

Museum on Main Street 2009 National Planning Conferences Sharing Best Practices

Incorporating MoMS Tours with Teacher Institutes

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MoMS Tour(s) That You've Coordinated (exhibition and year): 2004 – Yesterday's Tomorrows, 2005 – Barn Again, 2006 – Key Ingredients, 2007-2008 – New Harmonies, 2008-2009 – Between Fences

What needs did you identify among your local hosts that led you to develop this component of your MoMS tour? Or, how did this all come about?

IHC staff and board had a planning meeting in 2005 to figure out how we could make the MoMS experience a larger statewide initiative. The board liked the idea of creating a teacher institute around roots music history and if we could do other programming, that would be a bonus. During that time we applied for a grant from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation and were successful. With the additional funding we were able to (1) give host sites larger programming grants for additional events and activities in their communities; (2) fund a series of concerts throughout Idaho by Grammy award-nominated folk singer Rosalie Sorrels; (3) fund a local musician to conduct a project to research and catalog "roots" songs (pre-radio) related to Idaho people, places, and events; and (4) compile a CD sampler of Idaho roots music from that project called "The Idaho Songbag."

What council resources/expertise were you able to utilize? What partner resources/expertise?

In planning our summer 2006 "New Harmonies" teacher institute, we tapped Carol Harsh and MoMS staff to identify scholars that could be our lead facilitators. We were thrilled when Bob Santelli (music historian and New Harmonies exhibit contributor) and former Library of Congress folk music archivist and fiddler Alan Jabbour agreed to be involved. Both were recommended by Carol. We also involved Hal Cannon of the Western Folklife Center, and Idaho folksinger Rosalie Sorrels also agreed to lead the institute with Bob and Alan. They worked together to formulate the daily discussions about the roots of fiddle music, sacred music, blues music, western music, and the folk revival of the 1960s.

What were the steps involved in implementation?

IHC staff member Cindy Wang manages IHC's teacher institute project every year. She worked closely with the scholars to identify texts, daily presentations, films, educational materials, and handle all the logistics.

What were the results?

This institute was very successful. We included elementary and secondary teachers from all disciplines. With grant funds from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, we were able to have evening musical presentations open to the public at the institute.

After the institute, we sponsored a series of roots music presentations at the host sites and in any other interested community. IHC's Speakers Bureau currently has three roots music scholar/performers.

What adjustments (if any) did you make along the way?

IHC's Speakers Bureau usually is not open to public schools. However, because of interest in schools visiting the exhibit sites, we allowed roots musicians in our Speakers Bureau to visit schools in the communities that hosted the exhibit, or when schools from outside the communities visited the sites.

What's been the short and long term benefit to the local hosts?

The exhibit host sites benefited greatly, seeing themselves as humanities cultural programmers in their communities. They learned publicity, the importance of docent training, the importance of enlisting local partners to accomplish goals and host events. Long after the exhibit is gone, they explore other opportunities to host activities.

What's been the short and long term benefit to the state council?

I think this initiative really elevated the profile of the IHC, not only in the exhibit host communities, but in other communities as well. Roots music was something people really could relate to. They loved the exhibit, and now many host communities would like to host other exhibits in the future. For the IHC, New Harmonies and other exhibits offer a way to bring programming into communities from which the Council receives few grant proposals to develop humanities programming. After the host communities host a MoMS exhibit, they often consider their own projects. This helps IHC's outreach considerably.

What advice would you have for other state tour coordinators trying to make a similar impact in this area?

Most MoMS exhibit themes offer a good template for teacher workshops and institutes. The narrative of the exhibits often can be translated into daily institute sessions. Scholars are more than willing to help with programs that benefit teachers.

Do you have any files, forms, documents or digital images illustrating this component of your MoMS tour(s) that we could post on-line to share with others?

Yes.

Would you be willing to serve as a mentor to other state coordinators, advising them on this topic? If so, please indicate the best way for them to contact you.

Sure – Jennifer Armstrong, Idaho Humanities Council, Jennifer@idahohumanities.org