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A Recent Emergence

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# Multiple Perspectives on Teen-Centric Art Museum Programs: A Recent Emergence

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*Abstract: Subjected to the social, political, economic and artistic events of the day, the need of the art museum has shifted with time. As part of that shift the museum has had to reflect on their goals as an institution, updating their mission, revising their content, and identifying who should be served. This paper will look at the recent emergence of teen-centric Art Museum programs as part of a historical trend that began to center attention on audiences. Since the needs of teens are different than any other age group, to engage them has caused museums to further transform their connection to the public in many ways. The paper will explore the historical context in which museums have come to include a teen audience, tracing the emergence of the art museum's mission from collecting and preserving objects of art to public engagement, and the shift from focusing primarily on school children and art appreciation to including a teen population and its particular needs. As a key characteristic of this engagement, there will also be a discussion about the change in art museums from being 'temples' for contemplation to 'rocking community centers,' wired for technology.*

*Keywords: Teens, Audience, Museum Mission, Technology, Community Center, Education*

**I**n a 2011 *New York Times* article, Zezima describes a move by the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston to engage a new audience of adolescents:

Four times a year the Institute of Contemporary Art (I.C.A) turns itself over to a group that typically loathes to spend Friday night at a museum: teenagers... While the move might raise some eyebrows — teenagers with backpacks, cell phones, and loud voices come to the museum — it is part of a concerted effort at the I.C.A. to attract, educate, and hand responsibility over to teenagers.<sup>1</sup>

The teen-led organizing committee's work described by Zezima culminates with a party at which students are invited to tour a featured exhibition, participate in activities, and watch performances of artists invited by the Teen Council.<sup>2</sup> "There's a real dearth of opportunities for teenagers to engage in contemporary museums and the arts as leaders," said Jill Medvedow, the I.C. A. museum's director.<sup>3</sup> The themes of contemporary art resonate with teenagers; a museum is a safe place where adolescents can push their artistic and intellectual boundaries. As Ms. Medvedow explains, "So many contemporary artists deal with issues of identity, sex, politics, gender and authority."<sup>4</sup> Zezima also identifies these themes as relevant to teens, saying, "Those are the issues that so many teenagers deal with."<sup>5</sup> With I.C.A.'s "Teen Nights at the Museum" come bands and large groups of teenagers. The notion of silent galleries representing a sacred meditative space is broken by teen sounds, nightlife, and special events in the building. But, in many ways, this is not new to the museum.

The teen public is part of an ongoing trend in expanding museum audiences. There is historic precedent for ways that the treatment and engagement of new populations of visitors revitalizes the museum. This essay builds upon the arguments of Andrew McClellan, museum historian and author of the book *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*.<sup>6</sup> In this work, McClellan argues "...public museums have always been a space of social encounter in which the

<sup>1</sup> Katie. Zezima, "Art Beyond the Canvas: Resonating with Youth," *New York Times*, March 16, 2011, sec.F, page 2

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., sec.F, page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Jill Medvedow, personal communication, Jan, 20, 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Zezima, sec.F, page 2.

<sup>6</sup> McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2008).

needs of the undereducated and the elite, the art lover and the shallow tourist, democracy and diplomacy, are in play and potential conflict.”<sup>7</sup> The museum has always been a place for public discourse, associated with the extension of democratic ideals, and not just a place to observe beauty. Thus, the iPods and Facebook pages of today’s teens may seem new and unprecedented, but the relationship between the museum and this population is part of a longer story of audience engagement, albeit with new forms of virtual interaction and a strong sense of “teen spirit.”

The emergence of teen-centric art museum programs began in the U.S. as early as the 1920’s, beginning with the reform movement of the 1880’s and 1890’s and European notions of “simplified display and public pedagogy, “with the museum”...as an institution actively engaged in the artistic education of [the] community through programs for children and adults alike.”<sup>8</sup> The conditions under which museums have come to include a teen audience can be traced to changes in the art museum’s mission from collecting and preserving objects at the turn of the century to the appearance of the theme of engaging “the public” through educational programming for children and art appreciation for adults. This theme of engagement of the public through education intersects with the increasing commercialization of the museum and strategies of communicating with new audiences and responding to financial challenges.

While it has been a slow development, the origins of today’s social network and marketing approaches associated with teen programs can be seen as early as the 1920s. During this period, museum leaders embraced the successful commercial model of the department store. McClellan writes, “What museums and stores had to ‘sell’ might be quite different but the means of engaging their publics could be the same.”<sup>9</sup> One of the ways that the museums worked to reach their public was through a steady increase of commercialism during the last half of the century. For example, within most art museums there was an increase of space allotted for the new flourishing of museum shops and restaurants. Museums started staging so-called “blockbuster exhibits” under corporate department store sponsorships. Commercialization, using a department store model, became a way to draw audiences to the museum, offering a shopping and dining experience. Highlighting a special exhibit as a sponsored free event could make the contemplation of art secondary to a “night on the town.”<sup>10</sup>

Department store programs for teens also provided a model for teen programming in museums. During the days before the conception of internships, there was an attempt on the part of department stores to allow students to come aboard and learn about the operation of the store. Instead of primarily concentrating on advancing young people’s interest in shopping, department stores asked mostly college age students to learn about the department store’s operation. Department stores did not target teenagers as consumers until the stores realized they had spending power.

According to Whitaker, in the 1920’s, department stores used the need of teens to want to “fit in” with their peer groups:

“The stores played much more to teens’ insecurities and fantasies than they did with college girls, who enjoyed higher stature in department stores and more credit for having minds of their own. 1920’s department stores took an interest in selling to youth but had not yet developed a merchandising scheme around a clear cut teen persona.”<sup>11</sup>

It took another twenty years for department stores to create special fashion shows and clubs for the teens, and the end of the 1940’s courted a very noticeable teenage culture. During this period, major department stores such as Macy’s and Filenes created teen advisory boards.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.2

<sup>8</sup> McClellan, 168.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 204.

1. Jan Whitaker, *Service and Style : How the American Department Store Fashioned the Middle Class*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006), p. #282.

The department stores established a model for how large institutions needed to interact with a teen audience in order to gain customers and participation. Stores invited teenagers to be more than guests or shoppers, and become part of the department store. Teen views were solicited and board members acted as valued consultants. There was an understanding of the importance of empowering small groups of teenagers—to invite ideas, and invest in the value of their own planning and decision-making—in order to reach larger teen audiences. The awareness that teens needed a voice and had to be involved in the operations of the business, established precedents for how art museums work with teens today.

What may be new in current museum attempts to engage teens is the way that this population is “native” to the world of technology that represents contemporary adolescent life, and the ways in which museums have given teens a level of control over their programming and, by association, the public image of the museum. According to McClellan, “Perhaps no development in the art museum of the last half-century has been more dramatic or controversial than the increase in commercialism...”<sup>11</sup> The contemporary trend of wiring museums and emphasizing technology has allowed for a vast array of outreach possibilities and communication with the public, including changing the actual shape of the museum as exhibits and public engagement that goes beyond the institutional walls. New technologies in the museum, especially new forms of social media exemplified by teen use, are the most recent example of how outreach and commercialization are combined in museum strategies to meet their missions. Striving for civic engagement and focusing on educational opportunities, the modern museum has demonstrated an interest in engaging the teen population as well as putting their interests in technology to work. Thus, the story of reaching out to teens by art museums as they advance their mission of social responsibility and respond to challenges of fiscal constraint provides us with an example of the marriage of public engagement and commercialism in the art museum.

This story begins with the art museum’s founding in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in the spirit of democratic idealism that McClellan describes as, “notional spaces [that] embodied ideals of collective learning and progress considered essential to a perfect society”<sup>12</sup> We then see the evolution of the museum’s educational mission through the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as a way of reaching out to a broad public and inspiring democratic dialogue. Finding strategies to accomplish this goal and weather increasing financial and political challenges to the museum’s purpose resulted in increasing commercialization, a blending of public and popular cultures in the form of marketing and entrepreneurial strategies.

## Democratic Idealism

Andrew McClellan argues that museums are inherently social institutions and through a historical, theoretical, and critical perspective looks at the challenges they face today. Laying out the debate about institutional purpose, McClellan states that, “Within the art world, opinion is divided over the relative importance of traditional function—collecting and scholarship—and the expansion of the museum through new programming, amenities (shops and restaurants, etc.), and outreach incentives.”<sup>13</sup> McClellan also claims that as “cosmopolitan” institutions, museums have the ability to work towards absolving conflicts and prejudice. In the sense that museums have been imagined as contributing to democratic humanism, they might be thought of as utopian.<sup>14</sup> As he further describes, “Free from the divisive tensions of the everyday world we may entertain utopian thoughts about ‘what man is’ and has as his ‘inner aim’.”<sup>15</sup> The utopian ideal of the

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<sup>11</sup> McClellan, 193.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> McClellan, 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, page 7.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

museum was evident in the 17<sup>th</sup> century democratic hope, where all people could come together and build a monument to humanity.

Meeting that educational mission required engaging the public. Museums that started as places to collect, classify, and display the great art of civilizations and assumed that people would come to see it, realized a need for audience building. According to McClellan, in the 1800's the purpose of creating access to an artistic culture was ultimately to, "do away with classes; to make all life in an atmosphere of sweetness and life."<sup>16</sup> The goal of the museum was to transform art from being "an engine of social class distinction, separating its holders, like a badge or title, from other groups of people who have or have not got it," to a space for dialogue and critique about the human condition.<sup>17</sup>

At the turn of the century, also known as the Progressive Era, public museums began to concentrate on developing education programs that would demystify the collections and inform the viewer, calling for a new commitment to public education. Upon its opening in 1909 the director of the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) in Boston, Benjamin Gilman saw the challenge as, "...the democratization of museums: how they may help give all men a share in the life of the imagination."<sup>18</sup> Under Gilman's leadership at the MFA there were many educational initiatives. Docent programs and teacher training were offered, "...free of charge, and museum staff visited every school in Boston and distributed some twenty-five thousand reproductions for classroom use." During the summer, 6,800 underprivileged children were bused to the museum from settlement houses, and 850 children attended story hour on Saturday afternoons (repeated on Sundays for Jewish children).<sup>19</sup> Gilman opened the museum on Sunday, which was controversial at the time, and by 1918 abolished admission fees.

During the same years there were also major strides in educational programming at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City under Henry Watson Kent, and at the Newark Museum under the leadership of John Cotton Dana.<sup>20</sup> In all of these examples, the democratic ideal of creating space for humanistic dialogue was tied to the expanding educational function of the museum for all age groups, but focusing primarily on school children and adults broadly defined.

The Toledo Museum of Art was a subsequent leader in educational programming during the 1930's. The exceptional building and art collection of the Toledo Art Museum are the result of the artistic interest of Toledo's late eminent glassmaker and founder Edward Drummond Libbey. Blake-More Godwin, former director (1926-59) and his wife Molly-Ohl Godwin, embraced new art appreciation strategies in designing outreach events, bringing in the best symphony orchestras for free concerts in the museum's peristyle, for the benefit of educating Toledo's citizens as much as for the enrichment of the museum.<sup>21</sup> In a publication entitled *The Museum Educates* (1936), the mission of the Toledo Art Museum was described as, "leading people to like art, to apply its principles to their daily living and to discriminate between good and bad pictures, sculpture and music."<sup>22</sup> The goal, in this case, was to open up the museum space while engaging public dialogue about the arts.

The Toledo Museum claimed to create a standard beyond traditional educational programming: "the usual talks, tours, illustrated lectures, forums on current exhibits and talks which relate art to the subject matter of the elementary and secondary schools."<sup>23</sup> Their new goal reflected progressive era objectives of integrating everyday life with lifelong learning.

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<sup>16</sup> McClellan, 166.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in McClellan, 169.

<sup>19</sup> McClellan, 169.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>21</sup> Penny Gentieu, Artists of Toledo [www.artistsoftoledo.com](http://www.artistsoftoledo.com)

<sup>22</sup> Molly Ohl Godwin, *The Museum Educates*, (Toledo: Toledo Museum of Art, 1936), page 171.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., page 172.

Another example of museum programming in partnership with schools and reaching beyond the museum walls is that of radio. The radio was the first form of technology implemented in an art museum, starting in 1923 at the Brooklyn Children's Museum. The Smithsonian also made arrangements with the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) to broadcast from the museum. Although controversial at the time, radio was a way to teach about works of art to a vast public through mass communication. Soon, many museums throughout the country used the opportunity to use radio programs to reach new audiences. "It began to be evident that the radio could give museum collections a voice; that radio talks from art museums might create for listeners, the atmosphere in which an artist worked and might make the characters of his pictures live..."<sup>24</sup>

The museum staff developed most radio programs for an audience of children or adults. A "San Francisco newspaper and a department store in 1936 gave the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum regular radio time for two programs. These consisted of a series of art and applied art talks... and a children's story hour..."<sup>25</sup> These programs essentially involved youngsters, and had the children themselves appear throughout the programming with their own dramatizations of what they had written. All of the broadcasts dealt with different subjects related to the collection that young people wrote about from their museum experiences.<sup>26</sup> Programming was also created to teach students about the art on display, and describe the programming that was available at the museum. Children's dramatization over the short wave radio was an important precursor to today's students using the Internet to communicate about museum events and educate fellow teens.

In the post-war era, the message of universal humanism as promoting freedom and creativity received renewed attention. While, according to McClellan, little data has been collected on how museums heeded the call to lift the human spirit following the war, one example was a program at the Minneapolis Institute of Art called, "Wings around the World" pioneered in 1948. This program was developed to teach, "the background, ideas, and cultures of the many peoples who have contributed to contemporary civilization and illustrate through works of art, the sociological, economic, political, and aesthetic ideas which constitute the heritage of all religions and racial groups."<sup>27</sup> In a relatively quiet and prosperous post-war era, art museums set out to restore faith in the human spirit and display its highest ideals. Although it is not known how typical this exhibit was, it is important to note that *Wings around the World* was a program explicitly for young adults, indicating a shift in thinking about adolescents who were viewed as the future in a post-war world.

The Museum's involvement with its community and outreach to broad audiences began to be embraced as early as the 1920s, but this democratic engagement was not without tension. These tensions grew with the opening of public discourse around race, gender, and class at mid-century. According to Berry and Mayer,<sup>28</sup> when a show such as *Harlem on My Mind* was presented at the MET, it received a great deal of criticism from conservative museum directors. Sherman Lee, the Director of the Cleveland Museum was the show's harshest critic. He believed in a museum dedicated to collecting, and strongly objected to museums dealing with community issues such as race. *Harlem on My Mind* focused on a particular neighborhood of the MET, and became a frequently debated example of Director Hoving's willingness to open the doors of the museum to the community.

The relationship between museums and their audiences have clearly influenced museum programming and the ways they are defined as public institutions. Mid-nineteenth century

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>25</sup> Ramsey, 199.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>27</sup> McClellan, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Nancy Berry and Susan Mayer, "Museum Education; History, Theory and Practice, NAEA Press: Reston VA: (1989): page 78.

opening of the museum to the everyday public led to turn of the century commercialism. Post-war reflections on humanistic ideals led to Vietnam era challenges to the public conscience. Along the way, funding concerns and an increasing call for public accountability and social activism influenced the ways museums engaged their publics.

In the 1950's there was a "period of professional consolidation following the populist expansion and experimentation of previous decades. Budgets were under control, the art market flourished, and museums found themselves in the steady hands of curators and directors. . . ." <sup>29</sup> There was competition to collect important masterpieces and to create unique new buildings to study them. The flourishing market and need to establish collections changed however, and the more financially challenged museum was looking for ways to gain revenue. It turned to high profile programming and marketing. For example, the first blockbuster shows took place in the late 1960's under Tomas Hoving at the MET. By the 1980's, a downturn in corporate giving made large scale shows even more relevant. It is from this financially challenged period that the desire to increase participation by new audiences, this time for revenue as much as social justice or democratic idealism, became important.

During their early history, public art museums were occupied with collection building, filling cavernous spaces with works of art. Then came the need for more space to house collections and expansions of buildings followed. <sup>30</sup> Today, few museums are focused on the object as a source of knowledge that was the emphasis before the First World War. Over the last thirty years money dried up; architectural extensions and large building schemes are no longer an option. Museums are still aiming to attract new audiences, but instead of physically expanding, they seek to enlarge virtually. According to András Szántó, "The greatest audience development and diversification opportunity of our time, however, unquestionably lies in the deployment of the internet as a fully-fledged programming tool." <sup>31</sup> The museum is interested in expanding its audience, but through new means. Using technology, you might never need to step into the museum to experience the collection. "We really have to stop thinking about the web as an add-on, and think about it as a virtual museum almost in and of itself." <sup>32</sup>

During the period that museums turned their attention to society and serving the public, teenagers came to be identified as a definite social group, and have been actively sought out to participate by art museums. According to the American Association of Museum's report *Museums for a New Century*, the art museum has historically overlooked teen audiences. The AAM report established important precedent and challenged museums to reach new, traditionally underserved audiences including teenagers. <sup>33</sup> What is different? The change can be partially attributed to a downturn in museum finances that has elevated commercialization to a higher pitch. For example, social events from weddings to school dances are taking place in the museum. The interest in courting teenagers can also be credited to a general interest in technology by museums, and teens as a driving force of technological innovation.

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<sup>29</sup> McClellan, 210.

<sup>30</sup> Steven. Conn, *Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876 – 1926* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), page 13.

<sup>31</sup> Andras Szántó , "Will U.S. Museums Succeed in Reinventing Themselves? The Recession is Forcing North American Institutions to Reconsider Every Aspect of What They Do," *The Art Newspaper*, January, 2010, Issue, 209.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>33</sup> American Association of Museums, *Museums for a New Century* (Washington, D.C., 1984).



## Educating Teens

The early examples cited above set precedents for some of the educational practices emphasized by teen programs today. While teen programming is perhaps best understood as an aspect of the larger trends previously described, some museum educators would characterize the twenty-first century as the era in which museums actively attempt to involve teens in the museum community in new ways. “Contemporary teen programs are one of the clearest examples of the in-depth community outreach efforts that museums have undertaken to date.”<sup>34</sup> Adolescents have been invited to be part of the museum not as visitors, but as movers and shakers employed to be a part of furthering the chain of reaching out to other teens and community centers. Involving teenagers has meant that the museum becomes a place not only to receive teens as the most recent visitors, but also fully engage them in museum activities.

Museums, to some extent, have always served teen audiences, but the definition of a teen has changed. Before the 1960s, teens were either grouped together with young children, or with adults as museum audiences, never really having their own category. While adolescence as a stage of childhood development was credited to psychologist and educator Stanley Hall,<sup>35</sup> the idea of the teenager was not fully developed as a specific time period in personal development until the 1960’s. Coinciding with the stir and rebellion of the Woodstock generation, teenagers came to be defined as a distinct group with its own share of controversy.

The newly formed teenager of the 1960s was often described as the rebellious and uncontrollable part of society. Nancy Lesko (2001), author of *Act Your Age: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence* explains:

“Adolescents became a social space in which to talk about: the characteristics of people in modernity, to worry about the possibilities of these social changes, and to establish policies and programs that would help create the modern social order and citizenry. Adolescence became a handy and promiscuous social space that is, a place that people could endlessly worry about, a space that adults everywhere could watch carefully and that could be imagined to have many visible and invisible instabilities.”<sup>36</sup>

With the classification of teenagers emerging in the 1960s, museums began to see a need to develop specific programming for them as a distinct audience, something that had not been considered in previous decades. Unlike the co-curricular ambitions like those described by Ramsey in the pre-war era,<sup>37</sup> teenagers as described by Lesko embodied the kinds of social tensions and questions that were the heart of the Hoving v. Lee controversy. Clearly this was an audience that could not be treated lightly.

Programming for teens, while responsive to established practices like docent programs and public boards, offered new challenges. Lesko (2001) notes, “Teens are not known to react to adult invitations, but respond more to other teens, as they travel in packs and respond to learning that is self-directed.”<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, museums have financial needs that require a political connection to this new audience. As museums today take a perpetual count of visitors, teens have to prove themselves as worthy revenues for patronage to be developed. The following section describes how teenagers are also providing museums another consumer audience, in their forms of communication and commercialization similar to previous new audiences.

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<sup>34</sup> Linzer, Danielle (Whitney Museum, Teen Program Director) May, 2011.

<sup>35</sup> Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence* (UK: Routledge-Falmer, 2001), p.5

<sup>36</sup> Lesko, page 6.

<sup>37</sup> Ramsey.

<sup>38</sup> Lesko, page 6.

## Building Teen Audiences and Communities with Technology

A museums' social responsibility is most relevant to their need to serve the public and foster a sense of community. By engaging in the latest in digital technologies through web sites, museums can nurture a greater sense of community by engaging an online audience. Robert Putnam, who wrote *The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, urges "us to think about social capital as a public good that can be nurtured and used for the greater benefit of society."<sup>39</sup> Web sites allow for a wider access to information, and therefore an ability to gain social capital. This gives museums the ability to create a stronger connection to visitors already engaged, and a way to access new audiences as they create and sustain online communities.

Members of museum teen boards, charged with building larger teen audiences for the museum, have been working on web sites to allow for the formation of virtual communities. Information is posted, artwork is displayed, and Podcasts are up. At the Whitney Museum, for example, teens communicate not only with each other, but post their comments on in-house exhibits and the art world. There are web sites that have more teen influence and those that are solely run by the museum, but allow for teen projects to be posted. Anything that uses the name of the museum is associated with it, providing importance and legitimacy to the source, including the Internet voices of teens.<sup>40</sup>

Placing a personal and friendly face on the museum is one of the essential marketing tools used by today's teen programs. Adolescents are invited to the museum through personal invitations from other teens, and by forming a close relationship with a caring and popular teen education staff member at a museum. It is noted in the literature on teen education programs that teens prefer to come to the museum with other teens. Facebook and blogs, and other innovative technology used by teen board members have become instrumental in a personal marketing effort—from teen to teens.

The general principle of today's teen programs is to have teens convince others that it is "cool" to attend an art museum. Using their contacts with other teens, and their extensive technology skills, board members become "virtual friends," engaged in selling the museum to others. Board members learn from their own exposure to a world of advertising and being raised with technology, to offer their contemporaries finely tuned invitations to participate in teen communications and events. Sites such as MySpace and Facebook are keys to reaching this audience. According to Lenhart and Madden, "55% of American youths aged 12-17 had accounts at social networking sites such as MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com>) and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)."<sup>41</sup>

## Access & Community Partnerships

One way of creating comfort for teenage visitors is to give access to all that the museum has to offer. For example many museums provide free admission for teenagers. At a museum such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), waiving the usual admission price of \$20 is a large incentive. MoMA also offers free classes to all teenagers. As teen director, Merit Dewherst notes, "A majority of our students are from poor public schools and we require teens to be public school students for our internship programs."<sup>42</sup> MoMA educators take pride in their efforts to get teenage students from a wide variety of schools, by admitting only one student from each school, per program. Of course, according to Dewherst there are sometimes a number of schools that are

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<sup>39</sup> Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

<sup>40</sup> Linzer, Danielle (Whitney Museum, Teen Program Director) May, 2011.

<sup>41</sup> A. Lenhart and M. Madden, "Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview," PEW Internet Report, last modified 2006, [www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Social-Networking-Websites-and-Teens.aspx](http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2007/Social-Networking-Websites-and-Teens.aspx).

<sup>42</sup> Dewhurst, Marit, (MoMA, Museum Education Director): November, 2009. .

more frequently represented, but we do a good job of reaching out to others. Programs for teenagers in the study, made a special effort to be inclusive and to reach a wide spectrum of the community they serve.<sup>43</sup> According to the Whitney's teen program director, one of the major competing factors for student's time is after school jobs. When the teenage program is presented as a paid internship, it allows more teens, from various socio-economic backgrounds, to participate.<sup>44</sup>

College admission officers are looking for teenage community involvement. Many students at the Speed Museum have logged over 800 hours a year, since they not only work and get paid during the school year but also participate in the museum's summer camp and special museum sponsored events. The students and staff are aware of the college entrance requirement as being an important incentive for many teens to be active in the museum.<sup>45</sup>

Some teen programs view community involvement as the goal of their teen board members and community ambassadors. Representing the museum in the community allows students to use their personal ties to other teens in their school and to share the opportunities the museums provide at community events. In representing the museum, teens enjoy being involved with other teens and acting as mentors for younger students. Having teens act as teachers and community workers, and not just students, is important in working with adolescents trying to establish their own identity and role in the community.

Another example of museums engaging the community is targeting specific groups of students. The Whitney's Youth Insight program pairs teens from the museum with children from the Regent Family Residence, a transitional housing facility for families on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. According to the Whitney Museum's program director, "teen programs are consciously involving community organizations, exploring mutually beneficial relationships in working with teenagers."<sup>46</sup> Whether in a small city or in a large urban center, teens are now reaching out to their community, facilitated through the art museum.

## Conclusion

Teens are the latest audience targeted by museums. While this may seem like a new advance, there has been a history of museums moving away from building larger collections to an emphasis on building audiences and activities that foster community involvement. Early work in museum education began with catering to children and adults, since teens were not seen as a social group until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century; however, early examples of commercialism in museums foreshadows today's engagement of youthful technology and social media. As museums experienced declining budgets and were forced to seriously count each visitor, teenagers appeared as an untapped source. Teens became a group of interest to art museums not only as potential flow of new visitors, but also as future leaders and patrons.

During the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> Centuries, new technology developed at a rapid pace and museums started to recognize their potential and connection to teenagers. Technology and commercialism also had an earlier beginning in radio broadcasts involving children. The notion of teens engaged in the workings of a major institution, started with the department stores first developing teen boards, breaking ground for today's art museum teen boards.

As museums enlarged their technology platforms they began to recognize the facility of teens in using technology that could be put to use by teens working in the museum. With Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs, today's teen board members are leaders in social networking; spreading the word about programming ideas and innovations in adolescent museum programs.

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<sup>43</sup>Dewhurst, Marit, (MoMA, Museum Education Director): November, 2009. .

<sup>44</sup>Linzer, Danielle (Whitney Museum, Teen Program Director) May, 2011.

<sup>45</sup>Linzer, Danielle (Whitney Museum, Teen Program Director) May, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Linzer, Danielle (Whitney Museum, Teen Program Director) May, 2011.

Able to tap into technology, they are constructing elements of the virtual museum that goes beyond brick and mortar, advocated by museum officials. Often surpassing what adults are capable of, or comfortable with, the future museum audiences of teens now works in many art museums, making their presence felt and their voices heard.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

***Ilona Szekely***: For almost a decade, I have shared my love of art with others. A career in art education has enabled me to share this enthusiasm in varied settings. I have taught students in college, as well as in public schools, both urban and rural. I have shared my love of art and knowledge of art education in leading museums and in one of the nation's top private schools in New York. During my career I have helped to establish several community arts organizations. I worked to obtain funding, as well as promote growth. In my studies of educational policy, I have

expertise in school reform initiatives as they pertain to the arts and the museum. Additionally, I have expertise in reform initiatives concerning policy and leadership in visual arts education. In 2012 I finished my Ph.D. in the department of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky. The focus of my doctoral research was art education in museum settings and its relationship to school art programs. I hold a full time assistant teaching position in Art Education at Eastern Kentucky University.

***The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum*** addresses a key issue: In this time of fundamental social change, what is the role of the museum, both as a creature of that change, and perhaps also as an agent of change? The journal brings together academics, curators, museum and public administrators, cultural policy makers, and research students to engage in discussions about the historic character and future shape of the museum. The fundamental question of the journal is: How can the institution of the museum become more inclusive?

In addition to traditional scholarly papers, this journal invites case studies that take the form of presentations of museum practice—including documentation of organizational curatorial and community outreach practices and exegeses analyzing the effects of those practices.

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