

VAM Voice

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Beating the Economy While it's "Down:" Museums Innovate to Survive

① *Making the Most of Earned Income*
VAM FY 2009 Annual Report



Artist Bill Harris demystifies the process of creating art during the Picturing Health Family Health and Art Day at Gari Melcher's Home and Studio at Belmont.

Beating the Economy While it's "Dow

by Heather Widener

The day I began writing this article I received more good news in yet another press release – the Virginia Historical Society will not be charging admission fees in 2010, despite the challenges posed by the economy. *"In spite of a serious economic environment, the board unanimously agreed that we cannot balance the budget by pricing history out of the public's reach,"* said VHS President and CEO Paul A. Levengood.

Despite disheartening news of cuts in staff, hours, and services at many institutions, an increasing number of museums have chosen to swim against the current of the troubled economy and take bold moves to become more accessible, relevant, and to better meet goals set forth in their mission statements – and to profit in the process.

Free admission is not the only surprising strategy being employed in a time when conventional wisdom might suggest the need to raise admission prices even as services are cut. Museums are working harder than ever to become relevant in their communities and to provide desirable services and events for the public. Science museums are holding 'swine flu' information sessions. A history museum is partnering with a bookstore chain in a program that donates a percentage of shoppers' purchase amount to the museum. Poplar Forest recently hosted its first wine festival, and saw 2,000 visitors show up (they had hoped for 1,000) from 15 states and the District of Columbia. Said Anna Bentson, director of public relations and marketing for Poplar Forest, *"We realized that, with the strong Jefferson connection, that [a wine festival] could be a very positive venture...."* Indeed, the festival allowed them to showcase all that Poplar Forest has to offer while supporting local wineries. A little further west there was more excitement

going on - the Historical Society of Western Virginia hosted a day of art. Members of the public watched original pieces being painted at three historical sites, then joined the museum staff and artists for cocktails and live music while the art was auctioned off to benefit the Society!

One museum tapped a wide variety of community partnerships to create an event that dovetailed with a new exhibit. Gari Melcher's Home and Studio at Belmont has an exhibit of Norman Rockwell art and contemporary illustrations entitled *"Picturing Health."* Rather than a traditional art opening, the museum hosted a *"Picturing Health Family Health and Art Day."* Members of the community could view the exhibit and participate in a plethora of community events. A Lions Club Mobile Sight and Hearing Van conducting screenings, MediCorp volunteers checked blood pressure, Body Mass Index, and discussed winter injury prevention as well as breast feeding and early time at home. To demystify the process of creating art, the museum invited a local artist, who worked on a painting using a live model (and invited visiting kids to help). Families also watched a caricature artist at work (thanks to a partnership the museum struck with Kaiser Permanente). Several companies donated healthy snacks. One of them, Cabot Cheese in Vermont, found out about the event on the internet, and donated 300 samples of low-fat cheese! Said Michelle Crow-Dolby, education coordinator for the museum, *"A good time was had by all.... I loved the event itself because it gave us the opportunity to partner with such diverse organizations - most of whom were not familiar with our site. It also attracted quite a few first-time visitors which is always a good thing."*

Events such as this are not what you

would call traditional museum programming. However, as we continue to trudge through challenging economic times, museums are realizing that they need to think creatively and establish partnerships and raise awareness within their communities to survive. Gone are the days that a museum's only role was to preserve significant pieces of art or history and merely allow the public to visit and view their collection. Nearly all museums' missions are centered on not only preserving and documenting, but sharing their collections with, and educating, the largest possible audience. Now, more than ever, museums are reaching out to traditionally underserved audiences and broadening public awareness and their potential donor base in the process.

Innovative Partnerships + A Little Web 2.0

But it's not just creative event programming that brings in new audiences and partnerships. The Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum in Wytheville – a museum with a single, "wearing all hats" employee – has embarked upon several successful partnerships that are allowing it access to manpower, talent, and audiences that might otherwise seem elusive. Says Leslie King, the museum's executive director, *"We have increased visitation, interest, and volunteer hours through several different college partnerships, which are helping us survive during these challenging times. At the moment our partnerships are with the Wytheville Community College (WCC) and Radford University. With WCC, we have four very strong student volunteers who have helped us as docents and with data-entry... students receive extra-credit for helping us out with events, mailings, and silver preservation...."*

While successfully enlisting an effective

n:" Museums Innovate to Survive

tive group of young volunteers is indeed a boon to daily life at the museum, perhaps the most innovative is their partnership with Radford University - one that has the potential to put them on the cyber map. "We hope to generate interest in the museum from an audience that, otherwise, might not have sought us out," stated King.

What is the project? Introduction to Graphic Design students at Radford are designing t-shirts for the museum that reveal the history of Edith Bolling Wilson, called "the secret president" by some historians. But it's more than that - there are 30 potential t-shirt designs, and the museum is currently holding a contest, which runs through January 15th, whereby visitors to the museum and 'virtual' visitors on the museum's website (www.secretpresident.com) can vote for their favorite design. In order to vote, you must make a small donation to the museum. At the end of voting, the museum will have a winning design and enough cash to produce the first round of t-shirts!

This innovative idea takes advantage of the interactive, "2.0" aspect of the internet, actively brings the public into the fold by making them the decision-makers, and generates interest in and excitement for the museum. Invitations to a kickoff event were sent via a social-networking site on the web, so that event coordinators and potential attendees can see who is coming. Indeed, some of the t-shirt designs ("Southern girls are dangerous") are provocative, and even the website URL (www.secretpresident.com) incites interest, making people want to learn more about the late first lady.

Offering Services Beyond the Museum's Collection

The Mariners' Museum in Newport News is offering digital restoration services to its members. Their photo specialists will digitally restore and print old family photos for a fee, and even offer free consultations.

Since part of their mission is to preserve, this type of service extends that mission beyond the confines of their current collection. Says Claudia Jew, the museum's director of photographic services, licensing & publication, "...we understand the importance of preserving one's history for future generations." Indeed, the Mariners' saw the need in the community and recognized that they could address that need. "Many of our members don't have access to the equipment or software that is needed to do a really great job and a 'professional' outside the museum setting can charge anywhere from \$150.00 upward per hour to scan and digitally restore a photograph. I thought this would be a serendipity and added benefit to our members," said Jew. Members benefitting in such a personal way from the professional expertise at a museum is certainly innovative, and a great way to meet the institution's mission of preservation and providing a valuable local service.

While the downturn in the economy may be changing how museums are functioning, the impetus behind projects such as the ones we've highlighted do not merely stem from a reaction to economic troubles. Museums have always searched out new ways to increase access to the public, to become more relevant, and to raise awareness of their offerings. These are simply examples of how resilient and innovative our museums are, despite challenging times. Society as a whole is changing, and museums are changing with it and proving to everyone that museums are not 'things of the past!' ✎

See page 15 for how professional organizations are offering assistance...



Poplar Forest hosted its first wine festival this fall, featuring nearly a dozen regional wineries. The event resulted from a partnership between Poplar Forest, the Bedford Visitors' Center, and the Lynchburg Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau. The partnership led to a marketing grant from the Virginia Tourism Corporation.



Radford students and their professor look over the t-shirt designs for the Edith Bolling Wilson Birthplace Museum. Left to right: Adrienne Desrosiers, David Clark, Ken Smith, Anastasia Santos, and Rebecca Medlin Larsen. Over 30 designs are 'on the table.' The public can vote for their favorite at the museum or online. "Southern Girls are Dangerous" was created by Michelle Sheppard.



by Jennifer Weiskotten Thomas

The 2010 VAM Annual Conference will be my tenth as VAM's program director. As I pick myself up off the floor and try to recover from that astounding fact, I realize that my very first VAM conference was also in Richmond. How things have changed in the world! In 2001 Bush had just taken office, 9-11 hadn't happened yet and foot-and-mouth disease was the big pandemic everyone was talking about.

Things at the VAM conference have changed too. Our Exhibit Resource Hall in 2001 had 30 booths—this year, we plan on welcoming 45 vendors and service providers to Richmond. Some of our exhibitors have been with us since the 2001 conference (and before!), including Cinebar Productions, The Creative Company, and The Design Minds. Others will be brand new for 2010. Two of the four venues we are visiting for our evening events did not exist in 2001: The American Civil War Center at Tredegar, and the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Shockoe Bottom (the museum was then in a small wing of a temple). The other two sites, the Virginia Historical Society and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts have major new additions since 2001

(and one—the VMFA—we will get to see before anyone else!). In 2001, we offered 24 educational sessions during the conference. For 2010, that has been expanded to 33, including 8 half-day workshops! Topics range from disaster response to grantwriting, and from ethics to girl and boy scout programming.

Our keynote speaker in 2001 was Ruth Abram, executive director of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. Her message, that museums need to be more than just repositories of objects, that they can be and need to be community advocates and catalysts, will coincidentally be echoed by our 2010 keynote. Michael Loveday, director of HEART, a heritage revitalization group in Norwich, England, will share with us the ability museums have to shape the future of their communities, and to drive the change that happens there.

Some things do not change through the years. The VAM conference in 2001 and the conference in 2010 will look remarkably similar to many attendees. Whatever the surface changes may be, or the changes we face in the world around us, the VAM conference remains a place to connect with peers who face similar challenges, a way to learn new skills for

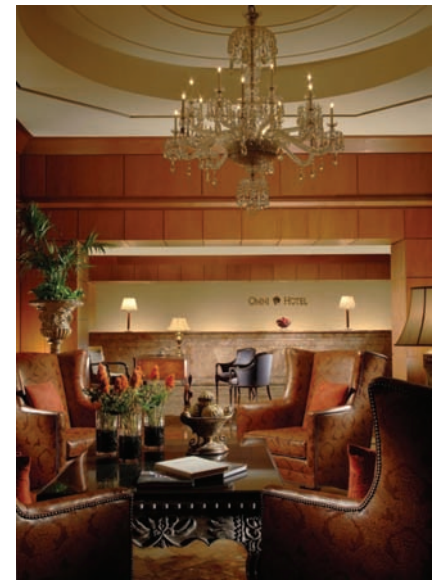
Visit

www.vamuseums.org

to:

- view the Conference Program;
- find out about the Daniel H. Weiskotten Memorial Scholarship & the VAM Professionals Scholarship;
- download a conference fulfillment form (for Certificate Students);
- download a registration form; or
- download an exhibitor brochure and registration form.

your current job and for your career, and a chance to remember why it is you joined the museum field in the first place. We can't wait to see you at the Omni Richmond in March! ☺





Cultural Institutions Discover \$10,000-\$200,000 In Added Facility Rental Income & Commissions from Caterers *by Art Manask & Peter Miller*

Even the most prestigious institutions are discovering considerable untapped net income from renting their facilities to outside groups. Yes, just about everybody rents out facilities, in almost every case providing food and beverage catering. But many - if not most - institutions are seeing but a fraction of the potential income.

Catering is normally handled one of several ways:

- 1.) An exclusive caterer that provides all food and beverage services, or,
- 2.) In most cases a list of preferred or approved caterers, and,
- 3.) In some instances, an 'open policy' whereby most any caterer that meets certain minimum institution criteria (certificate of insurance, pay a fee) can provide the service.

If your institution is like most with a 'list of preferred or approved caterers,' you will find the following two case studies informative and potentially 'profitable' if you consider implementing an 'Approved Caterer Program' similar to what is being described.

Case Study #1: Improved RFP Process Grows Net Income 250% in 5-Years

This museum has an active facility rental program (a very popular venue in their city for outside groups and organizations to stage events). In 1997 this museum did two things:

- 1.) A comprehensive evaluation of its special event department; how it operated; how it interfaced and served museum departments and external customers, quality of management and staff, and,
- 2.) Reviewed its preferred caterer program. The museum's goal was very simple, 'optimize earned income'. (*The results of this 1997 special event department study can be reviewed in 'The Complete Guide to Foodservice in Cultural Institutions', Chapter 7, page 127.*)

The museum had 16 catering companies on its preferred list. Each caterer paid a \$600 flat fee to be on the list. One of the recommendations that came from the evaluation mentioned above was to consider shortening the list of caterers. The

rationale behind this recommendation is: *the shorter the list the greater potential income to the museum.* This short list approach had not been tried by similar institutions in this city and there was concern that a short list might reduce net income because fewer caterers could bring business (clients) to the museum. Museum management believed in the short list concept and conducted a Request for Proposal (RFP) process with the goal to shrink the caterer list from 16 to 5.

As part of the RFP process each caterer was required to:

- 1.) Pay a percentage of total caterer food revenue (the museum handles the alcoholic beverage sales),
- 2.) Guarantee the museum a minimum dollar annual payment (the greater of the minimum payment or the percentage),
- 3.) Pay a percentage of total caterer food revenue towards an advertising and marketing fund that is pooled, administered and controlled by the museum and spent in consultation with all the approved caterers,
- 4.) Provide a discount on museum sponsored/paid for catering,
- 5.) Provide an annual catering donation, and,
- 6.) Host (at caterer cost) an annual PR event (public relations party) where the museum donates the space and the caterer's prospective clients, meeting planners, etc., are invited.

The result of this RFP process enabled the museum to select a total of 8 caterers, caterers that represented a true cross-section of menu variety, pricing/cost, quality, and other factors to be reasonably certain that any internal (museum department) or external client could find a caterer in their list that met the client's service needs and budget.

This museum was so pleased with the results of this RFP process, after a 3-year period they did another RFP with the goal to further reduce the list of caterers from 8 to a maximum of 5-6. It is interesting to note that when this museum conducted its first RFP there were about 15 proposals received from local caterers. When this RFP was done in 2003 there were more than 20

proposals received.

Why did this museum's net income grow with this 'Approved Caterer Program'? Following are some of the key reasons:

- As part of the RFP selection process the museum looked carefully at which caterers actually brought clients to the museum versus those that were just names on the list.
- A review of historical catering activity at the Museum indicated that 5-6 caterers catered 80%+ of the events in any event (this is true with most cultural institutions).
- The caterers offered a minimum annual dollar commission which meant they had to be motivated to bring business to the museum, not just wait for calls from museum referrals.
- By concentrating 100% of the catering revenues with fewer caterers, this makes it more profitable for this short-list, thus enabling the museum to receive more net dollars in return.
- Having motivated caterers with excellent sales organizations increases the institution's 'facility rental income' as well as catering commissions.
- RFP competition provided the museum discounts on internal catering and outright donations that were not received before.
- The caterers are contributing to a marketing /advertising fund; dollars the museum did not have in its budget before this program was put in place.

Case Study #2: Revising the Preferred Catering List Adds \$220,000 Net Income in Year One

Another institution that is a popular seasonal destination for visitors and facility rentals was looking for new ways to increase earned income. This institution has a long history of renting its facilities to outside groups and organizations and allowing the user to pick from about 12 caterers on the preferred list.

Seeing the demonstrated success as detailed under Case Study #1, the president of this institution decided to conduct a similar RFP process with the goal to reduce the caterer list from 12 to 4 firms.

Why only four? Case Study #1 demon-



strated that a short list can produce more net income and this institution felt that four caterers could provide the quality, variety, pricing and menus to meet all user needs in their geographic area. Following the same procedure in Case Study #1, this institution issued an RFP to about 15 local caterers. It is important to point out that many of the caterers in the community complained, said it was not going to work, it was not fair and created some negative PR for the institution (this also happened to the museum in Case Study #1 when the first RFP was done). Caterers that have not been sharing profits with the institution in the past were less than enthusiastic about responding to the RFP. When the RFP was issued, however, as was experienced in Case Study #1, there was close to a 100% enthusiastic response to the RFP and the complaints went away.

Fifteen proposals were received and four caterers selected. The four finalists are guaranteeing this institution over \$200,000 in first year net new income. This does not include discounts and other financial advantages and incentives. What are the key caterer criteria to be on this short-list?

- Food and service quality;
- The caterer understanding they are a guest in your home;
- Ability to be creative and flexible in the delivery of food to guests due to most institution's physical limitations of space for kitchens and service staff;
- Reputation and relevant experience at other cultural institutions including experience working at this institution;
- Realize your institution is first 'a Museum' (or zoo, botanic garden, or historic home) dedicated to preserve its collection and service its visitors and the community... not just a special event venue;
- Ability to provide catering services with a variety of menus at different price points and to a variety of different internal and external customers;
- Ability to bring new customers (which are potential members, donors and sponsors);
- Demonstrated sales and marketing capabilities;
- Financial returns;
- Financial strength and stability; and,
- Related criteria as determined by the museum during the evaluation and selection process. (From The Manask Report – Spring, 2004)

What about my institution?

These are two dramatic and successful

turn-arounds explained in these case studies. Not every institution has the facilities and venues to enjoy such a profitable program. What about my institution? We are too small. Don't we command that degree of popularity and desire to use our facilities as others do? Virtually every cultural institution has either an internal and/or external event program to one degree or another. Most are not taking advantage of their facilities' potential and are missing opportunities to improve their earned income. Keeping the institution's mission in mind and gaining an understanding of how the facilities should be used and its potential is the first step.

- Review your facility and identify what space is currently used for internal and external events.
- Determine if other spaces could be used or used more effectively for events, such as the Board Room.
- Determine how many days in the year could each venue be used. For example: 365 days – 52 Mondays (closed) – 3 holidays = 310 days potential days for events in each venue.
- Potentially, how many times a day could each venue be used? 1, 2, 3 times a day? (Morning, Afternoon and Evening)

Lobby – 1 time per day after hours.
Board Room – 2 maybe 3 times per day.

- What is the potential use of only these 2 venues?

Lobby – 1 time per day or 310 events per year.
Board Room – 2 times per day or 620 events per year.

- Next, how many times per year will these venues be used for internal purposes out of each venue's potential?

Lobby – 310 opportunities (-) 4 fund raisers per year = 306 rental opportunities.

Board Room – 620 opportunities (-) 12 board meetings (-) 52 other committee

meetings = 556 rental opportunities.

- Realistically, these 3 spaces aren't going to be used to their fullest potential. Some decisions must be made to determine a range of opportunities that makes sense for the use of these venues. The following is an example:

Lobby

- Potential use – 306 opportunities per year;
- Conservative: 2% of inventory – 6 times per year;
- Mid-range: 5% of inventory – 15 times per year;
- Aggressive: 10% of inventory – 31 times per year.

Board Room

- Potential use – 556 opportunities;
- Conservative: 2% of inventory – 11 times per year;
- Mid-range: 5% of inventory – 28 times per year;
- Aggressive: 10% of inventory – 56 times per year.

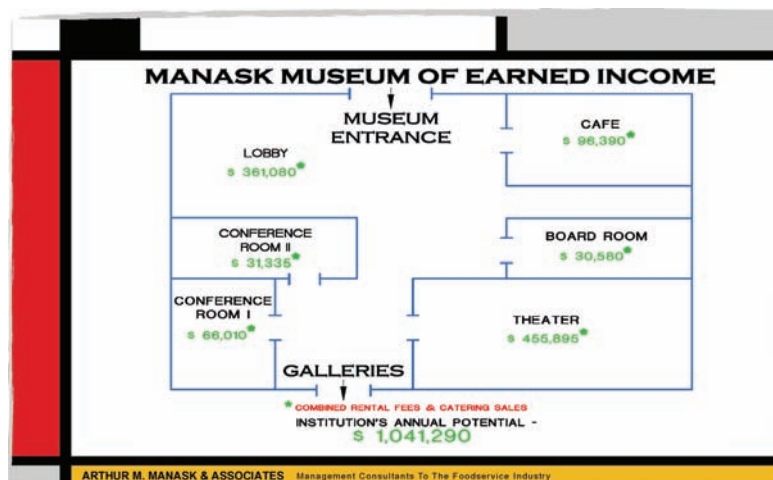
How aggressive does the institution want to be in improving the use of their venues and earned income initiatives (keeping in mind existing event activity, personnel, mission concerns and income objectives)? This will be the subject of an upcoming educational article in a future VAM Voice newsmagazine. ☞



Art Manask

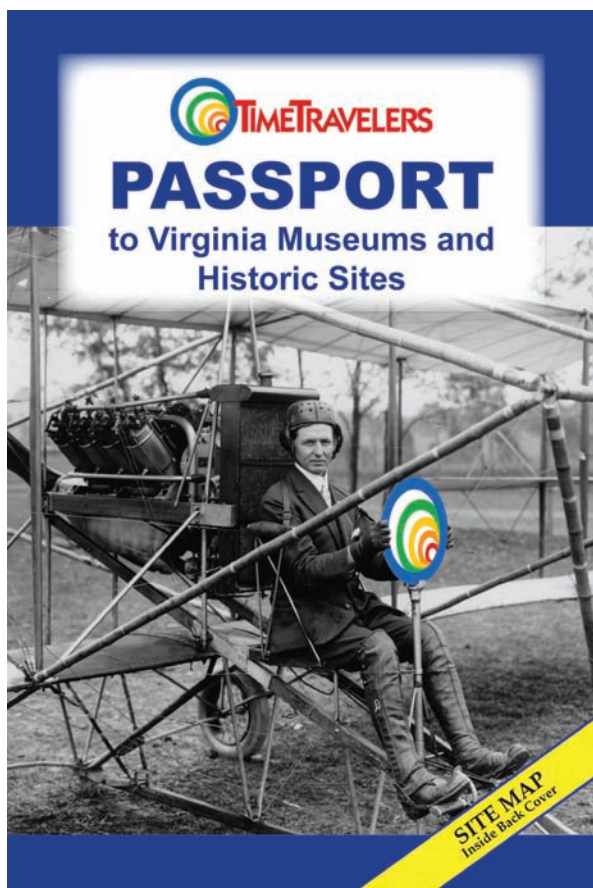


Peter Miller



Virginia TimeTravelers 2010

New & Expanded



No longer a program just for children, the new TimeTravelers souvenir book will encourage visits to your museum by all generations: couples taking weekend getaways, seniors, tour groups – anyone with an interest in heritage or cultural tourism.

A Marketing Program and Money-Maker Too!

This expanded TimeTravelers program will continue the 14-year tradition of cross-marketing of Virginia's museums. A visit to one museum becomes a quest to visit many more in order to fill out the passport. Each participating museum will offer the TimeTravelers Passport to Virginia Museums for sale in their gift shop or at their front desk, making a profit on every book sold. For a minimum order of 240 books at \$3 each – a \$720

investment – the book can be

or download a simple passport sheet to track their visits – making participation in the program possible for every child regardless of circumstances. Parents will enter their child's visit information online and print out a TimeTraveler certificate; theme patches and Master Traveler seals will be sent out by the VAM office. They keep their books for future visits! Stay a part of the Virginia TimeTraveler Program – contact the Virginia Association of Museums at 804-788-5821 or mcarlock@vamuseums.org for more information or to sign up. Only 210 can participate, and space is first come, first served.

Think Marketing....

Your museum will be featured in a promotional campaign that involves 50,000 copies distributed throughout Virginia, and used over and over. How much would you spend on comparable advertising in magazines and newspapers? Be a part of the expanded Virginia TimeTravelers program! ☞

The Passport

The Virginia Association of Museums is launching a new, softbound souvenir passport book which will attract new audiences to your museum while earning you revenue on each book. Modeled after the popular National Park System passport concept, the TimeTravelers Passport to Virginia's Museums will contain a photograph, description of the museum or historic site with location, and a space to collect stamps or stickers for each of the 210 sites to be included. The book will also include a fold-out highway map of Virginia with the locations of participating sites clearly marked and an index of sites to aid travel planning. This handy travel guide will make it easy for visitors of all ages to record their visits and keep a souvenir that will encourage them to return again and again to Virginia's museums and historic sites.

sold for \$5-6, a popular price point for visitors. And it will not be dated– extending the shelf life for sales indefinitely.

What About the Traditional Online Program? VAM will continue the www.TimeTravelers.org website with resources for teachers and parents, as well as new sections for older adults. Annual themes will be featured to keep the program fresh. Children may either purchase a passport book



Fiscal Year 2009 Annual Report for the

This report covers the fiscal year for the Virginia Association of Museums (VAM) from July 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009.

VAM is a network of individuals with common interests and concerns, all working toward the stewardship of Virginia's historic and cultural heritage. It is a collegial community that helps and supports one another, and this is the basis for the programs and services the association provides.

With a total of 1,089 members during the report period, VAM is the largest and strongest state museum association in the country. It was created in 1968 to promote and serve Virginia's museums by providing training to staff and volunteers, serving as a resource and clearinghouse of information, and advocating on behalf of the museum community. Its interests are served by three full-time, two part-time and one volunteer staff and a governing board of twenty museum professionals from throughout the state representing all types of museums. VAM has taken a leadership role among museum associations and cultural institutions nationwide, and its staff represent Virginia museums on many state, regional and national initiatives.

MEMBERSHIP

VAM had a total of 1,089 members during the report period. This included 313 institutional members, 583 individual and staff members, 47 student and faculty members, 32 patron members and 114 business members. Members come from throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and the District of Columbia, and reflect the great diversity in disciplines, job positions and demographics that are indicative of the larger museum community. In addition, as a result of the ongoing professional exchange program with museums of the United Kingdom, there are 13 honorary members in England, Scotland and Ireland.

The Virginia Association of Museums represents art museums and galleries,

history museums, historical houses, historic sites and battlefields, science museums and discovery centers, children's museums, botanical gardens, arboreta, zoos, natural history museums, and specialized audience museums including federal agency museums and military museums.

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

Professional development for museum staff, volunteers, and students remains the core of VAM's mission. Now in its fourth year, the Virginia Certificate in Museum Management has opened for us a new avenue by which to provide this professional development. We currently have 130 active certificate students, including 28 new students who joined in this fiscal year. We awarded a record 10 certificates at our March conference this year, and another two this summer. While the majority of students rely almost entirely on the VAM workshops and conference to fulfill their credits, we did notice an increase this year in the number of students taking advantage of our partners' workshops, as well as online webinars offered by AAM, AASLH, and museumclasses.org.

Workshops

There were six full-day workshops in our 2008-2009 Annual Workshop series. Attendance was up slightly over last year, and five of the six workshops were sold out. This continued popularity of our workshops despite the changing economy can be attributed to both the quality of our speakers and topics, and the increased number of certificate students who need these workshops in order to complete their certificate requirements.

The first workshop in our series this year was on September 22, 2008. *Museums Going Green* was hosted by the National Museum of the Marine Corps, and focused on the different ways that museums can begin to go greener, from small steps like recycling to huge changes in infrastructure and construction. Our speaker,

Sarah Brophy, is widely recognized as an expert in the burgeoning field of green museums, and co-authored a book on the subject in late 2008.

On October 22, 2008, we held a workshop at the Virginia Historical Society titled *Interpretive Training: Do As I Say and As I Do*. This workshop was an expansion of an extremely popular conference session from 2008, and gave participants hands-on lessons in training their docents and interpreters on tour and school program technique and content. One participant wrote in their evaluation: "I liked that it put into practice the ideas it was teaching. It is a simple but highly effective concept. The breakout groups were very creatively organized!"

Developing a Furnishings Plan was our November workshop, held on November 24, 2008 at Morven Park in Leesburg. This highly specialized topic was one that had been requested for several years, and attendees included staff from historic sites across the state. The speaker worked with participants on the elements of a furnishings plan, how to find the right resources to help you, and even worked on creating a sample furnishings plan for our host site. She also brought in a museum director who had just completed a furnishings plan to talk about the challenges that site faced, and what results they have seen so far.

The January workshop was also an oft-requested topic, *The Basics of Archives Management*. This workshop was hosted by the U.S. Army Women's Museum at Fort Lee, home to three of our certificate students—which made planning and implementing all the logistics very easy!

The Basics of Archives Management covered everything about archives, from electronic recordkeeping best practices to working with volunteers in your archives, and from inventorying your archival collection to dealing with accessibility issues. Our speak-

the Virginia Association of Museums

ers, from the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Reuel B. Pritchett Museum, and the Valentine Richmond History Center, all deal with different types of archives in their own institutions, and were able to provide participants with a broad overview of the topic and varying perspectives to compare. The speakers broke the participants into small groups in the afternoon, in order to be able to answer specific questions and go into more detail about various aspects of archives. One participant summed it up when they said: *"The whole thing was great. It covered the breadth of things to think about with archives from processing to making them available to the public to volunteer activities. Very thorough!"*

Rethinking the Front Desk was next in line, and was held on April 24, 2009 at the Frontier Culture Museum in Staunton. This workshop was geared toward visitor services staff who work directly with the visitor, and was developed to help those staff members think of new and creative ways to serve the public and present a good first impression of their organization. Speakers raised a lot of different issues in their presentations, including admissions policies, better front desk training and customer service, and new technology that can make a front desk run more smoothly. An added bonus for the day was the beautiful spring weather that enabled participants to explore our host site and see how the Frontier Culture Museum's interpreters interacted with the public.

The last workshop in the 2008-2009 series was *Museum 2.0*, held on May 20, 2009 at Monticello. Rather ironic, to hold a workshop on social media in an historic house on the Monticello grounds, but it worked well. We had

two speakers, one a web and social media coordinator for a museum, the other a consultant who works with organizations to develop and maintain an active presence online. Both offered tremendous amounts

VAM Statement of Financial Position FY 2009

	2009	2008
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$19,140	\$4,495
Accounts receivable	\$5	\$1,455
Grants receivable	\$39,987	\$18,930
Investments	\$78,916	\$133,513
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$138,048	\$158,394
Property & Equipment		
Furniture/Office Equipment, Website	\$61,042	\$61,042
Less accumulated depreciation	(47,590)	(39,115)
	\$13,452	\$21,927
Other receivable	\$10,000	---
TOTAL ASSETS	\$161,500	\$180,321
Liabilities & Net Assets		
Current Liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$58,005	\$10,573
Accrued expenses	\$3,534	\$3,954
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	\$61,539	\$14,527
Net Assets		
Unrestricted net assets	\$69,859	\$138,198
Temporarily restricted	\$30,102	\$27,596
TOTAL NET ASSETS	\$99,961	\$165,794
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$161,500	\$180,321

VAM Annual Report, cont'd...

of information and advice on how to navigate through the maze of different options available. Do we Twitter? Blog? Flickr? The speakers were able to break down each element of the interactive web, and show examples of museums currently working in those areas. They explained both the pros and cons of the medium, and how to decide which ones you should work with. Their expertise and speaking style earned comments like this from our participants: *"The speakers were fantastic, and enthusiastic about their topic."*

An additional workshop scheduled for our regular workshop "season" was a special, two-day Middle Management Institute. This program was designed to teach those at mid-career about the financial, ethical and legal issues that museums and museum directors face—particularly in this tough economy. Unfortunately, whether because of the economy or the timing of the workshop close to high school graduation week, it did not garner enough registrations to make it viable, and we were forced to cancel it.

In addition to our regular workshop series, we continued our partnership with The Homestead 1766 historic hotel in Hot Springs this year. As with previous workshops, the hotel provided free guest rooms for staff, speakers, and 10 participants, as well as providing access to their historic collections. VAM participants in turn spent one classroom day learning a collections-related topic, and then another day using that new-found knowledge to stabilize or work with the hotel's collection. This year, we began with a workshop in July of 2008 which focused on photography and photo conservation. We were able to review the entire Homestead photograph collection and make recommendations for acid-free storage containers, stabilization techniques for slides and negatives, and even a basic cataloging system that will make it easier for the hotel staff to

find specific photographs when they need them. The second workshop this year was held in May of 2009, after a lengthy delay. The original date of December 2008 was pushed back several months due to a flood in the storage area at The Homestead; thanks to our previous visits and efforts, there was very little damage to artifacts or archival material. This 2009 workshop shifted focus a bit, away from collections management and care to public access and display of collection objects. Participants of this workshop spent a classroom day learning exhibit techniques, and then divided into groups to each create a display in the hotel's library. In their free time, several of the participants (and VAM staff!) decided to revamp the displays elsewhere in the hotel as well, polishing every trophy on display in the sports bar!

Annual Conference

The 2009 Annual Conference, *It's A Natural!*, was held at the Founder's Inn in Virginia Beach March 21st to 24th, 2009. The beach gave us the inspiration for our theme, and was the "natural" place to explore the opportunities that exist in our own backyards. Sessions asked questions like: *With energy costs rising, how can museums take advantage of tourism trends that focus on "staycations" and discovering unique community offerings? What environmentally-friendly practices can museums employ to model good stewardship - while supporting leaner budgets?* This was our first visit back to Virginia Beach since 2002, and amazingly, our attendance at both Beach conference was exactly the same: 383! This number does represent a decrease from our 2008 numbers, but we weren't at The Homestead, which is always a draw for us; and the economy was in the midst of its precipitous decline. Taking those two elements into account, the conference was a great success.

The conference began with a new addition to our pre-conference roster on

Saturday: *Technology Tutorials*. These tutorials were held at the Virginia Beach Technology Center, allowing participants to be in a computer lab for hands-on training in podcasts, flickr, and flash-based games. Our annual *Leadership Program* also took place on Saturday afternoon, and featured several of Virginia's most-respected museum directors sharing their thoughts on leadership in the museum field. Saturday evening concluded with this year's scholarship reception at The Cooke-Royster Cottage, one of the original Virginia Beach beachfront cottages. Built in 1917, the cottage has been lovingly restored, and houses the amazing personal art collection of the new owners.

Both Sunday and Monday nights we were treated to the generous hospitality of our local hosts. Sunday we began our evening at the Lynnhaven House, where we explored the site's new visitor center and the 1720s middle class planter's home. Then we ventured out onto the chilly beachfront for a VAM-style barbeque and beach party. The hardy few stayed outside to dance to favorite Beach Boys tunes, while the rest of the crowd enjoyed the warmth, desserts and exhibits in the Old Coast Guard Station.

Monday night was split between two institutions whose new exhibits were in the planning stages. We were treated to a sneak peek of the Virginia Aquarium's *Restless Planet* exhibition, getting a chance to see the habitats being built, and labels being installed. The Contemporary Art Center of Virginia, as well, was in the process of preparing for their huge *Art of Glass II* exhibit, and previewed some of the pieces in their auditorium before giving us a close up look at their famous Dale Chihuly glass sculpture.

At our *Annual Business Luncheon*, we gave distinguished service awards to Jeannie Niccolls, retiring from the Fairfax County Park Authority, and Francene Barber, retiring from the

Richmond County Museum. Earlier that morning, our keynote speaker, Alisa Bailey, president of the Virginia Tourism Corporation, shared with us some of the activities, promotional campaigns, and future plans of the VTC.

Conference sessions received excellent reviews. In addition to the *Technology Tutorials* and *Leadership Program*, the conference was packed full of 36 concurrent sessions, workshops, and our new hour-long *Top Ten* sessions. The highest rated session (receiving a perfect 5 out of 5!) was *Breaking Tile, Building Partnerships: The CityArts Mosaic Project*. Other popular sessions included *Using Visual Thinking Strategies in the Museum: How to Stimulate Dialogue Around Art and Search Engine Optimization*, one of our *Top Tens*. It is hard to pick the best sessions of the year, however, as a full 20% of our conference sessions this year had a comment that “*this was the best session I attended at the conference.*”

VAM continued our Going Greener initiative in 2009 with the help of our hotel, the first in the state to receive the “Virginia Green” label. We offered recycling to participants, provided reusable grocery bags as our tote bag for the year, and encouraged those staying at the hotel to take advantage of the hotel’s linen and towel reuse program. We also improved our online handout system, and used recycled paper for our conference brochures and programs.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & MUSEUM SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Emergency Task Force

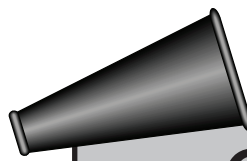
The main focus of our disaster planning activity this fiscal year was organizing and completing the first round of training for our *Emergency Response Team (ERT)* members. A grant we received in 2008 allowed us to create ready bags for ERTs, which included gloves, a Tyvek suit, “rite in the rain” paper and pens, a head lamp, and much more. We determined that anyone carrying the ready bag needed to have had both CERT

training, which provides basic information on community emergency response, triaging, fire safety, and working with first responders, and museum-specific training.

The same grant that gave us the ready bags also provided funds to hire a conservator to train ERTs in this museum-specific emergency response. In 2009, we held three training sessions for potential ERT members. The first, at our 2009 March conference in Virginia Beach, had 17 attendees. The next two training sessions were held in Richmond and in northern Virginia, with 23 and 21 attendees respectively.

The three-hour training sessions were divided into two sections; a broad overview of disasters at museums, and what damaged artifacts look like, and a hands-on component that let the participants work with objects and sort them based on what type of triage care they would need. The main goal of this training was to let participants know what to expect at a disaster, so that if faced with one, they could react without panic. Thanks to this training course, and the CERT courses, we now have 28 ERT members who are prepared for emergencies, and ready to be deployed. Our hope, of course, is that they will never be needed.

The other component of our *Emergency Task Force*, the *Museum Emergency Support Teams (MESTs)*, has hit some rough patches this year. Designed to bring local sites together to work together on disaster planning, work with local emergency management, and determine how to best use local resources, these teams



Call for Nominations!

Know someone who has given outstanding service to VA museums? Make a nomination for the Ann Brownson Award by Jan, 15th.

Know someone who has made an outstanding career accomplishment as a museum professional? Make a nomination for the Distinguished Service Award by Jan. 15th.

Find out more at www.vamuseums.org. Award winners will be announced at our annual conference in March!

are active so far in northern Virginia and Richmond. However, those teams have struggled with leadership and momentum issues this year. A new team, MEST-West (western northern Virginia), has begun meeting, and is excited about the possibilities they have in working together. Two Tidewater groups are talking with each other about whether to have one large MEST, or break down the region into smaller pieces.

Other Assistance Programs

VAM continues to offer pro bono technical assistance to museums, and this year saw an increase in the number of museums taking advantage of this service. Projects included assistance with incorporation papers, advising on board development, evaluation of exhibit design and interpretation, research on various topics, and several issues surrounding personnel (job descriptions, salary and benefit structure, etc.).

Another popular assistance program was our *Members in Transition*, which helps museum staff who are seeking employment. This program provides

VAM Annual Report, cont'd...

counseling, access to job information, free membership for a year and priority for annual conference and workshop scholarships. A related service VAM offers is its *Career Development* program which assists museum staff in developing the skills and making the contacts needed to further their careers.

Professional Exchange Program with the United Kingdom

In October 2008 a small group of Virginia museum professionals spent two weeks in England and Scotland visiting museums and meeting with their British counterparts. This trip followed several individual exchanges that took place after our "Rediscovering Virginia" program for 13 British museum professionals that took place in March 2007. Part of the trip included a three-day conference on "Museums, Sustainability and Growth" held in Norwich. Museums and sites visited as a part of this exchange included the Museum of London, the Docklands Museum, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Westminster Abbey, Norwich Castle, Norwich Cathedral, the Glasgow School of Art, Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, the Transportation Museum, the Chesterfield Museum, the Plague Museum of Eyam, Chatsworth, Hardwick Hall, and numerous others that were included on tours by our hosts.

ADVOCACY

Part of VAM's mission is to serve as an advocate on behalf of Virginia museums to elected officials and other community leaders. FY 2009 was a particularly active period in advocacy for Virginia's museum community and indeed for museums throughout the nation. VAM's executive director played a prominent role in the negotiation of an industry-wide legislative action plan. It is time for federal reauthorization of the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the package approach to reauthorization that is part of this action plan would go a long way toward accommodat-

ing the needs of the entire museum field, if realized.

AAM convened a small group in the summer of 2008 made up of representatives of various museum associations and service organizations. The group was guided by two principles: first, that a state grant program should be developed carefully so as to augment, rather than compete with, current programs at IMLS. Second, that the field needed to be united in order for any IMLS reauthorization to be successful. The agreement reached called for increased funding for current IMLS programs; additional funding to support new programs in conservation, traveling exhibits, "fast track" grants for small museums; and the funding of state needs assessments as a first step toward implementing a state grant program.

The amount of federal funding authorization requested as part of this legislative package is \$95 million per year by the end of the 5-year authorization period. This would be a significant increase in funding for IMLS' Office of Museum Services, which currently receives \$31 million under an authorization level of \$38.6 million. ☞

OptimaHealth 

Time to Update Your Health Plan?

Don't forget -

VAM offers health benefits to its members!

**Go online at www.vamuseums.org, or call
804.788.5820 for more!**

VAM's Honor Roll of Contributors - *Thank You!*

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Robin Reed
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STATUS UPDATE – IMLS REAUTHORIZATION

VAM's executive director is a member of the small AAM legislative committee working on draft language for the federal reauthorization bill with Senate staff. Two important points that have made it through the process:

- 1.) authorized museum service activities to be amended to include supporting efforts at the State level, including statewide assessments of museum services and needs and development of State plans to improve museum services, thereby maximizing museum services through the States; and**
- 2.) appropriation authorization for museum service to grow from \$50 million in 2010 to \$95 million in 2015 (\$38 million currently authorized, \$31 million actual appropriation). Stay up-to-date at www.vamuseums.org.**

Children Discover *Freedom of Expression* at Virginia Discovery Museum in Charlottesville



As Americans, one of our most important rights is Freedom of Expression. The Virginia Discovery Museum, located on Charlottesville's Downtown Mall, has teamed up with The Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Freedom of Expression to create a hands-on exhibit that teaches children about this important right.

A first of its kind, interactive exhibit to help children learn, understand, and practice the right of free speech opened to visitors young and older on September 19th, in the town that was home to the country's third president, Thomas Jefferson.

The Virginia Discovery Museum, a not-for-profit children's museum, is now in its 24th year. The museum's mission is to bring young children and families together to engage minds, excite imaginations and explore the world around them. The nationally-known Museum is located on Charlottesville's Historic

surrounding Albemarle County, the non-profit Thomas Jefferson Center's sole mission is the defense of free expression in all its forms.

The exhibit's two central themes are:

1. The many different ways a person can express an idea when free to do so, and
2. Freedom of expression encompasses not only the right to express oneself but also the right to hear, read, or see the expression of others.

Freedom of Expression provides multiple participatory learning "stations" that fill the Museum's entire Back Gallery. Included in the activity-oriented layout are features such as television and radio broadcasting studios, a print newsroom, a

Downtown Pedestrian Mall.

The landmark exhibit Freedom of Expression is being underwritten by the Thomas Jefferson Center for the Protection of Free Expression, who worked with the museum for a year developing the content of the exhibit.

Founded in 1990 and located in the

mini-theater, a library reading room, and even a speaker's soap-box on the public square. Activities focusing on freedom in music and the arts are also highlighted in Freedom of Expression. The exhibit addresses Virginia's Standards of Learning as well: English 1.1, 1.12, 2.3; Visual Arts 1.13, 1.15, 1.19, 1.20, 2.9, 2.19, 2.21, 2.22, 3.10; and History and Social Science 2.10, 3.11. Freedom of Expression will run through January 10th.

Visit the Virginia Discovery Museum: East End of the Downtown Pedestrian Mall, Charlottesville, Virginia

www.vadm.org
434.977.1025



Professional Organizations Offer Assistance

National Trust for Historic Preservation

To assist in providing guideposts for museums embarking into uncharted territory, professional organizations are doing their part to educate museums and share success stories of those who are flourishing despite the downturn in the economy. For example, The National Endowment for the Arts has provided a Chairman's Extraordinary Action Grant to the Heritage Tourism Program at the National Trust for Historic Preservation to create a new online survival toolkit for cultural and heritage tourism attractions and organizations.

As part of this effort the Heritage Tourism Program will seek out and share creative strategies that cultural and heritage attractions are using to survive and thrive in a down economy. While impacts of the economic downturn will be noted, the focus of the toolkit will be on positive solutions and timely resources to address today's challenges. Toolkit development will continue through the fall of 2010. Toolkit resources will be posted on www.culturalheritagetourism.org and www.preservationnation.org as they become available.

American Association of Museums

Additionally, the American Association of Museums (AAM) has put together a survival toolkit for their members. The toolkit includes resources from The Chronicle of Philanthropy, the US IRS, The National Council of Nonprofits, and the NEA Research Roundtable. Additionally, the toolkit includes tips on fundraising, management, and downsizing. For those who need more resources, AAM is also offering a 4-part webinar entitled *Museums Rising to the Financial Challenge*. The webinar explores retrenchment, fundraising, managing human resources, and communication strategies. A book, *Slaying the Financial Dragon: Strategies for Museums*, is also available from AAM. (If you choose to be a 'dragon slayer' and read this text, please let us know what you think of it – we'd love to do a follow-up book review). Find out more about AAM's services at www.aam-us.org.

Virginia Association of Museums

In addition to highlighting innovations and great ideas in this article, the Technical Insert article in this edition of the VAM Voice, written by experts in the field, focuses on ways to maximize earned income at your site. It presents two case studies in which museums were able to discover substantial increases in facility rental income and catering commissions.

VAM is also beginning a new lending program, entitled *Picturing America - Virginia Style*, designed for museums wishing to reach out to a traditionally underserved population – the elderly. In our resource library we are housing three outreach kits based around the *Picturing America* program initiated by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The *Picturing America* resources are being brought to the Virginia museum community thanks to a generous grant from the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities. *Picturing America* brings high-quality reproductions of notable American art into communities. The program uses art as a catalyst for the study of America—the cultural, political, and historical threads woven into our nation's fabric over time.

In *Picturing America - Virginia Style*, we have put together themed kits for museums to use in outreach programming at senior centers, assisted living facilities, and at other community organizations that serve the elderly. Along with the kit, which is focused around various themes and is designed to be used in conjunction with pieces from a museum's own collection, we are providing museums with tips on working with elderly audiences. The kit also includes a listing of community resources that will help museums hone in on this audience in their localities.

Picturing America - Virginia Style's themes include *courage, leadership, landscapes, freedom & equality, democracy, creativity & ingenuity, architecture & engineering, the African American experience, Women in America, Native Peoples, Man & Nature, America in Revolution, Exploration & Discovery, America Torn: The Civil War, The Rise of Industrialism, The World in Conflict: WWI & WWII, and The Modern Era: Post-WWII*. Each themed kit includes pieces from the *Picturing America* collection, as well as accompanying lesson plans in a companion guide from the NEH. Additionally, we have included suggestions for incorporating your own museum collections and/or expertise to presentations on each theme for senior audiences.

Stay tuned to VAM's website (www.vamuseums.org), and our e-news *Forum* for more information about the *Picturing America - Virginia Style* program. We will be kicking it off very soon – we hope your museum will take advantage of this or another opportunity to 'kick' the economy while it's down by using innovative, creative programming and valuable community and statewide partnerships! ☺

Museum News in Your

VAM News

Award Nominations

Ann Brownson Award

The Ann Brownson Award is given annually to an individual who has given outstanding service to the Virginia museum community and to the Virginia Association of Museums. Deadline for nominations: January 15th.

Distinguished Service Award

VAM created the Distinguished Service Award in 2007 to recognize, from time to time, outstanding career accomplishments by museum professionals in the Commonwealth. Deadline for nominations: January 15th.

IMLS Reauthorization

Margo Carlock is part of a group of museum community representatives meeting with committee staff and staff of Senators serving on the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions and the House Committee on Education and Labor to draft language for the upcoming IMLS Reauthorization. Check our National Legislative Updates for news as it becomes available.

Hails and Farewells

The Science Museum of Virginia Foundation's new Executive Director is Annie Magnant. *"She brings to this position a fascinating blend of fundraising and management skills along with a scientific background,"* says Science Museum of Virginia Foundation Board President John Ivins. *"We are excited to have her on board,"* says Science Museum of Virginia Director and CEO Richard Conti.

Mariner's Appoints New President & CEO

The Board of Trustees of The Mariners' Museum, America's National Maritime Museum, is pleased to announce that Dr. William B. Cogar has been appointed president and chief executive officer. Cogar's leadership is effective November 1, 2009. Cogar has been with The Mariners' Museum for several years, and he most recently served as vice president and chief operating officer.

Morven Park Welcomes Executive Director

The Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Inc. Board of Trustees is pleased to announce the appointment of Frank D. Milligan, Ph.D. as the new Morven Park (MP) Executive Director. Dr. Milligan will begin his new duties on January 18, 2010. Current Executive Director, William F. O'Keefe, will be retiring

after 17 years of dedicated service. *"We are very fortunate to have Frank Milligan joining Morven Park,"* stated Jill Gruver, President of the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Inc. Board of Trustees. *"His distinguished career of historic preservation, education and museum operations partners perfectly with the vision of the Westmoreland Davis Memorial Foundation, Inc."*

FAMCC Bids Farewell to President & CEO

Edwin W. Watson has stepped down as President and CEO of the Fredericksburg Area Museum and Cultural Center. He remains involved with the museum in an emeritus capacity. Mr. Watson has been at the helm of the FAMCC for nearly 23 years. *"I hope my legacy is that we've made this museum open and inviting to everybody, no matter who they are or what their background is,"* Watson said. Watson is also a former VAM Council Member!

Harrison Museum Bids Farewell to Ex. Dir.

Roanoke's Harrison Museum of African American Culture has lost its executive director. Bamidele Demerson moved to Greensboro, N.C., and a job with the International Civil Rights Center & Museum. In North Carolina, he is serving as curator and program director for the new center, which is scheduled to open Feb. 1 during commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Greensboro sit-ins. As of now there is no word on his replacement at the Harrison Museum.

Charles Hill Carter, Jr.

Charles Hill Carter, Jr., age 90, of Charles City, VA, passed away on November 20, 2009 after a long illness. He was born August 16, 1919 at "High Hills" in Charles City County, VA. Since 1960, Hill Carter and his wife Helle Klingemann made their home at Shirley Plantation. In conjunction with giving tours through the Great House, Hill Carter was a member of numerous committees and boards throughout his career. He was active in promoting tourism in the Commonwealth, working with and developing several tourism organizations. A memorial service was held at Westover Episcopal Church on November 27th.

Newseum Cuts

The Newseum has cut 29 full-time positions, or 13% of staff, late last month. That means total cuts since 2008 have reached 23%.

Member News

VHS Waives Admission Fees

In a bold move at the November 18, 2009, board meeting, Virginia Historical Society (VHS) trustees voted to waive admission fees next year. This decision comes as part of a long-term strategy to promote access to the society's collections and remove obstacles to sharing history. Effective January 2, 2010, it will not cost guests any money to visit the VHS museum or research library.

Cold War Museum Finds a Home

Francis Gary Powers, Jr., the Founder of The Cold War Museum (www.coldwar.org), announced that the museum had found a physical home. The Cold War Museum will lease a modest size two story building and secure storage facility at Vint Hill, located in Fauquier County, Virginia, less than 30 miles from Washington Dulles International Airport. The lease was signed on December 1, 2009 with the Vint Hill Economic Development Authority (www.vinthill.com), the owner of the 695-acre former US Army communications base.

New Affinity Group!

The registrars and collection managers in the Richmond, Virginia area have created the Richmond Registrars' Roundtable (RRR). RRR meets every other month for behind-the-scenes tours of members' collection storage. The group will discuss problems and offer solutions for issues ranging from collections storage to proper cataloging protocols. They will meet in February and are planning a reception for all registrars and collections managers attending the VAM conference in March! Please contact Kim Watson at 804-338-9010 if you would like more information!

Manassas Museum Releases Book

The Manassas Museum announces the publication of *Manassas Mosaic: Creating a Community*. The volume, authored by local historian Rita Koman and published by the Manassas Museum, is a comprehensive history of the city and surrounding Prince William County. *Manassas Mosaic* is available at the Manassas Museum Store, or online at www.manassasmuseum.org for \$39.95.

Art Acquisition at VMFA

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts has acquired a painting by Edward Mitchell Bannister (1828-1901), the first black artist to receive widespread acclaim in the United States. The 1885 painting, *"Moonlight Marine,"* is an oil on canvas.

Backyard, and Beyond...

Museum on the Move

The Harrison Museum of African American Culture is moving its operations to downtown Roanoke at the end of this year. This represents the first stage of the museum's long anticipated move to Center in the Square.

Sesquicentennial Signature Project Announced

The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission is pleased to announce the debut of a Signature Project, *Virginia in the Civil War: A Sesquicentennial Remembrance*. This three-hour program was created by Dr. James I. Robertson, Jr., the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies, and Blue Ridge PBS as an educational resource for the sesquicentennial commemoration. Distributed free of charge to every public school in Virginia, this two-DVD set features high-definition footage, commentary from dozens of historians, and a number of features that will capture and hold the attention of students and audiences of all ages.

Restless Planet Unveiled

The Virginia Aquarium and Marine Science Center celebrated the opening of *Restless Planet* - a 12,000-square-foot exhibit space on November 21st - after nearly a decade of planning and three years of construction.

Member Kudos

Award-Winning Design

Business Member Glave and Holmes Associates recently received both ASID and IIDA awards for their project on the Presidential Suite at Pinehurst. The project was also featured in Hotel Design Magazine, Hospitality Design Magazine Online, NEWH, Home & Design, and Pines-traw Magazine. Additionally, Glave & Holmes Architecture will be celebrating a new home for itself in the historic Shockoe Bottom district of Richmond, beginning January 2010. The new address is 2101 East Main Street.

Re-accreditation

The US Army Quartermaster Museum has again achieved accreditation by the American Association of Museums (AAM), the highest national recognition afforded the nation's museums. Accreditation signifies excellence to the museum community, to governments, funders, outside agencies, and to the museum-going public. The Quartermaster Museum was initially accredited in 1986.

National Appointment

Dr. James S. Beard of the Virginia Museum of

Natural History was recently announced as chairman of the Mineralogy, Petrology, Volcanology, and Geochemistry (MPVG) Division of the Geological Society of America. Beard's appointment to this national position was announced during the Geological Society of America's annual meeting in Portland, Oregon, in October.

Grant Award

The Richmond-based Virginia Genealogical Society has awarded The Manassas Museum a \$250 matching grant to fund the purchases of archival storage materials to preserve a collection relating to a Civil War Prince William County Cavalry Unit. The collection has been compiled from donations from the United Daughters of the Confederacy, Manassas Chapter (UDCMC), and private citizens.

Taubman wins Award

The Taubman Museum of Art, designed by Los Angeles architect Randall Stout, has been awarded a 2009 International Architect Award, co-presented by The Chicago Athenaeum: Museum of Architecture and Design and Metropolitan Arts Press Ltd. and The European Centre for Architecture Art Design and Urban Studies. The new facility celebrated its one year anniversary in November.

More Virginia & National News

New Home Needed

Virginia's Department of Historic Resources has a c. 1795 tub mill, complete with horizontal 6-paddle wheel, fore bay and flume. The tub mill was excavated in northern Virginia in the late 1980s from a site known as Woolf's Mill, Rokeby Farms, (44FQ75). The mill is chiefly wooden with iron gears and struts; overall dimensions are approximately 12 ft. x 25 ft. x up to 5 ft. high. As tub mills are seldom preserved, this is a highly significant archaeological artifact. This rare mill is currently stored in Richmond, but a new home is urgently needed, preferably a location where the mill can be interpreted as an educational exhibit. Suggestions for temporary storage would also be appreciated. Further details and images will be sent on request. Respond to Dee DeRoche, Chief Curator, Department of Historic Resources at (804) 367-2323 x134.

Allocation Approved

Largely thanks to the Civil War Preservation Trust, President Obama recently approved allocation of \$9 million to preserve America's endangered Civil War Battlefields.

Salzburg Declaration

On October 31, 2009, 59 cultural heritage leaders from 32 countries, including representatives of Africa, the Middle East, South America, and Asia, unanimously passed the Salzburg Declaration on the Conservation and Preservation of Cultural Heritage.

Virginia Forum

The 5th annual Virginia Forum will take place at Christopher Newport University on April 15 - 17, 2010.

Museum Store Association Releases Report

The 2009 MSA Retail Industry Report is now available and retails for \$249 for MSA members (\$349 for non-members). To order, call (303) 504-9223.

AASLH Receives Grant

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) proudly announces it has received a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) totaling \$407,810 as part of the Institute's 21st-Century Museum Professionals program. The 21st-Century program supports a range of activities, including professional training in all areas of museum operations and leadership development. The project is a three-year initiative to expand the Association's Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations (StEPs) that helps small- and medium-sized history organizations learn about national museum standards in a self-study format.

President's Corner



Dear Members,

As the end of my tenure as VAM Council President approaches, I have been contemplating how this organization has grown since I first became a VAM member in 1993. Like all organizations, we have witnessed good times and bad. Unlike some organizations, we have always banded together, learned from each other, and become stronger in the process. As 2009 comes to a close, we stand strong simply because we continue to stand together.

Despite the economic setbacks we have all experienced in 2009, VAM's focus has not been blurred. We continue to be an organization striving toward excellence – to serve the needs of all Virginia museums. The value of collegial relationships, networking opportunities, professional development and the sharing of expertise is more important now than ever! VAM offers venues for museum professionals to learn from each other, - *Annual Workshop Series, Museum Mentors Program, Collections in Action Program*; to network and socialize-VAM *Happy Hour* gatherings; and to explore best practices and products in the museum world-*Annual Conference*. We also offer assistance to members who are riding out the tide of economic distress through our *resume review service, Members-In-Transition Program, annual conference scholarships*, and

volunteer opportunities. These opportunities allow members to stay involved in the museum community after a layoff, get a jump-start on a new job prospect, and network with others in the profession to follow up on potential leads.

I can't emphasize enough the importance and benefits of belonging to VAM during uncertain times. As your President, I want to hear from you. I hope to see you at the Annual Conference, March 14 – 16th in Richmond, and I hope that VAM continues to serve your needs – through our *MEST* program, *Conservation*³ workshops, networking, volunteer opportunities, annual conference offerings, online listings of jobs,

products and services, and much, much more!

Drop me an email at:

jverrill@ci.manassas.va.us

if you have any questions, suggestions or comments. I wish you all the best this holiday season.

John H. Verrill

VAM
The Resource Network for Museums

Serving Museums in Virginia and DC

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Program Director, Jennifer Weiskotten
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Publications Coord., Heather Widener

Our Voice
VAM Voice is a member benefit published quarterly for museum professionals and volunteers. The editor encourages readers to submit article proposals. Contact the publications coordinator for more information.

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Our News Deadlines
Spring: February 1st
Summer: May 1st
Fall: August 1st
Winter: November 1st

Our Mission
The Virginia Association of Museums is a non-profit, professional membership organization for museums and individuals associated with museums, primarily in Virginia and Washington, DC, serving all museum disciplines. The Association provides education, information, resource and support services, facilitates communication among the institutions and individuals of its membership, fosters inclusiveness and serves as an advocate to governmental and other decision-making authorities on issues relating to museums.