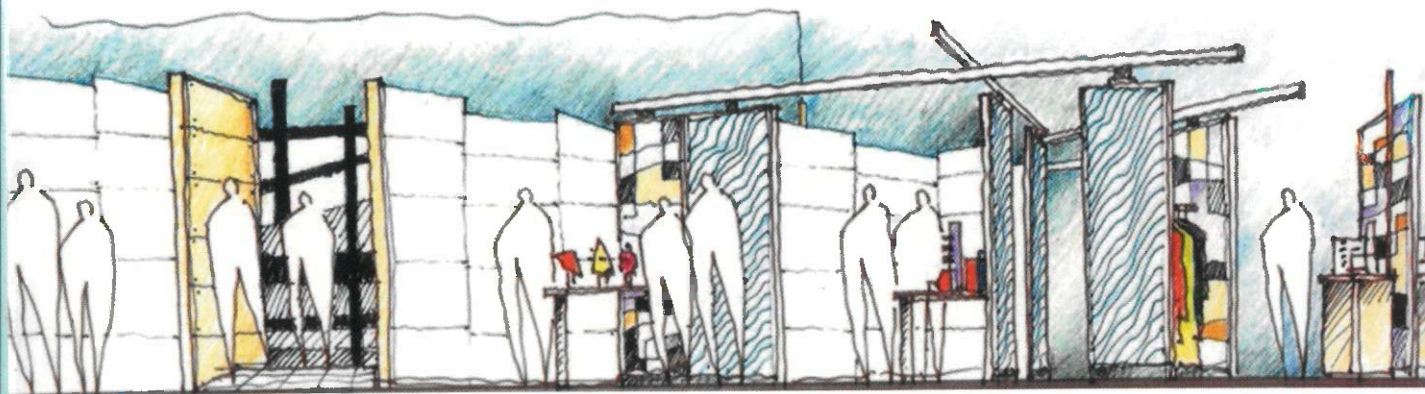


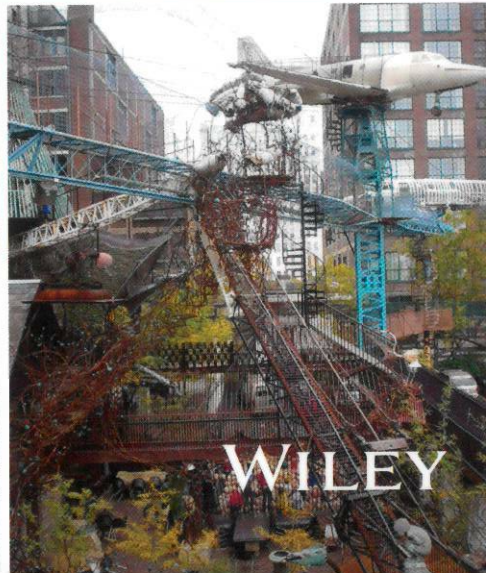
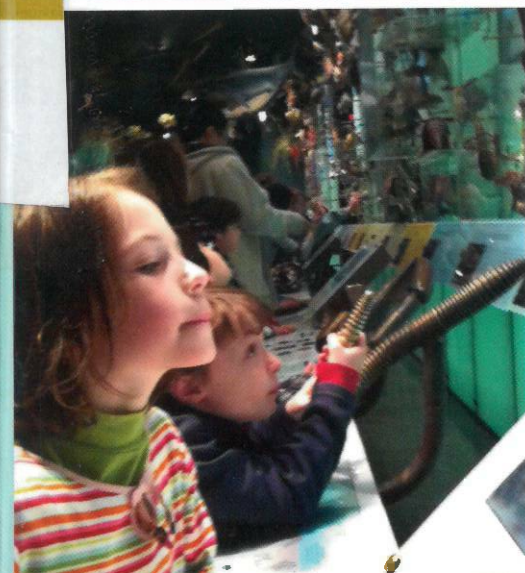
POLLY McKENNA-CRESS

JANET A. KAMIEN



# CREATING EXHIBITIONS

— — — — —  
**Collaboration in the Planning, Development,  
and Design of Innovative Experiences**





# CREATING EXHIBITIONS

Collaboration in the Planning,  
Development, and Design of  
Innovative Experiences

Polly McKenna-Cress | Janet A. Kamien

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—Janet

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—Polly

“Two dyslexics walk into a museum . . . one turns to the left and the other turns to the left . . . and they find a meaningful relationship.”

—Janet & Polly

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The two years we spent on this book were among one of the most remarkable gifts that I have ever been given.

# FOREWORD

When I was first asked to write the foreword to this book, I was flattered but skeptical. Having only just become the leader of Boston Children's Museum, I knew there had to be many museum directors more qualified than I to introduce this important work. But, as soon as I read the first chapter I understood their reasoning; for, as a newcomer to the complex and challenging art of creating museum exhibits, I found that *Creating Exhibitions* opened my eyes to a world of understanding and knowledge, offering many new concepts and ideas, and some that were surprisingly familiar.

As a producer of opera and theater, in *Creating Exhibitions*, I recognized the parallel process of production. We first decide upon an opera or play to produce, which is similar to the exhibition content or subject matter. The book then describes the advocacy positions of the creative team, each of which has a direct counterpart in operatic production: the project advocate assembles the team (the opera producer); the curator advocates for the subject matter (as does the conductor); the exhibit developer/educator advocates for the visitor/audience (just like the opera director); and both exhibits and operatic production employ designers and production managers. Both projects proceed in a similar way, navigating the turbulent shoals of creative collaboration. Being the Institutional Advocate for the theater and now for a museum, this text assured me of roles I knew well, but also opened up new clarity on the particulars of this interactive and participatory field. The heading, "No One Said Collaboration Was Easy" rang true

as I know that guiding a team through a collective creative process can be exhausting. But, as McKenna-Cress and Kamien assert, it is worth the effort and can push the limits of imagination, innovation, and engagement.

In its nine chapters, *Creating Exhibitions* provides an essential guide to exhibit development and design. Its practical open-ended style of offering considerations vs. rules takes the novice and the experienced professional through exhibit planning from inception to post-opening; starting with the collaborative process, working through the all-important visitor experience, to design, budgets, fabrication, and evaluation. The open-ended quality allows teams the flexibility to create their own process and practice. Each chapter is beautifully illustrated and includes an invaluable collection of case studies that serve to focus and inspire. This is a book written by experts in their craft and thoughtful teachers who draw us into the mind of the visitor, urging us to connect with our passion and love of the subject matter so that we can create an experience that is educational but also emotionally engaging and deeply relevant.

For museum directors/institutional advocates every day is show time and *Creating Exhibitions* will help anyone who is seeking to stage the most thrilling, transformative, and engaging exhibitions for its audience. For newcomers and veterans alike, this book offers fresh inspiration and guidance from two legendary leaders in the field.

Carole Charnow  
President and CEO  
Boston Children's Museum

# INTRODUCTION

*Whatever worthiness a museum may ultimately have derives from what it does, not from what it is.*

—Stephen E. Weil<sup>1</sup>

*Beyond information, values, and experience, what else of social utility might museums provide to their public? Let me suggest two: stimulation and empowerment. Here we approach the museum visit not as an end in itself but as the starting point, rather, for a process intended to continue long after the visitor has left the museum's premises.*

—Stephen E. Weil<sup>2</sup>

Museums are at a precipice facing a future that is unknown. It is no longer reasonable to rely solely on an old foundation that has been around since the first human placed an object on a pedestal for others to admire. It is no longer "enough" to simply keep and display things for a casual observer. Like libraries, over time the museum mission has shifted from a function of collecting and preserving to one of education, and now to one of relevancy, advocacy, and social responsibility.

The first seismic shifts in the modern museum landscape turned attentions from object to observer, with exhibitions' purpose "not only being *about* something but *for* someone." More recent shifts have turned visitor into collaborator. A number of museum professionals not only have embraced these shifts but also are the provocateurs that had pushed such issues from the start. These risk-takers have helped reshape many museums and heritage sites from static organizations into dynamic, inclusive, and relevant institutions. But museums can do more, can be more.

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.lukeweil.com/\\_pages/stevePage.html](http://www.lukeweil.com/_pages/stevePage.html)

<sup>2</sup> *Rethinking the Museum*, 1990

*Far better is it to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure . . . than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much, because they live in a gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.*

—Theodore Roosevelt



**Figure I.1:** Young awe-struck visitors are bristling with questions about what they see. Many museums want to better understand those questions. This shifts the museum's stance from "what we want to tell you" to a new dynamic "what do you want to know?" as the basis of developing exhibitions. *Photo courtesy of Richard Cress*

How dramatically have these conditions changed the museum mission and how we achieve it?

The interconnected collaboration inherent in any exhibition initiative is complex, and many institutions have not adequately analyzed or assessed *how* and with *whom* they have engaged the creation of their exhibitions. Rather, focus has remained more on the end product, which may be lovely but is not always achieving all that is possible through this medium. If the plan is to display material culture in a beautiful setting, that is one step. However, the field, funders, community, and society have set higher expectations that public institutions must address.

Those expectations point right back to the questions of *how* and by *whom* the exhibitions are created, not only in terms of skillful execution, but also in terms of the full tactical process of assessing and creating. The authors, with many decades between them working with all forms of institutions and firms in the profession and students studying the field, have found the most important needs are to understand an underlying process, to be perpetually pursuing interesting ways to engage meaningful teamwork and to ensure that visitors are at the center of all decisions. That is the purpose of this book. Our efforts exhibit for you the collaborative processes needed for developing and designing exhibitions of any kind, addressing interesting approaches in the field, and allaying possible fear of failure that can come with new or complex practices.

Here is where fear comes into play—fear of change, of offending someone, of not knowing what to do, and, of course, of failure and loss of credibility. This book was developed to allay these fears. In these nine chapters, we outline approaches to best utilize existing resources, both staff and money, to create visitor-engaged, forward-thinking exhibitions (Figures I.1 and I.2). That being said, this book is not a step-by-step "how to" manual. We do not proscribe singular techniques. We have been deliberately suggestive, collecting for you a guide to best practices and various considerations that can be taken into account when creating exhibitions. In some instances, we may say "you must pay attention to this," but mostly these are possible directions, reminders, and guides.

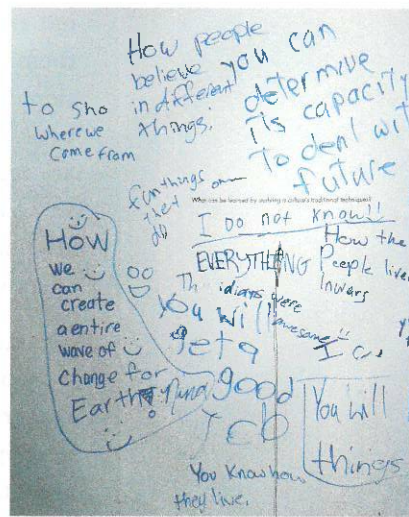
## WHY DID WE WRITE THIS BOOK?

Because innovation, relevancy and ultimately survival is important for our field! With the need for museums to evolve as the world evolves, and at what seems to be an increasingly more rapid pace, viable twenty-first-century institutions must understand *who*, *what*, and *how* they are *advocating* for and the critical role that *collaboration* plays in achieving those goals.

There are few resources that students and professionals can turn to when they need information or confirmation about certain types of museum practice. Yes, there are design books, and yes, there are process books, but ironically there is no collection of information that can help all members of an exhibition team understand each other's issues and organize their work in a collaborative fashion. This book is a reference tool for students, museum professionals, and museum stakeholders (boards, funders, community members) who want to be better informed about the practices to put together new and imaginative teams and processes to move their institutions, exhibitions, and programs forward.

We also wanted to ensure this book expressed a balance of theory and new thinking, yet always was grounded in practice and effective application of the thinking. Plus, there are so few museum-oriented books that tackle practice that we wanted this book to help build the canon for the ever-growing museum studies programs.

We hope readers will use this book to better understand their own work, to question how these ideas could be adopted and adapted for their own teams and institutions, to rethink the roles of team members and learn to become better collaborators, to realize new applications for skills and helpful techniques, to employ the design and development processes, or just simply to be reminded of a few tidbits of useful information. Most importantly, we hope you will be inspired by the thoughts collected in these pages.



**Figure 1.2:** Beyond basic display, how do we involve visitors in the conversation? This panel is from *Imagine Africa* an exhibition prototype installed by University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archeology and Anthropology. The exhibits pose questions to the audience about what they might want to know about the objects in the collection. The question, *What can be learned by studying a culture's traditional techniques?* sparked such answers as "You can determine its capability to deal with the future," "How people believe in different things," and "To show where we come from." With this information the museum will reinstall the collection based on the community's curiosity. Photo courtesy of Polly McKenna-Cress

## OUR PROCESS

Writing this book was very much like the experience of making an exhibition:

First, we found ourselves to be like some of the subject matter specialists we speak of in the following pages—too close to our material. How will we strike the right note between too much basic information and not enough? Where are the starting points for people? What will interest them? Well, we approached this collaboratively. We engaged professionals in the field to contribute on best practice topics and critique the book's various iterations. Our contributors and "test group" of readers are composed primarily of people who have as much or more experience as we do. Additionally, we benefit from the gift of teaching graduate students and of working with a variety of clients in the field; both perspectives provided valuable insights.

Second, was maintaining all levels of organization. No matter how we looked at it, this subject was complex. We needed to find a way for readers in all manner of museum positions to recognize themselves in descriptions of roles within a team, job titles within an institution, or activities within phases of the work, but most importantly to have an immediate resource that might help solve an immediate problem. From the top down, we needed to define terms and contextualize the many facets of this field about which we are so passionate. For us, "exhibition" refers to the totality of content, context, and physicality (including the media, programming, and collateral materials) that work within the space and extend the experience beyond the walls. Therefore, an exhibition is a fully realized experience from the imprint of the external marketing to the tangible interactions the visitors have in the space to the intellectual impact that sparks lasting impressions (Figure I.3). Thumb through these pages when at you are at wits end (or maybe before), and we think you will find at least a small nugget to help you.

Finally, we sought to define and describe the process and phases of exhibition creation. Some of our most experienced readers worried that this whole process, if couched solely in the familiar steps of the architectural field (concept, schematic, design/development, and construction documentation), would be a formula for killing creativity akin to

## We have



*As you navigate through the rest of your life, be open to collaboration. Other people and other people's ideas are often better than your own. Find a group of people who challenge and inspire you, spend a lot of time with them, and it will change your life.*

— Amy Poehler

Our chapters ask three critical questions for readers' consideration as they seek to apply some of this thinking to their process. These questions are somewhat rhetorical; the answers will be conditional to readers' individual issues, and of course the investigation and inquiry are part of the process. Each chapter also sets up approaches and philosophies, which in our expert view, provides guidance for how readers might best approach the particular advocacy or process being presented.

Chapters are peppered with action steps, dangers, and potential pitfalls to look for, as well as examples and case studies demonstrating the application of the approaches and philosophies discussed. As a design-oriented book, it has substantial references to design process and problem solving. The examples, anecdotes, and other professional contributions are included to give readers additional perspectives from which to critically analyze the approaches outlined. There are additional resources and bibliographies at the end of chapters with specific references for further reading.

## **WHAT THIS BOOK WON'T DO FOR YOU**

It won't make you a creative genius. If we can address some of the mundane, yet thorny, issues of exhibit-making and collaborative teamwork, it will free you creatively—and you will at least have a better time doing your work!

It does not have proscriptions for the best way to work in your particular circumstance. Some readers looking for a silver bullet solution will consider this bad news. But we are all different; each of our organizations is different, and each exhibition is different. While there are general rules of thumb and tried-and-true methods for various aspects of this work to share, there is no single right way to do anything. What works well in one situation may be a poor choice in another.

The good news is that this book has collected, analyzed, discussed, and presented you with a tool that you can make your own. Readers new to the creation of exhibition might read the whole thing. More experienced readers might start with your team role and learn how other roles are engaged in this collaborative process. If you are in the middle of an exhibition process, confused about something or feeling stuck, you

might thumb through for a bit of specific advice. With your colleagues and a modicum of goodwill and common sense, you can use this tool to design and implement creative exhibitions that serve both you and your audiences well.

In the end, our conclusion about the exhibition work we all do is that it's best done collaboratively. We think this work is more like making a movie or mounting a stage play than delivering a monologue. It takes many different kinds of expertise, and no one is expert at all of the parts and pieces. We must rely on and trust one another in order to get it done well.

## **WHO WE ARE**

Polly McKenna-Cress and Janet Kamien have been making exhibitions for many decades and in a variety of professional circumstances. They are passionate about the museum field and understand the frustrations and the joys of doing this work. They have learned a lot from each other, their own mentors, the many colleagues they have engaged here and abroad, and the inspirational students in the Museum Studies programs at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.



# COLLABORATION

*Teamwork is the ability to work together toward a common vision, the ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organizational objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.*

—Andrew Carnegie

Collaboration is not a naturally occurring instinct. For most people it is learned behavior. Studies are revealing that societies are actually beginning to evolve to become better collaborators, and the notion of survival of the fittest may be shifting. So why do we need to engage in this practice? As we move further into the twenty-first century, recognizing the continued need to advance from relying on a single decision maker to a more democratized approach is becoming the standard by which most organizations are run. To prepare the next generation of professionals and citizens, schools are placing emphasis on their students being able to collaborate, to work with others in a creative, innovative, and flexible environment. The twenty-first-century skill set must include critical thinking, communication, creative problem solving, and collaboration. We see this need emerging not only in the field of education but also in any field where a complex narrative is being crafted—whether film, theater, or gaming or for the more institutional narratives of mission and vision for corporations and big business. Museums have also taken up the collaboration charge, from how institutions are run to how exhibitions are developed, taking advantage of contributions from multiple sources to shape rich exhibitions for visitors.

*Large photo: Liberty Science Center, Jersey City, NJ. Photo courtesy of Richard Cress.  
Inset photo: Collaborative group. Photo courtesy of Polly McKenna-Cress*

## COLLABORATION UNPACKED

Collaboration, as defined in this book, is the intersection of thoughts and ideas from varying points of view to create multifaceted narratives and diverse experiences for a public audience.



**Figure 1.1:** Strong points of view of varied individuals provide opportunities to assess, engage, and strengthen outcomes. Photo courtesy of Polly McKenna-Cress

What collaboration does not mean is “design by committee” or “groupthink.” Strong points of view of varied individuals provide opportunities to assess, engage, agree or disagree, in order to make significant contributions to the depth of discussion and strength of final outcomes. For the museum, the collaborative group includes the exhibition team and institutional staff as well as outside stakeholders, experts, and funders. It also must include visitors, as they are the customers or end users of the museum “product” (Figure 1.1).

### What Is Collaboration?

**collaboration** | kəˌlæbəˈrā·shən | *noun*

1 the action of working with someone to produce or create something

The *Oxford Electronic Dictionary*’s general definition is couched in the basic singular sense—one person working with another person. However, although an individual may have unique ideas for conveying a particular subject, new and innovative thinking will remain unrealized unless there are opportunities to shape ideas by involving others. The essence of collaboration means different parties are sharing information and developing ideas to produce *something*. This book deals with the larger, more elaborate collaborations in the creation of museum exhibitions, involving multiple individuals, groups, and/or multiple institutions that have a shared goal to create rich experiences meeting many requirements. The potential for greatness is significant, and it’s important to understand that the opportunities of collaborative groups are broader and deeper than any one individual could achieve.

Collaboration in its fullest sense is the intersection of different ideas from different points of view to create multifaceted and “new” thinking.

## No One Said Collaboration Was Easy

Collaboration can be a difficult, exhausting, and time-consuming experience. At times it seems that only an imminent crisis with lives on the line can motivate a group to work together; it appears that motivation does not naturally occur otherwise. Intellectually we understand the merits, emotionally we feel the support, and physically it is nice to share the workload, but it can be stressful when opinions and egos collide.

Teams that are working toward a common goal often begin at the path of least resistance: a kickoff meeting to delegate responsibilities. This may pass for collaboration, but it isn't the same. It's simply task distribution—an important activity, but not one that will result in a breakthrough product. Teams must recognize that simply meeting as a group in a room together to talk once a week does not collaboration make. *Intentions* are the difference. Collaboration requires a shared commitment in which each person persistently pushes themselves and others to expand their thinking and engage in achieving common goals. This bears repeating: success depends on the *shared commitment*. One or two doubters—or participants with their own narrow agendas—can derail the entire process.

An essential first step for the team leader is to establish the expectations of the team, its purpose, and the commitment that will be needed to meet goals (Figure 1.2). Some good old-fashioned cheerleading and positive energy never hurts for group buy-in of the process. There are individuals who, when asked to join a collaborative process, react with negativity: “oh, it never works” they might say, or “people end up not liking each other” or “I always get stuck doing all the work.” Such individuals have probably never been part of a truly dynamic, successful collaboration and have not experienced the benefits and deep satisfaction that result when it works effectively. It's important to recognize that, while the process is not going to be easy, it will be worthwhile.



**Figure 1.2:** Shaping big ideas and mission for an exhibition through a group brainstorm discussion of descriptive terms. Photo courtesy of Polly McKenna-Cress

*Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.*

—Henry Ford

## WHY COLLABORATE?

In his *Scientific American* article, *Why We Help* (July 2012), Dr. Martin A. Nowak posits “far from being a nagging exception to the rule of evolution, cooperation has been one of its primary architects.” He discusses the five mechanisms for the evolution of cooperation that works *in tandem* with competition, not against it as previously thought.

Millions of years of evolution transformed a slow, defenseless ape into the most influential creature on the planet, a species capable of inventing a mind-boggling array of technologies that have allowed our kind to plumb the depths of the oceans, explore outer space and broadcast our achievements to the world in an instant. We have accomplished these monumental feats by working together. Indeed, humans are the most cooperative species—super cooperators, if you will.

*In the long history of humankind (and animal kind, too) those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed.*

—Charles Darwin

Literature from other professional fields, such as business or medical research, bears this out and makes clear that top thinkers have embraced collaboration as an important way of working. Dr. Nowak’s article goes on to discuss the need for all human beings to collaborate in the conservation of rapidly dwindling resources of our earth for collective survival. In short, if we don’t collaborate, we can’t evolve and may not even survive. We in the museum field can learn from this.

### To Share Knowledge

In James Surowiecki’s book *The Wisdom of Crowds*, he discusses how groups of people large and small can come together to create solutions to critical problems. He outlines moments in history where aggregate knowledge was imperative and, in some cases, saved lives. Many of his examples are particular problems with objective solutions as opposed to open-ended, subjective outcomes. But his important hypothesis is that the more minds focused on solving a common problem, the quicker, more complex the solution that is reached. Is this collaboration? Maybe not, but shared knowledge is an important ingredient in collaboration.

### To Create Community

Social networks have brought people together for personal, professional, and political reasons, for serious discussions and frivolous entertainment. Social networks have been continually evolving as “the newest”

*Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.*

—Helen Keller

form of communication and, perhaps more important, as *community*. Even as of this writing, we have not yet imagined all the possibilities or impact of social networks on our society. These connections will continue to affect us all. And, as museums strive to be leaders in their communities, we need to keep pace with change.

## To Facilitate Decision Making

Every tool has appropriate times and situations for its use. As a tool, the collaborative process is no different, and it should *not* be employed at all times or in all situations. Collaborative engagements should be considered carefully. Collaborative efforts should facilitate the important decisions that must be made to yield the best results. Sometimes, it's best to have a single decision maker who can drive the progress. For team-based initiatives, this means recognizing the moment when shared commitment must shift over to trust in leadership.

## WHY COLLABORATE IN MUSEUMS?

We can understand in the broadest sense how collaboration has advanced human achievements and has applied to different professional disciplines. Still we often hear “why should we collaborate? Should museums be particularly concerned with a collaborative process at all? How can collaboration help museums to thrive?”

Most good museum exhibitions are the ultimate examples of inter-, cross- and multidisciplinary enterprises. Their creation requires diverse people with multiple viewpoints and diverse skill sets during all phases of development because visitors come to exhibitions with varied knowledge bases and interests, and from different backgrounds and cultures.

Visitors are our most important collaborators, and their opinions, needs, and input must be considered in the creation of the experience. Just because you build it does not mean they will come. If they do come, they may not care. As society becomes more and more user-centric and customer feedback opportunities abound, it's simply not smart to leave your ultimate customer out of the conversation. The entertainment industry cares about its audiences and meeting their needs and expectations. Museums are in the same business—competing for audience attention, commitment, and satisfaction.

*Many ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than the one where they sprang up.*

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

*The last collaborator is your audience, so you've got to wait 'til the last collaborator comes in before you can complete the show.*

—Steven Sondheim

As museum teams plan, develop, and design exhibitions, collaboration is the critically important element in creating elegant, creative solutions that continually engage diverse visitor audiences who care and come back. We've said it once before: if we don't collaborate we can't evolve and may not even survive.

## Survival Instincts

There are three main survival instincts museums must possess that are best fueled by collaborative models in the development and design process:

- Varied points of view
- Interdisciplinary engagement
- Innovation

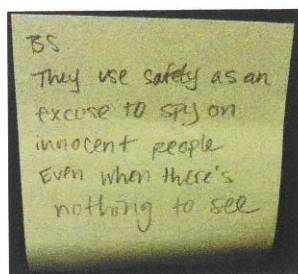
### Varied Points of View

Teams should not meld the richness of viewpoints into one diluted generality. Rather, they should allow strengths of conviction to come through, trusting collaborators—including visitors—to understand that there are many ways to approach a problem or create a solution. The intersection of ideas does not mean the obliteration of viewpoints (Figures 1.3 and 1.4).

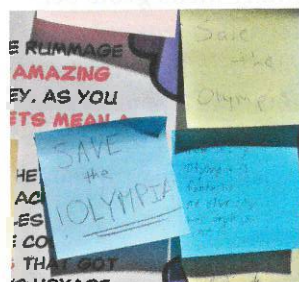
There are numerous methods to gather museum visitor points of view. One that is frequently employed is to pose questions and provide sticky note pads and response board for visitors to post their written feedback. Visitors tend to be very candid and honest in this approach.

### Interdisciplinary Engagement

Historically, people have sought to apply taxonomies to everything in our world, sometimes to the detriment of revealing important connections and deeper understandings. “Interdisciplinary” is a term that has become ubiquitous, yet it is meaningful all the same. Museums understand that interdisciplinary engagement—the act of creating opportunities for interconnectedness across varied disciplines—is a critical function.



**Figure 1.3:** Visitor's Note from a "Talkback Wall" at the National Constitution Center. Photo courtesy of Polly McKenna-Cress



**Figure 1.4:** Visitor's Note from a "Talkback Wall" at the Independence Seaport Museum. Photo courtesy of Ricahrd Cress

## Innovation

Basing program and exhibit development on the limited experience and knowledge of a single person is simply not acceptable in an age where access to information, knowledge, and people are at one's fingertips. Visitors are increasingly demanding innovation beyond what they can find on the Internet themselves, and museums must rise to the challenge.<sup>1</sup>

## HOW TO COLLABORATE

Collaboration is often a misunderstood practice. Many people believe a collaborative process requires that those involved make all decisions collectively with little or no disagreement or friction. This notion is one of the fastest killers of this process. Trying to make every decision as a group makes for a long and protracted experience that will exhaust and frustrate everyone involved. Avoiding friction leads everyone to place importance on “getting along” instead of putting that energy into pushing each other to craft the best solutions. While shared knowledge is an important ingredient, a frequent misconception is that collaboration needs many participants—bigger must be better. But bigger frequently slows or even stalls the process, with too many cooks in the kitchen. Participants entering into collaboration need to understand the different forms of group engagement, the potential models of successful teamwork, and how natural human behaviors will affect the process. (See our Science Gallery case study at the end of this chapter.)

*There is a creative act involved by the receiver as well as by the sender and that makes for innovation. Both sides are equally important.<sup>1</sup>*

—J. Kirk Varnedoe  
*formally chief curator of  
the Department of Painting  
and Sculpture at the  
Museum of Modern Art*

## Collaborative Methods

There are subtle yet important distinctions in understanding how collaboration works; identifying differences between the “collaboration” and “teamwork” structural models has proven helpful. In a collaborative model, individuals work together to achieve an intersection of each other's ideas by contributing thoughts, knowledge, and experiences to create a new “something.”

The teamwork model is well illustrated by a baseball analogy: players on the team have distinctly defined roles, each demonstrating separate

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<sup>1</sup> [http://creatingminds.org/quoters/quoters\\_v.htm](http://creatingminds.org/quoters/quoters_v.htm)

efforts that support the same desired outcome: to win the game. Catchers and pitchers do not combine the “content” of their roles; rather, their roles are distinct complements to one another. Awareness of the methods being engaged and each participant’s role helps a team confidently proceed forward.

To correlate these working methods to the creation of exhibition: The *collaborative* discusses and defines the mission, goals, and audience for the exhibition. Once those criteria are set, the *team* may go off and produce individual deliverables—graphic treatments, script, multimedia elements, marketing strategies, and the like—that all support the outcomes established by the collaborative.

## Collaborative Models

*A teacher (manager) who learns how to use team-learning methods to transform “groups” into “teams” (like water into steam) will be able to create a learning experience for students (staff) that is extraordinarily powerful.*

—L. Dee Fink, director of the Instructional Development Program at the University of Oklahoma

Without vision and shared passion, people may go through the motions but may not jell as a team or produce fruitful outcomes. There are several models for successful collaboration, and at the core of each is an ideal that everyone supports. The following models have worked well in many different fields, but particularly for museums.

### Core Group Collaboration

This may be the most often used model. It is a small and agile core group that has a strong collective vision for how the project needs to proceed, though the members might vary in the methods they use to achieve the same ideal. Members encourage each other to stretch boundaries for themselves and the best solutions. The core group typically brings in outside contributors for critical input to realize the vision and enhance outcomes.

### Visionary Collaboration

In this model, a single visionary leads the group, although it may seem counterintuitive to collaboration. The distinction is that the visionary needs collaborators to share the passion, understand the vision, and support its development so that the project can be accomplished. This model is dependent on the visionary recognizing his or her role as a leader of a collaborative team and not a dictator (Figure 1.5).

## The City Museum

St. Louis, Missouri

Bob Cassilly (1949–2011), founding director, launched this idiosyncratic museum with a strong vision for how a museum built from recycled parts of the city could reflect the true identity of St. Louis. From the City Museum's airplanes and high-wire tunnels to the historic roof-deck Ferris wheel, there were many individuals who shared this one man's vision and helped build this labor of love. The strength of these collaborative efforts continues today as the museum tries to sustain the vision beyond the man.



**Figure 1.5** The City Museum, Saint Louis, Missouri, is the vision of an individual who rallied a city to support turning the vision into a reality. *Photo courtesy of Paul Martin*