

## The Only Constant is Change

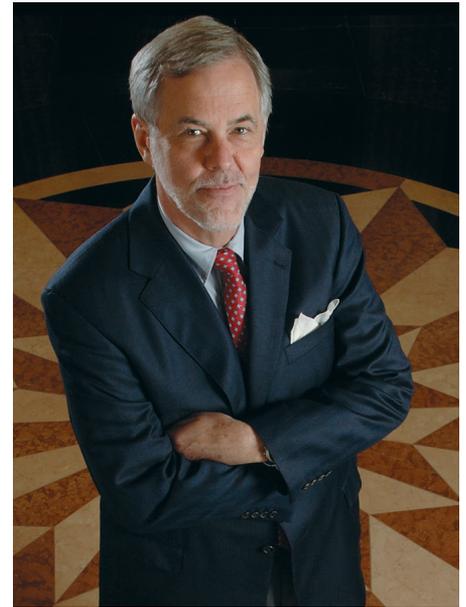
**BY THE TIME YOU** read this column, you may have already heard of my decision to step down as president of AAM, at the end of May next year. In many ways, this was a difficult decision. It was difficult because no one could ever have a better job than the one I have enjoyed for the past seven years. It was difficult because I have loved having the opportunity to work in the museum field, the opportunity to get to know many of you, and the opportunity to see firsthand the amazing and inspiring work that you all do, day in and day out, serving communities, preserving heritages, and providing people of all ages and backgrounds with unique and enduring educational experiences.

But on another level, my decision to leave this job that I have loved was very easy. We have just completed the biggest transformation that AAM has been through since it was founded 108 years ago. Our strategic plan, “The Spark,” led us to the re-thinking and innovation that drove a 34% membership growth in 2013 and allowed AAM to have operating surpluses two years in a row, after many years of operating deficits. With your support, with leadership provided by the AAM board of directors, and with the work of my amazing colleagues here at AAM, this organization is thriving again. But we cannot rest on our past achievements. AAM is now committed to being an innovative organization, one that will

continue to re-define what a professional association is in the 21st-century, and to look for better ways to serve the museum field. As we head into our next strategic plan, and the continued evolution of the organization, AAM deserves a leader with new ideas, new perspectives, and new energies. Change at the top is good when an organization has committed itself to continuous change, as we have.

And, my decision was made easier by the knowledge that AAM has a very strong and committed board, and a great leader in our chair, Kaywin Feldman. She is leading the search committee for the next president, and I know that my successor will count on your support in leading AAM into a new era, guided by the outcomes of the strategic planning process that we are just beginning.

It has been a privilege for me to serve you and the museum field. I have enjoyed every minute of it. My travels so far have taken me to almost 450 museums in 46 states, and whether I was at the Walter Anderson Museum of Art in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, the National Czech & Slovak Museum in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the San Diego Zoo, or any of the other museums that I visited, I saw you, museum professionals, working long hours, often with scant resources, always looking for better ways to serve your communities. My admiration for you, and the work that



you do, is enormous, and I will never stop telling your story, the story about museums and their essential role in our society today.

Over the next nine months, AAM will continue its efforts to support you and the essential work that you and your institutions do. My energies will not slacken as we work together to advance our shared cause. I hope to see you often in the future, and I will certainly see many of you in Atlanta next April, for our 109th Annual Meeting (it's going to be great—don't miss it!), or at one of the many other museum meetings that are on the calendar in the months ahead.

All the best to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ford W. Bell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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