Diversifying the Docent Corps

Mallorie Marsh & Robert Mundhenk

CROCKER art museum
Sacramento, CA
Sacramento Demographics 2022

- 65% BIPOC, 35% white
- 12.5% seniors
- 51% female, 49% male
- Seventh highest LGBTQ population in country
- Median age 34.5
- 49.8% own homes
- 63% speak English
- 18% speak Spanish

Source: World Population Review
## Some Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2022 Sacramento Demos.</th>
<th>2018-19 Active Docents</th>
<th>2020-21 Training Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49% male, 51% female</td>
<td>12% male, 88% female</td>
<td>19% male, 81% female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65% BIPOC, 35% white</td>
<td>15% BIPOC, 85% white</td>
<td>47% BIPOC, 53% white</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age 34.5</td>
<td>Median age 60+</td>
<td>Median age 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.5% seniors</td>
<td>78% retired</td>
<td>31% retired</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How Did We Get There?

- Diversity initiative established by Docent Council in 2017
- One representative from each touring team, VP in charge
- Two years to develop focus, functioning as a committee of the whole
- Nine months of work group activity
- LOTS of improvisation through the pandemic
The Working Group Approach

• Three groups:
  • Outreach: Identify underserved groups
  • Recruitment and Retention: Getting and keeping underserved groups
  • Continuing Education: Changing the climate

• Focus both internally and externally

• Evolve from “Diversity and Inclusion” to “Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access”
Outreach

• Identify underserved populations
• Develop strategies and connections to reach underserved populations
• Develop touring strategies for underserved populations
• Propose internal changes to make tours as accessible as possible to diverse populations
Recruitment and Retention

• Identify populations underrepresented on Docent Council

• Develop strategies for recruiting those populations

• Develop strategies for retaining those populations during training

• Develop strategies for reducing barriers to participation during training and thereafter
Continuing Education

• Recommend programming that emphasizes inclusivity
• Recommend programming that enhances the knowledge and skills of docents in touring works by diverse artists or works that address social issues
• Develop strategies that help to make colloquia and other programming more accessible
Nine Months Later

• Outreach:
  • Land acknowledgement
  • Proposed multilingual curatorial labels
  • Recruited docents to tour in other languages (now English, Spanish, French, Cantonese, and American Sign Language)

• Continuing Education:
  • Public transportation schedules published for docents with travel issues
  • New on View for Working Docents
  • Three diversity-focused colloquia scheduled for 2019-20, more for 2020-21
Nine Months Later

- Recruitment and Retention:
  - Developed strategies for recruiting docents from underrepresented groups
  - Developed “Want to Docent?” rack cards and banners
  - Recruited at Black History month celebration
  - Planned weekend recruiting
COVID!!!!!
During the Lockdown

- Refined list of outreach organizations
- Revisions of gallery cards for inclusiveness
- Recruited and trained a new class
Seeing Docents as an Audience

• Focus on relevant engagement
• Strategies to keep non-touring docents engaged:
  • Recorded Colloquia
  • Regular ZOOM meetings
  • ZAP (ZOOM Art Presentations)
  • Expanded categories of service and participation to increase inclusiveness
COVID Changes Actually Helped Diversity and Retention Efforts

• Focus shifted to alternative means of delivering content both from and to docents
  • New categories of activities for active docents:
    • In-person touring
    • Virtual touring
    • Research
    • Sustaining

• Different ways of thinking about touring led to more flexibility for younger docents with families and regular work schedules
COVID Caused Rethinking

• COVID response broke the “one-size-fits-all” approach to touring and continuing education:
  • Continuing Education activities were recorded and uploaded to Dropbox
  • Training was done completely online, helping younger and more diverse trainees to persist
  • Virtual touring opened schedules for working docents
  • Interactive diversity workshops made it possible for docents to collaborate on strategies for dealing with diversity issues
A Sample Case Study:

You're touring a group of fourth graders chaperoned by the father of one of them, a thirty-something of a different race from yours. During the tour, the father pulls out his cell phone and starts texting, clearly no longer interested in the tour. As you proceed, the children begin to notice and you can feel you're losing their attention as well. Do you ask the father to put away his phone? If so, what do you say to avoid embarrassing him and re-engaging the children?
Some Responses:

• Ignore it

• “I don’t care if you’re black or white or green or purple. This is my tour, and you’ll follow my rules.”

• “If you need to take care of that, we’ll be moving to the yellow room across the hall in a few minutes.”
Recruiting after the Lockdown

• Intentional and Targeted
  • Transparent language about DEAI initiative, recruiting efforts, demographics of current docents, and goals
  • Relied on docent outreach committee, general docent council, and staff contacts
    • Correlation between ethnicities of applicants and exhibitions / collection increases
    • Built upon existing staff relationships
## What Did We Gain?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2018-19 Active Docents</th>
<th>2019 Training Class</th>
<th>2020-21 Training Class</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12% male, 88% female</td>
<td>19% male, 81% female</td>
<td>19% male, 81% female</td>
<td>Slight improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% BIPOC, 85% white</td>
<td>24% BIPOC, 76% white</td>
<td>47% BIPOC, 53% white</td>
<td>Large improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15% bilingual</td>
<td>60% retired</td>
<td>37% bilingual</td>
<td>Large improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>78% retired</td>
<td>12% younger than 50</td>
<td>43% younger than 50</td>
<td>Large improvement</td>
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## What Did We Gain?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>2018-19</th>
<th>2022-23</th>
<th>Percentage Point Shifts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income - Under $150K</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIPOC</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education - &lt;Graduate Deg.</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still Working</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age - &lt;50</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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</table>
What Did We Gain?

• ZOOM and other technologies provided ways to connect with more diverse populations
• Colloquia are recorded and available for those who work
• Increased options for docents:
  • Virtual school tours
  • Research-based, monthly presentations by docents to docents
  • Increase in study groups
## What’s Next / What’s Now

<table>
<thead>
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<th>2017 – 2021</th>
<th>2021 - 2023</th>
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<tr>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>Education and Collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Self-Reflection, Growth and Accountability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Structure and Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recruitment and Retention</td>
<td>Communication</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Removing Barriers to Involvement and Retention</td>
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# What’s Next / What’s Now

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<th>2021 - 2023</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<td><strong>Education and Collection</strong></td>
<td>Develop curriculum with transparent, identified DEAI lens (eg Liberating the Narrative)</td>
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| **Self-Reflection, Growth and Accountability** | - Commitment to DEAI: Statement in yearly service agreement  
- Align peer review measures to DEAI goals |
| **Structure and Policy**     | Revise board nominating process  
- Make process more transparent  
- Confirm voting process  
- Define qualifications, skill set, board member sourcing |
| **Communication**            | Participate in and report on efforts of other museum DEAI work |
| **Removing Barriers to Involvement and Retention** | Improve the cultural leadership pipeline by creating and supporting programs and policies that foster leadership |
Docent Council Statement of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access

The mission of the Crocker Art Museum is to promote “an awareness of and enthusiasm for human experience through art,” and the Museum’s Docent Council was founded in support of this mission. The Docent Council acknowledges and challenges its own systems of power and privilege and holds itself accountable. We commit to advancing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) through education and communication so as to foster inclusivity and belonging.