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Pioneering Partnerships: The Role of the Independent and Non-Traditional Collections Manager in the Museum World

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Pioneering Partnerships:
The Role of the Independent and Non-Traditional
Collections Manager in the Museum World

by

Erin K. Schovel

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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Approved by

Dr. Peter D. Schaefer
Thesis Advisor

—

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Date

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Abstract

Museums are increasingly following for-profit business models. Downsizing, partnering and outsourcing are no longer exclusive business terms, but have been adopted into museum lingo. As museums large and small adapt to decreased funding, they look for ways to stretch their dollars further. Museums are finding value in outsourcing work to independent professionals who are knowledgeable in museum practices.

The available literature on museum outsourcing focuses on guest curators. Little is written about other categories of non-affiliated museum professionals on which museums rely, such as fundraisers, public relations officers, and, especially, collections managers. I am particularly interested in non-affiliated museum workers who work with the collection, whether under the job title of registrar or collections manager. *As museums and similar institutions streamline their operations to become more efficient in a business-driven world, the role of the non-affiliated (independent as well as non-traditional) museum professional is emerging as a valuable service provider.*

I explore the phenomenon of independent and non-traditional museum professionals through the results of my national survey and excerpts of my interviews with 12 of these professionals. My interviewees work in a variety of areas including collections

management firms, corporate collections, wealth management groups and private collections. Case studies and interviews with 8 museum staff members show the attitude of the museum world towards independent and non-traditional museum workers.

I investigate the benefits and challenges that non-affiliated museum workers encounter as they navigate financial, contractual and professional situations divergent from those encountered by affiliated museum workers. Finally, I look toward a future in which the increase in independent and non-traditional museum workers may affect museums. Independent and non-traditional museum work may be an alternative career path for emerging and established museum professionals.

To Dad, who still encourages me... I miss you

To Mom, whose faith inspires me

and

To Chris, my love and new life

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAM	American Association of Museums
ASSET	Academic Survey System & Evaluation Tool, Seton Hall University
IMP	Independent Museum Professional
MP-NTE	Museum Professionals in a Non-Traditional Environment, Yahoo Groups
MTA	Museum Trustee Association
NMP	Non-traditional Museum Professional
RC-AAM	Registrar's Committee of the American Association of Museums

Introduction

Over the last decade, museums have increasingly followed for-profit business models. Business terms such as downsizing, partnering and outsourcing have been adopted into museum lingo. As museums both large and small adapt to a decrease in funding, they are looking for ways to stretch their dollars further. Museums are finding value in outsourcing work to independent professionals who are knowledgeable in museum practices.

The broad trend in museum outsourcing can be tracked in AAM articles and CAA guidelines, although most of the available literature focuses on guest curators. Little is written about other categories of non-affiliated museum professionals on which museums rely, such as fundraisers, public relations officers, and, especially, collections managers. Guidelines for guest curators, however, can serve as a starting point for a discussion about the status of these other jobs that museums are outsourcing.

In this thesis, I am particularly interested in non-affiliated museum workers who work with the collection. I will show that, *as museums and similar institutions streamline their operations to become more efficient in a business-driven world, the role of the non-affiliated (independent as well as non-traditional) museum professional is emerging as a valuable service provider.*

In the first part of my thesis I will explore the phenomenon of independent and non-traditional museum professionals through definitions, survey results and excerpts of interviews with these professionals. In chapter 1, I will define what the terms independent and non-traditional mean in museum jargon and how pervasive such non-affiliated professionals are in the museum world. In the second chapter, I will describe the results of

my national survey of museums' use of independent museum professionals and the conclusions I gathered in conversations with representatives from the American Association of Museums and the Registrar's Committee of AAM. In the third chapter I will expand on the initial definition of independent and non-traditional museum professionals, describe what they do, and who hires them. I will give a glimpse into the work performed by these individuals. In chapter four I will explore why museum workers are turning to independent and non-traditional work, what the benefits and challenges of this work are, and what some of the practical considerations are; in addition, I will address some of the misconceptions and preconceived notions about them.

In the second part of my thesis I will show the attitude of the museum world towards independent and non-traditional work through case studies of partnerships and interviews with museum staff. In chapter five I will discuss who hires independent museum professionals. I will also present case studies concerning independent and non-traditional museum professional work in museums and non-museum collections. In chapter six I will show what the benefits, risks and practical considerations are for museums. In chapter seven I will address the issue of the rights and representation of non-affiliated professionals in museum organizations such as AAM and RC-AAM. Finally, I will look toward the future in chapter eight to explore how an increase in independent and non-traditional museum workers may affect museums in coming years. In the same chapter, I will also show that independent and non-traditional museum work can be an alternative career path for emerging as well as established museum professionals.

Chapter I: Defining Non-Traditional and Independent Museum Professionals

The organization of, and care for, a collection is just as important as its building. This job of organization falls to a collections manager who may be asked to inventory the collection, to properly store and/or display it, as well as to provide a descriptive catalogue of the objects. A collections manager performs the same essential tasks—handling, storing, tracking and researching objects, whether working within a museum, a private collection or a corporate collection. I have chosen to use the term “collections manager” to encompass both registrarial and curatorial functions because I have found it rare for non-affiliated museum professionals to restrict their services to only one function.

Collections managers may be museum-affiliated and non-museum-affiliated. Museum-affiliated collections managers are those who are employed by a museum, receive steady pay and, ideally, benefits. Non-museum-affiliated collections managers are not regularly and steadily employed by museums. This category can be further sub-divided into non-traditional and independent museum professionals.

A non-traditional museum professional (NMP) has one employer who may be a private collector, a corporation, or a foundation. As an employee, an NMP receives steady pay and, in many cases, such benefits as health care and paid leave. The work is tied to one collection and involves long term care of the collection. NMPs don't travel often. The collector may include an NMP in acquisition decisions, the rearranging of the collection's display, or in the deaccessioning of a part of the collection. Deaccessioning, however, is a different process from museum deaccessioning as there are fewer people to weigh in on the decision and the collector does not have the public obligation that most museums do. An NMP may be a proxy for his or her employer at an auction. The collector may never loan

the collection, and an NMP will probably never deal with gifts or bequests. The work may involve spending time in a family's home and dealing with the family. Sometimes this also involves work beyond caring for the collections; an NMP may become an estate manager or personal assistant.

Different from the NMP, the independent museum professional (IMP) is not an employee as the IRS defines the term, but rather a professional along the line of a consultant, who has more than one client. An IMP works on contract and often writes his or her own. Clients may be private collectors, corporations, or museums. IMPs do not receive benefits such as health insurance or paid leave. They necessarily have to be nimble in their work arrangements and be willing to travel as they move from client to client. Peter Trippi, former Dahesh Museum director, described it as “floating like a honey bee from collection to collection.”¹ An IMP makes his or her own schedule and may do some of the work at home. As an independent worker, an IMP must pay his or her own overhead for such things as office supplies, electricity, and equipment. Some IMPs choose to create a limited liability corporation (LLC) or a corporation.

The above definitions are derived from discussions with professionals engaged in IMP and NMP work, particularly via e-mail list-servs. The everyday reality of collections work is reflected in, and to some extent nourished by, the information streams to which collections managers have access. One particularly rich stream is the list-serv of the Registrar's Committee of the American Association of Museums (RC-AAM). It allows museum professionals across the country to share questions and answers related to

¹ Peter Trippi, Editor, *Fine Art Connoisseur*, interview by author, digital recording, 10 February 2007, *Le Pain Quotidien*, Manhattan.

collections care. Professionals connect with each other there and define themselves as a group.

An offshoot of the RC-AAM list-serv is a Yahoo Group for Museum Professionals in a Non-Traditional Environment, or MP-NTE. Due to a smaller member base it is not as active as the RC-AAM, but it is an excellent resource for independent and non-traditional museum professionals. My use of the terms “independent museum professional” and “non-traditional museum professional” stem from an on-line discussion with Suzanne Quigley on the MP-NTE list-serv. Quigley argues that the term “independent,” as used by most subscribers to the list-serv, refers to:

people who do not work exclusively for one client, but rather take on different project-based jobs where... [they] receive no benefits, write... [their] own contracts, etc., as opposed to people who work full or part time in a non-traditional setting... Examples of the latter might be a corporate collection or as a curator/collections manager for a private collector or a foundation.²

Though the terms “independent” and “non traditional” are debated even within the limited community of workers who call themselves so, there is an understanding that it is useful to have a name, even a debated one, to identify one’s particular employment status in a museum community.

When partnering with a museum, IMPs and NMPs perform one of three roles, or fluidly shift between the roles of, *expert*, *a pair-of-hands* or *a collaborator*.³ As an expert, a museum professional, whether IMP or NMP, makes the decisions about how to proceed, based on his or her expert opinion. The museum professional has technical control over

² Suzanne Quigley, Art & Artifact Services, Brooklyn, NY, e-mail discussion with author, 31 August 2006.

³ Peter Block, *Flawless Consulting: A Guide to Getting your Expertise Used*. (San Francisco: Pfeiffer & Company, 1981), 18-22.

the project, with the goal of solving a pressing problem. The client's role is to "judge and evaluate after the fact."⁴ In the pair-of-hands model, the client makes the decisions about how to proceed and retains control over the project. The museum professional takes a more passive role with the goal of applying his or her specific knowledge as the client prescribes. In the third model, a collaborative partnership is developed between the museum professional and the client. Decisions are made bilaterally, control is shared, communication is two-way and "implementation responsibilities are determined by discussion and agreement."⁵ Here the goal of the museum professional is to "solve problems so they stay solved."⁶ A kaleidoscope of opportunities exist for museums to partner with IMPs and NMPs. The future of museum work is emerging from these evolving relationships.

Chapter II: How prevalent is IMP work?

In an effort to discover how many museums currently use IMPs, I implemented an eighteen-question survey through Seton Hall University's Academic Survey System & Evaluation Tool (ASSET). I sent the ASSET survey to three list-servs: the RC-AAM, Museum-Land Museum-Ed. Sixty-seven respondents from across the country answered the survey. The responses address four basic questions: In what geographic regions are museums more likely to use IMPs? What types of museums are using IMPs? What is the range of budgets among museums that use IMPs? What tasks do museums have IMPs do?

⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁵ Ibid, 21.

⁶ Ibid, 22.

In order to maintain consistency with other published reports, I used AAM's definitions of geographic regions, types of institutions, and budget categories.⁷

Of those who responded, 83.6% reported they had hired IMPs within the last four years and 82.1% reported they plan to hire IMPs within the next four years. Over half of the respondents, 52%, indicated they hire 1-3 IMPs per year. Slightly over a quarter, 27%, hire 3-5 per year and 6% hire more than 5 per year. The other 15% do not hire IMPs. What follows is a summary of my findings. More detailed statistical information is available in Appendix 2.

What regions are using IMPs?

Of those who responded to the survey, 4.5% were from New England, 25.4% from the Mid-Atlantic, 16.4% from the Southeast, 19.4% from the Midwest, 17.9% from the Mountain Plains and 16.4% from the Western region. Two regions, the Mid-Atlantic and the Southeast, indicated a slight decline in anticipated use of IMPs in the next four years (figures 1 and 2). However, the statistics show there is ample demand for IMPs in all regions. One region, the Mid-West, indicated an increase in anticipated use of IMPs during the next four years. Most significantly, over 50% of respondents in all regions indicated they had hired IMPs in the past and well over 50% of respondents in all regions indicated they plan to hire IMPs in the future.

Respondents from all regions indicated they hire at least 1-3 IMPs per year. Respondents from all regions except New England hire 3-5 per year and only the respondents from the Mid-Atlantic and Western regions hire more than 5 IMPs per year. More respondents from the Southeast indicated they hire 1-3 per year than any other

⁷ See Appendix 1 for a list of these categories.

region. However, respondents from the Mid-Atlantic hire more IMPs than any other region.



Figure 1

Figure 2

What types of museums are using IMPs?

Of those who responded to the survey, 28.4% were from art museums, 35.8% were from history museums, 25.4% classified their museums as “other,” 4.4% were from general museums, 3% were from science museums, 1.5% were from natural history museums and 1.5% were from zoos. The respondents who chose to categorize their museums as “other” described their “type“ as a wide variety, including combinations of art, history and science; university; anthropology; historic houses and parks; drug enforcement and building arts museums.

Of all the types of museum surveyed, only those respondents from zoos indicated they did not hire IMPs in the last four years nor do they plan to hire in the next four years (figures 3 and 4). All other types of museums hired IMPs in the last four and plan to hire in

the next four years. Respondents from two types, history museums and “other” indicated a slight decline in anticipated use of IMPs. Respondents from general museums indicated a dramatic increase in anticipated use of IMPs. Sixty-seven percent of respondents from general museums said that they hired IMPs during the last four years, but 100% said they plan to hire IMPs during the next four years. Respondents from art and science museums did not indicate a change in their planned hiring of IMPs compared to the last four years.

Of the types of museums surveyed, respondents from history and art museums hire more IMPs per year than the other types. More respondents from history museums said they hire 1-3 IMPs per year than the other kinds of museums. However, more respondents from art museums said they hire 3-5 IMPs per year than the other types of museums.

Hired IMPs Last Four Years

Plan To Hire IMPs Next Four Years

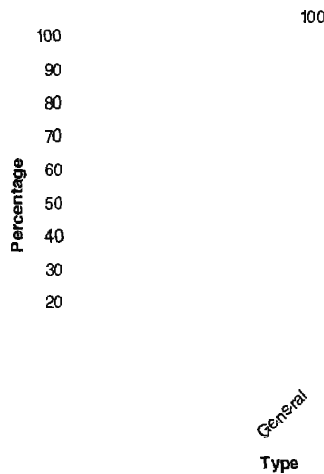


Figure 3

Figure 4

What is the range of budgets among museums that use IMPs?

Of those who responded to the survey, 19.4% are in the \$350,000 and under budget range, 9% are in the \$350,001-\$500,000 range, 13.4% are in the \$500,001-\$1 million

range, 34.3% are in the \$100,001-\$3 million range, 11.9% are in the \$300,001-\$5 million range and 11.9% are in the \$5 million and above range.

Museums of all budget sizes surveyed have hired IMPs in the last four years and plan to hire them in the next four years. Respondents in three budget categories (\$350,001—\$500,00; \$3,000,001—\$5 Million; and \$5 Million and above) indicated they do not anticipate a change in their hiring of IMPs during the next four years (figures 5 and 6). In two budget categories (\$500,001—\$1 Million; and \$1,000,001—\$3 Million) respondents indicated they anticipate a decrease in their use of IMPs. That three budget categories indicated no change in anticipated use predicts that there will be a steady need for IMPs in the future. Interestingly, the smallest budget category (\$350,000 and under) was the only category in which respondents indicated an anticipated increase in their use of IMPs. Cost saving measures are imperative in this smallest budget category. This graph comparison shows that respondents from small museums anticipate using IMPs to achieve a more streamlined budget.

Further survey data shows that respondents from the \$1,000,001—\$3 Million category hire the most IMPs compared to all other categories. More respondents from the two lowest budget categories (\$350,000 and under; and \$500,001—\$1 Million) hire 1-3 IMPs per year than respondents from the other budget categories. While museums of all budget sizes do hire IMPs, those with smaller budgets are more likely to hire 1-3 and those with larger budgets are more likely to hire 3-5 or more. The tasks completed by IMPs in museums also vary according to budget size.

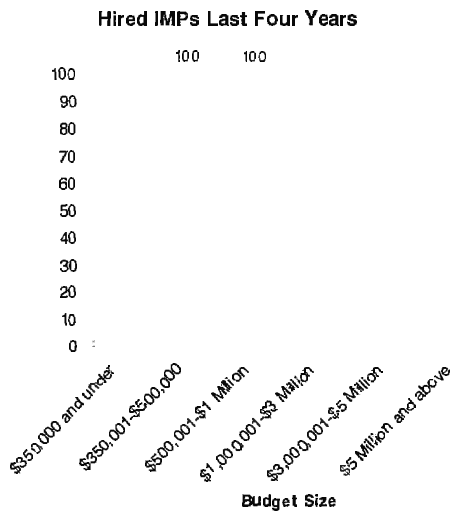


Figure 5

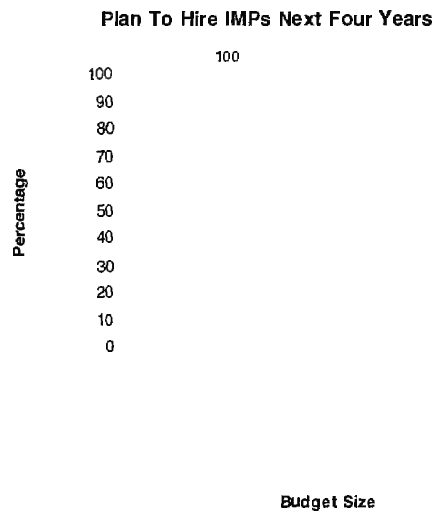


Figure 6

What tasks do museums have IMPs do?

In response to the survey question, “What tasks do these independent professionals generally perform for your institution?” respondents gave a variety of answers. The general trend in these answers was that museums hire IMPs to move art, do conservation, install and de-install objects, complete inventories and curate exhibits. Some respondents indicated they hire IMPs when they need supplemental staff, such as when the museum does an annual inventory, moves large artworks or organizes a traveling exhibition. One respondent wrote about hiring both guest curators and IMPs:

Guest curators are usually the primary curators for a particular exhibition and perform most tasks relating to research and object selection. Contract registrars are usually hired to assist existing staff with traveling exhibitions, international exhibitions, in house exhibitions that either require additional skill sets (i.e. international shipping knowledge) or to add an extra pair of hands and eyes to in

house exhibitions. Art handlers are hired to assist with installation, and packing requirements.

The aspect of responsibility was addressed in responses as well. Contracts or letters of agreement may be signed that delineate the tasks for which the IMP will be responsible. One respondent wrote, “The letter of agreement includes expected tasks to be completed, a limit to the number of hours that can be worked, and a dollar cap on what the ultimate cost can be.” Many respondents noted the need for IMPs when the museum staff isn’t large enough or specialized enough to complete a task.

AAM and RC-AAM Membership Data

In my quest for data concerning the current number of independent museum professionals and a comparison number to track the growth of this area, I contacted both the AAM and RC-AAM offices. Marjie Hashmall, Customer Service Coordinator for AAM, graciously answered my question, admitting that AAM does not have exact statistics. She stated that AAM has between 15,000 and 16,000 individual members and that there may be up to a third of these members who are independent.

Heather Kajic, the current Secretary of the Registrar’s Committee of the American Association of Museums (RC-AAM) reported that there are 813 RC-AAM members, 111 of which are categorized as independent. Ms. Kajic noted that this category is generated by AAM as members join or renew their AAM membership. It is difficult to verify these data because the subject of IMPs has not yet received much organizational attention. AAM is only now beginning to address the numbers of museum professionals who are operating independently. The other reason this information is problematic is that these categories are

self-selecting. It may seem that to call oneself “independent” is clear, but the variety of work structures that independents use raises interesting questions. To call oneself independent, does one have to be self-employed, own one’s own business and pay taxes and healthcare through one’s business? Do people who work on contract part time as a supplement to a full time job also check the “independent professional” box on the AAM join/renew form?

The AAM FAQ says in answer to the question “who is the category ‘independent professional’ category for?: ”This category of individual membership recognizes those people who provide goods and/or services to the museum field, but are not necessarily employed by one museum. This could be a consultant who provides services to many museum clients or someone who has expertise in a specialized area of museum operations.”⁸ Despite the limited data available, it appears that “independent museum professional” work is on the rise. One anecdotal bit of evidence given by Ms. Hashmall is that AAM conference attendants have mentioned that they noticed more and more colleagues with “independent“ on their badges. An even quieter segment, those who work for private collectors, also seems to be growing. Due to the nature of the job and the discretion it requires, these professionals may not be as vocal but when inquiries are begun, one finds many people who do museum work outside of museums.

⁸ American Association of Museums, *Membership FAQ's*, <http://www.aam-us.org/joinus/membership-faqs.cfm> Accessed 24 March 2007.

Chapter III: Expanded Definitions of IMPs and NMPs

IMPs: Who hires IMPs and what do IMPs do?

IMPs, by definition, have more than one client at once. They also have many different *kinds* of clients including museums, private collectors, and corporate collections. Consequently, it is rare to find an IMP who performs only one function. An IMP may be hired by one client to perform an inventory, and by another, to research objects in the collection in preparation for a catalog. The IMPs I interviewed stressed that they do all the same things that museum affiliated professionals do, and more.

Museums

Museums that hire IMPs use them for all the tasks performed by collections managers: registration, research, information management, conservation, couriering, etc. Museums may also use IMPs for accreditation and/or MAP evaluations. Elise LeCompte, for example, occasionally works as a consultant to museums involved in the American Association of Museums (AAM) Museum Assessment Program (MAP.) In addition to her position as the registrar of the Florida Museum of Natural History in Gainesville, Florida, Ms. LeCompte travels to museums and, for a fee, completes a MAP consultative report. The report is “designed to help the museum understand how it compares to standards and best practices in the field... and provides suggestions for improvements.”⁹

IMPs who perform registration tasks are faced with a wide variety of work environments. While there are generally accepted guidelines for processes and policies,

⁹ American Association of Museums. Museum Assessment Program, Frequently Asked Questions. <http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/map/help.cfm#8>; accessed 19 April 2007.

there are no “industry standards” that apply to all and every museum. Thus, IMPs have to be able to adjust to different policies in different museums while adhering to best practices. The IMPs I interviewed stressed that they have extensive experience in well established, often high profile museums. Proven experience is valued over degrees among those who hire IMPs, although the degree is definitely an asset. Suzanne Quigley, for example, began her business, Art & Artifact Services, after 20 years of experience in museums including the Detroit Institute of Art, the Guggenheim, and the Whitney. At all three museums she was head registrar. As an IMP, Ms. Quigley brings her considerable experience and extensive network of contacts to contract work. IMPs like her can sometimes serve to raise the bar in museums.

IMPs may serve museums as registrars when staff isn’t large enough or specialized enough to do the project at hand. Museums especially contract out for assistance with exhibits and some hire IMPs to manage entire projects. Due to the staffing structure at the Guggenheim, for example, IMPs are used constantly.¹⁰ As a recent example, the Guggenheim used IMPs as exhibition coordinators and couriers for *Art in America: Three Hundred Years of Innovation*, a survey exhibition of American art that traveled to Beijing, the People’s Republic of China, from February 10 to April 5, 2007. Cathy Hill, an IMP who often works with the Guggenheim, organized the exhibit and other IMPs served as couriers along with staff from lending museums. Twenty-six couriers accompanied approximately 130 important works from the Colonial period to the present day. In a

¹⁰ Meryl Cohen, Head Registrar at the Guggenheim Museum, described the staffing structure of her Registration department in an interview with the author on February 16, 2007. Her staff consists of only ten full time registrars, yet the New York office manages international exhibitions in New York, Las Vegas, Venice and Berlin. The department also handles major traveling exhibits to other museums worldwide. Because of a moratorium on hiring full-time staff, the department handles their workload by temporarily hiring IMPs as “project staff.”

situation like this, when a large volume of objects must be shipped internationally within a short time frame, museums must depend on experienced IMPs who are able to devote a significant amount of time to ensure safe passage for exhibition objects.

IMPs may be contracted to work with the permanent collection as well, in situations where an extra hand is needed for inventories, for example. One respondent to the ASSET survey answered that his/her museum hires IMPs for the annual inventory, as well as for “installation and movement of large artworks.” Another respondent wrote that IMPs are hired to produce condition reports when there has been a large donation. By hiring an IMP to focus on this specific task, the museum ensures that donation paperwork is completed as quickly as possible. This allows staff to concentrate on their other myriad duties. Museums seek IMPs who have demonstrated skill and success in certain specialized areas of registration such as rights and reproductions, international shipping or information and database management.

Private collectors

The trend towards IMP and NMP work is also supported by private collectors. As private collectors enlarge their collections, they find they need help keeping track of and caring for their collections in terms of insurance, shipping arrangements and general care. Private collectors now want to have greater control over their collections and are opening their own museums rather than giving their collections to already established museums. This trend is “hastened by an enormous flow of disposable income and an insatiable public interest in art (not to mention keeping up with the Joneses)”¹¹

¹¹ Carol Kino, “Welcome to the Museum of My Stuff,” *The New York Times*, 18 February 2007 [on-line]; available from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/>; accessed 23 March 2007.

Donors are no longer content to simply give away their money or artwork and leave the logistics of their usage to the recipient organization. Rather, philanthropists are now demanding a higher level of accountability of the organizations to which they give and want to be able to clearly see the effect of their gifts.¹² Some, like Mickey Cartin, a contemporary art collector in Connecticut, are not finding this accountability and are becoming “frustrated with the ‘general inefficiencies’ he perceived, from conflicts among trustees to a tendency to make creative decisions by committee... ’It was becoming more and more difficult to see how gifts that I was making were being used.’”¹³ This demand for greater control by collectors has created a demand for assistance in the form of IMPs and NMPs. The flexibility and often the pay scale private collectors are able to provide make the work attractive to professionals who wish to work outside of museums.

A private collector who needs help with the collection may not be ready to hire someone full time as an NMP. An IMP can come in occasionally for inventORIZATION, cataloging or photography in the collector’s home or storage warehouse. Collections management for private collectors is more flexible than for museums. IMPs who work with private collectors may be working with relatively small collections in an environment that doesn’t require the detailed tracking paperwork that museums use. The objects may be assigned accession numbers but not be tagged with the numbers. Systems to track movement from one room to another will probably not be used. There is no need for the

¹² The demand for greater control is apparent not only in arts donations, but in philanthropy as a whole. Perhaps the best-known philanthropic story of 2006 was Warren Buffet’s gift to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation with the stipulation that the money be spent in a very particular time frame. Buffet and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have defined this trend and set the bar for other philanthropists.

¹³ Carol Kino, “Welcome to the Museum of My Stuff,” *The New York Times*, 18 February 2007 [on-line]; available from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/>; accessed 23 March 2007.

typical museum “removed from display” tag. The collector, as owner, also has the prerogative to display the objects in whatever manner he or she chooses.

Dixie Neilson, Director of Art Care in Gainesville, Florida, relates a scenario in which she was contracted by a collector of African American memorabilia. The objects included everything from artifacts of the first African American run grocery store to rosters of soldiers in the Civil War. Everything was stapled to the collector’s walls, eggbeaters and all. Ms. Neilson was hired to remove all the artifacts from the walls, pack them and re-install everything at a local museum. Against Ms. Neilson’s advice, the collector had signed a ten year loan agreement. After a few months, the collector had a difference of opinion with the museum administration and decided to take all the objects back. Ms. Neilson was again contracted to reverse the process.

Ms. Neilson is contracted by private collectors to help them “get a handle on what they have.”¹⁴ When asked to expand on this, she answered:

I help them gather receipts and invoices. I often put the records in Access and I include a photo. When I make a catalogue book I print out the record with the photo there as well. Sometimes I organize the catalogue by room; however the client wants me to organize it... I print out the records into a three-ring binder. One client has his own family collection plus a foundation collection and things are constantly being moved from one to the other. So I have to be able to switch pages around.

These records will be invaluable time saving documents should the collector donate some or all of the objects to a museum. The documentation adds value to the collection as a

¹⁴ Dixie Neilson, Director, Art Care, Gainesville, FL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2007.

whole and any museum to which the collection is donated will be enriched by the extra information.

Corporate Collections

Corporate collections hire IMPs for the same reasons as museums and private collectors. Corporate collections may also hire IMPs for specialized tasks such as archive management. Angela Spinazze of ATSPIN Consulting in Chicago is currently working with a corporate archive. The Chicago corporation (which Ms. Spinazze preferred not to name out of respect for their privacy) has been in existence for many years. It has merged with other corporations and now has a large archive of papers, photos and objects. Ms. Spinazze is working with an exhibit designer to put together a museum for the corporation.

We have to keep explaining to the board every year why it's good for me to be here, but in a recent board meeting we got through to at least one person. I showed them some photos that had been unearthed and the PR person was very excited. She said that they've been using the same ten photos for the past twenty years! ...The next step will be to digitize the photos so that the PR department can actually use the photos themselves.¹⁵

The corporation's management finally understood that the archive could add value to the corporation.

Collections Management Firms

Several IMPs have created collections management firms and organized comprehensive service packages in order to maximize their effectiveness. Thomas and

¹⁵ Angela Spinazze, ATSPIN Consulting, Chicago, IL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2006.

Associates, in Manhattan, for example, offers on-site inventory and collections care performed by the firm's employees but also offers career building and job placement functions for individuals and institutions. Geri Thomas, President of the firm, works as an IMP and hires other IMPs as needed. Like other IMPs, she had a long museum career before creating her own business. Her firm does staffing, consulting, collections management projects, and professional development training for museums and art businesses. Ms. Thomas sees the value that her firm provides to museums in terms of an increase in training and professionalism. She is currently working with New York University on an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to offer a certificate program in art handling.

Peggy Schaller's firm in Denver, Collections Research for Museums, offers immediate collections care, but also conducts training services for small museums. In the area of collections care, Ms. Schaller is currently working with several different clients. For the Buffalo Bill Museum and Grave in Golden, Colorado, she is digitizing all archival objects so it will be possible to digitally search the documents. Another client also requires archive work because, "everybody who worked on the archives in the past had their own idea of how to find things and how things should be organized. Unfortunately we can't go back and establish original order. We're now taking current staff and training them how to do it right. They're also talking about doing an inventory of their collections."¹⁶ Yet another of Ms. Schaller's clients contracted her to computerize the collection, to make sure that the objects all have the correct tracking numbers and to enter them into a database. Her firm's project work has been close to home in Colorado. The training sessions she offers,

¹⁶ Peggy Schaller, Collections Research for Museums, Denver, CO, telephone interview by author, 26 March 2007.

however, have taken her to New Mexico, Arizona, Alaska, Texas, South Carolina and California. Ms. Schaller sees value in offering services and training to museums because, as she says:

What I'm seeing in my area is that small museums need training so they have a better idea of professional practice. If that issue is addressed, some other issues can be addressed also. I'm seeing needs for education... inventories are important, policies and security procedures are important. A lot of the small museums I see are lax as far as their access to collections. Basically it's about training and increased awareness.¹⁷

NMPs: Who hires NMPs and what do NMPs do?

According to MP-NTE list-serve discussions, a general consensus exists that “non-traditional” refers to a collection that is not considered a museum, that is, it does not have regular visiting hours when it is open to the public and it may not be a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. It may be a private, corporate or foundation collection. NMPs are open to a wide variety of work based on individual experience and expertise, preferred working environments, and preferred pay scale. However, NMPs often perform tasks in combinations that would never occur in a full time institutional setting. An NMP working in a collector's home may also do some work as a personal assistant or an estate manager who hires other contractors to do work on the house.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Museums

While museums don't hire NMPs, they often collaborate with them to create exhibits. An NMP can also make a collection more accessible for research. Elizabeth Alberding, Collections Manager for the Kelly Collection of American Illustration in Great Falls, Virginia, cares for the collection of Richard Kelly, a private investor. When Mr. Kelly was approached by the Dahesh Museum in Manhattan to lend his collection for an exhibit, Ms. Alberding organized the details of the arrangement. She worked with Mr. Kelly, Stephen R. Edidin, Dahesh Chief Curator, Chris Fauver, Curator, and Frank Verpoorten, Assistant Curator, to develop the exhibition floor plan and see the project through to fruition. This collaboration will be discussed in further detail later in the section, "Case Studies."

Private Collectors

As an NMP for a private collector in California, Miriam Katz describes herself as an art manager. "People don't know what a registrar is and if you say collections manager... Well, I don't collect bills. I find that art manager is best because it turns the conversation to, 'Oh, who do you represent?'"¹⁸ Ms. Katz manages a photography collection of approximately 5,000 images. A day's work can consist of ensuring proper storage, dealing with insurance, supervising appraisals, lending to museums, acting as the contact for purchases and sales, conducting inventories and cleaning up records and databases. She says it is "the usual mix [of collections management] stuff, but low key. There's a little bit of everything including hosting scholars because my boss was just

¹⁸ Miriam Katz, Collections Manager, The Marjorie and Leonard Vernon Collection, Los Angeles, CA, telephone interview by author, 15 March 2007.

invited to write an essay for an upcoming Sotheby's catalogue."¹⁹ In regard to NMP work, she sees her position as a "temporary caretaker with the view that many of these objects will eventually be given to museums."²⁰ Museums in the future will benefit from the care given to these objects now through proper handling and storage plus the research and documentation being conducted.

Corporate Collections

Corporations may own collections of the objects they have produced, as does Tiffany & Company; or they may form collections, mostly of art, to display the corporation's prestige, as did the IBM art collection. Unfortunately the IBM collection no longer exists, but the collection and archive of Tiffany & Co. is still intact. The combined collection, conservation lab and archive is located at the Tiffany & Co. manufacturing facility in Parsippany, New Jersey. In 1987 the jewelry company was purchased from Avon Products by a group of investors. The new management found that "nearly one million design drawings, production records, and correspondence... had been accumulating since the early 1850s."²¹

The Tiffany & Co. archive was created to oversee these papers and the objects in the Tiffany collection. The company's management actively sought and acquired important pieces created by the studio. The collection now consists of "over 1,700 historically and aesthetically important items of silverware, jewelry and crystal."²² These pieces are shown

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Anne Larsen Hollerbach, "Beyond the Blue Box-The Tiffany & Co. Conservation Lab," *Metalsmith Magazine* (Winter 2004); available through Ganoksin <http://www.ganoksin.com/borisat/nenam/tiffany-conservation-lab.htm>; accessed 20 April 2007.

²² Ibid.

in museum exhibits and are also displayed at Tiffany retail stores all over the world. The Tiffany collection certainly shows the company's prestige and heritage, but the historic objects are also used to promote the company's current wares. This is the major difference between NMP work in a corporate collection and museum work. In addition, corporate collections are able to draw on significant resources. For example, while Tiffany's collection managers certainly handle objects carefully and professionally, if damage occurs, they are able to pull the original designer's drawings from the archive for reference during restoration. Collections managers also rely on the Tiffany conservation lab which has the studio resources to repair damaged objects. Corporate collections like Tiffany's have the resources to research and conserve objects in a way that other collections can not.

Wealth Management Groups

A category unto itself, wealth management groups include banks and investment firms such as Citigroup, Fidelity and Chubb. Andrea Wood, Collections Manager for the Art Advisory Group of the Citigroup private bank, is an NMP who is employed by the company. Rather than working with Citigroup's corporate collection, however, she deals with the banking department's Art Advisory Service which caters to a select group of clients who have a net worth of \$1 billion and above. "We act as registrars for this handful of clients around the world. I do the same things as a museum registrar, only I do it for private collectors."²³

Ms. Woods manages the client's fine art insurance and automatically adds any new acquisitions to their insurance which is at a low rate because it is offered by Citigroup. She

²³ Andrea Wood, Collections Manager, Art Advisory Group, The Citigroup Private Bank, New York, NY, telephone interview by author, 16 March 2007.

and her colleagues do inventories and manage shipping, framing and conservation. Some clients have off-site storage in which Ms. Wood does an annual inspection. She bids for clients at auction and acts as their agent, especially for large purchases. The Art Advisory Group, which has been in existence since 1979, offers museum level care. Clients seek this service specifically because they want registrars who come from a museum background. In addition to working with private collectors, Ms. Wood works with museums when a client is asked to loan an object for exhibition. Both the museum and the lender benefit from having an experienced collections manager handle the loan transaction. In the case of a collector leaving the collection to a museum, the transfer proceeds more smoothly with the presence and experience of an NMP.

Chapter IV: Why are museum workers turning to IMP/NMP work?

Museums across the country are struggling for funding. As they try to do more with less, they let workers go or pay them on a scale that is not commensurate with their experience and certainly not adequate to meet the cost of living. Museum workers are leaving museums to take IMP and NMP work for greater freedom, more flexible hours and better pay.

What follows is a description of the benefits, financial aspects, and challenges of working as an IMP or NMP. The advantages and disadvantages to museums will be discussed in chapter V, “A Museum Response.”

Benefits

In addition to flexibility, independence, and better financial rewards, a major benefit of IMP work is the freedom to choose projects rather than being told what projects to do. Another advantage, to many IMPs, is that their work is focused on specific tasks. This can be liberating for those who are used to staff work in which it is rare to focus on one project to the exclusion of others. The satisfaction of having a finite goal, of taking on a project and completing it, is a psychological benefit that full time staff may not receive. IMPs frequently commented that they enjoy working independently because they can choose to say “No” if they wish. They also cited their distance from institutional politics as an advantage of their independent status. They feel it gives them leverage, though they acknowledge the necessity for diplomacy.

Dixie Neilson, Director of Art Care in Gainesville, Florida, cited several factors in her decision to work as an IMP, among them the freedom to set her own hours and the ability to stay home with her children. The opportunity for IMP work occurred often when she worked in museums; “I got phone calls from people in the community asking me to help pack and do inventories. I wanted to say I could, but I couldn’t because I was working full time.”²⁴ A change in museum administration prompted her to act on the idea. She describes Art Care as a “consulting business helping museums, artists, and art collectors manage and care for their collections.”²⁵

Ms. Neilson also enjoys being able to make her own choices about what projects to pursue. Though her consultancy is obviously a business, her sense of community leads her to accept some projects for which she receives little compensation. A faculty member at

²⁴ Dixie Neilson, Director, Art Care, Gainesville, FL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2007.

²⁵ Ibid.

the University of Florida's Museum Studies program, she completes projects that clients might not otherwise be able to afford by engaging her students and providing them with real life working opportunities. One example of her collaborative efforts is a project done for a Florida Boy Scout troop. The troop had been in existence for seventy years and had accumulated flags, banners, tents, uniforms, merit badges and photos that were stored in a 40 year old log cabin without climate control. There was no money available to catalogue the objects and upgrade the environmental conditions. However, as Ms. Neilson put it:

It needed to be done. I was teaching a preventative maintenance class at the time and we used it as a class project. The class created the catalogue and taught the Boy Scouts how to care for the collections. Students then gave a lecture at the Florida Association of Museums conference. It was something that needed to be done and the class gained valuable experience doing it.²⁶

For Marion Kahan, Director of Kahan Art Management, higher income, respect, freedom, and the variety of projects make IMP work worthwhile. Ms. Kahan has been working independently for over 20 years, which is longer than any other IMP I interviewed. Several IMPs referred to her as the first. Ms. Kahan worked at the Guggenheim during the Mark Rothko retrospective in the 1980s. A lawsuit concerning the Rothko estate awarded the Rothko Foundation 5/9^{ths} of the artist's work while Rothko's children received 4/9^{ths} of the collection. The heirs, Kate Rothko Prizel and Christopher Rothko asked Ms. Kahan to manage their portion of the collection. Her decision to leave

²⁶ Ibid.

the Guggenheim was also prompted by institutional politics. Now, she says, “If I do work for an institution I do it on my own terms.”²⁷

Ms. Kahan still works with the Rothko collection. At the time of our interview she was preparing to travel to Tel Aviv to install a Rothko exhibit, which opened on March 29, 2007. In addition, she was working with the Japan Society in Manhattan to bring in artwork for their exhibition *Awakenings: Zen Figure Painting in Medieval Japan* (March 28-June 17, 2007). The Japan Society was left with only one person running the fully indemnified exhibit. Ms. Kahan stepped in to complete the rather complicated exhibition. The agreement with the Japanese Ministry of Culture included rotating objects in the exhibition due to conservation efforts and hosting curators from Japan for the duration of the exhibit. The Japan Society also contracted Ms. Kahan to manage the travel of a last-minute photography exhibition to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto, Canada. In between these jobs, she works as the curator of the Absolute Vodka collection.

Ms. Kahan is clearly attracted to the variety of work available to her as an IMP. “I like to work with different objects. Even if you are at the Met, you are only going to work with certain kinds of exhibitions because it is so compartmentalized. And I’m given a level of respect that is not given to the regular staff. I perform my job and I do it well.”²⁸ Museums that hire IMPs like Ms. Kahan value their ability to step into a difficult situation and get the job done.

Jennifer Schansberg, Principal of Artsy Cartsy, has been an IMP since 1999. Her specialty is managing traveling exhibitions, but she is familiar with all areas of collections management. Most of her clients are exhibition firms like the American Federation for the

²⁷ Marion Kahan, Director, Kahan Art Management, New York, NY, telephone interview by author, 16 March 2007.

²⁸ Ibid.

Arts, but she also contracts with museums. When asked why she does IMP work, she said, “I can’t see working for someone else right now. When I go into a project, I’m in charge. I have the ability to say, no, that’s not how it’s going to be... I go in, do what I’m hired to do and I go home.”²⁹

Financial Aspects

Both IMPs and NMPs cited increased income as an attractive part of their work. All reported that they are making at least as much as they would in a comparable position in a museum and some reported they are making considerably more. NMPs, as employees, receive a steady rate of pay that is often above that of a comparable museum position. All of the NMPs I interviewed receive health benefits. Some NMPs also receive paid vacation time and compensation to attend conferences such as AAM or other professional development opportunities.

Among IMPs a salary comparison can be made by examining the daily rate a museum pays a staff member and the daily rate of an IMP. According to the 2005 Salary Survey from the Association of Art Museum Directors, the average annual salary for a head registrar is listed as \$45,675.³⁰ This is roughly \$173 per day. The AAMD Salary Survey is only for members and “membership is predicated on an annual operating budget of \$2 million or higher.”³¹ Given that 41.8% of all the respondents to the ASSET survey have an operating budget of \$1 million or less, the AAMD average salary may be higher than what many museums pay. It is not so easy to gauge the income of IMPs as they all

²⁹ Jennifer Schansberg, Principal, Artsy Cartsy, Washington, D.C., telephone interview by author, 16 March 2007.

³⁰ Association of Art Museum Directors, *2005 Salary Survey* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Art Museum Directors, 2005), 41.

³¹ *Ibid*, 1.

organize their pricing differently and often charge according to the work to be done, the difficulty involved and their expertise. Most do not advertise their rates. Peggy Schaller of Collections Research for Museums in Denver is among the exceptions. On her website she lists her rate for “Project Services” as \$250 per day plus expenses.³² This is a difference of \$77 per day compared to the average daily rate reported by AAMD.

The IMPs I interviewed said they establish several rates, usually an hourly, daily and/or project rate. Several reported that if, in the course of negotiations with a client (museum or private collector) it turns out that/s/he cannot or does not wish to pay above a certain rate, they negotiate how much work they will do rather than the amount of money the client will spend. Dixie Neilson, Director of Art Care, says “I give a range of options. I’d rather do a job and get a little money than not do a job at all.”³³ Angela Spinazze of ATSPIN Consulting described the financial situation of an IMP in cyclical terms. “When the business is good you put a bunch of money in the bank and when it’s not you take the money out of the bank. I appreciate my freedom. I’m my own boss.”³⁴

Challenges

In order for an IMP or NMP to be successful and provide service to museums through contract work or exhibition collaborations, they must understand the challenges as well as the benefits of their business environment. The major challenge cited by all IMPs was that they have to provide their own insurance. Some are able to use a spouse’s health insurance while others use COBRA or a group insurance policy. Some IMPs also pay their

³² Peggy Schaller, Collections Research for Museums, Denver, CO, Pricing. <http://museumcollectionmgmt.com/7182.html> Accessed 26 March 2007.

³³ Dixie Neilson, Director, Art Care, Gainesville, FL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2007.

³⁴ Angela Spinazze, ATSPIN Consulting, Chicago, IL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2006.

own business liability insurance. As stated above, all NMPs I interviewed receive insurance through their employers.

For IMPs the second major challenge is the uneven flow of work. Because they are not employees, IMPs do not receive a steady salary. This requires them to strategically plan their calendars. The amount of work they do depends on the work available and the extent to which they market their services. Angela Spinazze, of ATSPIN Consulting, advises, “You have to know what to take on and when. The reality check is that when it rains it pours and when there’s a drought, it’s all dry. Sometimes you have to do things you don’t want to do. You’ve got to find balance.”³⁵ A risk of the uneven flow of work is that IMPs feel they need to take all the work that comes their way. Geoffrey Bellman, author of *The Consultant’s Calling* suggests that the first step is to decide how much time to devote to work and how much time to devote to other areas of life. “When work is plentiful, it is too easy to work intensely on what is in front of you, putting off friends and family who want your time, using the rationale that the work is here today and may be gone tomorrow... With this perspective come fewer options and more compulsion.”³⁶

IMPs and NMPs alike tend to work in environments in which discretion and confidentiality are a must. An IMP working in several different museums should avoid discussing the confidential matters of one museum with the staff of another museum. An NMP working in a corporate collection may be privy to confidential archive information. Both IMPs and NMPs working with private collections in the collector’s homes are aware of the collectors’ personal and family lives well beyond their professional involvement

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Geoffrey Bellman, *The Consultant’s Calling: Bringing Who You Are to What You Do* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 36-37.

with the collection. Care must be exercised to protect the privacy of clients. Some collectors go so far as to have the IMP or NMP sign a confidentiality agreement.

A challenge associated with NMP work especially is that other tasks may be added to the work that are not specifically collections related. NMPs working in the home of a private collector may also manage the estate by hiring others to maintain the home or they may perform tasks as a personal assistant. NMPs I interviewed were pragmatic about these arrangements. While extra tasks may not be collections related, NMPs generally view the arrangement in the context of their entire work agreement. The benefits generally outweigh the burden of extra tasks.

In the work environment of an IMP there is less of an opportunity to develop co-worker relationships than in typical staff environment. It may be more difficult to get things done in an environment where the IMP has not historically been in charge and is only present for a short period of time. Some IMPs face resistance from staff members who feel threatened by the presence of an outsider. Jennifer Schansberg, Principal of Artsy Cartsy, acknowledges that an IMP must use the most diplomatic means necessary to complete the job and sometimes needs to alleviate the fears of staff members. This challenge can be mitigated to an extent by specifying in the contract to whom an IMP should report, preferably someone high in the organization's chain of command.

Chapter V: A Museum Response

Why do museums hire IMPs?

A major benefit that a museum gains by hiring IMPs is that it does not have to pay them long-term salaries and employee benefits. Museums are trying to stretch their dollars; outsourcing jobs is one method of streamlining their operations. Museums use IMPs as experts on-call in cases where the regular staff lacks expertise or when staff time should be focused elsewhere. By using IMPs, museums maximize their spending power and wisely manage staff time.

Survey Responses: Why They Hire

In responding to my survey, museums of all budget sizes reported they contract out for conservation work and for special projects to be completed within a specific time span. However, while most museums appear to hire IMPs, budget size is a distinct indicator of the way in which they use IMPs. Three trends, closely related to budget-size, emerged from the analysis of the answers to my survey question, “Under what circumstances would you hire an independent professional?” Respondents from museums with budgets up to \$500,000 reported that they hire IMPs because of a lack of staff; a lack of training of staff; or a backlog of work (especially after a large donation). In the latter case, hiring an IMP allows regular staff to keep up with daily operations. The responses suggest that small to mid-size museums hire IMPs who have a broad base of skills and who are essentially generalists. These museums need knowledgeable collections managers who can address typical museum problems.

Museums with budgets between \$500,001 and \$3 million reported that they hire IMPs for special projects when funding allows or when they experience a temporary lack of staff. Grant money was reported as a source of funding to hire IMPs. However, respondents from museums in this budget category reported that they hire because of a lack of expertise rather than a lack of training. This suggests that they tend to hire IMPs who have a specialized skill rather than generalists. Staff in these museums have training in the general tasks of collections management but need assistance when special problems arise.

Respondents from museums in the highest budget bracket, from \$300,001 to over \$5 million, report that they tend to hire IMPs due to a lack of staff time rather than a lack of staff. Museums of this size have the staff available, but the staff is busy. These museums also report that they hire IMPs on an as needed basis, suggesting that rather than having to wait for grant funding specific to an IMP project, they hire IMPs whenever necessary.

Benefits to Museums

In addition to the reasons cited in the survey responses, a museum gains some significant benefits by using IMPs. If an IMP is recognized by the museum's legal council and human resources department as an independent contractor, the museum is able to "have personnel to work on (or off)... [the] premises without becoming subject to payroll taxes or to many state and federal employment laws."³⁷ The museum also is not required by law to provide benefits or worker's compensation and is not subject to labor laws. When comparing the cost of a full time employee to the cost of hiring an IMP, "it should be remembered that... salaried employees' total compensation packages are typically 10 to

³⁷ CCH Business Owner's Toolkit: Total Know-how for Small Businesses, Independent Contractors http://www.toolkitcch.com/text/P05_0085.asp, accessed 15 January 2007.

15 percent higher than their actual salaries.”³⁸ By hiring IMPs, museums can choose to have a work force only when and where they need it.

Smaller institutions that don't have the funding for professional staff development often use IMPs for their experience. All IMPs I interviewed had many years of experience in museums before they chose independent work. An IMP with experience has a valuable network of contacts and knowledge of the vendors needed to work with companies for shipping, art handling and acquiring supplies. These networked contacts take years to develop and by hiring an IMP, a small museum can avail itself of this information quickly. As Warren Dow, a non-profit writer, researcher and consultant of Winnipeg writes, “It would cost your organization thousands of dollars and years of lost productivity to try to train one of your own employees to a comparable level; and then you would likely lose them to a competing organization.”³⁹ An IMP can also be used to train existing staff in order to help the museum develop the necessary skills in-house.

Another important benefit IMPs bring to museums is that they are available quickly and on a short-term basis. Through the RC-AAM list-serv, museum staff frequently request recommendations for a contract registrar when an emergency arises. An IMP may be needed immediately at the museum's home location or at another institution in collaboration with the museum. Hiring an IMP for a short term relieves the museum from having to train new staff and can “prevent the workload of... permanent staff from becoming too crushing—and ward off resignations.”⁴⁰ IMPs can free full time staff to concentrate on long term projects. After the IMP's contract is finished, they can be

³⁸ Warren Dow, “Consultants: High Priced Scourge, or First-Class Investment?” *Charity Village.com*, <http://www.charityvillage.com/research/rom9.html>, accessed 13 March 2007.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

released “amicably, without fear of a wrongful dismissal suit, or undermining the morale of the remaining employees.”⁴¹

Case Studies: IMPs

The survey findings and benefits noted in the previous section were reinforced by my interviews with museum staff. Museums use IMPs in various ways to accomplish their project goals. Two models of IMP use are illustrated by the responses of Stefani Ruta-Atkins, Registrar of Collections, Collections Management and Exhibition Registration at the Museum of Modern Art and that of Meryl Cohen, Head Registrar at the Guggenheim in New York.

Why MoMA uses IMPs

Stefanii Ruta-Atkins of MoMA explained that the registration department uses IMPs quite often and has done so for years. Until recently, the museum dealt with IMP contracts on a case-by-case basis. Within the past fiscal year the process was standardized. As a result of this standardization, Ms. Ruta-Atkins says, “Now we are literally building this in as a budget line for installation and deinstallation of exhibitions which, by scale, demand it.”⁴² There is not a hard and fast rule when this line item enters an exhibition budget. MoMA produces exhibition budgets for all exhibition changes, including permanent gallery changes, but an IMP would certainly be included in the budget for an exhibit requiring international assembly, a large number of objects, or objects that are unusually difficult to handle.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Stefani Ruta-Atkins, Registrar of Collections, Collections Management and Exhibition Registration, MoMA, interview by author, 2 February 2007, Manhattan, MoMA.

MoMA also contracts IMPs to fill a temporary vacancy for projects such as completing the registration procedures on a large, unexpected gift. They are used if a staff member goes on leave or leaves the museum and there is an institutional understanding that the staff can't be without the extra staff member. IMP hours vary by assignment, but some contract assignments can be quite flexible. Former MoMA conservators and registrars are also contracted as couriers. IMPs frequently work in the Queens facility with the collection in storage.

How MoMA uses IMPs

At MoMA, an IMP is never fully in charge of a project. If an IMP is contracted to work on an exhibition, they might greet couriers as they arrive, but the IMP would not make the courier travel plans or coordinate the shipping arrangements for objects. If an exhibition does not have a courier, the IMP might supervise the packing. The IMP may write condition reports, but if the report is for a borrowed object the IMP is not allowed to sign off on the report due to liability issues. A full time staff member must approve and sign the report. IMPs are allowed to write and sign off on condition reports for permanent collection objects. At MoMA, IMPs are usually hired as support for the existing staff of 20 registrars for relatively short periods of time. Depending on the project, MoMA might hire an IMP for a week or a month, although one IMP has been working on a project for three months.

Why the Guggenheim uses IMPs

At the Guggenheim, Head Registrar Meryl Cohen acknowledged that the staffing situation is much different from MoMA. While MoMA has a rather large registration staff, the Guggenheim has a staff of only ten registrars who manage an ambitious slate of exhibits for Guggenheim New York, Las Vegas, Venice, and Berlin in addition to large traveling exhibits like the aforementioned *Art in America: Three Hundred Years of Innovation*, which traveled to China. The Guggenheim rather heavily relies on IMPs due to the scope and quantity of the projects in which it is engaged and the limited size of its registration staff. IMPs help staff organize exhibits, independently organize exhibits or serve as temporary registrars during an exhibit change. Relative to MoMA, the Guggenheim's permanent collection is small, so staff energy is focused on exhibitions instead of collections work.

How the Guggenheim uses IMPs

IMPs are not always hired on contract. The Guggenheim's legal department prefers to be precise about how people are hired. If an IMP is doing work comparable to that of existing staff and will be working on the premises, the museum actually hires them for the duration of the project rather than using a contract. An IMP hired as a project registrar, as the Guggenheim calls them, will work out of a specific office, have their own telephone number, e-mail account and a blank business card on which they can write their contact information. There are limits to what these IMP project registrars are allowed to do and certain documents they can not authorize, but they do produce budgets and sign invoices related to their project. In other situations an IMP may not need a high a level of access

and may be able to do the work off-site. In that case, the IMP would likely be hired through a contract. Of the overall situation, Meryl Cohen says, “It’s not the same thing as having your own staff. It’s the best we can do.”⁴³ The Guggenheim uses IMPs for long periods of time as a replacement for, rather than support of staff.

Use of IMPs by other museums

These two usage models can serve as blueprints for other museums interested in using the services of IMPs. Other museum staff I interviewed included Amy Simon, Assistant Registrar at the High Museum of Art; Aimee Brooks, Registrar at the Columbus Museum of Art in Georgia and Paul Richelson, Assistant Director of the Mobile Museum of Art. These museums do not yet use IMPs, but all acknowledged a need for them in the future. Amy Simon spoke of the High’s recent expansion in both size and activity and their collaboration with the Louvre. “We have more than doubled in size, so we could be going that route [hiring IMPs] in the future. Right now, we run lean and mean.”⁴⁴ Ms. Simon also said that they might use IMPs for some of their upcoming indemnified exhibitions. This flagship museum of the South oversees the Atlanta Art Conservation Center, a subsidiary of the Williamstown Art Conservation Center. Because of these resources, the High Museum is quickly gaining an international reputation through its ambitious conservation projects including Verrocchio’s *David*, the silver altar of John the Baptist at the Museo dell’Opera del Duomo and Ghiberti’s *The Gates of Paradise*.⁴⁵ Considering these increases

⁴³ Meryl Cohen, Head Registrar, Guggenheim Museum, interview by author, 16 February 2007, Manhattan, Guggenheim Offices.

⁴⁴ Amy Simon, Assistant Registrar, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA, telephone interview by author, 19 March 2007.

⁴⁵ Catherine Fox, “Doors Open for the High,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, 15 April 2007, 1A.

in work load and the fact that they have not hired additional full time collections management staff, the High may be outsourcing in a few years.

Aimee Brooks mentioned that the Columbus Museum of Art in Georgia had recently acquired a large group of objects for their history collection.⁴⁶ Because of the exhibit work load and the small number of existing staff, an IMP may be needed to write condition reports and enter these new objects in to the museum's database. The presence of an IMP at the Columbus Museum would enable staff to concentrate on their busy exhibition schedule.

At the Mobile Museum of Art in Alabama, Assistant Director Paul Richelson noted that his museum isn't likely to hire an IMP for the purposes of exhibition assistance or permanent collection tasks. However, there is an increasing awareness that "we have to go with the flow and be more visible on the internet with our collections."⁴⁷ Making the collections accessible via the web has been written into the five year plan. Considering the staffing structure at the Mobile Museum, in which the majority of staff is paid through city funding, it is difficult to have new positions approved. An IMP would likely be hired for a specific project, such as increasing the Museum's internet presence, through private or grant funding.

Why do museums collaborate with NMPs?

Private, corporate and foundation collections offer museums the opportunity to exhibit objects that are not otherwise available to the public. However, these collections can be

⁴⁶ Aimee Brooks, Registrar, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, GA, telephone interview by author, 23 March 2007.

⁴⁷ Paul Richelson, Assistant Director, Mobile Museum of Art, Mobile, AL telephone interview by author, 11 February 2007.

difficult to access, even for those in the profession. Once a collection has been identified as the source of a potential loan, the museum may encounter difficulties in the loan process. A collection owner unfamiliar with museum documents may balk at the idea of signing a loan agreement or may request addendums that overburden the museum. The presence of an NMP can make a collection more accessible to a museum and allows the loan to proceed smoothly. Museum staff can work directly with an experienced professional familiar with museum procedures.

Case Study: NMPs

As a further study of the ways in which museums collaborate with non-affiliated museum professionals, I interviewed Peter Trippi, former Director of the Dahesh Museum in Manhattan. The Museum's collaboration with the Kelly Collection of American Illustration began at a meeting of the Museum Trustee Association and blossomed into an exhibit, *Stories to Tell*, which was on display from February 14 through May 21, 2006. The Dahesh bills itself as "the only institution in the United States devoted to collecting, exhibiting, and interpreting works by Europe's academically trained artists of the 19th and early 20th centuries."⁴⁸ Charles E. Janson, a trustee of the Dahesh Museum, is active in the Museum Trustee Association (MTA) which provides education programs and resources for those who serve as museum board members. During an MTA meeting, Mr. Janson met Richard Kelly, a private investor, owner of the collection and a fellow member of the MTA. Mr. Kelly expressed his interest in the mission of the Dahesh, the period of European academic art that it collects and the connections to American illustration of the

⁴⁸ Dahesh Museum of Art, Mission Statement. <http://www.daheshmuseum.org/about/index.html>, accessed 28 April 2007.

same period. Mr. Janson was invited to view the Kelly collection in Virginia and felt that it was a good match for the Dahesh museum.

Introductions were subsequently made between the Dahesh staff and Elizabeth Alberding, Collections Manager for the Kelly Collection. Peter Trippi, who was Director at the Dahesh during the exhibit, recalled:

The way it worked was that Stephen [Edidin, Chief Curator of the Dahesh] went to the house several times, looked at the material with Elizabeth, with the collector Richard Kelly and his wife Mary. They sort of team selected. Stephen... didn't know as much as they ever would about what they had and so they could say ok, this is a little too fragile to travel, there's a better example over here... They had everything impeccably catalogued and photographed so that in that regard it was easy to [select the artworks]. It was a very happy partnership.⁴⁹

Elizabeth Alberding agreed that it was a good partnership and spoke about her involvement during an interview at the Kelly's home, which houses the collection. After a tour, we spoke at length about the collaboration and about her day-to-day work. The selection process for the Dahesh exhibit began when Ms. Alberding sent information about the collection to Stephen Edidin, Chief Curator. This included a gallery guide and thumbnail images of all 400 works in the collection. A site visit was arranged and Mr. Edidin walked through the house with Ms. Alberding and the Kellys. After the Dahesh curator viewed the works in person, Ms. Alberding said, "We just duked it out."⁵⁰ The process seems to have been well organized but relaxed as they discussed which pieces to

⁴⁹ Peter Trippi, Editor, *Fine Art Connoisseur*, interview by author, digital recording, 10 February 2007, Le Pain Quotidien, Manhattan.

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Alberding, Collections Manager, The Kelly Collection of American Illustration, interview by author, digital recording, 23 February 2007, Kelly Collection, Great Falls.

include in the exhibition. The goal was to select one and a half times the amount needed for the exhibition.

A conservator for the Kelly collection then vetted the selection based on each object's fragility. Ms. Alberding attended to the shipping details, hiring vendors to pack and ship the works. The Dahesh, which did not have a registrar at the time, contracted an IMP to help with the loading and unloading. The resulting collaboration benefited both parties. The Dahesh explored the influences of Europe's academic tradition on American illustrators and shared with the public a closed collection. The Kelly Collection increased in stature through the public exposure and the printed catalogue. Ms. Alberding, as an NMP, smoothed the way for the exhibit to take place through her work with the collection over the years. Because she put the entire collection into a useable database, information about the objects is easily retrievable, such as the thumbnail images used early in the selection process. In addition to managing the collection of paintings and prints, Ms. Alberding manages two library collections. In one library, Richard Kelly collects the original magazines and books in which the illustrations first appeared. A second library houses literature on illustration in general and on the artists represented in the collection. Through her work with the Kelly libraries, Ms. Alberding aids in conducting research on the collection.⁵¹ As one who serves the role of both registrar and co-curator, Ms. Alberding's work as an NMP added (and continues to add) value to the collection and the museum field as a whole.

⁵¹ During my visit to the Kelly Collection, Kerry Roeeder, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Delaware, used the Kelly library to conduct research for her dissertation on Windsor McKay, artist and pioneer of comic strips and animation.

Chapter VI: Practical Considerations for Museums

What are the risks for a museum that hires an IMP?

Museums that use IMPs should be aware that there are risks involved. First, a museum must be sure that an IMP can actually be listed as an independent contractor according to the IRS definition. Second, the museum should evaluate its legal liability in regard to IMPs. Third, the museum should closely examine the contract, whether written by the IMP or museum staff, to ensure that it properly protects all parties. Fourth, the museum should take steps to ensure that it does not become overly reliant on IMPs, thereby losing its institutional memory.

Defining an independent contractor

In order for a museum to hire a worker as an IMP without being responsible for payroll taxes, benefits packages plus state and federal employment laws, the museum must be sure that the IMP qualifies as an independent contractor. Because “traditionally the government does not favor treating workers as independent contractors... there are several complex federal tests involved to make sure that the person qualifies.”⁵² The IRS uses a Form SS-8 to determine the status of a worker. This determination has to do with the degree of control the museum has over the worker. The more control the museum has, the more likely the worker will be classified as an employee. Form SS-8 uses a list of 20 factors to determine the level of control the museum has over the worker. It is a fairly

⁵² CCH Business Owner’s Toolkit: Total Know-how for Small Businesses, Independent Contractors http://www.toolkit.cch.com/text/P05_0085.asp, accessed 15 January 2007.

subjective analysis and all of the 20 factors are weighed differently depending on the facts of the situation. The museum's accountant should work through the Form SS-8.

Another important federal law, the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) also governs the use and treatment of workers. It has a slightly different definition of independent contractors and uses its own set of factors to determine a worker's status. Independent contractors, according to the FLSA are not granted the minimum wage and overtime protections that employees receive. According to the U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet #13, *Employment Relationships Under FLSA*, "there is no single rule or test for determining whether an individual is an independent contractor or employee for purposes of the FLSA."⁵³ This means that when a situation arises in court, the judge does not rely on one factor over the others to determine whether a worker is an independent contractor or an employee. It is important to note that simply having a worker sign an agreement stating he or she is an independent contractor "will not create such status if the worker does not meet the requirements" of both the IRS and the FLSA.

Legal liability

When evaluating a museum's legal liability, the AAM's *Insurability Checklist* is a useful self-evaluation tool. It consists of a list of questions divided into six topics of "nonprofit organization policies, programs or procedures that could carry legal liability risks."⁵⁴ These six topics were identified by studying the areas in which claims have most often been brought against non-profit organizations: contracts, publications, personnel,

⁵³ U.S. Department of Labor Fact Sheet #13: Employment Relationships Under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) <http://www.dol.gov/esa/regs/compliance/whd/whdfs13.htm>, accessed 13 March 2007.

⁵⁴ American Association of Museums. *Insurability Checklist: Evaluating Your Legal Liability*. http://www.aam.npo-ins.com/rm_checklist.jsp?subd=aam, accessed 13 March 2007.

finances, meetings and general issues. The first topic, “Contracts,” is especially appropriate for museums that hire IMPs. The questions provide a guide for museums to decrease their insurance risks. Liability issues should always be reviewed by the museum’s legal counsel, but these topics offer a starting point for museum administration.

Contracts

Before museum staff and an IMP reach the point when they will sign a contract for the proposed project, the staff should become familiar with some sample contracts and agreements. A thorough contract should cover the following eight points: (i) who are the parties to the contract and what is the time span covered by the contract, (ii) a detailed explanation of the scope of services, who will be involved, how the work will be accomplished, when it will be completed and where the work will occur, (iii) an explanation of the compensation involved, (iv) a list of additional obligations for any parties involved, (v) a means of evaluating the contractor’s work, (vi) an explanation of the consequences in case either party does not deliver what was promised, (vii) a termination clause that explains how and when the contract may be ended by either side, and (viii) an explanation of the conditions for changing the contract.⁵⁵ A contract should be written in plain English and reviewed by legal counsel. Issues of assigning credit should be discussed at the outset. An IMP who creates a collections management system out of a blank database like Microsoft Access may want to be able to use the structure, not the data, of it for future jobs.

⁵⁵ Phil Rabinowitz and Val Renault. “Understanding and Writing Contracts and Memoranda of Agreement,” Community Toolbox. http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/en/sub_section_main_1873.htm

While the contract defines for museum administration and the IMP what will be done, museum staff should also understand what the IMP will and will not do. This communication is crucial. Museum staff may feel threatened by the presence of an IMP. Staff may be afraid that the IMP will take over a staff member's job, either by taking away authority or by replacing staff. Full time staff can feel forgotten or become demoralized if projects they are accustomed to managing are given to IMPs.

Over reliance on IMPs

In addition to the demoralization of staff that may result with the overuse of IMPs, a museum may run the risk of losing its institutional memory. Mary Case, of the non-profit consulting firm Qm2, gave her opinion in an interview that, "Museums do need people to be the institutional memory of the collection... there should be people who work with the collection who have a deep understanding of the objects and the collection as a whole."⁵⁶ Because the role of an IMP is to do the work needed and then move on, they do not provide the same consistency that full time staff can. These challenges should be considered before a museum agrees to contract with an IMP.

Chapter VII: Should IMPs and NMPs have the same rights in organizations that other professionals have?

The IMPs I interviewed were concerned about their representation in AAM & other regional museum organizations. Several served as board members or committee chairs while they were employed in museums and found that after they became IMPs they were no longer eligible to serve in organizational governance. AAM views IMPs as vendors and

⁵⁶ Mary Case, Qm2, Washington, D.C., telephone interview by author, 25 March 2007.

lumps them into the same category as exhibit design firms and database companies. IMPs do not have the financial resources of large vendors. An IMP may choose to incorporate his or her business, but as an organization of one an IMP has more in common with an institutional collections manager than a corporate vendor. Marjie Hashmall, Customer Service Coordinator for AAM confirmed the association's stance on this issue. She referred to the AAM bylaws, Chapter I *Membership*, Section 1, where it is stated:

The Association shall be composed of Individual and Institutional Members as the Board of Directors shall determine. All members in good standing of the Association in all membership categories as defined by the Board of Directors have voting privileges. Voting privileges are defined as eligibility to vote for Officers, and Board Members-at-Large and such other matters provided by statute that are not specifically relegated to the Board by the Constitution or Bylaws. All Individual members of the Association in good standing in all membership categories except Independent Professionals and the Press/Public, are eligible for election as Officers and Board Members-at-Large, provided they meet the additional requirements outlined in Articles IV and V of the Constitution.⁵⁷

While IMPs are allowed to become individual members, they do not have voting privileges nor are they allowed to be elected as officers or board members. In an interview with Ms. Hashmall, she admitted, "Even though this segment of the population seems to be growing... It does beg the question that if [IMPs] are not on our board, will the AAM committees guide the conversation in the direction of independent professional concerns?"

⁵⁷ American Association of Museums. *Constitution and Bylaws*. <http://www.aam-us.org/aboutaam/governance/constitution.cfm>, accessed 24 March 2007.

Apparently the fear of those in AAM governance is that an IMP serving as a board member will use their status to shamelessly promote their own business & improperly steer AAM toward their own greedy agendas.

Several IMPs reported this as one of the most pressing issues in IMP work. They noted that it was discussed in a session at the 2006 AAM conference and is again a topic at this year's 2007 conference. Angela Spinazze of AT Spin Consulting said in an interview, "It angers me that AAM thinks I'd take advantage somehow of my position. The fear is that independent professionals might somehow take advantage. Why would I want to sabotage my connections, the relationships I've worked years to establish, by doing something... [that] would jeopardize my ability to gain employment later?"⁵⁸

Given the growth of this segment of the population and the fact that museums of all sizes rely on IMPs, AAM should recognize the need for IMPs to have a voice in governance. Marion Kahan, of Kahan Art Management and an IMP for 20 years, calls the current situation, "Absurd, narrow minded and antiquated. You have to outsource. These consultants are professionals and they should be part of the discussion." The fact that AAM is not looking towards the future of the profession was not at all a surprise to those I interviewed. Although she is an NMP and not affected in the same manner, Elizabeth Alberding, Collections Manager of the Kelly Collection, responded to AAM's rules in regard to IMPs. "It is unfortunate because so many former museum registrars are moving into the [area of] contracts as they are getting older and retiring... Part of me agrees with

⁵⁸ Angela Spinazze, ATSPIN Consulting, Chicago, IL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2006.

AAM, but AAM is not looking at the reality of the marketplace in terms of the economics of museum work.”⁵⁹

A change in AAM’s stance on IMPs may be influenced by the pressure put on standing professional committees such as RC-AAM. This pressure was recently illustrated in communications via the RC-AAM list-serv. In an e-mail sent by Devon Pyle-Vowles dated March 22, 2007, the RC-AAM committee in charge of the second International Registrars Symposium (IRS2) in Chicago sent a reminder for members to sign up for the symposium. Of specific interest to IMPs was a difference in the price of attendance, “\$190.00 for Registrars, \$300.00 for Contract Registrars.” This sparked quite a storm of responses from IMPs and museum staff alike who demanded to know the reason for the difference. Some considered it further proof that IMPs are marginalized by professional organizations. The flurry of responses prompted a retraction from RC-AAM board members who, within five days, leveled price of the symposium to \$190 for all registrars. This prompt response from IMPs and the subsequent action of RC-AAM shows that change is possible at a national level. Dixie Neilson, Director of Art Care in Gainesville, Florida, is a proponent of this change: “Independent registrars must convince the professional organizations that we are doing the same work whether we collect our own paychecks or we work for one museum everyday.”⁶⁰ IMPs offer museums a means to become more efficient and it is time for the museum community to recognize the value IMPs bring to the field.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Alberding Elizabeth Alberding, Collections Manager, The Kelly Collection of American Illustration, interview by author, digital recording, 23 February 2007, Kelly Collection, Great Falls.

⁶⁰ Dixie Neilson, Director, Art Care, Gainesville, FL, telephone interview by author, 22 January 2007.

Chapter VIII: Is This the Future for the Museum Sector?

IMP and NMP work is the future of the museum sector for three reasons. First, museums are constantly looking for ways to deliver exhibitions and care for collections at a lower cost. Second, museum professionals who have been in the business for years are retiring and becoming IMPs. They are able to use the contacts they have developed during their careers and the invaluable experience borne of years of trial and error. Third, I believe that this area of museum work will begin attracting younger workers. All IMPs I interviewed said they recommended a solid experience base in museum standards and practices before getting into independent work. While I agree with this, I also think that the field will begin to see younger people who are interested in IMP work and who may begin independent work with 3-5 years of experience as opposed to waiting until they have 20 years experience. They may go through a transition phase by doing this work on the side while maintaining a full or part time job. As such they may not technically be called “independent“ until they are free of an employer.

Emerging professionals may look to museums as a source of work as IMPs, or they may also look to private collections. Elizabeth Alberding of the Kelly Collection placed the growing trend of IMP and NMP work within a larger cultural context by citing e-Bay, the DIY network and programs like the *Antiques Roadshow* as catalysts for a public interest in collecting.

A lot of younger collectors... are now joining boards of trustees for museums... and people who are making more money than God! People in the 80s and 90s who bought everything possible are now maturing as collectors and are finding that they need someone to help them figure out what they have, how to focus their

collections, even, to some degree. [They need someone] to help them focus and make a coherent whole out of it. I think that's where independent museum work is going.⁶¹

Emerging professionals find that it is difficult to live on the salary they are offered as new museum employees. Fair paying museum jobs are centered in large metropolitan centers, but independent opportunities can be found everywhere. By working as an IMP or NMP, emerging professionals can supplement or expand their work possibilities to include corporate collections, libraries, archives and any kind of private collection. Interesting and care worthy objects exist everywhere, not just in museums. As IMPs or NMPs, emerging professionals have a unique opportunity to address object care concerns before objects are offered to museums.

The idea that the emerging museum professionals are, as a generation, creating their own niche markets is foreshadowed in a larger generational context by William Strauss and Neil Howe in their book, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. The authors discuss generational differences in American culture, particularly four generations born between 1901-1988. Of particular interest in regard to the topic of IMPs and NMPs is the generational shift as the Baby Boom generation (born between 1943-1960) retires and the next generation takes their place. Strauss and Howe call this next generation the Thirteeners ("13^{ers}" born between 1961 and 1981) because they are the thirteenth generation since the founding of the United States of America. The connection between emerging museum professionals and this 13th generation is brought into focus by Mary Case, a consultant with the firm QM². Ms. Case created a group called the *Museum*

⁶¹ Elizabeth Alberding Elizabeth Alberding, Collections Manager, The Kelly Collection of American Illustration, interview by author, digital recording, 23 February 2007, Kelly Collection, Great Falls.

13^{ers} as a means to bridge the gap between Boomer generation museum leadership and the up and coming 13^{ers}. She explained:

I have been privileged to be at the planning tables of AAM and MAAM and I've been hearing from these Boomers that they are ready to step off, to retire, but they feel that there is no one behind them to fill the gap. I woke up one morning and thought, 'What can I do as one person to help facilitate this leadership transfer?' I began to gather people who could recognize 13^{ers} in order to give them a more national profile.⁶²

The *Museum 13^{ers}* website serves as an introduction to the idea of defining this generation, offers a meeting point for those who have been identified as outstanding *Museum 13^{ers}*, and is means for the museum community to continue recognizing these generational leaders.⁶³ The website, titled *Qm2 Launches A Convergence of Museum Talent*, uses Strauss and Howe's *Generations* as a springboard to jump from larger generational issues to those specific to museums. A quote from *Generations* offers an answer to the section titled *Just What is a 13^{er}?* "They look for quick strikes ahead of long-term promises... often their best chance for success comes from striking out on their own, finding a small market niche, and filling it more cheaply and sensibly than older-run businesses."⁶⁴ This generation will fill a widening gap in museum leadership. Rather than staying in one museum job for a decade or more, 13^{ers} are more likely to try different jobs at a faster pace. Mary Case relates, "All the indicators are that the 13^{ers} are less likely to put up with institutional trauma and annoyances. They are developing skill sets that are more mobile.

⁶² Mary Case, Qm2, Washington, D.C., telephone interview by author, 25 March 2007.

⁶³ Qm2 Launches A Convergence of Museum Talent, <http://www.qm2.org/convergence/index.html>, accessed 25 March 2007.

⁶⁴ William Strauss and Neil Howe, *Generations: The History of America's Future, 1584 to 2069*. (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1991), 331.

At the same time, museum leaders are wanting their institutions to be leaner.”⁶⁵ Ms. Case admits that this situation can be both negative and positive for museums. 13^{ers} will fill a need in the museum world, but an entirely transient work force is detrimental to the institutional memory that adds depth to a museum collection.

Whether of the 13^{er} generation, or of the groups before or after, those interested in working as IMPs or NMPs should become familiar with the various codes of ethics developed by AAM & CAA. Of particular interest are codes that pertain to registrars (RC-AAM), curators (AAM & CAA), and board members (AAM). Emerging professionals should first gain experience in a museum setting to understand the processes that drive collection management and the need for high ethical standards. Those new to the profession may not be aware what circumstances may lead to ethical dilemmas. For this reason, they should read the available literature to educate themselves and increase their awareness.

IMPs who have come from a long and well respected institutional career can be models for emerging professionals. Emerging professionals must respect those who have gone before and learn from those with more experience. Those new to IMP work should take care that their actions are based on best practices, sound reasoning and respect for the field.

Conclusion

IMPs and NMPs are becoming an important force in the museum world in which they exist and thrive. IMPs enable museums to temporarily increase their workforce when and where needed without paying the attendant costs of hiring a full time employee. Museums can use IMPs for a discreet amount of time, only the time needed to complete a project, and thus are able to save money. Through the services IMPs provide they work as

⁶⁵ Mary Case, Qm2, Washington, D.C., telephone interview by author, 25 March 2007.

partners with the museum community. They can be a source of instant expertise, a supplement to staff and a means of increasing staff productivity through training. Museums value the ability of IMPs to work flexible hours and handle a variety of tasks without requiring in house training. Museums are increasingly aware of their bottom line and IMPs offer a means to streamline the budget of any museum. They exist because there is a market for their services and museums are becoming more aware of the benefits made available by using IMPs. Museums should also become aware, however, of the risks, before establishing a connection with an IMP. IRS guidelines must be followed to be sure that the IMP can legally be considered an independent contractor and the museum's legal counsel should review the contract. Care should be taken that IMPs do not completely replace museum staff thereby sacrificing continuity. Museums have been looking to the business world for the model of outsourcing jobs. The museum world will do well to continue adapting successful business models to a non-profit structure, while also being attuned to the long term affects.

Through collaborations with NMPs and their collectors, museums can exhibit objects that the public rarely sees. By exhibiting closed collections, museums address issues of ownership and access in ways they would not otherwise be able to do. NMPs can serve as a bridge between collectors and museums. Through their networked contacts with private collectors, NMPs can put museum staff and board members in touch with a wide range of collectors. The presence of an NMP makes it easier for a museum to organize the logistics of an exhibition. Further, the efforts of an NMP to register, catalogue and preserve objects while they are still within a private or corporate collection is boon to the museum world as a whole.

As museums grow, shift and change with their environments, the value that IMPs and NMPs offer the field should be acknowledged and embraced. The museum field in the future will increasingly rely on temporary and contracted workers. Museums that are prepared to take advantage of this workforce will benefit by streamlining their day-to-day operations.

Appendix 1

AAM Definitions of geographic regions, types of institutions and budget categories

Geographic regions

- Mid-Atlantic
 - Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.
- Western
 - Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, British Columbia
- Southeast
 - Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia - and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands
- Mountain Plains
 - Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming
- New England
 - Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont
- Mid-West
 - Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin

Types of Institutions

The ASSET survey used the following 9 museum categories:

- Art
- Aquarium
- Children's Museum
- General
- History
- Natural History
- Science
- Zoo
- Other (Please specify)

The 2006 AAM Annual Report (page 30) lists 10 categories:

- Art
- General
- History
- Natural History
- Science-Technology
- Nature Center
- Youth
- Culturally Specific
- Zoos and Aquariums
- Arboretum/Botanical Gardens

Budget Categories:

As listed on AAM's *Accreditation Program: Annual Statistics At-A-Glance*:

<http://www.aam->

[us.org/museumresources/accred/upload/2007%20Accred%20Annual%20Stats%20At%20A%20Glance.pdf](http://www.aam-us.org/museumresources/accred/upload/2007%20Accred%20Annual%20Stats%20At%20A%20Glance.pdf)

- \$350,000 and under
- \$350,001—\$500,000
- \$500,001—\$1 Million
- \$1,000,001—\$3 Million
- \$3,000,001—\$5 Million
- Over \$5 Million

Appendix 2 Survey Statistics

What regions are using IMPs?

This section compares the regional responses to two survey questions:

1. Within the LAST four years has your institution hired independent professionals to carry out museum tasks on a contract basis? (This includes guest curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and other museum professionals.)
2. During the NEXT four years is your institution planning to hire independent professionals to carry out museum tasks on a contract basis? (This includes guest curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and other museum professionals.)

Of the respondents from the New England region, 67% indicated they have hired IMPs within the last four years and the same percentage indicated that they planned to do so again in the next four years (figures 1 and 2). All of the respondents from the Mid-Atlantic region reported that they have hired IMPs within the last four years, while 94% indicated they plan to hire IMPs within the next four years. In the Southeast, 90% of the respondents indicated they had hired IMPs within the last four years and 82% planned to do so within the next four years. Fifty-four percent of the respondents from the Midwest indicated they had hired IMPs in the last four years and 61% indicated that they planned to hire in the next four years. In the Mountain Plains region, 83% of respondents indicated that they hired IMPs in the last four years and the same percentage planned to do so again in the next four years. Respondents from the Western region also indicated no change in hiring from the last four to the next four years; 91% of respondents indicated they had hired IMPs in the past four years and would hire them again in the next four years.

This section addresses the regional responses to the survey question, “How many independent professionals has your institution hired or planned to hire each year?”

In the Mid-Atlantic region 41% of respondents indicated they had hired or planned to hire 1-3 IMPs, 41% percent indicated 3-5 and 17% indicated more than 5. In the Midwest region 50% indicated that they hired or planned to hire 1-3 IMPs and the same amount indicated 3-5. In the Mountain Plains region, 80% indicated hiring or planning to hire 1-3 IMPs and 20% indicated 3-5. Of respondents in the New England region 100%

indicated they have or plan to hire 1-3 IMPs. Ninety percent of respondents in the Southeast indicated they had hired or plan to hire 1-3 IMPs and 10% indicated 3-5. In the Western region, 50% indicated hiring or planning to hire 1-3, 40% 3-5 and 10% indicated more than 5 per year.

What types of museums are using IMPs?

This section compares the responses by museum type to two survey questions:

1. Within the LAST four years has your institution hired independent professionals to carry out museum tasks on a contract basis? (This includes guest curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and other museum professionals.)
2. During the NEXT four years is your institution planning to hire independent professionals to carry out museum tasks on a contract basis? (This includes guest curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and other museum professionals.)

Of the art museums, 95% indicated they had hired IMPs within the last four years and plan to hire them in the next four years (figure 3 and 4). Of the general museums that responded, 67% indicated they had hired within the last four years and 100% indicated they will hire IMPs in the next four years. Of the history museums, 79% said they had hired in the last four years and 75% plan to hire in the next four years. Of the museums that indicated their type as “other,” 88% hired in the last four years and 82% plan to hire in the next four years. Of the science museums, 50% said they had hired in the past four years and plan to hire in the next four. None of the zoos that responded indicated they had hired in the past or would hire in the future.

This section addresses the responses by museum type to the survey question, “How many independent professionals has your institution hired or plans to hire each year?”

Of the respondents in art museums 50% indicated they hire 1-3 IMPs per year, 44% 3-5 per year and 5% indicated they hire or plan to hire more than 5 per year. Of the general museums, 67% indicated they hire 1-3 IMPs per year, and 33% indicated 3-5. Seventy-nine percent of the history museums indicated they hire 1-3 IMPs each year, 16% indicated 3-5 and 5% indicated more than 5. Of natural history museums, 100% indicated they hired or planned to hire 3-5 IMPs each year. Of the museums that chose “other” as their category, 60% indicated 1-3 IMPs per year, 33% indicated 3-5 and 7% indicated more

than 5. All of the science museums that responded indicated they had hired or plan to hire more than 5 IMPs each year.

What is the range of budgets among museums that use IMPs?

This section compares the responses by budget size to two survey questions:

1. Within the LAST four years has your institution hired independent professionals to carry out museum tasks on a contract basis? (This includes guest curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and other museum professionals.)
2. During the NEXT four years is your institution planning to hire independent professionals to carry out museum tasks on a contract basis? (This includes guest curators, registrars, collections managers, conservators and other museum professionals.)

Sixty-nine percent of respondents in the \$350,000 and under budget range indicated that they hired IMPs in the last four years and 77% plan to hire within the next four years (figures 5 and 6). Of museums in the \$350,001-\$500,000 range, 100% hired IMPs in the last four years and plan to hire them in the next four years. Of museums in the \$500,001 - \$1 million budget range, 100% hired IMPs in the last four years and 88% plan on hiring in the next four. Of museums in the \$1,000,001-\$3 million range, 82% hired IMPs in the last four years and 78% will hire in the next four years. Of museums in the \$3,000,001-\$5 million range, 86% hired IMPs in the last four years and the same percent plan to hire in the coming four years. Of those museums that responded, 75% of those whose budgets are over \$5 million indicated hiring IMPs in the last four years and planning to hire in the next four.

This section addresses the responses by budget size to the survey question, “How many independent professionals has your institution hired or plans to hire each year?”

Museums in all budget ranges reported hiring 1-3 IMPs each year. Of those museums that responded that are within the \$350,000 and below budget range, 90% indicated hiring or planning to hire 1-3 IMPs and 10% indicated 3-5 per year. Of museums in the \$350,001-\$500,000 range, 83% indicated 1-3 and 16% indicated 3-5. All of the museums in the \$500,001-\$1 million range indicated hiring or planning to hire only 1-3 IMPs each year. Of museums in the \$1,000,001-\$3 million range, 37% indicated hiring or

planning to hire 1-3 IMPs, 47% indicated 3-5 and 16% indicated than 5. In the \$3,000,001-\$5 million budget range, 57% indicated hiring or planning to hire 1-3 IMPs, 29% indicated 3-5 and 14% indicated 5 or more. In the “over \$5 million” range, 17% indicated hiring or planning to hire 1-3 IMPs and 83% indicated 3-5 each year.

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