

The Museum Environment in the 21st Century

Financial/Attendance Trends [Before mid-2008]

- Increases in both operating income and expense
- Steady non-operating income (endowment contributions, capital campaign contributions, realized gains on endowments)
- Decreases in the number of museums running operating deficits
- Increases in museums with surpluses
- 50% of budgets applied directly to mission-related activities
- Attendance steady to ticking upward
- 15% of audiences are school kids

(From *2006 Museum Financial Information*, AAM)

Financial/Attendance Trends [mid-2008 present]

- Decrease in both earned and contributed income
- Cuts to many state and local budgets
- Drastic erosion of endowment values for both museums and foundations
- Layoffs, buyouts, furloughs – some reactive and some pre-emptive
- Older employees plan to work longer to replace loss of net worth
- Delayed or cancelled starts on construction and major exhibits although some costs of labor and materials are reported to be falling in some communities
- Steady to increased attendance for museums with community involvement, and sudden death for single subject or special interest audiences

(Personal observations)

Operating Trends

- More civic engagement with communities
- High public trust and high expectation of quality and variety in programs
- Growth of niche audiences such as aging boomers and minorities
- Competition with entertainment venues for leisure time activity
- Growth of adult educational programming
- Collections made more accessible to all
- More use of interactive technologies
- More of a role for education in exhibit development
- Increase in outsourcing for content and design expertise
- Increase in complexity of operations
- Need for fiscal diversification
- Growing leadership gap – where is the next generation?

(AAM surveys and publications, personal observation)

Other Trends

- Clustering of museums and attractions
- Blurring of roles and boundaries between cultural and commercial
- Growth of user created content

(Personal observations)

WOLF Consulting
3230 E. Flamingo Rd., #151
Las Vegas, NV 89121
www.wolfconsulting.us

Trends of Particular Interest to libraries, archives and museums

Service

- Move towards library attitudes and standards for capability to serve stakeholders, audiences, visitors in sharing collections and program information
- Front line training in hospitality and service including security
- Flexible or extended hours to meet public needs
- Horizontal integration of functions for both projects and regular operations, with resources and accountability attached
- Expanded use of community scholarship for project and program planning and presentation
- Great recent increase in multiple opportunities for contact with audiences and customization of the visitor experience through social networking sites, blogs, podcasts, cell phone tours, website downloads, game-playing, etc
- Leadership in creating school curricula for museum visits that support state standards
- Increased multiple use of auditoriums and theatres for debates, lectures, performances, readings similar to what some libraries offer
- Increased integration with social needs of the community for job training, computer access, gathering places, refuge

Sustainability

- More museum people at cabinet-level or sub-cabinet level positions in state governments, whether in departments of Education, Cultural Affairs, or Natural Resources – giving museums the potential for more recognition and funding of their work
- Increasing numbers of foundations dedicated to support of municipal and state museums
- Development of multiple income streams to mitigate dependence on sole source funding including endowments, membership programs, facility rentals, retail operations, special program fees, etc.
- Emphasis on LEED construction for reuse of materials and efficient/cost effective ongoing operations
- Increasing use of partnership agreements for funding, programming, training, and contracting activities

(Personal observations and feedback from clients and colleagues)