

Mid-Atlantic
Association of **Museums**



October 6–8, 2026
Douglass Student Center
Rutgers University

The background of the poster is a photograph of a city skyline, likely New Brunswick, New Jersey, reflected in a body of water. The skyline includes a mix of modern glass buildings and older brick structures, with a prominent church steeple on the right. The water is calm, creating a clear reflection of the buildings and the sky. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

2026 MAAM ANNUAL CONFERENCE
New Brunswick, NJ

[MIDATLANTICMUSEUMS.ORG/ANNUAL-MEETING](https://midatlanticmuseums.org/annual-meeting)

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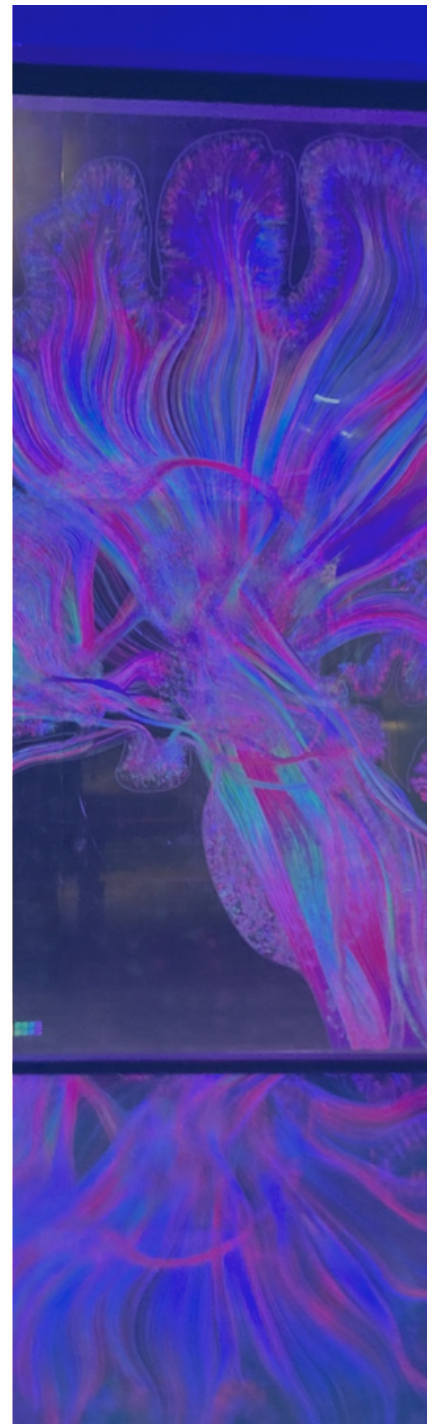
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Smithsonian Institution



welcome to MAAM

MAAM

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Dear Attendees,

Welcome to New Brunswick, New Jersey, and the 2026 MAAM Annual Conference! Whether this is your first MAAM conference or you've been part of our community for years, we're delighted you've joined us on the historic campus of Rutgers University for a few days of learning, collaboration, and inspiration.

As co-chairs of the 2026 Annual Conference, it has been our privilege to work alongside so many thoughtful and dedicated museum professionals. We extend our sincere thanks to everyone who submitted session proposals. The creativity, innovation, and passion reflected in this year's submissions are a reminder of the incredible work happening throughout our field, and we're excited for you to experience it firsthand.

We're also deeply grateful to the members of the Program, Local Arrangements, Awards, and Sponsorship Committees. Their countless volunteer hours have shaped every aspect of this conference. We also thank the MAAM Board of Directors for their leadership and commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for our museum community to learn, grow, and connect.

This year, we're gathering at Rutgers University, one of the nation's oldest institutions of higher education. For more than 250 years, this campus has been a place where ideas have been explored, challenged, and transformed. Surrounded by students, scholars, and a spirit of discovery, we're reminded that museums, too, are places of inquiry—where we ask questions, share knowledge, and inspire lifelong learning.

While you're here, we hope you'll take time to explore New Brunswick and the surrounding region. From its thriving arts and cultural scene to its diverse restaurants, the city offers plenty to discover. New Jersey's history is equally remarkable—home to pivotal moments in the American Revolution, generations of innovation and industry, and communities whose stories continue to shape the nation. We hope your time here inspires you both inside and outside the conference.

We've worked hard to create a program that is thoughtful, practical, and energizing, but your feedback is invaluable. Please share your thoughts through session evaluations, conversations with fellow attendees, or by connecting with MAAM staff and volunteers throughout the conference. Your insights help us continue to strengthen this gathering and ensure it reflects the evolving needs of our museum community.

Thank you for being part of MAAM 2026. We hope you leave New Brunswick with fresh ideas, new connections, and renewed enthusiasm for the important work museums do every day.

Tonika Berkley

Tonika Berkley
{At-Large Representative}
Africana Archivist for Special Collections
JHU Sheridan Libraries

Nicholas West

Nicholas West
{At-Large Representative}
Co-director, University Museums,
Colgate University

MAAM Board Members and 2026 Conference Co-Chairs

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Thank you to the sponsors of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museum's Annual Conference 2026!

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SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Tuesday, October 6		*Registration Required
8:00 am–5:00 pm	Check-In & Registration	Lobby, Douglass Student Center
9:00 am–4:30 pm	Pre-Conference Off Site Tours* Pre-registration required	Various Locations
9:30am–5:00pm	Full Day Workshops* Pre-registration required	Various Locations
10:00am–4:00pm	White Gloves Service Day* Pre-Registration Required	Various Locations
12:00pm–5:00pm	Exhibitor Hall Set Up	NJC Lounge, Douglas Student Center
5:30pm–7:00pm	Opening Reception	Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7		
8:00am–8:45am	Breakfast	Trayes Hall, Douglas Student Center
8:00am–5:00pm	Check-In & Registration	Lobby, Douglas Student Center
8:00am–5:00pm	Exhibitor Hall Open	NJC Lounge, Douglass Student Center
9:00am–10:15am	Keynote: Stephen Weil Memorial Address Monica O. Montgomery, Meme Omogbai	Trayes Hall
10:15am–10:30am	Coffee Break , Sponsored by Solid Light	NJC Lounge
10:30am–11:45am	Breakout Sessions 1A. A Shared Approach: Building Partnership to Recruit, Train, and Place Volunteer Staff 1B. Engaging Communities in Civic Learning through Museums and Historic Sites 1C. Objects and Manuscripts and Books, Oh My!: An Interdepartmental Approach to Collections Control and Access 1D. The Art of Reinvention: Innovation and Growth at the Delaware Art Museum	Various Locations
11:45am–12:15pm	Headshot Station	Trayes Hall
12:00 pm–1:30 pm	MAAM Meet & Eat , Sponsored by Artfit 3D Technologies	Trayes Hall



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, CONTINUED

1:45pm–3:00pm	Breakout Sessions 2A. Beyond the Museum Walls: Partnering with Local Tourism for Greater Reach 2B. Experimental Spaces: Practical Advice from a VR Prototype 2C. From Content to Connection: Developing Student Activities for Deeper Engagement 2D. Tough Conversations: Exploring Deaccessioning Dilemmas and Solutions	Various Locations
3:00pm–3:30pm	Headshot Station	Trayes Hall
3:00pm–3:30pm	First-Timers & Friends Coffee Break	NJC Lounge
3:30pm–4:45pm	Breakout Sessions 3A. HueArts & Culture Northeast: An Initiative Centering Museums That Preserve Our Stories 3B. QuickTakes from the Field 3C. The Active Power of Touch: Multisensory Experiences Increase Visitor Engagement 3D. Innovating the Field: Emerging Museums in New Jersey	Various Locations
4:45pm–6:15pm	Awards Reception, Sponsored by The Cooperstown Graduate Program	Trayes Hall

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

8:00am–8:45am	Breakfast	Trayes Hall
8:00am–2:00pm	Exhibitor Hall Open	NJC Lounge
8:00am–5:00pm	Conference Check-In & Registration	Lobby, Douglass Student Center
9:00am–10:15am	Breakout Sessions 4A. Bite-Sized Strategic Planning: 5 Steps for Success 4B. From Grants to Gameplay: How Museums Are Using Mobile Technology to Meet Institutional Needs 4C. Museum Programs for People with Memory Loss Benefit Everyone: How to Start or Strengthen Yours 4D. Strategies & Struggles: New Technology in Collections	Various Locations



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8, CONTINUED

10:15am–10:30am	Coffee Break	NJC Lounge
10:15am–11:00am	Headshot Station	Trayes Hall, Douglass Student Center
10:30am–11:45am	Resume Review/Career Conversations	Douglass Lounge
10:30am–11:45am	Student Poster Presentations	First Floor Lobby
10:30am–1:30pm	Museum Careers Table	First Floor Lobby
11:00am–1:15pm	Lunch Meet-Ups/Lunch On Your Own *Attendees responsible for their own meal	Various Locations
12:00pm–1:15pm	Leadership Lunch (Invitation Only) Sponsored by Argus Cultural Property Consultants	Trayes Hall
1:30am–2:45m	Breakout Sessions 5A. Bucking the Trends at the Delaware Art Museum 5B. Making Inclusive Museums Now: Lessons from the Field 5C. The Rise, Fall and Rise Again of Hinchliffe Stadium: Paterson's Sporting Jewel 5D. Nobody Puts Makerspace in the Corner! Using Maker-Based Approaches to Create Interactive Exhibits & Experiences Across the Museum	Various Locations
2:45pm–3:00pm	Coffee Break	NJC Lounge
3:00 pm–4:15 pm	Breakout Sessions 6A. Archives Together: Community, Collections, and Connections 6B. Beyond Touchscreens: Creative Uses of Digital Media to Shape Space and Engagement 6C. What Comes Next? The History and Legacy of Race, the Role of Museums, and the Work Ahead 6D. Increasing Impact and Building Community: Expanding Programs for Neurodivergent Youth	Various Locations
5:30pm–7:30pm	Johnson Atelier and Grounds for Sculpture Closing Tours (Limited Capacity)	Johnson Atelier and Grounds for Sculpture

guest speakers

THE STEPHEN WEIL MEMORIAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Monica O. Montgomery, DiasporaDNA Story Center, President and
Meme Omogbai, College Art Association, Executive Director

Wednesday, October 7, 9:00 am | Location: Treyes Hall

Join keynote speakers Monica O. Montgomery and Meme Omogbai for a dynamic conversation exploring the opportunities, challenges, and possibilities shaping museums today. Drawing on their diverse experiences as leaders, advocates, and change makers in the museum field, Monica and Meme will examine the questions that are influencing how museums engage with communities, preserve and interpret history, navigate change, and imagine the future.

This keynote conversation will be shaped in part by questions and topics submitted by MAAM attendees, creating a dialogue grounded in the experiences, concerns, and aspirations of our museum community. Attendees are invited to bring their curiosity, challenges, and ideas to this engaging conversation about where museums are today—and where they can go next.



Speaker Biography:

Monica O. Montgomery, MA is a cultural thought leader working across museums, public history, higher education, and arts administration. She is President & Founder of DiasporaDNA Story Center, a Philadelphia cultural center focused on “Healing through Heritage,” and a doctoral candidate at Point Park University studying community engagement, festivals, storytelling, and community power. With more than 15 years of experience, she has consulted with museums nationwide and curated social change exhibitions and participatory experiences with institutions including the Smithsonian, Brooklyn Museum, Portland Art Museum, and Weeksville Heritage Center.



Speaker Biography:

Meme Omogbai, MBA, CPA is Executive Director and CEO of the College Art Association, where she is leading a transformative strategic repositioning of the 115-year-old organization. With more than 25 years of experience across corporate, government, higher education, and museums, she previously served as Chair of the American Alliance of Museums and COO and Trustee of the Newark Museum. She has also served on the New Jersey Historic Trust and Montclair State University Advisory Board. Omogbai holds an MBA from Rutgers University and is a Chartered Global Management Accountant.

WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, RECEPTIONS

White Gloves Service Day

Tuesday October 6, 2026 10:00am – 4:00pm

Location: Various Locations

Kick off the 2026 MAAM Annual Conference by giving back to the museum community! Join fellow museum professionals and students for a day of hands-on collections care projects at museums in and around New Brunswick.

Projects may include inventorying collections, rehousing objects, scanning documents, numbering artifacts, and more.

Thank you to all MAAM volunteers and participating institutions!

White Gloves Service Day is supported by **Atelier Fine Art Services**, with in-kind support from **Gaylord Archives**.

Beyond the Label: The Experience Designer's Toolkit for Powerful & Engaging Storytelling

Tuesday October 6, 2026 9:30am – 5:00pm

Location: Douglass Lounge, 2nd Floor

What if a museum could feel less like a vault that preserves the past and more like a laboratory for exploring the present? This intensive, full-day workshop gives museum professionals the tools to learn how to conceptualize exhibits and experiences that are educational, personally meaningful, and fun.

Note: Pre-registration required.

Managing with Care: Management Training for Mid-Career Professionals

Tuesday October 6, 2026 9:30am – 5:00pm

Location: Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University

This full-day management institute is a day dedicated to developing more compassionate, effective managers. It offers participatory activities and conversation, using a combination of individual, small-group, and large-group work.

Note: Pre-registration required.

Opening Reception

Tuesday October 6, 2026 5:30pm – 7:00pm

Location: Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University

Join friends and colleagues at MAAM's opening reception at the Zimmerli Art Museum. Enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres as you mingle, make new connections, and catch up with peers from across the museum field. The evening offers a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

Note: Included with Annual Conference registration. Add this session to your personal Sched schedule to sign up.

Sponsored by Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, RECEPTIONS, CONTINUED

MAAM Meet & Eat

Wednesday October 7, 2026 12:00pm – 1:30pm
Location: Trayes Hall, Douglass Student Center

Join fellow conference attendees for lunch, conversation, and updates from MAAM leadership. We also introduce both new MAAM board members and our 2026 Fellowship awardees.

Sponsored by ArtFit 3D Technologies

First-Timers & Friends Coffee Break

Wednesday October 7, 2026 3:00pm – 3:30pm
Location: NJC Lounge, Douglass Student Center

Enjoy fresh coffee, tea, and light refreshments while you mingle with fellow attendees, catch up on sessions, and make new connections. First-time attendees—and those returning after five or more years—are especially invited to connect with MAAM Board Members during this break.

Awards Reception

Wednesday October 7, 2026 4:45pm – 6:15pm
Location: Trayes Hall, Douglass Student Center

Join in a celebration of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums 2026 Award Recipients. Light refreshments will be provided.

Note: Included with Annual Conference registration. Add to Schedule to sign up.

(Continued)

Sponsored by The Cooperstown Graduate Program

Resume Review/Career Conversations

Thursday, October 8, 10:30am–11:45am
Location: TBA

Do you need advice on making a career change or someone to look over your resume? Bring your career questions and/or resume to our MAAM board members and colleagues and sit and discuss. Open to all career levels.

Leadership Lunch

Thursday, October 8, 12:00pm–1:15pm
Location: Trayes Hall, Douglass Student Center

This **invitation-only lunch** is an opportunity for the 2026 fellowship awardees and emerging leaders to meet with MAAM board members and others to discuss the museum field and their own career aspirations.

Sponsored by Argus Cultural Property Consultants

Poster Presentations

Thursday, October 8, 10:30am–11:45am
Location: Lobby, Douglass Student Center

Poster Presentations showcase the projects and research by students in museum studies programs or related academic programs, focusing on museum-based projects. Come explore projects and initiatives from around the region in an informal setting.



Tour: Lawrenceville Area

Tuesday, October 6 | 9:00am–4:30pm

This exclusive tour welcomes you to the Lawrenceville School, the Hopewell Museum, and the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum (SSAAM). Whether you're interested in collections, historic preservation, museum leadership, or community engagement, this all day tour explores how organizations of every size are preserving the past while building for the future.

Tour: Middlesex County

Tuesday, October 6 | 9:30am–2:30pm

Go behind the scenes with Middlesex County's Division of History and Historic Preservation as we explore three unique sites that preserve and interpret the region's rich history. Explore the Middlesex County Archives, the Raritan Historic Village, and the Cornelius Low House Museum. This tour provides a unique intersection for those interested in history, preservation, collections management, research, and exhibition development.

Tour: Princeton Area

Tuesday, October 6 | 10:30am–2:00pm

JA unique opportunity to explore two landmark museums in historic Princeton, NJ. Attendees will have the option to visit the newly re-opened Princeton University Art Museum, and take a curator-led tour of Morven Museum & Garden's newest exhibition, *Five Independent Souls: The Five Signers from New Jersey*. Each tour site lasts approximately one hour, with free time between 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. to enjoy lunch on your own and explore downtown Princeton.

Tour: Johnson Atelier and Grounds For Sculpture

Thursday, October 8 | 5:30pm–7:30pm

Join a behind-the-scenes tour at Grounds For Sculpture (GFS), a 42-acre nonprofit sculpture park, museum, arboretum, and home to Johnson Atelier (JA), a fine art fabrication facility and hub for artistic production.

The guided visit will highlight JA's three core capabilities—Design (3D scanning, CAD, digital sculpting, and prototyping), Make (5-axis CNC, metal and woodworking fabrication, and advanced finishing), and Restore (museum-quality conservation). The tour also includes *Opening the Vault: A Look Inside The GFS Collection*, an exhibition developed collaboratively by staff across departments that offers a fresh perspective on GFS's collection and curatorial practice. Current exhibitions will also be open for viewing before the tour.



Breakout

Session #1

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM

1A: A Shared Approach: Building Partnerships to Recruit, Train, and Place Volunteer Staff

Somerset County, New Jersey is home to many small, all-volunteer historic house museums struggling to find and train volunteer staff. The Somerset County Cultural & Heritage Commission, with the support of local museums, developed the Somerset County Docent Training Program – a countywide initiative to recruit, train, and match volunteer docents with open positions. Grounded in museum education best practices and emphasizing inclusive storytelling, the program provides foundational training in interpretation and visitor engagement. This presentation will explore the program's design, implementation, and outcomes, including how one museum was able to double their open hours within 6 months of participation; as well as discuss how the program can be replicated with similar partnerships between museums and local government agencies.

Presenters: Kaitlin Bundy, Sean Blinn, Katie Himics, Marissa Jackson, Marianne Sales

1B: Engaging Communities in Civic Learning Through Museums and Historic Sites

Museums serve as vital hubs for civic action, reflecting their communities through exhibitions and programming. This session demonstrates how cultural sites use collections to inspire student programming. Participants will be introduced to the Exploring Civics Toolkit, an adaptable framework for museum practitioners that bridges historical narratives with civic themes to foster community engagement. Representatives from four diverse sites will share Toolkit-informed strategies and activities that empower students to explore their

roles in their community. Attendees will learn practical methods to encourage students to advocate for positive change while gaining a deeper appreciation for the diversity inherent in the American experience.

Presenters: Gerrie Hall, Hannah Gaston, Karina Filipowski, Greer Luce

1C: Objects and Manuscripts and Books, Oh My! An Interdepartmental Approach to Collections Control and Access

Museum collections are not static, despite their typically stationary nature. Each item requires active, never-ending tasks to manage condition and utility. How can museums ensure that current and future generations of visitors continue to engage with their collections when maintenance and access are challenged by geography, funding, and environmental conditions? This panel will share how Historic Hudson Valley overcame these challenges and used interdepartmental partnerships to establish physical and intellectual control over historical collections originally held in disparate locations. Audience takeaways include strategies for developing their own collections management practices and utilizing cost-effective methods to meet project and organizational needs.

Presenters: Priscilla Brendler, Caitlin Monaco, Patira Puttharuksa

1D: The Art of Reinvention: Innovation and Growth at the Delaware Art Museum

The Delaware Art Museum turned decades of deferred growth into a bold reinvention—boosting earned income by 250% while advancing accessibility and community engagement. These investments enabled DelArt to address long-standing needs while rethinking its business model, in part, by reconfiguring spaces and strengthening its community connections. This interactive panel discussion shares the practical tools and creative partnerships behind the transformation, offering attendees strategies to increase earned revenue, improve accessibility, and strengthen community engagement.

Presenters: Heather Morrissey, Shannon Woodloe, Kim Barnhart

Breakout Session #2

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7

1:45 PM - 3:00 PM

2A: Beyond the Museum Walls: Partnering with Local Tourism for Greater Reach

Heritage and cultural travelers are hungry for authentic stories, and museums have them. But getting those stories in front of visitors takes more than great exhibits. Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)—local and regional tourism pros—can help. This interactive roundtable explores how museums and DMOs can team up to boost visibility, share resources, and bring more travelers through your doors. We'll dig into why these partnerships matter, what they look like in practice, and how to deepen your own relationships. Come ready to share your experiences and leave with practical ideas to put into action.

Presenters: Heidi Schlag, Jody Brumage, Jake Wynn

2B: Experimental Spaces: Practical Advice from a VR Prototype

How can virtual reality technology benefit museums? What outcomes justify the investment of significant financial and staff resources? For staff at the Intrepid Museum, virtual reality seemed like the key to unlocking unrestored, inaccessible ship spaces. The Museum prototyped a virtual reality experience centered on digital recreations of the ship's engineering compartments, the most asked-about unrestored spaces on Intrepid. This panel brings together staff from different departments to share what they learned from the development of Explore Intrepid: Engines and Boilers.

Presenters: Ephraim Kozodoy, Chris Malanson, Charlotte Martin, Tim Leitner



2C: From Content to Connection: Developing Student Activities for Deeper Engagement

The award-winning tour, Gilded Not Golden, contextualizes concepts like wealth disparity, labor conflicts, and capitalism on public tours of a Gilded Age home, Clayton. But how do you translate these challenging themes and complex narratives for younger learners? Beyond translation, how do you get those students to make deeper connections? To address these questions, staff developed participatory activities asking students to make connections between Gilded Age Pittsburghers, their resources, and impact. This session will share the process of developing these activities and give you tools to implement similar programs at your museum.

Presenters: Dalena Collins, Stacey McSorley

2D: Tough Conversations: Exploring Deaccessioning Dilemmas and Solutions

What are the "pain points" that make deaccessioning such a challenge? Co-presenters and audience members will work together to examine the social, emotional, and practical inhibitions associated with deaccessioning. They will explore how institutions can work through these challenges to create solid policies and practices that support financial, environmental, and operational sustainability.

Presenters: Katie Lowe, Candace Hesselbart

Breakout Session #3

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7 3:30 PM-4:45 PM

3A: HueArts & Cultures Northeast: An Initiative Centering Museums That Preserve Our Stories

This session will share key findings from the HueArts & Cultures initiative, demonstrating how mapping can illuminate networks of cultural memory, and explore how museums of color anchor community stories in the land itself. Participants will gain insights into how these institutions have been reshaping the museum field by linking storytelling, place, and cultural preservation.

This initiative examines how these museums function as gathering grounds where land, community, and cultural memory intersect. Session speakers will discuss how institutions of color steward stories embedded in place while fostering cultural continuity, community voice, and social change.

Presenters: Stephanie Cunningham, Silvermoon LaRose, Brenda Simmons

3B: QuickTakes from the Field

QuickTakes feature a series of brief presentations from multiple speakers, each sharing an innovative idea, project, case study, or practical lesson. This rapid-fire format allows attendees to hear a variety of perspectives and leave with actionable ideas in just one session.

Presenters: Nomi Dayan, Maeve Jones, Brad Baer, Erin Carty, Nancy Beatrice Bateman, Jonathan Schoff, Jennifer Elliott



3C: The Active Power of Touch: Multisensory Experiences Increase Visitor Engagement

How can "Please Touch" replace "Hands Off"? This session explores The Active Power of Touch, a landmark exhibition at the Peale Museum curated by a blind professional using a nonvisual curatorial process. By centering tactile engagement from the outset—spanning sculpture, textiles, and kinetic art—this exhibition disrupts traditional museum norms to foster deep visitor connection. We will examine the journey from nonvisual artist selection to the practicalities of tactile installation. Attendees will learn how welcoming touch transforms visitor behavior, inspires sighted artists to create multisensory work, and creates a truly inclusive environment where blind and sighted visitors engage as equals.

Presenters: Cheryl Fogle-Hatch, Andie Townsend

3D: Innovating the Field: Emerging Museums in New Jersey

Meet three new and emerging museums in New Jersey bringing fresh topics, STEM interpretation, and interactive spaces to the state. Featuring the Einstein Museum of Science, the Black Inventors Hall of Fame Museum, and the Museum of Makers + Innovators, this panel will explore: the process and experience of developing a new museum; how museums centering diverse audiences, innovation, and discovery can offer insights for the field at large; and ways museums can partner to help support emerging projects and achieve shared goals in the process.

Presenters: Sara Sorenson, James Howard, Elizabeth Romanaux, Callie Lasch



Breakout Session #4

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

9:00AM-10:15AM

4A: Bite-Sized Strategic Planning: 5 Steps for Success

Creating a new strategic plan can feel like a daunting exercise. Explore potential roadblocks and pathways with experienced strategic planners from The Athenaeum of Philadelphia and The Rosenbach Library & Museum. In this session, we will look at five themes or questions executives and Board leadership will want to consider before launching a new strategic planning process. Whether you have never had a strategic plan at your institution or are an old hat at it, this session will energize you to develop a living strategic plan with broad stakeholder buy-in.

Presenters: Kelsey Scouten Bates, Beth Hessel

4B: From Grants to Gameplay: How Museums Are Using Mobile Technology to Meet Institutional Needs

What does it take for a small or mid-sized museum to use mobile technology in ways that actually meet visitor needs? Lynne Calamia (Roebling Museum, NJ) shares how a small museum funded and scoped its mobile work. Ethan Miller (Night Kitchen Interactive) zooms out into a trifold case study spanning Roebling, Pearl S. Buck House, and Whitesbog Historic Farm and Village — three MAAM-region museums, three approaches to mobile. Samantha Gibson (Jackie Robinson Museum, NYC) brings the engagement lens with the "Citi Field Challenge" and a Harlem walking tour.

Presenters: Thomas Dunne, Lynne Calamia, Samantha Gibson, Ethan Miller



4C: Museum Programs for People with Memory Loss Benefit Everyone: How to Start or Strengthen Yours

Museums are ideally situated to make a difference in the health of their communities and are especially well-equipped to support individuals living with memory loss and those who care for them. Whether you are thinking of starting a program or looking for inspiration to refresh your approach, this session will provide you with ideas and information to take back to your museum based on sixteen years of experience with Arts & Minds at the Studio Museum in Harlem. This work is adaptable to museums of all kinds.

Presenters: Carolyn Halpin-Healy, Shanta Lawson

4D: Strategies & Struggles: New Technology in Collections

Technology promises a lot (and sometimes delivers!) but can cause as many problems as it solves if collection-specific needs are not part of the conversation early and often. Three collections professionals at very different institutions will speak to the wins and losses they've had recently with the use of technology to manage their specific collections and lessons learned.

Presenters: Emily Davidson, Bryn Cooley, Kelsey Wiggins

Breakout Session #5

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

1:30PM-2:45PM

5A: Bucking the Trends at the Delaware Art Museum

Art museums nationwide face declining attendance, aging audiences, shifting donor priorities, and competition. Yet some are growing post-pandemic by redefining relevance, access, and value. This case study shares practical strategies from the Delaware Art Museum that counter these trends and drive growth.

Through audience-centered programming, community co-creation, and mission-aligned revenue diversification, DelArt has rebuilt momentum. The presentation highlights reframing the museum as a civic asset—socially responsive, inclusive, and essential to community life. Attendees will gain actionable ideas, guiding questions, and renewed confidence to lead museums toward a more sustainable, impactful future while adapting to evolving public expectations and financial realities.

Presenters: Lise Dube-Scherr, Heather Morrissey, Molly Giordano, Iz Balleto

5B: Making Inclusive Museums Now: Lessons from the Field

JSA/MIXdesign, Queens Museum, and the Whitney Museum of American Art demonstrate how an inclusive design firm and art museums can move beyond code compliance to translate progressive principles into projects and guidelines.

JSA/MIX will share findings from the MIXmuseum initiative (2018–present), which developed inclusive design recommendations across partner museums, published in the Making Inclusive Museums Now report with the Architectural League.

The session then highlights two applications: the Queens Museum, from a 2019 pilot to a current capital project creating an Older Adult Hub; and the Whitney Museum, where accessibility guidelines address digital and physical visitor experience.

Presenters: Joel Sanders, Debra Wimpfheimer, Kimaada Le Gendre, Dyeemah Simmons

5C: The Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of Hinchliffe Stadium: Paterson's Sporting Jewell

Cultural preservation plays a vital role in telling the nation's full history, including advocating on behalf of African American historic places. Hinchliffe Stadium in Paterson, NJ, played a vital role in Negro League baseball history, a precursor to the Civil Rights movement. The renovation and reinterpretation of Hinchliffe Stadium is a success story exploring architectural renovation, local and national advocacy, community engagement, use of historic tax credits, reinterpretation, and modern-day use. Hinchliffe highlights the importance that historic places represent in the diverse heritage of our nation and serves as a model in preserving the most important landmarks in American history.

Presenters: Doug Stark, Brian LoPinto, Larry Doby, Chris Coke



5D: Nobody Puts Makerspace in the Corner! Using Maker-Based Approaches to Create Interactive Exhibits & Experiences Across the Museum

Makerspaces are some of the most effective spaces for learning skills, but making is not merely an activity, it's a mindset. Freeing this mindset from the makerspace corner creates unlimited possibilities for creatively and meaningfully engaging your audience. So how can we leverage core maker approaches such as agency-building, open-ended problem solving, and reflection throughout the museum? This workshop will introduce maker-learning approaches and facilitate hands-on opportunities to apply them to your museum's content and stories. You will walk away with tools to help you bring these low cost interactives to life in your museum.

Presenters: Jacqueline Eyl, Laurel Sandage, Savannah Fetterolf

Breakout Session #6

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8

3:00PM-4:15PM

6A: Archives Together: Community, Collections, and Connections

Surratt Historic Site and Museum successfully deployed its Archives Together: A Community Approach (ATCA) initiative with funding from the Maryland Center for History and Culture. This program engaged community members in family history preservation, recruited archives fellows, and developed sustainable approaches to community-minded archival practices. ATCA increased the museum's intellectual control of its archives, and heightened community investment in the museum's resources. The success of ATCA can serve as a model on which other institutions can build archives-based, community-centered programming. This session will explore lessons learned and offer participants a chance to ideate on similar projects on a small budget.

Presenters: Rhiannon O'Neil, Haley Herrmann, Veronica Gallardo

6B: Beyond Touchscreens: Creative Uses of Digital Media to Shape Space and Engagement

Design constraints can be frustrating, but they can also inspire more engaging and accessible solutions. How can docents present images in a space where nothing can be mounted? How can we bring documents to life without using screens? How can we teach young visitors to play a game without using words? This session explores case studies in historic buildings and children's exhibits, where creative digital media interfaces addressed fundamental challenges.

Presenters: Blair Chisholm, Susan Cook, Gina Lewis, Kaili Lockbeam



6C: What Comes Next? The History and Legacy of Race, the Role of Museums, and the Work Ahead

Launched in 2020, the Smithsonian's Reckoning with Our Racial Past initiative (RWORP) brings together collections, research, and convening power to deepen public understanding of the history and legacy of race in the United States and across the globe. As museums continue to evolve in how they engage communities, this initiative seeks to support thoughtful, informed, and inclusive approaches to sharing that history, culture, and reflective practice.

This regional conversation invites colleagues to reflect on how museums are advancing work that helps audiences connect with the past, make meaning of complex histories, and consider pathways toward thoughtful injury that helps to build our shared future. During this session we hope to learn what practices are resonating, where additional support could be valuable, and how the Smithsonian can best contribute to the field's ongoing efforts. Insights gathered will inform the initiatives' future resources, convenings, and evaluation strategies.

Presenters: Patty Arteaga, Maureen O'Connor, Dr. Pei Koay

6D: Increasing Impact and Building Community: Expanding Programs for Neurodivergent Youth

Often one-off programs, particularly those for neurodivergent audiences, cannot accomplish all of our program goals. A week-long intensive creates deeper opportunities for engagement, building confidence, and establishing relationships, especially for audiences with disabilities. Explore how two museums developed week-long intensives for neurodivergent children and teens, as well as extensions for program alumni, and how other cultural institutions can implement a plan and resources for similar programming. Participants will better understand the benefits of longer-term programming, be able to identify potential challenges and anticipate necessary supports ahead of time, and will start to apply resources shared to their own programming ideas.

Presenters: Charlotte Martin, Sara Thomson