

WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS

**AMM 2026 Conference
Chicago**



#AMM_2026 #MidwestMuseums #WeHoldTheseTruths

Welcome

letter from our co-chairs

Welcome to Chicago!

We are delighted to welcome you to the 2026 Association of Midwest Museums Conference. As a city of neighborhoods, Chicago offers something for everyone, and nowhere is that more evident than in its museums. From world-renowned institutions to small community museums, historic sites, zoos, gardens, and cultural centers, the Chicagoland region is home to one of the nation's greatest concentrations of museums and collecting institutions.

This year's theme, "We Hold These Truths," invites us to reflect on the important role museums play as stewards of evidence, stories, collections, and ideas. In this 250th anniversary year of the Declaration of Independence, museums have a unique opportunity to help people explore the many histories, perspectives, and experiences that continue to shape our shared future.

We also hope this conference reflects another tradition for which Chicago is known: improvisation. The best improv begins with a simple principle, "yes, and." It asks participants to listen closely, build on one another's ideas, and create something new together.

Whether you spend your time exploring museums throughout Chicago's neighborhoods, networking and learning in sessions with colleagues, attending workshops and affinity gatherings, or all of the above, we hope you leave Chicago reenergized and inspired. Thank you for joining us. We are excited to share our city with you.

2026 Conference Co-Chairs

Charles L. Katzenmeyer

Immediate Past President
Association of Midwest Museums



Erin Carlson Mast

Lincoln Presidential Foundation

At-Large Board Member
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Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum	CatalogIt	Guided by Community	Ravenswood Studio
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ARK	Dimension Fine Art Services	Intuit Art Museum	Solid Light, Inc.
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Thank You

hosts, committee members, volunteers, & staff

We are grateful to the organizations, community members and many volunteers who contributed their time, talent, and energy to make this year's conference a success. Thank you!

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Special thank you to **Edwards Creative** for providing in-kind graphics and display services, and to **Pigeon-Tech** for building our new conference app!

Thank You

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**Shout-out to AMM
Board Members!**
*Denoted with an asterisk**

Thank you to our generous patrons, George R. Fox Donor Society members, and Leadership Circle members!

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George R. Fox Society

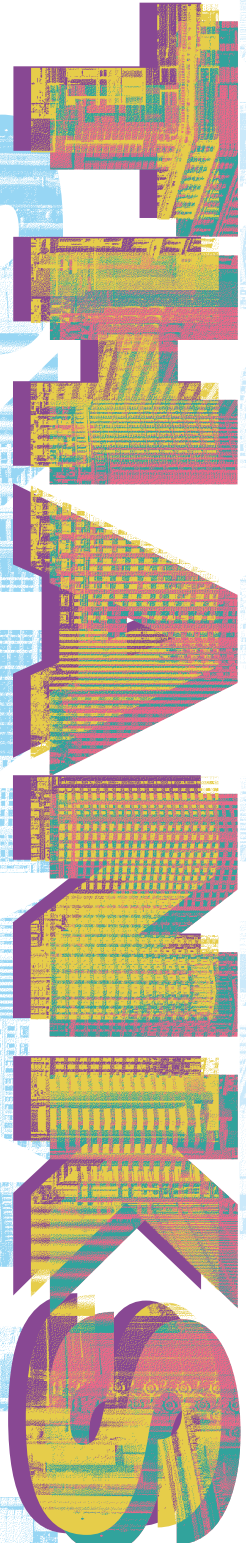
Joe Imholte
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AMM Annual Fund Donors 2025–2026 — continued

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Shout-out to our State
Challenge Winner:
WISCONSIN!

Virtual Sessions & Events



Wednesday, July 22

AMM Annual Business Meeting

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM CT (9:30 AM – 10:00 AM ET)

AMM Member Business

Prior to our opening sessions, AMM members are invited to join us live for our 2026 Annual Business Meeting for board election advance voting results and other announcements. (You don't have to be a member to tune in. All are welcome!)

Opening Session

9:30 AM – 10:30 AM CT (10:30 AM – 11:30 AM ET)

Whose Truths? Exploring the Chicago Monuments Project

Organized by the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

We're kicking off Virtual Day programming with a presentation exploring the significance of Chicago's monuments in reflecting and shaping the city's core values, particularly around race, history, and identity.

Virtual Networking

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM CT (12:00 PM – 1:00 PM ET)

What We've Tried, What's Next, and the Truth at the Center

Sponsor: H.E. Branch Advisors

Come as you are and connect with your peers across the region! We'll gather in breakout rooms for facilitated discussions around a variety of common questions, share steps we have taken and solutions we have tried, and consider "who" or "what" were at the center of those decisions. Looking back, would we change our approach? Looking ahead, who or what will inform our next step?

Concurrent Sessions

12:30 PM – 1:30 PM CT (1:30 PM – 2:30 PM ET)

Preserving Culture for Future Generations: Stewardship Beyond the Gallery

Track: Collections Stewardship

Climate change is testing the foundations of collections stewardship. This session connects preservation ethics, public trust, and environmental stability, offering scalable tools and real-world lessons to help museums act with foresight, even with limited resources.

Presenters: Jeremy Knoll, BNIM; Steve Waterman, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art; Ryan Evans, BNIM; Jeff Kling, GDS

Creating Safe Spaces for Community Dialogue

Track: Programs

Converse with some of Chicago's diverse cultural centers about how they have facilitated opportunities for dialogue around current events and addressed concerns around public safety. In roundtable discussions, exchange about when it was best to answer the call with events, programs and exhibitions and when it was best to employ alternative methods.

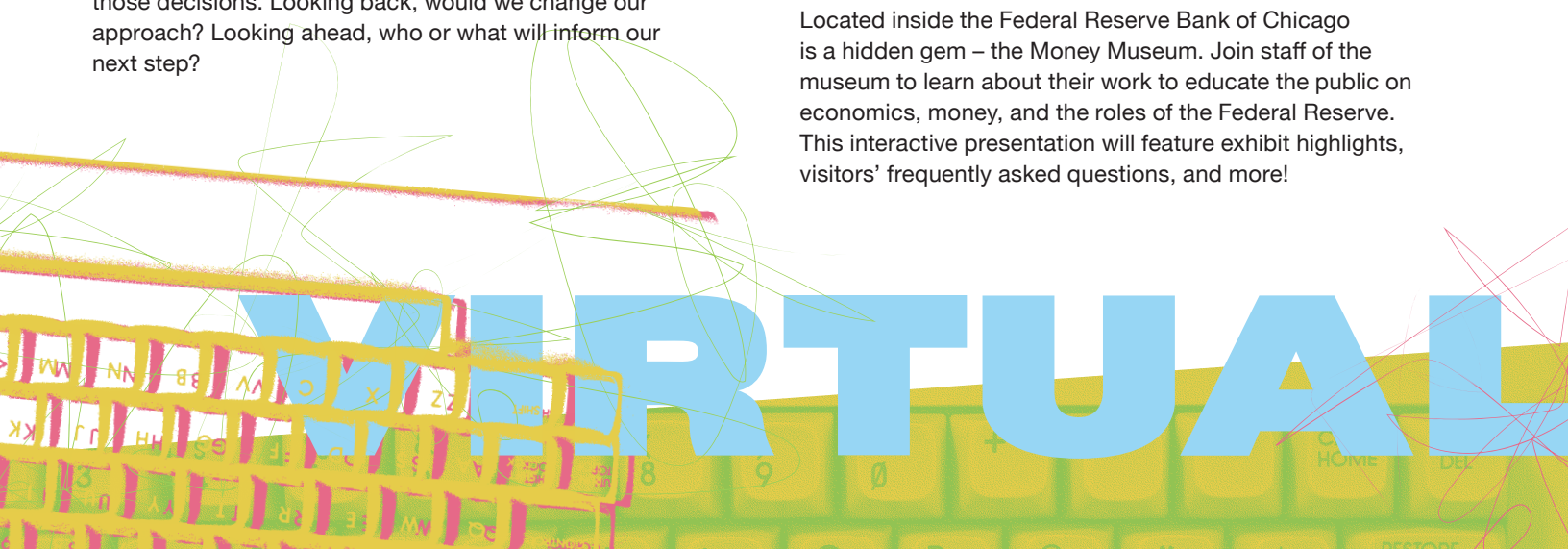
Presenters: Mónica Félix, Chicago Cultural Alliance; Leah Rauch, Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center; Kim Vigue, Gichigamiin Indigenous Nations Museum; Fernando Aburto, OPEN Center for the Arts

Virtual Tour

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM CT (3:00 PM – 3:30 PM ET)

Chicago Fed's Money Museum

Located inside the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago is a hidden gem – the Money Museum. Join staff of the museum to learn about their work to educate the public on economics, money, and the roles of the Federal Reserve. This interactive presentation will feature exhibit highlights, visitors' frequently asked questions, and more!



Virtual Sessions & Events

V Wednesday, July 22 — continued

Concurrent Sessions

3:00 PM - 4:00 PM CT (4:00 PM - 5:00 PM ET)

Proactive Preservation Part 1: A Framework for Developing Your Emergency Plan

Track: Management & Operations / Collections Stewardship

Don't face disasters alone. Join museum peers in this virtual session to discuss risks facing museums, determine essential components of an emergency plan for your organization, share best practices and exchange institutional resources. Facilitators will provide a framework for creating your emergency plan and bring real world examples to the conversation.

Presenters: Stacy Button, Distinguished Fine Art & Collectibles; Eric Dougal, HUB International

A Museum Without Walls: Bringing Community-Based Experiences to Every County in Wisconsin

Track: Exhibitions

Explore how the Wisconsin History Makers Tour redefines where exhibitions happen! In this panel discussion, hear from the team behind the Tour as they share adaptable traveling exhibit models and practical strategies for bringing history into communities statewide.

Presenters: Mallory Hanson, Wisconsin Historical Society; Sara Batkie, Wisconsin Historical Society; Juan Ochoa, Wisconsin Historical Society; Sarah Taylor, Wisconsin Historical Society

Virtual Tour

4:30 PM - 5:00 PM CT (5:30 PM - 6:00 PM ET)

Batavia Depot Museum

Let's go behind the scenes at Batavia Depot Museum, located in the western suburbs of Chicago. We'll take a peek inside their new collections facility and hear from staff about some of their favorite items in the collection.

Virtual Sessions & Events



Wednesday, July 22 — continued

Pre-Recorded Sessions

A handful of additional sessions will be made available as recordings for access on-demand, when it is convenient for you.

SPARK! A Creative Engagement Program for People with Memory Loss & Their Care Partners

Track: Programs

Interested in a creative aging program at your museum? SPARK! is creative engagement for people with early-to-mid-stage memory loss and their care partners. Participants stay actively engaged in their community through experiences that stimulate conversations, provide support and inspire creativity through engagement in comfortable environments led by trained staff.

Presenter: Heather Placko, Muskegon Museum of Art

Small Shops, Big Connections

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Unlock the power of personalized fundraising in Small Shops, Big Connections! Learn to identify, evaluate, and engage donors using screening tools, templates, and tracking sheets, all through hands-on exercises and interactive participation. Perfect for small teams ready to build lasting, meaningful donor relationships.

Presenters: Eric Heining, EDEN+ Fundraising Consulting; Ashlen Sheaffer, Des Moines Children's Museum

Museum Endowments: Building Blocks for a Solid Financial Structure

Track: Leadership & Advancement

What is an endowment? Why are they important? This session will help museum leaders gain a better understanding of why endowments are a good foundation upon which we can build a solid financial structure.

Presenters: Jim Croft, JWC Consulting Inc.; Charles L. Katzenmeyer; Wes Moran, Museum of Contemporary Art

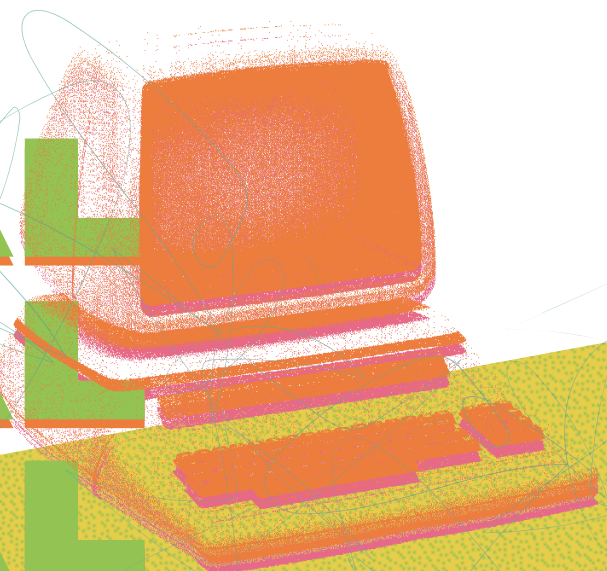
Leader-as-Coach: A Blueprint for the Future

Track: Leadership & Advancement

What kind of leadership do museums need right now? This session explores the leader-as-coach model as a response to today's challenges. Through stories and practical tools, a former museum leader illustrates how coaching-oriented leadership can build trust, nurture innovation, and create more accountable, engaged and adaptive teams.

Presenter: Jennifer DePrizio, DePrizio Leadership Group

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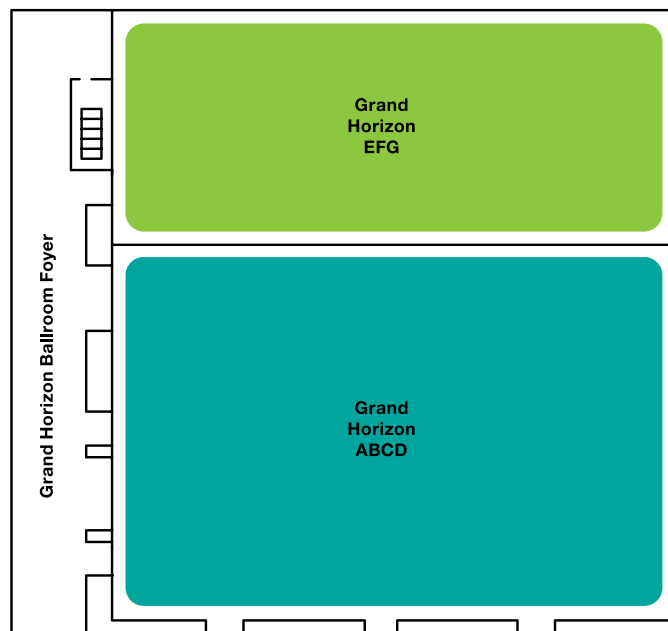


Map

conference locations

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---------------------|
|  | Registration |  | Exhibitors |
|  | Breakout Sessions Rooms |  | Office + Storage |
|  | Nursing Parents Room |  | Attendee Quiet Room |
|  | General Sessions + Leadership Breakfast | | |

Fourth Floor



Registration

Grand Horizon Ballroom Foyer

W

M / W

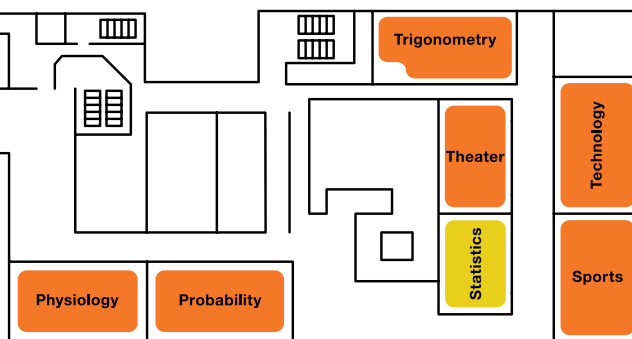
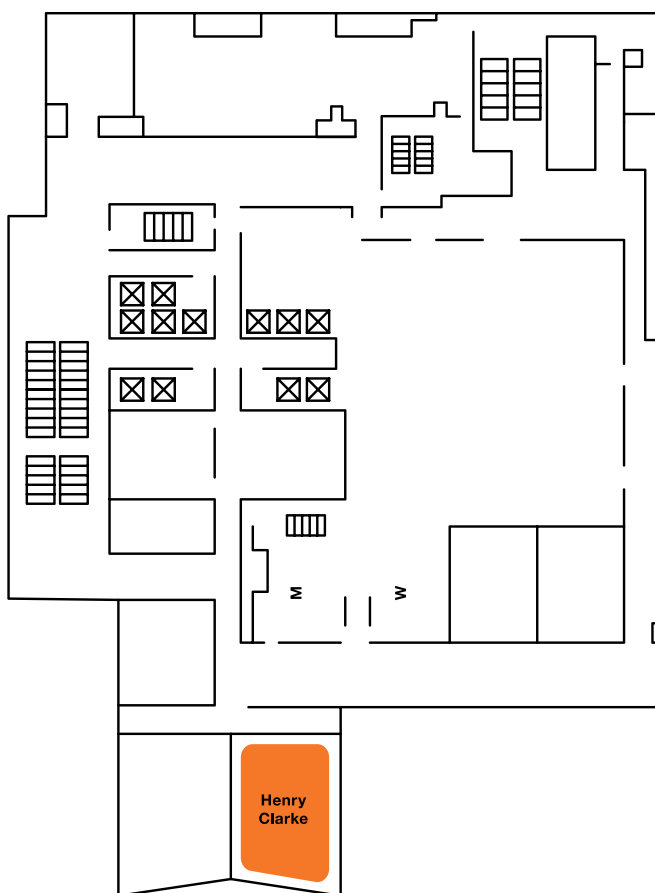
M

Northerly Island

Bronzeville

China Town

Third Floor



Exhibitors

directory + map

EXHIBITORS
EXHIBITORS
EXHIBITORS

Grand Horizon Ballroom ABCD + Grand Horizon Foyer

Church Mutual Insurance
Tyler Kromholz
churchmutual.com
Booth: 101

Museum EXP
Cynthia Brown
Booth: 102

**HUB International /
Distinguished**
Eric Dougal
Booth: 103

McCullough Creative
Pat McCullough
Booth: 104

Angle Park, Inc.
Martin Baumgaertner
Booth: 105

History is My Playground
Jeanette Watts
Booth: 106

Roto
Rachel Escusa
Booth: 107

Museum Explorer
Rich Faron
Booth: 108

FacilitySight
Anjelo Pina
Booth: 109

**American Association for
State and Local History
(AASLH)**
Eric Morse
Booth: 110

SAQA Global Exhibitions
William Reker
Booth: 111

elbē interactive
Melissa McAtee
Booth: 112

Caption
Sherman Bausch
Booth: 113

Morlights, LLC
Avi Mor
Booth: 114

Acme Design, Inc.
Elizabeth Haney
Booth: 115

**Sturgill Emergency
Preparedness Consulting**
James A Sturgill
Booth: 116

**Billy Ireland Cartoon Library
& Museum, The Ohio State
University Libraries**
Andie Near
Booth: 117

Edwards Creative
Tim Wren
Booth: 118 + 119

CatalogIt
Haley Twist
Booth: 120

Bluewater Studio
Erich Zuern
Booth: 121

**Art Display Essentials,
a 10-31 Company**
William Stender
Booth: 122

Dorfman Museum Figures
Chad Grob
Booth: 123

Ravenswood Studio
Rachel Strack
Booth: 124

**Midwest Registrars
Committee**
Sarah Humes
Booth: 125

**Western Illinois Museum
Studies**
Heidi Lung
Booth: 126

**Minnesota Children's
Museum**
Michelle Wright
Booth: 127

University Products, Inc
RJ Magoon
Booth: 128

**Fleming Museum
Consulting**
Bethany Fleming
Booth: 129

**Center for Collections
Care at Beloit College**
Nikita Werner
Booth: 201

**Universal Fiber Optic Lighting
USA LLC.**
Patric Dietrich
Booth: 202

ARK
Kelleree Hoggard
Booth: 203

RGI Creative
Heather Williams
Booth: 204

**Kraemer Design + Production
Solutions, Inc.**
Jacqueline Holthaus
Booth: 205

**Abraham Lincoln Presidential
Library and Museum**
Cindy Klenke
Booth: 206

**Famous Hoosiers/President
Abraham Lincoln**
Danny Russel
Booths: 207

Sagin LLC
Richard Sypniewski
Booth: 208

Cincinnati Museum Center
Erica Wainwright
Booth: 209

Asgaard Systems
Benjamin Adamitus
Booth: 210

Pigeon-Tech
Vijay Sabbineni
Booth: 301



Exhibitors

directory + map — continued

**Taylor Studios, Inc. -
Rantoul, IL**
Joe Reynoso
Booth: 302

Guide-ID
Jeff Danzinger
Booth: 303

**Dimension Fine Art
Services, LLC**
Lincoln Wright
Booth: 304

Collector Systems, LLC
Ashley Campone
Booth: 305

Split Rock Studios
James Tordoff
Booth: 306

NEDCC
Tahe Zalal
Booth: 307

Solid Light, Inc.
Mark Sargent
Booth: 308

Bridgewater Studio
Kristie McNulty
Booth: 309

Upland Exhibits
Joel Gaeddert
Booth: 310

**Association of Midwest
Museums**
Charity Counts
Booth: 401

**Illinois Association
of Museums**
Sara Phalen
Booth: 402

Intuit Art Museum
Lisa Lindvay
Booth: 403

Crozier Fine Arts
Rachel Doorly
Booth: 404

**Institute of Museum
and Library Services**
Mark Feitl
Booth: 405

Mosaic Collections
Eli Ball
Booth: 501

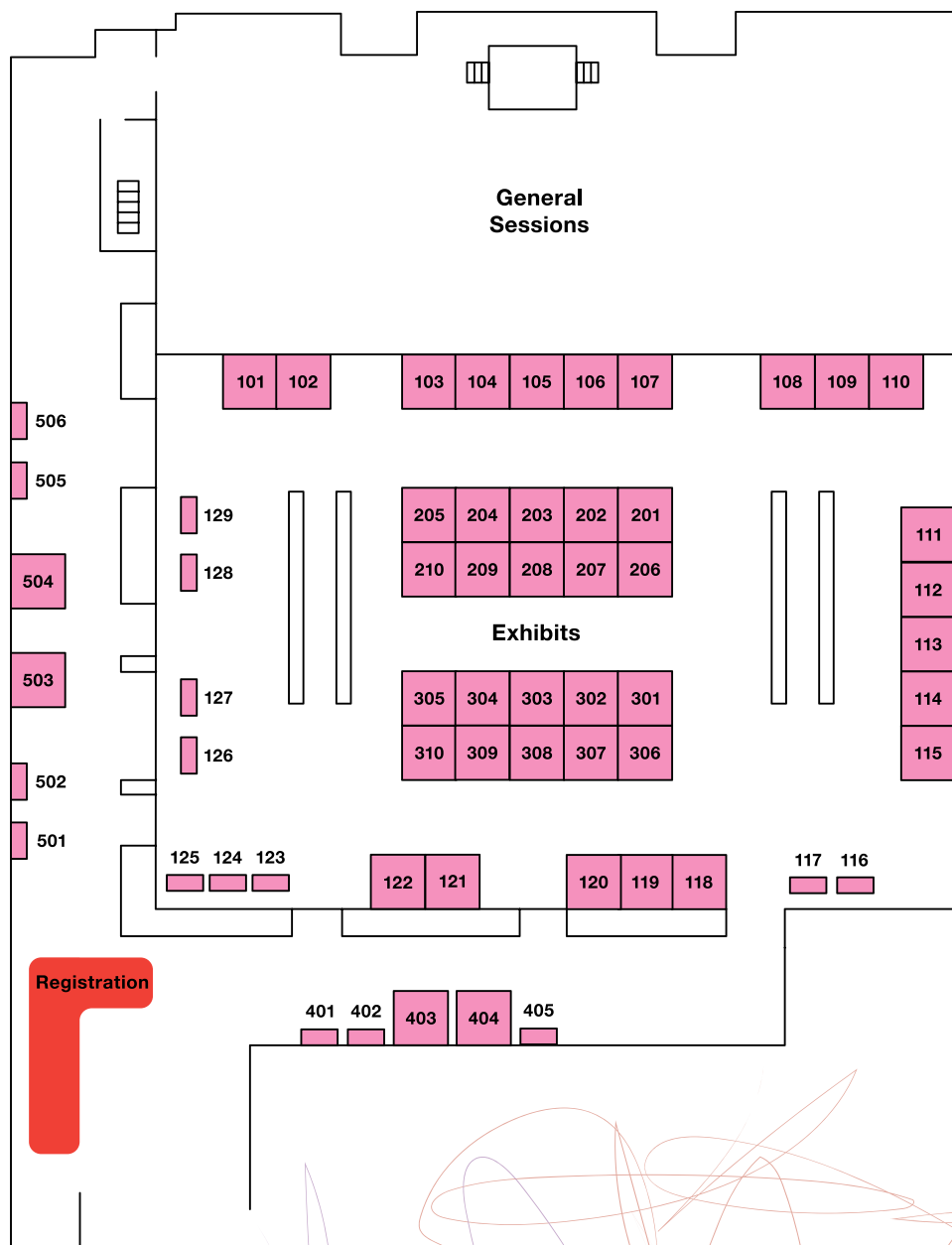
DuPage Children's Museum
Angela Dobbins
Booth: 502

Pareti Mobile Walls
Kathy Kyle
Booth: 503

**Saulaman Schlegel Art
Services + A3D**
Saulaman Schlegel
Booth: 504

Guided by Community
Lakeshia Wright
Booth: 505

Holland Litho Printing Service
Carl Heule
Booth: 506



Pre-Conference Tours

S Sunday, July 26



Swedish American Museum: Guided Tours and Open House

1:00 PM — Walking Neighborhood Tour
2:30 PM — Second Floor Exhibition Tour

Ticket: \$10 (limited onsite availability)
Capacity: 15 per tour (limited onsite availability)

Established in 1976, Swedish American Museum is a bustling center of Swedish art, history, and culture in Andersonville, Chicago's historically Swedish neighborhood. This recently renovated 24,000 square-foot cultural museum features a permanent exhibition titled We Are America, temporary art exhibits, the Brunk Children's Museum of Immigration, a genealogy center, Swedish food in Mormors Café, and a gift shop featuring a beautiful selection of handcrafted Scandinavian gifts. Attendees will have a 10% discount in the museum store and will be able to sample a special offering for free in the Café. Join the Swedish American Museum for an open house afternoon featuring two guided tour options.

Location:
Swedish American Museum
5211 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60640

Inside The Morton Arboretum: Guided Tour and Special Programs

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Ticket: \$10 (limited onsite availability)
Capacity: 40

The Morton Arboretum is a 1,700-acre, tree-focused botanical garden and global scientific tree research center located in the western suburbs of Chicago. Its vision is a greener, healthier, more beautiful world where people and trees thrive together. How are they inspiring visitors and community members to appreciate, learn about, and protect trees?

During an afternoon program featuring the Arboretum's scientists and leadership, get an inside look at the Arboretum's science and conservation programs and hear about their public-facing Plant Clinic. During a visit to Gateway to Tree Science, learn how the organization is communicating tree science and climate resiliency through exhibitions and outreach.

Attendees are invited to explore the Arboretum's vast tree-filled grounds, get lost in adventure through the Maze Garden, or play in the Children's Garden anytime before and after the program. Free Arboretum admission is included.

Location:
The Morton Arboretum
4100 IL-53, Lisle, IL 60532



Pre-Conference Tours

S Sunday, July 26 – continued

National Public Housing Museum: Guided Tours

1:30 PM – 3:00 PM / 2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

Ticket: \$10 (limited onsite availability)

Capacity: 15 per tour

The new National Public Housing Museum offers a unique journey through the rich and complex history of public housing in America. This museum is dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating the stories of the millions of people who have lived in public housing, highlighting their resilience, struggles, and triumphs.

During your guided tour, experience the texture of public housing throughout time by visiting three recreated historic apartments showcasing different families' experiences at different moments in public housing history between 1938 and 1975. The intimate individual, family and community stories become the lens to understand large national public housing policies and their impact. Attendees will have time to explore the museum's permanent exhibitions, *History Lessons* and *the REC Room*. Attendees can also check out the first solo museum show of *Nathaniel Mary Quinn: Love Letter to My Mother*.

Location:

National Public Housing Museum,
919 S Ada St, Chicago, IL 60607

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum: Guided Tour

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Ticket: \$10

Capacity: 25

SOLD OUT

In this hour-long tour, visitors will learn about the conditions immigrants faced in the 19th Ward of Chicago, the unique work of the Hull-House residents, the life and work of Jane Addams, and the lasting impact of the Hull-House Settlement. It will also include exploration of our current special exhibition, *Perennial City: Experiments in Urban Gardening*. Organized by room, each door opens to a new collection of artifacts, photographs, and stories that share the history of the Hull-House settlement, those who lived and worked there, and those who were served by it.

Location:

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum
800 S Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60607

Chicago Cultural Center: Guided Gallery Tour

2:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Ticket: FREE

Capacity: 20

SOLD OUT

Enjoy an exclusive, behind-the-scenes look at the exhibition spaces at the Chicago Cultural Center. Led by the Director of Exhibitions, this guided tour offers a deep dive into all of the exhibitions at the Cultural Center, featuring a compelling mix of local, national, and international artistry.

This curated 60-minute experience provides an insider's perspective on the diverse creative voices that define Chicago. You will journey through all four major exhibition spaces, discovering how the Cultural Center serves as a vital bridge between global artistic movements and the local Chicago community. Hear directly from the Director about the vision and selection process, and explore works from a wide range of artists, showcasing the broad spectrum of creative engagement within our walls as we move through the stunning architecture of the Cultural Center.

Location:

Chicago Cultural Center
78 E Washington St, Chicago, IL 60602



Pre-Conference Workshops

S Sunday, July 26

Bridging the Gap: Using Volunteer Programs as Workforce Development

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Ticket: \$10 (limited onsite availability)

Capacity: 20

Flip the narrative on traditional acts of service. Join new and established museum pros to explore how volunteerism can better serve young professionals by gaining marketable skills. Through collaborative dialogue, troubleshoot barriers and walk away with an action plan to implement skills-based changes in your volunteer program.

This workshop will feature four multidisciplinary professionals who will share their volunteerism journeys as organizational leaders and emerging professionals and case studies on how their organizations address the needs of volunteers. They will highlight their public outreach strategies to market volunteer opportunities for young and transitioning professionals with varied interests and experiences and offer a set of standard best practices for the recruitment and retention of volunteers.

Presenters: Trey Whitted, College Mentors for Kids; Bethany Hrachovec, Indiana Historical Society; Micaela Knox, Great American Songbook Foundation; Hannah Barton, Indiana University Indianapolis

Location:

Residents' Dining Hall
Jane Addams Hull-House Museum
800 S Halsted St, Chicago, IL 60607

Proactive Preservation Part 2: Co-Create and Operationalize Your Museum's Emergency Plan

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Ticket: \$10 (limited onsite availability)

Capacity: 20

This collaborative workshop will help you build a robust emergency plan for your museum. Building on the foundation established in Part 1 of this interactive conference series (held on Virtual Day), expert facilitators will guide you through the process of synthesizing ideas for your emergency plan, writing the plan, and “operationalizing” it through practical exercises and scenario testing. Turn your institutional knowledge into a ready-to-use plan that ensures long-term preservation and safety.

Presenters: Stacy Button, Distinguished Fine Art & Collectibles; Eric Dougal, HUB International; Janna Bennett, Carnegie Museum of Montgomery County; and James Sturgill, licensed EMS Instructor Coordinator

Location:

Chicago Maritime Museum
1200 W 35th St, Chicago, IL 60609

Repatriation Strategies for Midwest Museums: NAGPRA and International Approaches

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Ticket: \$10 (limited onsite availability)

Capacity: 20

This workshop reviews legal requirements and best practices for the repatriation and return of human remains and cultural belongings in museum collections. Participants discuss case studies and approaches to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and international repatriation efforts, receive digital resources, and ask questions to Midwest practitioners.

Presenters: Krystiana Krupa, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign; Brooke M. Morgan, Illinois State Museum; Jayne-Leigh Thomas, Office of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) at Indiana University

Location:

Chinese American Museum of Chicago, 238 W 23rd St,
Chicago, IL 60616



WORKSHOPS

Speakers

M keynote / Monday, July 27, 9:15 AM – 10:15 AM

Sponsor: Roto

Location: Grand Horizon EFG

Chicago is the birthplace of modern improv, and this year's keynote session will lean into the principles of this decades-old art form and apply them to the mission-driven work of museums. We'll share in a little levity as we learn how to create intentional connections and collaborate with people.

Malarkey Comedy is a Chicago-based comedy company committed to providing creative, accessible, interactive comedy through joyful inclusivity, diversity of voice, respect and collaboration. Through an interactive, humorous approach, we help teams work better together. All in a safe, fun, and supportive environment.

Led by expert facilitators from Malarkey Comedy, this session will include 2-3 exercises focused on quickly getting to know the person you are communicating with, building rapport, and operating with a "Yes, And" attitude. (Critical skills as we navigate a constantly shifting landscape!)

Applied Improv experiences are reliant on fully engaged participants, but attendees will have the option to observe and not participate. Activities will take place at your table/seat. The workshop environment will be inclusive and supportive in nature, and the activities are intended to foster relationships while building positive connections.

Facilitators:

Nicole Devin

Co-Founder and Chief Training Officer
Malarkey Comedy



Padraic Connelly

Lead Facilitator
Malarkey Comedy

Speakers

T leadership breakfast / Tuesday, July 28, 8:00 AM – 9:00 AM

Sponsor: Solid Light, Inc.
Location: Grand Horizon EFG

Capacity: 100
Ticket: \$50

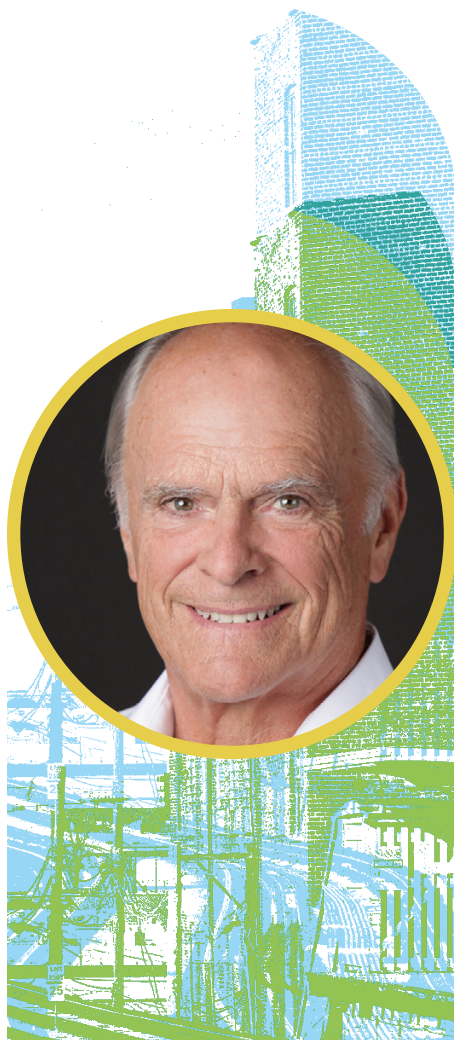
SOLD OUT

Walking the Walk – The Role of a Trustee Today and Tomorrow

Join us for a continental buffet breakfast and a special program designed for directors, CEOs, and leaders at any level and career stage.

What does it mean to “walk the walk” as a museum trustee? During a 45-minute fireside chat with a panel of local museum trustees, we’ll find out what has motivated their call to service, how their responsibilities and approaches to board governance have evolved, how they create institutional change in collaboration with staff, and how they hold institutional values in their role. Hear their perspectives, and bring your own burning questions to the conversation!

This hour-long event (8:00–9:00 AM) will include time to mingle with your peers during breakfast service (~15 min). There will also be time immediately following the fireside chat (~30 min) before the start of the Flash Talks, our morning general session.



Marshall Field V

Museum Board Service: Field Museum and Art Institute of Chicago

Marshall Field is the fifth generation of a Chicago family whose activities have included merchandising, real estate, publishing, communications, and civic affairs. He is a graduate of Harvard College and has served as publisher of the Chicago Sun-Times and the Chicago Daily News. Field was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Art Institute from 1965 to 2012, a member of the Board of Trustees of Rush University Medical Center since 1970 (Life Trustee), and a life member of the Board of Trustees of the Field Museum. In 2010, Field converted the Jamee and Marshall Field Foundation, to a donor-advised endowment fund, the Marshall and Jamee Field Family Fund, at The Chicago Community Trust. Field is a member of the Board of Directors of the Field Foundation of Illinois, The Everglades Foundation (Chair 2014-2018), The Regenstein Foundation, and the Veterinary Initiative for Endangered Wildlife.

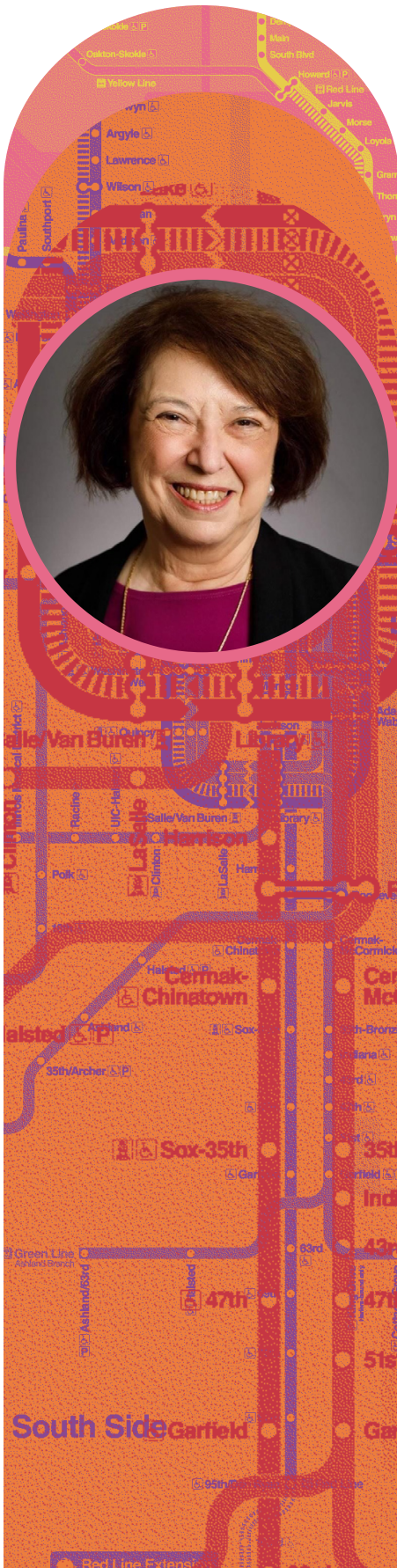
An avid fisherman, Field has a strong interest in conservation. He is active in various conservation organizations such as World Wildlife Fund, including serving as the Chairman of its National Council from 2002 until 2008. He is also a member of the Nature Conservancy, the Atlantic Salmon Federation and served as Chairman of the Board of Visitors of the Nicholas School of the Environment of Duke University from 2006 through 2009.

Upon retirement, Field has dedicated his time, talent and efforts to charitable and philanthropic efforts that align with his many passions which focus on the environment and conservation issues, arts and culture, education, health care and advising the Marshall and Jamee Field Family Fund.

Speakers

T leadership breakfast — continued

SPEAKER
SPEAKER
SPEAKER



Sunny Fischer

Museum Board Service: National Public Housing Museum and Richard H. Driehaus Museum

Sunny Fischer was the Executive Director of The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation from 1992-2013, and she has consulted for many other national and local foundations. She has served on NEA panels on design and on several architectural juries.

Sunny was Governor Pat Quinn's appointee to chair the board of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency from 2008-2013, and in that capacity chaired the board of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. She is a founding and current board member of The Richard H. Driehaus Museum and a founder of the National Public Housing Museum, whose board she currently chairs.

Numerous organizations have honored her for her work. Among them: the Association of Fundraising Professionals (Chicago Chapter) with Grantmaker of the Year award; National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy, which gave her its "Point of Lightning" award. Most recently, she received the Influencer Award, from Landmarks Illinois, that recognizes "community leaders...that promote a diverse, equitable, and accessible preservation movement across the state."

Born in New York City, Sunny was educated at Hunter College of the City University of New York. Her Master's degree is from the University of Chicago's School of Social Services Administration.

Speakers

T leadership breakfast — continued



Fay Hartog-Levin

Museum Board Service: Field Museum

Fay Hartog-Levin is a distinguished fellow at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs and serves as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors. From 2013 to 2017 she was a lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School, teaching a course on federalism and state social policy. From 2009-2011, she was the 65th ambassador of the United States of America to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. In that capacity, she was Chief of Mission of an embassy which included 15 federal agencies, 4 locations, and over 250 employees. Previously, at Chicago's Field Museum, Levin served on the executive management team as vice president of external affairs (1996-2006).

Ambassador Levin began her career as a legal advisor at the Illinois State Board of Education. In private practice, she joined the law firm Seyfarth Shaw, representing primarily school boards, private and public colleges, and social service agencies. Ambassador Levin is vice chair of the board of the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and serves on the boards of the East Bank Club (Chicago), the Field Museum, Interfaith America, and the Hold onto Your Music Foundation.

Previously, Levin served as a trustee and board chair of the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation in Baltimore, MD. Levin was a member of the board of directors of the National Archives Foundation (Washington, DC), the Roosevelt Institute (NY, NY), the Arts Alliance Illinois (and also served as its chair). She served on the board of trustees of the Merit School of Music, DePaul University, Columbia College Chicago, WWCI (WTTW-WFMT), Meridian International Center's Advisory Committee for Diplomatic Engagement and the Harris School of Public Policy's Leadership Council.

Ambassador Levin was honored with the Illinois Arts Alliance's Citizen Advocate Award in 2013 and was the 2016 recipient of Loyola Law School's Damen Award for distinguished community service. In 2018, the King of the Netherlands awarded her the royal decoration of Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau for her commitment to strengthening the bilateral relationships between the United States and the Netherlands.

Ambassador Levin is a graduate of Northwestern University with a BA in Russian language and literature. She received a JD and honorary LLM from Loyola University School of Law, and an honorary LLM from Knox College.



Speakers

T leadership breakfast — continued



Cleo F. Wilson

Museum Board Service: Intuit Art Museum (Board Member and Former Executive Director)

Cleo Wilson is a rare board member, having functioned as both a funder and a grantee, a museum board member and museum staff member. She is a founding board member of Intuit Art Museum (IAM) and served as board president from 2002-2006. In 2006, she was appointed Executive Director, a position she held until 2012. Wilson returned to the board of directors, where she has served in various leadership positions and is now a life trustee. She remains a committed advocate for the importance of diversity and inclusion efforts for museums.

Prior to serving on the Intuit staff, Wilson served for 25 years as the Executive Director of the Playboy Foundation, a corporate giving program of Playboy Enterprises, Inc.

Wilson has served as a trustee of several nonprofit Boards of Directors, including the Arts Alliance Illinois, American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois (serving as vice president from 1997 to 2004), and AIDS Foundation of Chicago (serving as president from 1990 to 1993). She has participated on a variety of state and municipal grant-review panels, including the Illinois Arts Council, Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs City Arts Fund, Evanston Arts Council and the Propeller Fund.

Listed in Who's Who Among African Americans and Who's Who Among American Women, Wilson was inducted into the Black Woman Hall of Fame in recognition of her community service. Wilson's honors include: "Friend for Life" by the Howard Brown Medical Center; "Phenomenal Woman Award" from Chicago's Expo for Today's Black Woman, in recognition of her leadership and dedication to community issues; AIDS Foundation of Chicago for her "leadership, compassion and generosity;" Handy L. Lindsey Award for Inclusiveness in Philanthropy; the Edwin A. Rothschild Civil Liberties Award for her "persistent and clear voice in defense of civil liberties;" and the Community Engagement, Community Service, and Community Organizing Award from the Gender and Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois Chicago. In October 2010, Wilson was inducted into HistoryMakers, the single largest archival collection of interviews of both well-known and unsung African American history makers.

SPEAKER

Speakers

T flash talks / Tuesday, July 28, 9:15 AM

Sponsor: ARK

Antonio Ramirez

Project Director,
Chicagolandia Oral History Project

Antonio Ramirez is Associate Professor of History at Elgin Community College. He is Director of the Chicagolandia Oral History Project, which documents the history of the lives, work, and culture of Latinx suburban communities around Chicago. Ramirez is currently writing a book on the history of “Chicagolandia” for the University of Illinois Press. His written work has been published in TIME Magazine, The Harvard Journal of Hispanic Policy, The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Nation, The Progressive, and others.

The Chicagolandia Oral History Project documents the history of the lives, work, and culture of Latinx suburban communities around Chicago including Elgin, Waukegan, Aurora, Joliet, and beyond. The Project uses oral history to create community dialogue about the history and future of Latinx communities in Chicagoland.

Starla Thompson

Indigenous Curator, Scholar, and Advocate

Starla Thompson (Forest Band Potawatomi) has served as a consultant for numerous institutions, including the Chicago Blackhawks, Lake Forest College, the Women’s Fund of Greater Milwaukee, the Burpee Museum of Natural History, and more. She is the curator of Of This Place, an exhibition at the Burpee Museum (opened July 2022), which showcases contemporary and traditional artworks by Native people from the Ho-Chunk, Sac and Fox, Potawatomi, and Ojibwe Nations. Thompson has presented widely as a diplomat, connector, storyteller, and truth-seeker, and she regularly performs the Native American ceremony called the “Jingle Dress Dance,” or “Healing Dance,” a century-old tradition that constitutes a prayer in physical form and motion.



Speakers

T flash talks — continued

Sponsor: ARK



Lisa Weiss

Storybeat Studios
Founder, Object Diaries Project

Lisa Weiss is the creator of [Object Diaries](#), a multimedia storytelling project and community engagement methodology built around a simple question: What happens when we honor the things that actually matter to us? Through workshops, public storytelling events, and a growing collection of personal narratives, Object Diaries explores what meaningful objects reveal about legacy, memory, and the relationships that define who we are.

Lisa brings to this work more than two decades of experience as a writer, journalist, and Emmy Award-winning producer, including years crafting stories for Oprah Winfrey and CBS News with subjects ranging from President Barack Obama to Dr. Maya Angelou and Brené Brown. A duPont-Columbia Award winner for journalism, she holds an MFA in Prose and Poetry from Northwestern University, and her writing has appeared in outlets including The Boston Globe. The Tory Burch Foundation named her a Fellow.



Nick Wesley

Executive Director and Co-Founder, Urban Rivers

Nick Wesley is the Co-founder and Executive Director of Urban Rivers, a leading organization dedicated to transforming urban waterways into vibrant, community-centered spaces. With a deep commitment to environmental sustainability and community engagement, Nick has spearheaded numerous initiatives that integrate natural ecosystems with urban development. His leadership has been instrumental in creating projects that not only enhance the ecological health of urban rivers but also provide accessible, inclusive recreational spaces for all. Nick has become an expert in working with stakeholders, government agencies, and community partners to create innovative space within navigable waterways.

[Urban Rivers](#) is a Chicago-based nonprofit dedicated to transforming urban waterways into wildlife sanctuaries and public green spaces. Their flagship project, the [Wild Mile](#), is the world's first floating eco-park, located on the North Branch Canal of the Chicago River, featuring floating gardens, wildlife habitats, and community walkways.



In-Person Sessions

M Monday, July 27

This year's conference takes place virtually on Wednesday, July 22, and in-person in Chicago on July 26-29.

In-person sessions will take place on the 3rd floor of the Marriott Marquis Chicago.

Session Tracks

The conference has curated tracks to help you plan your conference experience.

The tracks for this year include:

Collections Stewardship

Sponsor: Dimension Fine Art Services LLC

Exhibitions

Sponsor: Art Display Essentials, a 10-31 Company

Leadership & Advancement

Sponsor: H.E. Branch Advisors

Management & Operations

Marketing & Engagement

Programs

Sponsor: Museum Explorer

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM

Stewardship Starts Here: Trust, Truth, and the Places We Inherit

Track: Exhibitions

Location: Physiology

How can museums inspire stewardship before asking for action? This session explores how deeply place-based experiences ground history and sustainability in emotional connection. Using Conner Prairie as a case study, presenters share how land, architecture, and experience design work together to foster responsibility through local stories.

Presenters: Norman Burns, Conner Prairie; Sarah Fitzpatrick-Anderson, Monadnock; Shera Street, Luci

More Than Just a Field Trip: Developing Experiential Learning Partnerships

Track: Programs

Location: Probability

Discover how authentic external partnerships can enhance your field trip program. Explore how the Chicago History Museum and Embarc Chicago have joined together to create an experiential learning museum visit, based on student choice and artmaking. Complete your own partnership planning guide to consider application in your unique museum context.

Presenters: Heidi Moisan, Chicago History Museum; Megan Clark, Chicago History Museum; Shifa Ahmed, Embarc Chicago

AI in the Real World for Museums: Foundations, Guardrails, and Readiness

Track: Management & Operations

Location: Sports

AI is already showing up in museum work—but often without shared standards or guardrails. This practical session helps museum professionals understand what AI can and can't do, where it fits responsibly, and how to assess readiness before adoption. Grounded in museum values, not hype.

Presenter: Marissa Garza, MGTV Systems Studio and West Chicago City Museum

In-Person Sessions



Monday, July 27

The Truth in Prioritizing Collection Management

Track: Collections Stewardship

Location: Technology

In this session, Racine Art Museum is presented as a case study for getting a large collection under control. Looking at the past, present, and future of collection, RAM staff will discuss the experience with pausing acquisitions and shifting to focus on collection management through revised policies and procedures, auditing the collection and records, and addressing storage.

Presenter: Valerie Vespalec, Racine Art Museum

A Cultural Collective Model for Cities Big and Small

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Marketing & Engagement

Location: Theater

Join staff and leadership from the Chicago Cultural Alliance to learn more about how the collective works together on citywide events, such as Journey Chicago and the new Meeting the Moment series of support programs. The panel will include discussion with a Core Member of the Alliance: Heritage Museum of Asian Art.

Presenters: Mónica Félix, Chicago Cultural Alliance; John Russick, Chicago Cultural Alliance; Ji Yang, Heritage Museum of Asian Art

Building a Donor Engagement Plan that Works and Scales Results

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Location: Henry Clarke

In this hands-on session, attendees will explore practical strategies for donor retention, analyze prospect research tools, and build customizable engagement plans. Through guided exercises and examples, participants will learn how to segment donors, streamline stewardship, and create scalable systems that strengthen relationships and boost fundraising results.

Presenters: Eric Heininger, EDEN+ Fundraising Consulting; Steven Schnell, Museum of Discovery

From Follower to Friend

Track: Marketing & Engagement

Leadership & Advancement

Location: Trigonometry

Brainstorm ways to motivate visitors, members, and “followers” to support your mission as everyday givers and volunteers.

Presenters: Michelle Hummel, Web Strategy Plus; Sarah Owens, Radiance Insights; Diana Tuite, University of Iowa Stanley Museum of Art; Zoe Tyler, Kohl Children’s Museum of Greater Chicago

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

The Unreasonable Museum: Designing for Real Brains, Not Ideal Visitors

Track: Exhibitions

Location: Physiology

Museums prize reason—but visitors aren’t reasonable. This playful, provocative session explores how real human brains shape trust, attention, and meaning in museums. Through psychology and hands-on activities, participants will challenge professional assumptions and discover creative ways to design experiences that feel more human, memorable, and true.

Presenter: Greg Dietzenbach, McCullough Creative

Listening as Truth: Reimagining Museum Education Through Teacher Centered Research and Collaboration

Track: Programs

Location: Probability

How can museums honor the truths of the communities they serve? Through statewide teacher research, advisory committees, and collaborative design, presenters show how community voice reshaped school offerings for today’s classrooms. Discover how responsive listening can transform educational practice and strengthen institutional impact.

Presenters: Bethany Thomas, Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites; Jessica Toran, Naper Settlement

In-Person Sessions

M Monday, July 27

From Research to Action: Addressing Workforce, Workplace, and Compensation Issues at Museums and Historic Sites

Track: Management & Operations

Location: Sports

Join a panel to discuss the recently published results of the National Survey of History Practitioners, a research effort to understand who works in the history field, how they're paid, and how they feel about their work. We'll also discuss how we can make our field more resilient and sustainable.

Presenters: Eric Morse, American Association for State and Local History; Sara Phalen, Warrenville Historical Society and West Chicago City Museum; Jennifer Van Haaften, Wisconsin Veterans Museum

Nuestras Historias & Our Stories: Latinas/os/xs in U.S. History and Museums

Track: Collections Stewardship

Location: Technology

Join a captivating conversation with leading Latina/o/x history and museum professionals as they discuss their critical work of preserving, interpreting, and celebrating diverse Latina/o/x experiences in U.S. This dynamic panel will explore the innovative strategies and unique challenges involved in ensuring that Latina/o/x stories are central to the American narrative.

Presenters: Sylvia Gutierrez Scoggin; Carlos Tortolero, National Museum of Mexican Art; Elena Gonzales, Chicago History Museum; Antonio Diaz Oliva, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Holding Cultural Truths: Balancing Identity and Relevance in German American Museums

Track: Marketing & Engagement

Location: Theater

Holding Cultural Truths explores how two German American institutions balance heritage, relevance, and change. Through case studies, presenters share strategies for inclusive interpretation, audience engagement, and mission-driven adaptation while offering scalable tools for museums navigating shifting demographics, accessibility and funding challenges, and evolving community expectations.

Presenters: Clare Tobin, German American Heritage Center and Museum; Samantha Lundeen, DANK Haus German American Cultural Center

Strengthening Museum Governance in a Changing Landscape

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Location: Henry Clarke

Strong museum governance starts with intentional board development. This session explores practical strategies for recruiting, engaging, and sustaining effective boards amid shifting community expectations and institutional pressures. Through real-world case studies, participants will gain actionable insights to strengthen board leadership, align governance with mission, and build resilient, community-centered museums.

Presenters: Matthew Toland, Ellwood House Museum; Megan Wood, Ohio History Connection; Darren Macfee, Nonprofit Wizards; Jeff Capps, Iowa Children's Museum; Charity Counts, Association of Midwest Museums

Midwest Museum Superheroes: Facing our Kryptonite - A Roundtable Discussion

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Programs

Location: Trigonometry

Museums play a pivotal role in their communities as they connect people across time and place, encourage dialogue and discourse, and foster imagination and curiosity about the world we share. Yet the strengths that make museums essential are increasingly under attack. Let's rally around our strengths, share what we're doing, and leave ready for what's next.

Presenters: Joe Imholte, American Swedish Institute; Rachel Berlinski, Oak Park River Forest Museum; Richard Faron, Museum Explorer, Inc.; Ann Filmer, Riverside Arts Center; Katherine Johnson, Chicago Botanic Garden; and Ani Schmidt, Adler Planetarium

In-Person Sessions

M Monday, July 27

3:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Adaptations: Interdisciplinarity and the 21st Century Museum

Track: Exhibitions

Location: Physiology

Museums eager to meet the wants and needs of 21st century audiences often look to intersections of art and science, interdisciplinarity, and technological innovation in their exhibitions. How can a museum push itself to create interdisciplinary experiences that activate collections and rethink what exhibitions can be? Join us for a discussion about how museums can foster collaboration and reimagine practice to create experiences that bring collections to life in new and meaningful ways.

Presenters: Mary Worrall, Michigan State University Museum; Teresa Goforth, Michigan State University Museum

We Hold These Truths: Using Religion as a Lens in Museum Interpretation

Track: Programs

Location: Probability

How can museums engage religion as history, culture, and lived experience? Four Chicago institutions share practical strategies for using religion as an interpretive lens across exhibitions, programs, and collections, grounded in scholarship, community engagement, and museum values.

Presenters: Brandon Stokes, Newberry Library; Nate King, American Writers Museum; Rebekah Coffman, Chicago History Museum; Philip Nadasdy, Chicago Architecture Center

From Hiring to Thriving: Self-Advocacy for Neurodivergent Museum Professionals

Track: Management & Operations

Location: Sports

Self-advocacy is a skill, not a burden. This session offers practical tools for neurodivergent museum professionals navigating hiring, on-boarding, and long-term roles. Learn language, frameworks and strategies that support sustainability, retention, and thriving across museum workplaces.

Presenters: Elin Filbey, Deaccessioned Career Coaching, and Ross Edelstein, Indiana University/Autism, LLC

Engineering Truths: Safeguarding Collections Through Systems That Protect

Track: Collections Stewardship

Location: Technology

Explore how mechanical and fire protection systems safeguard collections and uphold museum values. This panel of engineers and museum operations leaders will share challenges, solutions, and scalable strategies for institutions of all sizes—ensuring preservation, safety, and public trust remain at the heart of museum practice.

Presenters: Brian Noonan, SmithGroup; Leslie Villanueva, SmithGroup; Tom Ryan, The Art Institute of Chicago; Julio Saravia, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; and Emmelia Lamphere, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago

Holding Attention: How Short-Form Video Builds Trust, Niche Audiences, and Museum Relevance

Track: Marketing & Engagement

Location: Theater

TikTok, Reels, Shorts—oh my. This session explores how museums can use short-form video to cut through the noise, build trust, and attract niche audiences, drawing on real research and a small-museum case study that proves it works.

Presenter: Stephanie Hartman, Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum and Gardens

In-Person Sessions



Monday, July 27

In the Room Where it Happens: How Museum Leaders Make Hard Decisions

Track: Leadership & Advancement
Location: Henry Clarke

This session offers candid insight into how museum leaders actually make decisions when priorities compete and outcomes are uncertain. Attendees gain peer-level perspective, not prescriptions, and leave with a practical framework they can use immediately in real institutional conversations.

Presenters: Jeremy Knoll, BNIM; Steve Waterman, Nelson Atkins Museum of Art; and Nick Nelson, Springfield Art Museum

4:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Posters + Conversation Stations

Posters and Conversation Stations will take place in Grand Horizon EFG during the afternoon reception.

Civic Learning Spaces: Museums Meeting the Need as Co-Educators in Today's Environment

Track: Programs

This session will equip museums and historic sites to fill the gap in the current environment for age-appropriate civics programming. Participants will experience activities from Applewood's Civics and History field trip for high school students and leave with ideas to build youth-focused civics programs at their museums.

Presenters: Renee Saba, Ruth Mott Foundation/Applewood; Cole Rutledge, Ruth Mott Foundation/Applewood

Connecting Communities to Serve a Vital Need - Museums on Call

Track: Programs

Discover how Museums on Call brings uplifting, meaningful cultural moments to patients and families across healthcare settings. Explore magical activity ideas, hear stories of healing through art and history, and learn how your museum can get involved—we'll guide you to the right contacts and share opportunities you can begin right away.

Presenter: Brooke Calderone, Illinois Association of Museums

Green Space Use and Accessibility During the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Mixed-Methods Study

Track: Management & Operations

Green spaces gained new importance during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. A study focused on the Chicagoland region investigated the role of green spaces in supporting physical and mental well-being, and if access was equitably distributed across communities. Green space use by cultural institutions will also be discussed.

Presenter: Alek Gasiel

Illinois America 250

Track: Programs

The IL250 Conversation Station is a resource table available to organizations, communities, and educators interested in learning more about ways to engage with the Semiquincentennial throughout the entire year, the 4th of July and beyond

Presenter: Erin Drain, Illinois America 250 Project Lead

Iterative Design for Teen Audiences: Case Studies in Internship Development

Track: Programs

Designing is only the first step - the best programs evolve and iterate! In this case study, learn how iterative and data-driven design has propelled internship curriculums forward. Take away key insights from teen feedback, critical elements of success, and reflections on opportunities for transformation in your own teen-facing programs.

Presenter: Abby Busser-Accettura, Shedd Aquarium

In-Person Sessions

M Monday, July 27

Kurrent Script and Current Practices: Transcribing Handwritten Botany Labels from 19th Century Prussia

Track: Collections Stewardship

Collections professionals often encounter illegible handwriting. While processing historic botany specimens, the Chicago Academy of Sciences staff and volunteers encountered herbarium labels written in German Kurrent script, which ceased to be taught in 1941. Learn how they handled these transcription challenges and put your own skills to the test.

Presenter: Jessica Weller, Chicago Academy of Sciences

Lilacs, a Ventriloquist Dummy, and a Squirrel Uprising: How Small Stories Build Powerful Brands

Track: Marketing & Engagement

Discover how small, unexpected stories can create powerful museum brands. Three Executive Directors share real-world examples of how quirky artifacts and local lore drive marketing, membership, and gift shop success. Walk away with practical ideas and inspiration to turn your museum's uniqueness into meaningful audience engagement.

Presenters: Brian Failing, Aurora Regional Fire Museum; Sarah Richardt, Grover Center: Museum & Historical Society; Alison Costanzo, Lombard Historical Society

Listen In: Exploring Cutting-Edge Technologies to Provide Audio Description and Self-Guided Audio Tours in Museums for Accessibility

Track: Exhibitions

How can we make exhibitions come alive for museum visitors who cannot visually experience content? Join the conversation about technologies for providing audio description/audio tours for visitors, especially those who are blind or have low vision. You'll help capture current practice, brainstorm solutions, and explore technology options available to museums.

Presenter: Denice Blair, Michigan State University Museum

Meet-n-Greet with Pre-Recorded Session Presenters

Track: Leadership & Advancement Programs

This year's pre-recorded virtual sessions cover a range of topics - from leadership and programs for people with memory loss to museum endowments and small team fundraising. Stop by this presenter meet-n-greet station to connect and ask questions.

Presenters: Jim Croft, JWC Consulting Inc.; Charles L. Katzenmeyer; and Wes Moran, Museum of Contemporary Art; and Eric Heininger, EDEN+ Fundraising Consulting

Museums Playing Together: Fostering Peer Support Outside of Your Museum Walls

Track: Programs

How can we play well with other institutions, and why? Join the DuPage Children's Museum, the Batavia Depot Museum, and fellow professionals to explore the power of collaboration. Review partnership examples, discuss challenges, and leave with a plan for building successful, cross-museum relationships that strengthen communities and the museum field.

Presenters: Areli Morales, DuPage Children's Museum; Peyton Reicherts, DuPage Children's Museum; Jessica Meis, Batavia Depot Museum

Stewarding Truths in Collections Data: Designing Systems Under Real Resource Constraints

Track: Collections Stewardship

What truths live in your collections data? Using a technical case study in developing collections management solutions without access to commercial platforms, we will discuss the challenges and opportunities involved in navigating legacy data, inherited systems, resource constraints, and the documentation choices that shape access, accountability, and consultation work!

Presenter: Hayat Zarzour, Illinois State Archaeological Survey

In-Person Sessions



Monday, July 27

Two Things Can Be True - Balancing Collections Access and Collections Stewardship

Track: Collections Stewardship

Let's be honest – we all know this tension. This session is an honest examination to build understanding and share examples of successfully navigating this challenge. Bring an open mind and learn how to bridge what feels like mutually exclusive priorities in ways that benefit our visitors, communities, and collections!.

Presenters: Brenda Raney; Madison Auten, Auburn Cord Duesenberg Automobile Museum

We Hold These Truths: Not All Commitments Are Created Equal

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Drowning in commitments but starving for connection? Discover why you can't "time manage" your way out of overload – and what actually works. Learn to reclaim authentic presence, set guilt-free boundaries and transform exhaustion into intentional impact. Stop performing in life and start living.

Presenter: De'Andrea Matthews, Detroit Zoological Society

We hold these Truths...Some core beliefs about great advancement programs and a look at the current state of philanthropy

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Buckle up for a jam-packed (but efficient) ride through the world of successful museum advancement practices. Enhance your understanding of key strategies and the things we hold true about our wonderful profession

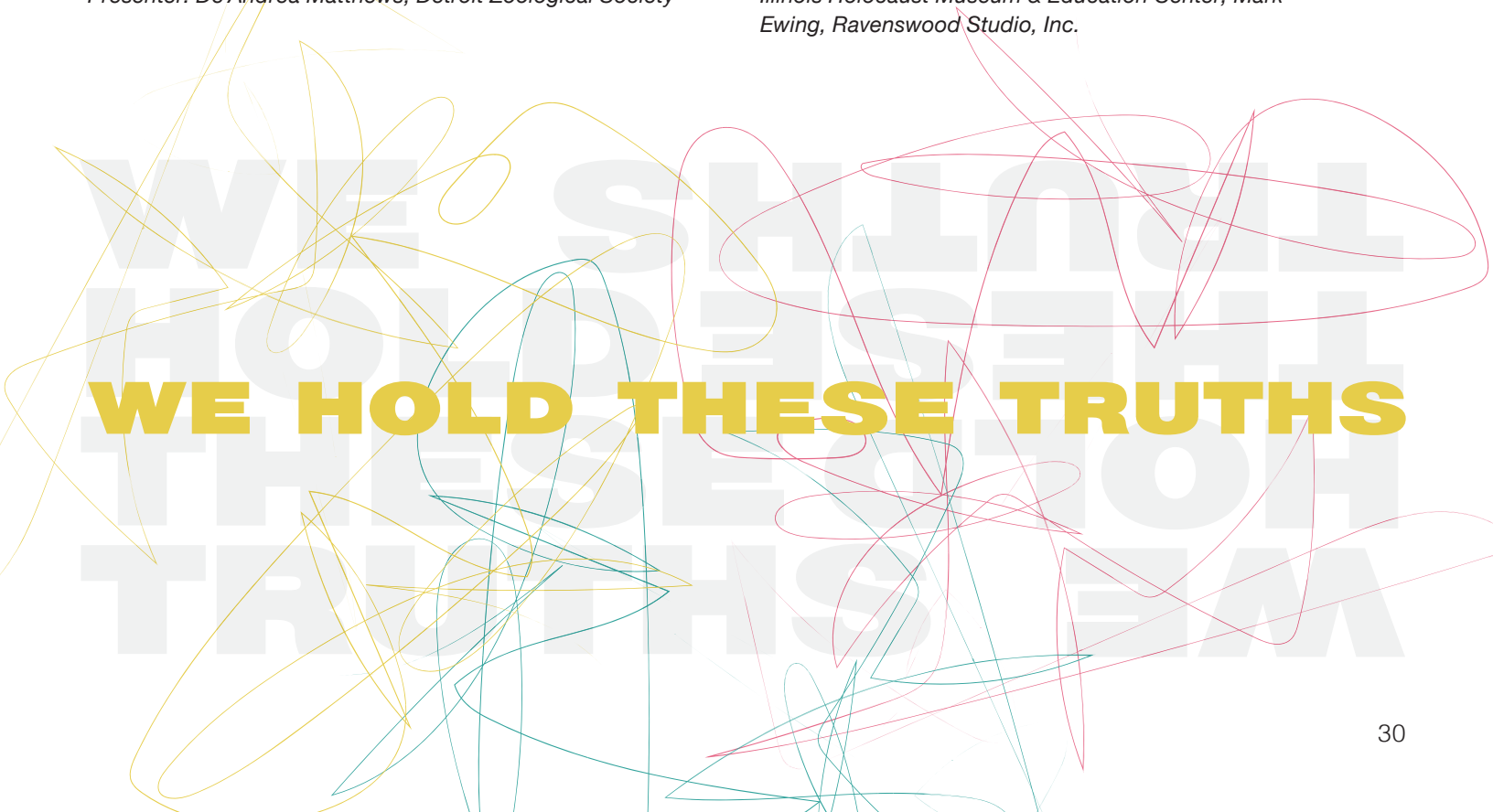
Presenters: Bill Lynerd, The Field Museum; Jacob Masters, Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens

When Space Shrinks, Truth Can't: Decision-Making in Temporary and Transitional Spaces

Track: Exhibitions

Learn how the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center upheld its educational mission while transitioning to a satellite location, Experience360. Explore how innovative designs and curated narrative selection was used to protect historical integrity, ensuring core values remain powerful and public trust stays unshaken even in limited spaces.

Presenters: Amy R. Bornkamp, Luci; Leah Rauch, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center; John Tweedie, Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center; Mark Ewing, Ravenswood Studio, Inc.



WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS

In-Person Sessions

T Tuesday, July 28

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM

Be Radical: Breaking Barriers in Exhibits

Track: Exhibitions

Location: Physiology

Have you been trying to create progressive exhibitions and programming but worry about pushback from visitors, leadership, or the risk of losing funding? Join the Lombard Historical Society and the Jane Addams Hull House to learn practical strategies for moving forward with intention and confidence, even in challenging times.

Presenters: Rae Slowik, The Grove National Historic Landmark; Alison Costanzo, Lombard Historical Society; Candace Bey, Jane Addams Hull House

Shifting Strategies When Schools Face Funding Cuts

Track: Programs

Location: Probability

Explore how one museum has pivoted its educational programs to better provide desired facilitation options in a time when funding cuts are affecting school budgets. Discuss what strategies you can use to bring your museum's value to your community and address the community's budget constraints and boost your bottom line.

Presenters: Armand Morales, DuPage Children's Museum; Jessie Janik, DuPage Children's Museum

When Your Mission is National and Your Audience is Local

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Programs

Exhibitions

Location: Sports

Featuring four Chicago museums with a national designation and scope, this panel session focuses on the impact of that status on their institutional identities, how it has shaped their missions and values, and how it guides their approach to collecting and local community engagement. We'll also learn more about how this designation has opened the door for national and global exchange and/or presented unexpected challenges to their mission.

Presenters: Mónica Félix, Chicago Cultural Alliance; Billy Ocasio, National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture; Lisa Lee, National Public Housing Museum

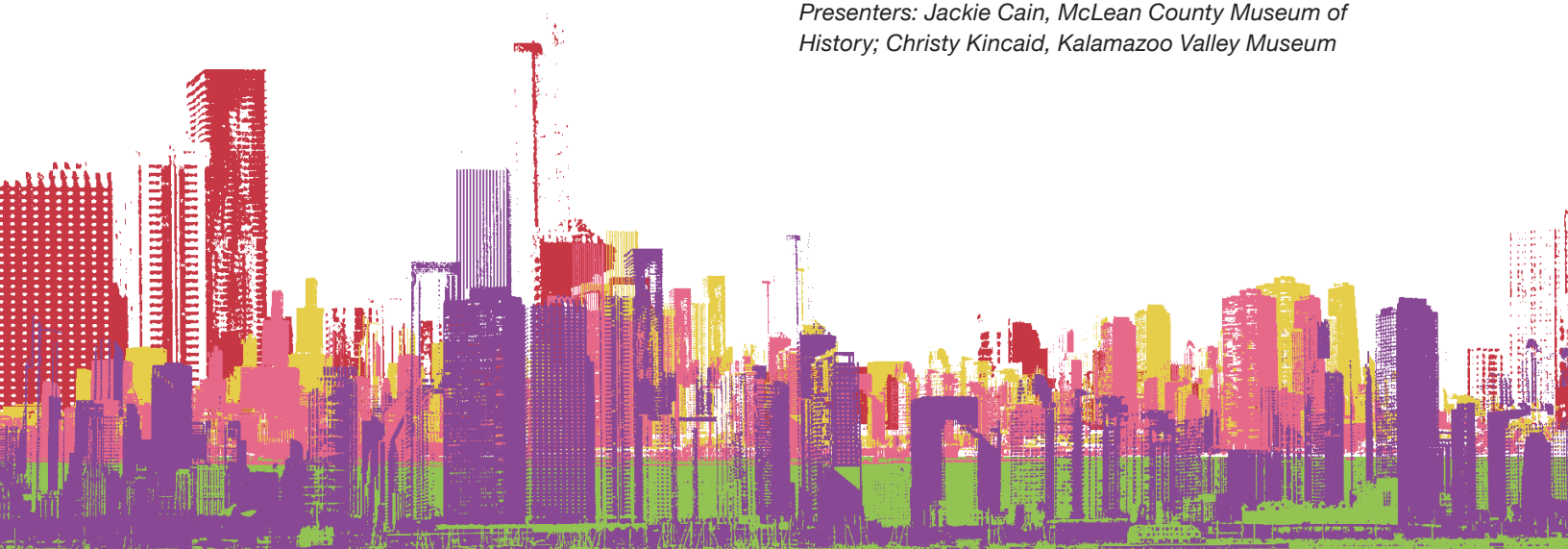
From Chaos to Clarity: Applying Project Management Tools to Streamline Collections Work

Track: Collections Stewardship

Location: Technology

Project management isn't just for tech teams! Learn how Collections departments can use platforms like Monday.com to streamline grants, inventories, donations, and environmental data, create clearer workflows, shared documentation, and sustainable systems that help museums do more with less.

Presenters: Jackie Cain, McLean County Museum of History; Christy Kincaid, Kalamazoo Valley Museum



In-Person Sessions

T Tuesday, July 28

Intentional and Flexible - Successful Mission-Aligned Museum Stores

Track: Marketing & Engagement

Location: Theater

Hear from two museums whose intentional approach to curating a mission-aligned retail store has resulted in a positive guest experience and a healthy bottom line. Find out how their mission and understanding of audience interests are guiding their decision-making and the key factors that have ensured each store's success.

Presenters: Joy DeFrance, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History; Dyembe Toure, Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History; and Karin Moen Abercrombie, Swedish American Museum

Navigating Political Turmoil: Museum Leadership in an Era of Division

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Location: Henry Clarke

Join three museum leaders to discuss leading history organizations in this challenging political climate. The presenters will use case studies and audience participation to examine the balance of the mission, funding, reputation, staff well-being, and values – in the context of polarized perspectives of donors, trustees, visitors, and staff.

Presenters: David Janssen, BruceMuseum; Megan Wood, Ohio History Connection; Tobi Voigt, Michigan History Center

Mission Delivery on a Dime - A Brainstorming Challenge

Track: Management & Operations

Marketing & Engagement

Programs

Location: Trigonometry

Join us for a collaborative game to gather inspiration and collaborate with your peers to solve common museum conundrums using a variety of cost-saving strategies.

Presenters: Kristine Klasen, Chazen Museum of Art; Kelly Kniewel, eATLAS – Adventures To Go

1:30 PM – 2:30 PM

Inclusive by Design: Creating Access From the Start

Track: Exhibitions

Location: Physiology

As museums create experiential exhibits blending art, media, and technology, accessibility becomes both more complex and more essential. Through real examples, we will share strategies for embedding accessibility from the start and ensuring it remains central as projects evolve. This discussion positions accessibility as a catalyst for creativity and inclusion—helping teams deliver richer, more meaningful experiences for all.

Presenters: Natalie Pettit, Roto; Stephanie M. Lampkin, PhD, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center; and Lindsey Young, Shedd Aquarium

Beyond the Boo: Placemaking, Policy & the Paranormal

Track: Programs

Location: Probability

Beyond the Boo: Placemaking, Policy & the Paranormal explores how ghost-themed programming can engage or challenge museums of all sizes. Through case studies, presenters examine how mission, place, and community expectations shape responsible decisions, revealing when paranormal programs are a treat and when they are best left in the shadows.

Presenters: Nina Fuscaldo, Downers Grove Museum; Nadia Maragha, Jane Addams Hull-House Museum; Devin Payne, Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites; Kelly Klobucher, A Muse Consulting

In-Person Sessions

T Tuesday, July 28

Building Institutional Alignment: Using Exhibit Trainings to Empower Staff and Improve the Visitor Experience

Track: Management & Operations

Location: Sports

Go behind the scenes of in-house exhibit training at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis. Explore real training examples, multiple delivery formats, and practical strategies you can adapt to museums of any size. Learn how aligned staff training strengthens exhibit storytelling and the visitor experience.

Presenters: Shanna Martin, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis; Marissa Ulie, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

Ask the Registrar: An Open Roundtable to Discuss Collection Conundrums, Quandaries, & Questions

Track: Collections Stewardship

Location: Technology

What stewardship truths do we uphold? What can be challenged? Join our "Ask the Registrar" roundtable! Share your challenges, learn from colleagues, and gain practical solutions for collection care. Panelists will guide open dialogue, fostering a supportive network and empowering you to navigate the future with confidence.

Presenters: Sarah Humes, Grand Rapids Public Museum; Mx. Jocelyn Krueger, Grinnell College Museum of Art; Jennifer Gallatin Rigsby, Newfields; Christy Kincaid, Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Museums and the Communities That Make Them

Track: Marketing & Engagement

Location: Theater

Vanessa Sanchez, Executive Director of Yollocalli Arts Reach (NMMA) and Monica Chadha, founder of Civic Projects Architecture share the engagement process with Yollocalli youth, alum, artist, staff and community to turn a decommissioned Fire Station into an arm of the National Museum of Mexican Art's youth arts outreach program.

Presenters: Monica Chadha, Civic Projects Architecture; Vanessa Sanchez, Yollocalli/National Museum of Mexican Art

Modernizing Membership: How Three Institutions Found Revenue Hiding in Plain Sight

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Location: Henry Clarke

Your membership program likely has more revenue potential than you realize. Hear how a zoo, a planetarium, and an art museum each discovered this by making structural and operational changes to their programs. Join this panel to hear their stories and take home practical strategies for rethinking your own membership model.

Presenters: Julia Burns, Lincoln Park Zoo; Brittany Miller, The Art Institute of Chicago; and Hilary Branch, H E Branch Advisors

Ambitious Asks That Worked

Track: Leadership & Advancement

Location: Trigonometry

During this facilitated idea-gathering session, we'll get a chance to hear from our peers about a time they dared to ask for something big and had success. Then we'll use the tips we gathered to help some friends problem-solve. Bring your "ambitious ask" story and, if you have one, a fundraising challenge!

Presenters: Betsy Matt Turner, Putnam Museum and Science Center; Rae Slowik, The Grove National Historic Landmark

In-Person Events



South Loop Museum Hop

Sunday, July 26

5:30–9:00 PM (5:15–9:15 PM, including travel time)

Sponsor: Guardian Fine Art Services

Capacity: Unlimited

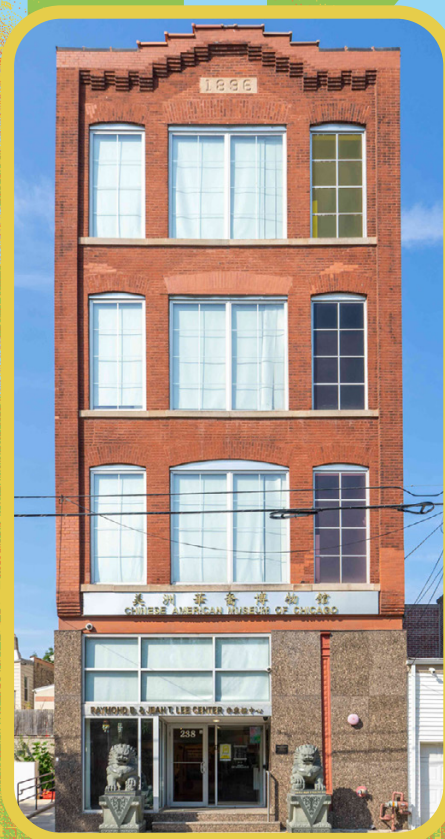
Ticket: \$25 if riding the bus; \$10 if driving self (Conference badges and tickets required for both options.)

Featuring:

- > Chinese American Museum of Chicago
- > Field Museum
- > Glessner House

Discover the rich stories and collections of Chicago's South Side during this special museum hop. From Chinese American heritage at the Chinese American Museum of Chicago and world-renowned natural history at the Field Museum to the architectural legacy of a historic Prairie Avenue residence called the Glessner House, each stop offers a unique opportunity to step back in time with views through different lenses. Access special exhibitions such as *After the Age of Dinosaurs* at the Field Museum and *Ruyell Ho and Li Lin Lee: Language of Abstraction* at the Chinese American Museum. Spend your time exploring remarkable collections, learning from knowledgeable guides, and experiencing three distinctive institutions that help tell the story of Chicago and the world.

See the AMM conference app or ammconference.org for more information.



Chinese American Museum
of Chicago



Field Museum



Glessner House

SOUTH LOOP

In-Person Events



Northwest Museum Hop

Monday, July 27

6:00–9:00 PM (5:45–9:30 PM, including travel time)

Sponsor: Ravenswood Studio

Capacity: Unlimited

Ticket: \$25 if riding the bus; \$10 if driving self (Conference badges and tickets required for both options.)

Featuring:

- > Garfield Park Conservatory
- > Intuit Art Museum
- > National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture

Spend a summer evening exploring three of Chicago's most inspiring cultural destinations. This museum hop features guided tours, hands-on engagement activities, salsa dancing lessons, and access to the indoor and outdoor exhibits at Garfield Park Conservatory, Intuit Art Museum, and National Museum of Puerto Rican Arts & Culture. From lush gardens and striking architecture to self-taught art and vibrant Puerto Rican art collections, each stop offers uniquely immersive experiences. Wander, learn, create, and shop with local vendors for meaningful mementos from the day. It's a celebration of art, culture, and community—perfect for a summer adventure!

See the AMM conference app or ammconference.org for more information.

Transportation for offsite events sponsored by elbê interactive



Garfield Park Conservatory



Intuit Art Museum



National Museum of
Puerto Rican Arts & Culture

In-Person Events



Near North & Lincoln Park Museum Hop

Tuesday, July 28
5:00–8:00 PM (4:30–8:30 PM, including travel time)

Sponsor: Ravenswood Studio

Capacity: Unlimited

Ticket: \$25 if riding the bus; \$10 if driving self (Conference badges and tickets required for both options.)

Featuring:

- > Chicago History Museum
- > Driehaus Museum
- > Newberry Library
- > Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

Explore Chicago's history at four of the city's standout North Side cultural institutions when you visit the Chicago History Museum, Newberry Library, Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum, and the Driehaus Museum. Immerse yourself in the Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum's *Butterfly Haven* and *Wilderness Walk*, and experience Chicago's past through the powerful intersection of art, politics, and social justice at the Chicago History Museum, Newberry Library, and Driehaus Museum. Access special exhibitions including *Aquí in Chicago* at Chicago History Museum, *Ink and Outrage* at the Driehaus, and *Conceived in Liberty* at Newberry Library. Galleries will be open late and will each offer hand-on ways to engage – from art-making and animal encounters to guided tours and tastings.

See the AMM conference app or ammconference.org for more information.



Chicago History Museum



Driehaus Museum



Newberry Library



Peggy Notebaert Nature Museum

RETREAT



Closing Day Retreat

W

Closing Day Retreat: Chicago Fed's Money Museum

Wednesday, July 29

9:45 AM–12:00 PM (9:00 AM – 12:30 PM including travel time)

Sponsor: Acme Design, Inc.

There's a hidden gem in Chicago's financial district where you can learn about Federal Reserve System (our nation's central bank) and see what a million bucks looks like in-person. This interactive museum presents the history of money and the day in the life of a dollar – from cash production and circulation to, you guessed it, shredding! Join us for the Closing Day Retreat to decompress as we explore the Chicago Fed's Money Museum and take a rare, guided tour of the bank vaults where billions are stored.

See the AMM conference app or ammconference.org for more information.

SOLD OUT

AMM Awards

congratulations to the 2026 AMM Awards recipients!

Best Practices Award

Illinois State Museum, Springfield, IL

With a desire to reimagine meaningful collaboration while engaging previously underserved audiences, the Illinois State Museum (ISM) engaged with the Spanish Club at Beardstown High School to develop a temporary exhibition titled *Mi Casa es Tu Casa*, exploring the lived experiences of immigrant and first-generation Latin American families in rural Illinois.

The relationship between the staff of ISM, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), and the high school students from this diverse rural community went beyond mentorship and collaboration to co-creation, inviting the students to the table as peers in the planning and implementation of *Mi Casa es Tu Casa*. The students shaped every stage of the exhibition design process: generating the concept, collecting oral histories, selecting objects for display, creating the exhibit's visual identity, drafting label text, and hosting the exhibition for their peers and families. The end product was a beautiful example of inclusive storytelling, but it is the thoughtful and humble approach to engaging students as co-creators that makes this project a model for all museums.

AMM is pleased to present the Illinois State Museum with the Best Practices Award and to have the opportunity to celebrate and learn from their student collaborators and community partners!

Groundbreakers Award

Minnesota Museum of American Art, Saint Paul, MN

Since 2023, the Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) has been engaged in a deeply collaborative, community-centered process with artist and cultural leader Penny Kagigebi (White Earth Ojibwe) to develop *Queering Indigeneity*—a multi-year, multi-generational exhibition and programming initiative that centers 2-Spirit, Native queer, and gender-expansive voices.

Queering Indigeneity, now open through August 16, 2026, offers representation that is not only visible, but affirming, celebratory, and grounded in Indigenous worldviews. By reclaiming traditional understandings of 2-Spirit people as leaders, healers, and visionaries, the project reconnects contemporary communities to cultural knowledge disrupted by colonization—and insists on a future shaped by resilience and belonging. Developed over multiple years in collaboration with 15 regional artists and Kagigebi, the project has already fostered meaningful relationships, professional growth, and intergenerational dialogue.

AMM is excited to celebrate the intentional approach of Minnesota Museum of American Art on this bold and much-needed project through this year's Groundbreakers Award!



AMM Awards

congratulations to the 2026 AMM Awards recipients!



Distinguished Career Award

Sherry D'Asto Peglow, Indianapolis, IN

Sherry D'Asto Peglow is the most tenured staff member at Newfields in Indianapolis, IN, with 36 years of service in registration roles, from exhibitions registration to permanent collections. Sherry's staff describe her as their "Gold Star Registrar" and "fearless leader." Her vast knowledge of policy and procedure—not just at Newfields, but many institutions globally—and the artistry of her hand-drawn condition reports are alone worthy of recognition.

While Sherry has exemplified the highest standards of the museum registration profession, it is through her leadership and mentorship of each new generation of registrars that she has had the most profound impact. Sherry recognizes and nurtures individual strengths, creating opportunities for others to grow as leaders and contribute meaningfully to the field. Her mentorship has shaped the careers of countless museum professionals, many of whom have gone on to lead registration departments of their own.

AMM is thrilled to honor Sherry D'Asto Peglow and her "unwavering dedication to art, to the museum, and to those around her" through the Distinguished Career Award!

Distinguished Career Award

Peter James Ward Richie, Minneapolis, MN

In his fourteen years of volunteer service on the Board of Directors for the Robbinsdale Historical Society (RHS), Pete Richie has helped to advance the organization's mission through programs, multimedia communications, collections stewardship, and exhibitions.

Among his accomplishments at RHS, Pete secured and completed 3 collections management grants to support the development of a Collections Management Policy, implementation of a new collections database, and completion of a three-dimensional object inventory—all part of a long-range plan to bring RHS up to speed with fieldwide best practices. Pete's "warm leadership and creative problem-solving" were essential in the success of the museum's internship programs and reimagining of museum displays. His tenacity and unwavering passion for local history have also reached beyond the museum—from writing and publishing two books for Images of America to engaging in preservation and advocacy efforts for local landmarks.

AMM looks forward to celebrating Pete Richie's outstanding volunteer service through the Distinguished Career Award!

AMM Awards

congratulations to the 2026 AMM Awards recipients!



Promising Leadership Award

Marissa Ulie, Indianapolis, IN

Marissa Ulie is the Training and Professional Development Assistant at The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis. Marissa began her career at TCM in 2019 as a Gallery Interpreter before transitioning to the training team in 2023.

Among Marissa’s earliest accomplishments was the development of a self-care toolkit, which has been described by museum staff as “an oasis in the desert” and has since evolved into monthly self-care workshops for staff. Marissa has also supported the museum’s efforts to center diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion through service on their internal task force. Most recently, as part of the Children’s Museum’s 100th anniversary celebrations, Marissa went above and beyond to fill a gap in programming by partnering with a local historian to create walk and talk tours focused on themes from the museum’s Memories, Wonders and Dreams: Stories from 100 Years exhibition.

As her nominator described, Marissa Ulie “leads quietly with empathy, compassion, and understanding.” AMM is thrilled to present her this year’s Promising Leadership Award!



See you in Kansas City!

August 4-7, 2027

