

The Ultimate Guide to Surviving and Thriving as a Cultural Organization in the 21st Century



INTRODUCTION

The role, demands, and expectations for those arts and cultural organizations in the museum community – which includes a vast and diverse mix of aquariums, arboreta, art museums, botanic gardens, children’s museums, cultural museums, historic sites, history museums, maritime museums, military museums, natural history museums, planetariums, presidential libraries, public gardens, science and technology centers, and zoos – have changed dramatically in the twenty-first century.

Historically, those in the museum and cultural community have been heralded as premier institutions for the preservation of significant art, history, and culture. Additionally, they have long aimed to serve as centers of education and research for academics, historians, scientists, and the public. While most museums still remain committed to these goals, the populations they serve and the expectations of their constituents have shifted considerably in recent years. To survive and thrive in this new era, museums and cultural organizations need to adapt to these changes to ensure their longevity and continued relevance to their audiences and the world around them.

New to the equation – one of the most unexpected recent challenges for the cultural sector has been the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic, with all of its sweeping effects. Due to necessary restrictions on public gatherings, the COVID-19 outbreak has presented visitor-serving organizations with new uncertainty and questions. With brick-and-mortar sites temporarily closed, many museum and cultural professionals are accelerating their use of new digital channels to reach and engage their audiences.

Driven forward by the rapidly changing world we live in, some of the most important trends for museums and cultural organizations to take note of are the evolution of **visitor expectations**, the rise of the **data revolution**, and the role of **new technology** in transforming all facets of daily operations.

From an increasing focus on the visitor experience, the rise of the “experience economy,” a widespread demand for personalization across all industries, competition for loyalty, and a focus on issues of social and environmental responsibility, sustainability, and community among younger generations, museums must cater to a new and diverse body of constituents.

In the same vein, adapting to changing expectations is precisely where data can prove indispensable within the cultural sector. Data can help museums track and measure goals, generate insights, and create vibrant programming.

Likewise, technological developments like cloud interfaces, marketing automation, artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), blockchain, and more are proving essential for delivering the memorable experiences patrons desire.

Our hope is that this eBook will provide museum and cultural professionals of all kinds with a resource to stay informed about the most urgent trends and challenges in the cultural space and, accordingly, develop the insights and tools they need to affect meaningful change at their institutions and the cultural sector at large.



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➤ power your passion



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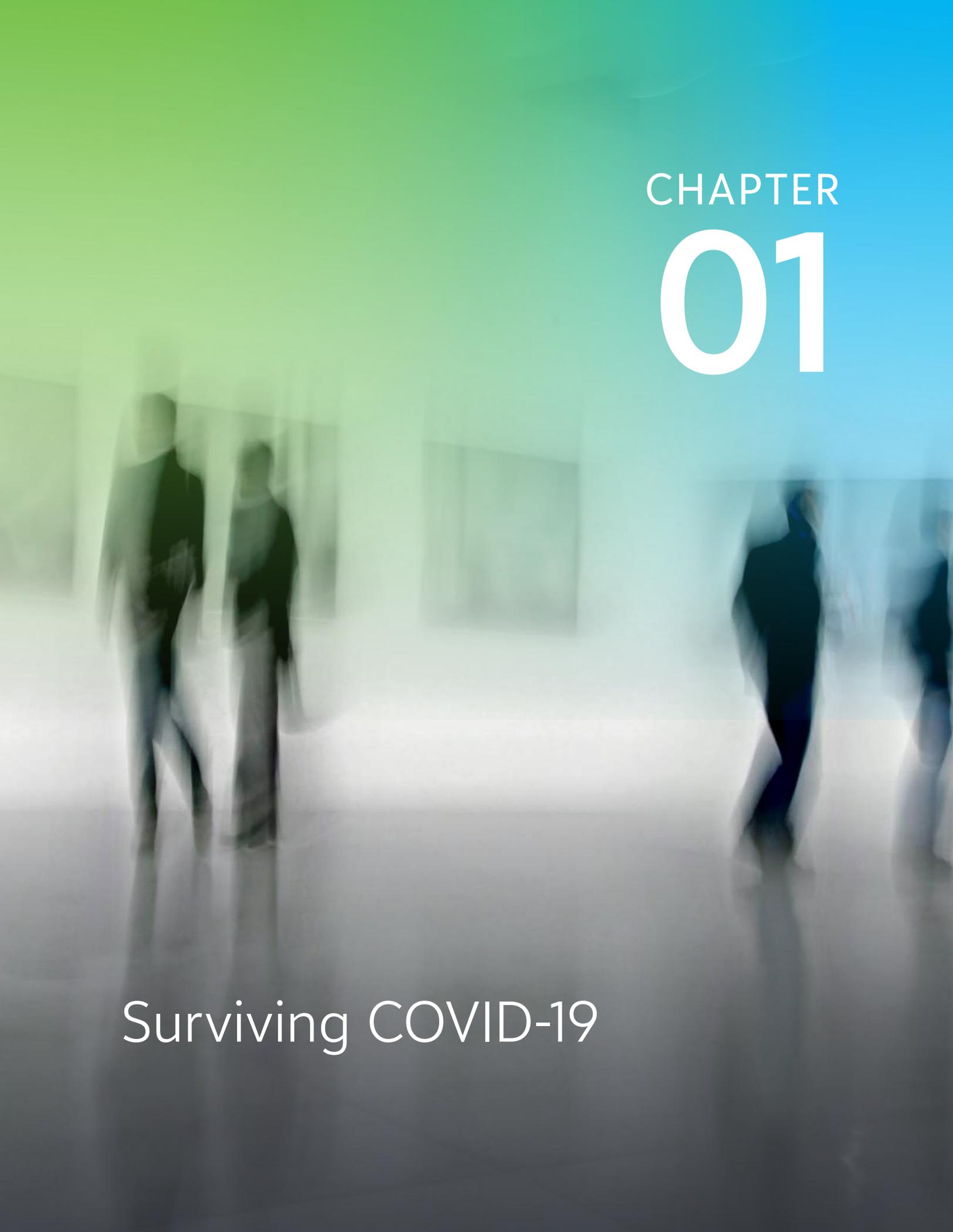
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Cuseum

 **CUSEUM**

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A blurred photograph of a modern office hallway. Several people in business attire are walking, their figures softened into ghostly shapes. The lighting is bright and even, creating a clean, professional atmosphere. The background shows office partitions and what appears to be a reception area.

CHAPTER

01

Surviving COVID-19

Strategy and Digital Initiatives

In the past weeks and months, the entire cultural sector has had its attention turned to COVID-19 and its sweeping effects. Beginning in March, industry behemoths like the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Fine Arts Boston, and The Smithsonian led the way in closing down their physical sites indefinitely. By mid-March, the New York Times reported that three-quarters of museums across the United States had followed suit.

In the twenty-first century, the digital age, many things are changing rapidly right before our eyes, from consumer expectations to the current trends in technology. However, COVID-19 has brought unprecedented rapidity, transformation, and demands to the cultural sector. Indeed, one of the biggest challenges of presenting any guidelines to managing COVID-19 at any given institution is how quickly information, recommendations, and initiatives associated with the pandemic are changing. Anything written in March 2020 might very well be outdated just one month later.

That being said, there are certain guiding principles and institutional examples that can hopefully continue to be relevant as this situation unfolds. Here we discuss those steps that museums and cultural organizations can take to respond effectively to this crisis.

Develop a Task Force to Empower your Team

To address the rapid changes and unprecedented challenges faced by museums and cultural organizations, it is vital to form an internal task force.

The possibility of closures requires rapid response and a dedicated team to brainstorm and produce new ideas. This measure can ensure that your museum will be equipped with a robust foundation and team to adapt, plan, and deliver effectively. As COVID-19 continues to evolve and affect museums, having an internal task force, and continuing to empower your staff, will be one of the most important measures your organization can take.

Trust Your Social Media Managers and Follow the Hashtags

COVID-19, and the resultant museum closures, have led many organizations to start (or want to start) harnessing social media, digital communications, and other engagement strategies more effectively.

While museums may feel unprepared for these circumstances, many organizations are fortunate to have their own digitally-savvy experts on hand: your social media managers, and the entire #musesocial community at-large.

You can look towards these members of your team to generate creative ideas that flow through different channels and into the smartphones and browsers of your audiences, especially when they can't come through your doors. The #musesocial community has already quickly responded to the current situation with creative hashtags and social media campaigns that are facilitating engagement at home. They include #MuseumFromHome and #MuseumMomentofZen.

By making use of living collections, offering light-hearted humor, and using social media to provide entertainment or comic relief, your social media teams can help position your museum as a bastion and source of reassurance during these trying times.

In the coming months, we expect the hashtags and campaigns to expand even more, and it's your marketing people who can keep your entire institution apprised of these trends.

Reduce Barriers and Get Creative

One challenge that museums and cultural organizations often face is long, rigid workflows and drawn-out timelines, meaning many creative projects and campaigns can take months or years to execute. Right now, as information and restrictions related to COVID-19 can change minute-by-minute and organizations need to adapt more quickly, this issue has become magnified.

To overcome this challenge, it is crucial to simplify procedures and encourage thinking outside the traditional manner. If there was ever a time to reduce barriers and look outside of the field for new ideas and approaches – now is that time. It is small, experimental ideas that will lead to big results with the highest return on investment.

Unleash Your New Digital Self

As visitors are unable to physically attend museums due to temporary closures, one of the more pressing challenges has been promoting ways to engage the public as they would on-site. There are many opportunities to do this digitally.

Museums around the world have turned to the power of live-streaming content. This is an especially viable opportunity for organizations with living or interactive collections, like zoos, aquariums, science centers, natural history museums, and more. Live-streaming content is also a great option for art and history museums that can offer special programs like virtual guided tours, behind the scenes experiences, and curator talks.

Organizations can also attract attention by driving audiences to their online collections. Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, many organizations engaged in efforts to bring their collections to the web. Online collections can be a huge asset during this time, especially if you create a dedicated section for all digital resources and promote it in all communications related to your temporary closure.

Finally, museums with a thirst for immersive technology and deeper pockets have invested in virtual reality (VR) and artificial reality (AR) programming and exhibitions. If this is you, now is an excellent time to try out this special content!

It might take time to understand what your audience wants, needs, and responds best to, but the only way to find out is to make options available to them and see what works. With or without COVID-19, the importance of having a robust digital strategy, presence, and content will continue to grow with time. The abrupt closures caused by COVID-19 have accelerated this reality in the cultural sector.

Prepare for the “New Normal”

We are in the midst of an unusual and unpredictable historical moment, which is transforming the way we interact, communicate, work, socialize, and more. Different experts have different predictions on how long the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact will last, ranging from a few months to upwards of eighteen months. Not knowing what the future may hold makes planning for the future difficult for us all.

In a time like this, it is tempting to focus on “seeing the other side” of the crisis and assuming things will return to normal. However, as we adapt to the circumstances, it is important to keep an open mind and prepare for a “new normal,” even when this crisis recedes. Ultimately, this challenging circumstance has presented a unique opportunity to experiment in ways that were previously not possible.

Tips and Best Practices for Maintaining Fundraising Momentum During COVID-19

Here are seven best practices that can help your organization make the greatest impact and offset missed fundraising opportunities should your events be cancelled or rescheduled as a result of the pandemic.

Communicate That Fundraising Efforts Must Go On



Be unashamed to fundraise. Ensure that your event participants understand the important role your fundraising activities play in your organization’s ability to accomplish its mission. Building a fundraising culture around your programs reinforces the vital role your organization plays in the community. If your organization is canceling an in-person event or forced to temporarily close its doors, consider including messaging on the important role that event plays in your overall fundraising strategy, and make calls to action or suggest ways your supporters can still contribute to your cause without leaving home.

Offer A Virtual Fundraising Option To Your Participants



Adding a virtual fundraising option to an event or your website doesn't have to be super complicated, time-consuming, or expensive. Depending on which tools you're using, this can be as simple as adding an additional registration type to your registration form or a button on your website or Facebook page.

If Your Audience Can't Come To You, Bring Your Programming To Them

If you are moving forward with your in-person programming, it's important to remember your supporters who may not be able to attend. Supplementing your in-person programming with a virtual experience can be as easy as using a mobile phone and broadcasting over Facebook Live.



The sky's the limit when it comes to broadcasting experiences on the internet. If feasible, consider hiring videographers to bring a higher quality production to your social posts and allow virtual participants to feel like they're there.

Even if you are closing your doors, consider hosting a virtual meetup by leveraging social media or live streaming platforms like Twitch or Mixer. Use a consistent hashtag to make your posts easily accessible, and pose specific activities or questions to your participants to respond to using their favorite social channels. Try to find social influencers or celebrities within your supporter base to help spread the word.

Engage social influencers in your events and programs

Some organizations already have a great idea of the social influencers within their spheres. If you're in this demographic, these individuals can help you amplify your work as you modify programs and events to fit a 'social distancing' model. If you're not yet aware of who these influencers are in your community, consider spending some time to uncover who these key people are.



A manual approach can be time-consuming, but is effective. This involves plugging in to the social networks and platforms your constituent base is using, following relevant hashtags, and building relationships with the thought leaders in your space. Once you've made a connection, these individuals are usually ready and willing to help promote your activities.

Hijack Your Homepage



Leverage your organization's primary communication tool—your homepage—to highlight your fundraising efforts. Use clear calls to action for your supporters to fundraise, donate, and spread the word through their preferred social media channels.

Get In The News



Let your local news outlets enhance your communications by providing them a concise statement informing those in your area about the urgent need your organization faces in order to continue serving your mission, or share information on how you plan to aid in the relief effort, encouraging others to follow suit.

Consider The Relevancy Of All Posts



Even if you're in the middle of an ongoing social media campaign, consider how each post might distract or devalue your more urgent calls to action. You can still post anything that provides value to your friends and followers, but be mindful of maintaining an economy of posts to ensure your urgent requests aren't watered down by over-posting.

Say Thank You!



Be sure to thank anyone that makes a gift immediately (for in-kind or cash gifts). Now more than ever, it's important to recognize people and companies making donations or doing their part to protect your mission. You should also send a follow up communication after the initial acknowledgement, and educate new donors on your broader mission and offer them opportunities to grow their support by becoming a regular member or monthly donor (within the next few weeks).

Email Tips and Best Practices

It's important to portray the urgency of your need and the impact your supporters can have, despite the circumstances. Here are some tips for crafting effective messaging.

Subject Line: Think of this message as a short, urgent message—something that you want your constituents to really notice. If a constituent only reads the subject line, what would you want him or her to know? Use the subject line to convey the urgency, importance, or time-sensitive nature of this message. Some examples:



.....
✓ *Take Action: COVID-19's Impact on {Event/Organization Name}?*
.....

✓ *COVID-19 Special Update – Our Response*
.....

✓ *Take Action | Ways to Help Mitigate COVID-19 Impact*
.....

Content - Headline: Use brief, compelling headlines that speak as directly to your constituents' interests as possible. Think of this as your call to action, your New York Times front-page story. Choose attention-grabbing headlines that highlight the outcome you're seeking, like "Keep Your Kids Learning--Help Us Continue To Provide Educational Content" or "Despite COVID19 Closure Our Animals Still Need To Eat." If there is a deadline, make sure the headline includes the date the action needs to happen by, even if it's a relative date or fluid window like "next week" or "in the near future." Urgency and immediacy are very important in getting substantial, quality responses.

Content - Email Body: This is your opportunity to provide your participants a focused message about regretfully having to close your doors or modify programming while encouraging them to continue making a difference by turning up fundraising efforts. It's okay to be emotional here—make it count. It breaks your heart that your usual engagement model is being impacted, but fundraising can help. Your content should be concise and immediately relevant. Unlike your eNewsletter that might contain many different types of stories, this topic should be the sole focus of the message.





In Conclusion...

In this time of uncertainty, it's important to turn to your staff and the larger museum community to find support. Your peers in the industry are asking many of the same questions, experimenting with new ideas and approaches, and are ready to collaborate. Now more than ever is a time to share ideas and support each other!

As we continue to witness effects of COVID-19, we are hopeful that the rest of the contents of this eBook will have renewed relevance. As organizations responding to this unprecedented event in human history, understanding transforming consumer expectations, utilizing digital tools, and thinking creatively at an institutional scale will be ever-more important. These are the very topics that populate the rest of these pages.

A woman with long dark hair is shown in profile on the right side of the frame, looking towards a kangaroo on the left. The kangaroo is standing on a wooden ledge and looking back at the woman. The background is a blurred green field, suggesting an outdoor zoo or park setting. The overall image has a soft, naturalistic feel with a slight color cast of greens and blues.

CHAPTER
02

Catering to Changing
Consumer Expectations

Walk in Your Visitor’s Shoes: How to use the Buyer’s Journey to Increase Attendance at Your Arts & Cultural Organization

The buyer’s journey is a fundamental marketing concept in the corporate world. Why? Companies understand that they can no longer just “push their product or services” or claim they’re “the best” and expect to see revenue growth. Concepts of mass marketing such as sending out the same email to everyone with the hopes that something sticks no longer works. In today’s digital world, consumers are inundated with messages; in order to cut through the noise and grab their attention, you need to be relevant. The buyer’s journey is a way for companies to change their thinking from “inside out” to “outside in”. It’s a framework that promotes customer-centricity. Arts & cultural organizations can use this framework to send the right messages to the right people at the right time.

What is the Buyer’s Journey?

There are many interpretations of the buyer’s journey, but at the core it’s a way to organize your communications into the steps a buyer goes through to make a purchase. It forces organizations to think about where the buyer is in the purchase journey and what content/messages would be the most relevant at that time.

A simple buyer’s journey consists of 4 main stages, but more complex journeys can include more stages.



Awareness



Consideration



Purchase



Retention

Let’s consider each stage from an arts & cultural point of view and for our purposes rename this a visitor’s journey.

Awareness

Awareness is the first step of the visitor’s journey. A patron can’t visit your organization if he or she doesn’t know about you. In the awareness stage, you want to introduce potential patrons to your organization and mission. Typical marketing channels used at this stage are PR and advertising. Look for ways you can get exposure in the media – many local NPR affiliates will cover cultural events, particularly if they involve partnering with another organization or doing community outreach. The most important thing to remember is to find channels to reach your target visitors: the people most likely to visit your zoo, museum or aquarium or to attend a performance.

When talking about your organization during the Awareness step, you’ll want to keep it at a high level. Thought leadership such as high-level reports, white papers or blog posts that introduce or educate the audience to a topic would all be appropriate. Examples of topics could be “The educational value of visiting zoos for young children” or “A backstage look into the making of a ballet” – keep it broad, with the goal of teaching the reader something rather than a deep dive into your organization.

Consideration

Once a potential visitor is aware of your organization, you want to communicate with them in a different way. In the consideration stage, you want to entice patrons to visit your museum, aquarium, zoo or attend a performance. At this stage, you can talk more about your organization and ideally, you'll have a contact name and a way to communicate with them. You'll want to get as much data as you can on this contact so that your communication is relevant. For example, if you know that your contact is a mother of small kids, you'll want to talk about what your organization has to offer for young kids. Marketing channels that work best at this stage include email, social media and digital retargeting.

In Consideration, you want to talk about reasons to visit or attend. Examples could include introducing a few of your popular exhibits, sharing a calendar of events, or providing visitor testimonials.

Purchase

At the purchase stage, your potential patron knows about your organization, and is interested in what you offer. Your goal is now to get them to purchase tickets and visit your organization or attend a performance. At this stage, you can send pricing, purchasing options (online, phone, at the door), special offers (including membership options) and tickets for special events. Marketing channels to leverage include email, digital retargeting and your website.

Communications I've received in the purchase phase include special holiday events, such as a special Halloween night of trick or treating at a zoo or gingerbread house making at a children's museum. I've also received offers like a discount for purchasing a membership prior to the busy season (i.e. purchase prior to the summer) and emails from performing arts centers with their performance line-up and when tickets go on sale.



Retention

The final stage is retention. Once someone visits your museum or attends a performance, how can you keep them coming back? Communication channels to use include email and social media. You want to engage your visitors and encourage them to like or follow you on social media channels like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram and Twitter. Provide interesting content to keep them engaged and informed about new programming and exhibits. Feature different aspects of your organization that your patron might have missed, will want to see again or may be interested in based on their previous visit. Give them a reason to come back. You'll want to look at the patrons who will most likely turn into members and donors. Build a relationship with these patrons and use data to deliver the right messages to increase their engagement with your organization.

Being Customer Centric

The visitor's journey provides a framework for you to put yourself in your patron's shoes so you can engage with them in a relevant way to grow and further your mission. This concept can be adopted no matter how small or large your organization. You'll be much more successful and see better results if you think about communicating what your patron wants to hear rather than what you want to tell them.



Membership of the Future: 4 Essential Trends Every Organization Needs to Know to Succeed

In addition to visitors, one of the most important constituent bases that cultural organizations continue to serve is members. According to [research by IMPACTS and Colleen Dilenschneider](#), becoming a member is the best thing people in the United States believe they can do to support an organization. That being said, membership is presenting new challenges. In order to cultivate thriving membership programs, museums and cultural organizations need to stay on top of four major trends:

The Rising Costs of Membership (and Everything)

Year after year, the cost of *everything* continues to rise, and this has serious implications when it comes to how we think of budgeting and efficiency. Between the costs of labor, facility maintenance, and all things related to operations, cultural organizations are fighting to keep their heads above water. The importance of smarter planning and strategic thinking is more vital than it has ever been when it comes to how dollars are allocated and spent.

Running a successful membership program involves lots of moving parts, which come at a cost. From hosting special member events, fulfilling membership cards, and all related marketing, mailings, and collateral, everything adds up fast!

Traditional membership programs issue paper/plastic cards and use a combination of direct mail and email marketing to reach their constituents. Both physical membership cards and snail mail

marketing materials can be taxing for these organizations. Just last year, postage increased from 50 cents to 55 cents for First Class mail. Cultural organizations have already expressed concern about the effect of this hike on fundraising. When it comes to mass direct-mail campaigns, that difference of 5 cents can accumulate quickly for organizations on a tight budget!

That's not to mention how strained museums and cultural organizations already are in terms of resources. According to the American Alliance of Museums, the average museum has [6 volunteers for every paid staff member for museums overall](#), a ratio which soars to 18:1 in museums with budgets under \$250,000. Heavily reliant on volunteer labor as it is, museums cannot afford to squander valuable staff resources on membership tasks like envelope stuffing.

With all of these increasing costs, museums need to be smarter with where they direct their dollars. Innovating membership by introducing digital membership cards is just one small step in efforts to save on staff labor, time, and money.

Pro Tip: You can figure out just how much you can save by plugging a few simple numbers into this [calculator](#)!

The Rapid Shifts in Consumers Expectations

The rise of mobile technology has also led to changes in consumer expectations and demands. It's not just major brands that have to cater to the modern consumers – museums and cultural organizations also need to anticipate the needs of an increasingly mobile-oriented audience.



[45% of Millennials said technology has made them more impatient than they were five years ago](#), and all consumers are demanding instant gratification through seamless consumer experiences, especially in the age of the smartphone.

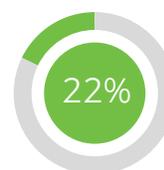
In today's world, [59% of customers say companies need cutting-edge digital experiences to keep their business](#). But a lot of organizations are failing to keep up with these digital demands. According to Forbes, although



[60% of companies think they're providing a good mobile experience,](#)

[only 22% of consumers feel the same](#). That's a huge disconnect!

And while some organizations are taking their first steps into the digital revolution, many have not started that transformation yet and are worried about falling behind. The good news is, it's not too late for museums and cultural organizations, but the longer you wait to introduce digital offerings to your members, the more you stand to lose.

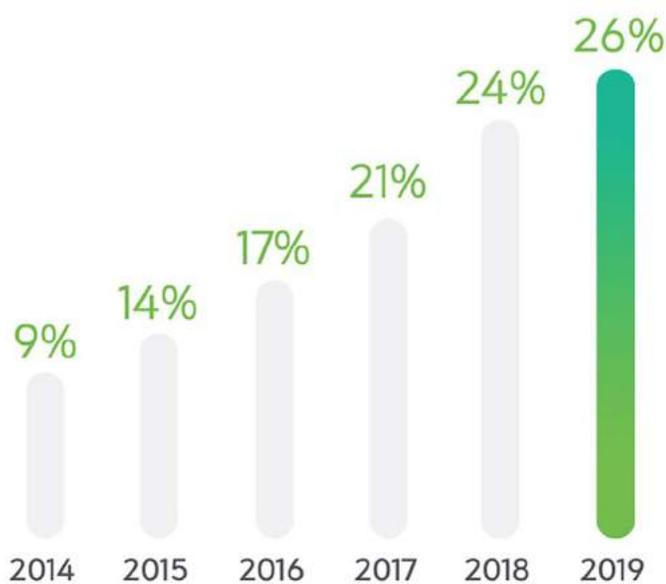


As a seamless "customer experience" becomes ever more essential to building a brand, organizations have to think hard about what that means for their membership program. It's not enough to offer super-

slick events or an out-of-this world tour through your exhibitions or galleries – museums also need to step up the membership experience by providing members with digital convenience.

According to [Blackbaud's 2019 Charitable Giving Report](#), “In 2019, an estimated 26% of online transactions were made using mobile devices. This has grown steadily since 2014, when it was just 9% online donations.” What’s more, the report also urges that “With the age of mobile giving in full swing, organizations must not only be equipped to process mobile transactions but must readily optimize and test their platforms. Mobile-friendly websites, email, and donation forms should work together seamlessly to maximize the supporter’s giving experience.” As you can see, the impact of mobile and digital convenience on your members is already here and only going to continue to grow.

PERCENTAGE OF ONLINE DONATIONS MADE USING A MOBILE DEVICE



Source: Blackbaud

Offering your members digital cards is just one way to stay on top of these mobile consumer trends. Digital membership cards can be downloaded and instantly added to your members’ digital wallets, ensuring a no-hassle membership experience!

The Increasingly Eco-Conscious Audience

Corporate social responsibility is a buzzword these days, and that’s for good reason. According to Nielsen, [81% of global respondents feel strongly that companies should help improve the environment](#). According to Harvard Business Review, millennials in particular increasingly say they want to buy from environmentally responsible brands. Additionally, almost half of U.S. shoppers say they’ll change their consumption habits to benefit the environment.

This trend is only likely to increase as Gen Z consumers come of age. The teens coming into adulthood [are more likely than adults \(57% vs. 49%\) to pay more for brands that support the causes or organizations important to them.](#)

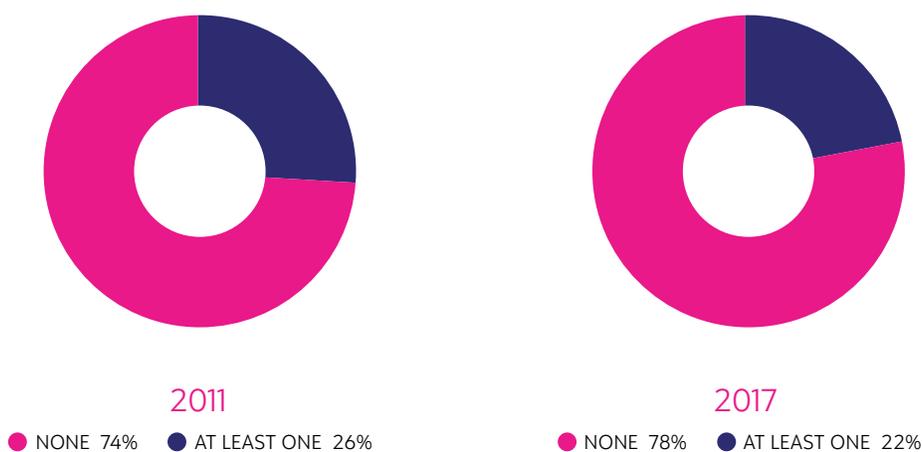
In a nutshell, your members and visitors want you to go green, and they'll take their spending power and focus elsewhere if you don't make green practices a core part of your mission. With these numbers, museums and cultural organizations simply cannot afford to ignore delivering on their commitment to the environment.

If you want to keep up, you have to go green! Digital membership cards eliminate the paper and plastic associated with physical membership cards. Moreover, the back of the digital card can be used to advertise special events, and the card allows museums to send membership renewal reminders directly to their members' mobile devices. These push notifications can drastically reduce the amount of paper waste from direct mailings. All in all, digital membership cards are a key way that museums can incorporate their eco-friendly values into their practices and keep their eco-conscious members happy!

The Competition for Loyalty

There is growing competition for attention, dollars, and loyalty from today's consumer, whether they are an altruistic nonprofit devotee, environmental advocate, culture vulture, or none of the above. According to a leading resource on trends in the cultural sector, Place Cohen's [2017 Culture Track study](#), there has been a flat or downward trend in memberships and subscriptions. In 2011, 26% of people had at least one visual arts membership. That dropped to 22% by 2017. Additionally, a study by Museum Hack revealed that [most museums see renewal rates between 50% and 79%](#). At a rate of 50% retention, a museum could turnover its entire member base in a matter of years!

VISUAL ARTS MEMBERSHIPS



Source: LaPlaca Cohen

If museums want to hold onto their members, they have to recognize that the competition for member loyalty is tougher than ever and step up their game accordingly.



For example, the New England Museum Association Membership Survey uncovered that [67% of museums use both email and mail to contact members to remind them to renew their membership](#). If most museums are still relying exclusively on mail and email for their marketing campaigns, they're missing out on just how effective push notifications, social media, text messages or other innovative digital channels can be. For push notifications alone, not only is the messaging shorter and punchier – [they also have a higher click through rate than email](#).

When competing for member loyalty, one of the greatest benefits you can offer is convenience.

Children's museums, science museums, natural history museums, zoos, and aquariums – all organizations directed towards families – should take special note.

[Parents are 21% more likely than non-parents to join a loyalty program that simplifies their planning and](#)



[31% more likely to join if organizations provide follow-up information so they can easily stay involved.](#)

Digital membership cards are a great way to simplify logistics for busy parents and can be a medium to deliver them up to date information. Family memberships bring in lots of revenue, so it's important to make them as user-friendly as possible in order to retain and acquire members.





Membership trends will continue to evolve, and as they do, it's important to take small steps to transform your museum or cultural organization accordingly. Understanding evolving member expectations is essential to ensuring high member retention and new member acquisition, simultaneously securing the vital sources of support that will carry museums into the future.

4 Clever Ways to Recruit and Retain More Members at Arts & Cultural Organizations

Do you have “No Monet”? Or are you more of a “Sugar Dada”?

These aren't just jokes for people who like art—they're real membership categories at the Halsey Institute of Contemporary Art in Charleston.

These clever names for membership tiers—which can easily be adapted to work for a zoo or any other cultural organization—show how arts and cultural organizations are getting creative with their memberships. But innovative membership ideas aren't just about being clever—effective membership programs create lifelong patrons who are actively engaged with your organization. Here are some ways that organizations can excel at recruiting, engaging, and retaining members.

1. Special Member Access

Remember that [Rain Room](#) traveling exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York? It had two lines: one for the general public that often had an estimated wait time of more than three hours, and one for members that averaged an estimated wait time of about 20 minutes. Many museum-goers purchased a membership on the spot.

Another way to make members feel special is to offer members-only previews of upcoming exhibits. (Bonus points if they're accompanied by a related lecture and/or snacks.) If your organization is in a big city—or if you just have a lot of visitors—special access to exhibits with smaller crowds is a major draw for potential members.

2. Partnerships with Other Organizations

After joining the [Blanton Museum of Art](#) in Austin, Texas members often get invitations to artist talks and other special events. But notifications also often point to other partner arts and cultural organizations such as [Ballet Austin](#).

Want to try a partnership yourself? Think about an organization with a similar mission to yours and brainstorm a special event to introduce members to both organizations.

3. Free Membership

Some arts and cultural organizations have benefitted tremendously by offering free memberships. It may seem counterintuitive at first (memberships are a primary source of revenue for many organizations), but the additional data you get—people's visiting habits, peak times, exhibit interests, and programs attended—might make up for any losses in revenue. This wealth of information about supporter behaviors can help you create even better programming and increase the impact that your organization is making in the community.

4. Special Renewal Offers

More and more arts and culture organizations are offering discounts and incentives to members to get them to renew early. These special offers not only act as gentle reminders that memberships are expiring—and it's time to renew—but they can also be an effective strategy for getting members to move up membership tiers.



A young girl with blonde hair and blue glasses, wearing a red shirt, is looking intently at a large interactive display. A woman in a blue shirt is standing behind her, also looking at the display. Another person is visible on the right, pointing at the display. The background is a blurred indoor setting with warm lighting.

CHAPTER
03

Setting Goals, Using
Data, and Developing
Best Practices

Looking to Be More Data-Driven? For Nonprofits, KPIs Start with Goals

Across all sectors, there's a push to become "data-driven" and "digitally-savvy." Just last year, MIT's Center for Information Systems Research released a [study](#) that showed exactly how much companies in the commercial sector benefit from having a tech-savvy board. **In fact, companies with digitally literate board members significantly outperformed their peers on key metrics.**

This data frenzy has not just taken the commercial sector by storm. Throughout the cultural space, more sophisticated CRMs, advanced analytics, and murmurs about the use of artificial intelligence in fundraising have given rise to a case of data fever in the social good sector as well. All this technology and data have made it possible for nonprofits to use a range of metrics to measure growth and performance.

What is a KPI?



That's where the term KPI comes into play. A KPI, which stands for Key Performance Indicator, "is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively a nonprofit (or another type of organization) is achieving its key organizational objectives." With all the data available as a result of new technology, nonprofits have new tools available to identify concrete targets and evaluate their success at reaching those targets.

At the same time, all this hype about "big data" can be anxiety-inducing, especially for smaller nonprofits. If you're just figuring out how to make the most of new technology, thinking about KPIs, metrics and "going digital" can be overwhelming and seem outside of the scope of your organization.

KPIs Start with Goals

So what's the solution? It's pretty simple. Making the most of data and getting a handle on KPIs doesn't mean you have to go on a frantic data rampage. Rather, start with your goals, not with your measurements. There's no point in focusing on data just for the sake of it. It's only worthwhile if you're going to apply your work towards a relevant goal and achieve something that will be useful to your organization.



Goals won't be the same across organizations, or even across departments within the same organization. When you read an article about "best KPIs for nonprofits" it can be difficult to know which of these apply to your organization. But, if you start by identifying goals within your department, build consensus within your nonprofit about your goals, and then take the next step of developing strategic objectives to meet those goals, then you'll be well on your way to identifying KPIs.

Another important thing to remember? Not all metrics are KPIs. Identifying Key Performance Indicators involves determining what success looks like at your organization. Not every metric can be "key."

How does this look in practice?

Say you're a cultural nonprofit which has relied primarily on support from foundations. Now, you're trying to diversify your donor base, bringing in more philanthropists and small-dollar donors. If that's the goal you set as an organization, **Donor Growth** might be a key KPI for you to track.



Or, perhaps you're a museum with the goal of becoming a pillar with your community and cultivating long-term engagement among your visitors. If that's the case, **Member Retention Rate** might be an excellent KPI for your organization to measure.

There are many great resources available to give you the lowdown on potential KPIs for your nonprofit to track. But, KPIs aren't just based on aimless collection of swaths of data. Rather, they start with your mission and goals.



The Benefits of Having a Digitally-Savvy Board

As referenced above, MIT's Center for Information Systems Research [showed](#) that **companies with digitally literate board members significantly outperformed their peers on key metrics:**

“Doing business in the digital era entails risks ranging from cybersecurity breaches and privacy issues to business model disruptions and missed competitive opportunities. When a board lacks digital savvy, it can't get a handle on important elements of strategy and oversight and thus can't play its critical role of helping guide the company to a successful future.”

So, what happens when board members do know their way around emergent technology? Companies with three or more digitally savvy directors had 17% higher profit margins, 38% higher revenue growth, 34% higher return on assets and 34% higher market cap. In the words of Stephanie Woerner, research scientist at MIT Sloan's CISR, “Directors on digitally savvy boards have an understanding, tested by experience, of how digital technologies impact the way that companies will succeed in the next decade.”

But, **the commercial sector isn't the only one that would greatly benefit tech-savvy board members** – museums and cultural nonprofits also need leaders who will champion entrepreneurial principles to jumpstart innovation and transform museums into truly modern organizations that are prepared to face today's world.

While digital technologies can often seem like too big an investment (with uncertain returns) for nonprofits, it is essential that board trustees provide guidance and leadership in steering organizations towards effective digital strategy.

For that reason, the initial costs should not be a deterrent. Brendan Ciecko, CEO and Founder of Cuseum, recently [discussed what it means to be a “museopreneur”](#) in a feature article published by American Alliance of Museums. Museums and cultural institutions need to be innovative and resourceful with technology in order to stay ahead, and they require board members who will help motivate this change.

More recently, forward-thinking cultural nonprofits have already begun tapping into wider networks to meet their new needs. For example, “Prominent innovators, such as the founders of Android, Groupon, and Behance, have supported and shared their entrepreneurial perspectives with various arts and cultural organizations as board members and advisors.”

With more adaptable, entrepreneurial, tech-savvy board members, cultural nonprofits will be better equipped to embrace a modern, innovative mindset and start harnessing the power of technology to engage their visitors in new ways.

Digital Transformation: Tips for Moving Your Social Good Organization into the Future

Many of us remember going to the video store to rent a movie. How about the calculator that used to sit in the junk drawer in your kitchen? How about getting directions from a friend for driving to a new place or printing them out from MapQuest? All of these are now apps on your phone and represent a small way digital transformation has impacted our day to day lives.

It's amazing to see how far we've come in just the past twenty years. What about what's ahead? What about the post-smartphone era – what will that look like? Now that your gears are turning, we can agree that technology is developing at outstanding, breakneck speeds, and organizations and businesses need to keep up or risk being left as a memory. Sorry Blockbuster.

In the [100th episode of The sgENGAGE Podcast](#), President and CEO of Blackbaud, Mike Gianoni, discussed digital transformation. From how it's impacting our daily lives, to what successful digital transformation looks like within a social good organization today, to how to strengthen your organization to maintain flexibility for whatever changes are to come, there's valuable information in this interview no matter your professional role or walk of life. Here are some of the important points that Mike discussed during the interview.

Digital transformation and the workplace

- To say the world is changing isn't enough. The world has changed. The quality of digital technology available to us as consumers has accustomed us to expect more out of our day to day encounters, and to expect the software we work with be as good as consumer platforms.
- Digital transformation has also trained the workforce preemptively to be accustomed to interacting with a mobile device. People are used to using quality software on the go. As Mike puts it "It's not new to put a mobile device in someone's hand at work because it's in their hand outside of work."

Digital transformation from a leadership perspective

- Don't get caught in the trap of thinking it's the IT person's job to drive digital transformation. It's actually the CEO's job or the executive director's job to drive it because you have to change the entire workflow to maximize the efficacy of your software, not just the software itself.
- The IT folks' responsibilities obviously will change as well, empowering them to be thought leaders internally. They can and should help the organization think about what's possible through the use of technology as you move away from having to maintain internal systems to working in the cloud and opening your organization up for rapid process evolution.
- With more automation available and less staff required for maintenance tasks, things organizations have done the same way for years need to be reexamined at a leadership team level. Your employees should be freed up for higher level thought exercise and improving ways to drive your mission while not being bogged down updating spreadsheets.

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a red sweater, and a young boy with curly blonde hair, wearing a blue and green jacket, are looking intently at a large aquarium tank. The tank is filled with vibrant, colorful coral and several bright orange fish. The scene is lit with a cool blue and green light, creating a serene and educational atmosphere.

CHAPTER

04

Leveraging Technology
Tools Effectively

3 Digital Tools You Want In Your Toolbox: CRM, Marketing Automation, & Digital Membership Cards

Membership and loyalty programs have long been the lifeblood of museums and cultural organizations. Yet, the possibilities, potentials, and challenges of membership programs have transformed in the digital age. There are all sorts of new tools and strategies available to enhance membership programs, which allow nonprofits to engage more meaningfully with their constituents.

The suite of tools available can seem overwhelming, but it's essential that arts and cultural organizations learn how to utilize digital solutions effectively to increase member engagement and attract new donors. We'll outline the key trio of tools organizations can leverage to deepen their engagement with constituents.

1. CRM

A CRM is the single most important tool for documenting and sustaining mutually-beneficial relationships with your constituents and running your organization efficiently. With a CRM like Blackbaud Altru® or Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT®, you can collect and organize data effectively, use that data to improve your customer service, and gain a return on investment.



Collecting Valuable Data

A CRM allows you to collect a range of important details about your members, patrons, and volunteers, and makes it easy for staff to create a 360-degree view of the member and donor.

This 360-degree view includes information like:

- Date your member joined
- Membership level
- Donation and gift history
- Attendance at special events
- Additional ticket purchases
- Retail transactions
- Volunteer history

With more advanced CRMs, you're also able to see even more helpful data for each constituent:



- Effectiveness of your email campaigns



- Engagement on your website and social media channels



- Wealth estimations

Leveraging Data for Improved Customer Service

By centralizing and organizing all this data, a CRM makes it incredibly simple to gain an in-depth history of each of your constituents, and leverage this data to improve visitor experience. With easy access to the preferences of prospects, donors, patrons, and businesses, your organization can tailor customer service.

Gain Major Return on Investment (ROI)

Using a CRM can rescue you from the biggest time sucks for your nonprofit: data entry, tracking down contact information, and processing donations. This saves vital financial resources and staff time.

2. Marketing Automation

Another digital tool that your organization can benefit from? Marketing automation software. You're likely familiar with the standard marketing tips and tricks, as well as strategies to address member and donor retention. Marketing automation software is the necessary next step for museums and cultural organizations that are confident in their ability to create quality marketing content for their constituents, and are now looking to improve their outreach strategy.

Segment for More Effective Campaigns

By using marketing automation software, you can specialize your marketing campaigns and be more effective in your outreach. Marketing automation allows you to segment members and donors to deliver precise, curated content to specific segments of your constituency. By identifying personas and delivering specialized content accordingly, museums and cultural organizations can take marketing and member engagement to the next level.

Gather Detailed Information about Members and Donors

Marketing automation software is also the key to assembling high-level profiles of members and donors. This is a game changer when it comes to cultivating donors, establishing relationships, and raising more funds. When you send out an email and one of your constituents clicks a link, marketing automation allows your organization to track that member every time they return to the website. Over time, organizations can accumulate detailed information about the specific interests of their constituents based on their online activity. This compiled information is indispensable when it comes to building personalized relationships with members and donors.

Improving your Analysis

Marketing automation software also offers other advanced analytics. It provides data and reporting that allow organizations to measure and analyze the effectiveness of their segmented campaigns, which can be used to refine marketing strategy.

3. Digital Membership Cards

In addition to a CRM, digital memberships are a key tool you can harness to better engage with your members. Digital membership cards can replace physical (paper or plastic) cards, and can be conveniently downloaded and saved to your members' smartphones. They include all the member information that a physical card does, with some extra perks.

Real-Time Updates

You can use the back of digital membership cards to inform your members about upcoming programming, events, and member benefits. Instead of overloading your members' email inboxes with reminders, or wasting time stuffing envelopes, digital cards update automatically with new information when needed. You can also include additional info, tailoring it to various membership levels and even featuring reciprocal benefits at partner organizations

Driving Renewals

Digital membership cards are an easy and effective way to drive membership renewals. Digital cards equip your organization with the power to send push notifications directly to your members, so you can automatically deliver reminders for membership renewal as you approach the anniversaries of each of your members' join-dates.

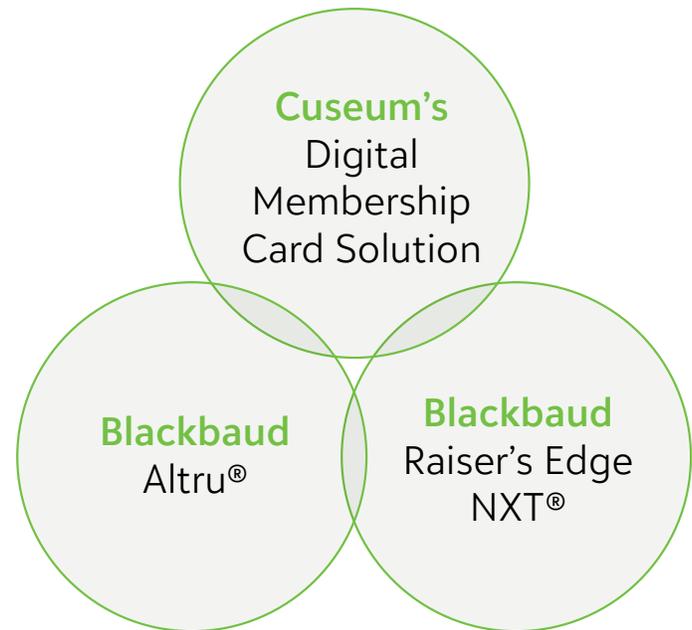
Easy Integration

The best part? Both [Blackbaud Altru®](#) and [Blackbaud Raiser's Edge NXT®](#) integrate with [Cuseum's digital membership card solution](#), allowing cultural organizations to save time and money, while increasing convenience and connection with their members.

The Beauty of Integration

The best part of this trio of digital tools is that they are not just great individually – they all integrate to help you achieve maximum returns. For example, you can:

- Integrate your CRM with digital membership cards so that members receive renewal reminder push notifications before the anniversary of their join date
 - Combine your CRM with marketing automation to generate high quality sales leads
 - Integrate data from CRM and marketing automation to create even more detailed member and donor profiles
- As you think about how to make your organization more-data driven, it's important to be aware of how your digital tools can work together. Integrated systems can be powerful, opening new doors for museums and nonprofits when it comes to member and donor engagement.



Using Data Can Help to Create a Vibrant & Sustainable Membership Program

The world is abuzz about “big data” and “data-driven” strategy. Simply put, big data is defined as the use of advanced analytics against increasingly large and complex datasets. In the commercial sector, big data has applications in everything from product development, customer experience, operational efficiency, to innovation. By harnessing the power of big data analytics, businesses have been able to gain richer insights into their prospects, clients, and business performance.

But, as with KPIs and tech-savvy boards, it's not just the commercial sector where big data has **transformative potential**. **Museums and cultural organizations, too, are also taking strides to become “data-driven.”**

A data-driven approach has proven particularly valuable in nonprofit fundraising activities. Tracking figures like donor retention rate and donor conversion rates for appeals can help organizations establish clear goals. Additionally, big-data has powered AI and machine learning fundraising solutions that allow organizations to identify the best donors.

In this increasingly fast-paced, digitally-evolving world, it is more important than ever that visitor and member-serving organizations continue to adopt strategic, data-driven approaches across all departments. One of the most fruitful areas to apply a data-driven approach is that of membership. In fact, if you're a museum or cultural attraction, data about members and guests might just be the key to giving your organization the boost it needs.

Museums and other cultural organizations already keep track of member data and annual visitors. **Yet, they can do a lot to amp up their data game – and take advantage of the benefits!**

For example, **while you might collect information about your members, how much do you know about your members' guests?** Many museums, aquariums, and zoos issue at least one and up to eight or more guest passes to members annually as a perk of membership. But what do you know about how these guest passes are distributed and redeemed?

One of the biggest deficiencies around the traditional guest pass is that the entire process is untrackable and without insights. Indeed, you probably don't know if, how, and when they are distributed or who your member's referred guests are. Yet, the friends, family, and social connections of your current membership base who use those guest passes are all potential members – if only you knew who they were and how to reach out to them. As it stands, every unlogged action or guest is a lost opportunity for your organization to attract another potential visitor, member, or donor.

► **That's where data comes in.** As the adage goes, "your network is your net worth." Data is the only way to tap into your network and make that network work for your organization.



Let's take guest passes. Until now, guest passes have been a void for museums and cultural attractions. But, what if they became trackable? What if instead of logistically-demanding and financially-draining physical passes, guest passes could be sent via email and distributed from members to their guests digitally? And what if you could compile data on the large volume of guests coming through your museum, then leverage this data to grow your pool of potential members and convert guests into members?

Today, digital guest passes make this possible.

Digital guest passes are another way to make data part of your organization's DNA. As the saying goes, "if you can't measure it, you can't improve it." A digital referral system is a vital tool for tracking your members and guests. When digital guest passes are redeemed, you are able to track that information to gain valuable insight into who is visiting your organization and who referred them. Moving forward, organizations will be able to harness digital guest passes to gain deeper insights into their visitors and communicate with and market to potential members through effective digital channels. Together, we can take a step further, reaching towards a future that fuses multiple sources of data and harnesses predictive models to access the social networks of current patrons to bring in new members and visitors.

Additionally, a digital referral system can offer tracking capabilities that allow you to map out which of your members are the most socially-engaged and influential, and which patrons invite guests with the highest conversion rate into members.

Armed with this valuable insight, you'll be able to offer rewards and incentives to your most devoted advocates.

Data and digital go hand-in-hand, and there are now easy-to-use tools that can help you grow and sustain your membership base and more effectively serve your constituents.

Making Cybersecurity a Priority at Cultural Organizations

As museums and cultural organizations begin to leverage CRMs, cloud computing, marketing automation, and digital solutions more effectively, it's important to keep in mind that these tools come with new responsibility. When starting to reap the benefits of digital solutions, it is equally important that museums, cultural institutions, and nonprofits verse themselves on the ins-and-outs of cybersecurity.

With the rising number of recent online security breaches at major retailers, banks, and even museums, increasing reliance on technology, and the enormous volumes of sensitive data nonprofits collect, cybersecurity should be a high-priority topic for visitor-serving organizations and their leadership.

In the past few years, there have been several cases of cybersecurity incidents where museums and nonprofits were targeted. Last year, multiple major art museums were subject to Ransomware cyber-attacks and email phishing scams that compromised the personal information of hundreds of customers, donors and employees at the museum.

These cybersecurity breaches should serve as a cautionary tale to other similar institutions, and prompt organizations to ensure they have appropriate cybersecurity measures in place.

So, you're thinking about cybersecurity – now what can you do about it? By developing a plan of action, educating your team, and ensuring you have a cybersecurity leader at your organization, you can be well on your way to better protect yourself and your data.

Develop a plan

First, you need a cybersecurity plan. This very idea can be both scary and overwhelming as it's unknown territory for most organizations. Research conducted by the Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network and Microsoft revealed that [more than half of nonprofits \(55%\) have created a policy around cybersecurity](#), but the remaining portion did not have such a policy or was unaware of its existence.

According to a [paper presented at the 2017 Museums and the Web conference](#), "An effective cybersecurity approach should include network firewalls and gateways, anti-malware, user access management, and authentication controls, backup management, business continuity, and disaster recovery planning, patch management, and software updates."

Feeling overwhelmed? You're not alone. All of this jargon can be anxiety-provoking, and it might seem difficult to figure out which initial steps to take.

We have some good news: this doesn't have to be complicated. If you're a small organization, there are myriad cybersecurity templates and checklists available online. These can be a great jumping-off point, especially if your organization doesn't have an IT department or a budget to hire a cybersecurity firm.

Educate your team

If you're intimidated by unfamiliar terms involved in cybersecurity, it might also help to know that the most important thing an organization can do to jump over the learning curve is to provide employee training. **Cybersecurity is an organization-wide concern, and that's why it should involve organization-wide training.**

The stats are here to prove it. According to [CSO](#), "**Phishing still remains one of the biggest cyber threats for organizations.**" That means that one of the best things your organization can do to prevent a breach is train your employees to avoid clicking suspicious links or downloads.

Appoint a leader

Cybersecurity needs to be a priority and requires investment. It can't just be an afterthought. This means someone at your organization needs to take the lead. Yet, most museums and cultural organizations are understaffed and operate within limited budgets that don't leave much room to hire a chief security officer.

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What’s most important is that you have a leader in place who’s responsible for keeping the team accountable for cybersecurity and ensuring sensitive data is safe!

In the face of these challenges, tapping into tech-savvy board members is one option to help spearhead this important initiative.

With these measures in place, you'll be well on your way to securing and protecting your organization's data and systems while realizing the full benefits of data-driven strategy and digital transformation.

Credit Payment Security – PCI P2PE and EMV E2EE Explained

In today's digital world, payment processing security is increasingly important for arts and cultural organizations to prevent hacks and protect sensitive patron data. Here we examine the security standards PCI P2PE and EMV E2EE.

What is PCI P2PE?

PCI Point-to-Point Encryption (PCI P2PE) is a standard established by the PCI Security Standards Council whose mission is to enhance global payment account data security. PCI P2PE encrypts credit card data by turning it into indecipherable code when captured at the payment terminal for secure transfer to the payment processor. The merchant will receive notice indicating whether it is approved or declined. Not only does the merchant never see or get any of the credit card data, if the data is hacked along the way to the payment processor, it is encrypted thereby increasing the security of card transactions.

In addition to added security, merchants who have a PCI-validated P2PE solution may qualify for a self-assessment questionnaire (SAQ) P2PE which significantly reduces the number of questions and their PCI scope. There are also cases when specific circumstances are met that merchants can discontinue their annual assessment process to re-evaluate PCI compliance and gain safe-harbor protection in case of a breach.

What is EMV E2EE?

The acronym EMV stands for Europay, Mastercard and Visa, the three companies who originally developed the security standard. It now refers to all of the security specifications administered by EMVCo, a consortium of the major card brands including American Express, Discover, JCB, Mastercard, UnionPay, and Visa as well as financial institutions. EMVCo's charter is to facilitate worldwide interoperability and acceptance of secure payment transactions. The most well-known specifications are for credit cards with embedded chips and contactless technologies such as mobile payments like Apple Pay. EMV-certified devices are those that were designed and manufactured to meet EMVCo's specifications and are most commonly associated with chip card readers or contactless readers. With these certified devices, cards are not swiped at the POS but are inserted into the reader, a process called chip dipping, or placed close to a terminal scanner, otherwise known as tapping.

E2EE refers to end-to-end encryption. The device generates a one-time identifier and encrypts the data at the point of sale, which is sent directly to the payment processor so that the sensitive data is never shared at the POS. The one-time identifier generated is unique per transaction, therefore dramatically reducing the risk of fraudulent charges since the identifier can only be used once. Many international



countries have a chip and pin system, which provides the additional layer of security of requiring a pin to access the card.

In addition to added security, the liability for fraudulent chargebacks shifts from the merchant to the card issuer.

What is the difference between PCI P2PE and EMV E2EE?

Both PCI P2PE and EMV E2EE are security standards established and regulated by a council or consortium to make card payments more secure. While EMV standards secures and encrypts card-present payments to reduce fraud, PCI P2PE focuses on securing card data in-flight to deter fraud. Both standards require strong encryption of card data and secure hardware devices to handle the encryption in addition to the inability to decrypt the data within a merchant's environment. The main difference is that PCI P2PE devices have been PCI-validated, which can reduce the scope of a merchant's PCI questionnaire.

A young child with light-colored hair is wearing a white VR headset. The child's mouth is open in a surprised or excited expression. The child is wearing a pink and white checkered shirt. The background is a bright, out-of-focus outdoor scene with a blue sky and green foliage. The overall color palette is vibrant and futuristic.

CHAPTER
05

Understanding the
Technology of the
Future

Top Technology Trends: What it means for Museums & Cultural Organizations

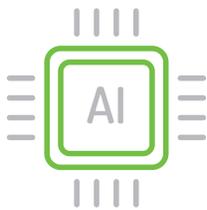
So far, we've done a deep dive into the technology that is already integral to the day-to-day operations at cultural organizations. From CRMs, marketing automation, digital memberships, to point of sale systems, many tools have already been adopted by the social good industry.

While these tools are essential to understand, the future of technology in museums is much bigger. In order to stay ahead, cultural organizations can't just embrace the technology of the moment; they must also stay apprised on the technology of the future.

Each year, [Gartner](#), the global research and advisory firm, releases its predictions for the biggest technology trends for the coming year. As museums and nonprofits look to the latest technologies to help solve age-old challenges and excel in the modern age, it is essential that they stay on top of these predictions.

Examining predictions in 2019 and 2020, let's take a look at what's in store for coming years when it comes to museum technology:

1. Artificial Intelligence (AI)



Artificial intelligence can be used to optimize collections management, decipher data trends, and inform marketing and fundraising strategies. Today, museum visitors can interact with sophisticated robots and chatbots while visiting museums. Additionally, AI can be used to analyze patterns in visitation, offer up personalized recommendations to visitors, and more. As artificial intelligence applications become more mainstream in the museum and nonprofit sectors it is increasingly important to understand and minimize bias. It is clear that artificial intelligence will solve some of the world's biggest problems, and museums are well-positioned to benefit greatly.

2. Augmented Analytics



Augmented analytics use automation to identify data patterns, democratizing the type of advanced analysis previously accessible only to data experts. Gartner has predicted that “data science tasks” will become increasingly automated in the coming years, resulting in increased productivity and broader use ...” This will help fill the gaps in data which is critical in an age of growing importance for making data-driven decisions.

3. Multi-Experience: Augmented, Virtual, and Mixed Reality



According to Gartner, “Virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and mixed reality (MR) are changing the way in which people perceive the digital world. This combined shift in both perception and interaction models leads to the future multisensory and multimodal experience.” These technologies have untapped potentials within museums and cultural attractions, especially as the public's appetite for multisensory experiences continues to grow. The popularity of multi-experience is predicted to increase in 2020 and beyond.

4. Autonomous Things



According to Gartner, “Autonomous things are physical devices that use AI to automate functions previously performed by humans.” Museums such as The Smithsonian and Musée du quai Branly are already employing robot tour guides, robot docents, and “deepfake” versions of famous artists to engage their visitors, it is likely that as autonomous things proliferate in 2020, we will start to see even more examples and use cases within museums and cultural attractions.

5. Blockchain



Blockchain is a digital, distributed, decentralized ledger which has become a hot topic over the past few years. It was first used as the foundation of cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, but blockchain’s ability to track and validate has several emerging applications in the nonprofit sector. Blockchain’s foremost application is as a chronological, digital framework for tracking the movement of physical and digital objects.

A number of forward thinking startups working on the intersection of art and technology have already begun utilizing blockchain in creative ways. For example, blockchain can be used to establish a history of ownership and provenance by creating a tamper-proof digital ledger. With this, there is also the hope that blockchain might finally be able to bring transparency to the art market.

6. Smart Spaces



Gartner describes smart spaces as “physical or digital environment(s) in which humans and technology-enabled systems interact in increasingly open, connected, coordinated and intelligent ecosystems”. Smart spaces, such as smart cities, use technology to improve the lives of residents. San Diego and Jacksonville, for example, partnered with GE Lighting to implement LED streetlights that automatically adjust to weather and reduce energy expenditure. Art is a part of every healthy community, and smart city developers like UK-based CityVerve have begun working with artists to create smart digital art aimed to increase creativity and vibrancy. As quality of life emerges at the center of smart city initiatives, museums, nonprofits, and artists can contribute to the development of the cities of tomorrow.

7. The Empowered Edge



You’ve perhaps heard the term “edge computing” thrown around lately, but just what does it mean? According to Gartner, this is a technology, closely affiliated with the Internet of Things (IoT), through which “information processing and content collection and delivery are placed closer to the sources, repositories and consumers of this information..”

Edge computing and the proliferation of 5G technology will be essential in introducing a cutting edge IoT experience into the museum space. Installing IoT infrastructure within museums could involve networked sensors, “smart” lighting and frames, fully contextual digital signage, and new types of experiences layered on top of the new network.

8. Digital Ethics, Transparency, and Traceability

In the world of big data, advancements in artificial intelligence, and widespread surveillance technology, “Consumers are increasingly aware that their personal information is valuable and are demanding control.” With the growing role data plays today, it will become vital for museums to step up their game in the areas of cybersecurity and overall transparency about how they collect and use the data of their visitors and constituents.



As museums and cultural organizations increasingly employ big data, cloud technology, CRMs, marketing automation, 5G, artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, and more, they will need to make even bigger strides towards securing and managing personal data of their visitors, members, donors, and patrons.

Preventative measures to protect data against internal and external threats are being taken by private and public entities alike. At a minimum, these include data encryption, dual-authentication, and the separation of public and internal WiFi systems.

Technology is constantly evolving, and cultural organizations cannot afford to be complacent. From improving wayfinding, providing immersive experiences, streamlining operations, offering digital conveniences, and curating the visitor journey, technology has diverse applications in the museum ecosystem. To stay ahead and ensure their continued relevance, cultural institutions need to stay on top of the trends and predictions.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Membership & Attendance

Artificial intelligence (AI) has many applications in cultural organizations, but one of the most promising use cases is in matters of membership and attendance. While the use of AI in museums is still in its early stages, this is likely to accelerate in coming years. AI can help museums and cultural organizations deepen member engagement, increase attendance, more effectively communicate with donors, and drive revenue.

Let’s take a look at the benefits:

1. Boost Your Staff’s Productivity

Development is the backbone of the nonprofit world. This being the case, building relationships with donors and prospects is vital to ensure their longevity and success. Top-notch donor cultivation depends on consistent activity, customized communications, and an excellent strategy.

Cultural organizations and museums depend on dedicated, but oftentimes limited, development staff to sift through countless prospects to determine which ones are priority. Then, they have to compose personalized emails and letters to them. The time fundraisers expend on the first two activities of donor cultivation – consistent activity and customized communications – greatly limits the time they can spend on effective short and long term strategy. That’s where AI can come in to help.

Chatbots are one of the emerging secret weapons in the commercial world. Also known as “conversational AI,” these bots are increasingly sophisticated and are able to handle requests and questions from clients, as well as offer advanced assistance with processing healthcare claims and negotiating mortgage rates.

That’s why they can also come in handy in museums. With a chatbot on your Facebook page or website, donors and members can easily ask questions about how late you’re open on Thursday, their membership benefits, and much more – saving your staff valuable time they might otherwise spend on phone calls and email correspondence.

AI also has the capacity to simplify other donor communications for you. Artificial intelligence can quickly draft emails to donors and top prospects. Just imagine having a virtual assistant or side-kick! Instead of racking your brain trying to come up with another engaging iteration of the same email, AI can help write it for you, and you’ll only need to spend a couple brief minutes checking it over. By enabling much quicker, more consistent, and customized communications with donors, nonprofit fundraising staff can be put to much better use: working on development strategy and freeing up time to interact with donors and prospects in a more meaningful way.



2. Maximize Attendance and Revenue with Dynamic Ticket Pricing

Dynamic ticket pricing existed long before artificial intelligence and it continues to remain a popular tool in the tech-driven transportation service. As you might realize if you've ever tried to call an Uber or Lyft after a big concert or surprise downpour, prices for these services can increase radically with high demand. But just how are they calculated? The answer is AI.

While the commercial sector has spearheaded AI-enabled dynamic pricing, museums and cultural organizations also use dynamic pricing. In 2018, the Barnes Foundation gallery in Philadelphia began their own type of dynamic pricing, bumping the cost for several months during a special exhibition. The Franklin Institute, another museum in Philadelphia, also began dynamic pricing due to high demand to see the temporary "Terracotta Warriors of the First Emperor" exhibition.

In 2017, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis implemented one of the most innovative dynamic pricing systems among museums yet. With this new system in place, ticket prices vary from day to day based on seasonality and the school calendar, and visitors are rewarded for purchasing tickets in advance. **This dynamic pricing key to both driving revenue AND increasing museum accessibility.**

Hear it from the Children's Museum of Indianapolis and their collaborators at their [2017 MCN presentation](#) on the use of dynamic pricing: "Each day at your attraction or museum is a unique day, has different unique demand patterns, and should be priced differently than other days. If you're using a static pricing strategy, most days you're going to be systematically overpricing or underpricing admission to your exhibit, and that leads to leaving money on the table, overcrowding and queuing issues, and lower attendance than you otherwise achieve." In other words, many of the most common challenges faced by museums come down to inefficient pricing.

Through the use of AI, museums can switch to dynamic pricing that takes into account varying demand based on day, season, weather, and other factors. Not only can this increase revenue by tackling pricing inefficiency – it can also make museums more accessible by offering affordable admission options more days out of the year.

3. Measure Attendance Patterns to Drive Renewals

Especially as 5G enables museums to collect data about attendance patterns, in real-time, and the specific popularity of exhibits, **museums in particular will be able to use AI-powered analytics to better plan and implement effective strategy.** The Art Institute of Chicago was a pioneer in this regard: In 2015 and 2016, the Institute employed a sophisticated attendance model to test the effect of smaller exhibits on attendance. The results? The Art Institute of Chicago was able to discover that special, small exhibits were the key to driving attendance and has since stepped up smaller exhibits,

Until recently, museums have only relied on large, unstructured data – like total annual visitors – to assess success and inform their long-term strategy. AI technology changes this. Using sophisticated analytics, museums will be able to measure the success and popularity of certain exhibits and strategize to boost museum attendance and membership.

4. Automatically Personalize Content for your Audience

The commercial sector has already spearheaded the use of personalized content to the point where consumers are more likely to do business with a company if it offers a personalized experience. For example, Netflix doesn't just offer you customized recommendations – they also personalize the image used to depict the movie or series they're advertising, based on customers' preferences for different genres and themes. These personalized images are essential for optimizing conversion rate.

Customized images aren't just the territory of the commercial sector, though. **AI makes it possible for everyone to experience personalized museum content in a completely new way.** Rather than offering the same exact content across the board, AI can be used to generate tailored content and messaging specific to the style and interests of your visitors, members, and donors.

MIT, Microsoft, and the Met partnered up to host a hackathon session to explore how AI can connect people to art. The results were hugely successful and innovative. One of the most popular projects, *My Life, My Met* uses AI to turn your Instagram feed into a work of art. *My Life, My Met* employs machine vision AI to analyze posts from users' Instagram feeds and then show which objects in the Met collections are the closest match for recent posts. *My Life, My Met* "enables you to bring art into the everyday interactions of your life."



Source: The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Another pioneering AI-driven project from this collaboration was Artwork of the Day, which uses AI "to find the artwork in The Met collection that will resonate with you today." Artwork of the Day determines a customized entry point to the museum for you based on your location, current events, news, weather, and historical data. This means that everyone gets a personalized visit to the museum, which deepens the accessibility and interest of the collections.

We are just in the beginning stages of experimenting with this use of AI, but the results are promising. AI means that every museum visit can be customized to an individual's life story or personal preferences. This personalization is key to attracting and keeping members, who value a tailored experience.

Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR), and the Visitor Experience

Augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and other forms of mixed reality are becoming increasingly common in a variety of sectors. In entertainment and theme parks, they have already begun to make a splash. Now, museums and cultural organizations, too, are adopting these technologies to deliver immersive experiences.

Major museums like the Franklin Institute, Perez Art Museum Miami, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Kennedy Space Center have begun to offer VR and AR experiences in recent years.

For museums and cultural organizations considering making these sorts of immersive experiences available to visitors, it's important to know their impact. To understand visitor expectations and desires, a research team at Cuseum executed a visitor impact survey.

Cuseum surveyed 103 visitors and learned that **almost all participants agreed that mobile technology enhanced their experience of the museum.**

More specifically, the study showed the following:



The research team also asked visitors to describe their experience in one word, and they expressed reactions such as “easy,” “enhancing,” “fun,” and “immersive.”

These findings offer key insights to museums looking to invest in new, compelling, and hands-on visitor experiences. We're excited about the role that augmented reality will play in pushing mobile experiences forward in the cultural sector. The mobile device will continue to be the lens through which visitors can engage with culture, but more literally, your smartphone's camera and live (and, of course, augmented) view is becoming the next interface.

Digital tools such as augmented reality overlays on your visitor's smartphone can make it easier and more fun for them to access information and learn while at museums. As the twenty-first century rolls on, cultural sector professionals need to prepare themselves to implement these sorts of immersive mixed-reality experiences in their home institution.

In Conclusion...

As you respond to our ever-changing world and redefine what it means to be a museum or cultural organization in the twenty first century, we hope that the resources in this eBook help you deal with the evolving COVID-19 situation as well as changing visitor expectations and prepare you to better leverage data and new forms of technology.

As a member of the museum community you are among the most trusted sources of information and a community anchor. Keep these things in mind as you react to trends and challenges now and in the future:



Cater to changing consumer expectations to remain relevant



Set goals, use data, and develop best practices to adapt



Leverage technology tools of the future to improve efficiency

About Blackbaud

About Blackbaud (NASDAQ: BLKB) is the world's leading cloud software company powering social good. Serving the entire social good community—nonprofits, foundations, corporations, education institutions, and individual change agents—Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. The Blackbaud portfolio is tailored to the unique needs of vertical markets, with solutions for fundraising and relationship management, digital marketing, advocacy, accounting, payments, analytics, school management, grant management, corporate social responsibility, and volunteerism. Serving the industry for more than three decades, Blackbaud is headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina and has operations in the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. For more information, visit www.blackbaud.com or follow us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

About Cuseum

Cuseum helps museums accelerate visitor and member engagement using digital tools. Cuseum's software platform makes it easy for museums, cultural institutions, and public attractions to publish mobile apps, manage their collections, access visitor analytics, and generate new revenue opportunities. For more information, visit www.cuseum.com or follow us on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.



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