

REEXAMINING BELONGING:

THE IMPACT OF DEAI INITIATIVES ON MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

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DEAI and Museum Membership

CECILE SHELLMAN, MUSEUM DEAI CONSULTANT

DEAI

- ▶ Diversity
 - ▶ Equity
 - ▶ Accessibility
 - ▶ Inclusion
-
- ▶ Where did this term come from?

Excellence and Equity

- ▶ Early 1990s report from museums
- ▶ Focused on Museum Education departments and outreach
- ▶ Positioned diversity and inclusion as front-facing, audience-focused challenges
- ▶ Good start on acknowledging and exploring diverse people, groups, voices, and viewpoints

American Association of Museums

- ▶ American Association of Museums becomes American Alliance of Museums
- ▶ Renewed focus on people and systems in museum culture in addition to championing the excellence of practice-specific work
- ▶ Leadership changes and a new strategic plan signal new, collaborative, inclusive direction
- ▶ Many staff and volunteers begin to call for more diverse board, leadership, staff, and membership

2017: Working Group on DEAI

- ▶ By 2017, AAM has a Director of Inclusion
- ▶ By 2017, more than 50% of AAM's Board of Trustees is racially and ethnically diverse.
- ▶ By 2017, the LGBTQ Alliance, a professional network of AAM, has published a groundbreaking guide to LGBTQ Inclusion in Museums (an updated guide to transgender inclusion was published in 2019)
- ▶ 2017: AAM President Laura Lott and Dr. Johnnetta Cole convene a 20+ person working group to research and write about diversity and inclusion across and about museums.

DEAI is an approach, not a program

- ▶ Not a program
- ▶ Not an add-on
- ▶ Not a pejorative
- ▶ Not an afterthought
- ▶ Not a meaningless must-have
- ▶ Not a gimmick
- ▶ Not a fad

What does this mean for museums?

- ▶ Everyone's responsibility

What are the special challenges for Membership?

- ▶ DEAI is all about **belonging**

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Diversity Equity Inclusion & Access Initiatives



SAINT LOUIS ART MUSEUM

Saint Louis Art Museum

A free comprehensive Art Museum, founded in 1879 as the City Art Museum of St. Louis

Receives tax support from St. Louis City and St. Louis County, is a sub-district of the State of Missouri



2014 Strategic Plan Commitments and Priorities

The Art

The Experience

The Community

Financial Sustainability



Second Commitment: The Experience

Ensure that every visitor feels a sense of welcoming and belonging.

Foster meaningful and innovative visitor-centered interactions with art.



Third Commitment: The Community

Reach, engage, and sustain the Museum's future audience and membership.

Actively contribute to the vitality of cultural life in St. Louis to better serve the needs of the St. Louis region.





AMMC
April 3, 2019

Diversity Equity Inclusion & Access Initiatives



The Art Institute of Chicago

Opened in 1893

Strong holdings in Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, European painting and sculpture, contemporary art, Japanese prints, and photography

260,000+ works in our collection

~100k members

~500 employees



Here's what we're
working on:

Enrich Chicago

DAMLI

Accessibility Committee

MASS Action

artEquity Assessment and Training

Enrich Chicago

Founded in 2014, Enrich Chicago is a collaborative of 21 Chicagoland arts and culture organizations and philanthropic institutions that are committed to ending racism and systemic oppression in the arts sector

DAMLI **(Diversifying Art** **Museum Leadership** **Initiative)**

- Help interns from underrepresented communities succeed as art museum leaders
- Robust professional development and training alongside deep organizational transformation
- 20 museums across the country
- Supported by Walton Family and Ford Foundations with internal collaboration between HR, Museum Education, and Academic Research

Accessibility Committee

- Established in 2014 by a small group of staff, the Accessibility Committee strives to help make the museum's building, resources, and programming, accessible to all individuals
- Projects include: New assistive listening systems, a wheelchair assistance program, sensory kits, updated signage, and training for onsite staff
- Thanks to a major grant from the Elizabeth Morse Genius Charitable Trust, we aim to embed a strategy of Universal Design

MASS Action

“MASS Action is a project that aims to create a community of practice, of people engaged in the social transformation of museums.

In 2018 we held monthly reading groups to walk staff through the MASS Action Toolkit chapter-by-chapter, gathering about 150 staff from across the museum to create a common language and set of ideologies on equity work.

This year we’ve started experimenting with creating space for small equity projects to be conceptualized and executed by staff participants.”

artEquity

Assessment and Training

artEquity, led by founder and director, Carmen Morgan is “a national program that provides tools, resources, and training to support the intersections of art and activism” (artequity.org)

Established an internal “Core Team” of 15 staff, from different departments and levels of positional power, as the decision-making body

Facilitated artEquity-led assessment and training sessions for 100 enthusiastic staff

Take-aways from artEquity Assessment

Perception of Initiative

- Skepticism
- Disjointed diversity and inclusion efforts
- Appreciation for MASS Action

Perception of AIC in the Community

- Community pride and sense of ownership
- Elitist
- Not connected to the community

Institutional Areas for Improvement

- Communication
- Organizational siloes
- Diversity in staff leadership
- Transparency around hiring and salary structure
- Incidents of unequal treatment
- Lack of support to develop staff

THOUGHTS & QUESTIONS

THANK YOU!