



# EdCom

## AAM's Education Professional Network

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### EdCom Newsletter: June 2016

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#### Chair's Corner

Hello Museum Educators,

If I am being honest, it is with slight trepidation that I assume the Chair of EdCom. Sarah Jesse, whose term ended at the end of the AAM Annual Meeting, not only has stylish shoes to fill, but has provided consistent and impactful leadership for the past few years. I hope you will all join me in thanking her for all she has done for the Education Committee and for the field. Sarah, we appreciate your tireless commitment to museum learning and are grateful for all you've done to advance the work of EdCom.

However, I also left Washington DC with a great deal of excitement. AAM revealed a new [strategic plan](#) that includes a focus on the expanding role of museum learning in the P-12 ecosystem. The Center for the Future of Museums will soon name the [Ford W. Bell Fellow for Museums & P-12 Education](#). As museum educators, we know the power and impact of our work. We know that the skills, the content, and the approaches to learning we take in our museums are essential to the holistic development of 21st Century Learners.

Monica Montgomery, our luncheon keynote speaker, reminded us that museum educators must, "tackle tough topics and turn them into teachable moments." In short, it is a marvelous and opportune time to be a museum educator and we look forward to working with you in the name of our profession.

In the coming months, EdCom will be launching a new mentorship program to support emerging educators, we'll be highlighting some amazing and award-winning programs, we'll be hosting conversations about skills and issues that matter to you, and we invite you to join us. In addition, I'd like to officially welcome our new EdCom Committee members:

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#### Calendar

##### June 28:

[An Inside Look at TrendsWatch 2016](#)

Free webinar, sponsored by Blackbaud

##### August 6-13:

[Invite Congress to Visit Your Museum](#)

##### August 16:

Historic House Call: Religion and Historic House Interpretation [Webinar](#)

Rachel Parham, Chair-Elect, Communications  
Mark Osterman, Chair-Elect, Conference  
Russanne Hoff, Chair-Elect, Membership  
Chris Taylor, National Associate

I look forward to working with this amazing committee and to working with all of you.

Education Forward!



Anthony Pennay  
Chair, EdCom  
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**August 26–30:**

[IMTAL 2016](#)

The Practical Magic of Museum  
Theatre  
Denver, CO

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## Top 10 AAM Annual Meeting Observations

### As Experienced by an Annual Meeting Fellow

Brianna Tussing  
Exhibit Program Coordinator  
Museum of Natural History & Science, Cincinnati



**10.** As a colleague once told me, “Embrace the F–word: Flexibility.” Have a primary schedule and a secondary schedule on hand. If a session on your primary schedule wasn’t as relevant to your work as you thought it may be, jump to schedule number two. Too many options—it’s such a good problem to have. (Also, don’t worry about offending the speaker if you sneak out. They get it.)

**9.** Network everywhere. Standing in line for registration? Give out business cards. Sharing an outlet with someone to charge your phone? Give out business cards. I actually gave out a business card while brushing my teeth.

**8.** Even if you’re not an international attendee, go to the international events. It may be the closest to museums in Taiwan, Paris, and Munich that you will ever get.

**7.** Do everything with purpose so that you can make the most of your time. Scope out the conference area before day one so that you can strategically plan meals with events and sessions. Challenge your organizational agility.

**6.** To counteract my last point, take an afternoon to yourself. I found myself taking in so much information that I couldn’t immediately process it. As another colleague once told me, “Live the contradiction!”

**5.** While I walked away with many more contacts than I began with, I also walked away with better ties to my own coworkers. Sometimes it takes four days of completely magical chaos to team-build.

**4.** If at all possible, attend as many events inside of museums as possible. Being inside of a Natural History museum with 6,000 museum enthusiasts was one of the best experiences of my life and reaffirmed my love for my profession.

**3.** I’m already receiving emails from my new contacts to discuss active projects and participate in problem-

solving. I left the conference with a brand new posse of museum peeps. You really can't put a price on that.

2. By virtue of being in the same room as Mae Jemison (my she-ro), I was the closest to space that I will likely ever be.

1. I've grown more professionally in the last four days than the last four years—it's that good.

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## EdCom Hosts Monica Montgomery



The EdCom Luncheon, held during the AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo, offers more than tasty food and the company of our fellows. It is an opportunity to hear about innovation in our field. This year, at #AAM2016 in Washington, DC, EdCom was delighted to host longtime educator Monica Montgomery, who delighted the full tummies and open minds of EdCom members with a presentation on tackling tough topics in the museum environment.

You can watch the entire presentation here on [YouTube](#).

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## 2016 EdCom Award for Innovation in Museum Education

Every year, EdCom is thrilled to honor museums and educators across the country for their innovative and inspiring programming. Over the next few issues, we will highlight one award winner and the program, practice, or resource that garnered the honor.

### ***Eco-Explorers: Colonial Time Warp***

Accokeek Foundation

Accokeek, Maryland



Building from EdCom’s definition of innovation as “a new technology, practice, or methodology, or repurposing of an old or existing method or practice,” judges selected Accokeek Foundation in Accokeek, Maryland as this year’s winner for [Eco-Explorers: Colonial Time Warp](#). The field trip program uses the context of colonial history to teach current-day environmental literacy that immerses students in an exciting role-playing scenario where students engage in a mission to save the earth and change the course of history.

The program applies STEM-infused learning through the use of a narrative format that seeks deeper impact by:

- Directly connecting history to the present day in a useful, relevant, and personal way
- Breaking through the barriers between subjects of history and science, which are never separate in real life, especially on a farm like Accokeek
- Prioritizing the learning of critical thinking skills over the memorization of content
- Using narrative practices, including theatre and dialogue, to create a completely immersive “You Are There” experience

This approach, in turn, demonstrates the ways in which museums are essential institutions. The use of storytelling and immersive theatre in the design, implementation, and process of *Eco-Explorers: Colonial Time Warp* has led to a shift in hiring and training practices that now foster a culture of innovation and aspiration among the Programs Department. *Eco-Explorers: Colonial Time Warp* seems scalable and replicable across the museum landscape and, thus, has the potential to impact or “disrupt” museum education.

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## Calling You: The AAM Strategic Plan

At this year's Annual Meeting, President and CEO Laura Lott unveiled AAM's new [Strategic Plan for 2016-2020](#). The document outlines the five areas that AAM will focus on in coming years: Thought Leadership, Excellence, Advocacy, Access, and Global Thinking. This plan, while succinct in its language, is rich with potential for meaningful work ahead—and has the EdCom Board excited about our continued work as a Professional Network.

Excitingly, the whole plan wraps around three core ideas, called “focus areas.” Two of these areas happen to be aligned with the work of EdCom over the past three years:

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion has been a constant theme in our professional development offerings, and continues to be an area where educators in museums are doing outstanding work. Thanks to the strategic plan, we will look for more best practices in our field and continue bringing them to you via webinars and Museum Education Roundtable chats.

P-12 Education is also listed as an area of focus. The EdCom Board has had very engaging conversations with AAM leadership, and EdCom is excited to focus on the role museums can play in the learning ecosystem of

students from Pre-Kindergarten through grade twelve.

In the coming months and years, as EdCom creates new opportunities for professional development, conversation, and sharing our work, you will see these important Strategic Themes echoed again and again. If you are passionate about these areas of our work and want to get involved, please reach out to the EdCom Board by emailing us at [edcom@aam-us.org](mailto:edcom@aam-us.org).

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## One Good Thing

### **Peoria PlayHouse Children's Museum** ***Playhouse Teacher Team***

The PlayHouse Teacher Team is a hybrid between professional development and a teacher advisory committee. Each year, the Teacher Team has an area of exploration—this past year it was field trips, and for the 2015–16 school year it will be pre- and post-visit lessons. The twelve participating teachers meet with the PlayHouse Education Manager for six two-hour sessions over the course of the year to consider best practices in this area and co-develop programs to be offered by the museum as well as related classroom lessons and strategies. Participating teachers can receive professional development credit through the Regional Office of Education and are also offered free field trips for their classes. One teacher told us, "This has helped me learn about other schools, teachers, and field trips." Another said, "It made me anticipate ideas and activities I never thought of."



There are two dominant existing models of professional development currently offered to teachers by museums. The first model imparts information to teachers. By attending a museum professional development, teachers learn about ecosystems, contemporary art, or the Revolutionary War era. This model is a long-standing offering of museums and is rooted in the idea that museums are experts in content areas who can help teachers build knowledge.

The second model is focused on helping teachers learn strategies for teaching art, science, and history in the classroom. Best represented in multi-session workshops and summer institutes, this type of professional development is more and more prevalent in the 21st century museum, rooted in “best practices” of constructivist education, and is often highly successful. This model, though, places the museum in the position of expert and the teacher in the position of learner in the context of educational methodology. By doing so, it risks devaluing classroom teachers’ expertise.

The PlayHouse Teacher Team attempts to solve this tension by changing the nature of the teacher’s role in a museum professional development program. It is an open-ended, multi-session approach in which museum staff and classroom teachers collaboratively explore a topic. It reimagines the relationship between classroom

teachers and museum educators as collaborative rather than hierarchical, opening doors to new forms of museum/school collaboration and potentially groundbreaking approaches to programming for students.

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## Meet the Board

EdCom welcomed four new board members at #AAM2016 and we'll get a chance to meet all of them over the next several issues of the newsletter. First up is **Dr. Mark Osterman**, Guiding Programs Manager at Vizcaya Museum and Gardens in Miami, Florida, and the Chair-Elect for the Conference Committee:

### Why are you involved in EdCom?

I am deeply interested in the museum field and feel that playing a role in EdCom will give me access to other talented professionals in the field that can help continue my growth. Additionally, I am involved in EdCom to help the committee play a part in the advocacy of museums' role in advancing the arts and education in our culture.

### What's your day job?

I am the Guiding Programs Manager for Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. In this capacity, I manage all guiding programs that take place in the museum and gardens. I also conduct recruitment, screening, and orientation of museum educators and volunteer guides and provide supervision, management, and training of museum educators and volunteer guides. Additionally, I collaborate with other staff to develop and implement an array of educational and interpretive experiences for museum visitors. Lastly, I play a leadership role in the development of digital strategies and technology initiatives for the institution.



### What is the future of museum education in 10 words (or fewer)?

Leadership, adaptability, experimentation, and advocacy.

### Recalling your expectations on your first day as a museum education professional, what is one thing that has surprised you about working in museum education?

I am most surprised, or a better word would be impressed, with museum education's adaptability and evolution. Its ability to respond and change with society's needs (unlike other educational fields) makes it relevant and necessary to the larger field of education.

### When you need inspiration as an educator, who or what do you turn to?

I turn to art both as a view and creator. I am a painter.



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