

Museo·log

MUSEOLOGY GRADUATE PROGRAM
NEWSLETTER

DIRECTOR'S NOTE: KRIS MORRISSEY

"Museums seeking to attract and keep a more diverse group of users will need to consider carefully what "diversity" means for their audiences."

—Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums report
AAM Center for the Future of Museums (2010)

ARE WE DIVERSE?

What, if any, is the responsibility for museum studies programs to diversify the field? What voice can we provide in considering 'diversity' in the context of the ongoing dialog about the audience, community, purpose, and future of museums?

When the Museology Program adopted our five core values, we spent considerable time discussing whether diversity was one of our values. By traditional indicators, we could probably claim to be diverse with 32% of last year's class self-identifying as 'non-white' (compared to 31-34% of US population). However, the construct of race is not only limiting, but as the report cited above asks, "Are we obsessing about race and ethnicity when they are on the cusp of becoming irrelevant?"

According to the census, between 2000 and 2004, the percentage of individuals selecting two or more races increased by 13%. Interestingly, four of the six states with the highest percentages of mixed-race are on the West coast (AK, WA, OR, CA). Equally provocative, in 2005 the median age for those individuals reporting 'two or more races' was 20.5 while the median age for those indicating 'white only' was almost double at 40.

Clearly, the world is changing what it looks like. Most of our Museology students have grown up in a digital and global culture with a very different (and often more democratic) set of norms and cultural experiences than most of us presuming to teach them. What will diversity mean to them or their visitors?

As we pondered whether diversity was a goal for us, we decided instead on the goal of inclusiveness. We view inclusiveness as a way of practice and diversity as an indicator, or perhaps an incidental outcome of a deeper and more relevant value, an indicator that we are building a practice that accommodates, empowers, includes and invites.

It is our sincere hope that by creating and sustaining a program that attracts and engages individuals who have the passion, knowledge and commitment to engage with, and through, communities our museums will naturally and organically become more representative of our vibrant American communities.

Thank you kind readers for supporting the Museology Program and our students as they continue to make a difference in our lives and in our communities!



Kris Morrissey
Director



(above) Postcard of Frederick and Nelson Department Store, Downtown Seattle. 1916. Courtesy of Museum of History & Industry.

(left) Hubert de Givenchy; Frederick & Nelson, Seattle. Woman's suit. 1965 – 1967. Synthetic and wool blend double weave. Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, Irene Joshi Collection. 90.11-18, t1 and t2.

An Interview with Marjorie Schwarzer

New Managing Editor of *Museums & Social Issues: A Journal of Reflective Discourse*

Museums & Social Issues is a peer-reviewed journal which provides a forum for the consideration of social issues and their engagement with museums. Each issue focuses on a specific theme, and includes multiple perspectives from inside and outside the museum field, exploring and reflecting upon the intersections between society and museums. UW Museology Director Kris Morrissey is the Journal's editor, and Museology students have the opportunity to contribute to and help oversee its production. We welcome Marjorie Schwarzer as its new managing editor!

What is your museum background?

I was one of the lucky ones. I grew up going to museums — both in Buffalo New York where I spent my early childhood and Washington DC where I grew up. My parents and grandparents were educators so they made sure my brother and I were exposed to lots of ideas, art and an understanding of good citizenship. I met my husband in 1976 when we were freshman at Washington University in St. Louis and our first date was to the St. Louis Art Museum. You might say that museums have figured large in my life in many ways! I ended up getting my MBA in nonprofit management at UC, Berkeley and then combining my interest in museums and democracy through my work at the Boston Children's Museum, Chicago Children's Museum and, from 1996 - 2011, running the museum studies graduate program at John F. Kennedy University in Berkeley.

How did you become involved with the Museums and Social Issues journal?

How could anyone say “no” to Kris Morrissey? Seriously, I am deeply committed to advancing thoughtfulness and critical inquiry in the field and feel that one strength that I can offer is my passion for clear, forceful writing and research. So when, in 2006, Kris asked me to serve on the editorial board, I immediately signed on. In 2007, Judy Koke (now at the Nelson-Atkins Museum in Kansas City) and I co-edited an issue on civic discourse. It was a joy to bring so many voices to the printed page on such an important aspect to our democracy and I have been involved with the Journal ever since.

What do you think the role of the Museum and Social Issues journal is in the museum field?

In my 30 years in the field, I've observed that museum workers tend to be so overwhelmed with the day-to-day that we don't take the time — or even have the tools — to reflect on our practice and how it intersects with what's going on on the ground and out in the world. Likewise, people working in other fields, like social work, academia and child development — also work in isolation of museums — and one another. I see the journal as a forum that bridges the divide between academia, museum practice and the many issues facing our society. I also think that the kind of critical writing and editing that goes into the Journal can serve as a reliable and

lasting source of information and provocation for the field. That's a long way of saying: don't recycle your issues of the Journal; hang on to them and look at them as part of a long term tool kit for field-wide change.

Given the depth of your experience in museums and museum studies, what are the major changes you've observed since you entered the field?

Wow. The field has definitely become more open-minded and sensitive to different publics. I think that design (exhibitions and buildings) has gotten more interesting and is more sensitive to visitors' needs and that educational programs are far more engaging. The focus on evaluation is changing the way we remediate and respond to our publics. Some things haven't changed and need to. Salaries, gender inequity, and the never-ending concerns with financial sustainability are all persistent challenges that we moan about but still haven't dealt with.

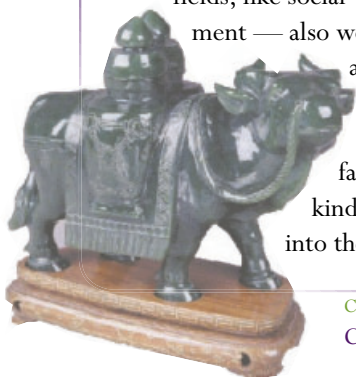
But, I'm very impressed with the young people who are entering the field right now. They have tremendous energy and great ideas. With a little patience, it is they who will move the field forward.

Could you share some of your thoughts about diversity and inclusiveness in museums with us?

I was involved in diversity issues in the field during 1980s, and I worked on an exhibition on how racism impacts children in the 1990s. My dream has always been that inclusiveness would become second nature to everyone in the field and we wouldn't have to talk about it. We'd simply include all kinds of voices and people from different backgrounds and perspectives because it makes sense to do so. It makes a stronger product. It makes a more functional organization. It makes a better world. I think that younger people fully understand this. It's those scary politicians and bureaucrats that get in the way! So we need to keep reminding people that racism and the fear of those who are different from us still festers in this nation and we must never tolerate it.



Photo courtesy of Marjorie Schwarzer
Schwarzer and Ray-the-puppy, whom she recently found abandoned on the highway and nursed back to health.



Courtesy of the Burke Museum. 2000-11/18
Chinese jade figure.

THESIS SPOTLIGHTS

The class of 2011 culminates its education in Museology with a thesis and defense. Some students traveled far for their thesis research, while others tapped local resources.

The West's Golden Orotones

Christy Hansen '11

My thesis project explores the historic photographic process of orotones—an early twentieth century novelty that was deeply rooted in the Pacific Northwest, and can be distinguished by their shimmering gold appearance and unparalleled three-dimensionality.

I have turned to a small unprocessed orotone collection housed by the UW Libraries' Special Collections Division to explore how orotones depicting North American Native cultures and Western natural wonders are intertwined within the larger developments of the period, and the ways in which they reflect cultural meaning and consumption.

To help fill a deep ravine that presently prevails amongst academic literature on orotones, I have digitized and developed an on-line exhibit utilizing the UW's exemplary specimens that will be accessible on the Special Collection's website.



Photo by Julian Christodoulides, 2011.

Edward S. Curtis, *Vanishing Race*, orotone. 8" x 10."
Courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections Division.

Emerging Practices for The Use of Evaluation Findings in Museums

Renae Youngs '11

Evaluators working in museums sometimes perceive their results to be under-utilized, raising concerns that neither client museums nor the wider museum field fully benefit from the opportunities for improved practice and service that evaluation presents.

I conducted a focus group with visitor studies professionals and targeted interviews with both evaluators and museum-based evaluation clients. These conversations explored what factors might enhance or prevent museums' full use of evaluation findings. Participants described several key elements of a visitor studies project that would enhance its usability. While this exploratory study does not offer a definitive framework for maximizing evaluation use, it provides initial insights into both the barriers that prevent more widespread use of museum evaluation findings and emerging best practices for conducting museum evaluation in ways that support increased utilization.

Developing Trends in Museum Study Centers

Abbi Huderle '11

This winter, I visited fifteen study centers at ten museums during the course of my thesis research. I visited them with an eye towards discovering any existing trends in terminology, architectural features, and some operational procedures, with the goal of developing a definition of a museum study center.

Study centers are a relatively new phenomenon and there has been very little research done specifically on them or their role in museums; I am hoping that my research can become a stepping-stone to further research and understanding how they can be effectively used to further the missions of their respective institutions. In the course of my research, I visited institutions from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Chicago History Museum. I also visited institutions closer to home, namely the Henry Art Gallery and the Museum of Flight. Using this research, I am coalescing my information into a singular definition of what, spatially and operationally, constitutes a museum study center.

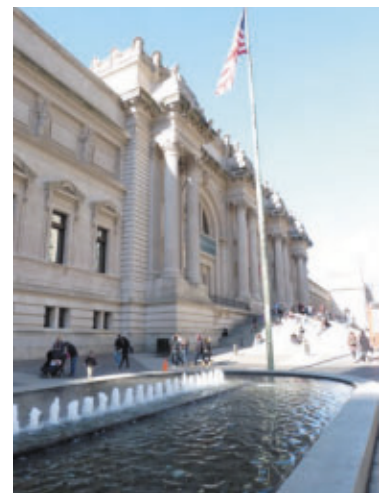


Photo by Abbi Huderle.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, where Huderle conducted research at four different study centers.

Examining Visitor Behaviors and Perceptions of Animal Activities: A Study at the Woodland Park Zoo's Jaguar Exhibit

Andrea Barber '11

My thesis is a research study that is creating baseline data on some under-examined areas of visitor relationships with living collections. Specifically, I'm examining if and how different animal behaviors influence visitor perceptions of their enjoyment, the animal's wellbeing and exhibit design. The location for the study is the jaguar exhibit at the Woodland Park Zoo.

The goal of the study is to better understand how audiences engage with dynamic, living creatures in order to help the museological community address areas of potential misconceptions and also help encourage positive experiences for our visitors. This way, more potential learning opportunities and support of museums with living collections and their missions can occur.



Photo by Andrea Barber.
Junior: "a big, handsome Bolivian jaguar."

A Unifying Museology Curriculum for Museum-Schools

Kaleen E. Povich '11

The number of museum-schools in the nation has rapidly grown in recent years. These public and charter K-12 schools employ a diversity of methods and curricula which is testament to the ambiguous definition of 'museum-school.' Through research and site visits I gained a better understanding of the educational approaches that define museum-school pedagogy. With this knowledge, I designed a unifying museology curriculum to support the museum learning in these schools.



Photo by Kaleen Povich.
Brooks Elementary in Raleigh, NC

Evaluating Audience Behavior in Time-Constrained Exhibits

Emily Craig '11

Significant research has been done on how visitors spend their time during museum visits, but there is little published research on how visitors spend their time during visits that are subject to institutionally-imposed time limits.

Although blockbuster exhibitions have used timed entry tickets for a number of years, the practice of imposing entry and exit times is relatively new. For my thesis, I am looking at how these types of time constraints imposed by museums affect the visitor experience. Drawing from Beverly Serrell's framework for determining Sweep Rate Index and percentage of diligent visitors, my study investigates how knowledge of time limits affects behavior patterns seen within an exhibit. The study includes two exploratory case studies conducted at the Skirball Cultural Center's Noah's Ark exhibit in Los Angeles, CA and the Warner Bros. Museum in Burbank, CA.



Photo by Emily Craig.
Collections at the Warner Bros. Museum.

A Methodological Exploration of Learning in Museum Theatre

Betsy O'Brien '11

My thesis has two main goals. The first is to describe the types of learning facilitated by museum theatre. The second is to develop a framework through which to study this. In order to accomplish this, I am conducting research at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield, IL. My study involves analyzing the questions asked by visitors in a question and answer session held after performances of Richard Hellesten's play, *One Destiny*. Building off the existing studies of visitor conversations in exhibits, I am creating a framework for coding visitor questions to identify evidence of learning.

Photo courtesy of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum.
Actors in *One Destiny*, which deals with the events at Ford's Theatre on the day of the assassination.



CURATORIAL THESIS PROJECTS

(Be)Longing: Apprehensions and Opportunity at the Cultural Crossroads

Curated by Mercy Trent '11 at the Kirkland Arts Center, Kirkland, WA



Photo by Nick Visscher.

Trent displays her exhibit catalogue on opening night.

What do a dining room set, a basketball hoop and a stack of carved wood blankets have in common? All were pieces included in *(Be)Longing*, a show at the Kirkland Arts Center curated by Mercy Trent for her master's project. *(Be)Longing* brought together local artists with widely varied backgrounds to explore what happens when cultures collide and traditions meet and meld.

"We live in an increasingly international world where different cultures are coming into contact and intersecting," wrote Trent in her exhibit catalogue. "This crossing of cultural borders inspires a reevaluation of identity and place within society as conventional divisions between heritage, tradition, and identity fall away. The changes brought about by interaction of cultures provide challenging opportunities for redefinition. They are also the source of apprehension as previously held beliefs and cultural definitions change."

Artists included Sonny Assu, Jana Brevick, Diem Chau, Zhi Lin, Hugo Ludeña, Tess Martin, Saya Moriyasu, Remedios Rapoport and Marie Watt.



Photo courtesy of Diem Chau. (top)
Photo courtesy by Nick Visscher. (bottom)

Amy Thickeny '11 and Andrea Cohen '11 peer into "Mahjongg," by Diem Chau.

Trent's exhibit ran from March 5 - April 9, 2011, and was made possible by the Emerging Curator Initiative; a collaborative venture shared between the KAC and the Museology Program.

嬗 Shàn—Seeing the Evolving China: A Photography Exhibit

Kai Tian '11

This February, I completed work on my thesis project: a photography exhibition titled "*嬗 Shàn—Seeing the Evolving China.*" The Chinese character 嬗 (shàn), symbolizing transition and evolution, is the very theme that lies within almost every aspect of life in China. The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games and the Expo 2010 Shanghai China have especially brought the country under the global spotlight. I was always curious about the visual arts in China and the grass-roots lifestyle there. I really wish to reflect on the younger generation and their perspectives.

嬗 Shàn presents a selection of outstanding photographs by the enthusiasts of photography among the students at the UW, most of whom were born and raised in China. A variety of themes, the styles and the techniques these photographers employed and implemented, what happened in the past and what is going on currently in China are being recorded by and reflected through the films and lenses of many of the Chinese students here.

Through the whole process of installation, I learned a lot from my peers, friends and experienced seniors. Given the very limited time for preparation and lack of experience among us, my colleagues and I also made some mistakes in exhibition space, captions and installation materials. But it was a valuable experience for me to participate, as the exhibition is my way to present my culture and my generation to this academic community.



Photo by Kai Tian.

嬗 Shàn exhibit installed in Suzzallo/Allen Library at the University of Washington.

嬗 Shàn—Seeing the Evolving China was on display in the Allen Library on the University of Washington campus during the month of February. It travels next to the Microsoft campus.

Ainu and Pacific Northwest Cultural Collaborations Abroad, Burke Museum

Tasia Endo '11

Aside from being places to visit where we can see and even interact with cool objects and exhibits, museums can be powerful sites of cultural exchange. I witnessed this firsthand during my internship last spring and summer quarter at the Burke Museum, working with Deana Dartt-Newton, Curator of Native American Ethnology, as she led “Ainu and Pacific Northwest Cultural Collaborations,” an exchange funded by the Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad grant from the American Association of Museums.

The exchange consisted of three trips: the first, when Ainu delegates visited the Burke and Washington State tribal museums in December 2009; the second in March 2010 when representatives from Washington State Native tribes and the Burke visited Ainu communities and museums in Hokkaido, Japan. Lastly, in July 2010, Ainu youth and an elder returned to Seattle to participate in the annual Tribal Journey canoe trip, paddling for two weeks to Neah Bay, WA where the Makah tribe gathers each year.

Over the course of the internship, I had the opportunity to work with two Ainu interns and interpreters to create both an Ainu Burke Box and an exhibit of recently acquired Ainu objects in

the *PacificVoices* gallery. I gathered camping gear for the seven Ainu delegates who camped and paddled on the Tribal Journey, and coordinated the final farewell reception. Though I did not get to travel to Hokkaido, all of the different aspects of my internship proved that museums can extend beyond physical boundaries in providing insight into global cultures.



Photo by Julia Swan

Masashi Kawakami, Tasia Endo '11, Curator Deana Dartt-Newton, and Akira Kikuchi at the Burke's farewell.

My master's project will hopefully do just that—provide an opportunity for people who did not get to personally experience the Ainu exchange to still learn from it. To share this culturally rich exchange, I hosted a panel discussion about the indigenous issues that arose from this unique international experience. Featuring a short film, and panelists, including one who kindly Skyped into the discussion from his job at the Ainu Association of Hokkaido in

Sapporo, Japan, this event exemplified the multitude of museum resources available for connecting people with physically distant but conceptually close cultures.

My experience with both my internship and my master's project reinforced the dynamic and important role of museums today. Museums in this globalized world can not only facilitate cultural exchange locally through exhibits and programs, but also internationally.

A Review of *The African Presence in Mexico: From Yanga to the Present*

DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago, IL

Chieko Phillips '11

Right off the airplane, straight to a Museum; my uncle and aunt know what I like. That is why they whisked me off to the DuSable Museum of African American History immediately after I de-boarded my flight from Seattle to Chicago. This winter I visited Chicago for a Critical Mixed Race Studies conference, but my secret excitement was seeing *The African Presence in Mexico: From Yanga to the Present* at its last stop before closing.

I discovered *Presence* last year while researching exhibits on mixed race identity. It presents an interpretation of Dr. Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's research about the influence of African people in Mexico. The purpose was to affirm Africa as “Mexico's Third Root” and to establish Afro-Mexican as a complete Mexican identity. As the largest and most complete display on the African presence in Mexico, this bilingual show has toured since 2005 and traveled to 11 cities in North America.

My goal was to understand the purpose of what I thought would be an exploration of a mixed race identity through history. Only one section about the complex caste system directly addressed the history of multiraciality in Mexico. The system included more than 50 mixtures of African, Criollo (Spaniards born in the colonies), and Spanish people.

Exhibit Review continues on next page.



Exhibit Review of *The African Presence in Mexico* by Chieko Phillips (cont.)



Photo by Michael Tropea.

Agustín V. Casasola (1874-1938), 1910.

Sepia-toned enlarged print from original photo negative.

National Museum of Mexican Art Permanent Collection,

Gift of Pilsen Neighbors.

The main message was that a person's racial category defined every aspect of his or her life during colonization. I was thirsty to learn more about the history of multiracial classification and some of its effect on life, but that message was the only direct one I would find.

The rest of *Presence* created a history for Afro-Mexicans by inserting them into the history and past and present culture

of Mexico. The exhibit presented major events of Mexican history that visitors might have learned once in a history class (slavery, rebellion, independence, economy, the Revolution).

After reading the third text panel, I understood that the pattern of text for each panel was going to be, "This happened and Afro-Mexicans were there too."

Presence uses photographs, paintings and sculptures as primary source evidence of Afro-Mexicans' existence throughout history. Visitors first experience a group of figurines used as evidence of Afro-Mexican presence in colonial times. The figurines are determined to be African by their bodily features.

Another example, a photograph taken in 1910 titled, "Portrait of a Female Soldier from Michoacan/Retrato de una soldadera de Michoacan" accompanies text about Afro-Mexicans who fought in the Revolution. The soldier is given no story; she is just a face, an African face.

Staring at the soldadera, I struggled with what I was seeing. These objects were chosen for display because the subjects looked African. This exhibit silently suggested race could be determined by physical attributes. Ironically, this was the same process used to erase Afro-Mexicans from the history books in the first place. This message about race and classification was more audible to me than anything else in the exhibit. I wanted to talk about it, ask about it, be challenged on it, but my aunt and uncle were now experiencing the rest of the DuSable, the

gallery was empty, and there was no feedback section in sight. I had no outlet.

My mind swam in race theory, but I snapped back into exhibit mode in time to enjoy my favorite section: an area of contemporary Afro-Mexican art. This was tangible evidence of the mixture of African and Mexican cultures, (instead on one being within the other). Paintings by artist Aydee Rodriguez Lopez depicted Afro-Mexicans drumming on *artesas*, a West African-style drum that is played by dancing atop it. Text explained that the tradition started when Afro-Mexicans were prohibited from using hand drums. Information was also provided about organizations and institutions, like the Vincent Guerrero Saldana Museum of AfroMestizo Cultures, that celebrate and encourage the self-expression of identity by young Afro-Mexicans. This section sent a message that the African presence is not just something to think about in the past. In fact, it is a contemporary identity that is demanding recognition.

After we were ushered out of the museum (15 minutes after closing), I reflected on my whirlwind visit. I did not find what I expected. Instead, *Presence* expanded Mexican national identity to legitimize people of African descent as truly Mexican. I also found that the exhibit reinforced deep-rooted habits of racial classification: a discovery that could, scarily, go unnoticed and without discussion by visitors.

I was not disappointed that *Presence* did not create a multiracial history. Rather, I was fascinated with it as an exploration of a different kind of complex identity. I hope to discover similar messages of recognition and legitimization in more exhibits about mixed race as I continue my research into this important topic.

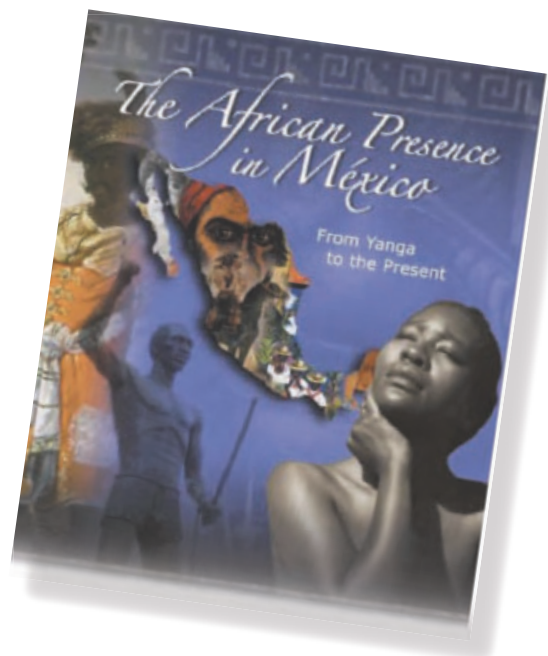




Photo by Brent Povich.

Renae Youngs '11, Kaleen Povich '11, Emily Craig '11 and Abbi Huderle '11 explore the UW Hall of Fame during Spring Quarter.



Photo by Sarra Scherb.

Hillary Saalfeld '11, Jessica Cima '12 and Aletheia Wittman '12 come in from the rainy parade during the Seattle Art Museum's Community Night Out.



Photo by Nick Visscher.

Beck Tench, Director for Innovation and Digital Engagement, North Carolina Museum of Life and Sciences pays a visit to *Intro to Audience Research*.



Photo by Katie Phelps.

Chris Cadenhead '12 and Mark Rosen '12 show off their fearsome audience research team sweatshirts at the Woodland Park Zoo. Their focus is the new dinosaur exhibit.



Photo courtesy of Kaleen Povich.

Kaleen Povich '11 and Andrea Barber '11 work hard to understand their toddler audience at the Seattle Aquarium.



Photo by Winifred Kehl.

Katie Phelps '12 and Anne Melton '12 go for an historic ride at the Washington State History Museum.



Photo by Chris Cadenhead.

2011 grads know the Student Center all too well...
 Front: Megan Churchwell, Valerie Johnson.
 2nd Row: Valerie Grabski, Lauren LeClaire, Chieko Phillips, Emily Craig, Kaleen Povich, Mercy Trent, Emily Sparling. 3rd Row: Renae Youngs, Tasia Endo, Marina Hernandez, Hillary Saalfeld, Amy Thickpenny.
 Back: Abbi Huderle, Betsy O'Brien, Mike Breedon.



Photo courtesy of Winifred Kehl.

Sarra Scherb '12, Winifred Kehl '12 and exhibit development instructor Judy Rand at the Seattle Art Museum.

STUDENTS IN THE FIELD

Current Museology students perform internships, log volunteer hours and brainstorm projects for local institutions. What did we work on during 2011?

Conservation Under Glass at the Burke

Winifred Kehl '12

This past winter I had the opportunity to help develop a small exhibit for the display case in the lobby of the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture. The purpose of the exhibit was to honor Estella Leopold, a professor emeritus of UW who had just been awarded the Cosmos Prize for her accomplishments in research and conservation.

My internship started with background research, reading, and meetings with both a paleobotanist and a curator from the Burke. Drafts flew back and forth as everyone involved ensured the display would meet expectations. My work reached a fever pitch the week and a half before our deadline and stayed there until the display went into production/fabrication. It was a relief to relinquish my part of the project and gratifying to see such a nice cohesive product to reward our efforts.

At the same time I was working on the exhibit, I was taking Judy Rand's exhibit development class. It was a great experience to put into practice what I learned from her while under challenging circumstances: learning first-hand how to work with time constraints, unexpected changes or problems, and collaborating with a large team; from the exhibit designers, to other museums, to



Photo by Winifred Kehl.
The Estella Leopold display in the Burke lobby.

fossil experts. Overall, I learned that with a lot of hard work and help, you can pull together a nice display even with a few bumps in the road—and there will always be bumps in the road. It's nice to know from experience that I can handle a few bumps.

The exhibit opened during a celebration of Estella Leopold at the Burke. Seeing Estella herself and hearing stories from people who know her was a special experience—I felt that the exhibit I helped develop successfully captured a small part of who she is. Seeing a project like this come together is probably the most satisfying conclusion to an internship I could hope for.

Spend an Online Minute with MOHAI

Peder Nelson '12

Crawling through cobwebbed tunnels, climbing water towers and getting super-secret access: it's all in a MOHAI Minute for Peder Nelson!

Peder interned at The Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) in Seattle throughout Winter and Spring quarters, continuing work on his innovative video project: the MOHAI Minute. MOHAI Minutes are a series of short (2-4 minute), informal video segments broadcast on YouTube that highlight the vast collection of artifacts, documents, and photographs belonging to MOHAI. They also explore Seattle's neighborhoods, landmarks, and historic hot-spots. The goal of these videos is to present history in a fun and casual way, stressing the fact that local history is all around us.

Co-created with MOHAI Public Programs Manager, Helen Divjak in 2010, MOHAI Minutes have gained popularity amongst the

museum staff, local historians, and are even used as a reward at the end of class for one elementary school history class.

The first films were created by Peder and Helen using nothing more than an old camcorder and a microphone. Today, the videos are being produced by a video production group The Last Quest. One of Peder's favorite parts of producing these videos is his ability to include music from local bands in the soundtrack—and every now and then he even adds music from his current musical projects; *The Stevedore*, *Fenster* and *Blind Tater Nelson*.

By the end of 2011 the MOHAI Minute team will have created 38 videos featuring the history of places such as The Paramount Theater, the Smith Tower, Alki Beach and Schmitz Preserve Park.

Watch the MOHAI Minute on its YouTube channel:
<http://www.youtube.com/mohaiprograms>.



My Favorite Things: “Highly Opinionated” Public Tours at SAM

Mark Rosen '12

So it's Friday night, 6:15 rolls around and I'm perusing the galleries at SAM for potential participants in this evening's My Favorite Things tour. I manage to wrangle 20 or so folks and put on my show-time face, welcome everyone, introduce our tour leader, (metaphorically) close my eyes, cross my fingers and (not so metaphorically) prepare to enjoy the ride.

For the past 7 or so months I've coordinated these tours at SAM, which take place every Friday night at 6:30 p.m. as well as at Remix (SAM's riot of a social event). Past tours have been led by artists, students, bloggers, drag queens, choreographers, authors, designers, actors, the list goes on and on. I've laughed along as Lil' Wayne is compared to Picasso, witnessed someone respond to an Ellsworth Kelly painting through dance, and had a chat about why we should love artists we all hate (e.g. Jeff Koons). When I say these tours are always a surprise, trust me, I mean it.

Perhaps my favorite thing (pun intended) is what these tours represent on an institutional level. Let's face it; art museums don't let their hair down very easily. Even events that draw in thousands of people to party the night away are understandably met with meticulous planning and code red security. I plan and plan then plan some more for these tours but come show time, so much is still left to chance. In other words, the “highly opinionated” part has done a standup job of figuring out just how to keep me on my toes. We've seen interpretation via body movement, belting



Photo courtesy Mark Rosen.

songs associated with works (accompanied by a handheld Casio keyboard of course) and tours that touch on everything but the art. Visitors always seem to join expecting the usual “I've read the texts and spoken with the curator” spiel that neatly categorizes and organizes their experience but instead, they're met with something completely unexpected that encourages them to not only develop an opinion but stand by it.

I'm painting a rosy picture here; not every tour is met with an immaculately tailored response to every work. Sometimes there is an “I love this, and I can't really say why,” but reality check number two, folks, the viewing experience is a messy one. Art history has largely been written as a kind of taxonomy, forcing the often chaos of the art world to percolate (to use a coffee reference, welcome to Seattle) until works are filtered out and what you have left is purified and ready to take in. These tours complicate that system, tossing into the mix a pinch of personal relevance and a sprinkle of uncertainty. What they then perpetuate is the notion that, while Protofeminism or Post-minimalism might be your cup of tea (somebody stop me), “this reminds me of such and such for these reasons” will stick with you much longer.

So this story has a moral: definitely follow through with research and try to come to understand the art historical importance of a work but, for the love of art, put much of your time and energy into finding what makes it important to you. You certainly don't have to love everything (trust me, “I detest this” makes for a far spicier tour) but when you find something that gets you going, go. Then sign up to lead a My Favorite Things tour.

Seattle Children's Theatre and the Northwest African American Museum Team Up for an All-Star Exhibit

Anne Melton '12

Since January, I have been working as the Curatorial Intern at the Northwest African American Museum (NAAM), a grant-funded position through the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The Seattle Children's Theatre approached NAAM regarding the play “Jackie and Me” which ran during the spring. “Jackie and Me” is the story of a young boy who travels back in time to meet Jackie Robinson and learns valuable lessons about courage and compassion while on his adventure. Using NAAM's objects from Seattle's very own 1940s African American baseball teams, I created a display for the theater which made a local connection to what was happening in our city during Jackie Robinson's first season with the Brooklyn Dodgers.

The exhibit featured Donlee Moore as the personality who takes visitors back in time to see what it was like to be a Black baseball player in the Pacific Northwest in 1947. Mr. Moore was the catcher, manager, and power hitter for the Carver Athletic Club baseball team. Carver was the only all-Black team in the Puget Sound Baseball League, and held their home games at Garfield Park in Seattle's Central District. In the early 1950s, many teams became integrated, eliminating the need for the all-African American teams. Mr. Moore himself later signed with the Ballard Boosters, an integrated team in the local semi-pro circuit.



Photo by Anne Melton.

Melton's display in the lobby of the theater.

Learning in the Field:

These are some of the programs, classes and special collaborations from 2011.

Public Engagement in Art Class: Costume and Community at the Seattle Art Museum

Sarra Scherb '12

"Meet Me at the Center of the Earth" was an exhibit of colorful and eerie soundsuits by Chicago artist Nick Cave. These wearable amalgamations of fabric, trash, and hair were not only powerful transformative costumes, but also the most *fun* objects the SAM has put on display all year. They were the impetus for the theme behind this year's Community Night Out; an event that invites visitors to make crafts, tour the museum for free and even march in a costumed parade. The soundsuit exhibit was also the focus of this year's Public Engagement in Art class, taught by Sandra Jackson-Dumont, Deputy Director for Education and Public Programs and Adjunct Curator at the SAM.

Charged with creating hands-on activities to debut in the galleries and with facilitating community participation in the 1st Avenue parade, the class got down to work in a hurry. With only one month to brainstorm and implement the projects, students worked quickly with SAM staff to make their ideas a reality. The results were a creative mix that had visitors laughing, guessing, creating and searching high and low.

Megan Churchwell '11 and Joseph Wapner '12 sent visitors scurrying with their clever scavenger hunt. It prompted people to find pieces in the permanent collection which connected to the materials used in Cave's soundsuits. Hundreds of guests participated and were awarded small prizes when their sheets were turned back in. Brittin Romero '12 and Mariah Moody created Meet Me: A Game of Visual Transformation. Cave's soundsuits are a vehicle for personal transformation for their wearers, and the duo used this concept to design a fast-paced matching game. Players were faced with two sets of photographs: one of costumed celebrities—such as Lady Gaga, Queen Elizabeth II or a Cirque du Soleil performer—and the other of those same people without their costumes. By matching the sets of photos, players were asked to think about the way in which we transform ourselves on a daily basis.

Zulma-Lin Garcia Morales '12 and Sarra Scherb '12 set up five mannequins, along with pounds of fabric and fasteners for their We Are What We Wear activity in the upper lobby. Each mannequin wore a sign that stated how it wished to be dressed, and visitors were charged with creating a unique costume from the materials provided. Families, friends and strangers collaborated to add, subtract and change fabric to best suit the mannequins throughout the night. Another activity utilized fabric to connect to Cave's work: the Design Challenge, by Xiaoxue "Nara" Zhou '12 and Mark Rosen '12. They challenged visitors to respond to a certain work of art in the SAM's collection using craft materials and their own spin. Each hour, Zhou re-set the dress form and chose a new inspiring art work.

Outside in the parade, Allie Criado '12 and Megan Lamboley '12 worked with 1st Avenue businesses to support and hype the parade before the May 5th date. Aletheia Wittman '12, Jessica Cima '12 and Hillary Saalfeld '11 reached out to the greater Seattle arts community pre-event in order to boost participation in the parade, and checked in groups for the parade route during the evening.



Joseph Wapner, Megan Lamboley, Megan Churchwell, Zulma-Lin Garcia, Hillary Saalfeld, Michelle DelCarlo, Mariah Moody, Xiaoxue Zhou, Jessica Cima, Aletheia Wittman, Brittin Romero. Bottom: Sarra Scherb, Allie Criado. Not pictured: Mark Rosen.



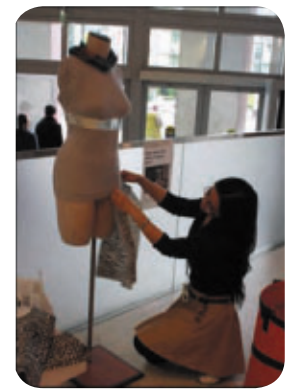
Zulma-Lin Garcia Morales '12 and Sarra Scherb '12.



Brittin Romero '12 encourages a visitor to keep matching.



Megan Lamboley '12 and Allie Criado '12: ready for anything.



Xiaoxue (Nara) Zhou '12 preps her dress form.

Participatory Design Class with Nina Simon: Connecting at the Henry Art Gallery

Abbi Huderle '11

This past Winter quarter, 13 Museology students undertook an experiment in participatory design under the guidance of Nina Simon; museum consultant from California and author of *The Participatory Museum* and the blog “Museum 2.0.” Working in the Henry Art Gallery’s “Vortexhibition Polyphonica” gallery, our task was to develop an activity which would engage the public and encourage them to interact with each other and the space. Splitting up into three teams, the class created three distinct projects: *AirYour Dirty Laundry*, *Alphabet Soup with Xavier*, and *Stringing Connections*. Each project debuted over a weekend at the Henry, and encouraged viewer participation in its own unique way.



Photo by Sarra Scherb.

AirYour Dirty Laundry: Bomar '11, Breedon '11 and LeClaire '11 invite visitors to air their secrets.

Alphabet Soup with Xavier was the result of the grouping of first-year students Alicia Barnes, Chris Cadenhead, Rose Kinsley, and Rachel Woodbrook. Planning their activity around a charismatic statue from the Henry’s permanent collection—titled “Xavier”—the group invited guests to use magnetic alphabet letters to create a speech bubble conversation between themselves and the statue. Visitors’ speech bubbles were responses to the previous visitor’s comments, thereby creating an unending stream of responses during the weekend in which the project was live. Each visitor and their dialogue were photographed, and the results can be seen at the Henry’s



Photo courtesy of Henry Art Gallery’s Flickr Stream.

Stringing Connections team (Hernandez '11, Endo '11, Craig '11 and Huderle '11) reveal the web of connections made by visitors.

Finally, visitors could add explanations to existing connections on the map by hanging their new explanatory tag onto the string connecting the objects. This project was inspired by the curators’ statement for the exhibition, which explained that works were included based on relationships they saw between them. *Stringing Connections* was an attempt to give visitors a chance to take on the role of curator.

For me, the major lesson learned from this project was that it is possible to transform an aloof gallery space into an engaging and enticing place for people to visit. All three of the projects required a high level of facilitation to succeed. It was essential to learn to not be afraid of trying something new, pushing your comfort level just a little beyond where it’s been before. That’s what the Henry allowed us to do for them, and the result was a successful weekend with lots of exciting activity and participating visitors. I hope future students have a similar opportunity.



Courtesy of Tasia Endo & Henry Art Gallery.

Tasia Endo collaborated with the Henry to create a logo for the weekend.

AirYour Dirty Laundry was developed by second year students Amanda Mae Bomar, Mike Breedon, Lauren LeClaire, Kai Tian and Renae Youngs. Inspired by the extraordinarily popular “Post Secret” website (www.postsecret.com), visitors to the museum were invited to share their secrets on brightly colored construction paper cut in the shape of undergarments. These secrets were then cycled into the museum where other visitors were invited to sort them into four groupings: “I just LOL’ed,” “I’ve been there,” “I think I know you,” and “I’m inspired.” They could then choose to air this laundry publicly on lines strung near the Vortexhibition gallery and outside.



Photo courtesy of Henry Art Gallery’s Flickr Stream.

Three of the *Alphabet Soup* team (Cadenhead '12, Kinsley '12, Woodbrook '12) chat with Xavier.

Stringing Connections was developed by second-years Emily Craig, Tasia Endo, Marina Hernandez, and Abbi Huderle. Its main component was a large map of the gallery space, including all the works of art included in the exhibition, each associated with a small hook. There were multiple ways for visitors to participate. They could make visual realizations of connections between two or more pieces of art using a single piece of yarn, and explain the connection on a tag hung on the string connecting the objects. Or, visitors could collaboratively connect the artworks together by stringing connections with a continuous strand of yarn (the red yarn ball), and using tags to explain their connections they added.

New Directions in Audience Research Project: Year Two Review

Nick Visscher, New Directions Project Coordinator

Since its inception in 2009, the *New Directions In Audience Research* Project has successfully implemented nine different evaluation projects within local cultural institutions. These projects include evaluations of exhibits and programs as well as assessments of more nuanced pieces of the visitor experience. We are thrilled to add three exciting projects to our portfolio conducted by eight class of 2011 Museology students.

Braving the elements and the iPad, Renae Youngs, Betsy O'Brien and Emily Craig worked with the Burke Museum's Family Day events to develop a profile of event visitor demographics and discover what experiences and expectations visitors have at these events. The trio ventured into the technological realm wielding their trusty iPads to record visitor interviews, and learned the joys of collecting data in sometimes inclement weather. The information gained from this study will help the Burke further its understanding of their audience as it embarks on a two year identity-building and public awareness campaign in preparation for launching a major capital campaign.

"What do you see? And, why do you say that?" Amanda Mae Bomar, Lauren LeClaire and Valerie Grabski worked with the Frye Art Museum to discover what conditions result in high levels of participation in their "Visual Thinking Strategies" (VTS)-based programming conducted with school tour groups. One of the most complex projects our students have taken on—attempting to record multiple elements and behaviors of program participants simultaneously—these three navigated this project with

great poise and worked with Frye staff to hone in on questions that are critical to assessing the success of these innovative tours.

What happens when your visitor pays more attention to the vent on the floor than the actual exhibit? Kaleen Povich and Andrea Barber took on the task of observing toddlers at the Seattle

Aquarium to discover which exhibit elements and spaces are able to attract and hold the attention of this difficult-to-evaluate audience. This dynamic duo developed some unique and creative methods to observe the aquarium's toddler audience as well as gain valuable information from their caregivers. This data will be of great use to the aquarium as they plan future exhibit space and continue with their city to private institutional transition.

Throughout winter quarter these students collected data by utilizing the help of students enrolled in MUS 596, "Intro to Audience Research." Throughout the

spring they prepared their results and analyses to present to their project sites, in addition to presenting each project as a poster at the annual Visitor Studies Association conference in Chicago.

It has been a joy working with these eight individuals and getting to watch them make their first steps into the field of Visitor Studies as researchers and evaluators. I can't wait to see what post-graduation brings for each of them, and know they'll continue to be consummate advocates for audience research and evaluation in whatever area of museum practice they pursue. Congrats, class of 2011!



Photo courtesy of Nick Visscher.

Left to Right: Renae Youngs, Kaleen Povich, Lauren LeClaire, Valerie Grabski, Amanda Mae Bomar, Betsy O'Brien, Emily Craig, Andrea Barber, class of 2011.

Follow *New Directions* on Twitter @UWNewDirections or on the Museology website!

An Alumna Puts *New Directions* to Work

Marta Beyer '10

Last November I joined the evaluation team at the Museum of Science (MOS) in Boston as a Senior Research and Evaluation Assistant—a fantastic opportunity to work with a very active department. Aside from evaluating MOS exhibits and programs, our department's six full-time members also have exciting collaborations with organizations and museums across the country. And thanks to our work with the NISE Net (Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network), I've worked with another 2010 Museology alumna, Liz Rosino, in her new evaluator position at OMSI, in Portland, OR.

UW Museology gave me a great start. *New Directions* gave me so much hands-on experience and preparation for evaluation work at MOS. I learned about crucial evaluation resources and had the chance to meet leading evaluators and attend major conferences. My Public Engagement with Science (PES) class prepared me for work with MOS's efforts to survey people actively involved in the PES field, and our department is now planning a major workshop. Museology's emphasis on current trends in the field and on practical experience provides a solid and enriching foundation.

OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM

Two current students find ways to flex their museological muscles in a different setting.

A Sign of the Times

Kaleen E. Povich '11

As the Museology class of 2011 looks toward graduation, we evaluate our professional goals and map out our intended career paths. Due to the tough economic climate, marketing our transferable skills may be more important than usual. Already, many Museology students are putting their talents and teachings to work in local museums. Contributions are also being made outside of the museum field to institutions such as the YWCA.

An opportunity to collaborate with the YWCA on a signage project was presented by visiting lecturer Barbara Johns. The goal of the project is to provide LEED signage (*Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design*) for YWCA Family Village Issaquah, an affordable housing neighborhood for working families on the Eastside.

Thanks to the skills we gained in Judy Rand's *Planning for People in Exhibits* class, Emily Sparling and I were prepared to volunteer for the job. We were honored to be working with an incredible group of women who embody the YWCA mission. The YWCA is dedicated to "eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all." In this endeavor, the YWCA is also showing its commitment to the environment by seeking LEED certification. Informing the community about the 'green design' elements is the purpose of the on-site signage. Our Museology training has allowed us to craft these signs with a visitor-centered approach.

While it is true that museums are a distinct class among non-profits, a common bond of non-profits is their intensity of mission. Not only has it been inspiring to work with such a dedicated organization, but seeing that our skill sets are valuable to a variety of institutions in the non-profit sector has furthered our career confidence. I am confident the class of 2011 will see success as professionals. When our personal passions are aligned with an institutional mission we will thrive. Here's to following your passion!

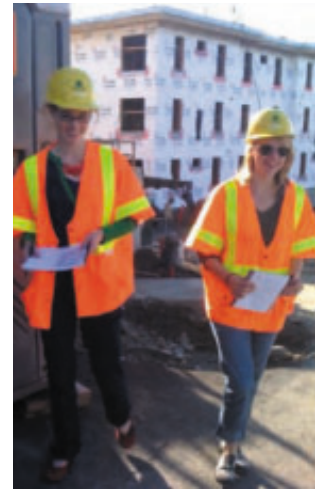


Photo courtesy of Kaleen Povich. Povich '11 and Sparling '11 demonstrate how to be highly noticeable in the Museology field.

One Day Only: The Pop-Up Museum!

Michelle DelCarlo '12

I was busy pondering the connections between community development, collaborative relationships, and the creation of meaningful experiences, when the idea for the DIY Pop-Up Museum struck. I decided to create a non-traditional, hands-on environment where I could watch the intersection of all these topics play out. The major impetus for this project is my interest in defining "museum relevancy," and my desire to productively push the boundaries of accepted museological methodologies and practice.

How does the DIY Pop-up Museum work? First, choose a public place as the day's "museum," and a theme for its content. My pilot test took place at the University District Public Library, and the theme was "handmade." Next, invite community members to bring meaningful personal objects to share—similar to "show and tell". Using the "Handmade" example, they could bring in a scarf they knit or a special handmade textile that was given to them. Participants write a "labels" using provided pencils and paper to illustrate their object's significance. The Pop-Up Museum's temporary collection is based entirely on objects provided by the day's participants. The museum exists for just a few hours in one spot, but I hope to bring it all over Seattle to include the diversity of neighborhoods in the city.

I have learned some crucial lessons from my April pilot test. Most importantly, a five hour event is too long. People came, displayed, and left with their objects, leaving those who came afterwards with less of an experience. An overwhelming call for more snacks has prompted me to compile a list of vendors interested in donating tasty treats for next time. I was thrilled to see participants connecting with each other as they shared stories and objects. For example, Rosaleen Rhee (Museology '12), played some beautiful "handmade" piano music. This sparked conversations about what instruments people had played in the past and what kind of music people listen to. In the future, I hope that the Pop-up Museum will continue to generate conversations that lead to true dialogue and connections between people of all ages and walks of life.



Photo by Michelle DelCarlo
Tyler Browne writes a label for a knitted wombat made for him by his grandmother.

EXHIBIT REVIEW: *Checking Our Pulse* at the Northwest African American Museum, Seattle, WA

Reviewed by Sarra Scherb '12

For an exhibit that takes up little more room than your first apartment, NAAM's "Checking Our Pulse" manages to pack a hefty factual and emotional punch. Created as a collaboration between Seattle's Swedish Medical Center and the Northwest African American Museum, "Checking Our Pulse" conveys a tripartite message in a bold, colorful style that is forceful, but never preachy.

Those three messages include a celebration of African Americans in Seattle's health industries; a clear-eyed look at grim health statistics in the African American community; and a call to action for visitors to check their own pulse and change their thinking about the care of their bodies. It's a lot to cram into a single low-ceilinged room that seems too small for those weighty ideas, but through clever design, strong messages and clear signage, "Checking Our Pulse" remains aloft.

That clever design is evident from the moment you enter the horizontal, corridor-like space. A colorful video graphic spins and pulses on the entrance wall, popping up biographies of local health practitioners of color. Beside it is list of health topics which the exhibit will address: cardiovascular, mother and infant, diabetes, HIV/AIDS and breast cancer. The five topics are color coded, and visitors soon notice rounded vinyl squares on the floor in the same colors which serve as directional guides.



Photo by Chieko Phillips.

A young visitor tries out an activity that increases heartrate.

Before they leave this entry hall, however, visitors should notice the text on the wall. A succinct, heartfelt introduction to the exhibit, it's the first and last time the museum speaks for itself. The rest of the exhibit relies on the words of doctors, nurses and patients from the community. Rather than using a paternalistic "god voice" to admonish visitors, NAAM has the good sense to allow the voices of community members to shock, educate and engage audiences.

Each category contains didactic text in its signature bright color, as well as free-standing cases with objects and interactive materials, ranging from a Wii Fit to a blood pressure cuff, infant mannequins, or a box of condoms. Stations feature a celebratory biography of a local African American health practitioner. Their first-person quotes convey their desire to see the health of the black community improve.



Photo by Marq Dean, © Belle & Wissell, Co.

The result is a brightly—one might say loudly—colored exhibit with an arresting amount of text that is expertly balanced by just enough objects and activities to appeal to all comers. Activities or touchable objects are placed in the reach of many visitors, rather than one at a time, and the free-standing pedestals are low enough that smaller visitors should be able to see their content.

On the design side, the bright colors enliven an unwelcoming low-ceilinged, concrete floored space. That color coding is also key to comprehensibility: the five topics must be presented cheek-by-jowl in the small room, and had the categories been signed less clearly, they would have blended into an indistinct ramble. Belle and Wissell, a local design company which partnered with NAAM for this show, must be given credit for their clear, concise graphics. The rounded corners on all of the signage and the rounded font style both lend a "friendly" feel to the often dismal statistics, and invite visitors who may view healthcare as foreboding or stressful to reconsider.

Overall, NAAM worked within its constraints to mount an informative exhibit that combines hope, celebration, caution and a galvanizing call for change. Relying on the strength of their information, the easily understandable message of their interactives and the clarity of their design, "Pulse" avoids the pitfalls that could have tripped it up.



Courtesy of the NAAM.

Not bad for some vinyl text and a room smaller than some suburban garages!

Checking Our Pulse runs through Sept. 30, 2011 at the Northwest African American Museum.

MUSEOLOGY ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES

On the Job at the Seattle Aquarium: Education on the Move

Justine Walker '10, Education Assistant



Courtesy of Justine Walker.

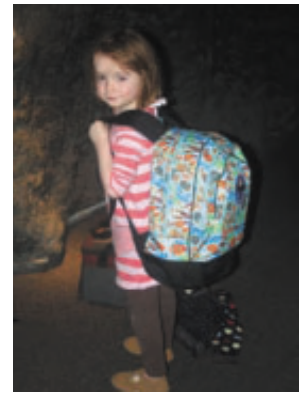
Young aquarium visitors take a backpack break and explore the activities inside.

Justine has been working at the Seattle Aquarium for a year now. Her job there has been split between being an interpretation supervisor and an education assistant. As an interpretation supervisor she spends time working with volunteers and aquarium visitors in the exhibit spaces throughout the aquarium. She also overcame her fear of microphones and delivers many different presentations during feeding times in the exhibits. As an education assistant Justine teaches classroom programs to school groups that take field trips to the aquarium and helps develop curriculum for self-guided school groups and for a new high school program that is being pilot tested this spring and fall. She has even been able to use her evaluation skills learned from the *New Directions* classes to help with evaluations of summer camps, preschool programs, and the volunteer program.

In addition to working in interpretation and education, Justine has been able to continue work on her thesis project from Spring 2010. She created, pilot tested, and evaluated activity backpacks for members with children ages 4-6 to use in the Pacific Coral Reef exhibit during their visit to the Seattle Aquarium. The first phase of pilot testing showed that members were interested in this program and shed light on what specifically they liked and did not like. After the busy summer season Justine met with representatives from the education, interpretation, membership and development departments to discuss the future of this pilot program. It was decided that the backpacks should be used for a second phase of pilot testing after some modifications to their contents—only the favorite activities and books were included in the backpacks for this round of testing.

After a three month pilot period Justine again saw positive results. The backpacks were checked out by 173 groups, which included 318 children. Nine of those groups used the activity backpacks at least twice, and many expressed interest in seeing the program expand.

The Pacific Coral Reef Backpacks will not be available for members to use through the peak season (spring and summer), but Justine is hoping the decision will be made to allow members to check them out again in the fall. In the meantime, the Seattle Aquarium is searching for a sponsor to support this program as it is, or even better, to allow it to grow into other areas of the aquarium, including marine mammals and birds.



Courtesy of Justine Walker.

It takes a strong back to do science!

UW Museology is on the web! Friend us on acebook (search: UW Museology), and visit our website for the online newsletter and Program information:

www.museum.washington.edu

Museo•log is produced by:

Coordinator: Maya Farrar • Student Editor/Designer: Sarra Scherb • Website Coordinator: Winifred Kehl

Heartfelt thanks to all of our contributors!



Keeping Everything Connected at the Woodland Park Zoo

Rebecca Whitham, née Durkin, '06. Public Relations Coordinator at the Woodland Park Zoo, Seattle, WA



Courtesy of Rebecca Whitham.

Whitham releases an endangered western pond turtle into a protected habitat, part of a Woodland Park Zoo conservation project.

It all started with gorillas, then for a time it was wolves, back to the apes with chimpanzees, and most recently polar bears. A fascination with and passion for wildlife conservation has long been a driving factor for my personal and professional life. Throughout college, I explored different zoological career paths from zookeeping, to field conservation and animal behavior research.

But it wasn't until I began volunteering my weekends as a docent at Central Park Zoo in NYC that it clicked for me where my talent could be best used in the service of conservation—using zoos as a platform to talk to people about and connect them with nature, inspiring them to take action on behalf of wildlife. Seeing the power of nature to cross linguistic and generational boundaries and recognizing the power of zoos in making that happen has been extraordinarily influential in my life.

Entering the Museology program, I focused my studies on informal science education, which set me up very well for the communications and outreach work I would eventually end up doing in my career. In my second year, I took a work study job in public relations at the Burke Museum, and discovered that there was more than one museum career that could fulfill my desire to connect with museum goers, to share stories with them and listen to their experiences in return. Now, as public relations coordinator for Woodland Park Zoo, my position is, essentially, that of a storyteller. My job is to connect the public with the amazing things happening at the zoo and because of the zoo every day.

The two biggest outlets I have to help me get those stories out there are the news media and social media. With news media, I'm reaching out to local, national and international outlets including newspapers, TV stations, radio and web, garnering coverage for zoo news, with an emphasis on stories that highlight the zoo's mission of excellent animal care, conservation and education. On a much more intimate level, I'm also connecting with audiences directly, using social media outlets including the zoo's blog, Facebook and Twitter to highlight the zoo's mission with behind-the-scenes, multimedia content.

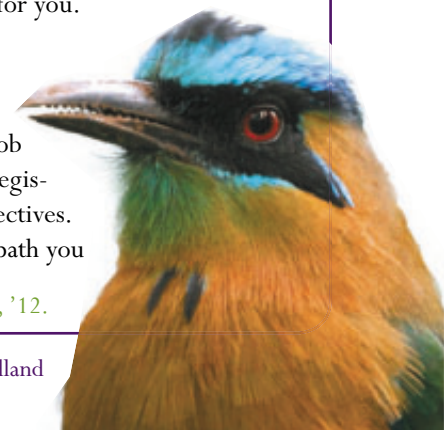
If storytelling is my primary job, then listening is certainly my secondary. Having great content to share is important, but if you aren't being timely, relevant and responsive to your audience, then your work will easily go unnoticed. I spend much of my time following what's going on in local and national news, what's trending in social media, and what topics our fans are talking about, and I try to be relevant to these areas, responsive to the community, and grow true relationships with our fans.

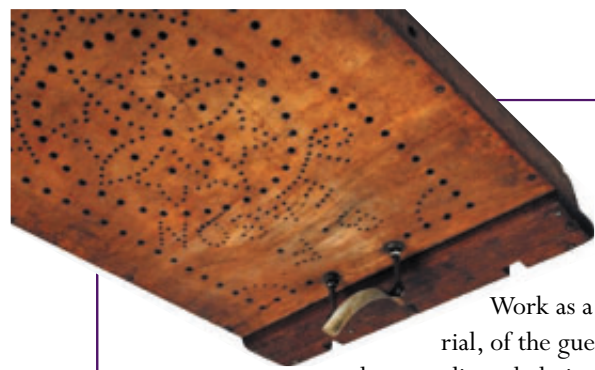
The best part of my job is the incredible access I have to the fascinating things going on at the zoo—from getting up close to elephants and grizzly bears behind the scenes, to seeing veterinary exams of newly arrived animals, and even going into the field to help release endangered turtles into the wild in an effort to repopulate the species. By experiencing these things first hand, I'm better equipped to talk about them to our audiences and share with them the wonder and passion behind Woodland Park Zoo's mission.

Part of the excitement of working in communications is the unpredictability of the work, especially with a living collection. If, for example, an animal is born, I might spend my week writing a press release announcing the news and pitching it to press, creating a photo opportunity to give access for press to see the animal and interview our animal care experts, developing a blog post to feature behind the scenes information about how we care for the animal, posting a video of the new animal to Facebook and discussing the birth with our fans, or running a contest on Twitter to name the animal. If you are comfortable with, even motivated by the thrill of walking into work to open possibilities each day, museum communications may be a good career path for you.

As I transitioned from student to professional, the most useful part about an interdisciplinary program such as Museology is that it not only prepares you to do your own work, but it also helps you gain firsthand knowledge and experience of others' work within an institution. I feel better able to do my job because Museology helped me also know the job of a zoo educator, fundraiser, curator, administrator, registrar, etc., greatly improving my ability to work cooperatively and to see a project from multiple perspectives. That's a tremendous advantage when job seeking and in the work field, no matter the museum career path you choose. Use it!

Interview conducted by Winifred Kehl, '12.





...And Now For Something Completely Different

Tracy Buck '07

Collections Manager, Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, WA

Work as a collections manager or registrar provides a consistent source of party small talk material, of the guess-what-I-did-at-work-today variety. We puzzle over the best way to preserve paintings done on discarded pizza boxes, we rediscover stunning Tiffany vases and 1950s Dior gowns in storage, we become experts on obscure local figures, the origins of street names, and neighborhood politics in response to a new accession that requires cataloging.

Recently I organized a display in the auditorium lobby of the Museum of History and Industry, *And Now for Something Completely Different: Unexpected Artifacts from the Museum's Collection*. Visually communicating some of the more unusual aspects of museum work, this display showcases a few of the quirky (a 1930s coin purse made from a mink's head) to the frightening (a 1870s medical scarificator used for bloodletting) objects uncovered in MOHAI's collection.

Featured in the exhibit are a few recent acquisitions. Butterworth Mortuary, a Seattle fixture since 1892, recently donated a 1930s mortician's cosmetic kit and an embalming table that dates from 1886. The table's eye-catching Pennsylvania-Dutch style design is almost charming – until one remembers that the perforations were used for drainage rather than as a strictly stylistic choice.

The exhibit features a model of the locally-invented prosthetic "Seattle Foot," a set of early and disconcerting dental instruments, and a brass diver's helmet from ca. 1890. Also on display is a piece of artwork by local artist Dorothy Rissman, whose 2008 "Hairshirt: I Love Dick's" repurposes discarded Dick's Drive-In hamburger wrappers.

There's a mug carved from a walrus jaw – four teeth are still intact; it's a souvenir from 1930s Alaska that one hopes was used to store pencils rather than serve coffee. There's a lamp fashioned from three reindeer legs (no word on what become of the remaining leg), an 1895 X-ray "therapy" machine, and WWII-era Japanese Katana sword with a large bullet hole in the blade.



Photo courtesy of MOHAI
This reindeer-footed lamp is certainly something completely different.

Photo courtesy of MOHAI
(Above) Embalming table from Butterworth Mortuary, 1886.

And Now for Something Completely Different runs through this year at MOHAI, a visual reminder of the quirkiest side of collections management.

STUDENT EDITOR'S NOTE: The Diversity of the Local

Sarra Scherb '12

The Spring/Summer issue of *Museo-log* highlights Seattle's wealth of natural, historical and cultural beauty. All of the margin images in this issue hail from local museums and collections, including this petaled specimen from the Herbarium, and these polished moonstones from the Burke's geology collection. Whether they collect fashion, airplanes, fossils, works of art, curiosities or living creatures, Seattle's museums safeguard an astonishingly unique cultural heritage and richly diverse environmental landscape. As more collections are uploaded to the internet, and in-house study centers open their doors, local museum increase allow anyone to discover their personal history, explore the natural world or simply sate their curiosity!

At a time when museums are threatened by budget cuts and when some question their relevance, it is even more important to remember what a critical role museums play in the life of a city. They are the guardians of a community's history, tourist attractors, educators of all generations, safe havens for discussion and disagreement, and places for experiences found nowhere else.

Seattle's museums—and those everywhere—are a vital part of celebrating what makes us human and understanding this vast, amazing place in which we live.



Photo by Ron Eng.
Moonstones in the Burke Museum Geology Collection. Courtesy of the Burke Museum.



Photo by G.D. Carr
Chamerion angustifolium var. canescens
UW Herbarium Photo Collection.