

### *The Newsletter for Paid and Unpaid Museum Staff*

Editors: Dierdre Araujo, Emily Knight

#### SPOTLIGHT: ASSESSMENT

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#### *Recent Webinar: Evaluating Volunteers and the Volunteer Program*

By: Marne Bariso

Another successful collaborative webinar was held Wednesday January 25, 2017, co-organized by AAM and AAMV. Alongside the webinar, Watch and Talk events—programs that include networking, listening to and participating in the webinar, and then a facilitated post-webinar activity—were held in Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Washington.

The webinar's topic, evaluation, is a complex and tricky one, but essential for the success of volunteers and vitality of a museum volunteer program. The webinar was moderated by Richard Harker, education and outreach manager, Museum of History & Holocaust Education, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA, and Greg Stevens, assistant director, professional development, American Alliance of Museums. Presenters included Marne Bariso, volunteer and intern manager, Chicago History Museum, Olivia Edlund, education and outreach manager, Philadelphia Magic Gardens, Megan Millman, program Assistant, Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library, and Tina Nolan, principal, Tina Nolan Consulting. Richard and Greg began the discussion endorsing the importance of an evaluation protocol within volunteer programs, and the presenters then relayed examples of challenges and successes experienced at their institutions.

Richard Harker's pointers, inspired in great part from the AAMV publication "Transforming Museum Volunteering," suggested evaluation of volunteers will ultimately convey appreciation and reinforce value of volunteers, as well as motivate them. The museum's volunteer program will be improved, as problems are flagged early and retention of volunteers is improved. The ultimate message to volunteers will be that the organization cares deeply about the experience of the volunteers, and also about the quality of their activities. Other tips included essentials such as including information about how evaluation will be handled up front, during orientation and in the handbook, and that evaluation can be formal and informal. The scene was set for the following presenters' case examples.

Firstly, Olivia Edlund pointed out the majority of Philadelphia's Magic Gardens' visitors, staff, and volunteers are millennials. They use an evaluation network that includes the volunteer manager, other staff members, and visitors to provide feedback, most of which is informal. Primarily, issues of evaluation at the Magic Gardens relate to the volunteer policies that volunteers are informed of and sign off on when they join the program. If follow up or corrective action is needed, consideration is also used to determine what the best way of communicating is (email, phone call, or in person), and what the volunteers' motivations are for volunteering.

The case study that Oliva spoke about involved two volunteers who were late and absent on several occasions. These individuals were sent an email outlining their behavior, recognizing their importance to the organization, and suggesting a solution to rectify the problem. Both volunteers apologized and agreed to the solution. One volunteer had no more offenses and attained the highest level of volunteer achievement for the year (40+ hours). On the other hand, the other volunteer had another offense the following week and never responded after receiving a final warning via email. It was interesting to hear the differing conclusions even though the same action had been taken with both volunteers.

Megan Millman next explained about the Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library's teen volunteer program. Eight to twelve teens from local high schools help run the Winterthur's "Terrific Tuesday" family drop-in program that takes place in July and August, by facilitating a craft/activity station. They also help with outreach at the local Salvation Army summer camp in downtown Wilmington where the "Terrific Tuesday" activities are reprised for a new audience. To prepare for all of this, the teens participate in a teen training week at the end of June. The evaluation component of the teen volunteer program is a "Cycle of Continuous Improvement." throughout the summer.

Final presenters Marne Bariso and Tina Nolan spoke about how they worked together at the Chicago History Museum to incorporate a system of reflective practice into the volunteer gallery interpreter program.

First, Tina defined reflective practice as the process of systemically thinking about the way you do your work, developing theories about how to improve upon the work, and enacting a plan to test your theory. Reflective practice can be done individually, with a partner, or in a group. Protocols for reflective practice include peer-to-peer coaching, reflective journaling, and a host of other activities. Tina also suggested the rationale for using this strategy as:

- To encourage deep thinking about the process of formal or informal teaching.
- To foster a culture of learning and continuous improvement.
- To open dialogue and build a culture of trust.
- To encourage creativity and innovation.
- To improve the experience for the visitor.

## Cycle of Continuous Improvement

•**Pre-Assessment** – begins with application process and in-person interview; during teen training week a pre-assessment worksheet is completed

•**"Terrific Tuesdays"** – teens are prepared to run the activities during teen training week, but as they progress through the summer they become better at teaching and instructing the activities (self-assessment); at the end of the event there is a meeting to discuss how the activities went – this is critical because the programs are then moved to the next venue, the Salvation Army later in the week; teens are also able to learn from each other

•**Salvation Army** – another opportunity for self-assessment for the teens, teens lead a group of campers through all of the activities rather than being in charge of one station. This is also a chance for some "re-training" in the morning before heading to the Salvation Army

▪It is a cyclical process between the "Terrific Tuesday" events and the Salvation Army outreaches throughout the summer.

•**Post-Assessment** – post-assessment worksheet, also an exit interview with the interns who mentor the teens throughout the summer, these interviews can also be informative for the teen program

### Live Tweets From the Webinar!

*Marne Bariso + Tina Nolan: Reflective Practice- "we have a vast reservoir of untapped potential"  
#AAMVolunteers*

*Why evaluate? Because when our volunteers succeed, our #museums succeed! -Richard Harker @Rjwharker from @KSUMHHE #AAMVolunteers*

*What evaluation questions to ask? Ask the right questions. And don't forget @ self-evaluation & exit interview! #AAMVolunteers @MuseumVols*

Next, Marne pointed out how after several years of trying to incorporate a protocol of evaluation for nearly 60 gallery interpreters, the Chicago History Museum (CHM) hadn't come upon a system that was sustainable. The CHM Director of Education had heard of Tina Nolan's work with peer coaching and reflective practice at other cultural organizations, and Tina and CHM decided to collaborate.

Tina first worked with a pilot group of volunteer gallery interpreters, and together they created the worksheets and materials to be used for the initial round of this experience that was eventually named "Peer Exchange." There was apprehension and some confusion among the pilot group of volunteers, but this is evidence that when you aim to change behavior and even culture of an organization's volunteer group, it is difficult.

The essential steps of the "Peer Exchange" process are:

- Each volunteer finds another volunteer partner.
- They have a pre-conference (conversation) about some aspect of their practice (their volunteer activity) that each volunteer wants some information about—and perhaps wants to improve. For example, "I wonder if I use questions more than I lecture during my presentation with the students."
- Each partner does an observation of the other partner, taking notes and collecting data. This data is non-judgmental. Peer coaching is not considered evaluation.
- Finally, a post conference takes place between the volunteer partners, and they conclude what action steps might take place next time for some possible improvement.
- The History Museum added an additional step—the inquiry circle. This is the opportunity for volunteers to get together in an even bigger group and discuss their findings more widely, so that more volunteers could hear about the action steps that the volunteer pairings were coming up with.

Marne added that they are all still learning; another round of "Peer Exchange" will take place this spring.

## CONCLUSION

This webinar on evaluating volunteers and the volunteer program inspired spirited discussion during the webinar, and a lot of follow-up chatter by e-mail and social media. It is not, however, the end of our conversation. Join us at the AAM 2017 Annual meeting where we will be continuing this conversation and on the AAMV members-only forum to tell us about your evaluation triumphs and to add to our discussion.



Marne Bariso

Volunteer and Intern Manager, Chicago History Museum

AAMV Mid-West Regional Director

### Presenters in Webinar:

- Marne Bariso, Volunteer and Intern Manager, Chicago History Museum
- Megan Millman, Program Assistant, Winterthur Museum, Garden and Library
- Olivia Edlund, Education and Outreach Manager, Philadelphia Magic Gardens
- Tina Nolan, Principal, Tina Nolan Consulting

### Moderators in Webinar:

- Richard Harker, Education and Outreach Manager, Museum of History and Holocaust Education
- Greg Stevens, Assistant Director, Professional Development, American Alliance of Museums



The Exploratorium, photo by Amy Snyder

The Field Trip Explainer program at the Exploratorium is an intensive and time-limited experience for early-career informal education professionals. In order for this team to best engage the students they serve, they too must shift each day into learner mode. Ongoing training on gallery-specific content and facilitation strategies are key to this shift. In addition, peer-to-peer mentoring and reflection on varying ways of guiding learning processes augment their professional development in this three-year program.

One intern is welcomed annually into this cohort in either Fall or Spring semester. In our planning email exchanges, it was clear that prospective intern, Julia Relat, struggled to see the benefit to her burgeoning career as a science writer, but she agreed to trust our judgement. The team she was to join was selected to build a community reflective of our audience, with a diversity of academic, professional and life experiences to share. Also, it might be fun for the students to hear a true Catalan accent.

Still jet-lagged from her Barcelona to San Francisco, CA, flight, Julia borrowed a sleeping bag and set out for a weekend of camping and bonding with her new teammates. When I saw her next, she was at the demo table, observing a fellow Explainer as he dissected a cow eye! Now back in Spain, I asked Julia to reflect on her experience. She provided the following account of her adventure in Spanish, English, and Catalan. Enjoy!

Deirdre Araujo  
Manager Volunteer Engagement  
The Exploratorium

## Exploratorium, 3 Months as an Explainer

By: Julia Relat

When I think of the Exploratorium, I inevitably feel myself smile in complicity. Only those who are part of it or have been to it at some point in their life can understand what I'm talking about. When you go in and start immersing yourself, neither space nor time counts as you enter another reality formed by the exhibits, by you, and by all those willing to share the experience. True, you start out lost, not knowing exactly where to go, what to look at, hear, smell, touch, move.., but then, you try, simply to experience, and try again, and continue to discover the myriad of options that emerge from each of the exhibits. It is at this moment that you begin to build, to create, to generate ideas as a direct result of having managed to leave your mind blank. The Exploratorium transports you back to the beginning, deconstructing everything you had assumed to be true, and gives you the option to create and own your perspective. Never had so many uncertainties and certainties combined at once, a burst of questions, answers, and different points of view invade your mind. Definitely, the Exploratorium changes the way you think.



Several Explainers helping visitors at The Exploratorium, photo by Amy Snyder

The Exploratorium is a public learning laboratory located in San Francisco in California. Learn more at [exploratorium.edu](http://exploratorium.edu)

During the three months of volunteering, which I have almost exclusively dedicated to working as an explainer, I have been able to dive deep into the day-to-day of the museum. Apart from having participated in what I consider to be the best training program I have experienced so far, focused on the philosophy of expanding scientific tools and knowledge by doing and proving, instead of memorizing (with which you stimulate curiosity making you a participant and responsible for your own learning), I have been able to interact with many different departments of the museum. Although the structure is clearly differentiated, each area having its own space (floor, explainers, workshop, tinkering, bio lab, learning department and administration and communications), and everyone knowing where their work begins and ends, all departments are interconnected, creating an articulated whole that functions as a single organism. If all this is possible, it is because the people who work there have a clear vision of the priorities of the museum, as well as its philosophy, and the commitment that implies. In fact, the museum is its workers, who have not lost a single opportunity to surprise me and motivate me.

Last but not least, I would like to highlight the location, the architecture and the interior design of the building that combine to help you immerse yourself and absorb all the science and magic of this box of surprises called The Exploratorium.

From my point of view, everyone should spend some time of their life in this small paradise.

*Julia Relat, from Spain, completed an international internship at the Exploratorium. She has a PhD in Pharmacology, and at the time was enrolled in a Masters of Scientific, Medical, and Environmental Communication at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF).*



## Making Paid Internships a Priority

By: Jenny Woods

I would bet the cost of one paid intern that you read that title and thought to yourself, “yeah, paid internships would be great but my museum just can’t afford it.” And it probably doesn’t matter if you work at a large or small museum – your response is the same. Smaller museums with smaller budgets can’t find the extra money in the budget to pay an intern. Larger organizations with larger budgets often have larger intern programs and can’t find the extra money to pay the 30 interns that work with them each year. So we continue to have unpaid interns, pat ourselves on the back for providing such a meaningful experience to these students, and perpetuate a decidedly homogenous museum field, full of people who were able to work for free to gain experience. I don’t have a perfect solution for finding the funding for paid interns, but the hard truth is that until museums make paid internships a priority, there won’t be any funding for them in our budgets. Once we do prioritize paying interns, we will change the museum profession for the better.

Last summer the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) piloted two paid Emerging Arts Leader internships. These interns worked 20 hours per week for 10 weeks at \$12 per hour (minimum wage in Seattle in 2016). One section of the intern application asked how the applicant would bring a diverse perspective to SAM, and we particularly encouraged applications from people who are underrepresented in the museum field. We posted the opportunities on our website and the internship boards at local universities. We also sent the opportunities to the diversity/equity/multicultural offices of local universities, city and state government organizations focused on equity, and local art community groups. We received 55 applications for two positions and interviewed 6 applicants who provided particularly intriguing

answers to the question about diverse perspectives. The selected interns were each placed in a home department, but had several cross departmental projects they worked on together. We made sure these interns had experiences with staff from every department in the museum – sometimes as a half day of job shadowing, and other times working directly on a project a department was focused on. The program was designed to have the interns be able to contribute their knowledge, skills and abilities in a meaningful way, while also offering them a wide lens to learn the breadth of all it takes to run a museum. While there were a few hiccups with this pilot year (ours were mostly scheduling based) overall staff and the interns deemed the internships a success and we are planning to continue the program next summer.

So how did we fund these internships? It was a long process that started a few years ago. Staff, including myself, started by regularly talking about having more paid interns. I brought it up anytime the lack of diversity in the museum field was mentioned. I mentioned it when staff complained about the few internship applications they received. I listed it up on the annual staff survey, when asked what would make SAM a better place to work. I brought it up every time I was explaining the Department of Labor's restrictions on unpaid interns. Other staff - including our Director - mentioned it too, in racial equity trainings and workshops, managers meetings and board meetings. It was always in the background, and eventually it stopped being dismissed as financially impossible, and became a pilot program that cost \$2400 per intern, and was included in the operating budget. Now we are working on increasing the number of paid internships we offer, mostly by continuing to prioritize their importance, and now mentioning the success of the Emerging Arts Leader Internships. We might only get to add one or two each year, but we have made a start. I want to be

transparent that we do still host many unpaid internships, and we have worked to make some distinctions between the two programs - different types of tasks, projects and scheduling expectations, in particular - to avoid tension or confusion between our unpaid and paid opportunities.

Some strategies you might try for funding interns: fold the intern cost into the budget for the exhibition or program the intern will work on. Pursue grants that allow you to include paid interns costs. Partner with organizations, private foundations or local government programs that will pay your intern for you. Ask a board member to fund an internship. One strategy I don't recommend is paying a stipend instead of an hourly wage. There are legal considerations regarding paid interns and stipends that may cause the Department of Labor to designate the intern as an employee and put you on the wrong side of the law for not paying minimum wage! The other strategy I don't recommend is waiting for the money tree to grow in front of your museum to fund your internships. There isn't a magical, easy solution, but there is a way forward. Let's all move forward.

*Jenny Woods, Manager of Volunteer Programs,  
Seattle Art Museum*

**From the editor:** The topic of paid internships is rightfully receiving a lot of attention at the moment in our field. For links to more readings and thought-pieces visit AAM's "Resources for the Museum Industry to Discuss the Issue of Unpaid Internships":

<http://www.aam-us.org/home/unpaid-museum-internships>

# UPCOMING EVENTS AND NEWS

## ***2017 Annual Meeting and MuseumExpo***

**St. Louis, Missouri**

**May 7-10, 2017**

AAMV is proud to announce three sessions at this year's annual conference, in addition to hosting a networking luncheon.

### **Sessions:**

#### **Risk Management and Volunteers**

Host: Lois Kuter, Volunteer Services Manager, Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

#### **It's Critical—Evaluating Museum Volunteers**

Host: Marne Bariso, Volunteer and Intern Manager, Chicago History Museum

#### **Internships for Small Museums**

Host: Richard Harker, Education and Outreach Manager, Museum of History and Holocaust Education

## ***Now Online | Podcast Episode 3***

**Episode 3 of Volunteer Voices** - AAMV's members-only podcast is now available to listen to and download through our website.

We interviewed two former interns Ryan Meara, the Chicago History Museum, and Barrett Cooney, the Seattle Art Museums, to see what interning and internships look like from the intern's point of view.

Talking about their motivations for interning, their favorite experiences, and what they learned during their internships, Barrett and Ryan's perspective provides insight for those working with interns.

Also, check out former episodes of Volunteer Voices through the website, including:

**Episode 1:** Using social media in volunteer recruitment

**Episode 2:** Teen volunteer programs

If you want to hear from a particular person or about a specific topic on the podcast let us know by e-mail at: [rharker@kennesaw.edu](mailto:rharker@kennesaw.edu).

## ***Twitter***

AAMV is now on Twitter @Museumvols.

Follow us, retweet us, and send links that you want to share with our professional community.

## ***Check Out Our New Website!***

**Brand new members only content:**

- "Volunteer Voices" Podcast Series
- Complete Archive of Newsletters
- Sample Documents

## ***Register for AAMV's Networking Luncheon Today!***

Come network with AAMV members and the board at this years AAM conference in St. Louis! If you are new to volunteer management or have ideas to improve your museum's volunteer program, this is a great opportunity to share ideas with colleagues from all kinds and sizes of institutions!

Monday, May 8, 2017

11:45-1:15 p.m.

Marriott St. Louis Grand

Price: \$30.00 - Registration Required

**Register online now at:**

<http://annualmeeting.aam-us.org/>