

EARNED INCOME 101: MANAGING RETAIL, ECOMMERCE & MORE



American
Alliance of
Museums

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Saturday, May 28, 2016
8:45 to 10:00 AM



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WORK SHOP INTRODUCTION

This session lets you interact with and learn from a diverse panel of earned income experts with extensive management experience in museum stores, ecommerce, facility rentals, food service and more. Some museums invest in these services as visitor amenities and prioritize them within their administrations, while others do less to oversee them and integrate them within the museum. Some museums operate these functions themselves, others outsource them completely, and some do a little of both. These functions directly correlate to the visitor experience and also affect the internal relationships with members, donors, staff, and volunteers.

Learner Outcomes

1. The financial and operational pros and cons of self-operation versus outsourcing these earned income areas.
2. How to increase revenue and profitability (or reduced subsidy, if not profitable) for museum stores, ecommerce, facility rentals and dining.
3. Methods to increase and measure visitor/guest, donor, staff and volunteer experience and participation.

PANELIST & AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Some of the following questions will be asked to the panelists at today's session. In addition to these questions, there will be ample time for questions/answers with the audience.

Topic: Museum Stores

- Some museums prioritize the museum store more than others. What are some of the factors that may influence museum leadership to manage the museum store with less priority than some other functions or departments within the museum?
- What are some of the examples of reasons why museum leadership prioritizes the focus on museum store expectations and performance?
- What steps could be taken to learn how the museum store was comparing to others in a comparable setting?
- How does a museum store impact overall visitor satisfaction? How do you measure this at your institution?
- How do you optimize/balance product selection for all target audiences with brand alignment and performance?

Topic: Ecommerce

- What are some of the common steps to take to evaluate the museum's ecommerce performance?
- What are some of the steps a museum may take if they are uncertain of the proficiency their staff may be lacking?
- Aside from the profit and loss measurements, what are some of the metrics that are an indication your ecommerce is performing well, or in need of help?
- How does a museum online store affect visitor experience or brand identity?

Topic: Self-Operating vs. Outsourcing Museum Stores

- What is the motivation for a museum to change from self-operating to outsourcing their store (financial and operational ramifications)?
- What are the potential down-sides to outsourcing the store?
- Why does a museum maintain self-operation? What are the advantages?
- Does the potential of outsourcing the store apply the same to all types of Museums (art, natural history, historical, science, and children's)?
- Some believe outsourcing is pursued due to a lack of proficiency of museum leadership regarding those areas. What is your perspective about that statement?

Topic: Facility Rentals / Catering

- What are some of the common pit-falls that allow a facility rental business to decline? Conversely, what allows it to thrive?
- What are some of the critical advantages to the museum regarding facility rentals beyond the financial benefits?
- What is the best criteria to measure success of your facility rental business?

Topic: Visitor Dining

- What are some of the non-financial measurements that a museum may use to determine the level of satisfaction of their dining experience?
- Please comment on the impact and importance of the internal staff (employees, volunteers and donors) regarding their dining experience?
- What are the some of the indicators your museum dining is doing very well?
- How does café performance impact overall visitor satisfaction? How do you work with your team, to ensure the best guest experience?
- How do you align your menu selection/profitability with a variety of audience segments and expectations?

PANELIST PROFILE

Megan Williams
Director of Business Enterprises
The Field Museum of Natural History
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Bio:

Megan is the organizer of this session. She has been at The Field Museum in Chicago for over 15 years, and currently serves as the Director of Business Enterprises. Her experience includes oversight for retail and food service as well as special events and tourism. Megan has experience managing both self-operated businesses and outsourced operators.

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Barbara Lenhardt
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Bio:

Barbara is currently the Director of Retail Operations for The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington D.C. where she oversees retail store, concessions operations, web sales, and contracts for traveling show merchandise sales. Prior to that she was brought on board to develop a retail store for their new Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, AR. Most recently Barbara was the Chair of the Board of Directors for the Museum Stores Association.

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Mary Baerg
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Bio:

Mary serves as Director of Guest Experience Operations at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County and La Brea Tar Pits & Museum. She currently oversees ticketing systems, guest relations and the performance of food service, retail and photo experience partners. She previously served as Senior Vice President of Administration and Operations at the Great Lakes Science Center.

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Janice Yablonski-Hickey
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Bio:

Janice is currently a consultant specializing in the areas of ecommerce and interactive marketing. Janice has more than 25 years experience in museum retail and digital media. She was The Metropolitan Museum of Art's first head of ecommerce, a position she held for 13 years. Her work has won awards including the American Alliance of Museums' Best Institutional Web Site, Advertising Age's Best Ecommerce Site, and most recently, the Museum Store Association's Best Web Presence.

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MODERATOR

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Bio:

Paul currently serves as a consultant and for the past 19 years he has been directly involved in cultural attraction business management. Paul served as Chief Operating Officer of Museum Retail responsible for the income generating retail activities based in 16 of the Smithsonian museums, to include the stores, restaurants/cafés, and theaters in addition to several operator businesses. Paul also served as a Vice President for a leading national retail provider for cultural institutions.

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