MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

As we settle into this strange fall, it strikes me how much has changed in the 6 months since I became President of AAMV. Back in May, we were still hopeful that the summer would bring fewer COVID-19 cases, the idea of sustained protests against police brutality and systemic racism was unimaginable, and on a more personal note – I still had a job, managing volunteers in a museum. And now, we brace for flu season during a pandemic, expect protests to continue until meaningful change happens, and I look for and sometimes find different ways to stay connected to this profession.

There are many unknowns and it is easy to be overwhelmed by so much uncertainty – where do you even start? There have been other times when I have felt unmoored (though not quite to this extent), and I have found answers from a network of people who do what I do: love museums, love the work they do and love working with the paid and unpaid people who make it happen.

Volunteerism and volunteer management will change in the coming years, and we will need to work together to adapt. This is the purpose of AAMV – to be a network for us each to rely on. No one has all the answers, but we each have some answers and the willingness to share.

AAMV is here for you. We want to be responsive and helpful, whether you are new to volunteer engagement looking for best practices, a seasoned pro looking for community, or recently furloughed or laid-off and looking to stay engaged in the field. Please utilize the resources we have and let us know what other resources you need.

Here are some of the things we provide or are working on:

- Standards and best practices for museum volunteer programs
- AAMV Forum*
- Sample forms and documents*
- Volunteer Voices Podcasts*
- Conference session materials*
- Webinars
- Intern Best Practices Taskforce
- Volunteer Manager virtual happy hour – New!
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Taskforce – New!
- Volunteerism in the Post-COVID World Taskforce – New!
Most of these resources can be found on the AAMV website. The new items are genuinely new, and we will soon have resources or more details on the website as it is created. Some resources (designated with a *) are in the members-only section. If you are not a member or need to renew and the $35 is out of your budget, you can now apply for 1-year membership fee waiver.

Email aamvmembership1@gmail.com to request that waiver. If you can pay the membership fee, please do! It allows us do all of these things.

I certainly hope that at the end of my tenure as AAMV president, we will all be able to look back at 2020 as a difficult time, but one that forced a true and positive change in our museums, in our country, and in our world.

Jenny Woods
AAMV President

REMOTE INTERNSHIPS:
WHAT THE CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM LEARNED THIS SUMMER

Marne Bariso

As the nation shut down in mid March, and our cohort of 10 spring interns were unexpectedly forced to finish up their internship experiences remotely, I wondered if we would even had a summer internship program? Maybe I was off the hook for doing background screenings, onboarding, providing professional development enrichment programming, collecting hours data, and conducting exit interviews. But, as summer neared, I heard from colleagues that they would indeed be hosting summer interns--all virtual of course. In fact, we wound up with 28 summer interns--which is just about the same number we host when there isn’t a pandemic. Interns were placed in the development, education, collections, curatorial departments, and well as the president’s office.

I hustled to do some research on remote internships, and was pleased that advice was readily available. The American Alliance of Museums offered a terrific webinar last spring, and there are numerous articles online offerings top tips.

Here are the suggestions I made sure to include in my updated orientation material:

FOR INTERN SUPERVISORS

• Put instructions in writing. Since interns aren’t merely down the hallway, able to ask you, or someone else familiar with their project, writing out instructions explicitly will be useful.

• Set communication norms. Some interns are still getting accustomed to e-mail etiquette, and even us veteran e-mailers can sometimes make mistakes. So, set guidelines for e-mails--such as when to use “reply,” and “reply all.” Do you prefer responses to all e-mails--even when the response is merely “got it!” or “sure thing.” And what are norms for Zoom meetings?

Welcome Back Facebook Post From the Chicago History Museum

Say hello to history again! From the moment we closed our doors, we convened a Museum-wide team dedicated to designing a safe and engaging experience for our guests.

In order to do this, we’ve made some changes to our guidelines, building, and exhibitions to protect visitors and staff, so your visit may look and feel a little different from before. To purchase your tickets and read about our new safety protocols and cleaning procedures, visit our website here.
Many interns will be accustomed to participating in Zoom gatherings due to their online class experiences, but there can be different practices when it comes to professional meetings.

- Set up times to check-in with interns at least once a week. I chatted via phone with my summer intern twice a week, but once a week may suffice. And, allow some conversations to be more informal. Since the chit chat that might normally occur if the internship was in person isn’t possible, think about having some friendly non-business conversation during check-ins. Conversation and communication habits are also soft skills that interns should practice. Also determine how your intern can contact you if an unforeseen urgent questions arise. Should they text or e-mail you? Is there a time during the day when you are quite likely to be at your computer? Your intern will be glad to have more than 1 method of contacting you if necessary.

- Invite your interns to meetings. You may already do this for in-person internship experiences, but arrange for as many opportunities as possible for remote interns to sit in on meetings. This allows for interns to meet additional staff, observe behind-the-scenes plans for projects and group dynamics, plus, meetings are actually enjoyable for interns—according to intern exit interview data. You can also arrange for your intern to make presentations. This allows for interns to practice skills, summarize their accomplishments, and colleagues can hear updates on the intern’s projects.

- Provide enrichment opportunities for interns via Zoom. “Meet the Collections Staff,” “Hear an Update about the Latest Exhibition,” or “Reflections on the Great Pivot of 2020,” would be terrific programs and conversations for remote interns to engage in. And, at the end of a program, let the interns linger and “hang out” with one another if they wish. Again, this is not possible like it would be if we were all in our buildings together, and many interns appreciate opportunities to socialize with intern peers.

FOR INTERNS

- Put instructions in writing. Since interns aren’t merely down the hallway, able to ask you, or someone else familiar with their project, writing out instructions explicitly will be useful.

- Set a consistent time for your internship activities. I heard this tip consistently from exiting interns. Having a set time of day for internship activity will mimic a more standard in-person internship, help build time management skills, and aid with productivity.

- Log accomplishments. Interns should log and journal as they hit milestones in their project, hear compliments from staff, and learn insights from peers or staff. This log could then be used to write a cover letter, or determine the bullet points for the internship description on a resume.

- Set some specific goals, and write them out. These goals could be regarding learning more about the museum field, or skill-related, such as improving time management, communication, and writing and research skills.

This fall, the Chicago History Museum will have far fewer interns than we did this summer--our roster is currently at 8. I hope I can practice what I preach, and continue to learn from our interns’ experiences. Even when we are back in our buildings, and the health crisis is in our rear view mirror, I suspect aspects of remote internships will still linger. Virtual internships address issue of equity and accessibility. I am glad that I have been forced to think out of the box about engaging interns in new and creative ways. It has been enriching for me, too, and certainly benefits our organization.

Marne Bariso
Volunteer and Intern Manager
Chicago History Museum
Covid-19 has forced museums around the world to reevaluate how they operate, reach audiences, and fulfill their missions. Many non-profits faced a unique problem – how do we safely manage, engage, and utilize our dedicated volunteer corps if our institutions are closed? At The Perot Museum of Nature and Science in Dallas, TX, the Volunteer Services team decided to move forward with its annual summer volunteer program for teens using a remote only format. This program, known as Discovery Corps, has taken place every summer for over ten years. In normal circumstances, these high school students assist science day-camp educators and support guest engagement staff in exhibit halls. They would also work in teams on a project (usually a proposal for an activity or educational object) that would be presented to staff and expert volunteers for feedback and the chance for their idea to be used in future programming. With only about one hundred spaces available and an average of over three hundred applicants each year, the program has become highly competitive. By the time The Perot Museum had closed its doors to the public due to Covid-19 in March, most of the participants had already been accepted. The Volunteer Services team had to decide if the program would still even be offered and how it could proceed. Though we knew it would be a challenge and had little idea of what could be accomplished remotely, we very quickly decided that this program would still take place. Many other summer activities and programs were being cancelled and our team knew if there was any way to still offer a meaningful experience, we needed to find it.

After speaking with museum staff and doing research on other teen programs, it was decided that this remote program would focus on workforce readiness and specifically science careers. The Perot Museum is so incredibly lucky to have an adult volunteer corps that consists of many seasoned science professionals. Our team knew it would not be difficult to find individuals who would be excited to speak to these students about careers in STEM. The students were divided up into groups to work together over a two week period. On the first Monday of the first week, the students met via Zoom, supervised by a Volunteer Services team member and a Lead Volunteer. These Leads are established volunteers who have been through the program and could help guide and mentor the new volunteers. Each group was then assigned a science professional (this person agreed to participate and was scheduled in advance) and told some basic information about their educational and career backgrounds. The students then met for at least an hour every day of that week to research this and related careers. They used this research to then come up with interview questions to learn more. Not only was this a great opportunity for these young volunteers to meet and learn from an experienced professional, it was the perfect way to keep the Museum’s high level science expert volunteers engaged and actively inspiring young people even during closure.

During their second week of the project, the groups met with staff and their Lead Volunteer again to then take the information learned during the interview and produce a three minute long video about this career. The students learned about careers in engineering, the medical field, research, programming, geosciences, zoo keeping and wildlife conservation and even things they had never considered before like reliability physics and the world of scientific publication. By working remotely as a team, preparing for and conducting the interviews, and producing a video, the students learned invaluable lessons that will apply to any profession they pursue. They received sound career (and life) advice from knowledgeable and passionate experts, which they would be hard pressed to find elsewhere.
The finished videos can now be shared with guests, on social media, to recruit future volunteers, and help other young people consider careers in science. Out of the participants who successfully completed the program, forty of these students have already shown interests in continuing their volunteer service with The Perot Museum. Our team, as well as the rest of the Museum, were so pleased with the results, we will be adding a remote project portion to next year’s program even as in person opportunities resume. The goal will be to reach even more students from across North Texas.

**Featured Image:** Discovery Corps participants (top row), guided by Lead Perot Museum Volunteer, Grant Barta (bottom left), interview Perot Museum Engineering Hall Docent, Steve Gumm (bottom right), about his career as an engineer at Texas Instruments.

**Marcie Keller**  
*Manager of Volunteer Services*  
Perot Museum of Nature and Science  
Dallas, Texas
KEEPING THE LIGHT ON FOR PROSPECTIVE VOLUNTEERS

Deirdre Araujo

Many of us were forced to shut down our volunteer programs as facilities were closed and positions eliminated. Some were able to pivot, as you see in Marcie Keller’s wonderful report on teen engagement and the story I share here as the Exploratorium in San Francisco, CA remained committed to ‘keeping the light on’ for prospective volunteers. Here is the account of a wonderful, ongoing collaboration between Avery K and Carrie Leung.

Allow me to introduce a wonderful volunteer duo - Carrie (left) and Avery (right):

Avery K. is a rising high school junior from Northern California’s East Bay. Starting in elementary school, Avery’s robotics team attended national tournaments. She also trained in Taekwondo from age 5, represented Team USA at the World Championships in Argentina in 2018, and was recently coaching up until COVID shut down the gyms.

Avery joined the Exploratorium volunteer program at the beginning of June 2020 and experienced our new virtual onboarding process. At that time, she was curious about the differences between the Eastern and Western ways of managing menopause and its effects on dementia and Alzheimer’s symptoms. (She has a strong family history with the disease.) I introduced Avery to our adult volunteer Carrie Leung, a maker-educator at Make Fashion Edu, who agreed to become her mentor. Carrie and her husband James have just returned from 8 years working in China where they set up maker spaces and we’re delighted to have them in our volunteer corps!

With Carrie’s help, Avery is building a practical prototype that may help women with memory issues due to menopause. To start this project off, Avery sent out a survey to middle-aged women with hopes of gauging what types of problems they were facing.

After gathering and analyzing the data, Carrie and Avery concluded that the women were mostly commonly forgetting things on a daily basis such as their phones, keys, etc. They brainstormed a variety
of solutions that could solve the problem yet were implementable through basic-level coding. Also, Avery gathered a couple of clothing styles that she enjoys in order to help envision how the prototype will be embedded in fashion. Now, Carrie and Avery have two beta-testers who are helping guide their prototyping process. Their model will be secured in a purse so that when the purse is moved by its owner, the prototype inside will scan to see if all the necessary items are present. If not, the prototype will alert the user that they are missing something. Avery has received the electronic parts that she will be using and is now thinking of effective ways to place the prototype without it shifting around as well as starting to build out the prototype itself.

I’m looking forward to their next update!

Deirdre Araujo  
Manager Volunteer Engagement  
Exploratorium Museum  
San Francisco, California

The American Association for Museum Volunteers (AAMV) is a professional net-work for anyone working with museum volunteers. We are committed to providing a forum for the discussion and distribution of best practices in the field of museum volunteering and internships, expanding opportunities for networking, and advocating for volunteers in museums.

History: The United States Association of Museum Volunteers (USAMV) was incorporated in 1979 under the Not-for-Profit Corporation laws of Washington, D.C. The USAMV became an affiliated committee of the American Association of Museums in 1981. In 1986, the USAMV changed its name to American Association for Museum Volunteers (AAMV).

Today, AAMV is affiliated nationally with the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) through its Council of Affiliates and internationally with the World Federation of Friends of Museums (WFFM).

FALL 2020 AAMV RESOURCES:  
• Covid-19 and Your Volunteer Program  
• Designing a Museum Volunteer Program  
• Embracing the Power of College Interns  
• VolunteerFlorida: Volunteer Florida Convening Recorded Webinars  
• Important Links  
• Webinars  
• News  
• Standards and Best Practices  
• Volunteer Voices Podcast

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Although the Exploratorium, pictured above is currently closed due to Covid-19, the site still offers a wide array of educational resources which can be accessed at their Learning Toolbox here.