

San Antonio Museum of Art

The updated *Docent Handbook* is a must-read for docents with all levels of experience. For the more-recently minted, new insights, tips and techniques will come fast and furiously. But even the more experienced will benefit from the opportunity to reflect on and refine current practices. To discover that one's own style and approach is considered a "best practice" can be reinforcing and validating. The suggestions for further reading, including journals, books and websites, should prove valuable to all.

The *Docent Handbook 2* offers a multitude of tips and techniques, for example, suggesting visitors be treated as personal guests; how to attend to your guests' physical, psychological and intellectual comfort; and the importance of enjoying oneself (a personal favorite). One chapter explores different styles of thinking and learning, and how to design questions on tours to accommodate each different style.

Ideas for best touring practices are concrete and tangible; this is *not* an academic treatise but rather a wealth of clearly-presented suggestions any docent can easily incorporate into their own practice.

Gallery activities...ideas for approaching sensitive issues such as nudity in art and discussing religious and sacred objects...suggestions for dealing with restless or talkative or "difficult" kids...how to respond to "but I could do that!" in front of contemporary art...ways to incorporate tablets and smartphones into touring.

These are just a few examples of the richness of the content of the handbook.

I must mention the lay-out and formatting of the book. Chapters are short and concise. Pages are laid out well – the use of wide margins, italics, bullet points and double columns makes the book eminently readable. Blank pages have been included at the end of each chapter for personal notes. I found these useful because so many of the ideas of the authors prompted others of my own.

In summary: buy this handbook. You will want to add it to your library and refer to it often in the future.

Submitted by Mica Meadow, Docent

The Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC

The *Docent Handbook 2*, revised 2017, is an excellent synthesis of research into museum audience engagement techniques. New docents will find the information to be both informative and accessible. The handbook can be used as a means for prompting discussions around good docent practices. References, include within the handbook will allow for deeper research into many relevant topics.

Submitted by Joel Smeltzer | Head of School and Gallery Programs

As a veteran docent, I can wholeheartedly recommend *The Docent Handbook 2*, revised 2017, for any docent class! Even with my extensive experience I found that while reading the handbook I was highlighting and reviewing useful tools to assist me with best practices. Kudos, the new edition is an excellent review for even the most experienced docent.

Submitted by Holly Hall, Mint Museum Docent President, 2017-18

The Docent Handbook 2, revised 2017, in conjunction with docent training is very meaningful. The Handbook is written in accessible language and is both comprehensive and insightful. It explores a variety of encounters that will be useful to new docents as they face the challenge of introducing their museum to an increasing variety of groups from their surrounding communities. The index is clear and allows for quick reference to a variety of useful topics for both the new and experienced docent.

Submitted by Nancy Maloney EdD, new docent trainee 2017-18

The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD

The Docent Handbook 2 is both a refresher course for the experienced docent and a source of inspiration for my tours. It has been several years since my initial training, so it is important to revisit touring ideas and contemplate new strategies. For example, the timbre of the relationship I have with students on tours can change if I think of them as audience or visitor or a guest. Also, reviewing the sections on learning styles and questioning techniques has made my tours more relevant. I think that reading *Docent Handbook 2* would be a great introduction for individuals thinking about becoming docents. Thank you for this great resource!

Submitted by Jill Reynolds, Docent

Do you have comments about The Docent Handbook 2? Contact us at info@nationaldocents.org