



Photo by Eric Adolff

The **Museum** Group

12TH ANNUAL CONVERSATIONS • DENVER, 2008

The **Museum** Group continues the tradition of hosting *Conversations* at the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums. You are invited to join your colleagues in *Conversation* Sunday, April 27 and Tuesday, April 29 in the Paris A Suite at the Hotel Monaco, 1717 Champa Street.

Please see the attachment for descriptions of Conversations.

The **Museum** Group • Independent museum consultants providing the field with cutting-edge ideas and strategic choices in an ever-changing world.



SUNDAY, APRIL 27 • CONVERSATION TOPICS AND HOSTS

1:30–3:15 PM

Historic House Museums, Historic Sites: Suggestions for Survival

Hosts: Ann Barton Brown, Laura B. Roberts

Historic house museums and historic sites are facing the double edged sword of dwindling audiences and increasing expenses. In the burst of patriotism during the Bicentennial, many historic houses were saved from the wrecking ball and turned into historic house museums. Unfortunately, what society values and how people take in information changes over time. Historic sites must develop new ways to be relevant to contemporary audiences and thereby ensure their long-term sustainability. Among the topics to be discussed are alternative uses of the sites, pros and cons of deaccessioning the buildings, efforts to develop strategic alliances and collaborative partnerships with the business communities.

3:30–5:00 PM

Museum Audience Trends

Hosts: Mary Kay Ingenthron and Timothy Chester, President, Timothy J. Chester & Associates, LLC

What makes some museums lose audiences and end up on life support, while others break attendance records and open satellite operations? A recent headline in the Houston Chronicle reported. “Museums go where the visitors are: the suburbs.” As people continue to move further and further away from the traditional city and suburbs are the new main street for museums, how do suburban museums attract a geographically dispersed audience. Join us as we discuss these and other challenges facing suburban museums and the new marketing revolution underway to attract visitors.



TUESDAY, APRIL 29 • CONVERSATION TOPICS AND HOSTS

Tuesday, April 29

8:45–10:00 AM “Trustees & Governance”

Hosts: Anne Butterfield, David Ellis, Daryl C. Fischer, Maureen K. Robinson

The pressures on museum CEOs are continuing to increase while the average tenure is growing shorter. So is the pressure on Trustees to perform well and help maintain institutional continuity. Trustees are more often coming from corporate backgrounds than previously. Fund raising is becoming even more important for Trustees and the institutions for which they are responsible. Community expectations are another variable affecting Trustees and CEOs. What are reasonable roles for consultants in helping Trustees, CEOs and their institutions?

2:00–3:30 PM What is the Science Museum of 2020?”

Host: Mac West

This conversation, which includes current science museum directors and senior consultants, will examine numerous aspects of the future of science museums. Among the topics to be discussed are: the importance of a research agenda for science centers - is there/should there be one; the need to present and interpret current research; the impact of the web and public input/participation on the “authority” of the science center; relationships among industry, universities and science centers; economic sustainability and funding as institutions become more flexible and transparent; expanding adult audiences and removing the “its for children only” stereotype; membership and deeper engagement.

Participants will include David Ellis (TMG), Judy Rand (TMG), Jane Clark Chermayeff (TMG), David Chesebrough (COSI), Lesley Lewis (Ontario Science Center), Bryce Seidl (Pacific Science Center), Emlyn Koster (Liberty Science Center), Betsy Bennett (North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences) and Chuck Howarth (Gyroscope, Inc.). Mac West (TMG and Informal Learning Experiences) will moderate and instigate.

3:45- 5:00 PM “Learning: Is that all there is?”

Hosts: Leslie Bedford, Darcie Fohrman and Jay Rounds

“As the field has come to embrace learning as the reason for and outcomes of exhibitions, it has struggled to define the term, often stretching it to embrace a wealth of human behaviour that may or may not fit the learning model. What do we really expect goes on when visitors encounter exhibitions? What other or additional kinds of language and methodologies might be appropriate to consider?”