

Association of Art Museum Curators Foundation

# Professional Practices for Art Curators in Nonprofits

**aamc**



# About AAMC & AAMC Foundation

Founded in 2001, the Association of Art Museum Curators (AAMC) & AAMC Foundation advance the curatorial field through forward-looking leadership in development and educational opportunities. We seek to deepen appreciation of curators' vital roles in the advancement and understanding of the history, meaning, and purpose of the visual arts.

AAMC offers opportunities for learning and connecting at every stage of a curator's career. In partnership with more than 1,300 members, we serve as a resource for the profession's best practices, codes of conduct, and ethical standards. Our members include independent curators and staff members from 500-plus art organizations and museums in 18 countries, ranging from leading national organizations to community-based art organizations.

The AAMC Foundation provides a platform for the exchange of a broad range of information on critical issues driving the field, including diversity and inclusion, digital innovation, artistic voices and histories, and marketing and audience engagement. With programming serving curators, professional colleagues, and the public, our outreach reflects diverse perspectives within the field, often examining strategic directions of curatorial practice and art organization management. All of our efforts are focused on being inclusive of self-identifiers (by nation, gender, race, ethnicity, [dis]ability, and socioeconomic background), fields of expertise, types of organizations, and geographic locations.

As the field continues to evolve, the AAMC & AAMC Foundation is at the forefront of nurturing and shaping the voice and leadership of the next generation of curators while continuing to foster the values of inclusion, access, and collaboration across the profession.

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# Preface & Acknowledgments

Over a decade ago, the AAMC & AAMC Foundation gathered leaders in the field to create the *Professional Practices for Art Museum Curators* publication. The often-referenced guide, assembled over a three-year period and published in 2007, defined the role of the art curator, outlined their responsibilities as stewards of collections, and brought forth a set of professional ethics, standards, and values for the field. It served as a valuable resource for art curators across the world and as an important anchor for the organization.

In the decade-plus since that edition, the curatorial field, along with the entire arts sector, has shifted in dramatic ways. AAMC & AAMC Foundation identified areas that would need to be addressed in a revised guide, including new digital technologies; paths to a curatorial career; public engagement and collaboration; meaningful momentum toward diversity, equity, inclusion, and access; recognition of bias and linear narratives; heightened movement in provenance, including conditions of transfer; marketing outlets, such as social media; and shifts in how for-profit and nonprofit sectors work together. It was also acknowledged that the new text needed to reexamine and reinterpret subject matter from the original guide, with particular attention to tone and positioning. In recognition that all curators working in the nonprofit sector are not always associated with museums, we wanted to ensure that the title and content reflected this, hence its renaming as a *Professional Practices for Art Curators in Nonprofits*. Unlike the first edition, which was developed as a print publication and provided as a benefit of AAMC membership, the updated publication has been digitally produced by the AAMC Foundation and is freely available to all audiences. In addition, producing it digitally allows the AAMC Foundation to revisit its content more nimbly in the future.

This handbook is meant as a guide, but it is by no means an exhaustive review of every detail of a curator's work, nor can it encompass every possible scenario that might be encountered. For curators working in differing locations and organizations, experiences and policies will vary. However, our goal with this guide is to provide an overview of as much information as possible, supplemented by relevant support material through case studies, articles, videos, and additional sources. This document is a foundational resource on which to build one's work and to use as one advances in the field.

In all matters, curators benefit from internal and external cooperation, communication, transparency, and engagement, and we believe these principles should be upheld at all art organizations. Collaboration is invaluable in ensuring inclusivity in developing projects, advancing art organizations, and creating new opportunities.

Curators in every aspect of their work, including but not limited to, collection development, exhibitions, hiring, mentoring, and more, need to put at the forefront of their efforts consideration towards inclusivity and accessibility. Together we will ensure the profession embraces at its core collegiality, equity, inclusiveness, access, advocacy, and mentorship.

**The AAMC Foundation is grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their support of this project.**

We express our gratitude to all those that participated in the creation of this document and the 2007 edition. In particular, we are grateful to those that developed and spearheaded the project through all its stages: **Christa Clarke**, Independent Curator and Affiliate, Hutchins Center for African & African American Research, Harvard University, *President, AAMC &*

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# Responsibilities as a Curator

# CORE ROLE DEFINITIONS

In recent years, the term curator has become commonplace, used in general communication to signify activities relating to organizing or collecting. Curators at visual arts nonprofits are differentiated as scholarly ambassadors of the art, artists, cultures, and organizations that they serve, and present, interpret, and safeguard works of art, using their expertise, while upholding professional and ethical standards. Locally and globally, curators create compelling experiences of art, culture, and creativity that change how people understand themselves and the world by stimulating new perspectives, ideas, and feelings. They engage and collaborate with community members, donors, artists, scholars, colleagues, and others to achieve these goals. Curators interact with and have an obligation to the public they serve.

A curator's general responsibilities include:

- Understanding and supporting an organization's mission and priorities
- Developing exhibitions and installations
- Ensuring that curatorial work produced reexamines existing narratives and strives to make them more wide-ranging and inclusive
- Overseeing collection acquisitions, development, and care
- Supervising, mentoring, and supporting others so that they can succeed and advance
- Conducting research, including both within a scholarly area of expertise and with interdisciplinary studies
- Writing and publishing, including catalogues, digital copy, brochures, and other materials, as well as contributing to materials and information to assist non-curatorial departments
- Working to make the profession and the overall nonprofit arts sector inclusive and equitable
- Collaborating with colleagues across all departments toward the success of the organization
- Engaging with community and cultural stakeholders
- Working with living artists, estates, donors, and foundations
- Developing public and scholarly discourse through conferences, lectures, gallery talks, etc.
- Understanding general nonprofit financial and governance procedures

## Common titles & their responsibilities

The following descriptions are guidelines and will vary by organizational staffing size and type (encyclopedic collecting museum, non-collecting *kunsthalle*, community-based or public art organization, etc.). A small museum may just have one position, which will usually be the Curator, with duties ranging from Chief Curator to Curatorial Assistant. All curatorial positions should strive to work collaboratively, internally and externally, which fosters an appreciation and interest in their work, as well as advancing and enhancing it. All curators, regardless of their roles, should seek to mentor or be mentored. Curators should engage diverse groups and communities within their work and endeavor to secure and support inclusivity.

### Chief Curator/Director of Curatorial Affairs

A senior position within the internal organizational structure, this role represents the curatorial voice within an organization and collaborates across departments. Additionally, this role:

- Oversees a team of curators and sometimes registrars, conservators/conservation scientists, and preparators, and is required to mentor and advocate for curators and other staff under the position's supervision
- Engages with donors, Board members, and other external partners
- Works collaboratively with senior-level management to implement the overall curatorial vision of the organization, which must be in alignment with the organization's mission or strategic plan
- Manages, at a high level, internal and external aspects of exhibition programs, such as publications and websites
- Creates, oversees, and manages budgets for departments and projects
- Reports to the Director or ultimate decision maker on the staff of the organization

### Director/Curator of Exhibitions

This position oversees and coordinates aspects of organizing and implementing exhibitions, including incoming and outgoing traveling exhibitions. Additionally, this role:

- Maintains an ongoing dialogue with finance, registration, design, digital, marketing, development, special events, and other departments in sharing details of exhibition development, or does so through the chief curator
- Supervises, in many cases, one or several staff members including curators, registrars, design, and digital, among others, in general or in relation to specific projects
- Mentors and advocates for curators and other staff under the position's supervision

## Senior Curator

This position might be in charge of a particular collection, or the title may denote experience or a level of seniority in a given field or organization. Additionally, this role:

- Performs general administrative duties and supervision of curatorial team members
- Collaborates and provides expertise for fundraising and outreach, such as with digital projects or development initiatives
- Mentors and supports other curatorial team members

## Curator

This position is primarily responsible for caring for collections, planning and generating exhibitions, and managing projects in a leadership capacity. Additionally, this role:

- Performs general administrative duties
- Collaborates and provides expertise for internal and external initiatives around specific projects or areas
- Supervises staff and project teams
- Mentors and supports other curatorial team members

## Associate Curator

This position typically performs the same role as curator, in association with, and under supervision of, a more experienced curator/team member, such as a chief curator, senior curator, or curator. However, this role usually does not have as much agency as a curator to initiate and realize exhibition projects.

## Assistant Curator

This position assists the curator and/or associate curator and works under the curator's supervision. Additionally, this role:

- Learns and develops under the mentorship of senior staff, and is given individual goals within larger projects to gain experience
- Does not supervise other curatorial staff, but may help organize, oversee, and mentor interns and volunteers

## **Curatorial Associate**

This position has a junior level of expertise and experience in a chosen field. Additionally, this role:

- Assists and supports curatorial team members in routine duties, general departmental needs, or special projects, under the supervision of a senior curator
- Learns and develops under the mentorship of senior staff

## **Curatorial Assistant**

Typically, this is an entry-level position within a curatorial department. Additionally, this role:

- Assists and supports curatorial staff in routine duties, general departmental needs, or special projects, under the supervision of a senior curator
- Will find that the work assigned and the day-to-day responsibilities for this position vary

## **Curatorial Fellow**

This position is generally a recent graduate or graduate student who has expertise in a chosen field.

(This term does not here refer to a visiting scholar and/or senior scholar working on a temporary basis.)

This is often a temporary position. Additionally, this role:

- Assists and supports curatorial staff in routine duties, general departmental needs, or special projects, under the supervision of the curators

# PROVENANCE

Provenance studies are indispensable for any object-focused work—not merely for legal considerations such as ownership, title, and authenticity, but for understanding the shifting historical and cultural contexts of appreciation, attribution, display, acquisition, and value of works of art. As custodians of objects, and as a matter of professional ethics, curators must have utmost concern for an artwork’s provenance—its origins, ownership histories, and conditions of procurement at the time of transfer.

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***Best practices encourage, as does AAMC & AAMC Foundation, that organizations make publicly available, in print and/or online, fully transparent provenance information.***

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Every organization working with art needs to have a provenance policy outlining the ethics and conditions of transfer of objects in its collection, regarding the provenance of incoming loans, acquisitions, installations, and gifts. Curators must be well-informed about this policy. If an organization does not have a formal provenance policy, curators should encourage and work with leadership to develop one.

Provenance research needs to be conducted on any object that is being considered for acquisition, long-term loan, or bequest, as well as on objects that are already in a collection, especially when under consideration for loan, conservation, and/or deaccessioning. As a best practice, curators should recommend that loans (including bequests or installations) be governed by the same ethical standards as acquisitions,



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC Foundation, “Provenance Webinar Series: Advances in WWII-Era Provenance Research,”** June 12, 2018, video, 1:12:39, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/ProvenanceAdvances> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Provenance Webinar Series: Going Beyond WWII-Era Research,”** June 19, 2018, video, 1:14:18, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/ProvenanceBeyondWWII> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Provenance Webinar Series: Sharing Research, Asking New Questions,”** June 26, 2018, video, 1:16:51, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/ProvenanceSharing> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**American Alliance of Museums, “Alliance Activity Guide: Deaccessioning Activity,”** <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/deaccessioning-activity.pdf> (accessed April 8, 2019).

**Association of Art Museum Directors, “AAMD Policy on Deaccessioning,”** June 9, 2010/revised October 2015, [https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/AAMD%20Policy%20on%20Deaccessioning%20website\\_0.pdf](https://aamd.org/sites/default/files/document/AAMD%20Policy%20on%20Deaccessioning%20website_0.pdf) (accessed April 8, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### Ancient art (global ancient cultures & archaeological materials)

**The policies developed by the 1970 UNESCO Convention remain the current standard.** See: United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property*, 1970, <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/illicit-trafficking-of-cultural-property/1970-convention/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**American Alliance of Museums, “Ethics, Standards, and Professional Practices: Archaeological Materials and Ancient Art,”** <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/archaeological-material-and-ancient-art/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

### Nazi era

**The United States policy on Nazi-era restitutions is outlined in the Department of State’s “Washington Principles.”** See: US Department of State Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, “Washington Conference Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art,” 1998, <https://www.state.gov/p/eur/rt/hlcst/270431.htm> (accessed March 14, 2019).

deaccessions, and general collections. Immunity from judicial seizure applications under 22 U.S.C. 2459 for artworks of cultural significance on loan from abroad for temporary exhibition in the United States require detailed provenance information; inadequate provenance documentation can result in a denial of such immunity.

Some collecting museums employ specialized staff devoted to provenance research on their permanent collections. If an organization does not have a curator on staff who is an expert in provenance research, or in the field of a particular object under consideration, it must secure outside consultants for this research. Best practices encourage, as do AAMC & AAMC Foundation, that organizations make publicly available, in print and/or online, fully transparent provenance information.

Curators are responsible for familiarizing themselves and keeping up to date with the issues and debates around provenance affecting their collections, organizations, academic fields, and the larger visual arts community. They should keep their organization’s leadership and legal team abreast of key changes in the field. In turn, curators should be consulted about provenance matters and decisions by their organization’s leadership and legal counsel.

Furthermore, curators should advocate for systematic provenance research, particularly of existing museum collections. Curators have a responsibility to move their organizations forward in navigating the often-complicated ethics of collecting, particularly in relation to circumstances that may have been exploitative of source cultures, artists, and histories.



# LOANS

Identifying and negotiating loans can be a complex, delicate, and lengthy process that involves curators, the Director, registrars, legal counsel and, if the organization has one, an exhibition department. Identifying loans can require extensive curatorial research, including consulting galleries, auction houses, artists or artist estates, scholars, and others; this is particularly the case for works outside public collections. Securing loans can require negotiation and diplomacy, especially in today's economic and political climate, when organizations and private collectors are increasingly hesitant to loan works. International (and occasionally domestic) loans may involve ministries of culture and other governmental groups, which can increase the time it takes to secure a loan or complicate existing agreements. The Director and development staff can be extremely helpful to curators in identifying and contacting lenders and negotiating loans, as can additional sources such as auction houses, dealers/galleries, and academics.

Curators should work closely with their organization's internal structure and outside advisers, including registrars, exhibitions managers, legal departments, and/or others, to understand the many issues around all loans, and how these issues can potentially affect installation timelines and even the feasibility of an entire exhibition. Common issues to be aware of for international loans are: immunity from judicial seizure coverage; import/export restrictions and customs requirements for materials subject to regulation (for example, ivory or feathers); visas for handlers and/or artists; and obtaining indemnity coverage for loss or damage to loaned objects from the federal government, which is a particularly long and complex process. Extra time should be built into the exhibition schedule to cover the possibility of issues with customs for international loans, or with interstate border controls



## RESOURCES

(Nazi era continued)

*For a useful summary of past and present Nazi-era provenance research and restitutions, see:*

**Kelly Davis, "The New Face of Provenance Research,"** *The Iris: Behind the Scenes at the Getty*, February 27, 2018, <http://blogs.getty.edu/iris/the-new-face-of-provenance-research/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

*Additional resources on*

*Nazi era restitutions:*

**American Alliance of Museums, "Ethics, Standards, and Professional Practices: Unlawful Appropriation of Objects During the Nazi Era,"** November 1999/ revised April 2001, <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/ethics-standards-and-professional-practices/unlawful-appropriation-of-objects-during-the-nazi-era/> (accessed April 8, 2019).

**Association of Art Museum Directors, "Resolutions of Claims for Nazi-Era Cultural Assets,"** <https://aamd.org/object-registry/resolution-of-claims-for-nazi-era-cultural-assets/more-info> (accessed April 8, 2019).

## Native American art & artifacts

**NAGPRA/Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990) applies to objects of cultural patrimony, sacred objects, funerary objects, and human remains.** See: <https://www.nps.gov/nagpra/> (accessed March 14, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### Loans & exhibitions

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Challenging the Colonial Foundations of the 21st Century Art Museum,”** May 7, 2018, video, 1:17:05, <https://vimeo.com/270515445> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Preventing Cultural Isolationism,”** May 7, 2018, video, 1:11:09, <https://vimeo.com/270513332> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Contemporary Ways to Present Historical Art,”** October 5, 2016, video, 59:30, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/ContempWaysWebinar> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Models of International Research and Collaboration,”** video, 59:23, October 10, 2018, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/IntlResearchCollab> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Sheila M. Eldred, “Walker Art Center’s Reckoning With ‘Scaffold’ Isn’t Over Yet,”** *New York Times*, September 13, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/13/arts/design/walker-art-center-scaffold.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

within the United States. Lenders to the organization must always seek independent legal and tax advice with respect to any loan; the same is true for any donor, seller, or other counterparty engaging with the organization.

Curators and their organizations also need to understand the economics of loans. Most organizations have limited financial resources for exhibitions, and costs such as packing, shipping, insurance, storage, customs, and legal fees may impact the ability to realize an exhibition as it was originally planned. Curators must be willing to adapt an exhibition to fit the available budget, especially in the face of expense reductions. It is essential that curators collaborate at all stages of exhibition development with applicable internal teams such as registration, exhibition, development, and finance departments to estimate, fundraise, and account for loan costs.

Curators should be aware of potential conflicts of interest related to loans from artists, artist estates and foundations, and commercial galleries, particularly when many loans in an exhibition come from a handful of sources. Loans from an artist, estate/foundation, or gallery may (officially or unofficially) be available for sale, which may be perceived as a conflict of interest if the exhibition is thought to raise the value of the artwork at issue. However, when working with emerging, lesser-known, or underappreciated artists, works may only be available from a small number of sources, or even a single source. Additionally, economic or logistic factors may come into play, as shipping from a limited number of locations may be more feasible than shipping from many dispersed sources.

In seeking loans, curators and all team members need to be nimble and flexible, as loans can change at the last minute and for any reason, such as the financial situation of the lender, changes in the lending organization’s internal plans, and shifting laws and regulations internationally and locally.



## CASE STUDY

### ***The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Art of Gandhara, 2011, Asia Society Museum, New York***

On August 9, 2011, the exhibition *The Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan: Art of Gandhara*, including approximately 70 objects on loan from museums in Pakistan, opened at the Asia Society Museum—six months after its scheduled opening. The gallery spaces had been complete for over half a year. The delay was largely due to a breakdown in American-Pakistani relations in 2011. From the first stages of planning the exhibition, officials at Pakistan’s Culture Ministry were reluctant to allow the Gandhara treasures out of the country, as they had recently returned from an exhibition of Gandhara art in Bonn, Zurich, and Paris. In the aftermath of the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, a surge of anti-Americanism in Pakistan further complicated the negotiations.

In January 2011, just a little more than a month before the objects for the exhibition were meant to leave Pakistan for New York, it became clear that federal authorities in Pakistan’s capital, Islamabad, had not informed the lending museums in Lahore and Karachi of the plan. A major advocate for the show on the US side, Richard C. Holbrooke, an American diplomat who served in the Obama administration, among others, had just died; prior to his death in December 2010, he had been essential to the negotiations. The situation was further complicated by a newly implemented Pakistani law that handed the power to make decisions on art loans to foreign countries from the central ministry to the provinces where the museums were located. This necessitated new negotiations at the provincial level. Melissa Chiu, then the Asia Society Museum’s Director, traveled to Lahore to persuade the province’s Chief Minister to support the loans to the Asia Society. The province was then in turmoil because its governor, who had been a local ally for Chiu, had

recently been killed by an extremist bodyguard. Furthermore, once Chiu arrived in Lahore, an American CIA operative shot two Pakistanis, further provoking anti-American sentiment throughout Pakistan.

Ultimately Chiu was only able to pull off the exhibition by networking with the wives of elite men to get their husbands’ sympathetic ears. Chiu found a new ally in a local arts patron, who opened doors to Nawaz Sharif, the once and future Prime Minister of Pakistan who had also previously served as the Chief Minister of Punjab. Through Sharif, Chiu learned that the decision was up to the Board of the Lahore Museum, so she lobbied all ten of its members to support the loans. They voted in favor. On Chiu’s second visit to Pakistan in April 2011, to firm up a late-spring opening, she learned that the authorities in Karachi had yet to sign the papers to release objects from the National Museum of Pakistan. On May 2, as she waited for Karachi to sign off, Bin Laden was killed. The US State Department issued a travel advisory, warning American citizens against traveling to Pakistan. (Chiu was not affected because she is an Australian national.) As a result, the Asia Society could not send staff members to accompany the works on the flights back to New York. Visas for the Pakistani couriers were held up at the American Embassy in Islamabad, and the Asia Society had to appeal to the office of Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton to resolve the situation. Finally, as the German shipping company eventually hired by the Asia Society was crating the objects, Karachi became embroiled in a rash of ethnic killings. Even members of the Karachi museum staff, who were helping to pack and load, were afraid to use public transportation, and would only travel to and from the museum in hired cars.

<https://asiasociety.org/buddhist-heritage-pakistan-art-gandhara> (accessed on April 10, 2019).

# EXHIBITIONS

Curators should conceptualize and realize exhibitions that shed new light on and lead to better understandings of works of art, artists, movements, cultures, and historical moments in art, culture, and society. The goals of any exhibition should include increasing public understanding of a given subject; forging new narratives that expand the art historical canon; and enhancing visitor experience. The principles of diversity and inclusion should guide exhibition planning at all stages. Additionally, curators must tailor their programming to serve the needs of their audiences, being consciously aware of differing perspectives. Curators should always attempt to gather together community voices in developing programming, texts, and other materials around an exhibition.

Often curators will be asked to develop exhibitions outside their scholarly fields of expertise; in such cases, they should call upon experts and other community stakeholders for assistance in researching, conceptualizing, and executing the exhibition.

Consultants can be especially helpful in alerting organizations

to any current issues or sensitivities around a proposed exhibition and/or the objects in it. Curators should include compensation for consultants in exhibition budgets.

Developing and realizing an exhibition often requires a team of individuals. These groups should welcome additional curatorial staff but not be limited to them. Additional team members often include registrars, conservators, development, marketing, outreach, digital, technologists, art handlers, educators, editors, designers, publicists, librarians, archivists, cultural stakeholders, public advisers, security, human resources, legal counsel, and other professionals internally and externally. While never losing sight of the principle that the exhibition is a team effort, the lead curator should be actively involved in all aspects as the creator of the exhibition.

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***The goals of any exhibition should include increasing public understanding of a given subject; forging new narratives that expand the art historical canon; and enhancing visitor experience. The principles of diversity and inclusion should guide exhibition planning at all stages.***

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Curators have a responsibility to maintain ethical dealings and relationships throughout organizing an exhibition, including when borrowing works from artists, galleries, and private collectors. Visual arts nonprofits sometimes organize exhibitions of private collections. Curators and their colleagues should follow their organizations' guidelines and codes of ethics in making decisions about such exhibitions. Curators should be careful to cultivate a wide group of lenders for exhibitions and to pay close attention to the provenance of potential loans, including conditions of transfer. When working with living artists, curators need to weigh the artist's voice and wishes alongside their institution's priorities. This is a delicate balance, but vitally important in maintaining both long-term relationships with artists and the integrity of the artwork and institution.

## Touring exhibitions

### Originating

Originating a touring (sometimes called "traveling") exhibition is a complex undertaking but can have many benefits, including greater visibility for all involved, including cost sharing. The responsibilities for organizing touring exhibitions are divided differently for each exhibition and partnership and will include many teams working collaboratively within and across each organization, such as curatorial, digital, marketing, development, archival, registrar, conservation, legal, and more. Arrangements between organizations can include two basic scenarios:

1. One organizing and the other(s) serving as "venues." In this case, the venues, of which there are usually between one and three, pay the organizing institution a rental fee for the exhibition, plus prorated packing, shipping, and insurance costs (prorated among all the venues).
2. Two or more organizations partnering to co-organize an exhibition.

Usually the greatest challenges to touring an exhibition include costs and timing around venues' available dates. Coordinating loans for all venues can also prove complicated, as many loans cannot travel for extended periods, generally for conservation reasons. In working with a touring venue, it is essential to be transparent about the availability of works on the checklist to tour, in terms of both dates and conditions of display. Once a tour venue has committed to showing the exhibition, the originating organization issues a contract that includes terms regarding financial and insurance obligations; legal liability; information on whether the checklist may be altered and whether alterations must be approved by the originating organization; installation specifications, including if the organizing curator must be present for installation; details on available interpretative and other educational materials; and information on sales of the catalogue.

## Hosting

In general, curators will be assigned to coordinate and install exhibitions for which their organization is a venue. The applicable contract needs to lay out set parameters for the hosting organization, and the curator should understand those terms and requirements. Should concerns arise, the organizing party is to be consulted. Curators should work with internal departments and/or external advisers in accepting a touring exhibition, particularly in determining unforeseen legal and financial issues. Coordinating curators often work closely with the organizing venues around installation and other details of the exhibition, including interpretative content. Venues should respect the originating curator's wishes for how the show should be installed and interpreted; such details should be finalized at the contract stage to avoid conflict later. For example, budgets can fluctuate, and the accepting organization might not be able to match the original installation plans, or there could be concerns over inclusion of a particular work that may require a change from the initial exhibition. Both the organizing party and the hosting venues should be flexible in finalizing details of the agreement as they take into consideration conditions of loan, responsibility to audience and community, and artists, designers, and additional colleagues engaged in the exhibition.

Ethical standards apply when accepting a touring exhibition. Curators should conduct provenance research, review underlying loan documentation and agreements, and discuss in detail all terms with the relevant parties. The hosting organization must work to ensure fair and equitable inclusion and representation of communities and audiences, even if it did not originate the exhibition.

## COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

Collecting organizations, historic homes, caretakers of public art, and other organizations deal with the topic of collection development, which also includes acquisitions and deaccessions. Curators should ensure that their organization has a firm collections management policy covering both of these aspects and that it takes into consideration the legal, financial, and ethical issues around them, in particular provenance. It is the curator's responsibility to make certain that any collections policy addresses its ability to care for and sustain its collection and address the principles of diversity and inclusion and the need to revise traditional narratives. When considering a position, one should ask for this policy during the interview process. If an organization does not have a collections policy, curators should work with their leadership to develop a viable and on-mission program.

# ACQUISITIONS

Acquisitions—whether through purchase, gift, or bequest—should be guided by the mission of the organization, utilizing the curators’ expertise. As experts with specialized knowledge, curators are responsible for suggesting, locating, and researching all acquisition recommendations. Curators joining a new organization should, upon hiring, become familiar with and understand the terms of current promised gifts, which fall under acquisitions. Individual curators do not, however, have the ultimate say in whether a work is acquired; this is usually the responsibility of a combination of a curatorial team, Director, acquisitions committee, advisory group, and/or the Board.

## Acquisitions policies & process

A collecting, public art, or other relevant organization engaging in acquisitions should have a formalized acquisitions policy, as part of a larger strategy (such as collection development), created by a combination of the curatorial department, Director, acquisitions committee, advisory group, and/or Board. In addition to other aspects outlined below, the policy should clearly set forth procedural guidelines for presenting acquisitions for consideration to the organization’s decision makers. Without a clear acquisitions policy, there will be a lack of guidelines and procedural checks and balances, resulting in ambiguous standards. If an organization does not have an acquisitions policy, one should be developed, in consultation with colleagues and leadership at the organization.

Acquisition policies need to demonstrate the organization’s commitment to telling the most complete, inclusive, and multivalent narrative possible. New acquisitions should not only add depth to the collection but should seek to fill and correct gaps within it, such as a lack of holdings by artists from underrepresented communities and cultures, and to adjust linear and traditional histories.



### RESOURCES

#### General

**Association of Art Museum Directors, “Press Releases & Statements: Strengthened Guidelines on the Acquisition of Archaeological Material and Ancient Art Issued by Association of Art Museum Directors,”** January 30, 2013, <https://www.aamd.org/for-the-media/press-release/strengthened-guidelines-on-the-acquisition-of-archaeological-material> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Isaac Kaplan, “Art Market: When Collectors—Not Curators—Dictate Art History,”** Artsy, June 29, 2017, <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-collectors-curators-dictate-art-history> (accessed March 14, 2019).

In addition, an acquisitions policy should state the requirements for proper provenance research on a work's background; describe the fiscal costs of any acquisition beyond simply its price, including shipping, research expenses, legal, installation, conservation, and ongoing care; and outline the ethical standards that should be considered with any purchase. It should also stipulate that, should curators propose an acquisition outside their fields of expertise and/or lack the resources for proper provenance research, they should consult with an expert on that acquisition, and be granted funding to compensate that consultant.

In scouting potential acquisitions (as in seeking loans), curators are expected to develop and maintain relationships with colleagues at other nonprofit art organizations, auction house specialists, dealers, collectors, artists, foundations, and estates. Such connections can often alert a curator to an available work or provide critical information about it. In communicating interest in securing a work, curators should be conscious

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***Acquisition policies need to demonstrate the organization's commitment to telling the most complete, inclusive, and multivalent narrative possible.***

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of market value for any work and be clear about financial capacity in discussing possible acquisitions.

Curators and their colleagues should make every effort to gather pertinent information about a potential acquisition from the

collector/donor, gallery, auction house, or artist/estate offering the work. Upon acquisition, detailed notes on the work's physical conditions of display should be recorded. In the case of a work by a living artist, the organization should ask the artist to complete a questionnaire on the work's conditions of production and display, as well as any other relevant background on the work.

No potential acquisition should be considered for the collection if there is a question of the organization's ability to be a good caretaker of that work of art. Curators should consider consulting a conservator and/or archivist about any potential acquisition, be it purchase, gift, or bequest.

Organizations are sometimes offered gifts that they do not ultimately choose to accept into their collections. The grounds for declining proposed gifts can vary and might include relevance to a collection's mission; redundancy with existing works in a collection; the terms of the proposed gift; and/or conservation or other issues that prevent the proposed gift from meeting the standards that the organization wishes to maintain.



Informing donors of the decision to decline a gift can prove delicate, especially if they are established or potential patrons. Curators should have strategic conversations with leadership about how best to decline an offer—for example, by explaining transparently the parameters (condition, care concerns, duplication in collection, etc.), presenting different scenarios, and/or assisting in developing relationships with organizations that could offer beneficial solutions. There are also cases in which, despite curators' reservations about accepting a gift, they are pressured to do so from their leadership. AAMC & AAMC Foundation do not endorse such practices and encourage ongoing discussions to find alternative solutions.

## Provenance & authenticity

In considering an acquisition, curators should be guided by the same general ethical and procedural standards that apply to loans. These include provenance, authenticity, conditions of transfer, and/or ethical concerns around the work, donor, artist, and/or seller. It is the curator's responsibility to research and consider the object's complete history, and to provide this information in a transparent manner. In working with galleries, the curator should research and review all available information on the circumstances of the work's creation, including the timeline of its production, any legal documentation relating to its commissioning/creation (if applicable), and its ownership (including intellectual property). While acquiring many works from one gallery can raise conflict of interest concerns, there are also cases in which only a few galleries represent particular collecting areas.

## Joint acquisitions

Increasingly, organizations partner with one another to jointly acquire works of art. Joint acquisitions can help the organizations involved grow their collections while sharing costs. The same policies and procedures apply in this type of acquisition as when an organization makes an acquisition without a partner. One should, however, consider the financial, registration, and conservation impact of a joint acquisition, factoring in the costs and conservation issues inherent in shipping and installing the work (repeatedly) as it moves between partners. Partnering parties must be transparent in their goals for the joint acquisition, and formal legal documentation should address the terms of the acquisition; the procedures for sharing the work; and any display requirements and conditions. Specifically, the applicable contract between the owners should establish clear terms regarding scenarios in which any party should need to sell the work or relinquish its ownership.

Formal legal documentation should be drafted for each transaction and relationship involved, including the individual/company (collector, dealer, or auction house) that is selling the work as well as between the acquiring organizations. Each organization should seek legal counsel, especially because these joint acquisitions are often between organizations in two different states or countries, with different applicable laws and regulations; in addition, each organization may have varying levels of resources. Expectations regarding payment, exhibition exposure, view time, conservation, access, and more should be set between the organizations and agreed to, if applicable, by the artist or gallery.

## Gifts & bequests

Curators need to be familiar with the details of all existing agreements relating to promised gifts, partial and promised gifts, fractional gifts, and/or bequests in their purview, regardless of whether they were employed by the organization when such acquisitions were made. The curator should be transparent about any issues relating to provenance, ownership, authorship, etc., and investigate these concerns. In seeking new gifts or bequests, curators should adhere to the same standards and procedures for purchases. Areas of potential concern may include restrictions on the organization's ability to loan the work in question; on required approval for future loans; for how and when the work must be displayed; and for conservation and installation of the work (a promised gift should be conserved before being gifted to the organization). The curator must work closely with the organization's financial and legal advisers regarding evaluation of the work for tax purposes and any terms of gift with potential financial or legal repercussions.

## Artist commissions

When working on artist commissions, curators are encouraged to consider the culture, history, and origins of the organization and its communities, and of the proposed artist. Before proceeding with the commission, the organization, the artist, and the artist's representative (if applicable) should clearly and transparently outline their goals, procedures, and ethical standards. Curators would do well to consult with conservators in determining the viability and durability of a commissioned work. All involved parties should consider the financial, registration, and conservation impact of a commission, factoring in any additional shipping, installation, and conservation costs that a traditional purchase might not have.

Formal legal documentation should outline the terms of the commission agreement, including details regarding ownership and use rights (including as to intellectual property and moral rights); payment to the artist and, if applicable, payment to their gallery representation; right to sell or transfer the work in the future; conditions of display; and specifications on interpretive materials such as titles, wall texts, labels, etc. Legal documentation should also outline deadlines for the completion of the work and provisos should those deadlines (such as a specific opening date) not be met, as well as strategies for scenarios in which a work is left incomplete. The organization should consider methods that discourage such scenarios, including segmented payments for work from conception through completion. Additionally, curators should consider how completed commissions will be preserved, conserved, and/or documented, should unforeseen circumstances affect the work's status. Circumstances to consider include when a fabricator or material needed for the work's conservation becomes unavailable; changes in the organization's leadership; renovations to or destruction of the work's location; or funding appropriation impacting the commission. Any concerns on either side should be referred to the organization's leadership and dealt with prior to contract execution.

Organizations may also commission works that will not become part of their permanent collections. In such cases, the organization, the artist, and/or the artist's representative should establish, by written contract and in consultation with legal counsel, the clear division of responsibilities and ownership, image and use rights, and sales of the work.



## CASE STUDIES

### ***SFMOMA & the Fisher Collection***

Charles Desmarais, “Unraveling SFMOMA’s Deal for the Fisher Collection,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 20, 2016, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/art/article/Unraveling-SFMOMA-s-deal-for-the-Fisher-9175280.php?cmpid=gsa-sfgate-result> (accessed March 14, 2019).

### ***The Metropolitan Museum of Art & the Lehman Collection***

Dita Armory, “The Robert Lehman Collection: A Magnificent Bequest,” chap. in *Philippe de Montebello and the Metropolitan Museum of Art: 1977-2008*, ed. James R. Houghton (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 61–64. Online: <https://books.google.com/books?id=G-akfb80yFEC&pg=PA63&lpg=PA63&dq=restrictions+around+lehman+collection+at+met+museum&source=bl&ots=IEAY11HTM1&sig=ACfU3U2ZZwd9YhR-rXpxcNiPzqjUvMCnceg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiKscTArMvgAhWFNd8KHW6hBekQ6AEwFXoE-CAIQAQ#v=onepage&q=restrictions%20around%20lehman%20collection%20at%20met%20museum&f=false> (accessed March 14, 2019).

# DEACCESSIONS

The Director, department chair, or curator should initiate any recommendations for the deaccessioning or disposal of works of art from a collection. Curators should be deeply involved in conversations around deaccessioning and be guided by both their own expertise and the mission of the organization. While curators have a responsibility to ensure a transparent deaccessioning process, they do not have the ultimate say in whether a work is deaccessioned. This is typically the responsibility of some combination of a curatorial team, Director, acquisitions committee, and/or Board.

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***The AAMC & AAMC Foundation policy is that funds from deaccessioning should only be used for new acquisitions and conservation of the collection.***

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Deaccessioning is not necessarily a controversial or politicized issue. When undertaken in an ethical and transparent manner, it is a customary and accepted part of maintaining and caring for a collection. This may include reevaluating works in terms of relevance to the organization's mission and collection management policy; adjusting for duplication; or addressing a condition issue. An organization may also consider deaccessioning following an official change in mission; however, any object for deaccessioning should be evaluated in terms of whether it remains pertinent to the organization's history and founding. Any concerns or questions about the misuse or abuse of public trust in relation to a potential deaccession should be addressed to the Director and Board.



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC Foundation, "Demystifying Deaccessioning,"** February 5, 2019, video, 1:15:06, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/DemystifyingDeaccessioning> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Canadian Museums Association/Associations des musées canadien, "Canadian Museums Association Deaccessioning Guidelines,"** Canadian Museums Association/Associations des musées canadiens, 2014, <https://museums.in1touch.org/uploaded/web/docs/Documents/CMA%20Deaccessioning%20Guidelines.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2019).

### SFMOMA sale

**Robin Pogrebin, "SFMOMA to Sell 1960 Rothko to Help Diversify Its Holdings,"** *New York Times*, February 15, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/15/arts/design/rothko-sfmoma-sale-sothebys.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, "SFMOMA Announces Deaccession to Benefit the Acquisitions Fund and Strategically Diversify the Collection,"** press release, February 15, 2019, <https://www.sfmoma.org/press-release/rothko-deaccession-2019/> (accessed March 14, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### Baltimore Museum of Art sale

**Baltimore Museum of Art, “The BMA Diversifies Its Collection, Strengthening Its Holdings to Enhance Visitor Experience,”** press release, April 13, 2018, [https://artbma.org/documents/press/New\\_Acquisitions\\_Release\\_final.pdf](https://artbma.org/documents/press/New_Acquisitions_Release_final.pdf) <https://s3.amazonaws.com/artbma/documents/press/contemporary.pdf?pdf=contemporary> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**Julia Halperin, “The Baltimore Museum Sold Art to Acquire Work by Underrepresented Artists. Here’s What It Bought—and Why It’s Only the Beginning,”** Artnet, June 26, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/baltimore-deaccessioning-proceeds-1309481> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**Julia Halperin, “It Is an Unusual and Radical Act’: Why the Baltimore Museum Is Selling Blue-Chip Art to Buy Work by Underrepresented Artists,”** Artnet, April 30, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/market/baltimore-museum-deaccession-1274996> (accessed March 15, 2019).

The AAMC & AAMC Foundation recognize that curators are responsible for presenting the cases for and against deaccessioning in accordance with professional ethics and best practices and with consideration of the organization’s legacy and future; however, the AAMC & AAMC Foundation understand that a curator does not have the final decision in deaccessioning. The AAMC & AAMC Foundation do not hold curators ultimately at fault for an organization’s unethical and irresponsible decision to deaccession works in an improper manner, or unethical use of the proceeds from a deaccession.

It is helpful to be aware that some state and local laws and regulations may restrict or govern the deaccessioning of works at certain organizations. Consultation with legal counsel is advised.

The AAMC & AAMC Foundation policy is that funds from deaccessioning should only be used for new acquisitions and conservation of the collection.

## Policies

A collecting organization, or an organization that acquires public commissions, should have a deaccessioning policy as part of a larger collections strategy developed by some combination of the curatorial departments, Director, acquisitions committee, advisory group, legal counsel, and/or Board. If an organization does not have a deaccessions policy, its curators should seek to develop one in consultation with the organization’s leadership. Without a clear deaccessions policy, the organization will lack guidelines and a system of procedural checks and balances, which will result in ambiguous circumstances around any conversation or action engaging deaccessioning.

Deaccessioning policies should outline how and why works can be deaccessioned and how any financial proceeds are to be used. Additional details may vary; for example, the Smithsonian's policies state that any deaccessioned work must first be offered to any other interested Smithsonian museum freely. (This policy does not apply to the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, which is managed under a different rule initiated at the time Joseph Hirshhorn gifted his collection to the Smithsonian.) The Metropolitan Museum of Art has a formal checklist for curators to use for any proposed deaccession, as it would for any proposed acquisition.

Some organizations have deaccessioned works in order to support efforts to expand their existing narrative, using the proceeds from deaccessioning to acquire works that help tell more complete, inclusive, and multivalent stories. In such cases, deaccessioning can help expand an organization's collection and fill or correct gaps, such as a lack of holdings by artists from underrepresented communities and cultures.

Procedures for approving proposed deaccessions differ by organization. In many, a curator's recommendations are considered by the Director and the appropriate committee, then submitted to the Board for a final decision. The organization will likely seek input from those proposing to sell the works privately or publicly, such as a dealer or auction house specialist. Should curators propose to deaccession a work outside their fields of expertise, they should consult with an applicable expert on that potential deaccession and be granted funding by the organization to compensate the consultant.

Once a work is approved for deaccessioning, it may be sold at auction or through private sale, exchanged, or gifted to another nonprofit. Each organization's deaccessioning policy should address these options in detail.



## RESOURCES

### Chicago Public Library proposed sale of Kerry James Marshall painting

**Sopan Deb, "Chicago Pulls Kerry James Marshall Painting from Auction Following Criticism,"** *New York Times*, November 5, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/05/arts/design/chicago-kerry-james-marshall-christies-auction.html> (accessed March 25, 2019).

**"Editorial: A Restored West Side Regional Library Is Worth the Price of a Painting,"** *Chicago Sun-Times*, October 2, 2018, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/opinion/legler-library-knowledge-wonder-kerry-james-marshall-painting-regional-status/> (accessed March 25, 2019).

**Jason Farago, "Critic's Notebook: Kerry James Marshall Paints for Chicago. His Mural Should Stay There,"** *New York Times*, October 5, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/05/arts/design/kerry-james-marshall-painting-chicago-proposed-auction.html> (accessed March 25, 2019).

**Steve Johnson, "Was Kerry James Marshall's Public Library Painting Too Valuable to Stay in a Library?"** *Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 2018, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/museums/ct-ent-kerry-james-marshall-painting-library-sale-1014-story.html> (accessed March 25, 2019).



## RESOURCES

(Chicago Public Library proposed sale of Kerry James Marshall painting continued)

**Henri Neuendorf, “The Chicago Public Library Is Selling a Kerry James Marshall Painting to Fund Public Art in Underserved Communities,”** Artnet, October 1, 2018, <https://news.artnet.com/market/kerry-james-marshall-knowledge-and-wonder-1361221> (accessed March 25, 2019).

## Procedure

Curators should employ the same ethical and moral guidelines for research on deaccessions as for accessions. Curators are responsible for researching and analyzing the proposed work’s complete provenance, and for providing this information in a transparent manner to organizational leadership. Provenance research on a potential deaccession should include information on its authenticity; the conditions of its original transfer to the organization, such as whether the work in question is tied to any additional gifts or bequests and whether funds promised for the care of the work; and any ethical concerns around the work, its donor, and/or its seller. Curators should consider any legal documentation of or parameters around the object’s

original acquisition by the organization. They should be mindful of whether the deaccession will impact ongoing relationships with donors or their descendants, and should, if possible, personally consult with them. Curators should also investigate whether the work in question is tied to any additional gifts or bequests; whether there were funds promised for the care of the work; and whether the deaccession will have a general financial or budgetary impact on the organization. The same considerations should apply when deaccessioning work by living artists or deceased artists represented by descendants, estates or foundations, or other relevant entities. When contemplating a work for deaccessioning, curators have a responsibility to consider art historical and organizational fluctuations, weighing whether a work that does not seem relevant at the present moment might appear relevant in the future.

Curators should be candid and forthcoming with their Director—and ideally present to the Board—regarding any reservations they may have about objects proposed for deaccession, whether or not those objects emanate from their department. A curator should proceed cautiously and conservatively throughout the deaccessioning process, making considered recommendations that conform to the organization’s policies and are transparent to all involved.



## Restitutions

Restitution can be appropriate due to and motivated by provenance issues, such as conditions of transfer, origins, and ownership histories. Often, restitution is a result of research in the deaccessioning process but can also be motivated by findings from regular internal and external collection and scholarly research. In addition, the call for restitution of objects by countries and cultures of origin is common, with the details covered widely in the press and followed with great interest by the public.

An organization's leadership will direct a restitution process, in coordination with legal counsel and, if appropriate, governmental agencies; a curators' expertise in such circumstances is essential. Any restitution should follow the formal deaccession procedures of an organization where possible. Restitution requires the same level of diligence and ethics curators use with acquisitions and loans, including often working diplomatically and transparently with governmental entities, legal teams, donors, and the public.

Restitution is a sensitive and increasingly important topic across all art communities, and a conversation that includes governments, dealers, auction houses, artists, collectors, press, and the public. Curators should become familiar with and keep abreast of ongoing dialogues around this issue, as they are rapidly evolving.



## CASE STUDY

### *The closure of the Corcoran Gallery of Art, 2014*

The Corcoran Gallery of Art, which was founded in 1869, was a renowned and beloved Washington, DC, cultural institution with a deep dedication to US art and a long history of supporting innovative contemporary artists. It expanded in 1880 to include the Corcoran School of Art and Design, which educated artists and designers. In 2014, following years of financial difficulty, the Board of Trustees essentially dissolved the institution and reached an agreement with the National Gallery of Art and George Washington University to absorb its collection, school, and historic building. The loss of the Corcoran, especially its unique cultural history and curatorial perspective, was a painful blow to artists, students, staff, museumgoers, donors, and the District of Columbia. Critics viewed the closure as a failure of leadership and an affront to the institution's founding donor and historic supporters.

In an effort to honor the Corcoran's deep embeddedness in the city of its birth, the Board of Trustees developed a plan to keep the vast majority of the collection in Washington. Technically speaking, the Corcoran's collection was not deaccessioned, but rather distributed following the closing of the institution. The National Gallery of Art received a large portion of the collection, and the Corcoran's Board placed the remaining holdings in other Washington cultural institutions, including nine Smithsonian museums, the Phillips Collection, Howard University, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, and American University's Katzen Arts Center, among others. None of the Corcoran's works were ever sold and the collection's dispersal is considered "one of the largest free distributions of art in U.S. history." The institutions that acquired the distributed holdings will continue to feature the Corcoran's credit lines, allowing a trace of the museum's institutional history to remain part of the public record. The Corcoran's demise was tragic, and some would argue avoidable. The decision to not sell the collection and to keep it in Washington, DC, represented an attempt to honor the goals of the original founder and to ethically situate the former collection with responsible local institutions dedicated to education, scholarship, and public service.



## CASE STUDY

### ***Brandeis University's attempt to sell off the Rose Art Museum's collection, 2009***

In January 2009, Jehuda Reinharz, the President of Brandeis University in Waltham, Massachusetts, announced that the school planned to shut down the Rose Art Museum and sell its collection, reportedly because Brandeis was having an institutional budget crisis. The University's endowment had shrunk from about \$700 million to about \$530 million due to the 2008 economic downturn. What added to the institution's financial woes was that many of the university's major donors had lost much of their wealth due to Bernard Madoff's alleged Ponzi scheme. The announcement came as a shock to the Rose's Director, Michael Rush.

The Rose Art Museum was founded in 1961. The inaugural Director, Sam Hunter, who came to Brandeis from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, was an astute collector who with a \$50,000 gift from Leon Mnuchin and his wife, Harriet Gevirtz-Mnuchin, purchased works by artists early in their careers, including Willem de Kooning, Jasper Johns, Roy Lichtenstein, Morris Louis, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol. Hunter and Mnuchin built an exceptional collection, setting a \$5,000 limit per painting and often buying work straight from the artists' studios.

By 2009, the Rose Art Museum's collection had grown to more than 7,000 objects. In a February 5, 2009, *Time* magazine article, Director Rush said he had asked the auction house Christie's to value the Rose's art collection, which was discovered to be around \$350 million. Rush said he ordered the assessment for insurance reasons but also to raise the Rose's profile in the eyes of the campus administrators. He said, "that may have backfired."

Upon the University's decision, there was an immediate negative reaction from the faculty, as well as from artists and museum directors. The news received tremendous coverage around the world, mostly denouncing the school's decision. Also, the decision to turn the museum into a "teaching center and gallery" was widely derided as the way the University would be allowed to sell off the collection without going against the ethics guidelines set by museums.

Four of the museum's benefactors, Gerald Finberg, Lois Foster, Jonathan Lee, and Meryl Rose, sued Brandeis University to stop any art sales. The Massachusetts attorney general, Martha Coakley, also began an investigation of the propriety of the Brandeis plan. It took two years for the lawsuit to settle in favor of the plaintiffs. No works from the collection were sold. Jehuda Reinharz, the President of Brandeis University who recommended closing the art museum, stepped down in 2011 amid sharp criticism over his decision but with a healthy retirement package. When Michael Rush's contract expired in June 2009, it was not renewed by Brandeis.



## CASE STUDIES

### *The Elgin Marbles*

The Elgin Marbles—sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens, which have since the early nineteenth century been held by London’s British Museum—are the subject of an ongoing restitution case.

For a recent summary, see: Jon Stone, “Greece Demands UK Open Negotiations over the Return of the Elgin Marbles,” *The Independent*, August 21, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/greece-uk-elgin-marbles-british-museum-parthenon-acropolis-athens-a8500726.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

### *Dancing Shiva*

The *Pathur Nataraja* is a twelfth-century South Indian bronze image of the god Shiva dancing. It was smuggled out of the state of Tamil Nadu, India, in 1977, sold to the Bumper Corporation in Canada, and eventually confiscated and tried in a British court of law. The case was exceptional because the plaintiff was the god Shiva; this judgment upheld a 1988 ruling that Shiva has a “juristic personality” existence in Britain (as gods do in India), and therefore could sue for the return of his icon. Shiva’s position was argued in court by a legal team including a British Queen’s Counsel and lawyers representing the Indian government. The case was successful, and in 1991 the *Pathur Nataraja* (Dancing Shiva) was repatriated to Tamil Nadu.

### Some resources on the case include:

**Ramesh Chandran, “Indian Government Wins Stolen Nataraja Idol Case in British Court,”** *India Today*, March 15, 1988, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/international/story/19880315-indian-government-wins-stolen-nataraja-idol-case-in-british-court-797028-1988-03-15> (accessed April 9, 2019).

**Richard H. Davis, “Loss and Recovery of Ritual Self,”** chap. in *Lives of Indian Images* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 222–59.

**Rakesh Mathur, “British Courts Free Siva Icon,”** *Hinduism Today*, May 1991, <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=823> (accessed April 9, 2019).



## CASE STUDY

### ***Recent restitutions of African art***

Restitution or repatriation of artworks pillaged during war or colonization is currently a hotly debated topic and one that may motivate deaccessioning of works in institutional collections.

In 2018, French President Emmanuel Macron commissioned a report that recommends that objects removed from Africa and sent to France without the consent of their countries of origin be repatriated if the country of origin asks for them.

#### **Some responses to this report include:**

**Clara Cassan, “The Sarr-Savoy Report & Restituting Colonial Artifacts,”** *Center for Art Law*, January 31, 2019, <https://itsartlaw.com/2019/01/31/the-sarr-savoy-report/> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**Farah Nayeri, “Museums in France Should Return African Treasures, Report Says,”** *New York Times*, November 21, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/21/arts/design/france-museums-africa-savoy-sarr-report.html> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**Anahita Toodehfallah, “A French Report on Repatriating African Cultural Heritage Stirs the Pot,”** *Hyperallergic*, December 7, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/474573/a-french-report-on-repatriating-african-cultural-heritage-stirs-the-pot/> (accessed March 15, 2019).

#### **A timeline of events related to debates over repatriating African art is provided here:**

**Adenike Cosgrove, “Send It Back! Chronicling the African Art Repatriation Debate,”** *ÌMÒ DÁRA*, March 07, 2019, <https://www.imodara.com/magazine/send-it-back/> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**An example of a US museum returning African antiquities believed to be the subject of more recent illicit trafficking is here: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, “Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Transfers Eight Antiquities to Nigeria,”** press release, June 26, 2014, <https://www.mfa.org/news/nigeria-transfer> (accessed March 15, 2019).

# SCHOLARSHIP & RESEARCH



## RESOURCES

### General

**College Art Association, “Code of Best Practices in Fair Use in the Visual Arts,”** 2015, <http://www.collegeart.org/programs/caa-fair-use/best-practices> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Michelle Fisher, “Acknowledging the Intellectual Labor of Curators in a Museum,”** Hyperallergic, July 31, 2018, <https://hyperallergic.com/453438/acknowledging-the-intellectual-labor-of-curators-in-a-museum/> (accessed February 1, 2019).

**Yale Center for British Art, British Art Studies, an open access online scholarly publication:** <https://britishart.yale.edu/research/publications/british-art-studies/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

Original research and writing are among the most critical activities performed by curators and are essential to enriching public understanding and enjoyment of the work presented. For a collecting institution, research and scholarship are key curatorial responsibilities. Curators bring to their work considerable knowledge and experience that often originates both within and outside an affiliated organization, and they have a responsibility to ensure that their work addresses their audiences and fits the dynamic of the situation. Institutional publications and interpretive texts produced for special exhibitions and/or collection galleries should be accessible to broad audiences, as should public lectures and tours. In adapting scholarship, curators should work collaboratively with and honor the expertise of colleagues internally and externally.

Scholarly research and writing, whether around a special project, collection care, or temporary exhibition/installation, are often dependent on available time, and the organization should, if possible, support sustained periods of concentration for curators to undertake such work. If the organization does not have policies in place, curators

may wish to negotiate for time and/or support for research and writing at the time of their hiring or for independent/consultant work within their contract. Many organizations provide resources that contribute to the research carried out by their employees and contractors in the form of access to collections, libraries, archives, laboratories, equipment, grants, and travel funds.

Some organizational budgets include funds for ongoing research related to the permanent collection and potential acquisitions, as well as exhibition research. A small number of institutions have programs for sabbaticals and paid or unpaid leave. This is particularly helpful for curators who take on ambitious projects and for those who derive benefit from travel or periods of residence elsewhere in order to pursue their scholarly research on the institution's behalf.

When funds to advance research are not provided, curators may need to seek external funding for these opportunities. Many associations and foundations (private and governmental), some specific to particular areas of research, offer this support, and it can be useful to consult with colleagues in fundraising when seeking grant opportunities.

## Travel

Opportunities to visit exhibitions, performances, installations, biennials, and collections or attend colloquia are, for most curators, important research and learning occasions. Curators working with living artists need to be able to travel for studio visits and to maintain connections with artists who do not live and work in their area.

Many curatorial job descriptions include travel as a requirement. Curators are often called upon for courier trips; travel with Board members and other patrons and donors; and leading local, domestic, and international trips to exhibitions, collections, artists' studios, art fairs, etc. Curators need to be aware that such travel does not always lead to the ability to conduct scholarly activities while traveling, and can often be in conflict with that goal.

## Intellectual property

All organizations should have set policies for the acknowledgment/crediting of intellectual property and labor. Curators must have a clear understanding of the organization's intellectual property policies when hired and should keep abreast of any changes that occur. Many of these policies will differ from experiences in graduate work or academic employment. Typically, no text should be reprinted, altered, translated, or reused for a different purpose without permission of the copyright holder; legal counsel should be consulted about obtaining such permissions. While curators should be acknowledged publicly for their work for an organization, typically the organization owns the work product and rights thereto; these policies differ from those of academia.

## Acknowledgment of curatorial work

There exists a tradition in curatorial work of granting authorial credit only to the lead curator of an exhibition or project; junior curators and additional individuals within the organization are often not credited, regardless of how much of the work they undertook or how significant the contributions they made. AAMC & AAMC Foundation believe that all team members should be credited alongside the lead curator in texts such as catalogues, introductory wall texts, websites, press materials, etc., and encourage curators to advocate for this policy.

## Reuse of existing texts

Most scholarly writing is discursive. Any written work consulted or adapted for a new publication should be cited or otherwise acknowledged, regardless of whether it comes from a published or unpublished source. In accordance with the highest academic standards and practices, curators should always credit their sources, especially in published (print or digital) catalogues and articles.

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Brief passages in interpretive texts (including wall texts and object labels), entries in periodical publications, marketing materials, and texts on an organization's website frequently depend on work written by present and past staff curators and outside scholars.

Whenever possible, the author of any significant text should be credited. In addition, much writing undertaken at arts organizations is descriptive, not original, and scholarly citation is less applicable to descriptive writing; additionally, much of this writing may be drafted as a team by members of the organization's curatorial, education, digital, editorial, and/or communications staffs. However, if there is doubt about a text's originality or source of origin, one should consult the author of the text in question before reuse or adaptation. If such questions persist, consultation with the project leader and/or department head, and legal counsel should be sought.



## Free exchange of information

The free exchange of information is essential to progress in scholarship. All curatorial departments and all organizational team members are encouraged to share their departmental files as freely as feasible with interested parties including colleagues and outside researchers. At the same time, it is imperative that all those who consult documentation, whether curatorial files or conservation reports, respect the authorship of that material and acknowledge their sources. To avoid the risk of error or misinterpretation, curators are advised to consult with applicable colleagues before interpreting their reports, and conservators and scientists are advised to consult with the applicable curators before drawing on curatorial files as sources.

In some instances, it may be appropriate for a curator to postpone sharing research in progress. This decision should always be made in consultation with a supervisor. However, AAMC & AAMC Foundation believe that in the interest of intellectual cooperation and advancement priority should always be given to collaboration and the dissemination of information.

## Open access & visual documentation

Some organizations have implemented policies of open access of their images. Curators should advocate at their own organizations for the adoption of such policies. AAMC & AAMC Foundation support open access of images and data while observing any legal limitations and restrictions related to copyright or other use rights. Organizations should not only share resources with the widest possible audiences but also help create networks of professional reciprocity and free exchange worldwide.

The free exchange of photographs and digital images between researchers is essential to scholarship, as well as fostering engagement with a global community. AAMC & AAMC Foundation recommend that art organizations, in developing procedures for distributing visual documentation, ensure that internal and external communities are properly served. The exchange of visual documentation is distinct from the commercial licensing of images for reproduction.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Organizations benefit from their curators' participation in professional and field-specific conferences, seminars, workshops, webinars, and other educational opportunities. Some organizations may pay fees and dues on their staff's behalf and underwrite the costs of traveling to and attending programs hosted by such groups. These opportunities are an extremely important part of a curator's professional development, in particular as the majority of skills utilized day to day are developed on the job.

In addition, exposure to exhibitions, biennials, art fairs, auctions, and the like can have great benefit to the professional development of a curator. Often curators attending such events represent their organization at them, increasing the profile of both the curator and the organization itself. A curator works with the Director, department head, or appropriate supervisor to establish a budget and travel schedule for a curator's professional development. Ensuring these benefits are accessible at all stages of a curator's career is essential, and investing in its team represents an important part of an organization's success and culture.

However, policies guaranteeing curatorial research time and funding are more the exception than the rule. If an organization does not have such policies in place, curators may wish to negotiate for time and/or support for such efforts at the time of their hiring. In certain circumstances—and with an eye on the fine line between what advances a curator's own career and what advances the organization—one might consider the possibility of personally investing in one's own research, professional development, networking, or travel, in the interest of personal advancement.

# CURATORIAL COMMUNITIES

Communication among curatorial colleagues, internally and externally, is crucial, and can provide support in terms of one's work and broader professional development. Curators at the same organization should meet regularly with one another; some large organizations offer formal curatorial forums for this purpose. Curators should speak with and meet colleagues in their cities/towns/states/provinces, including independent curators and scholars. AAMC and other professional organizations also offer many networking opportunities; participating in such organizations is highly encouraged for professional growth.

# MENTORING, SUPERVISING & HIRING

It is the responsibility of a curator to mentor, manage, and have a role in the hiring process. This includes providing support, guidance, insight, and training for junior colleagues, interns, fellows, curatorial assistants, research assistants, administrative assistants, and/or assistant and associate curators. It also includes outreach to students from high school to graduate school, and to others with an interest in curatorial pursuits.

Both mentoring and supervising should include helping mentees or supervisees expand their networks and engage in the professional community; this might be done by facilitating introductions, sharing

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***AAMC & AAMC Foundation advocate that curators apply practices of diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility as a primary focus of their role in every aspect of mentoring, supervising, and hiring.***

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opportunities to join meetings, and encouraging professional activity in outside organizations. In mentoring, supervising, and hiring the principles of generosity and transparency apply in working collaboratively and sharing information; doing so fosters an understanding of curatorial work and promotes positive work cultures.

AAMC & AAMC Foundation advocate that curators apply practices of diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility as a primary focus of their role in every aspect of mentoring, supervising, and hiring.



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Diverse Educational Pipeline Programs Now,”** Monday, June 10, 2019, video, 1:03:04, <https://vimeo.com/341423116> (accessed June 14, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Diversifying the Curatorial Profession: How the Internship/Fellowship Track Can Be Our Essential Path Toward Change,”** May 10, 2016, video, 1:52:01, <https://vimeo.com/174880843> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Keynote Dialogue with Dr. Andrea Barnwell Brownlee and Dr. Mary Schmidt Campbell,”** Monday, June 3, 2019, video, 1:06:28, <https://vimeo.com/339983651> (accessed June 14, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “LatinX Identity, Mentorship & Representation,”** May 17, 2018, video, 1:18:12, <https://vimeo.com/270535107> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Management Webinar Series,”** Wednesday, June 12, 2019, links to three videos, variable lengths, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/ManagementSeries> (accessed June 14, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### (General continued)

**American Alliance of Museums, “Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion,”** n.d., <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion/> (accessed February 21, 2019).

**Juliet Bourke and Bernadette Dillon, “The Six Signature Traits of Inclusive Leadership: Thriving in a Diverse New World,”** Deloitte Insights, April 14, 2016, <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/topics/talent/six-signature-traits-of-inclusive-leadership.html> (accessed February 21, 2019).

**Dr. Brea M. Heidelberg, “How to Be (or Be an Asset to) an Emerging Arts Leader of Color,”** Americans for the Art Artsblog for Arts Professionals in the Know, April 26, 2016, <https://blog.americansforthearts.org/2016/04/26/how-to-be-or-be-an-asset-to-an-emerging-arts-leader-of-color> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**The Center for WorkLife Law/UC Hastings College of the Law, “Bias Interrupters: Tools for Individuals,”** <https://biasinterrupters.org/toolkits/individualtools/> (accessed February 21, 2019).

## Mentoring

Many of a curator’s skills are honed on the job; this includes understanding governance, fundraising, finance, and project management. Curators should prioritize mentorship, cultivating a good rapport with those with whom they work, and communicating in a supportive and transparent manner. Mentors should remember that a mentorship relationship also represents a learning experience for themselves; there is much to be gained from hearing your mentee’s views and insights. Curators should model best practices, including creating positive, inclusive, and equitable workplace cultures—and paying particular attention to their own implicit bias as they move through this process. Mentoring is a key aspect of how curators learn and develop; it is both a responsibility and an honor to support the next generation.

## Supervising

Like mentoring, supervising direct reports and team project members is a key aspect of a curator’s role. A supervisor should provide a transparent and positive line of communication, and offer insight into organizational

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***Supervising is a responsibility that should be taken seriously and engaged in thoughtfully. It requires sharing information and spending time with those one is supervising, as well as establishing empathetic, fair, and welcoming environments.***

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infrastructure and policies, including “big picture” objectives and strategies. Supervising is a responsibility that should be taken seriously and engaged in thoughtfully. It requires sharing information and spending time with those one is supervising, as well as establishing empathetic, fair, and welcoming environments.

When supervising, one should set regular meetings and activities for teams (whether departmental or project-based); these provide equitable forums to share updates and ideas, and to brainstorm as a group. A supervisor, like a mentor, must consider implicit bias and unfair presumptions of knowledge in their interactions. Curators need to recognize that the manner in which they were trained or brought on might not be the best method; it is always important to break existing unproductive cycles. Supervising and collaborative leadership involves more than just a day of training, and extends beyond solely curatorial work. For example, supervisors may help new hires from another culture or geographic location, for whom language and behavioral nuances may be challenging, or who may be encountering difficulties navigating benefits and policies that may differ from those in their home community.

## Hiring

In visual arts nonprofits and throughout the art world, there is a well-recognized need to diversify the curatorial field in regard to nation, gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and socioeconomic background. Implicit bias has long existed in the curatorial profession, which manifests around salary levels, opportunities for travel, conventions about workplace dress, etc. The same bias has manifested in the way art and culture have traditionally been presented in Western historical narratives. In addition, existing gender-based pay disparities prevalent in the arts community mandate that one must be mindful and vigilant about fair and equitable hiring and compensation practices.

When making or informing hiring decisions, curators have the opportunity, and the power, to locate and recruit talent who bring diverse perspectives and experiences. Curators should play an active part in working with Human Resources and leadership to review job descriptions,



### RESOURCES

#### (General continued)

**Judith H. Katz and Frederick A. Miller, “Conscious Actions for Inclusion: A Common Language to Drive Uncommon Results,”** The Kaleel Jamison Consulting Group, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56b3ef5a20c647ed998996880/t/57603dbf3c44d84d0759a9c4/1465925057134/Conscious+Actions+for+Inclusion+AR.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2019).

**Elizabeth Merritt, “Rethinking Hiring: Walking the Walk,”** American Alliance of Museums, July 7, 2016, <https://www.aam-us.org/2016/07/07/rethinking-hiring-walking-the-walk/> (accessed February 21, 2019).

**Bramwell Osula and Steve M. Irvin, “Cultural Awareness in Intercultural Mentoring: A Model for Enhancing Mentoring Relationships,”** *International Journal of Leadership Studies* (Vol. 5, Issue 1, 2009), pp. 37–50, [https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol5iss1/IJLS\\_Vol5Is1\\_OsulaIrvinR.pdf](https://www.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/ijls/new/vol5iss1/IJLS_Vol5Is1_OsulaIrvinR.pdf) (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Perception Institute, “Perception Institute Publications,”** <https://perception.org/publications/> (accessed February 21, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### (General continued)

**Ave Rio, “Mentoring Matters, Especially for Women and Minorities,”** *Chief Learning Officer*, February 8, 2018, <https://www.clomedia.com/2018/02/08/guide-improving-mentoring-opportunities-women-minorities/> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**Kerry Ann Rockquemore, “Can I Mentor African-American Faculty?”** *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 17, 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/02/17/advice-white-professor-about-mentoring-scholars-color-essay> (accessed March 15, 2019).

**Roger Schonfeld, Mariët Westermann, and Liam Sweeney, “The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey,”** The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, July 28, 2015, <https://mellon.org/programs/arts-and-cultural-heritage/art-history-conservation-museums/demographic-survey/> (accessed February 21, 2019).

**Mariët Westermann, Roger Schonfeld, and Liam Sweeney, “Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey 2018,”** The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, January 28, 2019, <https://mellon.org/resources/news/articles/art-museum-staff-demographic-survey-2018/> (accessed February 21, 2019).

postings, and other outreach materials to ensure that they are inclusive. New methodologies in this area are constantly evolving, and AAMC & AAMC Foundation strongly suggest that curators and their organizations maintain best practices.

In hiring new staff members, it is important to have a clear job description. Before posting an opening, curators should review the current position, and its description, and consider whether it truly fits what is needed for the role, including the level of expertise and education. This is particularly true of entry-level positions; one should be thoughtful about what a candidate actually needs to succeed in the role and how differing skill sets could be beneficial. Many studies provide insight into how to ensure job postings are inclusive, and how to encourage more diverse candidates to apply. Every curatorial posting should take these factors into consideration.

Since curatorial work is central to the function of visual arts nonprofits, curators are often asked to serve on search committees for new Directors, heads of departments, and curatorial peers. Curators can represent the needs of their departments in these forums, collaborating with interdepartmental colleagues to evaluate potential hires and to determine if the individual will advance the organization’s mission, including the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

# FUNDRAISING & CULTIVATION

Fundraising is important to the overall operation of cultural organizations; annual contributions from individuals, foundations, corporations, and governmental entities compose at least 30 percent of most organizational income, and for most it is much more. Development teams work in many ways to build relationships with people that inspire them to support the organization's mission, creating momentum toward and ultimately securing funding. Authenticity and transparency are key to success.

This section is intended to provide curators with an understanding of their roles within fundraising. A curator's activity in this area can vary depending on guidelines or geographic location. Many international organizations are government funded and depend less on fundraising; in some cases, curators are prohibited by their organization from personally taking part in any form of fundraising.

The development department (also sometimes referred to as external affairs or institutional advancement) is responsible for the overall fundraising program. These colleagues manage prospective and existing donor relationships; direct and oversee fundraising events and programs for funders; maintain records of donor gifts and history; and provide support to the Board, Director, and curators in their development efforts. Support from these colleagues includes activities such as arranging prospective donor meetings and drafting meeting materials; prospective donor research and strategy; writing gift acknowledgments, proposals, and gift reports; drafting (with legal counsel) gift agreements; and discussing naming, recognition, and gift acceptance policies with donors.

Curators work closely with colleagues and participate in many aspects of fundraising activity, and it is important to view the relationship as a partnership. Donors often seek out curators as art and art historical experts. Development teams support curatorial work by building and facilitating philanthropic relationships and are invaluable partners for curators in realizing curatorial projects. Development also manages the business side of donor relationships, allowing curators to focus conversations on curatorial content.



## RESOURCES

(General continued)

**Valerie Young, Ed.D., *The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer from Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It*** (New York: Crown Business, 2011). Website: <https://impostorsyndrome.com/book/overview/> (accessed March 15, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC Foundation, “Practical Matters: Loans and Fundraising,”** August 22, 2018, video, 1:02:49, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/LoansFundraising> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Workshop: It’s Complicated: The Curator-Patron Relationship,”** May 9, 2016, video, 1:32:32, <https://vimeo.com/178478613> (accessed March 14, 2019).

### Tate & British Petroleum

**Mark Brown, “Tate Paid ‘Paltry’ £350k a Year in BP Sponsorship, Figures Reveal,”** *The Guardian*, August 31, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/aug/31/tate-paid-350000-pounds-a-year-bp-sponsorship-figures-reveal> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Nick Clark, “BP to End Controversial Sponsorship of Tate in 2017,”** *The Independent*, March 11, 2016, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/art/news/bp-to-end-controversial-sponsorship-of-tate-in-2017-a6923471.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Benjamin Sutton, “Liberate Tate Activists Look Back on Six Years of Fighting BP Sponsorship,”** *Hyperallergic*, April 4, 2016, <https://hyperallergic.com/288254/liberate-tate-activists-look-back-on-six-years-of-fighting-bp-sponsorship/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

Curatorial and development teams partner on building relationships with donors (“cultivation” and “stewardship” in fundraising terms), writing grant proposals and reports (curators should provide an exhibition narrative from which grant writers can work), and on making the “ask.” Curators must realize that meeting deadlines and providing urgently needed material are imperative to securing funding and should provide information in a timely fashion. Positive collaboration often directly benefits the work of the curator or curatorial department. Curators are also asked to participate in activities that broadly support the organization, such as member and donor cultivation events that include exhibition tours or presentations. They should be frank with donors about challenges in their field yet discreet about those that are within the organization. Donors today want to know the impact of their philanthropy, and curators must be prepared to discuss why their work and organization matter.

In fundraising, expect situations in which the donor does not see eye-to-eye with the organization about a particular program or other matter and may raise the issue with a curator. Curators should not try to handle such situations alone but should seek help from development colleagues and senior management as soon as possible so that the issue can be handled appropriately. Transparency and clarity remain paramount in all funding relationships.

By the same token, there may be situations where curators find themselves at odds with donors’ (individual, corporate, government, foundation) and/or Board members’ personal, professional, or political actions, beliefs, or ethics. A donor’s engagement outside of the organization is increasingly and deeply analyzed by the public as well as internal staff for moral, ethical, environmental, and other standards.



If a donor says or is engaged in an offensive act or is operating outside of ethical standards, the curator should share this information with colleagues in the development department and at the senior management level as soon as possible. This will help prevent the situation from escalating, and it is best for it to be thought through and addressed institutionally. Controversy is not new to any cultural organization, and it is best to address it immediately. In the case of personal harassment or inappropriate behavior, one should notify one's supervisor, human resources, legal counsel, and/or colleagues immediately according to the organization's reporting policies, if applicable.

Curatorial and fundraising roles, as well as all sectors of the visual arts, are rarely nine-to-five jobs. While AAMC & AAMC Foundation do not support work environments that require unpaid and unacknowledged overtime, we also recognize that this is the reality for the visual arts community.

## Types of fundraising

Funds are raised for the full range of organizational operations and generally fall into the following categories: gifts for specific projects, which include education programs, special exhibitions, publications, etc.; general operating support; capital projects; acquisitions; endowment; planned gifts; and gifts of works of art or other personal property. Curators should familiarize themselves with each, as some will be more suitable than others with different donors.

### Individual

Individual donors will often be the primary source of support for curatorial work. Given their shared interest in art, curators should expect to build deep relationships with collectors and philanthropists that span many years. It is important to keep the development office apprised of contact with donors so that they can maintain complete



#### RESOURCES

### *Hide/Seek: Difference & Desire in American Portraiture*

**Holland Cotter, "Art Review: Sexuality in Modernism: The (Partial) History,"**

*New York Times*, December 10, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/11/arts/design/11hide.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Brian Logan, "Hide/Seek: Too Shocking for America,"**

*The Guardian*, December 5, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/dec/05/hide-seek-gay-art-smithsonian> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Jillian Steinhauer, "What Has Hide/Seek Lost? A Review,"**

*Hyperallergic*, January 10, 2011, <https://hyperallergic.com/16351/what-has-hideseek-lost/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Jacqueline Trescott, "'Hide/Seek': Smithsonian Officials Look Back at What Went Wrong,"**

*Washington Post*, November 23, 2011, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/hideseek-smithsonian-officials-look-back-at-what-went-wrong/2011/11/16/gIQAkP8oN\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.df7e77b5c456](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/hideseek-smithsonian-officials-look-back-at-what-went-wrong/2011/11/16/gIQAkP8oN_story.html?utm_term=.df7e77b5c456) (accessed March 14, 2019).



## RESOURCES

*(Hide/Seek: Difference & Desire in American Portraiture continued)*

**Neda Ulaby, “As ‘Hide/Seek’ Ends, A Step Back to Look for Lessons,”** *Morning Edition*, National Public Radio, February 10, 2011, audio, 5:42, <https://www.npr.org/2011/02/10/133622745/as-hide-peek-ends-a-step-back-to-look-for-lessons> (accessed March 14, 2019).

records of the relationship, notify curators of important pertinent information regarding that donor’s broader relationship with the organization, and assist with materials as needed. It may be difficult at times to balance work with the demands placed on personal time by individual donors. A strong partnership with the development office can be useful in such circumstances, as they experience and manage these difficulties regularly.

Curators working in emerging fields, or in areas not historically collected by their institution, should endeavor to educate their colleagues across the organization about the time investment required to cultivate potential new donors who support these fields. Just because an organization has started building a new curatorial focus does not mean that individual donors or collectors will immediately contribute funds or art. These

donors may need to see an organization’s meaningful commitment over time before they choose to support it. This dynamic should be taken into consideration when organizations evaluate a curator’s success at cultivating donors in emerging or historically marginalized fields.

Donors are increasingly tied directly to curators, and it is not unusual for a donor to follow a curator rather than an organization. However, curators should exercise caution about approaching donors from past places of employment or projects and have a clear understanding of their current organization’s policies and legal landscape and risk before doing so; for example, curators could be sued for approaching donors if prohibited by their previous employment or separation contract in some way, such as those with a noncompete clause.

Many organizations have annual giving groups that directly support curatorial departments. These activities should be overseen by the development office in coordination with the curatorial department. Annual dues for such groups should be commensurate with the level of access to curatorial expertise that donors receive.

## **Institutional**

Curators will likely be expected to participate in institutional fundraising from foundations and governments. In this context, curators will be asked to help develop prospect lists, as they may know foundations interested in supporting a specific genre or artist more directly, as well as to work closely with the individual writing the grant to compose the application, and together with development, to make presentations to prospective funders.

Foundation and governmental grants tend to require the most detailed proposals and can warrant sophisticated program evaluation with measurable impact. Reporting is required and typically rigorous, with firm deadlines. Curators should be mindful of schedules in working cooperatively with their development departments and understand in advance the requirements for each approach.

## **Corporate**

Corporate sponsorship has different nuances but also requires a seamless engagement with development departments. Corporate funders often wish to negotiate their terms of sponsorship, such as the size and placement of the company's brand, the number of events for staff and clients, brand alignment, etc. Corporate sponsors may ask for curators to give numerous exhibition tours, interact with artists, and so forth. Development staff should consult with curators before these numbers are set or before agreeing to any final terms for access; ultimately, however, it is up to organizational leadership, development, and legal to finalize these terms.

## **Board/Trustees**

While the relationship between curators and Board members/trustees varies from organization to organization, in most cases curators will have privileged access, as many Boards consist of collectors. Curators often engage the Board through their recommendations for acquiring and deaccessioning works of art. A recent study found that a strong understanding of programs relates to stronger Board engagement, strategy, leadership, and fundraising, underscoring the importance of the Board member/curator relationship. As with all donors, the development office can help navigate complex trustee relationships.

The organization's leadership and legal counsel should develop written policy guidelines that will support curators on a range of issues, including conflicts of interest, confidentiality, and acceptance of gifts. Always consult an organization's policies and/or legal counsel before accepting a personal gift. If such guidelines are not offered, curators should verbally consult with their Director and/or development staff about such policies, and ideally collectively work with legal counsel to put written guidelines in place.

## ASKS

Curators often find themselves in the position of asking for gifts, which may take numerous forms. Gifts most commonly include pledges of cash support for an exhibition or special project or donations of works of art.

All approaches for support should be coordinated with the development office. This is important for three reasons: (1) many donors have multiple relationships within an organization so the timing of asks must be centralized; (2) the development office and legal counsel must handle the business and legal details of gifts, such as naming opportunities and gift agreements; and (3) it maintains a focus on institutional funding priorities mandated by the Director. Curators should never find themselves in the position of negotiating conditions or terms of gifts in any manner.

Occasionally, curators may be asked to solicit gifts of artwork—usually from contemporary artists—for auctions or fundraisers benefiting the organization. It is important to be thoughtful in determining which artists to ask for donations. If artists have preexisting relationships with the organization, one should make sure that they do not perceive their gifts as barter in exchange for exposure at the organization or any other potential conflict of interest. Generally, these gifts are small works on paper or similar and should not present a significant financial loss or burden for the donating artists.



## CASE STUDY

### *The Metropolitan Museum of Art & a long-term relationship with a major foundation*

The Metropolitan Museum of Art has been fortunate to have the generous support of a major foundation for many years. The foundation's founder settled in New York in the early twentieth century and quickly became a key tastemaker in his field of art. At mid-century he created a foundation that became one of the most important supporters of his field in New York. From the time of his arrival in New York City, the donor formed a close relationship with the Met through his foundation, exhibiting objects at the museum and making regular gifts to Met departments related to his interests. Following his death, the relationship with the Met continued under the foundation's president, who personally knew the donor and remained dedicated to his vision.

During the president's extended tenure, he developed friendships with numerous curators in the departments of interest to the foundation's founder and was deeply engaged in their work. Museum leadership and senior staff in the development office also cultivated a close relationship with him—on any given day in the museum one might see him having lunch with a curator, a researcher, the museum president, or the vice president of development. He was invited to all Met exhibition openings and to all curatorial events hosted by the departments supported by the foundation, and he attended nearly all of them. Each curator and development staff member made him feel welcome, appreciated, and

part of the museum's inner circle. As the foundation moves into a new era, the museum will continue to cultivate close connections with it.

How does an organization successfully manage competing donor interests among curatorial departments? For the Met, these close relationships were key. Each grant cycle, the foundation president would talk individually with the heads of the curatorial departments supported by the foundation about their funding priorities for the coming year and beyond. With an established close working relationship with the development office, he would then call the vice president of development with his decision on what to include in the grant proposal for that year. He was transparent about issues such as timing, projects that fell outside the interests of the foundation, and available grant funds. In other words, he could tell the development staff what he was not comfortable saying to a curator. Development was tasked with informing each department of the projects that would be included in the grant proposal and collaborated with the curators on the narrative and budget. The president also worked closely with the development staff to shape each proposal.

Thanks to the foundation's generosity and the consistent relationship-building and partnership of the curators and development staff, fellowships, staff positions, publications, exhibitions, and acquisitions have been generously funded for the departments of interest to the founder.

# Professional Advancement & Navigation

## ACADEMIC TRAINING & OTHER ROUTES

Expectations are that curators have an area or period of specialization. Depending on that specialization, it is standard custom for curators of all ranks to have earned a PhD (or be in the process of doing so) or MA in their field of specialization, or to have equivalent experience. Common fields of advanced study include art history, anthropology, archaeology, history, visual culture, and curatorial studies. One should research graduate programs before entering them to ensure that a degree from the program will provide access to one's chosen career path. Other humanities or social science disciplines may be applicable depending on the position. There are nontraditional paths to becoming a curator, and often experience is viewed as equivalent to education, particularly in fields such as performance, fashion, textiles, contemporary, and so on; recognition of such experience varies by organization. Depending upon one's field, training in additional languages may be required; many graduate programs also have language requirements. As with any profession, continued professional development and supplemental training can help advance one's career.

## RELATIONSHIPS & ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION

Curators tend to be the primary contacts for a variety of constituents outside the organization, including individual and institutional lenders; gallerists; press; international, local, and national governmental agencies; and visiting dignitaries. As part of this, curators often participate in many "social activities" that blur the line between the professional and the personal. In all cases, curators should conduct themselves as representatives of the organization, familiarizing themselves with the cultural protocols of people with whom

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***Curators should be in open communication with their colleagues in other departments to ensure collaboration and alignment in understanding goals for a given project.***

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they are interacting (for example, knowing the appropriate ways to greet a dignitary visiting from a foreign country), and sharing this knowledge with colleagues within the organization to the best of their ability.

Curators should be in open communication with their colleagues in other departments to ensure collaboration and alignment in understanding goals for a given project. For example, curators should consult with their development colleagues about strategies regarding a potential donor before speaking with that donor themselves.

Curators who work with living artists must represent the interests of their affiliated organization while considering the interests or preferences of the artist, which may sometimes be in conflict. For instance, an artist might not want any interpretive materials, but the organization might insist on them in order to uphold its commitment to its audience; or an artist might not want any security measures in place, but the organization might need to overrule that request in the interest of public safety.

## HIRING & TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT NEGOTIATION

The degree to which job offers may be negotiable varies. Curators are in their strongest negotiating positions immediately after they have received a job offer but can also negotiate during the review process.

While some areas may not be negotiable, others might be arranged through a direct supervisor rather than as a matter of organizational policy; however, any benefit or arrangement that is not policy or part of a contractual arrangement or protected by law or regulation could be revoked at any time or be dissolved with new management, transfers, performance reviews, or team expansion. Unionized or university settings tend to have different parameters, as do organizations outside the United States, where benefits such as health care are often not part of an employment package.

One should review an organization's employee handbook during the hiring process, as well as annually, in order to anticipate topics one would like to discuss during negotiations or reviews. Upon entering into any negotiation, one should set priorities, limits, and boundaries. Making a list of parameters that are of key importance personally will help guide one through the process. It is common practice for curators (and for all professionals) to consult with trusted peers and mentors about what one might expect and/or negotiate for in a prospective position.



When considering salary, one should consult industry resources to judge appropriate levels. Also, one needs to consider salary in terms of the cost of living where the position is located. While salaries in a major metropolitan area or in a very competitive geographic market may be higher, so often will the overall cost of living. Curators working independently should take this into account; while they may live in an area with a high cost of living, the region in which they are consulting may have a lower cost of living and will offer a pay structure in accordance with it. The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), and many local not-for-profit coalitions publish salary surveys annually. For federal museums, pay grades are public. For university museums, one can consult the *Chronicle of Higher Education's* Salary Survey, which lists the average salaries of faculty and staff by institution. Annual IRS Form 990 filings (which are publicly available) will list the salaries of the top earners at nonprofit organizations. Particularly given existing gender-based pay disparities it is essential that the leaders of arts organizations remain mindful and vigilant about fair hiring and compensation practices.

Other areas one might consider in negotiations are benefits such as vacation, paid family leave, retirement plans, sick time, flextime, travel, moving and temporary housing, research, professional memberships and development programs, work visas, and residence applications. Titles are regularly negotiated or discussed in a review process. In some instances, one might choose to forgo an added benefit for a title change and vice versa.

## INDEPENDENT CONTRACTORS

Written contracts with consultants, adjunct, or independent hires should be clear about work parameters and deadlines, payment schedules, and expenses, outlining which expenses will be covered (travel, meals, supplies) and by what means (lump sum or staggered payments, per diems, reimbursement, etc.). Working Artists and the Greater Economy (W.A.G.E.), an artists' rights group, has a fee calculator based on an organization's total annual operating expenses that can serve as a useful guide, especially for engagements such as giving lectures or writing essays. Note that the difference between independent contractors and employees is a legal distinction of some complication so legal counsel and human resources should be consulted in all hiring situations.

# MEASUREMENTS OF ACHIEVEMENTS/ SKILLS FOR HIRING & PROMOTION

Before starting a new job or accepting a promotion, curators should have a clear grasp of their specific responsibilities. Documents such as job descriptions, performance plans, and organizational charts can delineate expectations of a curator within a larger institutional context.

Once hired, curators should have annual performance assessments with their direct supervisors. Many organizations conduct 360-degree reviews with supervisors, peer employees, and/or direct reports; these can provide employees with a more comprehensive assessment of their work. Depending on the culture and practices of the specific organization, performance assessments can be formal or informal, but should always evaluate staff members' work through transparent, clear, communicative, cooperative, and consistent processes. Assessments should entail discussions of how an employee has met existing goals, and of new and/or updated goals for the coming year; staff members should also be able to readjust goals as their projects progress.

Curators can prepare for performance assessments by considering their recent achievements, progress on long-term projects, and ongoing efforts such as mentoring and donor cultivation. Individual curators' performances may be evaluated by different criteria depending on their level of seniority. These may include: work on exhibitions, collections, acquisitions, and publications; engagement with audiences and public stakeholders; working with donors and patrons; teamwork; collegiality; handling conflict; supervising; mentoring; and active professional development. During the assessment, curators should be clear about the ebbs and flows of curatorial work; achievements for one year may entail behind-the-scenes research, whereas those for another year may involve more public-facing work such as donor cultivation, publishing, and lecturing. Assessments should also cover achievements made working as part of a team and collaborative projects within the organization that went beyond typical curatorial work.

Performance reviews and their procedures should be outlined in the organization's employee handbook, which should also cover areas such as benefits, whistle-blowing, harassment, retaliation, discrimination, and handling of employer property (digital and otherwise). Laws concerning these areas vary by country, and in the United States, by state and locality.

# HARASSMENT, INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR & ABUSE

AAMC & AAMC Foundation do not tolerate harassment, inappropriate behavior, or abuse in any form. Curators should report any and all such behaviors to human resources or the equivalent offices at their organization. A variety of laws in the United States, primarily state and local, protect employees who speak out against harassment, inappropriate behavior, and abuse; many states and localities also require that employees undergo anti-harassment training. Employees should consult their organization's policies and legal counsel should questions arise.

Because curators work with a wide variety of constituents outside their affiliated organizations—and the job generally involves extensive, and often after-hours, social events with donors, artists, etc.—there can arise instances in which sexual harassment, inappropriate behavior, or abuse may seem ambiguous or difficult to pinpoint. Such behavior should be reported to one's supervisor, human resources department, legal department, and/or Director. Reporting policies should be part of every employee handbook. Curators who work at university art organizations may be subject to university mandatory reporting policies, and should make sure they familiarize themselves with the university's policies on this subject.

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# WORK-LIFE BALANCE



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Navigating the Work-Life Balance,”** May 9, 2017, video, 1:13:59, <https://vimeo.com/220512902> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Navigating Social Media,”** September 27, 2018, video, 1:16:17, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/NavigatingSocial> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**David Z. Morris, “New French Law Bars Work Email After Hours,”** *Fortune*, January 1, 2017, <http://fortune.com/2017/01/01/french-right-to-disconnect-law/> (accessed March 7, 2019).

Like many professions, curatorial work can prove challenging for achieving work-life balance. Those working in the visual arts are required and/or encouraged to attend frequent after-hours events (at their organization and beyond); travel; spend time with donors and supporters; and in general, work beyond the traditional nine-to-five workday. E-mail and other advances in communication technologies also now often require attention outside of office hours. Employees who are nonexempt for purposes of wage and hour laws are typically entitled to overtime pay for extra work.

Individuals must always make their own decisions about prioritizing competing demands but should also communicate in a transparent manner about circumstances and needs, raising concerns with one’s direct supervisor, human resources, or other internal approval structures. While organizations often have prescribed policies regarding family leave, flextime, etc., they may be willing to work with employees to accommodate their needs, both in terms of policy and in more informal

agreements with individual supervisors. As with other benefits, it is often most effective to negotiate for such accommodations upon hire.

Organizations succeed best with healthy and engaged team members and should endeavor to promote work-life balance and well-being for their employees.

# MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Curators collaborate with their colleagues in marketing, communications, and digital to promote their specific exhibition projects and the overall organization. In addition, those in the curatorial sector represent their exhibitions and installations, and sometimes the larger institution, to the media (print and online), through exhibition previews and interviews. When speaking to the media, curators should be familiar with and follow their organizations' media policies and guidelines. Curators should work directly with marketing, communications, and digital staff in devising media strategies; supplying materials such as exhibition narratives that form the basis of press releases, social media postings, and advertisements; providing digital images and, in some cases, working with legal counsel to obtain copyright permissions for image use; and reviewing marketing, communications, and digital materials.

## Social media

Curators are often encouraged by their organizations to promote their work through social media. Those who are not previously familiar with navigating social media platforms should feel free to ask marketing colleagues for guidance. Curators must be aware of their organizations' policies regarding individual staff members' social media presence and keep abreast of any changes to these policies. If an organization does not have an existing social media policy, it should be encouraged to develop one; this may be a point to negotiate upon hire. While curators often post on social media about the commercial art world, including art fairs, galleries, etc., there exists a risk of perceived conflict of interest; curators should consult with their supervisors should such questions arise.

In some instances, curators also engage in personal branding, developing a recognizable professional persona that may or may not be connected to their organizations. This may include developing a personal website or honing a unique curatorial voice through social media; participating in profile pieces in the media; writing criticism, etc. This personal branding aligns with developments in other aspects of visual arts nonprofits' operations where, for example, some donors are increasingly interested in developing relationships with individual curators whose interests align with their own.

In general, organizations should support this kind of professional development. However, curators should be aware of and anticipate potential conflicts or issues relating to their personal social media presence.

# PUBLIC SPEAKING

Curators engage in a range of public speaking duties, from presenting scholarly papers, to giving exhibition tours and lectures to varied audiences, to emceeding events. Some organizations offer opportunities for training in public speaking; if not, one might consider requesting it, especially when negotiating upon hire or during performance evaluations. Curators need to be able to speak engagingly about their work in all settings and should be able to speak about the missions and strategic plans of their organizations, and to provide general institutional data. When engaged in public speaking or in public forums such as social media, curators should make distinctions between their organization's positions and their own personally held views.

# OUTSIDE WORK & VOLUNTEERISM

Outside employment, including self-employment and paid consulting, is often similar or related to the work curators perform for their employers,

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***AAMC & AAMC Foundation encourage that outside work remuneration be kept by the curator.***

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and for which they receive remuneration or nonmonetary compensation (or both). This might include speaking engagements, teaching, publishing, and curating outside of their affiliated organizations; serving on juries; conducting valuations; and working with galleries, art fairs, and auction houses. Many organizations encourage curators to engage in activities related to their profession, as these contribute to the organization's reputation and to the individual's professional development.

Each organization has different rules about when and how curators may engage in outside work (during work hours or on their own time); what kinds of outside work may be perceived as conflicts of interest; and how fees are disbursed. For example, some organizations allow curators to keep the fees they receive from outside work, while others require fees to be paid or donated to the organization. AAMC & AAMC Foundation encourage that outside work remuneration be kept by the curator. Before engaging in any outside work/employment (paid or volunteer), transparency with a supervisor is important and approval should be secured in advance.

# Organizational Contexts

# NONPROFIT STRUCTURES



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “New Models of Collection Sharing,”** May 8, 2018, video, 1:09:22, <https://vimeo.com/270536714> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Collegial Collaboration,”** November 15, 2017, video, 59:29, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/CollegialCollaboration> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “Curators and Conservators: Successful Cooperation,”** February 7, 2017, video, 59:06, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/CurConservwebinar> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**CARFAC (Canadian Artists’ Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens)** <https://www.carfac.ca/> (accessed March 4, 2019).

**Lisa Dent, “The Romance of Community: Supporting Artists in the 21st Century,”** Medium, September 21, 2018, [https://medium.com/@lisakdent\\_84998/the-romance-of-community-931bf6998960?fbclid=IwAR3nVSyxKaXbEc7CbS5ChIcE3PrBV3BL54n3oJwX2LD132xhdAgJ5Guc2cs](https://medium.com/@lisakdent_84998/the-romance-of-community-931bf6998960?fbclid=IwAR3nVSyxKaXbEc7CbS5ChIcE3PrBV3BL54n3oJwX2LD132xhdAgJ5Guc2cs) (accessed March 29, 2019).

Most arts organizations are structured as nonprofit corporations incorporated under and subject to state law. Some are formed as nonprofit trusts, but this is less common. Nonprofits contend with two parallel legal and governance regimes: (1) the state governance laws for the state in which the nonprofit is incorporated or operating, and (2) the Internal Revenue Service requirements for an organization that applies for and receives federal tax-exempt status based on its charitable purposes, typically (for arts organizations) under Section 501(c)(3). Tax-exempt status (exempting the organization from paying tax and enabling donors to make tax-deductible charitable donations) is the main reason why arts organizations form as nonprofits, making the IRS rules critically important. These rules, like certain nonprofit state laws, govern and prohibit specific activities such as those presenting conflicts of interest and private inurement. IRS rules differ slightly, but in important ways, for the two types of 501(c)(3) organizations—public charities and private foundations.

Nonprofits are governed by their bylaws, the document setting forth how the organization operates, how decisions are made, and by whom. A Board of Directors (or trustees) is the ultimate governing body of the organization. The Board may and usually does delegate certain operational powers to officers, such as a President, Secretary and Treasurer, and staff, primarily the Director. In addition to bylaws, nonprofits should have conflict of interest, whistle-blower, and investment policies. Legal counsel working with the Board, Director, and other departments will assist the organization in complying with these policies and state and federal laws.



# COLLABORATING

## Internal

Curating is a collaborative process, and it is important that curators work closely with their colleagues across their organizations. In the past, departments within many organizations were siloed—curatorial in particular—but this should not be the case. It is essential that curators are proactive about sharing information with other internal departments as appropriate, and cultivate a culture of communication, cooperation, teamwork, transparency, and generosity within an organization. Input and feedback from colleagues, not just those within curatorial, is vital,

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***Collaboration is invaluable in ensuring inclusivity in developing projects, advancing the organization, and creating new opportunities.***

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as it can help advance a project, provide solutions, and bring together varied perspectives. Curators must always acknowledge their colleagues' contributions as well. This applies to interns and other limited-term team members whose contributions tend to be inadequately acknowledged. It is important that curators communicate honestly and transparently with their supervisors and colleagues about their workload and other demands on their time, and present the same openness and empathy for their colleagues' schedules in return.

Collaboration is invaluable in ensuring inclusivity in developing projects, advancing the organization, and creating new opportunities.



### RESOURCES

**(General continued)**

**W.A.G.E. (Working Artists and the Greater Economy),** <https://wageforwork.com/home#top> (accessed March 4, 2019).

**Yale University Art Gallery, "Andrew Mellon Foundation Grant Launches Experimental Cost-Sharing Initiative,"** press release, May 6, 2010, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/andrew-mellon-foundation-grant-launches-experimental-collection-sharing-initiative> (accessed March 7, 2019).

**Yale University Art Gallery, The Arthur Ross Collection of European Prints is one example of such a donation.** See: "Meant to Be Shared: Selections from the Arthur Ross Collection of European Prints at the Yale University Art Gallery," press release, December 11, 2015, <https://artgallery.yale.edu/press-release/meant-be-shared> (accessed March 7, 2019).

**Yale University Art Gallery, "Reckoning with 'The Incident': John Wilson's Studies for a Lynching Mural,"** <https://artgallery.yale.edu/exhibitions/exhibition/reckoning-incident-john-wilsons-studies-lynching-mural> (accessed March 7, 2019).

## Academic

It is common for curators to collaborate with outside scholars who may serve in an advisory capacity; as cocurators and/or coauthors of exhibition catalogues and other publications; and/or as collaborators on partnerships between organizations, such as joint courses, events, internship and fellowship programs, etc. While traditionally such partnerships were primarily with art and art history departments, increasingly visual arts organizations are developing interdisciplinary collaborations, working with scholars from across the humanities, social sciences, and applied sciences.

When curators work with outside scholars, they should always acknowledge their collaborators' contributions in a manner that is in keeping with the academic standards of the field.

Within the context of university art organizations, curators often collaborate with academic units, faculty, and students to develop exhibitions, programming, and collections research independently or through classes or internship and fellowship programs. These endeavors may range from exhibitions derived from faculty research to projects that curators originate and to which faculty play a contributing role. These collaborations may allow university art organizations the opportunity to realize more ambitious projects than they would be able to achieve on their own.

Curators may engage with collaborators who are experts in their fields, but are unfamiliar with art nonprofit organizational practices and protocols. In such cases, curators must be proactive project managers in addition to content experts, facilitating discussions and ensuring a shared understanding of the project and its objectives. Curators should clearly articulate a project's roles, benchmarks, etc., in accordance with the organization's policies.

Additional types of collaborations with academia include:

- Co-organizing symposia and conferences—for example, on the occasion of a major exhibition or acquisition
- Supporting object- or collection-based research as part of students' thesis or dissertation projects
- Serving on student thesis or dissertation committees
- Hosting curatorial fellows or curatorial consultants whose projects promote collaborative exchange. These projects may be especially helpful to curators in staying up to date on current scholarship and research in their fields



## CASE STUDIES

### Academic collaborations

#### ***Chicago Objects Study Initiative (COSI)***

The Chicago Objects Study Initiative (COSI) is a collaboration among the Art Institute of Chicago, Northwestern University, and the University of Chicago, aimed at enhancing object-based art historical training for doctoral students. Please see: <https://www.artic.edu/about-us/departments/academic-engagement-and-research/academic-collaborations> (accessed April 8, 2019).

#### ***Paint the Eyes Softer: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt, The Block Museum of Art, Northwestern University, 2018***

*Paint the Eyes Softer: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* is an example of an exhibition that grew out of a wide-ranging interdisciplinary collaboration fostered by the museum, built on faculty research, and developed through classes that engaged faculty and students from diverse disciplines (including classics, art history, sound design, material science, medicine, archaeology, and molecular biology). Exhibition website: <https://www.blockmuseum.northwestern.edu/view/exhibitions/past-exhibits/2018/paint-the-eyes-softer.html> (accessed February 1, 2019).

## External organizations

Visual arts nonprofits are organizations with the intent, purpose, and responsibility to serve the public. They can be most effective when they collaborate with institutions in their local and global communities.

Curators—as ambassadors and representatives of their organizations—are often instrumental in initiating, cultivating, and maintaining relationships with multiple partners in the art world. It is the curator’s role to coordinate and execute collaborative projects, guiding and implementing programs that reach beyond the organization’s footprint.

International research organizations relevant to specific periods or collecting areas may be desirable partners and resources for visual arts organizations, be it for special exhibitions, sharing data sets on objects and collections, or targeted publicizing of the organization’s work. Cultural institutes of foreign countries—present in major cities around the world—may serve as information platforms reaching specific audiences (for example, the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea might aid in reaching an area’s Korean immigrant community); as conduits for international media coverage; or as programming partners or sponsors. These organizations often offer services including: resources for research; curatorial training in the represented culture; assistance with securing loans; funding for dedicated galleries within organizations; and assistance with traveling exhibitions.

Many visual arts organizations may have external affairs teams that include marketing, communications, and visitor engagement individuals that establish connections with such partners, but it is often the curators’ expertise and personal contacts that might move such collaborations forward. Curators need to be aware of and follow their organization’s policies and guidelines, as well as the legal implications and considerations in consultation with legal counsel, when they explore such partnerships.



## CASE STUDY

### External collaborations

#### ***Yale University Art Gallery Collection-Sharing Initiative***

The Yale University Art Gallery (YUAG) Collection-Sharing Initiative was developed in 2008 to foster collaboration and collection-sharing among college and university art galleries and museums. It offers loans from YUAG's collections to partner institutions, for use in specially developed exhibitions and academic courses. In addition to Yale University Art Gallery, the initiative's original participants were the Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick, Maine; the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum, South Hadley, Massachusetts; the Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; the Smith College Museum of Art, Northampton, Massachusetts; the Williams College Museum of Art, Williamstown, Massachusetts; and the Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.

The initiative was initially funded through support from the Andrew Mellon Foundation for a four-year period (2008–2012). In 2012 it was endowed as a permanent program by the Isabel B. Wilson Memorial Fund. This funding also made possible an expansion of the initiative's participants beyond the initial core group of college and university art museums.

Over the past 10 years, 60 projects and exhibitions have been developed out of this initiative. Additional outcomes of this process have included the development of a sustained and meaningful professional network of colleagues who collaborate on and share research and pedagogical strategies; an ethos of reciprocity among participating organizations; and the donation of artworks to YUAG with the specific intent that they are shared with other institutions.

One example of an exhibition developed out of this initiative is the 2019–2020 exhibition *Reckoning with "The Incident": John Wilson's Studies for a Lynching Mural*. This exhibition represents a reciprocal partnership among YUAG; Falconer Gallery, Grinnell College, Iowa; David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park; and Clark Atlanta University Art Museum. It draws on artworks from each institutions' collections to unite all of the preparatory materials for, and works related to, Wilson's no-longer-extant mural *The Incident* (1952). It will travel to each museum.

## Artists, artist estates, foundations & representation

Artists, along with stakeholders such as their estates, foundations, and/or gallery/dealer representation, may have residual rights over a work and whether and how it is presented, interpreted, and exhibited. The degree to which such parties exercise these potential rights varies and legal counsel should be consulted.

Investing the time to thoughtfully engage the minds and works of artists offers endless opportunity to present alternative and overlooked narratives. From the first point of encounter, it is essential to establish a professional and balanced communication system with the artist. Over time exchanges will build interpersonal trust, laying the groundwork for cultivating lasting and meaningful professional relationships. Engaging in the sensitive nature of an artist's work and history requires a conscious mindfulness.

Curators should be respectful of artists' perspectives and heed them when feasible. The curator's approach to a project, including their art historical and organizational frameworks, may differ from the artist's (or other stakeholders') expectations;

curators must balance these expectations with their own commitment to intellectual freedom and new scholarship, and with their organization's policies and limitations,

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***Curators should always strive to acknowledge implicit bias in historical narratives and juxtapositions, and consider perspectives different from their own.***

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including legal, financial, and spatial concerns. Curators should always strive to acknowledge implicit bias in historical narratives and juxtapositions, and consider perspectives different from their own.

Working with living artists presents the opportunity to collaborate with conservators and archivists in documenting the artist's process; curators should seek such opportunities whenever possible.

Best practices vary considerably regarding artists' fees. When working with contemporary artists, curators should advocate for an artist's fee/honorarium and/or to cover production costs, especially when the artist creates a site-specific installation or new work expressly for a given exhibition. When artist fees are not possible, curators may recommend inviting the artist to participate in related public programs for which they are compensated. Curators should encourage their organizations to act in accordance with W.A.G.E., whose website has both a wage calculator for fees based on institutions' total annual operating expenses,

and a list of W.A.G.E.-certified institutions. Internationally, fair compensation practices for artists may be government-mandated, for example by CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation/Le Front des artistes canadiens) in Canada.

When asked by an organization, stakeholders may contribute in-kind support to exhibitions of the work of that artist, and/or direct support to related initiatives such as publications, education programs, etc.

## **Advisory groups**

Organizations and exhibition projects benefit from the input of advisory groups, which provide guidance and advice (within the organization's mission and capacity), and may inform the organization's approaches to exhibitions, artists, content, public programs, publicity, interpretive strategies, and/or audience development. Advisory groups may consist of a combination of scholars, community members, and/or other interested parties. From the start, curators and other team members should be transparent about the purpose of the advisory group, clearly articulating the roles of the curators, organizations, and advisers. Curators should attempt to secure compensation for individuals serving on advisory groups, where appropriate.

## **Guest curators**

When working with outside guest curators, in-house staff should calculate fees based on the specific requests of the consultant and the consultant's curatorial experience, project responsibilities, and time requirements. It is important to pay outside colleagues for talks, tours, and other activities; such compensation should be factored into exhibition and/or programming budgets. It is essential that guest curators collaborate across the organization's internal departments.

# COMMERCIAL ART SECTOR

It is commonplace for commercial galleries and auction houses to provide financial support to nonprofit arts organizations, including sponsoring exhibitions, educational programs, and events. Many visual arts nonprofits have guidelines concerning such relationships, particularly around sponsorship by galleries, auction houses, and other corporate entities. Curators should consult with their development colleagues, legal counsel, and/or Director should questions arise. Open communication with leadership about working with the commercial sector is particularly important when the current internal guidelines no longer effectively capture the nuances of the work and/or relevance of the times. It may be necessary to revisit and update guidelines to ensure consistency with an organization's mission, vision, and cultural competency.

Galleries and auction houses can also help with donor cultivation. Curators often consult with auction houses and galleries for information about valuation for insurance purposes, especially in relation to government indemnity and immunity-from-seizure applications.

In particular, in working with galleries, budgets (whether for an exhibition, purchase, loan, or publication) should be openly discussed early in the process. Galleries can assist in finding cost-cutting measures such as suggesting local loans, or connecting the institution with donors who would support the project. Overall, engaging sponsorship from galleries in particular should be done at the onset of the project with enough time to discuss how best to allocate those funds. Asking a gallery for funding within weeks or days of a show's opening causes undue stress for the organization, the gallery, and, if applicable, the artists. It precludes those involved from celebrating the momentous occasion of the show, the publication, and the like.

A curator needs to communicate with the gallery about which elements of the budget are options for their support. However, many in the industry are cutting down on this kind of financial expenditure. Being transparent about the organization's needs is key and should be done from the outset of the project so that as things inevitably change there is a sense of teamwork and not just check-writing.



# ADVISING & THE MARKET

Donors and Boards often ask curators for advice about acquisitions for their personal collections, and about collecting in general. Events such as curator-led trips to art fairs are a standard part of many organizations' programming. As long as curators are offering such advice within the guidelines of their organization's conflict of interest rules, and not in conflict with the organization's own interests, they need not be concerned. Curators not affiliated with an organization should be fairly compensated by the donor for their work.

Advising is an important part of many curators' jobs; curators should make a point of developing their knowledge of the art market. It is essential that curators understand the prices of the artists that interest them, and to realize that those prices can fluctuate greatly in small amounts of time. Curators are often unaware of the prices of works they are asked to advise on by collectors/donors/Boards, and transparency in these matters is key. When considering a potential acquisition or in advising, curators should discuss pricing early on, and ensure that all parties understand the current value of the work. For example, when curators scout potential acquisitions for their organizations or accompany collectors at an art fair, they should be prepared to discuss pricing. Making serious inquiries about a work of art that is out of an organization's or collector's price range can be misleading for all involved. If for some reason curators are unable to discuss pricing, or feel uncomfortable doing so, they should communicate this to the gallery/dealer at the outset.

When working with living artists, curators should be mindful of artists' interests, including in loans and potential sales, to help ensure they are being treated fairly and ethically. Legal counsel should be consulted for consideration of an artist's rights, ownership, intellectual property, etc.

# PERSONAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Curators owe their first professional responsibility to their organization and should avoid conflicts of interest as described in their organization's policies and codes of ethics. Curators should not use their positions for personal gain or the personal gain of others.

## Gifts of art

Curators accepting personal gifts of art from artists and estates, galleries and dealers, donors, and other key players in the field is generally viewed as a conflict of interest, but organizations' exact policies vary. Curators must follow the rules set by their organization, preferably in a formal gift acceptance policy, familiarizing themselves with these policies upon hire and adhering to a practice of transparency and avoiding conflicts of interest.

Organizations may address concerns about personal gifts of art in a variety of ways:

- Prohibiting curators from accepting any gifts of art, except as donations to the organization
- Requiring curators to obtain written permission of the Director with regard to any personal gift of art
- Allowing curators to accept only personal gifts of art of nominal value
- Permitting curators to accept personal gifts of art only under certain circumstances, such as when a curator has a close personal and professional relationship with an artist or collector. In such cases the curator needs to obtain permission from a supervisor before accepting the gift

It is generally agreed that gifts that could be interpreted as an inducement to trade for services or favor should not be accepted.

## In-kind gifts or donations

Personal in-kind gifts or donations, cash or otherwise, may also present conflicts of interest. Organizations may address concerns about personal in-kind gifts or donations in a variety of ways, preferably in a gift acceptance policy:

- Prohibiting curators from accepting personal in-kind gifts or donations
- Forbidding acceptance if the gift is or appears to be in exchange for a privilege, concession, or benefit in connection with an organization's operations
- Requiring curators to obtain written permission from the Director to accept either in-kind gifts or donations, or monetary gifts or stipends
- Allowing curators to accept gifts as long as the monetary value does not exceed a certain annual threshold

Sometimes for-profit and nonprofit entities, such as art fairs, galleries, artists, vendors, foundations, or auction houses, will offer meals, accommodations, or travel services to curators on official business for their affiliated organizations. Cultivating a donor will occasionally include accompanying them on trips, visiting private homes, and participating in dinner parties or other meals. In most cases, this is acceptable within reason; however, should such activities make one uncomfortable for any reason, or feel that a professional line has been crossed, one should consult a supervisor immediately.

Curators should consider the possibility of perceived conflicts of interest in accepting invitations offered by individuals or organizations doing or wishing to do business with their affiliated organization. In general, small-scale outings; hosted meals; breakfasts, coffees, lunches, and dinners; and other low-cost activities as part of a group are part of the normal day-to-day of the art world and are customary and expected social courtesies.

# Digital Technologies

# DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Digital technologies have fundamentally changed the nature of art organizations and curatorial work, and have provided new ways to make collections, exhibitions, and scholarship accessible to broader audiences. They also continue to transform artmaking, creating new mediums for artistic expression.

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*Curators should work to become digitally literate and be up to date on advances in data collection and sharing initiatives in the arts.*

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Curators should work to become digitally literate and be up to date on advances in data collection and sharing initiatives in the arts. Digital literacy is an important part of curatorial training and should be seen as an institutional priority. This will help entire teams in working collaboratively on digital strategies. Organizations are encouraged to have a digital plan institution-wide, as they do with other policies.

By collaborating with colleagues in digital and technological areas of their organization, curators can help determine how best to address and manage the organization's digital needs and demands and, as curatorial content experts, raise concerns in conjunction with legal and other teams regarding interpretation, use, rights, and other issues. Particular attention should be paid to digitizing works protected by copyright, as with any reproduction.



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, "Continuing the Conversation—Curators & Technologists United,"** May 7, 2018, video, 57:23, <https://vimeo.com/270519690> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, "Curators Thinking Digitally,"** April 4, 2017, video, 1:07:57, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/Digitalwebinar> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, "The Networked Curator: A Digital Literacy Workshop for Art Curators,"** August 6–8, 2017, February 7–9, 2018, <http://networkedcurator.doingdh.org/> (accessed February 21, 2019).

**American Alliance of Museums, "Immersion in Museums: AR, VR, or Just Plain R?: A Primer for Attendees,"** 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Immersion-in-Museums-primer.pdf> (accessed March 12, 2019).

**The Williams College Museum of Art digital project with collections visualizations, and shared data sets from its collections,** <https://wcma.williams.edu/wcma-digital-project/> (accessed March 4, 2019).

# DIGITAL COLLECTIONS, RESEARCH & ARCHIVING



## RESOURCES

### Digital publishing

**AAMC Foundation, “E-Publications—Why Bother?”** June 7, 2016, video, 1:28:50, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/epublications> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**British Art Studies, an open access, online scholarly publication:** <https://britishart.yale.edu/research/publications/british-art-studies-0> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Digital Art History articles in 19th-Century Art Worldwide:** <https://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**The Drawing Center’s Drawing Papers series, in which print versions of the books are available for purchase but can also be read online for free as PDFs:** <http://www.drawingcenter.org/en/drawingcenter/34/bookstore/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**The Getty’s “buy/print/read online” model, in which the online version of the book offers more digital features:** <http://www.getty.edu/publications/digital/digitalpubs.html> (accessed March 14, 2019).

Curators should advocate for the digitization of the collections they steward, within the capacity of their affiliated organizations. Digitization allows art organizations to reliably document their holdings and provides a foundational platform for making collections accessible to researchers and the public. Establishing open access data is imperative for advancing the field. It can also provide documentation, including for insurance issues; protect against theft; and preserve evidence of cultural heritage sites and artifacts. Curators work closely with technologists, digital strategy experts, registrars, collection managers, librarians/archivists, educators, legal counsel, and conservators (for digitization of objects), among others, to realize these goals. Curators should be involved in major decisions pertaining to digital cataloguing and have a seat at the table when their organizations conceptualize digital interfaces; they should also encourage their organizations to develop digital content that can easily migrate to other platforms as technology changes.

# VIRTUAL, AUGMENTED & MIXED REALITY

Artists and art organizations are increasingly utilizing virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and mixed reality (MR), in their work. All three use specialized technologies and devices to offer interactive experiences and learning. Augmented reality adds selected digital elements to one's experience of the real world. Mixed reality, also known as "hybrid reality," blends the real and digital worlds to create an immersive interactive experience. Virtual reality refers to an entirely digital simulated environment. For some artists, VR, AR, and MR serve as mediums to produce born-digital art. These and other kinds of digital artworks raise new questions for art organizations, especially in regard to best practices for the display, acquisition, and preservation of these works. Given the rapid pace of technological change, curators need to work closely with technologists, conservators, registrars, and collection managers to develop protocols for the preservation and future access of digital artworks.

Organizations are using new digital reality tools, including VR, AR, MR, and/or others in development, in a variety of ways, including to make their collections and exhibitions accessible to remote audiences and for educational and special needs programming. These technologies provide audiences who are unable to experience an exhibition or to see an object in person with the opportunity for a heightened encounter. Organizations also use virtual and augmented reality to document exhibitions (or objects) in space. Because these efforts require significant time and resources, they may not be an option for many organizations.



## RESOURCES

(Digital publishing continued)

**The Getty's Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative, which was geared toward the development of online collections catalogues.** (The Walker's Living Collections Catalogue was part of this initiative.) The Getty's report on the Online Scholarly Catalogue Initiative includes helpful information about digital publishing in general: <http://www.getty.edu/foundation/initiatives/current/osci/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**The Walker Art Center's Living Collections Catalogue takes full advantage of the online environment with embedded video and using other interactive tools:** <https://walkerart.org/living-collections-catalogue> (accessed March 14, 2019).



## RESOURCES

### Exhibitions

Two examples of online micro-exhibitions are **MoMA's website for the exhibition *One Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series***, <https://www.moma.org/interactives/exhibitions/2015/onewayticket/> (accessed March 14, 2019), and the **Freer|Sackler's website for the exhibition *The Story of the Beautiful: Freer, Whistler, & Their Points of Contact***, <http://peacockroom.wayne.edu> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Gretchen Halverson, "What Mexican Bugs Have to Do with Italian Paintings: How Digital Tools Can Be Used to Explore Complex Connections,"** American Alliance of Museums, November 2, 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/2018/11/02/what-mexican-bugs-have-to-do-with-italian-paintings-how-digital-tools-can-be-used-to-explore-complex-connections/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**The Minneapolis Institute of Art, "Explore Mia's Global Collection through World History,"** <https://maps.staging.artsmia.org/> (accessed March 4, 2019).

Curators should carefully consider when and how these technologies may provide a useful platform to achieve their goals, and in exploring such options with their colleagues, should weigh the enduring importance of in-person encounters with works of art against the relevance of reality technologies to a specific project. Issues to consider might include: how these technologies could augment a physical experience, provide information or access that is not possible in a gallery setting, enable a multilayered approach appealing to various audiences, or offer new forms of engagement that encourage further exploration or discovery.

## DIGITAL PUBLISHING

Visual arts digital publications can take a variety of forms, from PDF versions of print catalogues, to online-only publications with uniquely digital features such as embedded video clips and interactive elements. The use of digital platforms for art publications has become increasingly common in the field. The advantages of publishing in a digital format include greater distribution and accessibility to scholarship and the ability to update texts, such as collection catalogues, more easily. Some challenges include issues around archiving texts and how publication sales factor into revenue models.

Digital publications such as exhibition and collection catalogues should be produced with the same scholarly rigor as traditional print publications; curators likewise serve the same primary role as content experts and/or content editors/contributors. In order to take full advantage of the digital environment, curators should work from the beginning as part of a collaborative team including designers,



technology experts, editors, marketing staff, etc. As content often affects how technological architecture is built—and vice versa—digital publications’ workflow is different from traditional print publications’ more linear workflow. Curators should be aware of and articulate any concerns about archiving digital publications, working to ensure that they may be used in perpetuity.

## DIGITAL & EXHIBITIONS

Online content, including exhibition websites and digital/online exhibitions, ideally constitutes part of an organization’s overall digital strategy. Exhibition websites—that is, sites that accompany a “real life” show—can prepare visitors prior to their visit, provide additional information after a visit, or serve in the place of visiting the organization for those unable to do so in person. In developing digital strategies curators should serve both as content experts and as part of a team of colleagues—from departments including digital, marketing and communications, education/engagement, and visitor services—that thinks holistically about how these tools may expand visitor experience.



## CASE STUDY

### ***Digital technologies for blind & low-vision visitors***

Digital technologies can help make artworks more accessible for blind and low-vision visitors. As part of a host of programs offered for differently abled audiences, the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, uses computer-generated tactile reproductions, which combine raised line, texture, and printed image to convey the composition of a painting. These panels are used in combination with visual descriptions during programs catering to visually impaired visitors. Since 2016, the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh has also used tactile panels and makes them available to visitors in the same galleries where the actual paintings are displayed.

**Erin Blakemore, “Visually Impaired People Can Now Explore Andy Warhol’s Work with Their Ears and Fingers,”** Smithsonian.com, November 2, 2016, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/visually-impaired-people-can-now-explore-andy-warhols-work-their-ears-180960935/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**Leah Morelli, “Blog: Designing an Inclusive Audio Guide Part 2: Tactile Reproductions,”** The Andy Warhol Museum, July 14, 2016, <https://www.warhol.org/designing-an-inclusive-audio-guide-part-2-tactile-reproductions/> (accessed March 14, 2019).

# Inclusion & Access

# INCLUSION & ACCESS



## RESOURCES

### General

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Access, Ableism, and Disability in Curatorial Practice,”** May 9, 2017, video, 1:19:29, <https://vimeo.com/219922085> (accessed March 11, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Collections as Assets for Inclusive Dialogue,”** May 10, 2017, video, 58:18, <https://vimeo.com/221474167> (accessed March 11, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Critical Race Art History: Reading, Writing, Teaching and Curating,”** May 8, 2018, video, 1:06:08, <https://vimeo.com/270517800> (accessed March 11, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Keynote Dialogue with Darren Walker and Hilton Als,”** May 9, 2016, video, 1:09:33, <https://vimeo.com/178274049> (accessed March 11, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Keynote Dialogue with Monica O. Montgomery and Tanya Odom,”** May 9, 2017, video, 1:03:28, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/2017KeynoteOdom> (accessed March 11, 2019).

As repositories of human achievement and creativity, visual arts nonprofits have a special responsibility to embrace the diversity of human and cultural experience. Organizations benefit from inclusive practices that welcome all audiences, and from a workforce that mirrors the audiences they serve. Recent studies confirm that visual arts nonprofits, and particularly museums, direly need to build paths toward inclusion and access, in terms of nation, gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and socioeconomic background. The 2019 Mellon Foundation demographic survey of museums found that the vast majority of leadership positions in US museums are held by white males. Even though people of color make up 23 percent of the total US population (according to 2010 census figures), they only compose 9 percent of museum audiences. If arts organizations are going to survive and thrive in a diverse world, the leaders of visual arts nonprofits need to prioritize inclusion, outreach, and access—from the boardroom to the mailroom.

In 2015, AAMC & AAMC Foundation adopted the following policy: “All of AAMC & AAMC Foundation programming and overall efforts shall strive to be representative of diversity: across self-identifications (by nation, gender, race, ethnicity, [dis]ability, socioeconomic background), fields of expertise, types of organizational mission, and regional position of participants. The more inclusive our voices, the more dynamic our offerings.”

Open and transparent self-reflection will help make our workforces inclusive, welcoming, and empathetic. While individuals are responsible for examining their own bias, top organizational administrators should

facilitate this process by developing mandatory team programs that define, educate about, and seek to eliminate explicit and implicit bias, the latter of which can appear both in our work and in our workplace.

Visual arts nonprofits should work to rectify previous exclusions in exhibition planning and across all their programming; build inclusive collections; and implement interpretive strategies that convey the complexity of cultures and representation. Curators are central to this effort. Inclusion and access in relation to bias including those based on nation, gender, race, ethnicity, (dis)ability, and socioeconomic background impact all aspects of visual arts organizations and their work.

## EXHIBITIONS, COLLECTIONS & PROGRAMMING

The movement to recognize that arts organizations are not neutral spaces, but rather are shaped by social, political, and economic currents, ideologies, and legacies (such as slavery, colonialism, imperialism, gender exclusions, class exclusions, etc.), requires visual arts organizations to constantly question existing frameworks. Internal team members should work together to uncover existing bias and shape programming that creates a respectful environment for all audiences.

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***Internal team members should work together to uncover existing bias and shape programming that creates a respectful environment for all audiences.***

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As the key content experts for their organizations, curators play a fundamental role in fostering inclusion and access across the organization, especially in regard to exhibitions, collection development, scholarship, public engagement, and hiring practices. Curators should keep abreast



### RESOURCES

(General continued)

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Keynote Dialogue with Hank Willis Thomas & Deborah Willis,”** May 10, 2017, video, 1:06:25, <https://vimeo.com/220548882> (accessed March 14, 2019).

**AAMC Foundation, “New Approaches to Inclusion in Reinstallation,”** December 15, 2017, video, 56:37, <https://www.artcurators.org/page/InclusionReinstall> (accessed March 11, 2019).

**AAMC & AAMC Foundation, “Start Where You Are: Acknowledge Implicit Bias as a First Step Toward More Diverse & Inclusive Museum Initiatives,”** May 10, 2017, video, 1:18:20, <https://vimeo.com/221486577> (accessed March 4, 2019).

**American Alliance of Museums, “Facing Change: Insights from the American Alliance of Museums’ Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion Working Group,”** 2018, <https://www.aam-us.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/AAM-DEAI-Working-Group-Full-Report-2018.pdf> (accessed on January 15, 2019).

**Canadian Heritage, “Making Your Organization Bilingual,”** [http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2015/pc-ch/CH4-1-31-2014-eng.pdf](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2015/pc-ch/CH4-1-31-2014-eng.pdf) (accessed March 4, 2019).



## RESOURCES

(General continued)

**Claire Champ, “Best Practices in Bilingual Exhibition Text: Lessons from a Bilingual Museum,”** Spring 2016, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58fa260a725e25c4f30020f3/t/594d16f7e6f2e1d4a11ad314/1498224412196/12\\_Exhibition\\_BestPracticesInBilingualExhibitionText.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58fa260a725e25c4f30020f3/t/594d16f7e6f2e1d4a11ad314/1498224412196/12_Exhibition_BestPracticesInBilingualExhibitionText.pdf) (accessed March 4, 2019).

**Jhonna B. Cole and Natanya Khashan, *Telling All Our Stories: 10 Steps to Greater Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums*,** May 5, 2018, <http://cookross.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/TellingOurStories-DEAIMuseums.pdf> (accessed February 21, 2019).

of current scholarship in their fields and new developments in art organization practice/visual arts administration and should urge their organizations to develop audience and/or scholarly advisory groups that can advise on new policies and initiatives that support inclusion and access. Curators should position their research-based knowledge and lived experience to devise new approaches that reframe, challenge, and acknowledge historic exclusions and elisions (i.e., grouping numerous, largely unrelated cultures under a single rubric). For example, recently curators have spearheaded acquisition initiatives to collect works by historically sidelined artists and cultures and implemented interpretive strategies that reveal how oppressive social structures and historical legacies shape cultural production.

Curators should work collaboratively with all departments to ensure that their organizations are welcoming and equitable spaces for diverse and differently abled audiences, communities, team members, and artists. They should strive to produce inclusive interpretive content that makes careful use of the organization’s authority to validate, expand,

and disseminate knowledge and learning. For example, many organizations have begun to adopt terminology such as “sidelined” rather than “underrepresented” and “unrecorded artist” rather than “unknown artist.”

These newer terms are at once more accurate and reveal the historical processes that create exclusion and inequality.

Another example is to use multiple languages for interpretative materials including printed and digital labels, catalogues, Web content, etc. Offering bilingual

and trilingual materials consistently, across all exhibitions, is an obvious path toward the inclusion of large demographic groups of (potential) visitors, and should become part of organizations’ infrastructure,

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***Curators should work collaboratively with all departments to ensure that their organizations are welcoming and equitable spaces for diverse and differently abled audiences, communities, team members, and artists.***

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especially in large and diverse metropolitan areas. This issue underlines the need to build diverse curatorial departments that include native speakers of languages such as Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic, in accordance with the visitor populations the organizations intend to serve.

## HIRING, SUPERVISING & MENTORING

Visual arts nonprofits should be proactive in building pipelines and administrative structures that can produce a diverse workforce. Working closely with colleagues—especially intern and fellowship coordinators and human resources—curators can share their career experiences with students from underrepresented groups to expose them to career

tracks in visual arts nonprofits.

This can entail supporting paid internships that give students from all socioeconomic groups the opportunity to gain valuable work experience, and to encourage them to build long-term careers in the field.

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***AAMC & AAMC Foundation strongly encourage curators to apply practices of diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility in every aspect of mentoring, supervising, and hiring in line with their organizations' policies and the law.***

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Establishing hiring and mentoring programs that seek to engage historically sidelined and underrepresented groups can help diversify the workforce in visual arts nonprofits. Diverse candidates should be encouraged to apply to all positions, not just those implicitly or explicitly marked as diversity initiatives. Organizations should advertise all job and internship opportunities within general and group-based platforms and forums, as well as with those geared toward the visual arts. Mentorship is key to all on-the-job curatorial training and is especially important for underrepresented groups, who are often the first members of their families to work in the cultural arena.

AAMC & AAMC Foundation strongly encourage curators to apply practices of diversity, equity, inclusivity, and accessibility in every aspect of mentoring, supervising, and hiring in line with their organizations' policies and the law.

# Art & Social Activism



# ART & SOCIAL ACTIVISM

As places of public engagement, visual arts nonprofits are spaces in which to address issues of social justice. Objects, both historic and contemporary, present a way forward in discussions of representation and participation. Vocal groups of artists, activists, feminists, and ethnic and racial groups have created movements aimed at challenging organizations to grow with the changing demographics of the nation. Large lobbies, event spaces, classrooms, and galleries are ideal for exploring cultural expressions that may sometimes be missing from permanent collections and exhibition galleries. Organizations can grow their collections by considering objects that respond to the rich and varied artistic contexts within the cultural landscape. Recent initiatives are attempting to respond to the historical inequities of traditional art organizations by offering new ways to bring additional and varied voices and ideas into their spaces.

Political and/or activist programming can connect both historic and contemporary moments of public engagement to the political environment of the moment. Recently, for example, a number of exhibitions have explored the activism of historic groups working in the 1960s and 1970s. Such exhibitions address current issues and support the work of artists and others who respond to these issues. Another example might be that arts organizations respond to elections by focusing on particular works from their collections directly relating to the current political ethos.

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***When planning an exhibition or program it is useful to bring in the institution's community as early as possible, and to listen to and respond to any concerns that are voiced.***

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There are legal limits on the types of political and advocacy activities undertaken by nonprofits, but these limits generally do not constrain educational programming. Curators should consult with a supervisor and legal counsel if in doubt about what political and advocacy activity is allowed.

Occasionally, colleagues, patrons, and/or visitors may have difficulties with a particular work in an exhibition, or the tone of an exhibition or program; such conflicts can call attention to power dynamics and bias. When planning an exhibition or program it is useful to bring in the institution's community as early as possible,

and to listen to and respond to any concerns that are voiced. Communication is essential in anticipating any challenges that may arise, allowing organizations to address them immediately and directly. It is essential that organizations build and sustain a reciprocal relationship with the community. This is especially true where public protests may occur, so that the organization can take measures to ensure public safety and security. Curators working on potentially controversial projects must have the backing of the organization and the community, and work closely with their organizations' management, communications team, educators, legal, and frontline staff to brief and prepare them for negative comments, debate, or controversy. An organization that is open to the public should also have policies for visitor behavior that guide staff on how to act in the event of protests or demonstrations on the property. Governmental organizations should consider First Amendment free speech requirements with legal counsel in such circumstances.

# Public Engagement

# PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



## RESOURCES

### General

**Gensler, “Engage/The Future of Museums: Interim Findings from Roundtable Discussions on Audience Engagement and the Role of the Museum in the Community,”** [https://www.gensler.com/uploads/document/395/file/gensler\\_museum-research-interim-report.pdf](https://www.gensler.com/uploads/document/395/file/gensler_museum-research-interim-report.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2019).

**“Gibbes Museum Launches ‘People’s Choice’ Initiative,”** *Charleston Post and Courier*, February 9, 2013, [https://www.postandcourier.com/features/arts\\_and\\_travel/gibbes-museum-launches-people-s-choice-initiative/article\\_2bb71ab6-d5da-56fb-a70a-124c1961e13d.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/features/arts_and_travel/gibbes-museum-launches-people-s-choice-initiative/article_2bb71ab6-d5da-56fb-a70a-124c1961e13d.html) (accessed March 25, 2019).

**Stephanie N. Stallings, Ph.D., and Bronwyn Mauldin, “Public Engagement in the Arts: A Review of Recent Literature,”** Los Angeles County Arts Commission, [https://www.lacountyarts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/lacac\\_pubenglitrev.pdf](https://www.lacountyarts.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/lacac_pubenglitrev.pdf) (accessed March 25, 2019).

**“Tribal Relations Advisory Committee,”** Heard Museum, <https://heard.org/about/tribal-relations/> (accessed March 25, 2019).

Public engagement is a fundamental purpose of art organizations and their exhibitions, publications, and programs. Organizations should understand—and their work should be informed by—the values of their local communities; this is critical to their longevity and cultural relevance. There are many ways for the public to have input, virtually and otherwise, in exhibitions and programming, including through town hall meetings, feedback cards, social media, etc. Many organizations have advisory groups and committees made up of neighborhood

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residents, artists, scholars, students, cultural stakeholders, and other community members; in some cases, these committees may be specific to one exhibition, program, or aspect of the organization’s work. Embedding community voices into planning has the potential to expand and enrich the organizational discourse. It is important to ensure these are meaningful interactions and to cultivate continuing relationships with the community.

# EXHIBITIONS

Communities should be included and invested in an organization's mission. Inviting the public to engage with the organization's programming can happen in various ways. Curators may also have special interest in connecting with constituents who can share experiences and knowledge of an area of focus. Members of the public can become essential to an exhibitions committee, for example, and could include members of the artistic and scholarly communities; cultural stakeholders; young professionals of a diverse range; or other groups who may help draw new audiences to the organization. Curators need to be connected with their constituents. Opportunities for informal feedback will result in a better understanding of the makeup, character, and mind-set of audiences as well as the cultures featured within exhibitions and projects. Feedback is invaluable in determining how all programming, including exhibitions, may best serve communities.

Audience research, while technically not direct public input, is another way the public can inform the work and practices of a visual arts organization. Curators can benefit from audience focus groups that test the effectiveness of exhibition titles, installation approaches, and interpretive strategies, or from audience research initiatives during and after an exhibition. The results can often be surprising and extremely valuable, enabling a more informed understanding of audience needs. If possible, audience research should be considered an essential part of any exhibition process and workflow. It is usually led by the department responsible for audience development, research, and evaluation; depending on the size and structure of the organization, this will most likely be the marketing or education departments.

# EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Every exhibition should be an educational experience. Curators play an important role, acting as bridges between the exhibition and the public, and organizations rely on curators and their expertise for these connections. Prospective audiences, including cultural stakeholders, should be considered as early as possible in any exhibition's development, so that the educational materials produced may best serve them.

Depending on the size of the organization, there might not be a department for outreach or education. If so, the curator should consult the Director or the appropriate committee to outline the purpose and the goal of the organization's outreach and education program and decide whether additional materials or initiatives are necessary.

If the organization is large enough to have an education department or an outreach department, the curator should consult with those departments to decide how best to utilize the curators and their expertise. Curators should consider working with educators early in the exhibition development and interpretation phase; by sharing exhibition concepts and story lines early on, education programs can become an integrated part of an exhibition, and both curators and educators can have more time to focus on their areas of individual expertise. Different organizations and/or exhibitions require different levels of involvement from the curator; in some cases, the interpretive texts produced for the exhibition, such as labels, handouts, pamphlets, and catalogues, etc., may be enough for the education/outreach department to work from; in others, curators and educators may collaborate in other additional ways. Regardless of whether the organization has an education/outreach department, curators are often asked to give tours to various individuals or groups.

## EVENTS & OUTREACH

As part of the organization's larger community relations and outreach efforts, curators may be called upon to attend community events at the organization, or at other locations within the organization's community (i.e., local arts council meetings, town planning meetings). Curators may also have special interest in connecting with constituents who are knowledgeable about or invested in their particular area of focus and/or with whom the curator wants to foster better connections in relationship to the organization. These efforts should be coordinated with colleagues in the education/engagement department or function. These public-facing duties are expected of curators. Curators, in consultation with their supervisors, should filter such demands by prioritizing events, outreach, and programs that relate to their organization's mission, vision, and goals.

# DOCENTS & VOLUNTEERS

The curator's perspective on, and knowledge of, the artists and works in exhibitions are essential to the work that docents and volunteers do with the public. Together with education staff, curators share with the docents and volunteers research and writing around the exhibition, and give talks and tours, essential for those that will be giving public tours. A curator-led tour or talk, with an insider perspective that can be both scholarly and casual, is a key element in the training of docents and volunteers. Curators' knowledge of the ways in which artists work is also central to the interpretations that docents and volunteers draw upon when speaking to the public. As with all educational programming, curators should share information about their exhibitions with docents and volunteers as far in advance of an opening as possible.

We express our gratitude to all those that participated in the creation of the AAMC Foundation's *Professional Practices for Art Curators in Nonprofits*. The AAMC Foundation is grateful to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for their generous support of this project.

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