest answers to the question.

There was also a response discussing the transition of the small-town museum into an international destination for tourists. In their growth, the responder acknowledges the museum's failure to properly show off their diverse community to their new

international audience. Recognizing their failure to diversify their core staff and board while receiving a new diverse audience is a fascinating insight.

The only other remarkable response came from a responder discussing how their geographic location being close to the coast and with a high Latinx population influenced a recent major decision. Their new building is to be designed by an architect from Mexico City, taking aspirations from major American and Mexican architects to better reflect their community.

Question 11b: Recent AAM accreditation requires museums to include information on minority voices when walking through their institutions. When your museum is looking to incorporate said voices, do you focus on the individual or the community's story?

The answers echoed some earlier sentiments when it came to minority voices in their museums. When the opportunity presents itself, they are willing to include these perspectives. What is currently there is not enough, and they have plans to correct that. Those with heavy Latinx communities are seeking input from them on what stories, be it individual or community, they should employ. This is the correct course, but most responses view this action in a singular sense. The museum using their input to enhance the Spanish Colonial collection that is on permanent display. One exhibit focused on the individual on the east side of the museum while another exhibit on the opposite end is community centered. While all commented that work needed to be done, only one response cited the need for minority voices throughout. They remarked, "Our main gallery is under review... and we will want to incorporate minority voices throughout the exhibits rather than focusing on one area of the museum to minorities." Their response shows an understanding of making sure their gestures are not construed as mere

tokenism. This is not meant to discredit the other polled institutions and their plans for incorporating individual and community voices. It is simply worth noting how conscious that institution is of the work that they need to do undertake.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

The events following spring 2020 rocked the country, and the museums of Texas are still recovering. Interactive exhibits are still not allowed as COVID-19 restrictions continue to limit museums' day-to-day operations nearly a year out from the initial lockdown. Safety precautions remain relevant at all social levels despite repeated statements from Governor Abbot that there will not be another lockdown.¹ In addition, the country is still reeling from the protests of last summer, as well as a divisive presidential election in the fall. Many museums are trying to figure out the best way to continue moving forward to address these issues and keep their museums healthy and relevant. The Pearce Museum, Baylor Libraries, and Rienzi as well as the additional museums surveyed offer a unique opportunity to consider how these events affected the museum field of Texas. We have seen how each location, different as they are, tackled long standing issues of interpretation and new issues of operating in a pandemic and how both issues have affected their development. What can we learn about exhibit development as health and racial issues continue into the new year? From the case studies, it is clear there is no all-encompassing or easy answer to fix these issues. The new normal that has been our reality since late March 2020 has forced museums to

¹ Patrick Svitek, and Dan Rosenzweig-Ziff, "Coronavirus cases in Texas are soaring again. But this time Gov. Greg Abbot says no lockdown is coming." *The Texas Tribune*, November 18, 2020: <https://www.texastribune.org/2020/11/18/texas-coronavirus-lockdown/#:~:text=But%20this%20time%20Gov.,reopenings%20regionally%20based%20on%20hospitalizations.>

consider new ways to thrive rather than just survive. This can be done by analyzing what our peers have done and figuring out where to go from here.

Each case study was completed during the period of July to September 2020, with additional follow ups conducted over email. We were six months into the pandemic and museums were still sorting out how to address this issue with the resources they had available. There are significant differences between these three organizations. The Pearce Museum is hamstrung to do more than maintain the integrity of their building. Financing a full re-design of their Civil War gallery to accommodate a new exhibit philosophy seems even more unlikely than it was before the pandemic. Baylor Libraries has lost valuable space due to the need to provide space for social distancing guidelines, but support remains for new exhibits. In contrast, Rienzi and MFAH have flourished, with a new programs and a brand-new building for each to spread their influence beyond their museum walls. This is made possible because Rienzi has the necessary resources and support from its parent organization.

It may be simple to say that those better prepared to weather this situation can thrive, but it is worth repeating. MFAH can advertise the new additions through the new campus building via Facebook ads because of their resources as a healthy parent organization. Navarro College has been supportive of funding basic operations and full-time salaries for the Pearce Museum but cannot do much else financially as the college struggles with low enrollment due in large part to the pandemic. It is difficult to continue development when resources are lacking. For now, Navarro College is focused on short-term adjustments to survive COVID-19. The Pearce has had issues and has needed to develop new areas for years, and while money may not have been in the cards before the

pandemic, capital improvements are an even lower priority for the college during the pandemic.

That leads to another issue created by 2020: stagnation. This is not traditional stagnation where an exhibit wing needs to be redeveloped to attract new audiences and current visitors. Rather stagnation as in limbo, waiting for the opportunity to move forward. Each of the museums has experienced this to some degree. Baylor Libraries extended several temporary exhibits, working with the lenders to get the value they missed due the shutdown. It makes sense to get the full value out of the borrowed exhibit. However, extending current temporary exhibits did not solve the problem of bringing in or developing new exhibits to replace outgoing exhibits, especially in institutions where budgets have been frozen or even reduced. Rienzi gave the house an extended time to rest because of the lockdown, waiting until they were prepared to move forward. The Pearce entered a holding pattern after their first week of re-opening, wondering when they could allow their part-time staff and docents to work in the building.² They are still in this holding pattern, with the latest estimates being until well after the spring semester.³ While there are success stories to share from each of these institutions, the challenges of 2020 remain. When can we re-open? Will we have something to show visitors after our temporary exhibits leave? Can we ever let our part-time staff and docents back into the facility? COVID-19 forced a lot of priorities to change.⁴ To help

² Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22nd, 2020.

³ Ann Zembala, Email message to author, January 8, 2021.

⁴ Jen Benoit-Bryan, Madeline Smith, Kriti Mira Adhikari. 2020. "Culture Track Part 1: Findings and Methodologies for Culture and Community in a Time of Crisis" Presented at Visitor Studies Association, Online, September 9, 2020.

compensate for this and to ensure visitors feel safe, some things have taken a significant hit. Docents, acquisitions, floor space, and exhibit budgets are nowhere near as large as a year ago. Exhibits have also changed as museums have eliminated most interactives to reduce the risk to visitors and staff.

Of the three case studies, Rienzi has clearly been the most successful in navigating the pandemic. Rienzi has been able to develop new exhibits and added online ticketing. Rienzi has been most successful in increasing its outreach and digital development. Gervais said the pandemic had given the institution opportunities to embrace new ideas that they had never been able to properly do before. This has been echoed from the other two case studies.⁵ The Pearce Museum and the Baylor Libraries have expanded their outreach and digital efforts albeit on a smaller scale than Rienzi. At the Pearce, Zembala may not have the budget for new initiatives, but she and her staff have worked diligently to expand their online tools for educators. They have also renewed their efforts to record the living history reenactment from their Civil War galleries.⁶ At Baylor, Swanson is fully embracing the challenge and creating new programs to help engage Waco teachers and youth in new programs.⁷

In the case studies and the survey, it is clear that museums in Texas are making conscious efforts, within their resources, to change both in response to the pandemic and

⁵ Christine Gervais (The Fredricka Crain Director, Rienzi and Curator of Decorative Arts for MFAH) in an interview with the author, July 23, 2020.

⁶ Ann Zembala (Director of the Pearce Museum at Navarro College) in an Interview with the author, July 22, 2020.

⁶ Ann Zembala, Email message to author, January 8, 2021.

⁷ Eric Ames (Assistant Director of Marketing and Communications) and Erik Swanson (Exhibit Curator and Coordinator) in an interview with the author, July 28, 2020.

in response to ongoing calls to address systemic racism in American society. Museums are adopting and adapting in an effort to demonstrate to current and potential audiences the value of their museum's content. In 2003, at the Pearce Museum, the staff and the exhibit team struggled to include slavery in its exhibits. In 2020, museums are recognizing the need to discuss race and racism in their exhibits, to expand the subjects of their exhibits, and to embrace inclusivity. These are exciting developments even if this is just the beginning for bigger things to come. The case study museums recognize the challenges. For example, Ames and Swanson realize that the libraries will need to develop its collections more fully to support future Latinx exhibits. MFAH participated in two separate programs from Culture Track to help staff figure out what their audiences want and what they can do to address those desires. They are recognizing these problems and addressing them in a healthy manner through their outreach to eventually lead to proper exhibit development when funding will allow. Survey participants and the case studies are engaging in planning efforts so they can move forward properly and respectfully.

Still much work remains to be done. Museum boards generally do not reflect the audiences of the museums they serve. Museums also struggle to follow through on their initiatives. For example, during the protests sparked by the murder of George Floyd, several major museums, including the Getty, were criticized for failing to address their own institutional shortcomings even as they issued statements of support for the Black Lives Matter movement and those who protested racial injustice.⁸ Museums will have to

⁸ Alex Greenberger, and Tessa Solomon, "Major U.S. Museums Criticized for Responses to Ongoing George Floyd Protests," *Art News*, June 2, 2020. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/museums-controversy-george-floyd-protests-1202689494/>.

confront their ongoing problems with “curatorial blackface,” a phrase coined by Tamar Evangelistia-Dougherty, a rare books librarian at Cornell University, to describe libraries and other cultural institutions who tout their efforts at inclusivity all the while failing to make deep substantive change.⁹ The calls to action do not end there, with equity for all needed in the wake of increased anti-Semitism in the nation following the January 6 insurrection.¹⁰ Museums need to address sentiments like this and the rise in Asian American racism, not just token minority inclusivity when it suits them.

It remains to be seen how the events of 2020 will affect exhibit development long-term. The survey and the case studies that form the basis of this thesis show how museums are responding to COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter and the intensification of racial protests. More research is needed to understand whether these early responses to the pandemic and racial unrest will bring lasting change. The biggest disservice museums could do to their communities would be to fail to grasp the lessons of 2020.

⁹ “When WHITE Libraries Happen to BLACK Collections; Pathways from Marginalization to Empowerment,” Cornell University Library, Rare and Distinctive Collections, online conference, October 19, 2020.

¹⁰ Jack Pointer, “Capitol Police officer suspended after anti-Semitic writing found,” *WTOP News*, March 15, 2021. <https://wtop.com/dc/2021/03/capitol-police-officer-suspended-after-anti-semitic-writing-found/>

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Survey Results

Section A

Demographic Results	
1. What is your Job Title?	
Director	2
Curator of Exhibitions	1
Chair, Learning and Interpretation	1
Director of Education	1
Executive Director	1
Assistant Director of Exhibits, Communication, and Visitor Services	1
President and CEO	1
The Fredericka Crain Director, Rienzi Curator, Decorative Arts	1
Assistant Director of Education and Programs	1
2. How long have you been at your Institution?	
	24 Years
	25 Years
	6 Years
	2 Years
	8 Years
	13 Years
	20 Years
	2 Years
	5 Years
	18 Years
3. What is your level of Education?	
Master's Degree	4
Bachelor's Degree	1
Doctorate	3
Bachelor of Science in Education	1
MBA (Master of Business Administration)	1

4. How long have you worked in the museum field?	
0 – 5 Years	1
5 – 10 Years	0
10 – 15 Years	2
More than 17 Years	17
5. What other museum positions have you held during your career?	
Previous Curator	
Outreach Coordinator Curator of Education	
Director of Education and Interpretation, Director of Interpretation	
Program Developer Writer, Interpreter Trainer	
Director of Interpretive Services Deputy, Director Curator of Education	
Collections/Exhibits at Wyoming State Museum, Curatorial at Texas Parks and Wildlife	
Educator Assistant Director of Education and Programs	
Executive Director	
Senior Vice President, Chief Operating Officer, Visitor Services Manager	
Curatorial Assistant, Assistant Curator, Associate Curator	
6. Is your museum accredited by AAM?	
Yes	10
No	0
7. How many staff members (full- and part-time) are employed by your institution?	
	17
	18
	(2) 650
	59
	37
	35
	36
	13 full / 17 part
	27 full / 25 part
8. How does your institution communicate to the general public? Mark all that Apply:	
Email	10
Mail	10
E-Newsletter	10
Billboard	8
Newspaper	9
Magazine	10

Facebook	10
Twitter	9
Instagram	9

Section B

Communication Results		
1. What departments participate in your exhibit design/conception meetings? Mark all that Apply:		
Volunteer	2	
Education	10	
Curation/Exhibit	10	
Collections	9	
Other	4	(Administration, Library, & Archives) (Development and Membership; Facilities; Security) (Visitor Services) (Marketing, Exhibit Maintenance, Operations)
2. How many people are you comfortable with in a creative meeting to ensure all voices are heard?		
Less than 4	0	
4	0	
5	0	
6	4	
Other (Write in Number)	6 Selected	
		8
		No Answer
		Under 10
		I like to have as many as possible. This helps them to voice their questions and concerns. It also helps the staff to buy in to the project
		12 - 20
		Depends on complexity and size of the project
3. When starting a new project/exhibit, do you employ the same exhibit design staff with little or no variance?		

With Variance		8
No Variance		2
4. Why or Why not?		
Sometimes strictly internal; Internal/Contractor.		
It often depends on expertise or access to partnerships that we are in need of.		
No Answer.		
They possess specialized skills and get help create the best boundaries for further discussion with a wider group.		
Different ideas for creativity and innovation.		
It depends on the project. If it is a project we are creating in-house, most of the same staff works on the project because our staff isn't large and we have assigned roles. If we are hiring an outside firm to help, we send out an RFP and choose based on the applicants. Depending on the extent of the project, we do have an advisory committee which will include staff from a variety of departments depending on their role.		
It's important to have all voices represented. It is also a way to allow for staff professional development and growth.		
Dependent on availability of resources		
It's not just about design. It's about exhibit development. Depending on the topic, I'll add new individuals with expertise in that area. I also always add new advisors to a project to assure multiple perspectives are considered. I also conduct front-end evaluation to assure visitor input.		
We have a small design department		
5. When developing new exhibits, do you hire an exhibit firm to assist in the installation process or do you keep it in house?		
Hire and Exhibit Firm		5
Keep it in House		6
6. If "Hire an Exhibit Firm" is selected, please write who you've contracted:		
Pony Allen Design and their Fabrication Contractors; good		
The Executive Director handles that- but I believe we often use Exhibit Concepts from Boston		
Roto - excellent Pony Allen Studios – fair		
Roto Studio - very good experience. Any Merrell and Associates - good experience. Hands-on Inc - Very Good. Design and Production Inc. - very good.		
7. What tensions exist between your exhibition staff and outside professional/consultants?		
	Staff	Consultants
Lack of Experience	4	3
Willingness to Embrace New Ideas	6	3

Money	4	5
Adapting Content to a Museum Audience	3	4
Barriers to Communication	4	1
Core Values	0	1
Other (Write Below)		
We Do not Use Outside Staff		
Telling Everyone's Story	1	1

8. How does your institution identify current vs potential audience?

I-35 traffic overall Waco tourism numbers
Most recently we identified a population in our city that is the lowest in attendance and have focused on reaching this audience through meeting language barriers (Spanish to English and vis versa)
By comparing demographic info between current audiences and our city Through evaluation of current audiences, and potential audiences (with help of outside evaluation firm)
Surveys directly administered by us and through professional institutions: AAM. TAM for example.
Evaluations and surveys
We look at the demographics of our current membership. We have also hired audience researchers.
We conduct COVES surveys to see who is coming to the museum. We have also done surveys within the community to see who isn't coming and why.
We identify our current audience by tracking the demographics of our visitors. A majority of our audience is middle-aged+ and white. We identify our potential audience by looking at the the demographics of our community, state and country. Our potential audience is extremely diverse, providing much opportunity for growth. We are working to incorporate everyone's story into our exhibits and adding more diversity to better reflect our community on our Board and staff. We have started diverse focus groups to start addressing this issue.
Our main audiences are families with children, adults, and school visits.
We use surveys
<h2>9. When considering new exhibitions, do you survey your audience to learn of topics of interest from them, or do staff come up with topics to pursue?</h2>
Both
We work closely with our volunteer board made up of 75 individuals from across South Texas and beyond. We also refer to what has met high acceptance in our reviews online and in person. We diversify our offerings to meet the needs of many different levels of interest.
Staff, but in dialog with community interests

We reach out to get surveys- similar to the previous answer
Yes, survey public; staff from different departments; volunteers; etc
We have surveyed our audience in the past but we don't do it for each new exhibit.
We survey our audience.
In the past, staff came up with topics that they wanted to pursue, incorporating some Board members from time to time. This didn't always result in exhibits that were popular or in exhibits that our guests wanted to see. We are moving away from this process and are planning to start involving diverse focus groups in our exhibit planning process.
Staff will come up with topics based on their expertise and interest, then we test those topics with visitors to see their interest level.
Curatorial staff pick topics
10. How do your geographic surroundings affect what information is presented at your museum? Do you have a geographic limitation on your interpretive mission?
We seek to offer balanced and diverse representations of the history
We are in a community close to the coast, with a higher Latino (a) population than many other cities. We engaged an architect from Mexico City to design the newest building and it connects with the Philip Johnson-designed reflecting the aesthetics and qualities of a major American architect and a major Mexican architect.
We have an "encyclopedic" collection, but collecting priorities have shifted to focus on diversity and inclusion to reflect the wide diversity of residents of our city.
Not very much since we are located in Texas between Austin and San Antonio and our collection is about the Pacific War. We do our best to tie in the connection with Nimitz who was born here to the bigger picture.
Greatly!
Central Texas is our mission
No Answer
We are currently going through a transition of culture. Our Museum went from a small, very focused museum with a limited audience to a place where people from all over the world visit in large numbers. This happened relatively quickly and we didn't transition well. Originally a small organization with a 100% Anglo Board and staff, our exhibits and offerings reflected these homogeneous values. Our location on I-35 in a tourism driven location, along with the growing diversity of our community (and our desire to serve this diverse community) has created this very positive need for our organization to change.
We are a museum of place and interpret the natural and cultural history of our community (within approximately a 200-mile radius. We also have a children's wing with includes a wider array of history and science topics.
We do think about our local audience appeal and have been programming Latin American exhibitions for many years.

11. Recent AAM accreditation requires museums to include information on minority voices when walking through their institution. When your museum is looking to incorporate said voices, do you focus on an individual or the community's story?
Both
We are meeting our community through multiple efforts of presenting work, both contemporary and historic (Spanish Colonial collection on permanent display in a dedicated space) as well as providing access to deeper information through translations and interviews, both textual and in QR coding.
It depends on the project, but our museum is increasingly focused on hiring a more diverse staff, so that staff voices are inherently diverse; in addition we seek expertise from outside the Museum, and those diverse voices are also featured in our exhibition interpretation
Currently our main gallery is under review and analysis for a major upgrade and we will want to incorporate minority voices throughout the exhibits rather than focusing on one area of the museum to minorities, as such. This is not to say that a deliberate effort will be made to evade covering minorities on their own, but rather to incorporate them as being a part of the whole effort rather than a specialized way to the winning of the war.
Always
Depends on the exhibit, though the individual's story can serve as a frame of reference for the community.
We work with various groups in the community to see what stories they feel should be represented.
We currently incorporate very few of these voices in our exhibits, but through our focus groups and staff discussions, we plan to focus on an individual in one portion of the Museum and the community's story in another section
Both, but I think individual stories are the most powerful.
We do monographic as well as thematic shows.

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