

“What if I Told You?” Docents Educating Docents: Reaching Higher, Deeper, Wider – The One Work One Hour Program

Why organize a “What If I Told You?” Docents Educating Docents, One Work One Hour Program at your institution?

One Work One Hour (OWOH) is a docent initiated continuing education program at the Columbus Museum of Art (CMA) in Ohio that expands touring techniques and which will facilitate meaningful interactive art experiences for museum visitors and docents. It requires a docent-designed perspective, as they are the implementers of their institution’s learning and educational goals. Who knows better than docents what policies and procedures work best for visitor tours? This program encompasses the Symposium theme: “Reaching New Heights.” Let us spread our wings to new heights, empowering docents to be stronger and excited to join the “What If I Told You?” chorus!

How do I organize a OWOH program at my Institution?

- *Select docents who enjoy leadership roles to assess what their community would like to investigate.*
- *Create a survey in which docents nominate works of art for which they wish a deeper knowledge to build their confidence when touring.*
- *Also, establish a cadre of docents interested in presenting and begin!*

At CMA, docents may select the work of art they are interested in researching. We also make a list of works of art from the survey and ask docents to volunteer to create an OWOH presentation. Docents can work together and be co-presenters or be the single presenter.

You will need your institution’s support - giving space and technical help. OWOH presentations can be in the galleries in front of the original work of art – at CMA we have stools for everyone to sit. We also study art in our Innovation Lab on screen with Power Point if the work of art is not available. We have learned docents respond positively to either format. It is learning about the art that motivates their participation!

How does the OWOH program build community with the docents?

The OWOH has been very successful in building a strong, dedicated docent corps (120 members) at the Columbus Museum of Art. Our docents are organized into teams by days of the week. Docents love their teammates like family – the OWOH program has docents working across teams to do presentations and this has made our community stronger.

We are organized with a Docent Chair who oversees twenty-two programs, including the OWOH program. The OWOH chair(s) arranges monthly programs - October to May – organized to include all the teams and planned for different days of the week to give equal opportunity to all who wish to participate. However, size is not the most important variable for a successful OWOH program: it is the will of the docents and their commitment to creating this unique and participatory experience for each other. Every institution can create a mechanism that best fits its mode of operation.

How do docents assure the OWOH presentation information and materials are verifiable?

The OWOH docent presenters do research from the Museum’s archives, sometimes meet with curators, and as required in all scholarly pursuits, must site their materials and sources. Additionally, a copy of the research notes, the presentation, and session handouts are filed in the CMA archives of the OWOH docent program. Annual reports are written by the Program Chairs to be placed in the museum’s docent archives. Many docents donate the books they purchased for research to the docent library.

Do the OWOH presenters give handouts to the docents for their personal files?

Yes. Handouts include talking points; references for research and questions docents can use to stimulate conversation on their tours with the work of art.

Contact Information

If you wish to consult further to create your own One Work One Hour Program, please contact today’s presenter:

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