

Sharing Perspectives: Generating Adaptive Responses to Accelerated Change - May 8, 2017

This conversation was designed in response to our current environment of accelerated changes in climate, global engagement, technology, politics and the economy. These increasing shifts are creating widening perspectives and are affecting each of us differently. We wanted to explore how museums can thrive and be effectively proactive and adaptive while authentically true to their missions and communities.

Our featured thought leaders Antionette D. Carroll, Founder and CEO of Creative Reaction Lab and Dennis Riggs, journalist and President of HEC-TV, both based in St. Louis, brought insightful expertise and nationally-acclaimed achievements to this conversation. Antionette's Creative Reaction Lab is a civic engagement and social enterprise designed to build healthier and more inclusive cities. It "trains, and challenges cities to co-create solutions with Black and Latinx populations to design healthy and racially equitable communities."

<http://www.creativereactionlab.com> Dennis Riggs' Emmy award winning HEC-TV <http://www.hectiv.org> station produces education, cultural, and arts programming and uses changing technology in television to innovate long distance learning and interactive programming for engaging communities around the world.

Our Conversation was facilitated by TMG member Charmaine Jefferson, Principal Consultant of Kélan Resources, which integrates art, history, culture and diversity into the DNA of producing projects and public private collaborations for nonprofits. <http://museumgroup.com/charmaine-jefferson/>

Antionette and Dennis, in conversation with Charmaine and audience members, discussed key strategies and insights for thriving in an age of accelerated change and innovation. Some of the thoughtful recommendations inspiring further exploration included:

Be strategic and focused

- Reach out beyond all the "chatter" and work in the space that is your focus.
- Do your research, analyze, and prioritize.
- Scale up and think about the long term.

Live life through the "lens of the future" by striving for continuous improvement.

- Ask how we can improve our learning through the process.
- Constantly question, "How did I fail? How did I make this a success?"
- What are the internal lessons?

Look for Impact especially in working with communities

- Ask - What is needed? What is the impact? What is the evidence?
- Apply your personal humility and cultural competency.
- Take the time to understand what is happening and why.

- Recognize the long-term gain for community health.

Much of the conversation focused on the importance of making powerful human connections and meaningfully engaging people.

Be people-centered vs. technology driven

- Meet people where they are versus building it and they will come.
- Look at and be ready to offer a variety of approaches.
- Don't lose sight of what is needed to tell the story versus only focusing on the latest technology. Give enough content to intrigue the audience to come back.
- Partner with experts and recognize community members as experts
- Make human connections at the soul level.

Practice "sourcing from the community" to problem solve and engage

- Use "primary sourcing" and involve people who have the direct experience.
- What can community members do to innovate your program and make it more authentic?
- Give youth agency (along with the space and ability) to challenge issues, develop skills and be leaders in designing healthier communities.
- Recognize that a younger generation is coming with a different mindset of producing their own content.
- Learn the cultural history and healing recognizing that decisions made decades ago are being felt now.
- Come with a "prompt" not an agenda.

Value equity-centered design* vs. participatory design thinking

- Start with humility then empathy building.
- Recognize the power dynamics.
- Identify different areas of expertise and barriers to working together. How can you overcome them?
- Problem solve and address issues together.
- Recognize this is not a short-term process.

*Applied at Creative Reaction Lab.

The importance of collaboration was emphasized when working in an ever-changing environment that affects each of us uniquely and not necessarily always equitably. Both Antionette and Dennis expressed great interest in collaborating with museums across the country and globe. See the attached information flier that Dennis distributed at the conversation to further HEC-TV partnerships with museums. HEC-TV and Creative Reaction Lab would be great partners. We were honored to have these thought leaders in conversation with museum colleagues. They inspired our deeper reflections on the complexities in being adaptive and thriving in an era of accelerated change.