Advocating for Collections During Challenging Times

LAURA HORTZ STANTON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CONSERVATION CENTER FOR ART & HISTORIC ARTIFACTS
FAIC CONNECTING TO COLLECTIONS CARE
JUNE 10, 2020
Advocacy in 2020

Photo via fda.gov

Coronavirus update: Kenney budget calls for shuttering arts office; 53 N.J. hospitals get $1.7B from feds
By Katie Grimmer - May 3, 2020

Screenshot, NYT, June 5, 2020

George Floyd Updates: 10th Night of Protest Follows Somber Memorial
Thousands of demonstrators poured into streets across the nation, marching over the Brooklyn Bridge and gathering outside City Hall in Seattle.

Published June 4, 2020
Updated June 5, 2020, 5:11 a.m. ET

This live briefing has ended. Click here for the latest updates.

Here’s what you need to know:
• As violence eases, curfews are renewed, but the push for change continues.
• Two Buffalo police officers are suspended after shoving a protestor.
• Biden holds a gathering of black supporters.
• New details emerge from an eyewitness to Ms. Floyd’s death.
• Protests against police violence have prompted more police violence.

Screenshot, NYT, June 5, 2020

Screenshot WHYY.ORG, May 3, 2020
Advocacy
Advocacy 101

- Agenda
- Preparation
- Plan, Strategize, Adapt
- Research and Analysis
- Messaging
- Advocacy Partners
- Outreach
- Influence
Set Your Agenda

Set advocacy goals that are:
- Clear
- Concise
- Relevant to organizational strategy
- Show awareness of climate
- Measurable
- Attainable
Specific Goals and Outcomes

- Funds
- Time
- People
- Support, authority
Prepare

- Know the landscape
  - Knowledge
  - Skills
  - Resources – internal and external
Why do we have to make the case?

• Perhaps not considered as exciting as other institutional functions like exhibitions
• Often not public facing
• Impacts are longer-term – there may be more immediate fires to put out
• Donor considerations
Mission Statement:

- Collect
- Preserve
- Disseminate

“Chester County Historical Society is a not-for-profit educational institution whose mission is to promote an understanding of the history of Chester County and southeastern Pennsylvania by collecting, preserving, exhibiting and interpreting that history and its relationship to the region, and nation beyond, to audiences of all ages and interests.”

“The National Museum of Wildlife Art’s mission is to collect, display, interpret, and preserve the highest quality North American wildlife art, supplemented by wildlife art found throughout the world. The Museum enriches and inspires appreciation and knowledge of humanity’s relationship with nature.”

“The DePaul University Art Museum extends the institution’s commitments to excellence, diversity and social concerns through innovative exhibitions, programs, and events that analyze the variety and depth of artistic expression. The Museum acquires, preserves and displays the University’s diverse and growing collection of works of art.”
Institutional Strategic Plan

- To “adopt proactive preventive conservation as a standard practice.”
  - “Develop and implement collections policies and procedures.”
  - “Develop emergency procedures and responsibilities for site, staff and visitors.”
  - “Develop a preservation plan for the House.”

- To “establish short-term and long-term preservation and conservation strategies for the [site] and [collections].”
  - “Strategy 1: Establish protective procedures to minimize damage to permanent installations
  - “Strategy 2: Develop a conservation and preservation plan
  - “Strategy 3: Protect [the] main site and [collections]”
Plan, Strategize, Adapt

- ID key decision makers
- How will you gain support
- Flexible strategy

"Animal Locomotion. An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements. Commenced 1872 - Completed 1885. Volume V, Man (Pelvis Cloth)" by Eadweard Muybridge is licensed under [CC0 1.0](https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/)
### F.A.3 Strategy:
Obtain a collections survey from a photograph conservator for the Religious News Service Photographs. Embark on digitization and post-digitization housing initiatives, and subsequent disposition of originals when necessary.

**Desired Outcome:** 68,000 prints, negatives (the majority cellulose acetate), and caption sets, which are presently housed together in acidic envelopes, are safely transferred and rehoused.

**Resources Needed:** Funding from an NEH Foundations Grant, associated resources, staff time.

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Understanding Different Types of Value

- Intellectual (content)
  - Evidentiary
  - Informational
- Intrinsic
- Administrative
- Aesthetic
- Legal
- Historic (age)
- Rarity
- Commemorative
- Monetary
Research and Analysis

- External data
  - Budgets/staffing similar
  - Metrics
  - Audiences

- Internal data
  - Access/use
  - Collections size
  - Cost per item

"IMG_6481" by washuugenius is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0
IMLS Heritage Health Information Survey

HTTPS://WWW.IMLS.GOV/DATA/SURVEYS-DATA/HERITAGE-HEALTH-INFORMATION-SURVEY-HHIS
Cost of Inaction Calculator
AVPreserve
https://www.weareavp.com/products/cost-of-inaction/

Digitization Cost Calculator
Digital Library Federation Assessment Interest Group’s working group on Cost Assessment
http://dashboard.diglib.org/

Preservation Statistics Survey Report
American Library Association, Association of Library Collections and Technical Services, Preservation and Reformatting Section
Messaging

- Messaging
- Clear
- Compelling
- Concise
- Adapted to audience

Image via Britannica.com
“Good communication cuts through the clutter, it doesn’t add to it. It does this by getting the right message in the right medium delivered by the right messengers, to the right audience.”

Collections 20 Questions

1. What do you collect?

2. What individual(s), event(s), or historical era(s) do your collections represent?

3. How do these collections fit into local, regional, national, and world contexts?

4. How do these artifacts illuminate a significant aspect of art or history?

5. What is unique or extraordinary about your collections?

6. How would you describe your site and these collections to someone who doesn’t usually visit museums, historic sites, and other collecting institutions?

7. How do these collections impact your visitors?

8. Who are your core audiences?

9. How do your collections, exhibits, and programs serve your core audiences?

10. How do you go about discovering how you are serving your audiences?
Collections 20 Questions Cont.

11. What do you think about or see differently after interacting with your audiences?

12. How do you engage your audiences?

13. How would you describe the physical condition of the artifacts in your collections?

14. What plans do you have for improving the environment and long-term care of the collections?

15. What exhibits or programs have you developed to highlight preservation of the collections?

16. In what ways is your organization, site, or collection distinct from others in your area?

17. Do you collaborate or partner with institutions that complement yours?

18. What initiatives, coalitions, or partnerships have you joined or do you plan to join?

19. If you could carry out your complete vision, what would your institution, collections, and visitors look like in a decade or two?

20. What would be lost if your institution no longer existed?
Tools

Introduction

Welcome to the Smart Chart!

This process is not rocket science, but it does require time, commitment and focus. Building consensus among your partners around the decisions you need to make is not always easy - but it is necessary. Allocating decisions will lead to less effective communications.

The Interactive Smart Chart takes you through six major strategic decision sections:

Step One: Program Decisions (Broad Goal, Objective, Decision Makers)
Step Two: Context (Internal and External Scans and Positions)
Step Three: Strategic Choices (Audience, Readiness, Core Concerns, Approach, Message and Messenger)
Step Four: Communications Activities (Tactics, Timeline, Assignments and Budget)
Step Five: Measurements of Success
Step Six: Final Reality Check
Compelling Stories

Data-driven:
- Economic impact
- Audiences served
- Outcomes achieved

Less tangible impacts:
- Knowledge gained
- Expression and recognition of community or group identity
- Engaging with historic and cultural collections teaches critical thinking – history helps contextualize and orient our current experiences
- Community enhancement
Partnership

- Other departments/staff
- External collaborations
- Other stakeholders
Make friends!

- Cross-disciplinary, cross-departmental collaboration
- Presentations to and special events for the Board and other administration
- All-staff meetings
- Departmental or working group meetings
- Tours of collections storage
- Inter-office memos, newsletters, emails
Outreach

- Communicate
- Educate
- Engage
- Network
Influence

- Put plans into action
- Build relationships with decision makers
- Share advocacy agenda
- Nurture

"Mother and Child" by Jacques Francois
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Stakeholder Analysis

Who is your audience?

- Are they change-makers (primary) or influencers of change-makers (secondary)?
- What is their current position, and what stakes do they hold?
- How best to reach them?
- Internal politics – understand relationships, timing
You’re an Advocate!

1: ONE WHO PLEADS THE CAUSE OF ANOTHER

2: ONE WHO DEFENDS OR MAINTAINS A CAUSE OR PROPOSAL

3: ONE WHO SUPPORTS OR PROMOTES THE INTERESTS OF A CAUSE OR GROUP

Source: Merriam-Webster Dictionary
Resources

- American Alliance of Museums advocacy resources
  http://www.aam-us.org/advocacy

  https://www.history.org.uk/files/download/9148/1317202347

- CCAHA’s Save Pennsylvania’s Past Collections Advocacy Toolkit
  https://ccaha.org/initiatives/past-initiatives

- IMLS Heritage Health Information Survey

- SAA Issues and Advocacy Toolkit
  https://issuesandadvocacy.wordpress.com/advocacy-toolkit/