

MUSEUM FACTS

Museums Serve the Public

- Museums are working every day in the public interest, educating and engaging our communities, preserving our cultural, artistic, historic, natural, and scientific heritage.
- Museums of all kinds – including aquariums, arboretums, archaeological museums, art museums, botanical gardens, children’s museums, culturally specific museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology centers, zoological parks, and other specialty museums – are important institutions that are struggling to maintain essential services.
- Only a small percentage of America’s 17,500+ museums receive federal funding of any kind.

Museums are Trustworthy

- Americans view museums as one of the most important resources for educating our children and as one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information.
- A public opinion survey commissioned by AAM in 2001 found that 38% of Americans believe museums to be among the most trustworthy sources of information while 87% believe they are trustworthy overall.
- According to a study by Indiana University, museums are considered a more reliable source of historical information than books, teachers, or even personal accounts by grandparents or other relatives.
- Museums preserve and protect more than a billion objects (Heritage Health Index).

Museums are Popular

- Americans from all income and education ranges visit museums.
- According to IMLS, two-thirds (66.4%) of American adults visited a museum in 2006 (including virtual visits via the Internet).
- There are 850 million visits per year to American museums, more than the attendance for all professional sporting events and theme parks combined (478 million in 2006).
- And there are an equally impressive number of virtual visits to museums. A 2008 IMLS study estimates the number of virtual museum visits via the Internet at 542 million.

Museums Serve Every Community

- At least 22% of museums are located in rural areas and other museums frequently reach rural communities by incorporating traveling vans or portable exhibits.
- More than one-third (35%) of U.S. museums are always free to the public, and more than 97% of the rest offer discounts, special fee schedules, or free admission days, according to AAM’s 2005 Museum Financial Information Survey.
- Teachers, students, and researchers are benefiting from access to trustworthy information through online collections and exhibits, although most museums need more help in developing their digital collections to meet this need. This is especially important when geographical distance prevents travel to a wide range of museums.
- Museum websites serve a diverse and growing online community.
- Museums are reaching a whole new tech-savvy audience by engaging the online public in creative ways such as adding museum exhibits to their Facebook page or opening a virtual museum on *Second Life*.

Museums Partner with Schools

- According to a 2006 IMLS Study, *True Needs True Partners: Museums Serving Schools*, museums spend more than \$1 billion annually on educational programming.
- Museums receive more than 90 million visits each year from students in school groups (IMLS study).
- Museums tailor educational programs in math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies, often in coordination with state and local curriculum standards (IMLS study).
- Each year, museums provide more than 18 million instructional hours for educational programs such as guided tours for students, staff visits to schools, school outreach through science vans and other traveling exhibits, and professional development for teachers (IMLS study).

Museums Educate our Communities

- The educational role of museums is at the core of their service to the public.
- People of all ages and backgrounds come to learn about the past and present, the natural and cultural world, and human creativity through unique museum experiences.
- Children find the spark that inspires them to become scientists, artists, political leaders, historians, and entrepreneurs.
- Museums tell these stories by collecting, preserving, researching, and interpreting objects, living specimens, and information.
- Museums are reaching increasingly diverse audiences, helping communities better understand and appreciate cultural diversity.
- Through museums, visitors make tangible connections to their heritage, art, or the natural world regardless of their ages, the size of their communities, or their economic and ethnic backgrounds.

Museums are Economic Engines

- Museums employ more than a half-million Americans, according to AAM's analysis of the 2007 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census.
- U.S. museums spend more than \$14.5 billion a year, encouraging economic growth in their communities (AAM estimate).
- Museums rank among the top three family vacation destinations.
- Trips including cultural and heritage activities comprise one of the most popular and significant segments of the travel industry, accounting for over 23% of all domestic trips, according to the U.S. Travel Association.
- Visitors to historic sites and cultural attractions, including museums, stay 53% longer and spend 36% more money than other kinds of tourists (U.S. Travel Association).
- Quality of life issues contribute significantly to decisions businesses make in choosing to relocate, including access to cultural resources that includes a dynamic museum community.
- The National Governors Association has found, "...civic leaders are beginning to take stock of artistic and cultural assets, recognizing that they are essential to quality of life."
- The U.S. Conference of Mayors has found, "The arts, humanities, and museums are critical to the quality of life and livability of America's cities. It has been shown that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates over \$166 billion in economic activity annually, supports over 5.7 million full time jobs, and returns over \$12 billion in federal income taxes annually. Governments which support the arts on average see a return on investment of over \$7 in taxes for every \$1 that the government appropriates."