

**Museum Education Impacts: Advocacy 101**  
**A Virtual Special Issue of the *Journal of Museum Education***

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Readers of, and writers for, the *Journal of Museum Education* come from all over the world. In some countries, the case for state support for museums and related organizations is understood. In others, it requires repeated efforts, clear arguments, and stories that stand out from the crowds of other advocates and their causes. In the United States, where national politics especially seems ever more divisive, museums have the advantage of being a topic on which nearly everyone agrees, regardless of party lines. Culture, heritage, and education are topics everyone says they support, whether or not they're willing to fund them.

Museum professionals are comparatively new to the world of advocacy, and many avoid it for fear of running afoul of the rules governing lobbyists or from concern that they might threaten their organizations' non-profit status. Fortunately, the majority of what you are likely to want to do: presenting your case with supporting evidence about a cause you care about, is considered advocacy. Only saying "and therefore we want you to vote this way" is lobbying, and saying it about a few bills in the course of a meeting or two over a year is not going to run afoul of the limits on lobbying placed on non-profits. The shorthand rule is that causes are safe, people are not. As long as you do not campaign for (or against) a particular candidate using your organization's resources, your non-profit status is safe. Even once committed to doing advocacy, it can be daunting to think about where to start and how to make your case. This collection of articles from recent issues of the *Journal of Museum Education* is designed to help.

Advocacy is a form of education, ergo educators are natural advocates. The parts of our job that involve public speaking, customer service, judging an audience and adapting on the fly, and finding elements of common ground and connection are all key skills in advocacy, political or otherwise. Like most audiences, our legislators enjoy hearing compelling facts and memorable stories, especially about their own constituents.

As with any program plan, grant request, or board meeting, we recommend preparation before visiting your local or national legislators. What are you and your colleagues doing that your elected officials ought to know? What are their favorite causes or issues, and what are they working on that relates to your museum? What facts and stories are relevant to these discussions? You can choose from these articles, selected for their demonstrated relevance to legislators and other public officials, as a starting point, and highlight the examples and talking points that will best support your case. Or use these case studies as inspiration to generate stories from your own institutions and experience!

Here are a few other helpful reminders for your visit with your elected officials:

- Only plan to meet with the legislators that represent your state, city or town. You are their constituents and they will listen to you.
- When doing your preparation, check out your officials' websites and facebook pages to see what they are currently interested in.
- Follow them on social media so that you can tag them with a public "thanks for meeting with us!" and a photo from your visit right after. Send them a written thank you note within a few days.
- Bring business cards, and any of your museum's literature that might support your case.

- Congressional staff are as knowledgeable (or more so!) than the legislators themselves, so talking to staff is always important, not a brush-off.
- If they ask for further information, make sure you follow through on anything you promise to send them (and remind them of your conversation when you do).
- Invite them to your institution, either for a special event or just for an everyday visit.

Not only are you going to be better at this than you think, you don't need to advocate alone. You can bring a buddy from your institution or from your cultural sector or join an advocacy group like American Alliance of Museums or Americans for the Arts. Most importantly, convey the passion and importance behind the work that you do. These are all the ingredients to being a good advocate on both a local and national level.

#### Articles:

***(note to T&F, we would like to retain the subheadings if possible to make this resource easier for readers to navigate)***

#### Making Your Case

- Trainer, "What is Your Museum's Economic Footprint" 35.3.
- Foley, "Why Creativity: Articulating and Championing a Museums Social Mission" 39.2
- Trainer, "Don't Let Your Message Die on Delivery!" 40.1

#### Schools and Families

- Rose, "Museum-University Partnerships Transform Teenagers' Futures" 41.4
- Nichols, "Museums, Universities and Pre-Service Teachers" 39.1
- Hartman, "Building Connections: Strategies to Address Rurality and Accessibility Challenges" 40.3

#### Health and Wellness

- DiGiovanni Evans, Krucoff, Johnson, "Health and Wellness in our Communities: The Impact of Museums" 41.2
- Rosenblatt, "Museum Education and Art Therapy: Promoting Wellness in Older Adults" 39.3
- Ackerman, "Museums and Health: A Case Study of Research and Practice at the Children's Museum of Manhattan" 41.2

#### Veterans and Military

- Kreski, "Healing and Empowering Veterans in a Botanic Garden" 41.2

#### Accessibility

- Lurio, "Engaging Children with Autism at Historic Sites: Developing an Audience Appropriate Curriculum" 41.3
- Wojton, Heimlich, Shaheen, "Accommodating Blind Learners Helps All Learners", 41.1
- Greenberg, Levinsky-Raskin, "Supporting Transitions: Cultural Connections for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorders" 42.4

#### Climate and Environment

- Jones, "Green History: Reframing Our Past to Save the Planet" 41.3
- Gillespie & Melber, "Connecting Students Around the World Through a Collaborative Museum Education Program" 39.1

## Race and Inclusion

- Hendrick and Harper, “Doing the Work: A Discussion of Visioning and Realizing Racial Equality in Museums” 42.2
- Hindley and Edwards, “Early Childhood Racial Identity: The Powerful Potential Role for Museum Programing” 42.1

**Brooke DiGiovanni Evans** is the Head of Gallery Learning at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. There she oversees more than seventy gallery programs each month for all ages. Brooke has worked in art, science, natural history, and history museums, primarily in museum education. Most recently Brooke served as the President of the Board of Directors for the Museum Education Roundtable. In 2016, she guest edited an issue of the Journal of Museum Education with two colleagues on “Health and Wellness in our Communities: The Impact of Museums.” Brooke holds an Ed.M and Museum Studies certificate from Harvard University and is the author of the children’s book “Are You an Art Sleuth?” published in five languages. Brooke is always eager to shine a spotlight on the important work museums do and to be an advocate locally and nationally.

**Meg Winikates** is the Membership and Advocacy Manager at the New England Museum Association (NEMA) and has more than ten years experience in museums and education. Immediately prior to joining the NEMA team, she worked as the Programs Coordinator for the Art & Nature Center at the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, MA. She has also worked at the Discovery Museums, the Longfellow National Historic Site, the Paul Revere House, and the New England Aquarium, among others. Meg graduated from Harvard with a B.A. cum laude in English Literature & Language, completed the Tufts museum studies program, and received her master’s in arts administration from Boston University. Aside from her love for museums, Meg is a published author and also enjoys travel, jewelry design, scuba diving, playing flute, and taking in a night of theater whenever she can. Her blog on museums and interdisciplinary education can be found at <http://brainpopcorn.com>.