Front-end Survey of Museum Professionals in Traveling Exhibitions

John W. Jacobsen, White Oak Institute
Robert Mac West, Informal Learning Experiences

January 2009

Introduction

Study Purpose: To identify current needs and interests of the museum traveling exhibition community of practice.

Methodology
The survey was developed to provide background and suggestions for a broadly-based research project (the Traveling Exhibition Surveys and Colloquium (TESC) initiative) that, if funding is identified, will lead to the development of a set of shared tools that will improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of traveling exhibitions nationally. The statistical result of each of the first 27 questions is attached; the last three questions include personal information about the respondents.

The survey instrument was written by John Jacobsen of the White Oak Institute (WOI), with the analysis led by Mac West, PhD of Informal Learning Experiences, Inc. (ILE). The Project Manager was Rebecca Robison of the White Oak Institute. The survey instrument was reviewed and refined by the American Association of Museum's Traveling Exhibition Professional Interest Committee (TEPIC) Chair Michelle Torres-Carmona, who also organized a peer review/alpha and beta test group of seven, all of whom are TEPIC members. All efforts were contributed by the TESC partners.

Participation invitations were sent to: ILE Traveling Exhibitions Database listers and subscribers and AAM/ASTC roundtable attendees (519 invitations), TEPIC members (293 invitations), and a WOI list of selected museum managers (101 invitations). There is overlap among the lists, and the number of unique individuals is between 519 and the 913 total.

In addition to broad questions about the traveling exhibition field, the survey asked a pair of questions about each of the proposed tools and standards that have been developed by the TEPIC Ad Hoc committee and the investigators' combined knowledge of the field. For each concept, the survey explored current awareness of anything similar, and then interest in having such a tool or standard developed. In all cases, there was little awareness of any overlapping or competing initiatives, and good to high support for all five ideas.

The survey was conducted via SurveyMonkey during November 25 – December 16, 2008, and the aggregated findings are attached.

Profile of Respondents
A total of 274 individuals responded to the survey with each question being answered by two-thirds to three-quarters of the respondents. 81.5% of those work at a museum, with the following profile:

Primary Focus of Respondents (N = 274)
Traveling Exhibition Surveys and Colloquium

Science, Natural History, Zoos & Aquariums	36.8%
Art	11.7%
Children's	5.5%
History	16.0%
General	8.6%
Specialized	2.5%
Other	19.0%

Table 1
Source: TESC Front-end Survey

Respondents represented a broad spectrum of the traveling exhibition "industry" in terms of both where they are placed in the system (e.g., venues, producers [commercial/independent or institutional], or both) and what kind of an institution they represent (e.g., larger or smaller, varying content emphases, and varying economic models with different expectations/requirements for traveling exhibition programs). Thus, the survey includes a broad range of interests, concerns, backgrounds, and experiences with traveling exhibitions. The result of this is that whatever products ultimately emerge from this research project, there will be multiple constituencies to be served and multiple agendas that must be met.

As might well be expected, respondents to this survey have personal and business/employer interests in the traveling exhibitions industry. The responses were from them as individuals, but many of the comments reflect the practices, issues, expectations, and experiences of their institutions/organizations as well.

The question-by-question summaries indicate both the absolute and percentage counts for the entered responses as well as the number of participants who did not provide responses or comments. With that data easily available for reference, this report will provide both high-level interpretive summaries of the tabulated responses and analyses of the substance and implications of the extensive comments, especially to survey questions 5, 7 - 13, 15, 17, 20, and 22.

Analysis

Q1-4: Traveling exhibitions are generally regarded as a significant part of the array of attractions offered by most museums and similar organizations. 64% of the Q1 respondents (N=272) think traveling exhibitions are a "high priority" or "top priority" for their institution; only 12.5% selected "low priority." There are some differences in how they see their organization's decision-making process and where in the administrative hierarchy decisions regarding TEs are made. "Opportunistic" (35%) led "systematic" as their institution's perceived decision-making process, but almost half (46.8%) said "a little of both."

However, once the selection was made, respondents thought their institution's approach to preparing for, launching, and operating a traveling exhibition was more systematic (43.7%) than opportunistic (19.9%), with over a third seeing a "mixture of both." This shift from opportunistic selection to systematic implementation reflects the relative turbulence of the marketplace of available exhibitions, and the need for individual museums to commit quickly in the case of popular exhibitions, versus a more controlled environment inside the museum as it prepares for,

launches and operates a traveling exhibition once it is chosen. Half the respondents believe that selection decisions were made by staff committees, either interdepartmental (42.7%) or within one department (9%). CEO/COO's were seen by 12.1% of the respondents as the deciders, with department or division heads accounting for 10.1%, board-level committees 7%, traveling exhibition manager/coordinators 5.5%, and others 13.6%. Many of the "others" listed a combination of top managers, such as the "Director, Associate Director and Head of Exhibits."

Q5: Overall Traveling Exhibition Program

There is great diversity in both the sizes of traveling exhibitions that can be accommodated and the ways in which they are developed. Over half (52%) of the respondents' organizations have the capacity to bring in national or international exhibitions in the 5,000+ square foot size range, while many more deal with both smaller exhibitions (63%) and those that they produce in-house (69%). In-bound traveling exhibitions frequently are supplemented locally with specimens/objects, interactives, and programming. Regardless of the size, it is important that traveling exhibits be able to fit into variable spaces in order to be received by multiple museums. The size distribution (the majority of traveling exhibitions in the ILE database are under 4,000 square feet) is consistent with data gathered by ILE in several surveys conducted over the past five years. They are size limitations among responding institutions, as 67.8% say they'd never lease 10,000 SF + exhibitions, and 34.9% never handle 5,000 SF +. Only 9% of the respondents never do in-house production, a finding that suggests that the vast majority of respondents do in-house temporary exhibitions as well as leasing, which raises the question of whether the field is better described as the *temporary exhibition field* rather than the narrower definition of traveling exhibitions. The survey did not explore the style of the desired exhibitions (e.g., flat, three-dimensional, interactive, etc.), but throughout the survey there is indication of the desirability of object-based and at least moderately interactive shows.

Q6: Traveling Exhibitions Business Model

Almost half of the respondents (43%) indicate concern about the lack of a satisfactory traveling exhibitions business model with established systems and shared standards. The ambivalence of the industry regarding rigid standardization appears several times in the survey. Time and again, the great variation among museums (and other venues) in size, nature of available spaces, budgets, audience expectations, and economic realities comes to the surface in this survey. There is a sense that some sorts of standardization might be valuable, but respondents expressed concerns about how their particular institution might deal with certain standards. However, the idea that certain physical parameters (e.g., crate size, electronic/web-based materials, lighting) could be more predictable meets with general approval. Further, some sort of standardization at the producer level would make decision-making at the venue end easier.

Q7: The Future of Traveling Exhibitions

What will happen with traveling exhibits over the next 5-10 years is a very intriguing question that provoked a large number of suggestions. Several dichotomies arise. Will there be more large, commercial shows or will there be a greater emphasis on smaller, cheaper exhibitions? What is the relative importance of revenue generation versus mission support? Will there be more or fewer producers, both institutional and commercial? Given the current economic circumstance, will the demand for traveling exhibitions continue to increase, and, similarly, will there be greater pressures for cheaper exhibitions? In the same vein, will there be greater pressure from management and boards for big shows that will significantly impact the bottom

line? Blockbusters are mentioned frequently – are they too expensive and not mission-related? Do they distort the educational mission? Might there be "mini-blockbusters" that are available to smaller venues? What will be the balance between education and entertainment in the traveling exhibits area? Does commercial production necessarily imply less educational value? What will be the role of the virtual world in the future? There are no definitive answers to any of these yet, but it is clear that the industry itself is not at all clear about what its future holds. Research that will clarify some of these matters and provide greater predictability for both producers and consumers clearly is welcome.

There is a vocal market that is hungry for lower cost, smaller exhibitions (under 4,000 SF), with many feeling that they are out priced by larger (5,000 SF+) exhibitions. While most comments about the future talk about growth and/or shifts in balances, there are some that feel traveling exhibitions do not have a long-term business plan and should be dropped. The comments offered to this survey question include many very thoughtful and experienced views of the future:

> More and more institutions will be partnering to co-organize exhibitions to ensure that costs and the work of organizing large scale exhibitions is shared. More attention will be given to reducing courier costs and ensuring that host country indemnification is accepted. Choosing partners will be based on an array of criteria including: potential to lend heavily to the show that is being organized; geographic synergy; venues that institutions have worked with before successfully; venues that can offer curatorial/intellectual support to the exhibition; ability to share the workload evenly; venues that are strong and can help secure financial support for the exhibition.

> 10,000 SF name recognition exhibits will dominate the market and provide the most lucrative business model. The industry will move largely to a gate share plus cost coverage model. Grants will become increasingly competitive and hard to get. In response more multi-party partnerships will form to produce exhibits - but this will not lead to a higher quality exhibition experience. Museum producers willing to forego significant revenue may revitalize the small exhibit market through single party smaller grants not requiring multiple-party partnerships.

> There will have to be a new business plan. Specifically, we will need to determine where the money will come from to cover the up front costs.

> There will be a focus on brands or commercialization for larger exhibits.

> Potentially, we will need to address shipping costs related to rising energy costs.

> We will see more collaboration in developing exhibits.

> Be in tough shape if the cost cannot be reduced. This is extremely critical in the 2,500-5,000 square foot range.

> Currently science museums seem to be adopting one of three models:

> 1) Pure blockbuster exhibitions only - trying to go from one to another. Charging extra at the door for each exhibition. This is the newest trend and I don't expect many museums will be able to continue this trend for more than 10 years.

> 2) No traveling exhibitions unless something "really speaks to the museum."

> 3) Three traveling exhibitions a year, with "blockbusters" sometimes rotating into the schedule.

> Producers will be more responsive to the needs of a varied market (serving institutions of small, moderate, as well as large capacity).

> Both producers and hosts will develop standardized measurements for the educational and financial success of a traveling exhibition.

Museums will build partnerships with like institutions for the purposes of developing and circulating traveling exhibitions.

If traveling exhibitions are going to remain viable, there will have to be a radical reformulation of strategy toward a more efficient, sustainable and affordable model. These exhibits have been, and are now even more so, a bad deal for most institutions. While we have brought in traveling shows in the past, and may still bring in others when circumstances dictate the need, I see this increasingly as a waste of money. Too often the content has little or no relevance/resonance with our local audience and the dollars involved are increasingly one-way. To survive, museums that produce traveling exhibits and even companies who specialize in them will need to adopt much smarter, regionally-based business models that reduce waste, save money on transportation and circulation and heed local social/cultural priorities in terms of content. I believe there is much promise in the idea of regional exhibit collaboratives but, beyond that, the end of the traveling exhibit era can't come so on enough for me.

Venues will be more selective than ever about the traveling exhibits, creating a very tight business plan to project profits or losses, considering how it fits into a mission even more strategically since expenses: fuel, labor, etc. are ever increasing and acknowledging why an exhibit may be more mission than income. Unfortunately board members see the bottom line of 'block busters' and want more of them for increasing revenue without any knowledge of what it takes to get them and what it does to the rest of the operation.

Exhibition formats will change, become more flexible; text and graphic information may be submitted in pdf files, with the host venue responsible for printing related materials.

Increasing fuel prices are a huge concern as they drive some rental costs beyond what is sustainable for mid-size institutions such as ours. Also the astronomic rise in rental fees is often out of bounds for us as well. We need new models to reduce overall costs of venue rentals to continue to engage institutions beyond larger museums in big cities.

The cost of shipping and the environmental impact of shipping will have a greater influence.

I see trends over the last few years which I think may continue: liability concerns resulting in increased demands for on on-site supervision of the public and, in some cases, reduced interactivity; increasingly stringent restrictions on local sponsorships. I hope the field will move towards greater interactivity, creative use of media -- not just buttons and touch screens, but tangible interfaces, etc. -- and more consistent standards incorporating best practices from the field.

I fear traveling exhibitions will, as everything else, become even more commercialized than it already is, further eating away at the professional integrity and standards of the professional museum industry they purport to serve.

More regional and lower carbon footprint, likely developed electronically so can be adapted for individual institutions and exhibition spaces.

- More stratified by size from gigantic (10,000 sf) to small (750 sf)
- More traveling exhibit networks like SMEC, TEAMs and YMEC
- A distinction among traveling exhibits and related definitions: blockbusters, real and pseudo
- Ways of measuring their impact and assessing ROI for more (i.e. somewhat smaller) museums
- Greater clarity around the purpose of traveling exhibits and what they accomplish for a museum than can't be accomplished otherwise.

Funding available for hosting such exhibitions will be harder to obtain, ultimately causing a strain on institutions and traveling exhibition services to strike a balance between quality exhibitions and ideas, related costs and dwindling budgets. Traveling exhibitions will need to take this shortage of

funds into consideration when creating and packing exhibitions in order to insure their longevity and accessibility to host institutions as well as their benefit to the institutions creating and ultimately managing them.

Q8-9: Standards for Traveling Exhibition Facilities

What about standards for traveling exhibition facilities? There is little awareness (75% unaware) of work in this area and general support (3.58 on a 1-5 scale) for developing some sorts of standards. Respondents point out that various existing exhibition collaboratives (TEAMS, YMEC, SMEC, and undoubtedly others) already have developed internal standards and expectations, and the AAM General Facility Report achieves a somewhat similar objective for traveling exhibition facilities, though it is <u>descriptive</u> of institutions' facilities and practices rather than <u>prescriptive</u> of ideal or necessary conditions. Others, especially smaller and older facilities, have observed the difficulties in retrofitting spaces for traveling exhibitions. There clearly are huge variations among facilities in the circumstances (physical dimensions, utilities availability, access, building location) of the spaces they use (dedicated or opportunistic) for traveling exhibitions. Some suggest that the standardization should start with the producers rather than the venues. Either way, any effort at developing standards MUST have great input from the field and not be imposed from outside.

Open-ended comments from participants reveal that there have been many initiatives by particular projects and networks to establish minimum facility standards for that particular project/network, plus some general recommendations in books. Some thought the General Facility Report covered facility standardization, but it is intended as a descriptive form, not a prescriptive format. In short, there is no language at the AAM level that defines minimum facility standards for different types and sizes of exhibitions (e.g., sensitive collections, immersion environments, audio-animatronics, high-security, etc).

The recognition that so many existing museums are retrofitted for TE's, and that they shift galleries, prompts some respondents to say establishing standards will be difficult to enforce, while others see the need:

> I have been traveling exhibitions for the last 9 years and find that every venue varies so dramatically that it's almost a moot point to standardize. What is needed is flexibility to fit into any size museum.

> I get informal calls from designers creating new facilities all the time--it would be great to be able to refer them to an approved set of standards. I think the challenge will be in making sure those standards meet the majority of needs.

> I really don't know what this effort will accomplish. I have not felt the need for such. We have hosted over 35 exhibitions of varying sizes over the past 20 years. Each situation is so different. Standards are only as good as they are enforced. Who is willing to do this? One must really know his source and its reputation. Accommodations are made. Will venues that cannot meet stated standards lose out because of strict interpretation, now that we will become more lawsuit conscious?

> I think it is an excellent idea- especially in the case of science museums, which although interested in hosting artifact-based exhibitions, often lack the atmospheric and security levels to provided appropriate care of the objects.

> That is a difficult standard to set, since each facility is different. Many museums are established in existing older facilities, Like Children's Museum of Manhattan and Austin Children's Museum. Without the museum moving or major renovation, neither of which is likely, how would you

incorporate them into set standards? We have had to address this dilemma head on when developing traveling exhibits. For example there is no standard for ceiling height. One way we addressed this was too have additional pieces that can be added or removed to the tops of taller components. This is just one example of the flexibility that has to be included in traveling exhibit development.

I wish our own museum met the standards it demands of outside organizations. The problem is that trying to standardize venues seems almost impossible, especially during an economic downturn.

I think this is an important avenue to explore because it would lesson the burden on both the developing museum and the host museum in terms of set-up personnel and expectations/demands on venues.

Museums often ask what standard they need to aim for in creating new galleries, and at this stage they may well receive very different answers depending on whom the question is directed to.

Q10 – 11: Economic Calculator for Traveling Exhibitions

There is no generally-used economic calculator for traveling exhibitions (85% of respondents agree), and strong encouragement from almost three-quarters of the respondents for one to be developed (4.11 on a 1-5 scale). However, most regular users of traveling shows have, of necessity, developed their own internal calculators that take into account the specific needs, resources, and expectations of that institution/venue. Because of the variations among venues, these are not readily generalizable. There are greatly varying expectations for TE net revenues as well as for educational/mission impacts. Here, as in several places throughout this study, the differences among art, history, and science/children's exhibits are brought out.

I'm already worried that we focus so much on making money that we pass up exhibitions that are more mission-oriented (for science and education) rather than attendance-oriented. I worry that if we develop this calculator, it will mean that the more mission-oriented exhibitions out there become even tougher to book. How do we calculate the intangibles? (Community impact, educational programs, relationships developed, etc.)

As someone new to the traveling exhibit management position, that would be very helpful.

This may be a very good way to perform assessment and to balance cost and effect when it comes to traveling vs. in-house productions.

Although the variables around the country might render it less useful, might be good for new professionals to get a handle on budgeting but I can ballpark pretty close to what an exhibit will cost to get it and install it.

art and science museum needs and costs are so separate--fine art is a different game

I am sure it could be useful, but we are lucky enough to have experience and documentation of past projects to draw on for our needs.

Our institution will likely stick to our internal procedure for consistency from one exhibition to another.

Q12-13: General Exhibition Report

The idea of a general exhibition report, which would describe available traveling exhibitions in a similar form to the way the General Facility Report (AAM, 2008) describes available venues is favored by 83% of the respondents and measured 4.32 on a 1-5 scale. However, this question evoked considerable observation that this is what the existing ILE Traveling Exhibitions

Database as well as several others (listed in the references) already do, though in different ways. However, there is a strong sense that this/these online database(s) can be improved and broadened to include art as well as other disciplines. Also, many respondents are unaware of the presence of these sources of information, suggesting that better branding and marketing will be important. Nonetheless, in several places in the survey there is acknowledgement that art exhibitions have markedly different formats and requirements than many exhibitions intended for other genres of museums. Questions were raised regarding the financial support of databases and the responsibility for maintaining them and keeping them current. (The ILE Traveling Exhibitions Database, the largest of those mentioned with about 700 exhibitions listed, is free to listing exhibitions and accessible to users by an annual subscription. It is maintained by one of the authors' small consulting firm, Informal Learning Experiences.)

There is some confusion between the AAM's General Facility Report, which exists and covers descriptions of facilities, and the proposed General Exhibition Report which would cover exhibitions in more detail (one per report) than the information provided via on-line databases.

Q14-15: A Survey to Identify Best Operating Practices and Economic Parameters
There is little awareness (82%) of any efforts to define ideal operating practices and economic parameters other than the recent surveys by ILE and its annual roundtables at AAM and ASTC, although the AAM General Facility Report implies such parameters and practices. There is considerable support (4.29 on a 1-5 scale; 81%) for surveys to identify and disseminate the results with the caveat that the survey will have to accommodate a broad range of very different institutions. Perhaps some sort of a tiered structure will be useful. Again, questions arise about who will do it and where the data will reside.

This high level of support (4.29 out of 5.0) for a "survey [of] museum managers, producers and distributors to identify best practices and economic parameters" is the clearest statement of the community's need for the TESC initiative, which has this research survey as its primary scope and foundational objective.

> Wonderful idea - please do a pilot version! As well, why not lead an initiative that tracks before, after and one-month later (longitudinal study) impressions of an exhibition in order to discover which modalities "stick" in one's mind best; what sorts of (outreach) messages best achieve their purpose in educating the public.

> Again, this would be an excellent assessment tool, and would produce data, which could help museum directors/coordinators to evaluate TE programs and their own roles.

Enhancing On-Line Databases
Q16-17: There is broad agreement (74%; 4. 31 on a 1-5 scale) that the capabilities of current online databases should be increased. Concerns arise over cost, how extensive the database should be relative to what can be easily accessed via hotlinks to institution/producer websites, and how the database can be sorted (the ILE database currently is sortable by size, cost, broad and specific topics and contents, and presentation style; the Ecsite EXTRA database is sortable in a generally similar way, though it does not list keywords and has fewer search fields). Other databases include ASTC's Exhibit Files, AAM Exhibits Clearinghouse, ACM, AASLH, and www.guestcurator.com is interested in setting one up.

Developing a General Facility Report
Q18-19: The AAM General Facility Report is regarded by many (67%) as useful, but its data are held in confidence by potential lending institutions. The idea of developing a more accessible and informative specialized facility analysis with industry-desired data for both traveling exhibitions facilities and developers is strongly supported (90%).

The Future
Q20: What should we look forward to over the next ten years? Some of this was discussed above. By far the most desirable attribute of future traveling exhibits is higher quality (though not defined by respondents and thus difficult to assess). When this is dissected a bit, there are several aspects – more educational impact, increased popular appeal and higher revenues, and increased efficiency and lower costs. Great differences are perceived between the commercially-produced blockbusters and the institutionally-produced mission/education-oriented exhibitions. Given the size distribution of museums, there is a strong desire for there to be more quality exhibitions for smaller venues and reasonable cost. And, with the changes we all see around us, there is an expectation that future traveling exhibitions will make far better use of the internet and the virtual world.

When respondents were asked to rank attributes most needed to grow/change/evolve over the next 10 years, with seven attributes to be prioritized, "reduce carbon impact" fell to the bottom of the list (2.65), with the majority of the higher priorities focusing on quality of the traveling exhibitions (5.38), financial returns (4.08), educational impact (4.87), more efficient costs (4.27) and increased popular appeal (4.44). To make significant inroads in the traveling exhibition field, the green movement needs to make its case through the "more efficient costs" (4.27) route. Changing the quantity of the traveling exhibitions available had the second lowest priority (3.21), perhaps indicating that the number of traveling exhibitions available and being produced is not as much of an issue as the quality of the inventory.

> It would be important to distinguish between blockbuster-type shows that have a primary objective of building attendance and smaller shows that are primarily targeted at education impact. The answer to this question would be nearly opposite for these two types of traveling exhibits.

> The content needs regional relevance- offer hosts a chance to realize longer term gains for these expensive experiences, encourage community building strategies as part of the TE curriculum. It seems newer museums are often most in need of this stuff and they pay out for it and find themselves no stronger for the experience when it packs up and leaves. There are good examples out there of more effective TE strategies. TE's, as revenue generators for bigger museums seem doomed to me. Nurture the field instead. Another key is the increasingly evident negative impact on our various mission statements when we bring these things in- if we are attempting to model and create a better world for our young visitors, should we not start by recalibrating the negative environmental impact of operating this way?

> I feel guilty ranking the Carbon footprint and educational impact as the lowest items, but the bottom line is that we need traveling exhibitions to be more popular with our audience and to cost less and generate revenue more.

> This branch of the field could use a stronger consistent commitment to quality, and an honest conversation about how to bridge the gaps between the "blockbuster" shows (everyone's view of what a traveling exhibition is) and the smaller projects; with a greater part of the conversation also focused on new interpretive issues and content in a traveling framework instead of just logistics and tour management.

If popular appeal, net financial return, and higher revenues become the most important facets for evolution, the industry will alienate a large percentage of museums whose mission speaks to an opposite viewpoint

Standardization

Q21-23: Finally, while there is an agreement that more standardization is desirable, 32.4% of the Q22 respondents (N=185) believe AAM and/or other museum associations should develop those standards; 25.9% thought this should happen at the peer level, and 24.9% thought the marketplace will handle it. 16.8% were not sure and 3.8% thought standards will get in the way. This is a perplexing question, given the number of parameters involved – physical facility, presentation style, institution size and mission, educational content, economics, audiences, etc. However this might happen, intense engagement with the field during the development of any standards or guidelines is an absolute necessity.

Traveling exhibition professionals believe that "AAM and/or other museum associations should develop standards, which museums can adopt voluntarily" (32.4%), and an additional 25.9% believe that the "traveling exhibition professionals need to be proactive in a peer to peer level," which is a function aligned with AAM's Traveling Exhibitions Professional Interest Committee's (TEPIC) mission. Together, these two responses (58.3%) say that standards should be set by TE professionals, which provides a call to TEPIC to undertake this challenge for the field.

Standards would need to be very different for art/history museum exhibits and for science/children's museums. They would also need to be very different for large exhibits (5000+ sq. ft) and for small exhibits targeted to small museums. We are a small museum don't have designated gallery space, a loading dock or non-standard door. Many traveling exhibits are completely unworkable for us

International crate standards; typical max width/height of gallery doors and freight elevators; definitions of small/medium/large traveling exhibitions

Educational materials
Set-up/take down/packing manual
Physical requirements (size and weight requirements/power and electronic needs)

How shipped, how set up, hidden costs revealed

Security definitions (for artifacts - i.e. "high" or "low" security should mean the same for all exhibits). Temp/Humidity requirements. Pricing ranges.

More standardized approach to the inclusion of educational materials, resource guide
More standardized approach to press materials provided

There are some aspects that lend themselves to standardization such as the method of securing objects to walls, or methods of moving exhibitions but other aspects can defy these standards. Personally I would hate to see exhibitions not created due to being unable to meet the "standards," but when I originally went into this industry I was surprised at the lack of standards.

standard rental agreements would be the most helpful
I prefer to have each exhibit have it's own identity, design, cases, etc. so that we offer variety to public. Traveling exhibits that are experimental let us learn about new developments and try them out.

Level of programming required by host. Level of technical maintenance required by host. Safety and security standards. Artifact/Object environmental standards but these are light years ahead of program and technical maintenance standards by comparison. Crating, packing and handling

standards of exhibits components, furniture, AV, etc. up to the standards provided for object handling. Time, resources, money, carbon are all wasted by our packing and transportation inefficiencies.

Contracts (formatting)
Courier rates/protocol - these costs need to be contained
Indemnification acceptance in host countries
Arriving at pro-rated costs - billing of pro-rated costs

The idea has merit. I do think the field could use a more in-depth conversation, and I can see Standards being useful in some areas - both logistically (a big help to venues) and qualitatively (foster high expectations and a great commitment to consistent quality). But it's such a broad application, with chasm of differences between various branches... how would it work? I would certainly be willing to participate further in the conversation.

Accessibility ... open captioning ... ramps ... sound levels, font sizes. So many exhibits come in with font sizes too small to read by many visitors or in an "artistic" font that is illegible. Ramps that are too steep, video that is not open-captioned ... but they are "block-busters" and they don't see the need for this, and if you ask for it, they just say they have spent too much money already.

Universal Design Standards. So few traveling exhibitions are universally designed. It's really a shame. We can do more to support each other in this effort and developing industry standards can be put in place.

Again my concern is the small museum. Standardization will keep many small museums out of the "approved locations" if these lenders adopt the standards as the rule. I would like to see the traveling exhibit profession do a better job of getting the word out about available exhibits, how to best use them within your programs, and provide more educational support. This is more than my humidity level where it needs to be. (Of course, this is not in respect to those exhibits with actual artifacts!)

As long as these are standards and not mandates, since I believe the marketplace is almost as important in setting these standards. Concrete things like ceiling heights, lighting, as well as availability of information. We will each continue to do things our own way, but we're doing pretty well so far: currently it's easier to compare TEs than to compare car insurance--even with Progressive!

I do think that standards would be useful in a few areas but do worry that too much standardization could get in the way of creativity and diversity of TE available. It would be helpful however to have standards that museums/producers of exhibits could use as reference/guidelines and adopt voluntarily, as needed. Since standards may not always work for every exhibit all the time, maintaining a degree of flexibility is important to keep the field fresh/interesting, and free of limiting rules/stagnation of ideas

Level classifications for Security
Set cost price structure, no more hidden costs that vary between exhibits
Standards on what are consumables
Avg. maintenance costs for each exhibit, so one knows what they are getting into.
Standard information sheet on logistics and details of exhibits.

Standard exhibit specs (cost, size, media, supplemental material, security level, etc.)
target audience
educational aim

I think standards should be optional and maybe be called best practices or suggestions rather than standards. I have seen standards become a straightjacket rather than a facilitator of exhibitions

Conclusions

The survey is an important initial step into identifying essential research into the current state and needs of the traveling exhibitions industry. It revealed numerous issues to be addressed, clearly demonstrated great interest on the part of the field in developing ways to improve its products, their impacts, and their integration into the larger business and educational operations of the museums. It also brought out the great diversity of both venues and developers and the need for them to be closely involved in this research and part of the ultimate use of its outcomes.

It also is clear that for this research to provide the data and baseline materials for the development of several standards (or, perhaps better, guidelines and recommendations) for the traveling exhibitions industry, for both producers and consumers, there must be endorsement and application by the relevant professional organizations. These must include TEPIC, which can endorse the standards/guidelines/recommendations and move them forward to AAM and then to the discipline and regional associations. Further, those who maintain databases of traveling exhibitions must be fully cognizant of these guidelines and incorporate them into their materials.

Invitation Lists
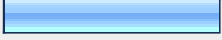
ILE sent invitations and a link to the SurveyMonkey site with the Front-end Survey to 519 individuals. 63% (326) are subscribers to our Traveling Exhibits Database. The majority of subscribers represent museums that are looking to rent exhibits, but this number also includes consultants, exhibit fabricators, and other organizations. 26% (135) of the emails were sent to individuals who post traveling exhibits on our database. This group includes museums and organizations that are looking to rent out their exhibits. 7% (36) of the individuals on the list are both subscribers and listers on the database. The remaining 4% (22) of emails were sent to individuals who have attended one of ILE's Traveling Exhibits Roundtables at ASTC or AAM. They represent organizations that are interested in either hosting or renting out (or both) traveling exhibits.

TEPIC sent invitations to the Front-end Survey to its 293 members
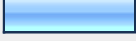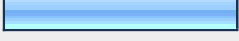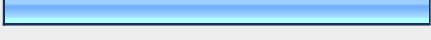
WOI sent invitations to the Front-end Survey to 101 selected museum managers, VP's and CFO's in its mailing list.
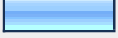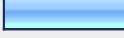
Front End Survey of Museum Professionals in Traveling Exhibitions

1. Our Institution seems to place our traveling exhibition program in the following priority for top management's attention (choose one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Top priority		18.8%	51
High priority		**45.2%**	**123**
Medium priority		23.5%	64
Low priority		12.5%	34
	answered question		272
	skipped question		2

2. Our institution selects traveling exhibitions using review and decision-making processes and selection criteria that are (choose one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very systematic		3.9%	8
Systematic		14.3%	29
Opportunistic		25.6%	52
Very opportunistic		9.4%	19
A mixture of both		**46.8%**	**95**
	answered question		203
	skipped question		71
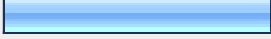
3. Our Institution's traveling exhibition are usually decided (as opposed to "approved") by a (choose one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Staff committee consisting of staff within one department		9.0%	18
Staff committee consisting of staff involving interdepartmental representatives		**42.7%**	**85**
Traveling exhibition manager/coordinator		5.5%	11
Department or division head		10.1%	20
CEO/COO		12.1%	24
Board committees (with CEO or staff participation)		7.0%	14
External stakeholders		0.5%	1
Other		13.1%	26
	If Other, please specify:		39
		answered question	**199**
		skipped question	**75**

4. In my opinion, our institution's approach to preparing for, launching and operating a traveling exhibition once it is selected is (choose one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Very systematic		10.4%	21
Systematic		33.3%	67
Opportunistic		16.9%	34
Very opportunistic		3.0%	6
A mixture of both		**36.3%**	**73**
		answered question	**201**
		skipped question	**73**
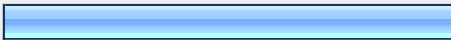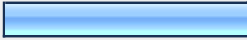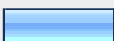
5. With regard to your museum's overall traveling exhibition program, which business/market sectors do you think your museum leases from most frequently?

	Never 1	Least Frequently 2	More Frequently 3	Most Frequently 4	Rating Average	Response Count
International large scale exhibitions of 10,000 SF+	**67.8% (101)**	18.8% (28)	8.1% (12)	5.4% (8)	1.51	149
National museum market for 5,000 SF - 10,000 SF	**34.9% (51)**	25.3% (37)	17.8% (26)	21.9% (32)	2.27	146
National exhibits under 5,000 SF	5.3% (8)	32.0% (48)	28.7% (43)	**34.0% (51)**	2.91	150
Networks of similar or nearby (50 mi +/-) museums	35.2% (50)	**38.0% (54)**	21.1% (30)	5.6% (8)	1.97	142
Small rentals	15.6% (23)	**48.3% (71)**	24.5% (36)	11.6% (17)	2.32	147
In-house production	9.0% (13)	22.1% (32)	**35.2% (51)**	33.8% (49)	2.94	145
Other	**47.6% (10)**	9.5% (2)	28.6% (6)	14.3% (3)	2.10	21
					If Other, please specify:	14
					answered question	**164**
					skipped question	**110**

6. Do you agree or disagree with: The traveling exhibition profession works within a sustainable business model with enough established systems and shared standards (choose one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Stongly Disagree		4.9%	9
Disagree		**37.9%**	**69**
Neither		26.9%	49
Agree		29.1%	53
Strongly Agree		1.1%	2
		answered question	**182**
		skipped question	**92**

7. In my opinion, over the next 5-10 years, the traveling exhibition profession will change in the following ways:

		Response Count
		129
	answered question	**129**
	skipped question	**145**

8. Are you aware of any efforts to establish traveling exhibition standards for TE galleries and other museum building facilities, perhaps for different categories of venues? For instance, standard specifications for height, lighting, security, environmental conditions, etc. for a collections gallery. (choose one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		**49.5%**	**91**
I don't think so		26.6%	49
I may have heard of one or more efforts		12.0%	22
I have heard of one or more efforts but don't recall specifics		5.4%	10
Yes		6.5%	12
	If yes, list efforts you are aware of (if possible) and/or comments:		23
	answered question		**184**
	skipped question		**90**

9. Would you support efforts to establish traveling exhibition standards for TE Galleries and other museum building facilities, perhaps for different categories of venues? (choose one)

	No 1	2	Maybe 3	4	Yes 5	Rating Average	Response Count
	4.3% (8)	3.8% (7)	**47.8% (88)**	17.4% (32)	26.6% (49)	3.58	184
					Comments (Optional)		55
					answered question		**184**
					skipped question		**90**
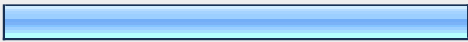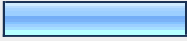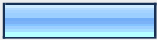
**10. Are you aware of any efforts to develop an "economic calculator" spreadsheet for traveling exhibition projects that would remind you of possible revenue and expense categories and allow you to enter your assumptions and see the bottom line results? (choose one):**

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		**63.8%**	**118**
I don't think so		20.5%	38
I may have heard of one or more efforts		5.4%	10
I have heard of one or more efforts but don't recall specifics		2.2%	4
Yes		8.1%	15
	If yes, list efforts you are aware of (if possible) and/or comments:		23
		answered question	185
		skipped question	89
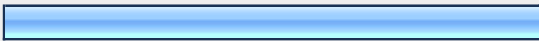
11. Would you support efforts to develop an "economic calculator" spreadsheet for traveling exhibition projects that would remind you of possible revenue and expense categories and allow you to enter your assumptions and see the bottom line results?(choose one):

	No 1	2	Maybe 3	4	Yes 5	Rating Average	Response Count
	2.2% (4)	2.7% (5)	23.5% (43)	25.1% (46)	**46.4% (85)**	4.11	183
					Comments (optional)		32
					answered question		183
					skipped question		91

12. Are you aware of any efforts to draft a General Exhibition Report that will provide museums with consistent data about available exhibitions such as their size, facility requirements, cost, terms, associated materials, etc.? (choose one)

		Response Percent	Response Count
No		**51.1%**	**93**
I don't think so		19.8%	36
I may have heard of one or more efforts		16.5%	30
I have heard of one or more efforts but don't recall specifics		2.7%	5
Yes		9.9%	18
	If yes, list efforts you are aware of (if possible) and/or comments:		29
		answered question	182
		skipped question	92

13. Would you support efforts to draft a General Exhibition Report that will provide museums with consistent data about exhibition options? (choose one)

	No 1	2	Maybe 2	4	Yes 5	Rating Average	Response Count
	1.6% (3)	2.2% (4)	13.1% (24)	28.4% (52)	**54.6% (100)**	4.32	183
					Comments (optional)		23
					answered question		183
					skipped question		91
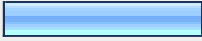
14. Are you aware of any efforts to survey museums, producers and distributors to identify best operating practices and economic parameters such as attendance impact, yearly leasing schedules, turn-over times, selection processes, implementation management, etc.? (choose one)

	Response Percent	Response Count
No	**59.2%**	**109**
I don't think so	23.4%	43
I may have heard of one or more efforts	7.6%	14
I have heard of one or more efforts but don't recall specifics	6.0%	11
Yes	3.8%	7
If yes, list efforts you are aware of (if possible) and/or comments:		17
answered question		184
skipped question		90

15. Would you support efforts to survey museums, producers and distributors to identify best operating practices and economic parameters? (choose one)

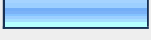|	No 1	2	Maybe 3	4	Yes 5	Rating Average	Response Count
	1.6% (3)	1.6% (3)	15.2% (28)	29.3% (54)	**52.2% (96)**	4.29	184
Comments (optional)							19
answered question							184
skipped question							90
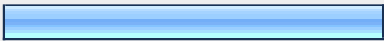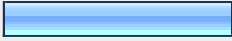
16. Are you aware of any efforts to expand the capabilities and listings of the current on-line exhibition databases such as Informal Learning Experience's or Ecsite's? (choose one):

|		Response Percent	Response Count
No		**60.0%**	**111**
I don't think so		21.6%	40
I may have heard of one or more efforts		8.6%	16
I have heard of one or more efforts but don't recall specifics		3.8%	7
Yes		5.9%	11
If yes list efforts you are aware of (if possible) and/or comments:			13
	answered question		185
	skipped question		89
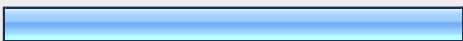
17. Would you support efforts to expand the capabilities and listings of the current and/or new on-line exhibition databases? (choose one)

	No 1	2	Maybe 3	4	Yes 5	Rating Average	Response Count
	0.0% (0)	1.1% (2)	20.8% (38)	24.0% (44)	**54.1% (99)**	4.31	183
					Comments (optional)		18
					answered question		183
					skipped question		91

18. What is your opinion about the usefulness of AAM's General Facility Report (formerly the Standard Facility Report) filled out by museum hosts? (choose one)

		Response Percent	Response Count
Important tool used regularly		**41.6%**	**77**
Useful tool used occasionally		24.9%	46
Difficult tool used rarely		8.6%	16
We do not use this tool		9.2%	17
Not familiar with it		15.7%	29
	answered question		185
	skipped question		89

19. What is your opinion about a parallel tool that might be called the General Exhibition Report to be filled out by traveling exhibition producers to describe available traveling exhibits consistently to facilitate direct comparisons of alternatives? (choose one):

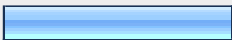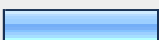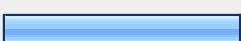|		Response Percent	Response Count
Important tool that we would use regularly		39.3%	70
Useful tool that we would use occasionally		**50.6%**	**90**
Difficult tool that we would use rarely		3.9%	7
We would not use this tool		6.2%	11
	answered question		178
	skipped question		96
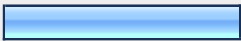
20. In your opinion, what does the traveling exhibition profession most need to grow/change/evolve over the next ten years? (Please rank in order, using each column only once):

	Least Important 1	2	3	Important 4	5	6	Most Important 7	Rating Average	Response Cou
Quality of traveling exhibitions available	3.4% (5)	6.0% (9)	9.4% (14)	13.4% (20)	9.4% (14)	15.4% (23)	**43.0% (64)**	5.38	
Quantity of traveling exhibitions available	21.2% (33)	**23.1% (36)**	14.1% (22)	15.4% (24)	13.5% (21)	7.7% (12)	5.1% (8)	3.21	
Net financial return from hosting traveling exhibitions	10.2% (15)	11.6% (17)	15.6% (23)	**20.4% (30)**	14.3% (21)	**20.4% (30)**	7.5% (11)	4.08	
Educational impact	1.8% (3)	6.7% (11)	9.8% (16)	19.5% (32)	22.0% (36)	**27.4% (45)**	12.8% (21)	4.87	
Reduced carbon impact	**32.9% (53)**	23.0% (37)	18.6% (30)	9.9% (16)	8.1% (13)	2.5% (4)	5.0% (8)	2.65	
Increased efficiency and lower costs	5.6% (9)	13.7% (22)	18.6% (30)	13.7% (22)	**20.5% (33)**	14.3% (23)	13.7% (22)	4.27	
Increased popular appeal and higher revenues	8.1% (14)	11.6% (20)	13.4% (23)	15.7% (27)	15.1% (26)	**18.0% (31)**	**18.0% (31)**	4.44	
							Other (please specify) and/or comments		
							answered question		
							skipped question		

21. Generally, do you think the traveling exhibition profession needs more or less standardization? (choose one)

	Less Standardization 1	2	Current Standardization 3	4	More Standardization 5	Rating Average	Respon Count
	2.8% (5)	3.9% (7)	27.9% (50)	**50.3% (90)**	15.1% (27)	3.71	1
					answered question		1
					skipped question		

22. Do you believe the traveling exhibition profession should define more shared standards? (choose one of the first five, and give us your suggestions in the last one):

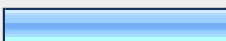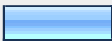|		Response Percent	Response Count
Yes, traveling exhibition professionals need to be pro-active at a peer-to-peer level		25.9%	48
Yes, AAM and/or other museum associations should develop standards which museums can adopt voluntarily		**32.4%**	**60**
No, the marketplace will present alternatives and we will choose what works best for us each time		24.9%	46
No, standards will get in the way more than they will help		3.8%	7
Not sure/haven't thought enough about it		16.8%	31
Standards may be useful in a few areas (please indicate)		25.9%	48
	answered question		185
	skipped question		89
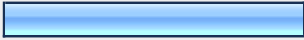
23. Specifically, do you think museums should keep in stock more standard components than is done currently (e.g. media equipment, pedestals, lights, cases, etc.) so that distributors can produce and ship fewer items than they currently do? (choose one)
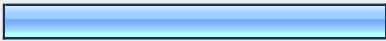
	Limited in-house stock 1	2	Current in-house stock 3	4	More in-house stock 5	Rating Average	Response Count
	19.3% (34)	13.1% (23)	**33.0% (58)**	19.9% (35)	14.8% (26)	2.98	176
					answered question		176
					skipped question		98

24. I work at (choose one):

|		Response Percent	Response Count
A museum (go to Q. 25 and 26)		**81.5%**	**150**
An enterprise unit/subsidiary of a Museum (go to Q. 25 and 26)		1.1%	2
A private company (go to Q. 27)		3.8%	7
A non-profit, non-museum organization (go to Q. 27)		8.2%	15
An independent consultancy (go to Q. 27)		5.4%	10
	answered question		184
	skipped question		90

25. Our Institution/Museum's primary focus is:

		Response Percent	Response Count
Science, Natural History, Zoos and Aquariums		**36.8%**	**60**
Art		11.7%	19
Children's		5.5%	9
History		16.0%	26
General		8.6%	14
Specialized		2.5%	4
Other (please specify)		19.0%	31
	answered question		163
	skipped question		111

26. Please tell us your role (please check those that most apply, more than one responsibility is possible):

		Response Percent	Response Count
Member of the TE Team		17.7%	29
TE Manager/ Coordinator		28.0%	46
Department or Division Head		**32.9%**	**54**
CEO / COO		19.5%	32
TE's are not in my job description but I tend to be involved		4.3%	7
TE's are part of, but not most of my job description		24.4%	40
TE's are most of my job description		6.7%	11
Other (please specify)		11.6%	19
		answered question	164
		skipped question	110

27. For non-museum respondents: My primary professional focus is (check one):

		Response Percent	Response Count
TE Producer/Distributor		**41.9%**	**13**
TE Producer		0.0%	0
TE Distributor		6.5%	2
TE Service Provider		9.7%	3
Consultant		29.0%	9
Other (please specify)		25.8%	8
		answered question	31
		skipped question	243

28. Name (optional)

	Response Count
	100
answered question	100
skipped question	174

29. Institution/Museum (optional)

	Response Count
	100
answered question	100
skipped question	174

30. E-mail address (for copy of aggregated results report - optional):

	Response Count
	136
answered question	136
skipped question	138

Prior Work

PUBLICATIONS

American Association of Museums/AAM Registrars Committee. (2008). *General Facility Report*, 2nd Edition, revised.

American Association of Museums (AAM). (2006). *Museum Financial Information.*

Buck, Rebecca A. and Jean Allman Gilmore. (2003). *On the Road Again: Developing and Managing Traveling Exhibitions*. American Association of Museums, Washington, DC.

CASTEX (Common Approach to Scientific Touring Exhibitions), n.d. Guidelines for Touring Exhibitions in Europe. Natural History Museum, London.

Center of Advancement of Informal Science Education (CAISE) Library of Prior Work (NSF and ASTC).

Falk, John H. and Beverly K. Sheppard. (2006). *Thriving in the Knowledge Age*. AltaMira Press.

Friedman, Alan J. (Ed.) (March 12, 2008). *Framework for Evaluating Impacts of Informal Science Education Projects*: Report from a National Science Foundation Workshop.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2008). *Interconnections: The IMLS National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums and the Internet.*. Griffiths, et. al.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services. (2005). *Museum Data Collection Report and Analysis*.

Kotler, Neil and Philip Kotler. (1998). *Museum Strategy and Marketing*. Jossey-Bass Publishers. San Francisco.

Krim, Walter and Ewing Cole. (October 14, 2007). *Trends in Design of the Best Temporary Exhibit Space: Results of a Benchmarking Study*.

Levy, Shab. (1989). *Cogs, Cranks & Crates: Guidelines for Hand-On Traveling Exhibitions*. Association of Science-Technology Centers.

Lord, Barry and Gail Dexter Lord. (2002). *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions*. AltaMira Press, 2nd Edition.

Manjarres, et al (2008). *Exhibiting Public Value: Government Funding for Museums in the United States*

McLean, Kathleen and Catherine McEvers (Eds.). *Are we there yet? Conversations about best practices in science exhibition development*. San Francisco: Exploratorium.

McLean, Kathleen. (1993). *Planning for People in Museums*. Association of Science-Technology Centers

Poulos, Angela (May, 2008). *Guiding Principles for the Design of Traveling Exhibitions* Produced in satisfaction of thesis requirements for the Master of Fine Arts in Museum Exhibition and Planning in the Department of Museum Studies, The University of the Arts, Philadelphia, PA.

Sixsmith, Mike, ed. (1995). *Touring Exhibitions: The Touring Exhibitions' Group Manual of Good Practice*. Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., Oxford.

Slivac, Barbara. (1997). *Getting the Shows on the Road: The Role of Traveling Exhibits in a Museum Plan*, pp. 125-128 in Maher, Mary, ed., Collective Vision: Starting and Sustaining a Children's Museum, Association of Youth Museums, Washington.

West, Robert M. (2004). *Traveling Exhibitions: Rationales and Strategies for the Small Museum* in Yao, Cynthia C., ed, Handbook for Small Science Centers. AltaMira Press.

West, Robert M. (2004, July - August). Traveling Exhibitions: What, Why, How, and What's Next. *The Informal Learning Review*, pp. 18-23

White Oak Associates. (May 31, 2006). *Travelling Exhibition Analysis.* Report to the Royal Alberta Museum in Alberta, Canada.

Witteborg, Lothar P. (1991). *Good Show! A Practical Guide to Temporary Exhibitions*, 2nd edition. Smithsonian Institution.

TRAVELING EXHIBITION ON-LINE REFERENCES

Informal Learning Experiences, ILE, Traveling Exhibitions Database. http://www.informallearning.com/database.htm

Association of Science-Technology Centers, ASTC, Traveling Exhibitions. http://www.astc.org/exhibitions/index.htm

European Centers for Science, Industry and Technology Exhibits, ECSITE EXTRA. http://www.extrascience.eu/

American Association of State and Local History, AASLH, Traveling Exhibits Clearinghouse. https://www.aaslhnet.org/aaslhssa/ssaauthmenu.show_menu?p_cust_id=389719&p_menu_id=19&p_level=1

Association of Children's Museums, ACM, Exhibits Marketplace. http://www.childrensmuseums.org/programs/exhibitsforrent.htm

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, SITES. http://www.sites.si.edu/

Guest Curator. http://www.guestcurator.com/exhibition.asp

Mid-America Arts Alliance, Exhibits USA. http://www.maaa.org/exhi_usa/

Touring Exhibitions Group, Exhibitions for Hire. http://teg.org.uk/index.php?id=4,11

American Library Association Traveling Exhibitions. http://publicprograms.ala.org/orc/travelingexhibitions/alatraveling/index.html