
IT'S A PERFECT TIME TO BE A DOCENT

- No matter what kind of cultural institution with which you are associated, this is a most important time to be a docent, guide, educator, gallery teacher.
- During my US and international visits while at the National Endowment for the Arts, we came away with two main insights:
 - **Insight number 1:** The arts are everywhere, not just on the east and west coasts. But they're thriving in different ways.
 - **Insight number 2:** People are yearning for meaningful ways to express themselves, especially through their identities, and they want to be inspired to imagine what their lives can be.

And the arts give people a creative outlet to have this expansion.

ENGAGING IN THE ARTS IN OUR COMMUNITIES

There is a difference between the ways the general public engaged with the arts several generations ago and today. This is mostly attributed to the presence of the internet, and an expansion of the population demographics.

Before the internet

- Performances and exhibitions
- Number of tickets sold to art events
- Focus on European classics
- Highbrow vs lowbrow arts
- Some artists focused on the purity and beauty in the classical arts, while other artists were in the commercial arts

After the internet

- Performances and exhibitions
 - Number of tickets sold to arts events
- Also:
- Folk and traditional arts
 - Arts as a community vitality strategy
 - Many of the same artists toggle between a variety of art forms, including both classical arts and commercial art
 - Artists working as artists in non-arts businesses
 - European arts are celebrated, as well as other art forms (Examples: jazz, blues, country, mariachi, Bharathanatyam, and more)

Expansion of population demographics: The arts are an outstanding way to honor diverse perspectives, recognize artists and community members who have traditionally been underrepresented, and help people feel like they belong.

MUSEUMS

(Recommended resource: The future of the museum: 28 dialogues (2020) by András Szántó. Publisher: Germany: Hatje Cantz)

Current conditions affecting museums around the world: coronavirus pandemic, decrease in operating income, and racial inequities.

Many museums have addressed these conditions in three ways:

EXHIBITIONS	OUTREACH	LEADERSHIP
The types of exhibitions are expanding to showcase excellent artists who have been underrepresented in the past.	Finding ways to engage in community settings outside of the museum/cultural institution in order to develop ongoing relationships with a wide range of community members.	Addressing the structural makeup of the board of directors and senior staff leaders, to be representative of the community they serve.

3 IMPORTANT ROLES OF THE DOCENT, GUIDE, EDUCATOR, GALLERY TEACHER

1. FINANCIAL	2. INTELLECTUAL
Donating your time and talent offsets operating income. Thank you.	Knowledge of the collections and programs connects the museum/ cultural institution to visitors. Thank you.
3. HOW YOU CONNECT	
<p><i>How</i> you do something is just as important as <i>what</i> you do. Here are three suggestions to consider when engaging with visitors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Connect to people outside the arts in other community settings. 2. Connect people to the big picture. Example: “We’re all going through ambiguity and change, but we are moving in the right direction.” 3. Have <i>conversations</i> with visitors, as opposed to talking <i>at</i> them. Encourage them to share their own stories and listen to them, just as they listen to you. 	

Thank you for your work