

December 22, 2000



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Dear Exhibitor:

Thanks again for participating in the survey we conducted on behalf of the James Irvine Foundation. As promised, an executive summary of our survey results is attached. By sharing information regarding your institution you have provided important input in the dialogue regarding the resource needs of California museums. Thank you.

If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the survey, please contact Prudy Kohler, Program Associate, The James Irvine Foundation, One Market, Steuart Tower, Suite 2500, San Francisco, CA 94105.

Again, thanks for your participation.

With best wishes,

Mary Kennedy McCabe
Director
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Executive Summary

California Museum Research ExhibitsUSA/James Irvine Foundation December 2000

Introduction

With support from the James Irvine Foundation, ExhibitsUSA researched the professional development and institutional advancement needs of California's small and mid-size museums. The key ambitions of the research were to: 1) better understand California's museum service organizations; 2) analyze the scope and constitution of the state's small and mid-size museums; and 3) recommend strategies for improving institutional practices of small and mid-size museums.

Methodology

As part of the research interviews were conducted with directors and/or other key staff members of the following non-profit cultural service providers: California Association of Museums, California Arts Council, California Council for the Humanities, California Association of Local Art Agencies, Western States Arts Federation, and Western Museums Association. These meetings led to a breadth of understanding about the technical assistance needs of small and mid-size museums and the commitment and ability of cultural service providers to address them.

Using the mail list of the California Association of Museums, a data collection survey of 1,200 museums in the state was conducted. With data from 177 respondents, coupled with information provided from previous assessment studies, a profile of small, medium, large, and major institutions was created, including important statistics in operating budgets, visitorship, disciplinary focus, and staff/volunteer professionalism. Further, the data was analyzed in order to understand the dynamics between institutional size and access to training opportunities, public impact, and staff experience.

Additionally, telephone interviews were conducted with fifteen museum directors from a broad range of California institutions. A subset of eight institutions was selected for on-site interviews with key staff members.

Results

The primary research findings are as follows:

- After considerable analysis of the data and examination of institutional behaviors, small, medium, large, and major museums were defined as follows:

<u>Operation Budget</u>	<u>Classification</u>
\$0 – 100,000	Small
\$101,000-500,000	Medium
\$501,000-1,000,000	Large
Over \$1,000,000	Major

By using operating budget as the key criterion, many other criteria conformed to these classifications as well: number of professional employees, visitorship, funding sources, and program capacity.

- Of the responding California museums, 40% would be classified as small, 29% medium, 11% large, and 14% major. This is comparable to national patterns of institutional distribution by size.
- The digital divide continues to exist in the California museum community. Forty-six percent of California's small museums do not have desktop Internet access for any of their staff. By contrast, half of all other museums said 50% or more of their staff have desktop Internet access.
- Small museums are less able to retain their directors than all other categories of California museums. Forty-two percent of California's small museums have a director who has held the position for three or more years, while at least 60% of all other museums have a director who has been in the position for three or more years.
- Two-thirds or more of the directors at medium museums have responsibility for a broad range of institutional needs: administration/finance, development/fundraising, marketing/public relations, exhibition concepts, and public events. In contrast, directors at major museums are primarily responsible for administration/finance and development/fundraising.
- Budgets for training are far less at small and medium museums than those at large and major museums. Fifty-four percent of small museums have no funds for training, while 42% have \$999 or less. 53% of medium museums have \$999 or less for training, 70% of large museums have \$1,000 or more, and 48% of major museums have \$5,000 or more.
- Overall, museums primarily depend on local training and subscriptions to magazines to stay current on issues in the museum field. However, most large and major museums augment this information with attendance at national, regional, and state museum conferences. In contrast, only 18% of small museums had sent a staff member to a state or regional conference in the past three years. Less than a third of small and medium museums had attended any national, regional, or state museum conferences in the past three years.
- Lack of funding, followed by lack of time, are the greatest obstacles to more training.