In these changing times, museum volunteer programs have been challenged to find new ways to utilize resources with ever-shrinking budgets. AAMV posed several questions to volunteer program managers across the country and retrieved some insightful feedback.

Are you concerned about your paid volunteer management staff?
We have heard concern across the museum field about job security, especially for volunteer program managers. In this tough time, it is even more essential that we track volunteer hours and note the importance of what volunteers give to museums. Besides tracking volunteer hours, you should track the human resource value of the contributed hours and the projects completed by volunteers and interns. Gather positive visitor feedback about volunteers and track how volunteers mentor new staff. In doing so, senior museum staff will see the importance of a well-run volunteer program. Debbie Young of the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis states, “if you don’t track volunteer hours, start doing it now because you are creating the justification for all to see the importance of your volunteer program.”

Are you seeing less interest in your volunteer program?
Some museums have seen a reduced interest in volunteering. Karen Fink of the National Constitution Center has seen more interest in paid positions rather than volunteer positions. Many of the applicants “have indicated that while they would love to be able to give their time, they are in a financial position where they need some income.” However, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens’ Lisa Leyh has seen an increase in volunteer applications. The program is at capacity and Lisa is looking at staff and visitor needs and considering new positions for the increased interest.

Have you seen any new trends during this tough time?
Many of you have found new opportunities to expand volunteer roles within your institution, especially for vacant staff positions. Linda Apple of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston has seen an increase in volunteer and intern applications along with an increase in staff requests for volunteers. She has created new volunteer positions for annual fundraising appeals. “This has typically been outsourced, but now we are thinking that we could recruit volunteers in groups to help with phone calls and annual fund solicitation.” Volunteers at the Oklahoma Museum of History have begun helping with community partnership and marketing efforts, duties formerly lead by staff.

To learn more about new trends in these challenging times, log onto the AAMV member listserv at www.yahoogroups.com to post new questions and review past dialogue. The current economic climate may have thrown some challenges our way, but as Robbin Davis of the Oklahoma History Center notes, “We are moving into a golden age at our museum where the staff has little breathing room and are taking a harder look at recognizing the value of the volunteers.”

Michael Kruelle is Head of Visitor Services, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, Washington, DC, and AAMV Treasurer.
From the President

We have been very quiet in the last few months but that does not mean that AAMV has not been hard at work for our members. We have been working closely with AAM as a member of AAM’s Museum Advocacy Team by participating in phone conference meetings and making calls to congressmen and senators to gain more support for our museums. We thank Maretta Hemsley-Wood from the National Air and Space Museum, for not only representing AAMV but all of you on Museum Advocacy Day. Our goal continues to be to show the value and importance of museums, volunteer managers and museum volunteers. The AAMV is well aware of how difficult it is for museums right now, and we are doing everything we can to help and support you.

Again, quiet does not mean inactivity. Sometimes one must sacrifice things in the present for a brighter and better future. The absence of our newsletter these last few months has been of great concern for us but it was something we had to sacrifice to enable us to make the transition to going green. Having a new, updated and more useful website is all part of this transition. We have also updated and improved our membership files and the process by which we handle membership. These are all wonderful things that will improve the way we can serve you better and in a more timely manner. Whenever there is change or one is making improvements, there are setbacks. It has taken much longer to get our new website up than we had planned because we have run into several unexpected technical delays. Soon we will have a new and more helpful website, a better newsletter and we will be introducing new and exciting programs that we have been working on to honor our volunteers.

Transitioning sometimes can be sad, however. The AAMV board is sad to say good-bye to two treasured board members. Emily Mudd-Hendricks, who had been on the board for many years, had to resign late last year, and Rhonda Hethcox, from the Birmingham Museum of Art, has just resigned. Both of these talented and hard working women will be greatly missed. It has been a pleasure to work with these dedicated people.

I will end this with a personal transition. I am completing my term as AAMV President, effective after the completion of the AAM Meeting in Philadelphia. I will continue on the board as AAMV’s immediate past president. This is so important to me to still be a part of this wonderful team when all of these transitions take place.

I am Co-chair for the National Docent Symposium that will be in Saint Louis in 2011. I am already staying up until one or two in the morning to be able to do all the things I must do, and do them well; something that is very important to me. I hope you all will attend.

The good news is Lois Kuter! One could never ask for a better Vice President and she will be an excellent President. We have been working closely on all the new things I mentioned above. I feel confident that everything we have worked so hard for will only continue and get better under her leadership. I am sure you will recognize her name. She is always there to answer questions and give great advice and help to all. Lois is the volunteer coordinator for the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

I hope you’re planning to join us at the AAM Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, April 30-May 4! AAMV will present two sessions and one special event during the meeting, all of which are described in this newsletter.

Good-bye and Best Wishes to all,

Gin Wachter
AAMV President
Join Us in Philadelphia!

AAMV will present two sessions and one special event during the 2009 AAM Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, April 30-May 4, 2009. We hope to see you there!

**AAMV Annual Meeting and Luncheon**
(Open to all AAM attendees; advance ticket required)

**Friday, May 1, 2009 – 12:15-1:45 pm**

Guest Speaker: Connie Pirtle, Principal and Founder, Strategic Nonprofit Resources, Bethesda, MD, and AAMV Newsletter Editor

“Volunteer Engagement: Keeping it Relevant, Responsive, and Real”

Museum volunteer programs face some of the same challenges as their institutions: engaging volunteers in relevant ways, staying responsive to the ever-changing needs of volunteers, and making the work of volunteers real. Join museum volunteer professionals at the AAMV annual luncheon to learn some tips and techniques for engaging volunteers in relevant, responsive and real ways.

**“I Have to Do What? – A Benchmark Success Story”**

**Saturday, May 2 – 10:45 am to Noon**

Chair: Debbie Young, Director of Volunteer Services, The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, IN and AAMV Board Member

Learn the process and results of the first year of a benchmarking study including ten museums of different types and sizes from around the country and discover how to apply these measurement standards to your own institution.

**“Talking Shop: Roundtable Discussion with Volunteer and Docent Managers”**

**Saturday, May 2 – 2:00-5:00 pm**

Chair: Gin Wachter, AAMV President and AAMV Board of Directors

Participate in a “roundtable” brainstorming forum where those who work with or manage docents and volunteers share new ideas and solutions to common issues and challenges.

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**AAMV Newsletter**

**Editor**
Connie Pirtle
10103 Edward Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814
AskConnieP@cs.com
Telephone: 301-530-8233

**President**
Gin Wachter
e-mail@ginwachter.com

**Vice President**
Lois Kuter
kuter@acnatsci.org

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the American Association for Museum Volunteers, the nonprofit membership and service organization dedicated to the millions of volunteers in all categories of museums in the United States and to the professionalism in museum volunteer program management. AAMV welcomes submissions of manuscripts for publication. Queries should be made to the Editor.

Information about AAMV’s other services is available at www.AAMV.org.
Heard on the AAMV Listserv

Whether you’re an active participant or a “lurker” on the AAMV listserv at www.YahooGroups.com, there’s always something valuable to learn. Here are excerpts from some recent threads.

**Johanna Moss**, Education Associate, National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia, posted this message:

“We are in the midst of building a new museum, planned to open in 2010. I have been on the listserv and thought I may not respond, I do read all your thoughtful feedback. The Docent Training Program Schedules have been helpful. Before the training schedule though, do you have a set of interview questions you ask on the phone as well as in person when you are going through the recruitment process? Please advise. Thank you!

**Melissa Swanson**, Nauticus Volunteer Coordinator, Norfolk, VA, shared her interview questions on the listserv:

- What do you know about Nauticus?
- Why have you chosen Nauticus to volunteer?
- What would you like to gain from your volunteer experience?
- In what extracurricular activities are you involved?
- Describe any previous work or volunteer experience.
- What are the top two positions in which you are interested?
- Many of our volunteer opportunities require long periods of standing. Are you able to do this job based on the position description?
- Tell me about a strength or skill that you bring to the Nauticus volunteer program.
- What skill would like to gain or improve through volunteering?
- What ages do you enjoy working with best?
- Do you think you are prepared to handle a visitor who is upset? Give an example.
- How long do you intend to volunteer at Nauticus?
- What is your availability? What days and times do you prefer?
- Do you have any concerns about our required criminal background check?
- Do you have any questions about the volunteer program?

**Karen Kennedy Fink**, HR and Volunteer Coordinator, National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, and AAMV Mid-Atlantic Regional Director shared her phone interview questions too:

- How did you hear about the Center as a place to volunteer?
- What attracted you most about volunteering here?
- Are you comfortable working with diverse groups of people? Describe any previous experience you’ve had working with the public.
- The NCC does not support particular viewpoints on the Constitution. Presenting information in a neutral, non-partisan manner is paramount to your service at the Center. Do you understand / accept the Center’s non-partisan mission?
- What type of work would you like to do?
- Do you have any special skills to offer?
- What days and times would you be available to volunteer?
- Describe your previous volunteer experience.

**Lisa Leyh**, Interpretation Volunteer Coordinator, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens, Washington, DC, responded: Hillwood’s interview process for potential docents consists on two components: (1) an informal conversation to get to know the interviewee a little better and (2) a short talk about an object by each interviewee. The object they choose can be a common, everyday object that has meaning or significance for them. We aren’t expecting the interviewee to bring in priceless artifacts or irreplaceable family heirlooms or deliver PhD-level art history presentations! We mean it to be a simple, 5-minute or less chat centered on an object of personal interest. As you can imagine, Hillwood’s guided tours are very object-based and this step helps us evaluate the volunteer’s ability to use an object to tell a story.

Two to three staff members from Interpretation and Visitor Services meet with 4–5 interviewees at a time. Some of Lisa’s interview questions include:

- Being a docent requires flexibility. Can you give us some examples of times you have had to think on your feet?
- Describe how you react to feedback and critiques from peers and supervisors.
- Both training and touring will require you to work cooperatively with small groups of people. What do you feel you bring to the group learning environment? In what areas might you want help from others in the group?
- Is there anything else you want to tell us about yourself that relates to your interest in Hillwood’s docent program? Do you have any further questions about Hillwood or the program?
- Do any of you foresee any problems in keeping the commitment to either education or service? For example, an extended leave of absence or lengthy vacation.

So the next time you need information, use the AAMV listserv to poll your colleagues! The listserv is a benefit of AAMV membership. If you’re not already on it, it’s simple to join. Just go to www.YahooGroups.com, create a free account, and then use the search box to find the “AAMV” group and click on “Join this group.”
What is AAMV?

The American Association for Museum Volunteers (AAMV) is the only national association representing more than 400,000 volunteers in all categories of museums. AAMV is affiliated nationally with the American Association of Museums (AAM), the U.S. Federation of Friends of Museums (USFFM), and internationally with the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM).

AAMV…

• Promotes professional standards of volunteerism.
• Provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.
• Is a not-for-profit organization

Accomplishes these goals in cooperation with museum directors, staff and boards of trustees.

Offers opportunities for continuing education through panel discussions and workshops at local, regional and national conferences.

Encourages volunteers and volunteer program managers to become familiar with projects and programs both locally and nationally.

Informs and represents volunteers in advocacy for tax benefits and other legislation at local and national levels.

The only organization dedicated to museum volunteerism for more than 25 years!

Become an AAMV Member Today!

AAMV members include individuals, groups and institutions who are interested in promoting volunteerism in museums and in starting or improving museum volunteer programs.

Most AAMV members are museum volunteers, volunteer groups and museum staff members who work with volunteers.

Membership benefits…

• Participation in AAMV listserv.
• Quarterly AAMV newsletter.
• Discount on AAMV publications.
• Information on creating and sustaining a museum volunteer program.
• Access to state and regional representatives as well as a network of volunteer professionals and experienced volunteers.

Opportunity to take part in workshops and panel discussions at regional, state, national and international meetings.

Notification of programs on museum volunteer issues at regional, national and international conferences.

Advocacy for benefits for museum volunteers and programs.

Join AAMV today!

Check out the AAMV website at www.aamv.org.

You’ll find:

• Information on the benefits and services of AAMV
• News on AAMV’s new book, Transforming Museum Volunteering
• Dates to note
• Links to other important resources on volunteer program management
• The AAMV Board of Directors and Regional Directors
• Membership information
• How to join AAMV Listserv

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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*This category will receive 10 newsletters mailed to a single address.

If you have any questions about your membership please visit our website www.aamv.org.

Send membership applications to: AAMV, P. O. Box 9494, Washington, DC 20016