Museums’ Websites and Usage

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Abstract

In the not that distant past, viewing a museum’s exhibits meant a physical trip to that museum or gallery. With the rapid global diffusion of the World Wide Web, requisite supporting zero/low-cost software, and increasingly easy access to terminal equipment, museums have begun presenting works of art online alongside educational resources designed to assist teachers and students otherwise unable to visit their institutions. Through advances in technology and particularly due to the recent advances in social media, museums are now able to reach a broader, self-selected audience at the mere click of a button and often at the recommendation and accompanied by a direct-to-the-spot link from a friend, mentor, trusted advisor, or role model.

This empowers and enables arts and cultural institutions to market to and solicit donations from a vastly larger number of art patrons and enthusiasts, while displaying works in any of the numerous ways these institutions feel best support their mission. This opportunity does not come without cost and competition, as other web-based publishers including such powerhouses as Google have also started making the interiors of museums available for viewing, enabling web users to travel through the museum as if they were inside viewing the works.

By researching and interviewing a range of institutions I develop a knowledge base of page views, budgetary considerations, and estimates of museum personnel working toward the success of their institution’s website so as to develop metrics and benchmarks needed to evaluate museums' use of the web. Despite a wide range in the results reported by the various institutions examined, we find that the number of page views and time spent on these websites is growing dramatically as the marketing of cultural institutions shifts increasingly to social media such as Facebook and Twitter.
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Introduction

“We consider our website the front door of the museum. It’s typically the first impression for people and we want the website to reflect that we are a world-renowned organization before they even walk in the door.” - Jennifer Messmer, Digital Marketing Manager, The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis

The World Wide Web (the “Web”) was created in the 1980s by Tim Berners-Lee. It did not become widely available to the public until the mid 1990s with the advent of easy to use navigation or browser software enabling a standardized approach to accessing the Web and the increasingly rich variety of content available through it (“Yahoo Education”). The Web’s rapid growth and expansion has changed the way people communicate, interact, and experience mass media. This mass, cross-cultural, transnational development in the way people communicate has engulfed not only consumers but also institutions such as museums. As early as the mid 1990s museums such as The Jewish Museum in New York started creating websites for museum members and patrons (Staelin). These institutions’ sites contain pages including, but not limited to: exhibits, museum stores, membership and donation, research libraries and teacher/student resources.

Who are these websites being made for? In 1998, surveys were conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology in order to describe and quantify the average Internet user. The study showed that the average Internet user’s profile as a: male Caucasian, 35 years old, spending approximately 15 hours per week on the Internet. These results can then be compared to that of the average museum website visitor (International Internet Museum Survey, 1998) whose profile read as a: female Caucasian, 36 years old, spending approximately 17.5 hours per week on the Internet. As Sarraf explains, “The primary differences are that the visitors to the museum sites are more likely to be women and more likely to
work in the museum field” (Sarraf 241). “The results of this survey demonstrate that an informed and interested audience is receptive to the efforts by museums thus far” (Sarraf 241). Needless to say, the studies conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology are extremely out of date, as the Web has developed rapidly in so many ways.

Beyond the merely technological, the Web has become more accessible to children, teens, students, and the elderly. This growth in accessibility changes the audience of the Web and museum website audiences to say nothing of the audience’s increasingly sophisticated needs.

As the Web continues to grow in popularity, use, and feature-set organizations and companies need increasingly to take advantage of this ever-changing medium. But how does a cultural institution decide on what to do? Museums such as the Indianapolis Museum of Art have taken steps to improve their website material and the organization of these materials through the use of surveys offered to visitors on the website (Anderson). This allows the museum to adapt and fix their website while also assessing why users visit the website.

Regrettably, not all museums are focusing equally on their websites. Some, such as the Mathers Museum of World Cultures, have but a cursory Web presence barely listing the exhibitions they feature. Other museums concentrate mainly on providing resources for students and teachers, while still others, like the Indianapolis Museum of Art, have gone far and above offering hundreds of links and interactive options to their websites.

Are these highly developed websites successful? And how does one rate success given the ever changing and growing nature of the World Wide Web? By interviewing several staff members from various arts
organizations around the country I began to analyze trends (Appendix II), including developing patterns and benchmarks based on a classification scheme and hierarchy first described by Schweibenz.

**Schweibenz’s Spectrum of Virtual Museums**

**The Brochure Museum**

As museums first begin to inhabit cyberspace, breaking free of their traditional brick-and-mortar presences, not all are able or appear to do so at the same “level”. In Werner Schweibenz article, “The Development of Virtual Museums” he describes four categories into which most museum websites fall. The first and most basic is the “Brochure Museum” (Schweibenz).

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**Figure 1**

example of a Brochure Virtual Museum is the Mathers Museum of World Cultures Website (Figure 1). This static website lists the museum’s programs, exhibits and hours. It does not, however, allow visitors to interact with the collections through the Web. The visitor must also come in person if he or she wishes to actually see the collections “advertised” through the museum’s website.

This type of static website does not allow visitors to experience the collections. This has the effect of creating less time on and traffic to the webpage. It also allows but a limited ‘taste’ of the museum to
those visitors who might be or become repeat audience members, but who are not able to visit the museum in person. Through interviews I conducted with several museums across the country, I found that there are increasingly more visitors through online media than in-person visits (Appendix I). These data suggest the need for museums such as the Mathers Museum of World Cultures to create a more substantial, compelling website to address the needs of their audience, and might be accomplished by becoming what Schweibenz identifies a “Content Museum”.

The Content Museum

The Content Museum, as described by Schweibenz, is the next step in types of online museum presence. Such websites are object, or collection, oriented. Rather than informing the patrons of the brick-and-mortar presence, the Content Museum website instead gives detailed information of the collection at the museum (Schweibenz). An example of a Content Virtual Museum as described by Schweibenz is the Indiana University Art Museum (IUAM) (Figure 2).

The IUAM allows visitors to look through selected collections while also providing detailed information for each piece. This content-based website focuses on the works of art rather than the visitors experience on the site. This smacks of the traditional technique used in brick-and-mortar museums and is fast falling out of favor in the virtual realm of museums, as to draw visitors online museums need
something to entice visitors or address a need that is otherwise unfulfilled. By simply listing and displaying the museum’s collections, the museum’s virtual presence does not give the patron the room or tools to grow and learn either easily or dynamically. By introducing portals and preferences for viewers by, say, age or theme, such Content Museums are able to engage with their website visitors more successfully.

The Learning Museum

The “Learning Museum” as described by Schweibenz is the result of audience-focused websites. As Schweibenz notes, “The goal of a learning museum is to make the virtual visitor come back and establish a personal relationship with the online- collection. Ideally, the virtual visitor will come to the museum to see the real objects” (1). An example of a learning museum is the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York. This interactive site allows viewers to select collections, programs and exhibitions based on some audience preference or characteristic, such as age. Figure 3 shows MoMA’s ‘Teen’ site.

![MoMA Teen Site](Image)

Figure 3

This webpage allows Teens to explore free programs, classes and online resources. MoMA also has individual sites catering to the needs of ‘K-12 Teachers’, ‘Kids & Families’, ‘Group Visits’ and ‘Community Organizations’.
Most large cultural institutions’ websites can be classified under Schweibenz’s “Learning Museum” model. Even so, and as shown in Appendix I, the amount of reported on-line visitors far surpasses the number of in-person visits. These data demonstrate the need for constant updates and progress towards Schweibenz’s fourth type of online museum, “The Virtual Museum”.

The Indianapolis Museum of Art

Before addressing the final website type, the “Virtual Museum,” it is important to note that not all museum websites fit cleanly into the categories described by Schweibenz. Through my research, observations, and interviews, I have found that some institutions, such as the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA), use a combination of all four levels defined by Schweibenz. These websites aim to inform the viewer of basic information (Brochure Museum) draw in the viewer through in-depth online-collections (Content Museum), while attempting to relate to and educate the viewer (Learning Museum). By combining all of these tools the IMA’s website acts as an, “extension of the physical museum” (Anderson) drawing the website visitor to the brick-au-mortar presence while serving the website visitor’s immediate needs through the provision of online videos and image galleries.

The IMA prides itself on its transparency with regard to usage. Uniquely among other museum websites the IMA has created a site where patrons, web-surfers and staff members can see exactly how past visitors to the website have used the IMA’s website. This is known as the IMA’s dashboard: http://dashboard.imamuseum.org/. The dashboard displays statistics such as the amount of time spent on the website, the number of viewers to the website, the number of in-person visitors, as well as the number of Facebook Fans (Anderson). The average amount of time spent on the website is among the more valuable statistics found on the IMA’s dashboard. The average amount of time that a viewer is on the website is shown as 2 minutes and 35 seconds (“Indianapolis Museum of Art”). At first glance this
statistic seems shockingly brief. But as I thought about the statistic more I realized that as an “average” it is likely skewed by visitors who chance upon the IMA website or are brought there through a mis-click, a faulty link, or just plain in error. Instead of being reported as an arithmetic average, it might be more useful to see this value as a median statistic or with high and low “outlier” values removed.

The Virtual Museum

Some museums take it a step further. Their web presences are in the realm defined by Schweibenz as the Virtual Museum. Schweibenz defines the virtual museums as, “...a logically related collection of digital objects composed in a variety of media which, because of its capacity to proved connectedness and various points of access, lends itself to transcending traditional methods of communicating and interacting with visitors...; it has no real place or space, its objects and the related information can be disseminated all over the world” (1).

The Britannica Encyclopedia’s defines a “virtual museum” as: “A collection of digitally recorded images, sound files, text documents, and other data of historical scientific or cultural interest, that are accessed through electronic media. A virtual museum does not house actual objects and therefore lacks the permanence and unique qualities of a museum in the institutional definition of the term” (qtd. In Panagiotopoulou 14).

Virtual museum websites use external links in order to connect the viewer not merely to the images and collections of one museum, but to multiple museums across the country and world. These virtual museums break the very concept of the traditional museum and link together people, places and things which otherwise could not be easily reach, if reachable at all. Museums, however, are not the only ones
interested in this goal. Other institutions such as Google have broken into this market by creating sites for art and culture lovers.

**Google Art Project**

Google’s Art Project (GAP) created by Amit Sood in February 2011, allows visitors to explore inside of 17 museums throughout the world (Sood). Sood explains that the GAP website is, “Our first step toward making great art more accessible, and we hope to add more museums and works in time” (2). The website allows patrons to feel as if they are standing in front of the work and allows the viewer to achieve “brushstroke-level detail.” The site also includes information panels about the works and related YouTube videos. Sood and his team have also allowed patrons to create their own collection of works that they can then share with others. While also allowing viewers to compare and contrast the works they see in front of them (Sood). By providing visitors with the tools to create their own galleries, compare and contrast works of art, and send the results of these explorations to friends, family, colleagues, and others, GAP creates a visitor-focused vision rather than the collection-focused vision commonly found at museums today (Panagiotopoulou).

GAP connects the educational aspects of museum and art while adding entertainment value through self-selection and media sharing. While the GAP website was initially set up as described above, including detailed photographs as well as the inside look at museums, more recently, GAP has changed its website taking it seems a step backwards. GAP has removed the option of allowing visitors to explore inside museums (Figure 4) and instead now presents itself to visitors as a flat gallery that people slide through as if reading text sideways (Figure 5).
Although the appearance of the new model is sleeker and some would say more modern, it diminishes the uniqueness of GAP. The “updated” presentation is also more difficult to navigate and use. The
abstract buttons on the side do not provide much description on what they do and with the paintings so close together it is difficult to zoom in, as one was able to do with the earlier presentation model. Still, Sood’s GAP fits well the mold of Schweibenz’s virtual museum, allowing visitors to share and create their own galleries.

GAP directly competes with museums’ individual websites, as it is a one-stop site for viewing famous paintings. So why have prestigious museums such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC paired with GAP? Is this new form of “Virtual Museum” hurting or helping these institutions?

It likely helps for a number of reasons. It allows for a larger, more diverse audience interested in viewing collections while enabling the visitor to link through to the museum’s own, independent website. It also serves as a benchmark for other museums. As noted above museums such as MoMA and the IMA have and are creating new ways to address the needs of visitors while also breaking down the boundaries and pushing towards new advances in technology. With a competitor such as GAP, these museums are forced to stay on their toes by constantly updating and creating new forms of interaction. As mentioned above, the IMA is diligent about assessing visitors’ needs through on-line surveys (Figure 6). These surveys allow staff members to evaluate the patron’s needs while understanding why the visitor has come to the website. Audience members are also allowed to state any “difficulties” that they may have encountered on the website. The IMA conducted their first survey in January 2012. Among the results from this survey was the observation that the primary reason for visiting the museum’s website by most viewers was to “Plan a visit” (Anderson).
Through this four question survey, the IMA is able to collect data that is needed to update their website and keep up with competitors such as GAP. Another way museums are using new innovative tools on the Web is through the use of social media.
Mass communications have been revolutionized with the creation and widespread transnational adoption of such social media as: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, to name just the first three such media vehicles that spring most readily to mind. We are now able to tell friends, families, and strangers across time zones, and vast distances—instantaneously—and at nearly zero cost: what we think, where we are, whom we are with, and what we are doing, have done, and/or plan to do. This constant communication and sharing of information, has attracted commercial and non-commercial ventures of all shapes and sizes, including cultural institutions.

In her lecture entitled, “The MoMA Approach to Social Media,” Allegra Burnette, Creative Director of Digital Media at MoMA describes the social media as a mechanism that “…allows an organization to connect, share information and collaborate with its audience. It provides a tool that allows an organization to listen to its audience, and to empower its users to share the organization’s content and information with others.”

By establishing Facebook pages, Twitter accounts, and photo feeds such as Flickr, MoMA and other Arts institutions have been able to share and connect with visitors and fans, literally, at the push of a (virtual) button. Unlike the more nearly static nature of most museum websites, social media encourage and enable their users to reply, comment, ‘re-tweet’ and ‘like’ the content/information they see and/or hear instantaneously and easily. With thousands upon thousands of Facebook Fans and Twitter Followers, institutions such as MoMA, can easily, quickly, and at no cost save that of message creation, publicize and promote events, programs, and exhibitions while monitoring and analyzing impact and feedback data in real time. Before the use of social media and the World Wide Web, these cultural institutions,
would have relied on expensive and inefficient: mailings, phone calls, print media, and follow-up surveys in pursuit of the same results with but limited hope of ever achieving comparable results to that routinely obtained with a well conceived and executed social media based campaign. Still, astonishingly, most cultural organizations are not dedicating the time, thought, personnel, focus, commitment, and other resources needed to leverage and operate this close-at-hand, freely available, easily accessible ever-evolving, online marketing and development toolset.

As part of her lecture, Ms. Burnette’s relates an amusing yet discomforting story about the creation of the MoMA’s Facebook page. Burnette explains that even as museum staff members argued and debated the creation of a MoMA Facebook page, they were upstaged by a High School senior. Unfortunately, the page created by the High School student was riddled with inaccuracies. Not only did it display an incorrect MoMA logo, it also provided wholly inaccurate information about the museum’s location. It was not until March 2008, that MoMA finally managed to create its own Facebook page, using the right logo and perhaps more importantly, containing accurate information about how to actually find the museum. Nonetheless, the page originally created by the student continued relentlessly to surpass the museum’s own page in Facebook ‘Likes.’ This prompted the museum’s staff to ask the student for a merger of both efforts into one unified site. Now with over 1 million Facebook fans Burnette jokes that one-day she and her staff will all work for this student (Burnette).

**Facebook**

Facebook allows museums to post endless amounts of information including, but not limited to: images, videos, information, events, and links. Yes, this content can also be posted on the museum’s individual website almost as easily. So why use Facebook?
Unlike the self-selected audiences which gravitate to an institution’s website(s), Facebook has become part of many people’s daily routine. Digital Buzz reported in 2010 that, “Facebook is now used by 1 in every 13 people on Earth, with over 250 million of them (over 50%) who log in every day” (“Digital Buzz Blog”). In addition to the broader audience which institutions are able to reach through Facebook, the time spent on Facebook by users far exceeds the time spent on most institutions’ website(s). The average user spends more than 55 minutes per day on Facebook, while the IMA reported that visitors to their website spend an average of 2.35 minutes (“Digital Buzz Blog”). While I mean neither to suggest that the two numbers are directly comparable, nor to devalue the importance of the 2.35 minutes spent on the IMA’s website, the stark difference in these two numbers is illustrative of the force which Facebook represents in today’s society.

Cost, of course, is a significant factor in museums’ redesign and maintenance of their websites. Some smaller institutions do not have the funds and other resources to continually update and enhance their sites. It is costly too to make museum sites accessible to the potentially large number of international visitors through the provision of multi-lingual versions of a site’s contents. Burnette notes the need for multiple translations on the MoMA site, yet hastens to add that MoMA cannot afford to provide such translations (Burnette).

Facebook solves this problem to some extent. As only 30% of its users are located in the United States, Facebook offers more than 70 translations to its users (“Digital Buzz Blog”). The language benefit of Facebook alone creates the availability of a broader, transnational audience that museums simply could not reach before. This access at little to no cost, pre-existing audience, and wide ranging variety of users makes Facebook the perfect outlet, whether for a large institution or a small local historical center.
Twitter

The ever-growing platform of social media does not stop at Facebook. Sites like Twitter allow constant ‘live feeds’ of content, questions, and links to be sent from institutions. Some institutions such as The Jewish Museum have a far larger number of Twitter Followers than Facebook Fans (Appendix III). Museums are using Twitter not only as a marketing or promotional device to draw people to their website, but also use it to communicate directly with the ‘Twitterverse’.

A single employee in their Digital Media department operates the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Twitter account. That account has 445,363 Followers and has tweeted 4,656 times. The Tweets range from promotional and informative to open-ended questions for Followers, who are asked to share their thoughts and experiences (Figure 7).

This interactive tool also allows museums and users to track patterns and hits through a series of ‘Hash Tags’ (#) and Replies. By creating the ‘Hash Tag’ Twitter allows the institution and viewer to see responses of other Twitter users in a simple, clear, automatically updated, dynamic feed. By simply clicking the ‘Hash Tag,’ #MyMet, shown in Figure 7, Twitter users, including the institution’s staff, are
able to pull up every single Tweet using that ‘Hash Tag’. Sample results are shown below in Figure 8.

MoMA’s Burnette expects Twitter to have the most growth in the years to come (Burnette).

Photo feeds and photo storage sites such as Flickr, enable an institution to share an image. Such photo feed and storage sites can be used to hold, organize, and share images from museums. In February 2009, MoMA created its own Flickr site, and since then, by immediately uploading an exhibit’s images to the web, has incorporated Flickr as a display device for some of its exhibits (Burnette). This immediacy, found too in other social media outlets, allows patrons to feel as if they are a part of an exhibit even as they may be physically separated from the institution and the objects in its exhibits by great distances.

**YouTube & ArtBabble**

While institutions using Flickr are also able to upload videos as well as still images, many museums also have their own YouTube channel. YouTube was founded in 2005. It “…allows billions of people to discover, watch and share originally-created videos” (“YouTube”). MoMA quickly jumped on the bandwagon, creating its own channel with over 240 videos (Burnette).
Such museum-supplied videos include interviews, reflections, and behind-the-scenes offerings. As with Facebook, viewers are able to ‘Like’ videos. They are also able to comment on the video. At the end of each video links to similar themed videos are available for viewers. Viewers can also “forward” a video to others via other social media outlets or directly through email, in effect creating “word-of-link” marketing.

ArtBabble.org was created by the IMA, “It is intended to showcase video art content in high quality format from a variety of sources and perspectives” (“ArtBabble”). This strictly art video archive is organized into themes by ‘Series’, ‘Channels’ and ‘Artists’. This enables users to sort through videos based on the source that posted it, the type of art, and artist’s name. Burnette notes that smaller museums have garnered a larger audience through ArtBabble.org than through YouTube. Museums such as: MoMA, the National Gallery of Art, and the San Jose Museum of Art have partnered with ArtBabble to post videos. Individual museums are also creating individualized Blogs.

Blogs have become increasingly popular over the past few years as they provide yet another path enabling users to create their own websites. Companies such as Tumblr, Blogger, and WordPress.com have created easy step-by-step authoring toolkits for individuals, entrepreneurs, and large corporations enabling them to post new trends, ideas, and theories. MoMA’s Blog, INSIDE/OUT, was created as part of MoMA’s website redesign in March 2009 (Burnette). INSIDE/OUT is used by the museum to discuss various topics on a daily basis. For example, Film is discussed each Monday on the Blog. The museum is also able to display information by curators on new exhibitions and the museum has begun using this form of communication with the public rather than relying press releases. Burnette explains that INSIDE/OUT allows the audience and visitors a chance to comment and blog back, which a traditional press release does not allow (Burnette).
Mobile Apps

“Instead of standing in line for one of the museum’s audio devices, or skipping the audio completely and fighting my way past crowds to read the wall descriptions. I pulled out my iPhone” –Bob Tedeschi, The New York Times

With the success in marketing, communicating, and advertising achieved through social media, it is not surprising that museums and cultural institutions are making their sites available for iPhones and other mobile devices. I will focus here on but a few of the iPhone Apps created by MoMA, the American Museum of Natural History, and the Guggenheim, as these Apps are illustrative of and push the boundaries of the mobile Apps offered by other museums.

MoMA created its first iPhone App in August 2010. With over 300,000 downloads in its first month, this free App was only the beginning. The iPhone App had the ability to list the contents on each floor of the museum, play audio commentary for the works displayed, as well as provide detailed facts on upcoming events and programs. At one point MoMA’s mobile App surpassed Twitter in downloads and was then featured in numerous newspaper articles. In an effort to reach the entire potential audience delivered by these advanced communications technologies, MoMA intends to create an iPad only App as well as an Android version in addition to its own site optimized for mobile devices (Burnette).

Other institutions such as the American Museum of Natural History and the Guggenheim have created Apps for specialized exhibits. The American Museum of Natural History offers several free Apps that provide patrons with maps that “...point to dining areas, shops, exits, and restrooms” (Tedeschi). Although these sound like great advantages the maps on the American Museum of Natural History App seemed to have a few flaws when the App first went viral. To resolve these problems, the museum
spent $1 million creating a Wi-Fi network inside the museum so that the App could be updated and the user could benefit from such updates while inside the building (Tedeschi).

The “Maurizio Cattelan: All, at the Guggenheim” exhibit specific iPhone App differs from the two Apps discussed above in one key way. The staff at the Guggenheim decided to charge for the App. When the exhibit and App first launched, it cost $3.99 to download (Brustein). This cost has since been reduced to $1.99. The App was filled with descriptions of images and short audio clips. The App allowed visitors to skip the trip to the museum as described by Brustein, “More than half the people who use the company’s museum Apps never visit the museums, and about 30 percent live outside the country” (1). In this fashion the museum generates revenue from other sources in addition to in-person visits. Although the experience is very different from actually visiting the museum, the Guggenheim is able in this way to reach and generate revenues from an audience who might otherwise not have been able to see an exhibit at all.

**Conclusion**

Experiencing a work of art in-person simply cannot be compared to the virtual, or online experience. But with the widespread use of the World Wide Web by patrons both domestically, internationally and especially among today’s young, starting as early as before pre-school, resources need to be devoted to this new media in a visitor-centered, useful, informative, and educational manner. The necessity for a museum to maintain a World Wide Web presence that is continuously updated simply can no longer be ignored or avoided. By updating the content, design and interactive aspects museums are able to grow in online visitors and time spent on their website.
Schweibenz’ model for the “virtual museum” allows museum staff members to work from a static “Brochure” type website to a dynamic “virtual museum” allowing patrons to interact with the materials, exhibits, institution, and their peers. By continually moving towards and within the “virtual museum” model, institutions also act proactively to avoid being overshadowed by such competitors as Google Art Project.

These updates must also be carried over into the realm of social media. As noted above, the social media provide a pathway to new, wider audiences. Once a website and its social media counterparts have been properly planned, developed, executed, and updated by the institution, institutions can then work towards creating member-only pages and/or premium paid features. By creating member-only premium features, the museum creates an enhanced form of exclusivity. This exclusivity is something that the institutions can the leverage to develop membership while stimulating more in-person visits. By including special videos, blogs, and advance notice updates, a museum’s virtual presence has the potential to generate revenues from new audiences around the globe. Jed Perl, a writer for The New Republic notes, “…what we have here is just a new version of an old dream—the dream of bringing an ever expanding audience into contact with works of art” (1).
Appendix I

In-Person Museum Visitors Vs. Museum Website Visitors 2011

The Frick Collection

- In-Person Visits: 81%
- Online Visits: 19%

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

- In-Person Visits: 63%
- Online Visits: 37%

The Jewish Museum

- In-Person Visits*: 82%
- Online Visits: 18%

The Indianapolis Museum of Art

- In-Person Visits*: 71%
- Online Visits: 29%

* does not include visitors to the gardens, grounds, or 100 acres
Appendix II: Museum Interviews

The Jewish Museum, New York
Phone Interview with Katharine Staelin, Creative Director for Digital Projects, Curatorial Affairs
February 3, 2012

Q: What is your role at the Museum / the museum’s website? How long have you been in this position?
A: Ms. Staelin has been working at the institution since 2005. She works in the curatorial department and edits the collections and exhibitions found on the website. Both the curatorial department and the marketing department are in charge of the website and each update their own section. Ms. Staelin has increased her work time to 3 full days a week. The museum also works with a part-time programmer, who is not associated with the museum.

Q: How does your website help to fulfill the vision/mission of your organization?
A: The website is linked directly to the mission and is a key element to leading the mission of the organization. Local visitors are able to come see the exhibits while non-local visitors are more interested in the Jewish dimension and cultural aspects of the collections.

Q: How long has the institutions website been available to the public?
A: The website has been available to the public since the 1990s.

Q: Total number of people who work on the website?
A: All of the public facing departments have a web editor, resulting in around 10 total FTE.

Q: How often is the website updated?
A: Continuously

Q: How do you measure the success of the website? (purchases, donations, viewers, etc.)
A: Ms. Staelin explains that this is different for everyone at the museum. The museum as a whole judges the success by the number of visits and page views. While Ms. Staelin herself rates the success by the times on the page/site by the visitor.

Q: Is your website totally free or are there any fees? If fees are not in place do you have plans to change this?
A: No fees.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum
A: In 2011 over 4.5 as many web visits and physical visits.

Q: What percentage of the museums total operating budget is spent on the museums website?
A: The Jewish Museum is a mid-size museum, therefore fundraising goes on throughout the year and then a massive upgrade for the website. Yet there is a very small percentage of the budget spent on the website annually.
Q: What does the museum value as the most important aspect of the website? Does this have to do with revenue?
A: Exhibitions and collections and visitor information are valued as the most important aspects viewed as the most important aspects of the website.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website use the student and teacher resources?
A: It is a small percentage yet it’s hard to tell.

Q: Why are certain exhibitions put online over others? Or are all of them put online?
A: Every exhibition is represented, on going exhibition may not be featured because of newness of the piece.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website view online exhibitions (permanent and temporary)?
A: 27% of total page views

Q: What statistics do you keep?
A: Page Visits using Google Analytics and time spent on site

Q: Who reviews these statistics?
A: Editors look at them as well as the board of the organization

Q: Do you have a Facebook? How often do you update it?
A: Yes and the Marketing department works on it

Q: Do you have a Twitter? How often do you update it?
A: Yes and Marketing works on this as well – working with Tumblr as well
The Frick Collection
Phone Interview with Vivian Gill, Web and New Media Manager
February 16, 2012

Q: What is your role at the Museum / the museum’s website? How long have you been in this position?
A: Ms. Gill is the Manager of the website and new media, she has worked at the Frick since 1998 ever since the website was created.

Q: How does your website help to fulfill the vision/mission of your organization?
A: The Frick is a Museum and Research Library and the website is promoting the library.

Q: How long has the institution’s website been available to the public?

Q: Total number of people who work on the website?
A: It depends on how you count it ... until last month we had the equivalent of 1.25 FTE, or full time equivalent (I work on the site full time but also manage our collections management system, TMS and eMuseum and manage our New Media efforts; my boss works on the site about half time but he is also head of the IT Department and New Media). We just hired a full time person to help us with coding as we develop a new Drupal site. So I guess 2.25 FTE? We have another person who manages our image collection and also does all video production.

Q: How often is the website updated?
A: Every few minutes. The main site: Frick.org/general info of the museum is updated several times a day. While the registrar updates collections.frick.org, once a week.

Q: How do you measure the success of the website? (purchases, donations, viewers, etc.)
A: Page hits and viewers. Membership purchasing/renewing is larger than donations section.

Q: Is your website totally free or are there any fees? If fees are not in place do you have plans to change this?
A: Free now yet is spoken about changing to fee, may do, topic of discussion.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum
A: 297,910 visitors.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum’s website
A: 1,254,276 visits and 5,096,720 page views.

Q: What percentage of the museum’s total operating budget is spent on the museum’s website?
A: IT works on the website, work in house. Salaries are the main expense. The total operating budget that is spent on the museum website is approximately 1.5%.

Q: What does the museum value as the most important aspect of the website?
A: Communicating events and exhibitions
Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website use the student and teacher resources?
A: About 12% (all pages beginning with /education or /calendar and containing keyword “education”)

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website purchase things at the online store?
A: Hard to know based on our site setup.

Q: Why are certain exhibitions put online over others? Or are all of them put online?
A: All exhibitions are online. Including thumbnail and basic information.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website view online exhibitions (permanent and temporary)?
A: Approximately 35%.

Q: What statistics do you keep?
A: All statistics used are found on Google Analytics

Q: Who reviews these statistics?
A: Quarterly report to the board, really basic.

Q: Do you have a Facebook? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, press office deals with this.

Q: Do you have a Twitter? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, press office deals with this.

Q: What is the Relationship between social media and website?
A: Group meetings, part of the committee for the website.
Indiana University Art Museum
Personal Interview with Linda J. Baden, Associate Director of Editorial Services
February 20, 2012

Q: What is your role at the Museum / the museum’s website? How long have you been in this position?
A: Ms. Baden is the Associate Director of Editorial Services and has been the manager of the website since 1999

Q: How does your website help to fulfill the vision/mission of your organization?
A: The website displays collections and activities to the public. It helps with academics and provides information and allows for viewers to see original works

Q: How long has the institution’s website been available to the public?
A: Since 2001

Q: Total number of people who work on the website?
A: < 25% FTE

Q: How often is the website updated?
A: This is the second version of the website. It was updated in 2001 and 2004. Another update is on its way soon.

Q: How do you measure the success of the website? (purchases, donations, viewers, etc.)
A: Success is measured through the requesting of services, object inquiries as well as other general inquiries.

Q: Is your website totally free or are there any fees? If fees are not in place do you have plans to change this?
A: Always free.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2010) at the museum
A: 53,000 Visitors (includes tours)

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2010) at the museum’s website
A: 46,461 Distinct Hosts. Includes: 24% from.edu domain, 20% from.com domain and 36% from.net domain.

Q: What percentage of the museums total operating budget is spent on the museums website?
A: $6,000/year spent on development. $3,000/year spent on website maintenance.

Q: What does the museum value as the most important aspect of the website?
A: General information of how to get to the museum itself.

Q: Why are certain exhibitions put online over others? Or are all of them put online?
A: Everything is available on the website.
Q: Who reviews these statistics?
A: Reviewed in Annual report and Budget by board.

Q: Do you have a Facebook? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, Updated once a day with new events.

Q: Do you have a Twitter? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, Updated ever 2 days.
Indianapolis Museum of Art
Phone Interview with Jennifer Anderson, Online Marketing Manager
February 10, 2012

Q: What is your role at the Museum / the museum’s website? How long have you been in this position?
A: Ms. Anderson has been the Senior Communications Coordinator since November 2010. She works in public affairs – with a marketing team to manage all content of website including the e-news, website updates and social media content.

Q: How does your website help to fulfill the vision/mission of your organization?
A: Extension of physical museum tries and translate the exhibition online through videos and large image galleries, experience without visiting – yet also aims to bring viewers in to the physical museum.

Q: How long has the institutions website been available to the public?
A: Since before 2006.

Q: Total number of people who work on the website?
A: Anderson takes responsibilities for updates and putting things on yet it may be produced at another department.

Q: How often is the website updated?
A: Updates done daily.

Q: How do you measure the success of the website? (purchases, donations, viewers, etc.)
A: Look at visual production – weekly meeting looking at Google Analytics, referral stats. Yet, it is hard to measure the value/success. IMA is focusing on experience of the viewer. In the process of working on through surveys and feedback (1st one done a month ago) who is coming to the website. Results of the survey include: Plan a visit got the most hits by viewers, yet still analyzing how do people get what they want when they come to the website on the next survey – who is the audience.

Q: Is your website totally free or are there any fees? If fees are not in place do you have plans to change this?
A: All of the content is free and open to the public, a couple of events are only for groups may make a page for this but page does not have art content rather information. This is not done often – FREE ADMISSION to museum.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum.
A: 414,866 – does not include visitors to the gardens, grounds, or 100 acres.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum’s website
A: 1,006,958 visitors | 3,609,901 page views.

Q: What percentage of the museums total operating budget is spent on the museums website?
A: Each department has a budget and a different role on the web money coming from a lot of different areas.
Q: What does the museum value as the most important aspect of the website? Does this have to do with revenue?
A: The museum is facing a time of transition because of governance changing. http://dashboard.imamuseum.org/ is a big component of the website including: transparency and how visitors use the website.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website use the student and teacher resources?
A: Currently less than 1% of our page views are teacher resource pages. This section of our web site is about to go through some major improvements. With staff changes, it’s been neglected for some time.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website purchase things at the online store?
A: There’s a .28% conversion rate on our site, which includes sales from the IMA Store, ticket purchases for a public program, memberships and donations. There were 2,779 transactions made on the site last year.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website make online donations?
A: 30 people gave to the IMA via the website last year. This does not include memberships (which many people consider a donation), just strictly donations a lot of people re-new memberships online and view it is a donation.

Q: Why are certain exhibitions put online over others? Or are all of them put online?
A: All exhibitions are online and are on micro-sites. Not all are as expandable as in videos and links.

Q: What percentage of total viewers to the website view online exhibitions (permanent and temporary)?
A: We had roughly 1,009,679, which is about 28% of our total page views.

Q: What statistics do you keep?
A: 3 stats: how many visitors that week, where visitors came from (referral stats), content that they looked at (top pages).

Q: Who reviews these statistics?
A: Staff members include: Jennifer Anderson, The Directory of IMA Lab, Media, Audience Engagement formally Education Department and the Chief Deputies. The Board also reviews these stats and has put out a strategic plan and wants them to reconsider stats on the dashboard – interested in seeing stats that relate to the strategic plan.

Q: Do you have a Facebook? How often do you update it?
A: Facebook: 20,000 fans grown significantly over the past year (most traffic to website). Museum posts everyday of the week. Museum is also using Pinterest, which is updated a couple times a week.

Q: Do you have a twitter? How often do you update it?
A: Try to update it everyday 6,000 followers (2nd in traffic to the website).
The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis
Email Interview with Jennifer Messmer, Digital Marketing Manager

Q: What is your role at the Museum / the museum’s website? How long have you been in this position?
A: Digital Marketing Manager—I manage the homepage, and all of the marketing content on the website. I have had this current title for only 4 months, but have been at the museum for 2.5 years with that same role regarding the website.

Q: How does your website help to fulfill the vision/mission of your organization?
A: We consider our website the front door of the museum. It’s typically the first impression for people and we want the website to reflect that we are a world-renowned organization before they even walk in the door. The Children’s Museum is at the forefront of creating learning experiences with the power to transform the lives of children and families, and the website is no different. We believe in continuing the learning experience long after you leave the building. Much of our website is filled with games and activities that families and kids can play at home.

Q: Total number of people who work on the website?
A: The museum has 4 staff that each have somewhat of a roll in the website. Digital Marketing Manager: Manages the Marketing content and homepage. Director of Web and Emerging Media: Maintains all aspects of the website including all of our e-commerce and web applications. Web Developer: Works on the back end development of applications and helps build exhibit websites (this position is open). Creative Media Manager: Manages exhibit website production and development of interactive galleries.

Q: How often is the website updated?
A: Our site is updated daily

Q: How do you measure the success of the website? (purchases, donations, viewers, etc.)
A: We use Google Analytics to track ticket/membership/program sales, web visits, donations, merchandise sales, and enews sign ups.

Q: Is your website totally free or are there any fees? If fees are not in place do you have plans to change this?
A: Our site is free of charge and there are no plans to change that.

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum.
A: 1.27 million visitors

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum’s website.
A: 2.19 million web visits

Q: What percentage of the museums total operating budget is spent on the museums website?
A: This varies. Apart from staff time there is no budget line in our operating budget devoted solely to the website. Web projects are paid for either out of marketing or technology support budgets; or special budgets for exhibits, special projects, grants, or one-time capital requests.
Q: What does the museum value as the most important aspect of the website? Does this have to do with revenue?
A: The web is our front door. We try to show that we are the biggest and best museum from the time they visit us on the web to the time they walk through the door. It’s important that caliber comes across on our website. We also very much value continued learning and spend a lot of resources on creating games and activities online for families to continue their experience.

Q: Why are certain exhibitions put online over others? Or are all of them put online?
A: All exhibits are put online. Some receive more robust pages depending on if they are a permanent vs. a temporary exhibit.

Q: What statistics do you keep dealing with the website?
A: While we track many statistics, we regularly report web visits and ecommerce total sales

Q: Who reviews these statistics?
A: The Director of web and Emerging Media reviews these on a regular basis. They are reported to the CEO, Board, and other senior leaders at the museum quarterly.

Q: Do you have a Facebook? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, Daily or multiple times per day.

Q: Do you have a twitter? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, multiple times per day.

Q: What is the relationship between social media and website?
A: We have an entire connect section on our new site dedicated to social media. We also have an area on our homepage that displays current social content. Many of our pages have social share features and some have Facebook like or share buttons as well.
Mass MoCA
Email Interview with August Rosa, Marketing Coordinator

Q: What is your role at the Museum / the museum’s website? How long have you been in this position?
A: Marketing Coordinator

Q: How does your website help to fulfill the vision/mission of your organization?
A: Clearly lists all galleries, events, and other info about the museum.

Q: How long has the institutions website been available to the public?
A: Since our opening in 1999.

Q: Total number of people who work on the website?
A: 4 Full time employees.

Q: How often is the website updated?
A: Weekly.

Q: Is your website totally free or are there any fees? If fees are not in place do you have plans to change this?
A: Not sure

Q: Estimate of total visitors last year (2011) at the museum.
A: 120,000 Visitors

Q: What does the museum value as the most important aspect of the website? Does this have to do with revenue?
A: Performing Arts, effects ticketing revenue.

Q: Why are certain exhibitions put online over others? Or are all of them put online?
A: All exhibits are up.

Q: What statistics do you keep dealing with the website?
A: Google alerts.

Q: Who reviews these statistics?
A: Marketing Department.

Q: Do you have a Facebook? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, very active account.

Q: Do you have a twitter? How often do you update it?
A: Yes, very active account.

Q: Relationship between social media and website.
A: Lots of linking to cross promote our different marketing tools.
# Appendix III: Museum Interview: Results Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Museum</th>
<th>Website URL</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Staff Working on Website</th>
<th>Free/Fee Website</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Facebook Fans (Likes)</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Twitter Followers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Jewish Museum</td>
<td><a href="http://www.thejewishmuseum.org">www.thejewishmuseum.org</a></td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>10 FTE</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9,261</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>84,885</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Frick Collection</td>
<td><a href="http://www.frick.org">www.frick.org</a></td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2.5 FTE*</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11,536</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11,129</td>
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<tr>
<td>MASS MoCa</td>
<td><a href="http://www.massmoca.org">www.massmoca.org</a></td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>4 FTE</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18,389</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>15,599</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indiana University Art Museum (IUAM)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.iub.edu/~iuam/iuam_home.php">www.iub.edu/~iuam/iuam_home.php</a></td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>&lt; 25% FTE</td>
<td>Free</td>
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<td>1,356</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>616</td>
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<td>Indianapolis Museum of Art</td>
<td><a href="http://www.imamuseum.org">www.imamuseum.org</a></td>
<td>&lt; 2006</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>19,768</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6,985</td>
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<td>The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis</td>
<td><a href="http://www.childrensmuseum.org">www.childrensmuseum.org</a></td>
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<td>4 FTE</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>45,321</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5,733</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Excluding online videos
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