LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS IN AN ERA OF PARTICIPATORY CULTURE
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broad public access to knowledge, cultural heritage, and lifelong
research, we help communities and individuals thrive through
museums. Through grant making, policy development, and
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he Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source
people to information and ideas
Creating strong libraries and museums that connect
knowledge, and connect to communities of interest. Such
technological developments obviously contribute to the creation
of changing expectations for the museum and library experience.
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of learning and exploration, what one of the participants defined
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This seminar was designed to engage thinkers with a wide
variety of professional experiences (approximately half came
from libraries and half from museums) and cultural and regional
backgrounds to debate the changing roles and responsibilities of
libraries and museums in their societies. As one participant
wrote after the seminar: “The combination of participants
from various countries, continents, experiences, and life paths
was a wonderful, unexpected, mixed masala.” Inspired by case
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orientation and reinvigoration.

When fifty-eight library, museum, and cultural heritage
leaders from thirty-one countries gathered in October 2011 at
the Salzburg Global Seminar in Austria to explore the topic of
“Libraries and Museums in an Era of Participatory Culture,”
they soon became aware that such terms as “community,”
“access,” and “public value” resonate quite differently in the
disparate parts of our planet today. Convened jointly by the
U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and the
Salzburg Global Seminar, the session plucked leaders from
Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South
America into discussion, debate, and the development of a
series of practical recommendations for ensuring maximum
access to and engagement in the work of museums and libraries
worldwide, as they examined the meaning of “participation”
and “public value.”

Over the course of the three and a half days of the seminar,
they explored the role of their institutions at a time when indi-
viduals can carry the equivalent of an entire encyclopedia on
their mobile devices and when people can use social media
platforms to share information, analyze data, create new
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Salzburg Global Seminar

Challenging present and future leaders to solve issues
of global concern

The Salzburg Global Seminar is a unique international institution
focused on global change—a place dedicated to candid dialogue,
fresh thinking, and the search for innovative but practical solutions.
Founded in 1947, it challenges current and future leaders to develop
creative ideas for solving global problems, and has brought more than
26,000 participants from 150 countries and regions to take part
in its programs. The Salzburg Global Seminar convenes imaginative
thinkers from different cultures and institutions, organizes problem-
focused initiatives, supports leadership development, and engages
opinion-makers through active communication networks, all in
partnership with leading institutions from around the world and
across different sectors of society. To learn more about the Seminar,
please visit www.salzburgglobal.org.

SUMMARY

Building on the IMLS initiative, “The Future of Museums
and Libraries,” as well as on past museum and library sessions
convened at the Salzburg Global Seminar, the seminar included
five plenary sessions, a fireside chat, a keynote presentation,
and a roundtable discussion. In addition, fellows divided into
five working groups to delve into and elaborate upon specific
topics, concluding with a series of recommendations for action.
The topics of those working groups were based on the five
plenary sessions: Cultivate and Communities; Learning Transfor-
med; Communication and Technologies; Building the Skills of
Library and Museum Professionals; and Demonstrating Public
Value. On the concluding day of the seminar, each working
group presented its findings in a final session, which also in-
cluded a keynote address by Vishakha Desai, President and
CEO of the Asia Society in New York.

In the spirit of making the seminar more “participatory” in
real time – and of extending the reach of the conversations –
daily interactive blogs were broadcast internationally by Michael
Stephens from San Jose State University (http://lameheweb.com/
category/conferences-mettings/salzburg-imls-2011/), and by
Rob Stein from the Indianapolis Museum of Art (http://rjstein.com/
your-community-better-off-because-it-has-a-museum-final-
thoughts-about-participatory-culture-part-iii/). Some of the
leading thinkers on the topic of the seminar joined in the dis-
cussion on the blogs, thus providing a global loop in and out
of the sessions taking place at Schloss Leopoldskron, home of
the Salzburg Global Seminar.
The Salzburg Seminar provided a rare opportunity for library and museum leaders from around the world to meet, get to know one another, learn, and imagine ways in which we can individually and collectively enable libraries and museums to play more essential roles in today’s global knowledge society. Through sharing our experiences — in plenary sessions, small groups, and informal conversations — we sparked passionate affirmations of the power of museums and libraries to engage the underserved, exploit the potential of new technologies to expand impact, and increase lifelong learning opportunities for all. We acknowledged our evolving role as learning facilitators; our responsibilities to ensure that our physical spaces and social media tools provide unencumbered intellectual, physical, and technological access to our collections and services; and our mandate to align our training and professional development resources and requirements accordingly. Ultimately, this stimulating seminar challenged us all to envision and articulate the “public value” of museums and libraries today and tomorrow.

— Marsha Semmel
Here we have brought together people from the policy world, the library world, and the museum world, across all different functions. And so we have conservators here, directors, educators, and technologists, and this kind of mix allows certain issues to be blown wide open in a way that is not done at a typical conference, where you hear, directors, educators, and technologists, and this kind of mix allows certain issues to be blown wide open in a way that is not done at a typical conference, where you

Michèle Cloonan

MODERATOR: Michèle Cloonan
PRESENTERS:
- Dawn Casey, Director, Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Australia
- Greg Hayton, CEO, Cambridge Public Libraries and Art Galleries, Cambridge, Canada
- Felton Thomas, Director, Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, United States

Roundtable fellows opened the seminar with observations, questions, and concerns about how the rapid pace towards increased technological mastery can lose sight of the actual goals of inclusive, accessible community participation. They challenged participants to consider a series of questions around both technology and audiences, among them: What is “participation” and “participatory culture” – – and who defines it? What relevance does participatory culture have for libraries, museums, art galleries, and cultural heritage sites? The fellows concurred that technology is a tool, not an objective, and that the creation of increased public value is the end goal. Identifying stakeholders’ needs means addressing human relationships, a sense of organization, and an intellectual construct to shape information and access.

Greg Hayton, the chief executive of the Cambridge Public Libraries and Art Galleries in Ontario Canada, opened the conversation by providing a context for discussion via relevant current statistical information on the use of technology, including the fact that some 30% of the world’s population has regular access to the internet, with exponential growth in internet use taking place in the developing world. Today some 85 – 90% of the world’s population uses cell phones, with nearly a third of eight-year-olds having access to a cell phone. And, in 2010 Amazon.com sold more e-books than hard-cover books for the first time.

Closer communication has led increasingly towards globalized culture, but also to a “pushback” towards more individualized culture, a greater empowerment of young people, the de-institutionalization of education, and an overall response that demands more “power to the people.” Subsequent discussion identified additional issues regarding the ostensible purpose of technology in creating greater participation, the nature of the link created between technology and participants, and the fundamental question of whether social media is changing the nature of our institutions or is merely being used as a marketing tool.

Dawn Casey, the director of the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, Australia, urged fellows to examine and challenge the role of institutions in creating greater participation and access. For example, she noted that young people, especially, want to know the thinking behind exhibitions and like to be able to contribute to content. She suggested different approaches to instilling the value of public participation within staff, while institutionally promoting, demonstrating, and measuring the public value of participatory culture. She stated that although institutions may feel threatened at turning over or sharing historically held responsibilities with those they serve, it is important to ask how we engage and how we help with learning. Casey conceded that sharing authority is a radically different mindset from that by which most organizations are developed, and offered suggestions for breaking down both institutional barriers and silos.

Felton Thomas, the director of the Cleveland Public Library in the United States, encouraged museum and library leaders to go outside of their walls, to be proactive in developing relationships, and to find out the needs of their communities. He challenged the concepts of borders and walls, and proposed that libraries and museums envision their boundaries in more porous ways. While the idea of linking our institutions to the larger community is a powerful concept, Thomas asked: “Where do our institutions fit into the larger community needs and challenges? How do our institutions effectively partner in addressing problems associated with housing, health care, and education, given that there is no single model or solution?”

During the ensuing discussion, participants recognized that increased collaboration between cultural institutions and linkages with both cultural and civic partners remain a strong model for enhanced effectiveness. As one of them noted: “Participatory culture is like a romance with audiences.” Another observed that technology is both a tool and a language for young people and that when a museum is addressing a social issue, it is vital that stakeholders be involved in constructing the knowledge conveyed. A third noted that at the Powerhouse Museum, anyone can become a curator and propose an exhibition, with a response coming from the museum within hours. A key question remains: how does an institution know when it has done enough? How far out does the institution go? One of the participants had perhaps the last word when he observed that “Technology only becomes participatory when a guest feels that he or she is a host and participates as such,” leaving fellows with much to ponder after this exciting opening session.
In conveying the session, moderator América Castilla reminded participants of the “public space” function of libraries and museums, which serve as a “habitat of free exchange” and as an ideal place where “inequalities are magically abolished.” He also observed that libraries and museums “interpret the cultures they live in” and must, consequently, be transparent as well as cognizant of such concepts as conflict and diversity.

The plenary sessions successfully combined presentations of general principles and case studies illustrating these principles and were followed by lengthy question-and-answer periods and further discussion.

Mats Widbom, Director of the Museum of World Culture in Göteborg, Sweden, emphasized how his museum’s core values of transparency, openness, hybridity, and reciprocity—a direct consequence of growing global exchange—are demonstrated in multiple ways, from architecture to operations to programs. The museum provides ongoing opportunities for participants to exercise their rights to access through such inclusive strategies as co-creation of content, interactive methods, and the vigorous use of social media. In addition, street art, mural art, and commissioned pieces are part of the museum’s public thoroughfare, as the museum strives to serve as a kind of contemporary “ agora,” a gathering place or assembly that is the center of artistic, cultural, and political life for the city. It also serves as an arena for art performance, debate, and after-dark social events.

The extensive discussion that followed raised questions about the role of museums and libraries in civil society. How does one create community ownership, participation, and inclusion? Participants acknowledged that changing the terminology and internal culture are fundamental to any sustainable success. A semantic question about changing conventional institutional language and terminology arose—and continued to be raised throughout the session. Should our users/audiences/visitors better be described as members, clients, citizens, owners, guests, global citizens? Should we be using language that implies ownership or co-ownership and that reinforces the notion of the institution’s service responsibility? One participant noted that at her institution, “We have changed the language in order to change our internal culture.”

Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand. Give me a platform and I will contribute! —Kurt Koenig

MODERATOR: América Castilla

PRESENTERS:
- Gabriela Aidar, Coordinator of the Social Inclusion Program, São Paulo, State Pinacoteca, São Paulo, Brazil
- Mats Widbom, Director, Museum of World Culture, Göteborg, Sweden

In closing the session, Aidar noted that such questions as “How can museums and libraries use their strengths to reflect demographic and cultural shifts?” and “How do they select the stories they tell and the resources they offer?” should be central to an institution’s mission, not merely sent to the education department. If libraries and museums intentionally use their resources to reflect and create change in societies, they must first be institutionally committed to the idea that museums can and must collaborate to strengthen cultural diversity and social inclusion. This involves reviewing standard operational practices and possibly redefining professional roles and relationships. The curator, for example, need not be defined as a sole authority, but alternatively viewed as a facilitator between individuals and objects who wields particular skill and knowledge about collections. Museums create social narratives, and these narratives can be used to include or to marginalize, as well as to legitimize or eradicating prejudices.

Citing the theorist Mark O’Neill, Aidar argued that “…any organization that is not working to break down barriers to access is actively maintaining them. Neutrality is not possible.”

Mats Widbom introduced a Chinese proverb during his presentation, which was quoted several times during the session, and then amended by participant Kurt Koenig to include a memorable fourth line:

Tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Involve me and I will understand. Give me a platform and I will contribute!

—Kurt Koenig

The museum’s exhibition on heritage looting and plundering, for example, explicitly addressed how various collections had been historically acquired and featured multiple voices and varying sources of authorship. The impact of globalization and contemporary issues are at the core of the Museum of World Culture’s activities, and the concept of a sustainable global future is a key element of its mission. The museum is thus a kind of embassy, with the concept of “global citizen” as a mindset. Issues such as prejudice are addressed through such activities as a “prejudice library,” in which visitors can borrow people instead of books and engage in conversations about prejudice. Widbom stressed the need for museums to continue asking themselves how to become more relevant, how to be ready to take risks, and how to decide “who tells whose stories on behalf of whom.”

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Participants spoke of museums and libraries created by outsiders and intended for outsiders (such as colonial and post-colonial elites) and thus disconnected from the local community, in which it is essential for sheer survival that the institution be proactive and engage its community audiences. Cultural institutions must communicate directly with their communities, asking what they want and in what formats they want and need it. In addition, as one participant reminded the group, it is important for museums and libraries to stand up to controversy and support contested culture in their discourse. The discussion ended with a call for libraries and museums to develop partnerships with other institutions and organizations, in order to create these new outcomes, and with the participants lauding the “courageous examples” already presented to the group.
PLENARY 2: LEARNING TRANSFORMED

MODERATOR: Michele Cloonan
PRESENTERS:
- Pablo Andrade, Studies Department Manager Biblioredes, DIBAM, Santiago, Chile
- Elaine Heumann Gurian, Consultant/Advisor to Museums, Arlington, United States

Pablo Andrade’s presentation described how Chile’s Public Libraries National System has incorporated the community into the management processes of the public library, with the goals of including indigenous knowledge and cultural systems in its operations and reaching out to non-traditional audiences. The Biblioredes program, inaugurated in 2002, was established to enhance the digital inclusion of local communities in Chile through public libraries, so as to engage these communities in expressing and sharing their cultures and identities in virtual networks. It is not only possible for users to post their own content, but users can interact with the content posted by others. The program connects people who want to share, show, and above all discuss their own cultures and identities, allowing voices never before heard to be part of the conversation. These digital tools include formal definitions and criteria for defining cultural practice, the criteria for cooperation and reciprocity, and the concept of local content communities – in both physical and virtual forms.

To accomplish this project goal in culturally resonant ways, the Public Libraries National System incorporated an indigenous concept of collective labor, known in the Quechua language as Minga or Mingaco, which denotes collaborative community work. Importantly, this cultural concept includes elements of cooperation and reciprocity, and relies on a trust process amongst those who participate. Andrade concluded his presentation with a video on the program created by a library user for whom the concept of Mingaco is an everyday cultural reality.

Elaine Heumann Gurian, an independent museum consultant in the United States envisioned issues and possibilities in the area of learning for museums and libraries of the future. She also described emerging systems changes in primary and secondary education, such as group problem-solving, the teaching of civility, the focus on 21st century skills proficiency, and the providing of experience in the workplace, thus utilizing a full range of community assets. Gurian sees the distinction between school as place and education as function becoming increasingly disaggregated, and increasing personalization and customization of education services being provided in both museums and libraries. She asked: “If the function of an organization is not necessarily situated in its institutional structure, but in its functions and operations, how does this translate into shifting institutional responsibilities and outcomes? How does one measure and assess impact?” Gurian suggested that museums will need to become more imaginative in terms of “the sacred cow of the school visit,” aspiring to a longer-term involvement with individual students beyond the short-term visit. She also predicted a scenario whereby school libraries may be increasingly subsumed by the public library system, with the library system providing services seven days a week, resulting in better service for students as well as substantial overall cost savings. Gurian sees a future of new networks of overlapping institutions, unbound by walls or a single authority, a “village effort” for learning that will come to be relied upon for interconnected services.

In the group discussion that followed, Andrea Sajó, director general of the National Széchényi Library in Budapest, described a developing partnership between schools and libraries/museums, in a system where Hungarian museums, libraries, and public schools are still very separate from one another. To counter this, heritage clubs were organized within schools, with teachers becoming designated heritage leaders. Presently some 25,000 Hungarian students are participating in this partnership program. The session ended with presenters asking participants to consider creating broadly applicable evaluative methods for assessing the impact of educational outcomes, something which to date has not necessarily been part of museum or library culture.
MODERATOR: Americo Castilla

PRESENTERS:
- Noha Adly, Deputy Head, ICT Sector, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt
- Susan Hazan, Curator of New Media and Head of Internet Office, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
- Michael Stephens, Assistant Professor, School of Library and Information Science at San Jose State University, California, United States

Michael Stephens from the School of Library and Information at San Jose State University in California, noted that a shared trait in all forward-looking spheres of communication and technology is that they encourage participation. For example, mobile and geo-social information environments have begun to involve the rudiments of geo-spatial information curation and stewardship. This technological trend involves everyone, suggesting that some of the future duties of librarians may be as embedded local experts. Stephens described several current projects that highlight these trends, such as the library commons, participatory library services in the Netherlands, and Learning 2.0 for Libraries, in which librarians are training in the use of new technologies, with reported increased confidence and a desire for exploration. Changes in technology increasingly emphasize the personhood and humanity of library professionals, what Stephens described as “technology with heart.”

Noha Adly, the deputy head of ICT at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in Egypt, titled her presentation “The Way Forward? Thinking Outside the Box.” Adly explored the data explosion and the “battle of the search engines,” each of which orders information differently. She described the huge amount of data-gathering that took place during the Egyptian revolution in the spring of 2010, which illustrated the complexities and challenges of bridging accuracy of data and public inclusion. Her library has collected some 237,000 photos, 90,000 videos, and 2.8 million tweets related to the revolution.

Adly noted that the multilingualism and cultural diversity of the web provide a strong rationale for both museums and libraries to play a leading role in advocating cultural diversity and multilingualism. She also spoke of the need to nurture non-English lingualism. She also spoke of the need to nurture non-English

This plenary session began with David Lankes, director of the School of Information Studies at Syracuse University in New York, declaring that “the mission of librarians is to improve society through facilitating knowledge creation in our communities.” According to Lankes, the library should be understood as the infrastructure and the tools that a librarian uses to fulfill the service and facilitation mission of the institution. He also postulated that librarians do not always need a physical facility to do this and that librarians are increasingly leaving the library as a physical place in order to do their work. In the U.S., Lankes noted, the physical space of the library is what turned back to the community. In positioning that “knowledge is creation through conversation,” he stated his belief that the new skills necessary for librarians include facilitating access to conversation; creating an appropriate and physically and intellectually safe environment for conversation; and always being aware of ways to improve society. In fact, Lankes sees the community and the library together as needing to shape the conversation about our future. He ended his presentation by calling for real, permanent change, both by librarians as they become part of a participatory society and by participants in the seminar, for whom “the seminar cannot be just a report on a shelf.” “We need to be a force for change,” Lankes concluded.

Kidong Bae, Professor of Archaeology at Hanyang University in Ansan, Korea, focused his presentation on what he referred to as “a new paradigm of museums’ role in modern society,” namely, their function as a center of communication. He noted the rapid social change occurring in the modern Asian diaspora as a result of globalization, resulting in a society that is heavily influenced by western culture, is multi-ethnic, demonstrates a wide generation gap, and has new social needs. He described how museums in Korea are responding to these changes by becoming civic areas for sharing cultural similarities and differences, creating work on topics of common interest, and building extensive cultural data bases. Bae believes that today’s museums must be a kind of “marketplace,” open to communication for all, without barriers between generations and individuals; however, he noted such practices as the “dominant unidirectional flow of information,” as presenting major problems for this kind of open institution, ideally a “unique humanistic place for exchange.”

Deidre Prins-Solari, Executive Director of the Center for Heritage Development in Africa in Mombasa, Kenya, began her presentation by speaking of the “absence of museums” in her early life in South Africa and by the “places of loss, absences, silences, and imagined worlds” that museums there have become. She noted that the brutality of apartheid resulted in “dreams deferred” in a way that prevented people from reaching their potential. Her work now centers on the training of heritage professionals, preparing them for work in a country of mixed race and in need of social cohesion.

Prins-Solari described professional competency in her country as “skills + knowledge + attitude” and stated the need for the revalidation of competencies beyond the standard disciplines. She called for such new skills as innovation, creating networks across the social sector, sustainability, and the nurturing of mutuality and wondered how we redefine and educate for leadership, when leaders need to be change agents. Throughout much of Africa there is a construction effort to create a balance between the conservation of heritage resources through relationship bridging. A primary reason for the marginal use of many African museums and libraries is their historic rational and service for elite populations, and the accompanying lack of flexibility that has minimized intellectual and emotional, as well as physical, access. For these reasons, issues of African community engagement are often viewed as charity or “special” pet projects. Prins-Solari challenged participants to help cultivate new attitudes and communication skills to achieve better engagement for professionals with their communities and asked, “Can we ever say that we’ve done enough? Have we facilitated dreams being realized?”

Group discussion addressed the need for community engagement projects to become the core business of museums, not special projects and “one-offs.” Participants provided suggestions for improving the fundraising, communication, and partnership skills of staff and partners, as well as for increasing the institutional ability to both attract and work in a sustainable manner with a broader range of stakeholders and partners.
Gary Vikan, the director of the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore, Maryland, began his remarks with the story of how his museum – founded in the early 20th century by a wealthy magnate and featuring a Gilded Age collection – had needed to change to reflect its communities and their needs today. In revising the museum’s mission statement to “bring art and people together,” the Walters moved from being object-centered to people-centered, emphasizing enjoyment, discovery, and learning. Vikan argued that art can be a social catalyst; but that “you are only as good as what you do with your collection.” In order to serve its new mission, the Walters restructured its operations, staffing and programs – introducing free admission, family programs, digitized content, and increased access to staff, who are expected to work on weekends. The result has been a 100% increase in family programs, a 45% increase in attendance, and a 400% increase in the use of the museum’s website. Vikan stressed that the internal process of institutional change was as important as any other factor. For example, at the Walters, work is always conducted in teams. The team is not only the staff but also includes leaders from other organizations and community members, who constantly bring different perspectives to the institution and its operations. In sum, the Walters staff focuses on putting their community at the heart of all they do.

Richard Atutu, the director of the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS), described the ways that its organization is also reinvigorating the service model. As part of re-visiting how the public is served, the KNLS Service has established a number of community libraries around the country, especially in rural areas, as a demonstration of “walking the talk.” The KNLS also engages its constituents through community functions and festivals. The KNLS created and maintained brand loyalty with a new “look” that is modern and dynamic, and identified target user communities with a special focus on young people. KNLS literally takes its services to people – there are mobile libraries on buses, and even donkey and camel caravans to reach otherwise inaccessible areas and nomadic communities. KNLS also works with primary and high schools as well as community centers and has established library reading tents for children in rural communities. In collaboration with national ministries, KNLS libraries are also providing a range of civic services such as e-health information and training for healthcare workers; youth empowerment; farm services and training; and fish farming, with a library fishpond as a demonstration center. The new library headquarters will feature a large drum, a unifying symbol signifying communication and knowledge in Kenya. The new logo of the national library is “Read, Know, Empower.”

Johannes Vogel, keeper of botany at the Natural History Museum in London, then discussed how a museum can inspire visitors to engage with science and expand their learning potential as well. The Natural History Museum is perceived as a place for learning, for discovery, and for dialogue about important global challenges, such as biodiversity, climate, water, and food, and social justice. Vogel argued that if a contemporary knowledge society is governed by science and technology, then it needs a scientifically literate citizenry. Citizens need and want to participate, for there is “no innovation without participation.” The museum can serve as an honest broker between science and society.

The museum staff now goes out into communities in order to learn what the public already knows and asks: “How can we meet you where you want to learn?” Vogel then described the museum’s citizen science program. One of the case studies involved fly fishing enthusiasts’ participation in a museum-sponsored water quality project. The museum trained the fishermen in scientific techniques, and their work, which resulted in changes in environmental policy, is now ongoing and self-sustaining. This project provided an opportunity for the museum to act as an agent of change, and learning occurred on both sides. Vogel noted that citizen science participation leads to a broader-based understanding of science and issues; lowers barriers for entry; and creates skills and understanding. Partnerships are key.

Group discussion reflected on these inspiring case studies as prime examples demonstrating that participation is not dependent on technology, but on people. Participants agreed that museums and libraries must take more risks in engaging the public and that trained staff that are good communicators are critical to success. They also concurred that the most effective tools “are in our heads” and “in our hearts” if we are to engage the public in profound ways that deliver real and sustained impact.

An important reference point which I will take from here to showcase in India is how important it is to share what you have in collections and to get over that fear, unfounded perhaps, of sharing. There is a mental block about letting go of it, but I think this also accentuates the fact that librarians and museum curators and directors are custodians of a common cultural heritage and there is need for these things to be out in the public domain. It is a question of building faith… and of the willingness to share and the necessity to create platforms to share.

– Anupam Sah
On the final day of the session, Vishakha Desai, president and chief executive officer of the Asia Society in New York, delivered the seminar’s keynote address, entitled “Connections and Collaborations across Cultures in a Digital Age.” She began by describing her own experiences of being both an outsider and then an insider during the course of becoming an American citizen. Similarly, she said that the Asia Society had gone through its own transformation in perspective and organization, and had shifted from being one of interest to “cultural insiders” and collectors to an organization whose mission is to strengthen partnerships between people and institutions in Asia and those in the United States while also promoting understanding among Asians.

Desai enumerated other working assumptions that had been challenged as part of the Asia Society’s transformative process, including that technology is value-neutral; that science is culture-neutral; that we can control content; and that one-size technology would address the needs of all onsite as well as all virtual visitors. Having virtual visitors and a global audience has, in fact, shaped the Society’s programming, and Desai gave as one example a live webcast program by the president of Sri Lanka, during which some 40,000 participants tuned in from Sri Lanka, many of whom asked questions. The Society’s job thus shifted from professor to moderator/facilitator, becoming “catalytic, dialogic educators” and representative of “post-heroic leadership.”

Because museums and libraries are generally trusted institutions, and visitors are looking for vetted, trusted content, the need for accurate online sources continues to grow. Museum and library professionals must be mindful of the roles and intentions that they bring to their work and their engagement with their publics and stakeholders. Although audiences may come to libraries and museums with trust, these institutions must remember to earn that trust.

Desai reminded the participants that working across different parts of the world also means that multiple audiences will bring different perspectives and points of view to our institutions. Institutional collaboration is more complicated now than ever before, and new models of institutional collaboration are being created. Accordingly, our institutions need to plan for the decentralization of authority and need to understand diverse audiences and what they will demand. This involves, among other things, learning how to address the possible “tyranny of the community,” as well as the internal resistance to lessening control over content. The present conventional modality of scholarship is flawed, with the role of the curator evolving as well. Curatorship needs to be about both scholarship and public engagement. It needs to reflect the weaving together of learning, teaching, and scholarship, and the concept of being authoritative does not have to be the same as being authoritarian. Desai also suggested that we examine the notion that social media are neutral and noted that online audiences will require the co-creation of content.

Desai continued by reminding participants that technology is by no means culture-neutral. One cannot assume equity in terms of technological advancement in all cultures. Technology can create an illusion of confluence, but at the same time it can impede communication and understanding, given cultural differences in communication that are easily misinterpreted and misunderstood. She stressed the importance of cross-cultural skills in this context and a new vision of “neighborliness,” characterized by empathy, curiosity, sensitivity, and openness as a precondition for successful cross-cultural collaboration.

Desai concluded by describing the Asia Society’s work as intensely local and profoundly global at the same time, or “glocal,” thus creating greater complexity, in which relationships are simultaneously layered and side-by-side.
REFLECTIONS
Marsha Semmel, Director of Strategic Partnerships at IMLS, reflected upon the salient messages and ideas emanating from the seminar in what she called both “a mirror and a talk back” to the group. Semmel noted that the entire seminar had been couched in inclusive language for both libraries and museums; that the concept of what is “international” is increasingly porous; that the aspirations for the broad range of our institutions are increasingly similar; and that our institutions are struggling with semantics. The changing nature of the language we use reflects increasing porosity; and that our institutions are struggling with the changing language of referring to users/guests/clients, which reflects changing institutional realities and expectations.

She reiterated that the belief of more than one presenter that technology is best wielded as a tool and that the major criterion for effectiveness should be impact. Semmel reminded the gathering that fellows often referenced “technology with heart” and that “our arch-enemy is dumbing-down.” She also noted several key ideas that permeated the seminar, such as the fact that expertise is less about having a stockpile of information or facts at our disposal and more about knowing how to find and evaluate information on a given topic. The role of libraries and museums, therefore, should be to facilitate the enhancement of the skills (media literacy/ historical learning/ visual literacy) that everyone needs to have: that what is needed is “a new culture of learning” in the “ocean of learning” of the 21st century, including the notion of personalized, customized learning. Semmel concluded with two quotes from Douglas Thomas and John Seely Brown, in A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination in a World of Constant Change: “We need to re-design the learning system to respond to homo sapiens (humans who know), homo faber (humans who make), and homo ludens (humans who play). And, “...a lifelong ability to learn is the human being’s killer app.”

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUDING COMMENTS
Perhaps the most useful change in my own thinking is an understanding that the era of participatory culture is not a new thing, but rather – enhanced by recent trends in technology – one that has its roots in the very reasons why museums exist in the first place. While technology, social media, and mobile adoption influence the ways that we engage museum audiences and the expectations they bring into the museum, an attitude that invites participation has the potential to transform individual and community experiences that enhance the public value of the work we do. The real test for public value is not what the museum says it is, but rather the value attributed to us by our communities and stakeholders. Simply declaring that the museum is valuable isn’t a substitute for actually demonstrating that value on a consistent basis.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS
Seminar participants returned again and again to the power of participatory learning as the visionary core of what museum and library professionals need to know and do to transform institutional effectiveness. Nothing less than a call to action, the working groups provided both recommendations and specific steps for policy and practices, so that museums and libraries become more democratic in their operations and engagement, and our community members better equipped and skilled to be active contributors in a sustainable global future. Participants repeatedly acknowledged that institutions must embrace new language, ideas, perspectives, and public accountability. They must recognize:

- the changing language of referring to users/guests/clients, which reflects changing institutional realities and expectations.
- the desire to position libraries and museums as change agents, cultural hubs, and multi-tasking civic centers, and to encourage lifelong learning – with passion and with risk-taking.
- the imperative to demonstrate public value and social impact and the need to keep these issues at the top of the organizational agenda.

It was acknowledged that this requires both internal and collaborative organizational work and action steps:

- “walking the talk”, and being more participatory internally as well as externally.
- improving the training curriculum of library, museum, and heritage professionals.
- acknowledging the changing role of the curator/internal expert.
- the changing role of the curator/internal expert.
- opening the institutional walls and referencing an outward orientation instead of defining barriers and an inward orientation.
- the participatory nature of new technologies can enhance the ways in which libraries and museums and their users interact and connect. Even so, there is no one-size-fits-all in communications strategies. The creators of digital resources need to contribute to the establishment of open standards that can help achieve interoperability for the exchange of digital objects. Similarly, libraries and museums should contribute their content to a diverse array of repositories that make content freely available, as part of a cultural commons for consumers to access and reuse in the creation of knowledge.

Among the tools available to accomplish this mission are digital collections that span institutional boundaries; physical spaces that enhance interactivity and discovery; organizations that can share collections and staff expertise more effectively, reducing costs and enhancing quality of services; and users of technology who explore resources from a variety of institutions, necessitating greater collaboration and integration of organizations to provide a seamless and fruitful discovery experience. It is imperative that our institutions demonstrate, assess and evaluate public value and social impact, and keep these goals at the top of and within the core of their institutional agendas. This goes far beyond the simple “outreach” programs of the past.

Participants concurred that the most effective tools “are in our heads” if we are to engage the public in profound ways that deliver real and sustained impact. Significantly, participants shared a sense of immediacy and consensus that libraries and museums must be re-purposed, re-thought, and re-imagined as places of lifelong learning, as responsible stewards of cultural heritage, and as community anchors who must invest in both programs and people.

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— Rob Stein

Dawn Casey, Rob Stein
WORKING GROUP SUMMARIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Five working groups on key themes of the seminar held multiple sessions interspersed among the more formal plenary presentations and discussions. Each was furnished with a series of guiding questions, and the facilitators were urged to push the questions – and the members of the group – to arrive at a kind of policy agenda and list of recommendations, containing innovative and bold ideas. A summary of each group’s conclusions is presented below, followed by a list of recommendations for concrete action.

GROUP 1: Culture and Communities
Facilitator: Beth Takekawa
Working Group Members: Serhan Ada, Sid Berger, Cecilia De La Paz, Luisa de Peña, Gwendolyn Everett, Greg Hayton, Deborah Mack, Anupam Sah, Rudo Sithole, Johannes Vogel

FOCUS QUESTIONS:
How can libraries and museums use their many resources and strengths, including their collections, spaces, and people, to reflect cultural and demographic shifts and bridge cultural differences? How do they select the stories they tell and the services and experiences they offer?

Working group members affirmed that the incorporation of participatory culture enhances and enriches the functions of libraries and museums. Therefore, bridging cultural differences and working with communities are essential, so that these institutions serve as cultural hubs, have greater social impact, and are sustainable. Libraries and museums must first and foremost develop a participatory attitude and culture among their own staff and among themselves. They must then create a space of engagement and dialogue where participation takes place, using an inter-generational approach; where communities are enabled to create knowledge and tell their own stories in culturally diverse ways; and in which participation will become the core.

Museums and libraries have an obligation and responsibility to work with communities towards creating meaningful social impact, and to employ technology judiciously, in order to provide institutions, regardless of size, the means to have greater global participation. Finally, the work with communities for mobilization of resources must be developed in a sustainable manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Museums and libraries must similarly engage with communities and creators of content. Libraries and museums must be equal participants in this evolution in order to remain relevant.
- Our institutions must adopt the new learning agenda characterized by 21st-century skills of critical thinking, of creativity and innovation, collaboration, and civility and add them to our already embedded agenda of knowledge acquisition, interpretation, and dissemination.
- Museums and libraries must develop new evaluation tools, so that quality and impact, rather than quantity, become the markers of success.
- We must integrate these recommendations into our vision, policies, and practices, so that museums and libraries become more democratic and citizens are better equipped and skilled to be active contributors to a sustainable global future.

GROUP 2: Learning Transformed
Facilitator: Michelle Hippolite
Working Group Members: Gabriela Aidar, Dawn Casey, Sawsan Dalaq, Elaine Heumann Gurian, Henry Myerberg, Nancy Rogers, Mats Widbom, Sirj Virkus

FOCUS QUESTIONS:
Technology, advances in neuroscience, and research are changing our understanding of effective learning environments and experiences. The boundaries between in-school and out-of-school learning are blurring, and the importance of early and lifelong learning has been recognized. What knowledge and skills do our publics need and want, and how are museums and libraries responding to these needs? How do libraries and museums tap the knowledge and skills that their publics can bring to their institutions?

Working group members affirmed that while libraries and museums have long held a trusted place in society and a responsibility for preservation, research, education, and access to their diverse holdings, they have often remained aloof and non-responsive to the changing world. The 21st century has witnessed the erosion of traditional boundaries of authority and increasing social participation, enabled by hand-held communications technology and evidenced by 800 million Facebook users and millions of Wiki entries. While the accelerated movement of peoples across borders is increasing diversity, the disparity of economic and cultural opportunities is less tolerated. The Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street movements are only two examples of people demanding new governmental and institutional accountability and participation. Libraries and museums are in similar crosshairs, with publics eager and capable to be their own gatherers, curators, and creators of content. Libraries and museums must be equal participants in this evolution in order to remain relevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Museums and libraries must develop and apply learning models and working methods that ensure a culture of participatory behaviors, both with our constituents and within our organizations.
- They must provide spaces/facilities that enable learning and sharing of knowledge, world-views, and authority with and between diverse communities.
- Our institutions must adopt the new learning agenda characterized by 21st-century skills of critical thinking, of creativity and innovation, collaboration, and civility and add them to our already embedded agenda of knowledge acquisition, interpretation, and dissemination.
- Museums and libraries must develop new evaluation tools, so that quality and impact, rather than quantity, become the markers of success.
- We must integrate these recommendations into our vision, policies, and practices, so that museums and libraries become more democratic and citizens are better equipped and skilled to be active contributors to a sustainable global future.

GROUP 3: Digital and Material Cultures
Facilitator: Sean Overberg
Working Group Members: Dan Baer, Debbie Deyo, Shadi Demir, April Mann, Gwendolyn Everett, Greg Hayton, Sid Berger, Beth Takekawa

FOCUS QUESTIONS:
With publics eager and capable to be our own gatherers, curators, and creators of content, libraries and museums must be equal participants in this evolution in order to remain relevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- Museums and libraries must develop and apply learning models and working methods that ensure a culture of participatory behaviors, both with our constituents and within our organizations.
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- Museums and libraries must develop new evaluation tools, so that quality and impact, rather than quantity, become the markers of success.
- We must integrate these recommendations into our vision, policies, and practices, so that museums and libraries become more democratic and citizens are better equipped and skilled to be active contributors to a sustainable global future.

GROUP 4: Participatory Culture
Facilitator: Michelle Hippolite
Working Group Members: Gabriela Aidar, Dawn Casey, Sawsan Dalaq, Elaine Heumann Gurian, Henry Myerberg, Nancy Rogers, Mats Widbom, Sirj Virkus

FOCUS QUESTIONS:
Technology, advances in neuroscience, and research are changing our understanding of effective learning environments and experiences. The boundaries between in-school and out-of-school learning are blurring, and the importance of early and lifelong learning has been recognized. What knowledge and skills do our publics need and want, and how are museums and libraries responding to these needs? How do libraries and museums tap the knowledge and skills that their publics can bring to their institutions?

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- We must integrate these recommendations into our vision, policies, and practices, so that museums and libraries become more democratic and citizens are better equipped and skilled to be active contributors to a sustainable global future.
GROUP 3: Communications and Technology  
Facilitator: Sarah Thomas  
Working Group Members: Noha Adly, Catalina Escobar, Susan Hazan, Max Kaiser, Kurt König, Rochelle Lau, Paula McGrew, Elpiniki Meintani, Gregg Silvis, Silvia Stasselová, Rob Stein, Gary Vikan  

FOCUS QUESTIONS:  
How are new technological innovations changing the ways people communicate? How can the participatory nature of the new technologies enhance the way libraries and museums and their users interact and connect? What implications do online social media platforms and the extensive use of digital technology and images by libraries and museums hold for the collections, physical spaces, and architecture of these institutions?  

The working group began their convening by acknowledging that new technologies are changing the ways in which people are communicating. While there may be increased homogeneity in information, with widespread distribution of ideas and data, at the same time there is the opportunity for diverse perspectives through democratic access to communication in many parts of society. And despite the penetration of technology, there remain social, economic, generational, language, technological, and attitudinal gaps that need to be closed. The participatory nature of the new technologies can enhance the ways in which libraries and museums and their users interact and connect. The roles of librarians and museum professionals are changing from sole authority figure or expert to sharing knowledge with a diverse set of users (audience/guest/host/customer/visitor) who bring their own knowledge.  

RECOMMENDATIONS:  
• Online social media offer opportunities to rethink the way in which the mission of libraries and museums is achieved and the ways in which collections, physical spaces, and the structure of organizations are conceived and managed.  
• Technologies may be powerful tools, but it should be understood that they are not the drivers in participatory culture.  
• Digital collections that span institutional boundaries can facilitate enhanced participation.  
• Physical spaces that enhance interactivity, and discovery can increase effective participation.  
• Organizations that share collections and staff expertise more effectively can reduce costs (cost benefit) and enhance the quality of services.  
• Greater collaboration and integration of organizations can provide a seamless and fruitful discovery experience to technology users, who are increasingly exploring resources from a variety of institutions.  

I was a bit skeptical at the beginning because I thought I was the odd one out, coming from a children’s museum. But I learned from each and every comment that was said here. I was in the Learning Transformed working group and the discussions were just amazing. What I came away with is that we are all about learning; we are all learning institutions, but we deliver our learning messages in different ways. I can not tell you how many things I will be using from this to inspire my team and eventually inspire our board. I think it is mainly about engaging the public and listening to our stakeholders. To put it quite simply we need to come off our high horses and listen to what people want and need. That is the main message.  

– Sawsan Al-Dalaq
GROUP 4: Building the Skills of Library and Museum Professionals

Facilitator: David Lankes
Working Group Members: Kidong Bae, Mary Chute, Ross Harvey, Daniel Lewis, Sasa Madacki, Rachel Moore, Deirdre Prins-Solani, Joyoti Roy, Andrea Sajó, Michael Stephens, Renyu Wang, Guo Xiaoling

FOCUS QUESTIONS:
What special and new skills do library and museum professionals need now and in the future? How do library and museum professionals address such social needs as bridging cultures and connecting to new demographics in their communities? How do they respond to the rapidly changing nature of the new technologies? Is professional training designed to meet these needs?

The working group affirmed that the mission of librarians and museum professionals is to foster conversations that improve society through knowledge exchange and social action. Service is a foundational value for professional development – a term that implies a lifelong set of activities for professionals in libraries and museums. Lifelong learning is essential to professional development and skill-building, both in and outside of formal educational settings. The following core values permeate these topics: openness and transparency; self-reflection; collaboration; service; empathy and respect; continuous learning and striving for excellence; and creativity and imagination.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
The group identified and elaborated six curricular topics essential to building the professional skills of library and museum professional leaders.

• Transformative Social Engagement involves values around activism, social responsibility, critical social analysis, public programming, advocacy, sustainability of societal mission, conflict management, and understanding community needs.
• Technology includes crowd sourcing and outreach, the ability to engage and evolve with technology, the ability to impart technology to the community across generations, and creating and maintaining an effective virtual presence.
• Management for Participation involves institutional sustainability, advocacy for our own institutions, economics, ethics and values, sharing benefits and the barriers to sharing, collaboration within interdisciplinary teams, and assessment/analytic impact.
• Asset Management involves understanding the preservation and safeguarding of collections and organizing assets.
• Cultural Skills needed include communication, the ability to analyze and function in intercultural settings and activities, the ability to comprehend languages and terminology, and the support of multiple types of literacy.
• Knowledge/Learning/Innovation Topics include constructed knowledge, improvisation or innovation, interpretation, dissemination, and persistent information-seeking.

Fluency in critical social analysis, “participating deeply within the community,” as our group defined it, transcends the more simple notions of community outreach and “going where the users are.” Consider the public librarian participating in community planning or development, or the academic librarian housed full time within their assigned liaison department. The potential for enhanced understanding of the needs of those particular communities is enticing. Stressing this need for participation, our working group leader posited: “Why showcase culture if we are not enabling conversations about that culture?”

– Michael Stephens
GROUP 3: Demonstrating Public Value

Facilitator: Luis Herrera
Working Group Members: Sharon Ament, Pablo Andrade, Richard Atuti, Tina Dunkley, Irina Eydemiller, Minna Karvonen, May Pasiniohin, Marsha Semmel, Felton Thomas, Georgios Zachos

FOCUS QUESTIONS:
How can libraries and museums better understand, demonstrate, and articulate their social, cultural, educational, and economic value to societies and to their own communities? How can they measure and assess success? What kinds of processes for accountability do they need to have in place?

Public value is based on a universal principle of access to culture, information, and knowledge and is inherent in the mission of libraries and museums. This group began its discussions by asking how their organizations can better understand and demonstrate their value. Public value includes by definition a family of values, such as monetary, social, economic, civic, and other tangible or intrinsic variables. Libraries and museums have both positive attributes and challenges that provide multiple opportunities to succeed in demonstrating and delivering public value. These include:

- Strengths – whereby libraries and museums have a set of positive attributes that provide multiple opportunities to succeed in demonstrating and delivering public value. Some of these strengths include the fact that they are trusted, apolitical, and credible; reportedly enjoy positive public perception; are dedicated to the public good; and contribute to societal cohesion.

- Barriers include a number of challenges within which libraries and museums operate and which act as impediments to delivering public value. Some of the challenges noted by the group include a lack of internal alignment and resistance to organizational change; a sometimes negative public image; staff perceptions of evolving technologies as threats; the failure to create customer loyalty; and the lack of effective communication among museum and library departments/agencies.

- Stakeholders (and potential stakeholders) for libraries and museums include the global collective, the political sector, funders (philanthropic, corporate, public), community leaders, ourselves, users and non-users (visitors, non-visitors), friends and volunteers, a range of cultural institutions, the media, academic and educational institutions, members, boards of trustees and other policy bodies, labor/unions, and the private sector.

Techniques and strategies for demonstrating public value include conducting perception and impact studies, testimonials, multi-pronged marketing and communications, institutional transparency, engaging social media, and crowdsourcing.

Finally, the qualitative and quantitative data that support the demonstration, assessment, and evaluation of public value utilize a variety of techniques for measuring that public value and include qualitative and quantitative measures, recognition and awards, testimonials and stories, funding support, and strategic planning, all tied to creating public value.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
- It is imperative that strategic planning and priority setting be driven by the concepts of public value and stakeholder engagement.
- It is essential that leadership within libraries and museums continually strive to ensure excellence in public value, putting it at the heart of the organization.
- It is a prerequisite that libraries and museums work in partnership with communities to define public value at the local level.
- It is essential that stakeholders demand that libraries and museums collaborate to demonstrate public value.

“One Thing I Will Do Differently After This Session…”

At the end of the seminar, the fellows submitted a list of personal commitments for action to be undertaken in their own countries and institutions after their return. Inspired by the presentations, the case studies, and the informal conversations with their colleagues in Salzburg, they made pledges in several broad areas.

For some of them, the action would take place within their home institution. For example, they would share the key ideas from the seminar with their colleagues and boards; incorporate the concept of participatory culture into their strategic plan and internal structure; work to break down barriers to access; and send staff members to visit places where exciting activities for public engagement are occurring. Others stressed collaboration; for example, three library directors promised to work with museums in their communities, while a museum director wrote of creating a partnership with the library in his city – and another participant spoke of creating arenas for collaboration between practitioners and academics.

Several of the fellows committed themselves to creating national impact: one of them planned to establish a group on library and museum change nationwide; another determined to increase awareness of the public value of all libraries in his country through his role as president of the library council; and a third will try to create a common platform of communication and cooperation for institutions throughout her country.

Others made commitments to being more “global” in their thinking – translating the content in a museum to many languages other than English; instilling staff with the vision of the local/global role of libraries and museums; “acting and planning strategically in a more global context;” and “reconsidering culturally diverse content and participation” in future activities. Several also committed themselves to using technology more effectively, especially social media and crowd sourcing, thus providing for more feedback and input from the community.

Improving courses and curricula in the training of museum and library professionals, based on the themes of the seminar, and “inspiring students” to think differently about their future work were goals of several of the fellows. They spoke, for example, of incorporating a global perspective and multi-cultural values into their teaching, and articles, books, and presentations are already being written on the topics of the seminar.

Finally, several fellows noted the importance of this report in reaching politicians, media, and governing authorities in order to justify the path already taken by a museum or library or, perhaps, to pave the way for their institution to become more participatory in nature.

— Catalina Escobar
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IMPERATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

FOR THE WORLD’S LIBRARIES AND MUSEUMS, AN ERA OF PARTICIPATORY CULTURE DEMANDS THAT WE:

- Recognize the importance of cultural, economic, and social diversity in our communities.
- Accept the principle of democratic access.
- Acknowledge the need for new language and vocabulary to describe our work, reflecting the changing realities and expectations for our institutions.
- Create innovative partnerships with the community and community organizations.
- Accept new obligations, accountability, and responsibilities within our institutions.
- Place a major emphasis on public value and impact.
- Embrace the changing nature of authority, allowing for cocreation of content and input from both on-site and virtual visitors as an accepted part of our work.
- Recognize the blurring of distinctions between in-school and out-of-school learning.
- Embrace early and lifelong learning as key to our mission.
- Accept the need for changes in the internal culture of our organizations and practice participatory culture internally as well as externally.
- Recognize that technology is a tool and that authentic participation depends upon people, not merely upon technology.
- Incorporate social media into our mission and strategic thinking.
- Join a new wave of collaboration with other cultural institutions via sharing of staff and collections and other means.
- Open our walls, break down boundaries, and orient ourselves outwardly, becoming the modern equivalent of the agora as a hub of communication.
- Change the curriculum for the training of museum and library professionals in order to address the demands and realities of participatory culture.
- Act with passion and creativity as agents of permanent change.

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Disclaimer
The report reflects many of the points raised and issues discussed during the October meeting, but is not an exhaustive exploration of the themes nor does it purport to reflect a consensus amongst the participants on all of the issues and ideas presented.

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