

**Statement of Christine Anagnos
Executive Director, Association of Art Museum Directors**

**for the record of the
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Labor, HHS, Education and Related Agencies**

Regarding the Institute of Museum and Library Services

The Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) requests funding of at least \$38.6 million in Fiscal Year 2019 for the Office of Museum Services (OMS) within the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

IMLS has had strong bipartisan support throughout its history. Its most recent reauthorization, in 2010, succeeded by unanimous consent in the Senate and by a voice vote in the House. Its previous reauthorization, in 2003, passed in the House by a vote of 416 in favor to two opposed. The agency has done its work quietly and without controversy. OMS has distributed its direct grants across the nation, carefully supporting all types and sizes of museums in every region.

I would like in this statement to focus on the leadership that the agency supports through its National Leadership Grants, and particularly on a grant that has advanced critically important research that is now nearing publication.

Awarded in Fiscal Year 2015, this grant to the National Art Education Association (NAEA) allowed it to manage, in partnership with AAMD, the first major national study in the United States on the impact on K-12 students of single-visit programs to art museums. The need for the study had been articulated to AAMD members by senior officials of the U.S. Department of Education two years previously. At the same time, NAEA's Museum Education Division had also begun to conceptualize an ambitious

research agenda that eventually settled on K-12 single-visit programs as its first undertaking, but by no means its only one, because such programs are the most common way that art museums serve students. NAEA and AAMD quickly joined forces, received a planning grant from the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, and decided to apply to the OMS National Leadership Grants program for a major grant.

The research question that the study investigated was: What are the benefits to students of engaging with original works of art within the distinctive physical setting of art museums when students are guided in their experiences by means of inquiry-based pedagogies?

The study qualitatively and quantitatively explored how engaging directly with original works of art can nurture skills and capacities among students. It included groups of children that got a museum visit, which included a docent-guided tour designed to stimulate close observation of and reflection on original works of art; groups of children that got a similar activity, also conducted by museum docents, but in a school classroom using reproductions rather than original works; and a control group that got no art-observation activity. This design allowed the researchers to see whether and how the physical setting of art museums and original works of art provided any advantage in education.

To prepare for the study, the researchers conducted and published the results of a survey of the art museum field to elucidate the current state of museum education practice. It found that most museums:

- reach out to schools that serve disadvantaged students;
- do not charge program fees;

- often provide free transportation, since the cost of buses can be a significant deterrent;
- have a facilitator-to-student ratio of 1:10-15; and
- are facilitated by asking students open-ended questions, providing factual and contextual information, and allowing group dialogue to evolve in response to students' comments or questions.

It found as well that the majority of art museums seeks to hone observation skills, encourage questioning and investigation, elicit interpretation of visual images, and achieve a personal connection to artworks/objects and/or their makers.

A core group of museum educators acted as a steering group for the study. This group conducted and published a comprehensive literature review of existing research on museum education; acting for NAEA and AAMD, they also commissioned a research firm, RK&A (formerly Randi Korn & Associates), to carry out the actual data collection and processing at six selected museums and associated classrooms. The six museums were: Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, OH; Hammer Museum, Westwood, CA; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Houston, TX; Orlando Museum of Art, Orlando, FL; Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI; and Walters Art Museum, Baltimore, MD.

The partners are now developing and will disseminate a final report and will hold a symposium in October of this year to share findings. We believe it will result in wider research-based understanding of how single visit programs affect various capacities of students. This will in turn affect the practice of museum education, allowing institutions

to focus their teaching on the capacities in which it can achieve the most. It will also identify new questions to research.

Many art museums also conduct multi-visit programs in which students visit throughout the school year, in some cases every year from elementary school through high school. Clearly, the benefits of such intensive and long-term engagement differ from those conveyed in a single visit program that may essentially be designed to awaken an interest or spark curiosity that can be satisfied by subsequent visits. Nevertheless, the NAEA-AAMD study, which started with a planning year funded by the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, will allow both schools and museums – including educators, administrators, and funders – to have a better idea of what they can and should expect from single visit programs.

The project built upon an earlier study conducted by researchers from the University of Arkansas at the new Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR, which found that students who attended a half-day field trip saw measurable improvement in several capacities. For students from rural or high-poverty regions, the increase was even more significant. It took the support of OMS to conduct a similar study on a national scale at a cost of over half a million dollars.

Much more information about this important project is available online, including a white paper that presented the need for the research, the survey on prevalent practices in museum education, and the literature review. This will soon be supplemented by the actual findings along with a “user’s guide” that will help museum educators apply them to their own practice. The online site is at:

<https://www.arteducators.org/research/articles/377-naea-aamd-research-study-impact-of-art-museum-programs-on-k-12-students>

On the AAMD website, moreover, is a series of reports on individual art museums showing exactly which schools they serve, separated out by jurisdiction including congressional district. In the course of mapping nearly 140 museums over the past decade, AAMD has identified about 25,000 unique schools that are served. Extrapolating this number to AAMD's U.S. membership of about 225 museums, we estimate they serve about 40,000 schools in a given year.

ABOUT AAMD

The purpose of the Association of Art Museum Directors is to support its members in increasing the contribution of art museums to society. The AAMD accomplishes this mission by establishing and maintaining the highest standards of professional practice, serving as forum for the exchange of information and ideas, acting as an advocate for its member art museums, and being a leader in shaping public discourse about the arts community and the role of art in society.

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