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Abstract

This case study explores the nature of museum education and its capacity to influence the operations and functions of the museum as a whole. Specifically, I examine the operations of the Columbus Museum of Art in Columbus, OH, and the institutional changes that occurred in the early 2000s. By centering the education department around the philosophy of creativity, the education staff reimagined the role of education in the museum and the museum visitor’s learning experience. From this new focus on creativity came a museum-wide adoption of creativity as an institutional value, an adoption that was manifested in the Center for Creativity, a structural reorganization and new job titles, and a new function as a social service for the community and local groups. This study shows that significant institutional change can take place as the result of a focus on education in the museum.
Dedication

This document is dedicated to my family, who have supported my education and passion for museums; my friends, who whined, complained, cried, and celebrated with me throughout this process; the Columbus Museum of Art, which continues to inspire my love for museums; and coffee, without which this thesis would not be possible.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Arts Policy and Administration

Specialization: Museum Education and Administration
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Preface

I have always felt at home in museums. One of my earliest memories is visiting the local natural history museum with my family and marveling at the fossils, exhibits, and artifacts on display. This passion for museums grew even stronger when I read the novel *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* (Konigsburg, 1967) when I was about ten years old. In this book, two children run away from home and live in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, helping to solve the mystery of a statue attributed to Michelangelo. For years, I dreamed of following in these characters’ footsteps and found each museum visit more enchanting and inspiring than the last.

Studying cultural anthropology in college helped me discover that one reason I love museums is that within those walls, I could travel the world, learn about people from diverse and varied backgrounds, and delve into the history of our culture and our world. Once I discovered that work in museums was both my passion and my desired career path, I began working and interning in as many museums as I could, gaining experience and understanding of the role museums play in our society and communities and the ways in which they promote learning through experience and knowledge of the world around us.

After gaining some work experience, the next logical step was for me to return to school and earn my master’s degree – an achievement that will open new doors and
opportunities for me. But getting to that point has not been easy. I have always excelled at scholarly pursuits, but I do not consider myself an academic or researcher by nature. I take more satisfaction from completing or implementing a project or event than from a day spent conducting research. Because of this, I was incredibly anxious about the prospect of writing a thesis. I knew that museums would be the focus of my study, but I drew a blank beyond that. To be honest, I thought very little about my impending thesis in the first year of my studies, at least until a class visit to the Columbus Museum of Art (CMA). During a conversation with various members of the education staff, I was drawn in by their passion and dedication to their work, and intrigued by the unique and innovative approach to education implemented throughout the museum. This interest continued to grow as I met with other members of the CMA staff on subsequent visits and learned more about the institution as a whole. At last, it dawned on me – this could be my thesis! A thesis did not have to be some dusty, library-bound, statistic-driven report; instead, an examination of this living, evolving institution and the passionate people who make it work would allow my passion and interests to shine through as well. This study is the result of that lightbulb moment.
Chapter 1: Rationale for Study

Introduction

Museums of the twenty-first century are facing an identity crisis. No longer able to subsist on the traditional methods of preservation and exhibition alone, museums are challenged to question the role of this institution in the community and the issues that take precedent both in and outside their walls. These issues and challenges include political and societal pressures in the arts, financial constraints due to the lack of public and private funding, and increasingly diverse audiences seeking recognition of their unique races, ethnicities, sexual identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and personal experiences. Education is one central issue in this identity crisis. Museums have long been regarded as educational institutions in a general sense, but specific and targeted educational programs in the museum have often been relegated to the sidelines and deferred in favor of curatorial and administrative goals and visions. This is especially true in art museums, as opposed to the more “hands-on” genres of science, history, and children’s museums. This is changing, however, as evidenced by innovative programs and practices that bring education to the forefront of the museum and specifically by the actions of the Columbus Museum of Art, in Columbus, Ohio, recognized as a 2013 National Medal recipient by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and as a leader
in the museum industry. The results of this change in focus may form a sustainable model of success for art museums today and tomorrow.

Background

The Columbus Museum of Art, founded in 1878 and located in downtown Columbus, OH, has long been recognized on the local and national level for its excellence in visitor engagement and education. With over 200,000 guests per year, the museum is a significant contributor to the arts and to the cultural life and industry of Columbus, OH. The museum has a large collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century American and European modern art, and strong examples of Impressionism, German Expressionism, and Cubism. They maintain the largest publically available collection of woodcarvings by Elijah Pierce, a Columbus folk artist, and the world’s largest collection of painting and lithographs by George Bellows, another Columbus native. The Photo League collection was acquired in 2001, and the Philip and Suzanne Schiller Collection of American Social Commentary Art 1930–1970, considered to be “the most important collection of its kind in the country” by curators from the Smithsonian Institution, was acquired in 2005. Today, the museum’s collection includes over 10,000 works. The Columbus Museum of Art has been undergoing renovation and expansion over the last few years, including the construction of a new wing, which will open in Fall 2015, all funded by the ART MATTERS capital campaign. The goal of the ART MATTERS campaign, beyond the building expansion, is to “foster a dynamic visitor experience built around a world-class collection, which places CMA at the
vanguard of a new movement among art museums that focuses not only on art, but also on visitors and their experiences with art and with each other” (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015). The museum has a strong focus on education and partners with Columbus City Schools to ensure that all 5,000 fifth-graders in the district visit the museum each year. The CMA is also home to the Center for Creativity, an 18,000 square foot space in the museum that serves as a physical hub for the institutional value of creativity (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015).

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this case study is to examine the relationship between the educational practices and philosophy of the Columbus Museum of Art and the operations and function of the museum as a whole. I propose that changes, beginning in 2006, in the education department of the Columbus Museum of Art served as a catalyst for changes in other aspects of the museum and thus affected the administration and function of the museum as a whole. Specifically, this thesis proposes that when the education department adopted new educational philosophies and practices, there was a ripple effect throughout the entire museum that impacted various aspects of museum operations, function, and role in the community, as illustrated in Figure 1, below.
By *education philosophy and practice*, I refer to the theories on learning and teaching that are employed in the museum setting and the various ways in which activities, discussions, questioning, and art-making are integrated with specific education-based goals in mind. By *operations and functions*, I refer to actions and decisions that affect the museum institutionally, including mission, vision, institutional values, branding, internal structure, engagement with and in the community, leadership, and the continued advancement of the museum.
To investigate this phenomenon, I will first conduct a review of the literature to examine the role of education in the museum setting in both historical and contemporary contexts, the dominant philosophies and theories of museum education, and the focal issues surrounding the relationship between museum education and administration, including the role of the museum in the community. Ultimately, the review of these topics will be applied to an in-depth examination of the Columbus Museum of Art. Data will consist of interviews, published articles, and personal experiences as a museum visitor in an attempt to understand the relationship between education and the institution as a whole in this particular museum.

**Research Questions**

The critical research question guiding this case study is as follows:

To what extent do educational philosophy and practices at the Columbus Museum of Art have the capacity to influence the operations and function of the museum as a whole?

Additional questions that will be important to this study include:

1. What forms can art museum education take? Why are these forms important?
2. What is the value of art museum education?
3. What role should education play in the museum?
4. What is the relationship of education to other aspects of museum operations?
5. How is change created in the museum?
6. How is change manifested in the museum?
7. How does an institution define success or achievement in these issues?
8. What factors led to this success?
9. Does internal change in the museum affect its function or role in the community?

**Scope and Limitations of the Study**

This case study has the narrow focus of the organizational change as the result of change in the education department at the Columbus Museum of Art. This could be viewed as limiting, I feel that this specific issue demands close attention and exploration. While other related topics, like the aesthetic experience in the museum, comprehensive reasons why the CMA chose creativity as a focus, and contemporary theory in museum education are certainly important and influence this case, there has already been significant research into these issues. My study takes these issues into account and builds on them, examining institutional change in museums inspired by change in educational practice and philosophy at the CMA in a scope that is reasonable for a Master’s thesis.

**Significance to the Field**

It is my hope that my case study will add to the current literature on art museum education by highlighting a leading institution in the field, breaking down the components of its model of operation, and elaborating on the relationship between and influence of education on other aspects of museum operations and function. By examining these issues, I hope to show that the Columbus Museum of Art has a meaningful and sustainable model that other art museums might adopt and adapt to their own needs and the needs of the community in which they are situated.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a general overview of the issues surrounding museum education and operations, in order to contextualize the specific actions of the Columbus Museum of Art within the larger context of the field. This literature review will examine the history of museum education and the museum’s construction as an educational institution, the schools of thought guiding traditional and contemporary museum education, the varied roles the museum plays in the community, and the history of institutional vision and goals in art museums. By consulting this review and its overview of “standard” art museum operations, the specific actions and operations of the Columbus Museum of Art can be compared and contrasted to the rest of the industry.

Museums as Educational Institutions

Museum education is a uniquely American phenomenon. The first museums in Europe had educational functions of a sort, but this was mainly in the form of instruction in “good” taste, manners, and the power of the current rulers or aristocracy. Once the first public museums were founded, however, museum education took a different turn, focusing on sharing knowledge, access, and interpretation to the guests who visited the collection. As sites of informal learning, museums had the opportunity to make meaning and push the boundaries of education in a way that formal education institutions could not. This earned them an important and valuable place in the community.
When the Charleston Library Society in Charleston, South Carolina opened a museum in 1773, it marked the founding of the first public museum in the United States, and one of only a handful in the world. Soon after came the Peabody Museum in Salem, Massachusetts in 1799, and the nation’s first art museum, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia in 1805 (Ramsey, 1938). In the late 1800s and early 1900s, some of the most prestigious public museums were founded, including the American Museum of Natural History in 1869; the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1870; the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 1870; the Art Institute of Chicago in 1879; and the Field Museum in 1896 (Ramsey, 1938). These museums were founded with educational purposes, unlike the shows of power and wealth that dominated the European museums (Skramstad, 1999). The motto of the American Museum of Natural History was “For the people, for education, for science,” and in its founding documents (1869), it states that the museum was created “for the purpose of…encouraging and developing the study of Natural Science; of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and to that end of furnishing popular instruction and recreation” (Ramsey, 1938, p. 1), clearly stating its educational motive.

Museum education continued to evolve, and by the early 1980s the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) published Museums for a New Century, a report which evaluated the current role of museums in American society and stressed the need for strong educational programs as an essential part of the twenty-first century museum (Somerville, 2013). This drive has continued to evolve and change in response to
national education policy, funding – both public and private, changing technologies, and a diverse audience with varied needs and experiences. Weil (2007) believes that:

In place of an establishment-like institution focused primarily inward on the growth, care, and study of its collection, emerging instead is a more entrepreneurial institution that - if my vision of its ultimate form should prove correct - will have shifted its focus outward to concentrate on providing primarily educational services to the public and will measure its success in that effort by the overarching criterion of whether it is actually able to provide those services in a demonstrably effective way (p. 30)

Education remains an essential part of museums, but too often a part that ranks secondary to institutional and curatorial visions and goals, as explored in the “Institutional Vision” section of this chapter.

**Theories of Museum Education**

Just as in formal education, the philosophies and methods of informal education are varied, hotly debated, and ever changing. In contrasting these two styles of teaching and learning, E.B. Caston, author of *A Model for Teaching in a Museum Setting* (1989), says “words are the principal tools of the school, whereas, objects are the principal educational tools of the museum” (cited in Hannon & Randolph, 1999, p. 4-5). Museum education, unlike traditional classroom education, is participatory, voluntary, and experience-based. These features give students agency and ownership over their own learning experience, and have the ability to make abstract concepts concrete through hands-on, eye-witness experiences with objects. The Smithsonian Institution magazine, *Smithsonian in Your Classroom* (1996), introduces this concept:
The objects inside a museum may be…made by exceptional artists such as Vincent Van Gogh. Or they may be natural specimens such as bones, beetles or fossils. They may be simple, ordinary things such as tools, forks and spoons, or quilts that show what everyday life was like for most people. All these things offer unique ways to learn about life in our nation and our world (cited in Hannon & Randolph, 1999, p. 7).

Howard Gardener, author of *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach* (1991), does not suggest that teachers “convert each school into a museum, nor each teacher into a master, but rather to think of the ways in which the strengths of a museum atmosphere, of apprenticeship learning, and of engaging projects can pervade all educational environments from home to school to workplace” (cited in Hannon & Randolph, 1999, p. 5).

Breaking down the most common varieties of art museum education, there are several schools of thought that can be roughly grouped into theories of the object, disciplines, and museum literacy; theories of learning and the psychology of the individual; and theories of making meaning in a sociocultural context (Ebitz, 2007). Each set of theories has positives and negatives and has gone in and out of trend over the years, but each group still offers innovative and valuable ways of looking at art and material culture.

Theories of the object, disciplines, and museum literacy maintain that the objects within the museum are central to the museum experience itself, and that museum literacy, the idea that one can have personally significant experiences with these objects, is the outcome of education within the institution (Ebitz, 2007). One popular practice in this theory group is Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE). Especially popular in
American schools and museums in the 1980s and 1990s, this type of instruction is what most would consider “traditional” art museum education and is based on art history, art criticism, aesthetics, and the disciplines of art construction.

Focused less on the history and facts of the art seen in the museum and more on the experience of viewing art, theories of learning and the psychology of the individual include practices that recognize that individuals have different styles of learning and include subjective interpretation and personal reflection. In the 1920s, influenced in part by John Dewey’s “learning by doing” philosophy, this approach became popular and the practice of “active learning” eventually became synonymous with many modern museum education models and practices (Somerville, 2013). In 1936, an educator at the Cleveland Museum of Art, Thomas Munro, decided to replace what he dubbed the “old way” – “a quick general tour of the whole building, ‘in which a docile class was rapidly paraded through a tiring and bewildering series of galleries,’ supplemented with an informational lecture ‘replete with names and dates’” – which we might liken to the theories of the object, disciplines, and museum literacy, with the “new way” – limiting the number of items children viewed and asking them to sketch or take notes about what they saw, actively participating in their own learning (Somerville, 2013, p. 6).

While some of these new models were first intended for adult museum visitors, it was quickly seen that these forms of self-directed and experiential learning (Ebitz, 2007) was equally valuable for younger visitors as well, especially to supplement more traditional teaching and learning methods in the classroom. Museum educators began to recognize different learning theories, including Kolb’s (1984) classifications of active
experimentation, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and concrete experience, from different audiences. Housen’s Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) is still popular today in many museums and is a student-centered method, focusing on critical thinking and a strict questioning strategy in which the educator can only ask three questions of the group: What is going on in this picture? What do you see that makes you say that? What more can we find? These three questions take learners through “accountive,” “interpretive,” and “re-creative” stages of thinking and learning rather than the sort of rote memorization and regurgitation that still can be found today in some school classrooms (cited in Ebitz, 2007).

Finally, theories of making meaning in a sociocultural context use art as a jumping off point to create dialogue about important community, cultural, and global issues. Duncan (1995) saw the art museum as “a stage for performing cultural rituals that serve ideological needs and define our values and beliefs about social, sexual, and political identity” (cited in Ebitz, 2007, p. 25). Additionally, beyond the traditional view of museums as sites of knowledge transmission, scholars and educators see the museum as a site of knowledge creation by the visitor. Influenced by factors like their own personal experiences, their communities and homes, their sense of self and identity, and personal agenda and beliefs, visitors give new meanings to their experiences in museums (Silverman, Visitor Meaning-Making in Museums for a New Age, 1995). In some views of this modern museum, collections and exhibitions are replaced by “a process or experience [where] a cacophony of voices may be heard that present a range of views, experiences, and values” (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 152). Through these models, the
museum is less about the objects it holds and more about the voices, ideas, and world-views that those objects represent.

Beyond these theories of museum education is the simple concept of “learning” in the museum. Referring to the theory of constructivism, in which “learners construct their own meanings and make sense in their own way of the learning opportunities they experience,” learning in the museum recognizes that guests have varied motivations for visiting and may not be seeking out an intentional educational experience (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p. 21). By instead offering more generalized learning opportunities, the museum allows the visitor to create his own experience and interpret it in his own fashion and in his own time, creating personal conversations between the viewer, the objects, and the wealth of personal experiences and knowledge he may bring to bear.

**Role of the Museum in the Community**

Museums have played many roles in society, including showcases of the ruling class or monarchy’s wealth and power, a civilizing agent for the lower class, educational institutions in a broader sense, and centers for dialogue and discourse on societal and cultural issues. Keith Hudson, of *Museum International* magazine, views the museums in our community today as institutions with an obligation as a public good or service:

The most fundamental change that has affected museums during the [past] half century...is the now almost universal conviction that they exist in order to serve the public. The old-style museum felt itself under no such obligation. It existed, it had a building, it had collections and a staff to look after them. It was reasonably adequately financed, and its visitors, usually not numerous, came to
look, to wonder and to admire what was set before them. They were in no sense partners in the enterprise. The museum's prime responsibility was to its collections, not its visitors” (cited in Weil, 2007, p. 32).

Although this idea is not entirely new, as the same principle was posited by John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Museum, who specifically advocated for innovative museum programming that reinforced the museum’s “social responsibility to serve as an institute of learning” in the 1920s (Elliott, 2012, p. 16), this sense of obligation and responsibility to serve the public is now widely accepted in the museum community.

The sense of obligation is reinforced by the recognition that the museums of the twenty-first century do not have to, and should not have to, remain as they were in decades and centuries past. Leaders in the field have acknowledged that the museum is an adapting, changing institution that can have the flexibility to meet the needs of the community in which it resides. Adele Z. Silver of the Cleveland Museum of Art states that “museums are inventions of men, not inevitable, eternal, ideal, nor divine. They exist for the things we put in them, and they change as each generation chooses how to see and use those things” (cited in Weil, 2007, p. 31). This flexibility extends to the community served by the museum, a group which in turn has an ever-changing definition and makeup. The “community” served by the museum is vast, encompassing all from young to old, single to married to partnered, traditional to modern, American to international, and every variation inbetween. Some may feel entitled to the opportunities the museum has to offer, but some may feel side-lined or excluded – what does the museum mean to them, and how can they be best served? “Museums and galleries must also provide meaning and enjoyment to the diverse range of publics within the context of
changing societal values. Museums in their role as custodial institutions of the world's material heritage, must also acknowledge and serve two unique communities - our ancestors and those who are not yet born” (Sandell & Janes, 2007, p. 1).

Education certainly remains a priority for many museums today, but equally important are the concepts of exploration, analysis, dialogue, preservation, and – simplest of all – enjoyment. Some scholars question “whose museum is it anyway?” Is it the museum of the staff, who may have an educational or curatorial agenda? Or is the museum of the public, who may bring their own motivations and agendas to the institution? Is it the museum of the curators, and educators must simply work with their visions? Or do museum educators have a place at the heart of the museum? Does museum administration have an obligation to listen to needs and desires of the staff and the public? Who has a say in the role of the museum and the ways in which the museum operates from within? These questions are being answered in many ways across the nation by members of the organizations themselves and by members of the community.

**Institutional Vision**

Despite a strong historical grounding in education, education programs in art museums are sometimes separate and disconnected from the rest of the museum. While mission statements frequently mention educational goals, goals related to collection, curation, and exhibition are frequently given higher priority. Education programs often come after – after fundraising, after curation, after preservation, and after ticket sales and memberships. Its importance is acknowledged, but sometimes disregarded.
Harold Skramstad (1999) explains in his article, “An Agenda for Museums in the Twenty-first Century,” that as American museums continued to develop, at the turn of the century large cities like New York, Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit opened museums with the motive of displaying their burgeoning economic and cultural power. Founded based on the contributions and support of wealthy, upper-class donors, these museums were less dependent on admissions and the earned revenue from programming and other events. Because of the size and primedence of these museums, this conservative and formalized model of museum administration came to dominate the industry. Museums shifted their focus from the audience to the collection, and based their authority on their valuable and extensive collections, not their educational and community roots. “The result was a gradual yet profound culture change as museums shifted the direction of their energies from public education and inspiration toward self-generated, internal, professional, and academic goals” (Skramstad, 1999, p. 112). The public school system also influenced this shift. As schools, testing, and formal education took precedence, the public, informal education offered by museums received less attention. Combined with the focus on collections, the museum was no longer a force for public education, but rather the “preserver and protector of the rare, the unique, the beautiful, and the special in the arts, the humanities, and the sciences” (Skramstad, 1999, p. 113). This change was not completely negative, however. It resulted in increased professionalization in the field, new practices and technology in preservation, and a firm place in the cultural landscape of the nation. But the impact of this shift away from education cannot be
ignored and must be considered when establishing the place of museums in today’s communities.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Design of the Study

This thesis is a case study examining the nature of the relationship between educational practices and philosophy and the operations of the Columbus Museum of Art as a whole. As defined by Creswell (2013), a case study is an in-depth exploration of an issue, problem, or phenomenon in a “real-life, contemporary context or setting” (p. 97). This qualitative approach can be bound by time and/or place or examine an issue over a period of time. Using the multiple sources of information, including “observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports,” this methodology hones in on the details and specifics of the unique case (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

The case study is first defined by the nature of the case to be examined, which may be a “concrete entity, such as an individual, a small group, an organization, or a partnership” or at a more abstract level, “a community, a relationship, a decision process, or a specific project” (Creswell, 2013, p. 98). For this case study, the site is the Columbus Museum of Art, and the relationship to be examined is of that between the education program and the museum as a whole. This site was chosen as a result of personal interest and experiences, the unique nature of the educational programming at the museum, and the museum’s status as a National Medal recipient by the Institute of Museum and Library Services in 2013.
Second, the intent of the case study must be determined. A case study may either be intrinsic, designed to “illustrate a unique case, a case that has unusual interest in and of itself and needs to be described and detailed,” or instrumental, designed to “understand a specific issue, problem, or concern” (Creswell, 2013, p. 98). My study of the Columbus Museum of Art is intrinsic. I believe that the operations and functions of the museum are unique in the industry and I wish to examine them in more detail. At the conclusion of this study, however, I do hope that there are instrumental benefits in the form of a model that might inspire other museums.

Third, case studies present in-depth understanding of the case at hand. I will accomplish this through the collection of many forms of data, in some cases both qualitative and quantitative. In this qualitative study, I conducted several interviews with key members of the staff, transcribed and recorded the interviews, examined documents, records, and reports, and analyzed reflexively my own personal experiences and observations of the museum and its operations.

Fourth, the approach to data analysis must be determined. I will assess multiple units – education department, leadership, internal organization, mission and values, etc. – and the ways in which these units come together to form a progressive whole, the Columbus Museum of Art.

Fifth, the case should be well described in the study, and themes, issues, or unique situations should be identified, as they may affect the case. A detailed description of the Columbus Museum of Art can be found in the “background” section of Chapter 1: Rationale for Study and a more thorough description follows in Chapter 4: The State of
the Art. The theme of “creativity” is central to this case, and is explained more fully throughout the study. Ultimately, these themes will be presented as part of a theoretical model that other museums might adopt.

Finally, the case study will end with a conclusion that presents my view of the case and the meaning that I, as a researcher, derived from the study. This conclusion will consist of information and understandings gained from the research, as well as recommendations for areas need of further investigation.

Interview Questions

Interviews will be conducted at the Columbus Museum of Art and are intended to be semi-structured, with opportunities for interviewees to speak candidly, to elaborate on issues they find stimulating or engaging, and to offer additional topics and insights related to the questions. Questions asked in the interviews are as follows:

Background information

1. How long have you worked at the Columbus Museum of Art?
2. What is your position at the Museum?

Focal questions

3. In your own words, how would you describe the educational philosophy of the Columbus Museum of Art?
4. How would you describe the educational practices of the Columbus Museum of Art?
5. Do you think that these practices are similar or different than other art museums? How so?

6. Do you think that educational practices in museums (in general) have an effect on how the museum as a whole operates? Why or why not?

7. Do you think that the specific educational practices of the Columbus Museum of Art have had an effect on the operations of the whole museum? Why or why not?

8. Do you think that there is a relationship between the educational aspects and the administrative aspects of the museum? Why or why not?

9. Do you think that there is an important relationship between education and administration in the museum, or is it an unimportant relationship? Why or why not?

10. Do you think that the museum plays a role in the local community?
   a. If yes, how would you describe that role? What factors in the museum do you think contribute to that role?
   b. If no, why do you feel that way?

11. Do you think that the way the Columbus Museum of Art operates might be a model that other museums might imitate? Why or why not?
   a. What are the essential elements of this model?
   c. Are there other museums that might benefit from this type of model?

Other questions may be asked, depending on the subjects and issues raised by the interviewee through the course of conversation.
Chapter 4: The State of the Art

The cultural stereotype of the art museum is pervasive. Ask the average person on the street about museums and he will most likely describe a large, white-columned temple full of long hallways, lined with imposing gold-framed art and marble nudes. Filling those hallowed halls are steely-haired docents that are reminiscent of librarians, rambling off dates and facts from the long history of art in hushed tones to groups of glazed-eyed school children. This model of museum is the sort described by Skramstad (1999) – an institution that preserves and collects the works of the “great masters” and conservatively offers lessons on the history of the art. According to A Decade of Arts Engagement: Findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002–2012, a National Endowment for the Arts report (2015), attendance rates at visual and performing arts events have declined since 2002, with slightly over half of all American adults attending an arts event or activity in 2012. Only twenty-one percent of American adults visited an art museum or gallery at least once in 2012 (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015), a number that seems bleak to those in the industry. Nina Simon (2010), posits that people do not visit museums because they feel that cultural institutions are irrelevant to their lives; the institution never changes; the “voice” or administration of the museum does not include diverse views or give context for understanding; the institution is not a
creative place for expression; and the institution is not a social place for the exchange of ideas (Simon, 2010). The contemporary museum is in a tenuous position:

On one hand, they retain many of their traditional distinctive features – their authoritative and legitimizing status, their role as a symbol of community, their ‘sitedness,’ the centrality that they give to material culture, the durability and solidity of objects, the non-verbal nature of many of their messages, and the fact that audiences enter and move within them. One the other hand, they are challenged by new information technologies, increasingly mobile and heterogeneous communities, and the demand for contemporary programs that demonstrate usefulness and “relevance” (Burton & Scott, 2007, p. 60). But what can be done to make the museum relevant? To bring these visitors into the museum and show them that there is a place for all types of people and points of views within its walls? While there are still many art museums that cling to the “temple of art” model and the traditional operations and programs of museums, others, like the Columbus Museum of Art, question the model, address these concerns, and look to the future.

The typical mission of an art museum is recognizable. It hits the big topics of collection and preservation and hails back to the traditional models of museums. Looking at a few of the blockbuster museums of the art world, the commonality of their missions is obvious. The mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City, is “to collect, preserve, study, exhibit, and stimulate appreciation for and advance knowledge of works of art that collectively represent the broadest spectrum of human achievement at the highest level of quality, all in the service of the public and in accordance with the highest professional standards” (Metropolitan Museum of Art). The mission of the Paul J. Getty Museum, in Los Angeles, is “to inspire curiosity about, and enjoyment and understanding of, the visual arts by collecting, conserving, exhibiting and
interpreting works of art of outstanding quality and historical importance” (Paul J. Getty Museum). While there is certainly nothing inherently wrong with those missions, something seems to be missing, especially for the seventy-nine percent of Americans who do not visit art museums each year. What are they getting from these goals of “preservation” and “stimulation?” And for institutions regarded as centers of education, there seems to be little very room for that amid all the collecting and exhibiting going on.

Turning the focus to the Columbus Museum of Art, the mission of the museum during the 1990s and early 2000s fit right in this traditional model:

In recent years, the museum has reasserted its mission to acquire, to preserve, to study, and to interpret its collections, and to stimulate public interest in art through special exhibitions and education programs. That mission takes shape today in the following assumptions:

- As a fine arts museum, the Columbus Museum of Art stresses artistic quality, program excellence, and the highest standards of professional practice in all audiences of the city.
- As the major art museum in Columbus, the Columbus Museum of Art embraces its public responsibility to reach and to involve the diverse audiences of the city.
- As the major art museum in Central Ohio, the Columbus Museum of Art intends that its collections and programs will try to represent the broad history of art and reflect the varied interests of the region.
- As the oldest and most solidly established arts institution in Columbus, the Columbus Museum of Art will seek to play a major role in the increasing urbanity and sophistication of the city.
- We believe that the future of the Columbus Museum of Art is tied to its relationship to a community and a society that is plural and culturally diverse in nature. Therefore, it is our belief and stated goal to seek a level of inclusiveness at all institutional levels that adequately and accurately reflect the diversity and plurality of the world in which we live (Columbus Museum of Art, 1992, pp. 1-2).
While this mission does highlight the role of the museum as a diverse, community-focused institution, it is certainly consistent with the idea that museums are first and foremost centers of collection, exhibition, and preservation and only marginally concerned with education. Educational goals are only briefly and generally mentioned in relation to the role of education as a method of “stimulating public interest in art.”

Additionally, the mission statement seems to contradict itself when referring to the audience served. On one hand, the mission states that the museum seeks to “involve the diverse audiences of the city,” but also seeks “to play a major role in the increasing urbanity and sophistication of the city,” tasks that are open to broad interpretation, but could refer to two very different audiences – the elite art connoisseurs and the impoverished minority communities (Columbus Museum of Art, 1992, pp. 1-2). Clarity is needed in terms of the true role of the museum in the community – as well as who that community might be comprised of – and the nature of education in the art museum.

In sharp contrast to the mission statement of years past, today’s mission of the Columbus Museum of Art has changed drastically, providing a jumping off point for the vital changes that now shape the museum and the way it perceives itself, its operations, and its role in the contemporary community:

The mission of the Columbus Museum of Art is to create great experiences with great art for everyone. Whether we are presenting an exhibition, designing an art-making activity, serving a lunch, or giving directions to a visitor, we are guided by a belief in advocacy, quality, community, integrity, and creativity. We believe that art speaks to each and every one of us in different ways. Art inspires. Art challenges. Art thinks [emphasis added] (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015). Inherent in this mission statement are the institutional values to which the Columbus Museum of Art holds itself accountable and that guide the operations of the institution:
Community: Means we’re open to all and celebrate the rich diversity of our stakeholders – from staff, volunteers, and members, to the public at large.

Integrity: Means we demonstrate trust and respect in what we do every day – from our stewardship of art to our commitment to lifelong learning.

Advocacy: Means we are fierce and proactive champions of art. We strive to preserve, share, and celebrate art in all walks of life.

Quality: Means that from the quality of our collections and exhibitions (and programs) to the quality of life in our community, we strive for the ideal.

Creativity: Means we champion new and different ways of thinking and doing. We celebrate the process and results of creativity. And we provide opportunities for people to cultivate and discover the value of creativity in their own lives (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015).

This new mission and institutional values were a huge step away from the traditional museum model of collection and preservation.

While this mission – “great experiences with great art for everyone” – seems simple, it was the source of much conflict within the museum. When Nanette Maciejunes was named Executive Director in October 2002, she knew that changes needed to be made in the museum and that a new mission would set the stage for other changes in the future. The new mission was formulated at a board retreat and was the source of much debate. At the time, they felt that they needed to choose whether the CMA’s focus should be art or people. Heated arguments erupted on both sides, and eventually the group felt that as an art museum, art had to be the priority. “We of course wanted people to come to the museum. We wanted them as visitors, members, and donors. Our perception then was that we had to choose, and that as an art museum we in the end had to choose art before people” (Maciejunes, 2014, p. 132). What they came to discover, almost five years later, was that there was no need to choose between the two, and that both could be had through a focus on creativity and the visitor. Maciejunes stated: “We
increasingly realized that it was a faux choice. We decided we wanted to be an institution that was truly about art and people — to be a welcoming, visitor-centered art museum that was responsive to its community” (Maciejunes, 2014, p. 133). This fundamental change laid the path for a reevaluation of all the museum stood for and the role it played in the community.

What makes this change significant is that it was voluntary. The museum could have continued in its path and maintained the status quo, although this model may not have been sustainable in the long run. The Columbus Museum of Art will never be a blockbuster, international attraction like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, or any number of famous institutions. The city of Columbus is simply not large or important enough, and the museum depends on repeat visitors from around the region rather than tourists. Instead of competing with these other types of museums, focusing on big, crowd-drawing attractions, the CMA would focus on the local community. By embedding itself deeply into the city of Columbus and its people, the museum could be a “meaningful resource…for learning and experiences that you return to again and again over a lifetime” (Maciejunes, 2014, p. 133). To this end, the mission “great experiences with great art for everyone” was developed. Deliberately placing “experiences” before “art” broke from the traditional model and renewed the focus on the visitor. However, this mission required significant institutional changes. This change and this recommitment to the mission of the CMA created a foundation for experimentation, reflection, and growth that stemmed from the education department and its place at the heart of the institution.
“What is purpose or value of an education department in…our art museum?”

This deceptively simple question was posed by Executive Director Nanette Maciejunes to the newly hired Director of Education Cindy Foley in 2006, just as the Columbus Museum of Art was embarking on a new capital campaign, ART MATTERS (Foley, 2014). The new mission “great experiences with great art for everyone” had been developed and implemented, but it was time for the staff to discover what it specifically meant to create those experiences in the CMA. Whether she realized it or not, by asking that question, Maciejunes was steering the institution down a path for dramatic and meaningful change. According to Foley, there are two routes available when a museum decides to embark on a campaign of this nature. The first route is to put all available energy into the campaign itself and to maintain the status quo – nothing new or radical that would cause friction. This route is safer, and more often the route that museums adopt. The second route, however, is to acknowledge that the campaign is an opportunity for change, and an opportunity to articulate and manifest the changes they want to see take place. This second route is a prime example of what Charles Handy (1995) calls “second-curve thinking” (cited in Sandell & Janes, 2007). In this model, organizations and civilizations follow an S-shaped curve – they begin, grow, flourish, decline, and disappear. But, according to Handy, decline is not inevitable if “second-curve thinking”
is adopted, thinking that challenges the decline down the second curve of the $S$
before it occurs. Applied to museums, it “requires museum staff and leaders to challenge
all the assumptions underlying current success, and this must begin with questions...The
fundamental requirement of second curve thinking is to be skeptical, curious and
inventive before you have to be” (Sandell & Janes, 2007, p. 7). When Maciejunes asked
Foley, “What’s this all about? How am I going to frame that we’re unique, we’re special,
we’re important, we’re worthy of the funds you may invest? I want to convince this
community we’re important, but...are we? And what’s going to resonate with people and
how do we do that best?” she started the journey down that second route and anticipated
the second curve (C. Foley, personal communication, February 20, 2015). While
Maciejunes may have only been asking this question in order to clarify the operations of
the education department, appease the demands of the board, or present the information
to potential donors, that simple question opened the floodgates and called for an
examination of what art museum education was and what it could be.

The result of this question was manifested in a deceptively simple diagram
(Figure 2) that elaborated on the true heart of the Columbus Museum of Art: creativity.
In many art museums, ideas like “exposure to fine art” and “knowledge of the history of art” and “enrichment” are common and traditional foundations for museum education programs. Again, there is nothing wrong or bad about these descriptors, but for Foley there was still something missing: the visitor. How do these goals value the experiences, needs, and beliefs of the twenty-first century visitor to the museum? “Creativity” was the apparent answer. Museum education at the Columbus Museum of Art was “needed and valued in our community because we believe in and honor the power of creativity” (Foley, 2014, p. 140). The art in the museum is the result of brilliant creativity from the
artists of yesterday and today, artists who “questioned, challenged the norms of society, played with ideas and materials, embraced ambiguity, and bravely and passionately engaged in developing creative products even when those around them rejected their work” (Foley, 2014, p. 140). What Foley uncovered is that the Columbus Museum of Art values the role of creativity both in the arts and in the community, and at every stage of life.

Once the case for creativity had been made, as described in Chapter 6: Why Creativity?, it had to be put into action. After presenting the case for creativity to Maciejunes, Foley returned to the education department and began the long, difficult process of change within the education department, where creativity could be cultivated and nurtured. She followed the advice of Sandell and Janes (2007):

Museum workers should question everything and generate new perspectives through discussion and dialogue. This approach is much more conducive to creation, invention, and discovery, and all these are not only essential in addressing complexity, but they are also prerequisites for innovation and creativity (Sandell & Janes, 2007, p. 6). Foley gathered her team and opened a dialogue about the role the Education Department could play in cultivating the true heart of the institution and bringing creativity to the forefront of the CMA.

First, the education department needed to determine what creativity looked like in museum education. What programs cultivated creativity? What job titles and positions allowed creativity to flourish? What evaluation techniques are necessary to ensure that creativity was achieved? Foley and her twelve-person team began a process of reflection and evaluation, bringing in a professional evaluator to instruct them on creating and
measuring outcomes and push them to articulate goals and visions for the department.

By modeling creativity themselves and creating a departmental culture that rewarded questioning, risk-taking, play, and innovation, Foley and her team reimagined education in the museum and “stopped offering programs that ‘museums are supposed to do’ in favor of programs that would intentionally help our visitors and participants question and think for themselves” (Foley, 2014, p. 150). After working with professional evaluators, Foley and her team developed a series of questions that guided their thinking and planning for future programs, exhibitions, and events:

1. What does lifelong learning look like in the twenty-first century?
2. What do we want visitors to gain from their visit to the museum?
3. How can an art museum have an impact on school reform?
4. What fosters teaching for creativity?
5. How do we help our families cultivate the next generation of thinkers?
6. What must happen for art museums to have real impact on thinking (critical & creative) skills?

By answering these guiding questions, the team shaped the new face of education at the CMA and started to redefine the nature of the museum experience.

One change that affected the way the education department operated was the way in which visitors were classified. No longer would guests be grouped into brackets like “adult” or “family” or “children.” Instead of catering to age groups, programs would consider motivations of visitors, whether that be social or educational or reflective, and respond to those needs. They were inspired in part by the work of John Falk (2009), who asserts that the museum is a resource to be used by the visitor, and that each visitor’s identity, comprised of unique experiences and motivations, effects his or her experience.
in the museum. Therefore, museums should strive to understand the visitor and meet his needs, otherwise he will find a way to fulfill those needs elsewhere (Falk, 2009). The CMA took this philosophy into consideration when planning the event *Wonderball*, which was designed with multiple visitor motivations in mind. Describing the event, Foley says:

> We had fifty to sixty year olds and we had twenty to thirty year olds, but the motivations were – which is what we designed for – “curiosity seekers,” “all things Columbus,” and what we call “social capital people” – they enjoy being part of something, that exchange…We have conversations about…if their motivations are *this*, how are we moving their thinking? If they are “social seekers” and they are motivated by “all things Columbus,” then what are we doing in the event that actually allows for that to shine? So we want local food, but we also want participatory types of activities, because they’re more socially inclined, so we had…these challenges they would do, and so they’d do them together, and couples would do them. And so it was thinking about “why are they different than the folks who come to the Art Ball?” And the Art Ball is very buttoned down, and somebody gets up and performs for us, and [you] don’t even think about participating! So it was about us being very intentional about these motivations” (Personal communication, February 20, 2015).

By removing assumptions that each visitor of a certain age desires the same experience and has the same motivations, the department opened opportunities to truly inquire into the needs and interests of their audience. Consequently, if there were to be no more “family” events or “adult” events, then job titles needed to change accordingly. Instead of Family Programs Manager or School Coordinator, job titles now describe positions like Creative Producer, Manager for Studio Initiatives, Director of Learning for School and Docent Programs, Chief Engagement Officer, and Visitor Experience Manager, which more accurately reflect the work and vision of the department. The name of the
department was changed from “Education” to “Learning and Experience,” again reflecting the goal of an institution-wide educational experience.

From these reflections came an overhaul of the entire curriculum of the department, from school programming to community partnerships. School programming changed from single-visit “exposure” trips to imaginative tours that challenged students to think critically and creatively about the art they saw, as well as enjoying the experience. The addition of pre-tour classroom visits by docents and educators further strengthened the experiences and established connections between students’ work in the classroom, experience in the museum, and skills that are applicable in the real world. Pre-school classes were added to the curriculum, and multi-visit programming was added for middle school students and teens, groups that, until the past decade or so, had largely been neglected in many art museums (Arias & Gray, 2007). Programs like Art Lab help a small group of passionate teens discover the connections between art and their communities through exploration of ideas like responsibility, informal learning, and inclusiveness in the museum. Other programs, like Critical Works and Pressing Matters, create partnerships between the museum and middle schools that lack arts programming and explore social and community issues through art (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015).

Additionally, there was an in depth examination of the drop-in visitor experience. From 2008 to 2010, education team member Merilee Mostov, with the new title of Chief Engagement Officer, led a multidepartment team called CAP (Connecting Art to People) in an exploration of what the average visitor gets from a visit to the CMA. This interdisciplinary team questioned what it meant to have a “great experience with great
art” at the CMA and how each department fostered that, what technology, lighting, or seating in the gallery best fit the needs of the visitor, and how “creativity” could manifest itself in the gallery and visitor experience (Mostov, 2014). To explore these issues, they launched the CMA Lab, “an installation loaded with works of art from the collection, different interpretive strategies, and visitor feedback stations,” and held focus groups to gain new insights on visitor desires, needs, and expectations at the CMA (Mostov, 2014, p. 164). From this analysis, the team discovered that the CMA previously did not consider the visitor experience when planning or designing an exhibition, that false assumptions were made about how visitors learned in the museum, and that they too often fell back on isolated, facilitated experiences as sources of “learning” in the museum (Mostov, 2014). The team determined that instead of assuming that the visitor was comfortable and felt welcomed in the museum or that he or she was learning something, there should be defined outcomes for each experience and each exhibition. These outcomes, spearheaded by the Learning and Experience Department, but with input from all relevant departments, would guide the CMA’s vision to create change and fundamentally change exhibitions at the museum. With the support of Foley and Catherine Evans, chief curator, Mostov and her team proposed a shift that brought learning and educational experiences into the gallery in two ways. First was through the creation of two new galleries – the Wonder Room and the Big Ideas Gallery – that took the focus away from traditional, content focused interpretation of art and placed it on imaginative play and participatory learning. Second, Mostov proposed the addition of “connectors” to the other gallery spaces. Connectors are ways of engaging with art in a
new, imaginative way. This engagement is through puzzles, comment boards, games, conversation starters, and more, all placed prominently in all the galleries in the museum (Mostov, 2014).

Through the process, new and old programs were examined, researched, planned, implemented and evaluated. Some showed promise, while others were discarded.

An event called *Game Show* brought in new adult audiences and surprising community partnerships, like a local roller derby team, but failed to make the final cut:

After six events [the education team] realized while what was happening was delightful for the audience and incredibly creative for our staff and partners, it was not impacting adult creativity in a significant way. The “failure” of Game Show was not that it was not well-attended or enjoyed, but that it had not moved the needle around cultivating questioning, idea development, and play in our adult visitors (Foley, 2014, p. 148).

By critically analyzing the role of education in the museum, and the specific actions and programs necessary to fulfill that role, the education department changed from an important, but perhaps peripheral, part of the CMA to a central, driving force for change in the museum and in the community.
Chapter 6: Why Creativity?

Once it had been determined that creativity was a core value of the CMA and an essential part of the mission, this concept needed to be articulated and manifested in the institution. But first, two important questions had to be answered: Why does creativity work for the CMA? And how does the CMA define creativity? For Foley, creativity made perfect sense. Trained under Dr. George Szekely in her undergraduate education, Foley embraced his teachings on the power of play and imagination in art education and challenging students to think like artists rather than the traditional, art history based approaches, like Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE). “He didn’t think that DBAE was a bad thing, he just thought that art history and skill development need to be secondary to idea generation, especially in an era where kids are inundated with content…where do we develop ideas?” (C. Foley, personal communication, February 20, 2015). Foley took this philosophy into her career, as both an educator and a curator, and created the 2002 exhibition Playground for the Institute for Contemporary Art at the Maine College of Art, featuring artists like William Wegman, Lucky DeBellevue, Kimberly Hart, Harrell Fletcher, Miranda July, Jason Rognes, and Thad Simerly. These artists were intentional about the use of play and the creative process in their work, and
Foley used that in seeking to understand how artists think and how creativity is manifested. Foley also looked to the work of Friedrich Froebel (1896), the creator of the modern kindergarten, who would give his students open-ended creative challenges that involved skills like building, experimenting, and critical thinking, and focused on creativity through play-oriented learning. Additionally, she found inspiration in the book *Inventing Kindergarten* by Norman Brosterman (1997), which examines the impact of this style of education on the children who participated. Brosterman draws connections between the educational tools and philosophies of kindergartens and the art of modernists who attended kindergarten, like Georges Braque, Piet Mondrian, Paul Klee, and Wassily Kandinsky, and those influenced by it, like Frank Lloyd Wright, whose mother ran the first kindergarten in Chicago (Brosterman, 1997). Additionally, he notes that the *Bauhaus*, the famous German art school of the early twentieth century and home of the modern art movement, was founded by artists who were the products of formal, creative education (Brosterman, 1997). And, as if to make an even stronger case for creativity, one of the CMA’s specialties is modernism. “Here we are, an institution built on artists who are…byproducts of investing in creative play and experimentation, and they go on to create the *Bauhaus* and the modern art movement…so Nanette [Maciejunes] basically says ‘You know, if I don’t support this [creativity], I’m more or less saying that I don’t want this to happen in the future!’” (C. Foley, personal communication, February 20, 2015). Foley’s education and training drew her to the concept of creativity, but the seeds of this value were already planted in the museum and its mission.
For the CMA, creativity involves “the process of developing new ideas (imagination), synthesizing and evaluating those ideas (critical thinking), and doing something of value with the results (creativity). An ideal outcome for creative ideas, actions or products is to progress, change, or impact the world (innovation)” (Foley, 2014, pp. 143-144). In the eyes of this museum, along with other scholars in different disciplines (Bronson & Merryman, 2010, Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2009), creativity has the ability to change the world. Leaders around the world are seeking for solutions to the world’s problems, but little has been done to cultivate creativity in the next generation. The 2010 IBM Global CEO study cited creativity as the number one desired leadership skill, and this need was even addressed by President Obama in his 2012 State of the Union address, in which he called for educators to focus on creativity (cited in Foley, 2014). Inspired by this global need for creativity and the Institute for Museum and Library Services report, *Museums, Libraries and 21st Century Skills* (2009), the CMA set out to fill this creative void. *Museums, Libraries and 21st Century Skills* is a guide that outlines the ways in which museums and other informal learning centers need to adapt in order to remain relevant and to serve the needs of modern audiences. They argue that to succeed in the twenty-first century, the next generation needs to have skills like critical thinking and problem solving, flexibility and adaptability, visual literacy, and – perhaps most importantly – creativity.

While it is true that libraries and museums are—and always have been—well-equipped to provide critical learning experiences to their audiences, this potential must be further developed, defined, and made more accessible…Therefore, it is critical that we envision, define, and implement library and museum approaches that integrate 21st century skills in more tangible, visible ways. And as our...
society shapes its educational, technological, and economic policies, it needs to more intentionally call upon the trusted, welcoming, and content-rich settings of libraries and museums— institutions found in every community across America, to support the nation’s development of 21st century (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2009, p. 6).

By placing creativity at the heart of the museum, the CMA recognized the significant role they could play in valuing and developing the important skills to be nurtured within the local community, a community of individuals who can take those skills out into the world and use them to positively influence their lives and the lives of those around them.
Chapter 7: Institutionalizing Creativity

While the changes that occurred within the Learning and Experience Department are significant, they are relatively normal or expected when removed from the context of the rest of the museum. By articulating what it means to teach and learn creativity, implementing sweeping departmental change, and undergoing intense evaluation and reflection, the education team was going beyond the expected and making a meaningful difference. However, education departments in other art museums also have the capacity to evaluate, design new programs, cultivate creativity, and more. Any education department, no matter their size or the size of the museum, can evaluate existing programs, conduct research on the visitor and his or her experience, and make changes to their programs and operations. What makes the changes in the Learning and Experience Department significant is their impact on the CMA as a whole and the institution-wide change that took place as a result. By cultivating a culture of creativity, the Education Department and team was the spark that lit the fire of change for the CMA. Through their articulation that learning and creativity were at the heart of the museum, the department led the process of institutionalizing creativity and a reimagining of the operations and function of the CMA as a whole.
At first, the changes remained relatively isolated to the Learning and Experience Department. As described in Chapter 5: *Education Revolution*, outcomes were developed for programs and special exhibitions, and programming within the education department was evaluated and tested. The most visible manifestation of this new focus on creativity and learning outside of the Learning and Experience Department came in the form of the Center for Creativity (CFC), which opened in 2011. The Center for Creativity is an 18,000-square-foot space located on the first floor of the older, 1930s-era section of the museum and consists of galleries, classrooms, studios, collaborative spaces, and a hands-on exploration space. This space embodies creativity and was designed to:

act as a catalyst, a jumping-off point for individuals and groups to discover their unique connections to creativity…and provide a myriad of experiences that engage visitors with art and with each other, model the creative process, highlight creativity in action and underscore the importance of creativity in our community (Foley, 2014, p. 141).

In 2010, just before the CFC opened, the CMA hosted the first Creativity Summit, a gathering of creative minds from business, education, politics, families, and more that came together to discuss the ways in which creativity could be cultivated and fostered in the community. The CFC was the physical representation of all the internal reflection and evaluation within the Learning and Experience Department and the need for a creative resource and community hub in Columbus (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015). Highlights of the CFC include the *Wonder Room*, a hands-on, family-friendly space for imaginative play and creating art; the *Big Idea Gallery*, a gallery that emphasizes learning through play, the creative process, and thinking like an artist; a community gallery; a creative challenge space where guests can make art; and open studio space, available to the public.
weekly. Additionally, the CFC engages with teens through the SURGE Columbus, a drop-in mentoring and exploration program, and with the creative community through the Connector Series, a program that connects visitors with local artists, musicians, performers, and creative thinkers of all sorts (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015). Each element of the CFC reflected the intense soul-searching done by the Learning and Experience Department and their new focus on the learning experience of the visitor and the impact of creativity.

After the Center for Creativity opened, the education team started receiving far more attention than in years past. Foley remembers that her team felt empowered and felt that their work had real meaning, and they felt they had the authority to make hard decisions and eliminate programs or initiatives that were not working or not meeting outcomes, sometimes to the chagrin of other departments. In some cases, this caused rifts throughout the museum based on perceptions of favoritism or perhaps just jealousy (C. Foley, personal communication, February 20, 2015). However, “it is essential for museums to work through the tension…recognizing that this tension can stimulate creativity and new ways of thinking” (Sandell & Janes, 2007, p. 2). In order to mend these rifts, the education team, along with the senior level staff, had to take a step back and realize that creativity was not the sole property of the education department – creativity belonged to the entire institution. Forays had been made into other departments, through the development of the CAP meetings and a stronger relationship between the education and curatorial teams, but the overall impression was that creativity was education’s “thing,” not the rest of the museum’s. Additionally, until that point,
creativity had not been included in the institutional values, and there seemed to be a
disconnect between the Center for Creativity and the rest of the CMA. With separate
branding, programming, and vision, it was almost as if there were two separate
institutions in one building, with the CFC belonging to the Learning and Experience
Department and the rest of the museum belonging to everyone else. However, through
close examination of the goals and vision of the CFC, they came to realize that the CFC
was articulating the change the CMA wanted to see take place in the community – the
social mission of the CMA. Articulating this social mission and adding creativity to the
institutional values of the CMA helped to reestablish the connection between the CFC
and the rest of the institution and create a cohesive institution founded on creativity. The
entire museum needed to take ownership of learning and creativity and incorporate it into
every aspect of its operation, from curation to security, development to marketing.

The first way in which the educational philosophy of creativity was institutionalized
in the museum was through the formal creation of interdepartmental teams. This follows
a trend in museum work, and interdisciplinary teams have the benefit of being “flexible
pools of knowledge and experience, whose members work individually, collectively and
across the organization, depending on the work to be done” (Janes, 2007, p. 75). At the
time of this study, there were seven teams, each made of members of different
departments: visitor experience, programming, operations, roll-out, content, exhibitions
and permanent collections, and vision. On the visitor experience team, for example, there
are staff members from security, special events, facilities, front desk, and more, working
to ensure that each moment of the museum visitor’s experience is meaningful and meets
the desired outcomes. The reason the team approach is so important for Foley is that it allows each staff member to take ownership of the mission and allows them to actively participate in carrying out that mission. The team approach facilitates group accountability and decision-making on all levels of the organization: “A group of people...[in] the organization, with shared responsibilities and clear accountabilities, are developing strategies together, and reaching decisions by consensus. Put another way, leadership is less the property of a person than the property of the group” (Janes, 2007, p. 75). Although it may have started in the Learning and Experience Department, the cultivation of creativity, both for the guests and for the culture of the CMA, is now an essential part of each staff member’s duties. Each team’s planning and operations centers on the mission of the institution and making sure that the learning experience of each visitor is a priority.

Another manifestation of the institutionalization of creativity is in the CMA’s organizational chart (Figure 3), job titles, and staffing. As mentioned previously, the name of the Education Department was changed to the Learning and Experience Department to better reflect its role in the museum as well as its goals and priorities. Additionally, Foley’s position, Director of the Learning and Experience Department, was promoted to a new level within the organizational hierarchy. Previously, the department had operated under the Operations Director and was just one of many departments fighting for a place at the table. Now, from its position near the top, the value of the Learning and Experience Department and all the team’s hard work was acknowledged. Foley was also named Executive Assistant Director and was given more authority, both
over her own department and over the museum as a whole, allowing her to work toward the inclusion of creativity in each part of the museum (Figure 3).
Figure 3 – Organizational Chart (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015)
The influence of the museum’s educational philosophy continues to influence the work of each member of the staff and hiring of new staff. David Stark was just hired as the new Chief Curator at the CMA. But despite his new role as head of curation, he comes from a background in education. His previous position was Director of Administration for Museum Education at the Art Institute of Chicago. Stark’s appointment, as well as his interest in education and the needs of the visitor, is yet another manifestation of the changing nature of curation at the CMA. The introduction of the education-led CAP (Connecting People to Art) team and their evaluation of the drop-in visitor experience challenged the curation department to abandon traditional assumptions about visitors and museum experiences. Instead of passive, art-history focused exhibitions, new institutional values convinced curators to include challenging questions, visitor participation, and balance scholarly and aesthetic pursuits with visitor needs (Evans, 2014). According to Foley, this is an important statement about the future of curation. If the CMA and other like-minded institutions are changing to reflect the realities and needs of the twenty-first century visitor, where does the traditional curator—academic, history-based, removed from daily operations—fit in? Stark, perhaps a member of a new class of curators, makes a point to visit the galleries daily and makes the feelings and needs of the visitor a priority in his work (C. Foley, personal communication, February 20, 2015).

The CMA continues to institutionalize creativity in each exhibition, staff team, special event, community partnership, and new hires. Exhibition planning forms, filled out for each exhibition at the CMA, disseminate the important facts of the show,
determine outcomes that articulate what the institution hopes to achieve, and track visitor experience goals (Mostov, 2014). These outcomes are determined by all involved departments and show each one’s commitment to visitor learning experiences at the CMA. Although the system is certainly not perfect – Foley believes that they still need to work on professional development and that some of the interdepartmental teams could use some work – there is a clear commitment to creativity as an institutional value and belief.
The final influence of this education-centered model is a renewed focus on meaningful change, both in and outside of the museum. While the institutional mission and values of the CMA are powerful, in Foley’s opinion, they do not go far enough. They do not articulate the change the museum wants to see take place in the community. Beyond the goal of creating “great experiences with great art for everyone,” the CMA desires to foster real change in the lives of those they serve: a social mission. To form this social mission, Foley turned to other institutions and businesses to draw inspiration. For-profit companies like TOMS shoes and Whole Foods have social missions to improve people’s lives and the health of the environment through their businesses. COSI, the Center of Science and Industry in Columbus, OH, enhances its mission through the addition of an identity statement: “COSI is about inspiring interest in science and encouraging people to want to learn more about their world” (COSI). Once the Center for Creativity opened, it was clear that it was the physical manifestation of this social mission, as mentioned in Chapter 7: Institutionalizing Creativity, and that its guiding vision was the change the CMA desired to see in the community. The vision for the CFC states:
We are All Creative - In the Center for Creativity at the Columbus Museum of Art, we believe that creativity is for everyone. It can live within anyone, and take on any form. This is where creativity is fostered. Cultivated. Championed. Celebrated…What if creativity is what we crave, require, need for the future? We believe it is (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015).

Maciejunes confirms the addition of this social mission to the institutional mission statement, or the addition of a formal social mission or vision statement, in the near future (N. Maciejunes, personal communication, March 13, 2015). The integration of the CFC into the museum showed the CMA’s investment in creativity and the social role of the museum in the community. The social mission of making creativity accessible to all people is the guiding force behind the CMA community partnerships and programming. Maciejunes brings up the idea of “using” a museum (Maciejunes, 2014). People often say that they “use” the library or “use” a resource, but that they “visit” the museum. But what would it look like to “use” a museum? By reimagining the institution as a learning resource, a creative hub, and a community partner, the CMA hopes to answer that question.

An example of this “use” comes from partnerships with groups not typically associated with the arts, like the students of the Ohio State University College of Medicine. The program, titled *Art of Analysis*, takes second-year medical students and uses art to encourage critical thinking, cooperation, observation skills, empathy, and interpretation. As students who are used to dealing with scientific facts and hard data, this program challenges them with situations in which there are no right or wrong answer in which they must make an interpretation and defend their point of view (Jacques,
Trinkley, Stone, Tang, Hudson, & Khandelwal, 2012). Students also learn empathy through their interpretations, making guesses as to emotions, situations, and motivations of the figures presented in art. Another unique partnership is with the Alzheimer’s Association of Central Ohio and AWARE (Alzheimer’s Women’s Association to Reach and Engage) in the program Sparking Imaginations. By opening the museum to these community members with unique needs, the CMA serves as a place for dialogue and for creative expression, all based on experience with art. Through this program, people with Alzheimer’s or dementia and their caregivers can step away from the stress and challenges of their everyday lives and use art to express emotions, focus memories, and facilitate imaginative play (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015). A medical school and Alzheimer’s patients are certainly not the first partnerships one would imagine with a traditional art museum, but these relationships make perfect sense when paired with the learning-centered and community change model of the CMA.

Through its social mission to create meaningful change in the community, the CMA is a prime example of the museum as a social service. Although this seems like a new concept, it is really a return to the operations and goals of the very first museums. The museums of classical times, called mouseions and located in ancient Greece and Egypt, served as temples for the Muses and gods of the humanities and universities (Silverman, 2010). They were spaces for learning, academic dialogue, and social interaction in addition to collection. By the 1500s, museums often took the form of “cabinets of curiosities” in the homes of the elite and were showcases of unique objects and wonders from around the world. Although only seen by the owners and his
privileged friends, these miniature museums still served to aid in self-discovery and relationship building through the act of collection and display. The public museums of the nineteenth century had the goal of “civilizing” the working class through exposure to the arts and high culture, and some settlement houses of the same period even opened their own museums with similar goals. By the twentieth century, many museums had established traveling exhibitions that traversed the country and the globe, with the mission of exposing new and underserved audiences to the arts and culture. Closer to home, community museums sprang up, creating exhibitions that dealt with the issues and challenges faced in their own neighborhoods and promoting a culture of community involvement (Silverman, 2010). Although this social service may have been overshadowed by the overwhelming emphasis on collection and preservation in American museums throughout the years, the concept is rooted deeply in the history of the institution and brought to the foreground by the operations of the CMA.
Chapter 9: Model for the Future

In 2013, the Columbus Museum of Art was awarded the Medal of Excellence by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the nation’s highest honor for museums and libraries. The CMA was the only art museum honored that year and was chosen because of its “reputation as a model for innovative visitor engagement as well as being Central Ohio’s hub for social, creative, and dynamic experiences” (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2013). This prestigious honor recognizes the ground-breaking work of the CMA and shows the pivotal role of education in the museum on a national level. By refocusing the operations of the museum around visions and goals that emerged from the Learning and Experience Department, the CMA reimagined what a museum is and its role in the community.

Focusing on creativity and the visitor’s learning experience aligned the CMA with other forward thinking and innovative museums. Nina Simon, Executive Director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, in Santa Cruz, California, and author of *The Participatory Museum* and the blog *Museum 2.0*, advocates for a participatory museums and cultural institutions, the goal of which is to:
both meet visitors’ expectations for active engagement and to do so in a way that furthers the mission and core values of the institution. Rather than delivering the same content to everyone, a participatory institution collects and shares diverse, personalized, and changing content co-produced with visitors. It invites visitors to respond and add to cultural artifacts, scientific evidence, and historical records on display. It showcases the diverse creations and opinions of non-experts. People use the institution as meeting grounds for dialogue around the content presented (Simon, 2010, pp. 1-2).

Although the CMA does not have a fully participatory model, there are certainly elements of this model that reflect this visitor-engaged philosophy of participation, particularly its new exhibit #MobilePhotoNow. This exhibit, a collaboration between the CMA and #jj, an online mobile photography community, invites visitor participation through online photo challenges on Instagram. Prior to this, the CMA conducted similar mobile photo challenges on its own and installed the resulting images alongside a Photo League exhibit from its collection, “The Radical Camera: New York’s Photo League 1936-1951” (Columbus Museum of Art, 2015). #MobilePhotoNow is the first crowd-sourced museum exhibition and, according to Tyler Cann, the CMA curator of this exhibition, it demonstrates that:

art can be created anywhere and the means of creating contemporary artworks are very democratic… In some sense we are all photographers now. It’s not necessary to carry something on a strap around your neck; there’s a phone in so many of our pockets… The museum feels strongly about celebrating the idea that all of us have that kind of creative potential (Ziv, 2015).

The result of both of these mobile photo initiatives is an engagement with a new audience of amateur artists through a contemporary, non-traditional medium and new type of museum participation.
Another innovative museum, with similar elements to the CMA, is the Toledo Museum of Art (TMA) in Toledo, Ohio. Focused on visual culture and teaching visual literacy, especially to young children, the museum has undergone a similar internal restructuring that was driven by a mission, vision, and brand refresh (Toledo Museum of Art). TMA’s changes, however, came from the executive team and focused largely on how resources are allocated to different departments to achieve objectives (Kennedy, Gilman, & Bintz, 2015). Common between the CMA, and these other innovative institutions are the qualities of shared purpose or mission, experimentation, and openness:

The first is the need for shared purpose. Every employee must have an understanding of the museum’s purpose, and how he or she contributes to it. Second, is the need for active experimentation. Most innovation occurs from hundreds of small changes and ideas which add up to enormous differences, and must encourage such thinking in all we do. Last, is the vital importance of openness. We recognize that there will always be tension between the individual and the organization, but that we must always deal with this conflict openly, creatively and in non-manipulative ways. There is no doubt that candid communication requires a balance of power (Janes, 2007, p. 79).

These institutions, along with the entire body of museums, must look inward and cultivate these qualities in order to address the needs and desire of our constantly changing world.

But can the CMA, with its education-centered operations, serve as a model for other museums? Maciejunes and Foley say “yes” and “no.” On one hand, “yes” - an education and learning-centered model can help museums reach a new generation of visitors and remain relevant in a changing world. Since the 1950s, researchers have used the Torrence test, designed by E. Alfred Torrence, to measure the CQ – “creativity quotient” – of our nation’s children. In the years since the test was invented, scores have
been going steadily upward, until 1990, when they began to tumble. This downward
trend has no clear culprit, but scholars point to technology and problems in education
trends and issues as two possible sources (Bronson & Merryman, 2010). Today, children
spend more time playing video games and watching television instead of engaging in
creative play, and education reforms, like No Child Left Behind, have decreased the time
available for creative pursuits at school. There is a national and international demand for
workers and thinkers with twenty-first century skills like critical thinking, creativity,
innovation, so this lack of creativity has the potential to be extremely detrimental to our
society and to our future (Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2009). So if
creativity is being short-changed in the school or at home, then where can it be learned?

For Maciejunes, the museum is the clear answer:

> We can learn from the way artists think. There’s a whole set of skills you and I
can take from artists that make the things you want to do even better and more
successful...It can be carried into the galleries, because the products of that way of
thinking is hanging on our walls...Art museums have always been, or should
have, about artists and the creative spirit of artists and what they bring into the
world, that’s why we collect their works. We collect them so that creativity is
available to everybody (N. Maciejunes, personal communication, March 13,
2015).

By refocusing on the lessons that can be learned from art and the artistic process,
museums become foundational institutions in teaching creativity and other values that
can be found in the close examination of artworks.

But on the other hand, no – this model is certainly not “one size fits all.” Foley
makes it clear that the motivation to change has to be central to the museum and that if
institutions change just to follow the trends or jump on the “bandwagon” of creativity or
another other educational philosophy, then they are doing it for the wrong reasons. All
institutions must fully understand the changes they are trying to make. Foley speaks of hearing from other museums that opened their own Centers for Creativity:

> We’ve had groups come here and they say, “Oh, we’re opening a Center for Creativity like you” and I say, “What kind of programming are you doing?” and they respond, “Well, we’re teaching drawing classes on Wednesdays…” But drawing has nothing to do with creativity. Drawing is merely a skill that you learn that if you have an idea you want to get out, you can use that, but by teaching drawing, you’re not teaching creativity (C. Foley, personal communication, February 20, 2015).

Merely copying components of the CMA, like the Center for Creativity or similar programming, is not the same type of institutional change that rocked the CMA’s foundation. For real, institutional culture change, the impetus must come from within and be rooted in a desire to examine the role of the museum in today’s society. At the CMA, that impetus was located in the Learning and Experience Department and called for a reexamination of the institution as a whole.

For other institutions looking to adopt an education-centered model of operation, the CMA serves as an excellent example of the change that can occur. However, other museums should consider three characteristics of the CMA that allowed this change to occur. First, the CMA already had a strong relationship between curators and educators. Even before Foley began working at the museum, exhibition teams of curators and educators worked together. Curators planned and designed exhibitions, and then educators came in and used the content to generate educational programs and activities (Evans, 2014). Despite the traditional nature of this relationship, with the curator defining and the educator interpreting, it still set a precedent for education to take a stronger role in the museum. Second, the CMA is a midsize, regional museum. This size
and type of museum is ideal for an education-center model. In a large, prestigious museum, like the Museum of Modern Art or the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the vast majority of visitors are tourists. Tourists tend not to participate in educational programming, simply due to the brief nature of their visits. The local audience that does take advantage of educational programming is simply not a large enough percentage of the audience to inspire institutional change. A small museum struggles just to find the funds to keep the doors open, and often simply does not have time or resources for change. But a midsize museum depends on both the everyday, local visitor and the regional visitor, and hopes that these visitors will make repeat trips throughout their lives. It is this audience that the CMA considered throughout its change, and this audience that continues to engage with the museum and the services it offers. The size of the CMA was also essential to grasping the opportunity for “second-curve thinking” and the opportunity for change, as mentioned in Chapter 5: Education Revolution. As Sandell and Janes assert, “for many museums, steeped in tradition and relatively privileged as a result of their widely recognized social status within society, second curve thinking may exceed their grasp” (Sandell & Janes, 2007, p. 7). The relatively small size of the CMA made it possible to take risks and experiment, to the ultimate benefit of the institution and the community.

Finally, the last component of change at the CMA was the leadership. Strong leadership is essential when undergoing any type of change, but particularly the large scale institutional change required to institutionalize educational philosophies. When thinking about leadership at the CMA, Foley references the work of David Perkins and what he
calls “visionaries for change” (Perkins & Reese, 2014). In order for meaningful change to take place, and to be sustainable, Perkins says that there must be three types of leaders in place: the conceptual visionary, the practical visionary, and the political visionary. The conceptual visionary is the dreamer, the one with ideas and belief in the vision she has for the institution or project. The practical visionary is the manager, the one who implements the ideas of the conceptual visionary. This person has to be willing to take risks and to fail, but to learn from those mistakes and find the real-world solution that fits the overall vision. The final leader required for change is the political visionary. The political visionary is the face of the change, the one who will support the change – and those working toward it – with resources, affirmation, and commitment to the vision. At the CMA, the conceptual visionary was Foley, the practical visionaries were Mostov and the team of educators in the department, and the political visionary was Maciejunes. Each of these visionaries supported and enhanced the work of the other (Perkins & Reese, 2014). Without all three leaders, the CMA would not have been able to achieve the institution-wide change and national recognition that they enjoy today.
Chapter 10: Conclusion

Through the Columbus Museum of Art’s adoption of an education and learning centered model, based on the concept of creativity, it is clear that educational philosophies and practices have the capacity to strongly influence the operations and functions of the museum as a whole. This philosophy of creativity, brought to life and nurtured by the Learning and Experience Department at the Columbus Museum of Art, spread across the entire institution where it was cultivated and continues to grow. The operations of the institution, its role in the community, and its function as an agent of change are all the direct result of prioritizing education and learning in the museum. If these changes had begun in any other department, I do not believe that they would have spread to other departments or achieved the same level of success. The Columbus Museum of Art serves as a model for what can happen when learning, the visitor, and creativity are placed at the heart of the art museum and when the entire institution works toward the same goal.
References


