

Social Value in Museums and Funding Priorities

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Abstract

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Within the museum field, there is a general assumption and expectation that museums should and do have what is broadly characterized as ‘social value’. However, little research has looked at the alignment between the priorities of the field and the priorities of the key funders for the field. This study analyzed Institute of Museum and Library Services funding programs over the last 17 years, using them as a predicator for and reflection of the work that the museum field values. The concept of serving the public was seen across the reviewed grant programs, as reflected in consistent references to museums’ communities and the concepts of serving and engaging with them. Language around museum social work changed: there was a shift from serving the public to serving communities. In addition, references to museums’ service role became more explicit as program categories were linked to their impact on communities. Across the surveyed period, museum social work equally as important as work around education, whilst professional development was mentioned frequently across all surveyed grants. Technology was consistently funded, but appeared to become a less significant museum activity.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Within the museum field, there is a general assumption and expectation that museums should and do have a social impact. As early as 1942, Theodore Lowe argued that museums need to be willing to adapt to the needs of the ever changing present, lest they become irrelevant. Museum services need to address issues that directly affect museum communities (Stocks, 2014; Anderson, 2006) in order to achieve relevancy (Simon, 2016).

Both the Museums Association (MA) and the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) encourage initiatives that focus on aspects or ideas around social impact. The MA states that “museums change lives” (MA, nd.) and AAM’s recent conferences have focused on the social responsibilities of museums: the 2015 conference theme was “The Social Value of Museums: inspiring change;” in 2016 “Power, Influence, and Responsibility” (AAM, n.d.-a); and in 2017 “Gateway for Understanding: Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums” (AAM, n.d.-d). Weil (2012) described the museum field’s shift towards becoming people orientated institutions, as going “from being about something to being for somebody” (p. 170), whilst Simon (2016) considers museums’ social value to be a matter of relevancy: “to succeed, we [museums] need to expand our value – and not just for the individuals to whom we are already relevant” (p. 21). Others, such as Silverman (2010), refer to people and community orientated museum work as “social work” (p. 14).

Contemporary social work is a diverse field with no one definition (Grobman 2005; Colby & Dziegielwski, 2001; Berg-Weger, 2013). It can take place on a number of levels, with macro social work akin to the community outreach work of many museums. Macro social work addresses problems at a community level (Colby & Dziegielewski, 2001) and is “a community-based response to social need” (Holland & Scourfield, 2015, p. 2). Museums too, share these characteristics: they seek to impact the well-being of their communities through committing to work with a social value.

While museums are encouraged to provide social value, how is this priority reflected in and supported by the funding priorities in the field? Ford W. Bell (2014), President of AAM, states that US museums are funded “precariously.” Typically funding comes from multiple sources. However, almost every museum in the US benefits from some form of government support, direct or indirect. However, little research has looked at the alignment between the priorities of the field and the priorities of the key funders for the field. As the Institute of Museum Library Services (IMLS) (2008) states, “for federal sources where data on direct funding to museums are available, more analysis is needed... to assess which segments of the sector are most successful in securing federal dollars” (p. 9). Government funding inherently gives museums a public character by which they are expected to be of benefit to the public (Rosenstein, 2010). How do major funders of museum programs describe and prioritize the social value of museums? This study explores how the trend of museum social service initiatives is supported and viewed at the federal and field wide levels.

Purpose Statement

This study assumes that federal funders are one reflection of and predictor for the expectations that society has for museums, and that the examination of funding priorities and language used by funders will provide a lens to understand changes in museum practice and infrastructure.

The purpose of this study is to identify the changing priorities in the museum field as reflected in funding opportunities, focusing on the IMLS as the primary source. The research is particularly interested in identifying whether social work in museums is or has been a priority for the museum field. The research is guided by the following research questions:

1. What do funding opportunities currently identify as priorities for museums?
2. How have these priorities changed over the past 20 years?

3. What do these changes suggest about the changing role of museums in society?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter discusses museum funding; social services; and museums and community engagement. The first section explores the different forms of funding for museums in the US and the challenges that museums face in obtaining funding. The second section looks at social services. Whilst not comprehensive, this section will identify the goals, ethics, approaches of social services. The final section considers the different ways that museums engage with communities, focusing on museum social work.

Museum Funding

Much of the literature about museum funding comes from the world of non-profits, a category that most museums in the US belong to. For this reason, this review will draw on sources from both the museum field and the world of non-profits.

Museums manage costs to generate an outcome; this outcome is “public good” (Falk & Sheppard, 2012, p. 380). Pratt (2004) agrees, stating that every non-profit hopes to be of benefit to the public, but also highlights that they often face financial challenges. Adequate resources are needed if museums’ good intentions are to be realised (Weil, 2002).

The museum sector is large and diverse and financial support is precarious. The primary funding sources are government grants, private donations, earned revenue, and investment income (endowment). In 2009, the typical US museum got 24% of its operating revenue from government (public) support and 38% from private donors (which includes individuals, charities, philanthropic foundations and corporate sponsors) (Bell, 2012). Neither private nor public funders have increased at the same rate as the number of museums, meaning that obtaining funding is an activity that grows only more competitive. (Koster, 2012; Pratt, 2004; Lindqvist, 2012).

Koster (2012) and Pratt (2004) suggest that funding sources can influence the direction of museums' work. Gurian (2010) views this as a reason that museums "tend to evolve toward more traditional funding sources" (p. 75). Pratt goes so far to suggest that a change in direction is more often the result of changing revenue than changing intent.

Museums seeking revenue sources are impacted by many variables, including their discipline. Koster (2012) suggests that art and historical museums tend to attract more affluent patrons, making them more sustainable than other museums. In contrast, Rosenstein (2010) found that whilst history museums and historical societies came only second to arboreta and botanical gardens in receiving government funds, public funds were not as a significant source of income for art museums.

Location is another variable that impacts museum revenue sources. AAM (2013) notes that local economic conditions (on such a scale that they are not evident in even regional data) impact individual museums' revenues. Similar trends are found when examining federal funding sources: there is a "concentration of museum funding by discipline and geography" (IMLS, 2008, p. 9). This is the result of federal agencies with legislated priorities. One exception to this is IMLS, which funds museums of all disciplines and locales (IMLS).

Whilst some sources suggest that museum revenues are vulnerable, others suggest that museums are stable because of their multiple funding sources. Lindqvist (2012) argues that economic downturns have a minimal impact on museums because museums rely on several revenue sources to support their financial planning. She suggests that donations are normally long-term decisions, not based on the current economy. Data from AAM (2013) supports the notion that donations are not significantly impacted by the economy: between 2009-2012 (following the financial crash of 2008) private individual donors were consistently the highest source of revenue increases for museums and they offered the third smallest decrease in

revenues (only membership and admission revenues decreased less during this period).

However, investment income was most erratic source of revenue. Lindqvist, meanwhile, acknowledges that sponsorship, a shorter-term source of revenue, is impacted more by the economy. There is an alignment between long-term planning (on the behalf of the museum and the donor) and a consistent source of revenue via donations, in comparison to more short-term plans that are reliant upon the economy and thereby less stable. As Ciconte and Jacob (2008) state, “major donors and funders [who] are interested in knowing the long-range goals” of the organizations they support (p. 82).

It is the actions of museums, not the economy, that are of greatest importance to grant makers (Lindqvist, 2012). Yet, there is a tendency within the museum community to resort to short-term thinking because “future funding can be uncertain” (MA, 2008, p. 7). Funders have control of valuable resources and do not want to see them wasted (Pratt, 2004), but Brown (2006) states that the pattern of foundation funding for short-term projects is “ineffective and sometimes irresponsible” (p. 27). In contrast, Pratt argues that funders’ actions are about “increasing the accountability and effectiveness of grantees.” Lindqvist and the MA give agency to museums in affecting in whether they receive foundation grants, whilst Pratt and Brown discuss foundation control of resources. Brown is more critical of foundation actions, whilst Pratt considers the motivations for the restrictions foundations impose.

Brooks (2000) notes the precarious relationship between public and private giving. He argues that there is a fine balance between receiving both public funding and private donations. He suggests that high levels of government funding discourages private giving: a low level of public government support is needed to maximize private giving.

Lindqvist (2012) also maintains that government actions can impact museum revenue. Whilst Koster (2012) states that government funding is declining in general, Stubbs

and Clapp (2015) found that the situation was more complex. 2015 was the third consecutive year in which public arts funding increased (although still below 2008 levels), yet funding has not kept pace with inflation: total public funding for the arts decreased by fifteen percent between 1995-2015. The situation may be more dire in 2017: the president is considering eliminating the NEA, NEH and IMLS completely (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2017). Whilst 26 states have dedicated funding mechanisms for the arts (for example, special taxes or arts licence plates), this only accounts for the majority of arts funding in eight out of the 26 states (Stubbs and Clapp). In turn, Stubbs and Clapp highlight that it is “small, underserved, rural, and grassroots groups” that benefit most from public funding, given that public funds provide them a higher percentage of support. There is agreement that until recently public funding for the arts had been gradually increasing, and that this funding, both at the federal and more local level, does financially impact museums.

“The presumption that museums, by what they traditionally do are of obvious social value has not proven sufficiently convincing for broad government funding” (Gurian, 2010, p. 75). Gurian suggests that museums aren’t a government funding priority because they are a nicety, not a necessity when it comes to meeting immediate social needs. In turn, bottom-up funding models have increased. These emphasise that the business model begins with the customer (Falk & Sheppard, 2012). For example, DeBoskey (2016) maintains that there has been an increase in impact investing and that there are more grants designed to fund programs that have a social impact. Gurian highlights the need for a move towards museum work that is more useful and meets social needs, whilst Falk and Shepard and DeBoskey suggests methods to achieve this.

The MA (2008) notes that sustainability means being socially responsible, ensuring long-term relationships with communities, as opposed to relationships that last only the duration of short-term projects. Museums aim to be sustainable in order to continue to exist.

For charitable non-profits, a category to which many museums belong, sustainability refers to a non-profit “that is able to sustain itself over the long term perpetuating its ability to fulfil its mission” (National Council of Nonprofits (NCNP, 2015): this involves having sustainable funding sources.

The diversification of a non-profit’s income stream is widely seen as a way in which to achieve sustainability (NCNP, 2015; Pratt, 2004; Lindqvist, 2012). This is because, as Pratt notes, a diverse income base is a characteristic of mature organizations. Having a range of funding sources makes a non-profit’s income less volatile. Alternatively, the MA (2008) suggests prioritising quality over quantity: if a museum reduces the number of activities it undertakes, it can devote greater funds to the remaining activities. In contrast, Schafer (n.d.) discusses non-profit sustainability in terms of growth of development. However, Schaffer does not offer strategies for achieving sustainability, but rather states that a strategy is needed. The MA (2008), the NCNP (2015) and Merritt (2012) also maintain that museums need a “plan for the long haul” (p. 18). These assertions that a plan is needed for museums to achieve sustainability ultimately supports the views of the Pratt and Lindqvist: a diverse income stream is the result of planning.

Koster (2012) maintains that greater relevancy can help a museum’s sustainability, although he also acknowledges that relevancy can have a mixed impact on earned revenue, thereby perhaps limiting sustainability. If relevancy is a factor in sustainability, then Anderson (2006) states that for a museum to be relevant, museum leaders must set the tone, leading a commitment from the whole museum. Schafer (n.d.) and Weil (2002) agree that effective leadership is important for success, whilst the NCNP (2015) view leadership succession planning as critical to financial sustainability. However, whilst Koster agrees that leadership is a key factor in relevancy, he ultimately believes that it is financial or public pressures that force change, not leaders.

Social Services

Social work is a diverse field with no one definitive definition (Grobman 2005; Colby & Dziegielwski, 2001; Berg-Weger, 2013), but it has been described as “a community-based response to social need” (Holland & Scourfield, 2015, p. 2). The Department of Health and Human Services (n.d.) expands on this definition, including services that aid individuals as well as groups, whilst the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) (2008) maintains that social work focuses on “individual well-being in social context and well-being of society.” Silverman (2010) too, recognizes that social work addresses problems within systems, not just individuals. There is consensus that social work aims to improve well-being or address a need within a societal context, to help people (Berg-Weger; Colby & Dziegielwski) and to contribute to the “perfectibility of community” (Specht and Courtney, as cited in Colby & Dziegielewski).

Social workers hold a core set of values that include offering “service” to those in need; respecting the “dignity and worth of the person;” valuing human relationships; and acting with integrity and competence (NASW, 2008). These values are applied to what both the NASW and the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) define as a key aspect of their purpose: the enhancement of human well-being (IFSW, as cited in Silverman, 2010; NASW). Both organizations work to overcome social problems and view the “empowerment” of people as a core tenant of social work (NASW, 2008). Others (Segal and Gerdes, 2013; Berg-Weger, 2013) agree, maintaining that social workers help clients to become empowered and to able to advocate for themselves.

Berg-Weger (2013) highlights the difference between social work and social welfare (which together make social services): “social work is the professional practice that involves helping individuals, groups, and communities. In contrast, social welfare is a system aimed at creating social and economic justice” (p. 21). Social services can be both reactive and

proactive, depending on the manner in which social services are offered and the scale at which they implemented. Simon (2013) maintains that social services are often reactive; she states that “social service providers often find themselves working in a reactive stance to unexpected incidents,” and that there is an indefinite demand for them. On the other hand, Silverman (2010) suggests that social services are both proactive, with planned goals, and reactive, with emergent goals that are responses to particular situations. Segal and Gerdes (2013) support Silverman’s view, stating that the social welfare system provides preventative (proactive) and responsive (reactive) help. However, Segal and Gerdes also note that most social services in the US are only available if there is a documented need because society only wants to pay for “identifiable problems and visible needs” (p. 40). This suggests that there is a tendency to privilege reactive services in order to save money. Whilst a reactive approach may save money, it can cause greater problems. In contrast, preventative measures are universal and exist whether there is a problem or not (Segal and Gerdes). Wilensky and Lebeaux (as cited in Berg-Weger, 2001) categorizes social welfare programs differently. They acknowledge that social welfare programs are guided by social policy, which is either “residual” or “institutional” (p. 67). Residual policies address needs specific to a particular population and these needs will continue to exist regardless of the policy’s effectiveness, for example the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Institutional policies, such as Social Security, address universal social needs. Wilensky and Lebeaux’s institutional policies align with what others have described as preventative measures, but residual policies and reactive measures do not align.

Generalist social work practice is an approach of social workers that involves working at a variety of levels: individual, group, and community (Berg-Weger, 2013). Colby and Dziegielewski (2001) identify these levels slightly differently: micro; mezzo; and macro. Micro practice is much akin to direct practice with targeted individuals and groups, whilst

macro practice addresses problems that affect a community. It is Colby and Dziegielewski's identification of a mezzo practice that differentiates them from Berg-Weger. The mezzo practice is primarily concerned with the social work organization's administration; it involves minimal client contact and is concerned with connecting micro and macro systems. Yet, both Colby and Dziegielewski and Berg-Weger maintain that all these practices apply a systems perspective, in which all the levels are acknowledged as being interconnected because, as Berg-Weger states, "change is the purpose of the social worker's involvement with client systems at all levels of practice" (p. 267). The systems approach also uses the core processes of engagement, assessment, intervention and evaluation associated with generalist social work (Berg-Weger).

One type of social work particularly relevant to this study is community social work. Holland and Scourfield (2015) state that community social work is the practice of "improving the social and environmental context of the individual and the family" (p. 77). This is because community social work is often combined with direct (microlevel) practice (Berg-Weger, 2013). Holland and Scourfield identify two approaches to community social work: top-down or bottom-up. Top-down community planning assesses and plans for the needs of the community whilst bottom-up community planning introduces community resources as preventative measures against the need for individual help. Whilst Holland and Scourfield do not identify a preferred approach, Berg-Weger, when discussing community development, advocates for a bottom-up approach. However, both Holland and Scourfield and Berg-Weger support a solutions-based approach in which solutions are found within the community. This approach acknowledges that the client (be it a community or individual) has the "ability to make decisions and pursue change" (Colby & Dziegielewski, 2001, p. 117).

Berg-Weger describes different models for community social work, such as "geographic community organizing;" "functional community organizing;" "social planning;"

and “program development” (as well as an additional four models of practice) (p. 320), demonstrating the wide range of community social work activities and approaches. However, a 2008 NASW survey (as cited in Holland & Scourfield, p. 87) notes that only 2% of social workers’ time is spent on community organizing and policy developments, suggesting that it is not a high priority area. This is perhaps because there is little evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of community social work, in comparison to other helping professions (Holland & Scourfield). However, Dickens (2016) argues that social workers have the potential to affect policy, but they are “strangely marginal and isolated, left out of new policy initiatives” (p. 3), thereby limiting their impact.

There are also questions as to what is meant by the term “community.” Holland and Scourfield (2015) recognize that it can mean a variety of things and can be used to refer to both homogenous and heterogeneous groups. Alternatively, Simon (2016) defines a community as “a group of people who share something in common” (p. 87), suggesting that a community is defined by a shared set of attributes. Simon’s definition of community does not directly contradict Holland and Scourfield, rather it recognises that groups that may be considered diverse in one regard, but can still be a community if they have something in common.

Museum Community Engagement

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) (n.d.-b) states that “museums [also] provide many social services,” an idea that others have expressed in a variety of ways (Janes and Conaty, 2005); Sandell, 2002). In the early-twentieth century John Cotton Dana (1917) advocated for museums to “learn what aid the community needs: fit the museum to those needs” (p. 38). Weil (2002) questioned the value of museums if they “are not being operated with the ultimate goal of improving people’s lives” (p. 61). Many (Janes and Conaty; Sandell;

Silverman, 2010) museologists recognise the social responsibility of museums, supporting Weil's (2012) notion that museums should be "for somebody" rather than "about something" (p. 170). There is general agreement that museums should be doing work that improves the lives of people. However, whilst Dana and Weil are primarily concerned with museum's people orientated activities, others, such as Gurian (2010), suggests that social service initiatives, "such as job retraining, educational enhancements, and public discourse" (p. 75) can work alongside museum's more traditional roles. For example, the Tenement Museum responded to its community's need for free English classes by providing language classes, an atypical museum activity, that began with tours, a typical museum activity (Abrams, 2006). According to the AAM *Code of Ethics* (2000), museums should be "responsive" and reflect society's interests. AAM suggests "programs [that] further the museum's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of society." Simon (2016) agrees that the work museums undertake must relevant to the mission. Yet, Merritt (2012) holds that issues, such as food, are often not addressed because museums may not consider them to be mission related. There is agreement that a museum's mission is the basis of any museum activity, but there is disagreement as to how museum's social actions are impacted by this. AAM and Simon maintain that museums' missions are compatible with public service work. Gurian (2010) supports this notion, stating that, for some museums, work with the community is central to their mission and not consider outside their realm.

It is acknowledged that successful museum social work should be relevant and meet local needs. To achieve this, museums must talk with their communities (Stocks, 2014; Sandell, 2002; Phillips and Coleman, 2016; Simon, 2016). However, museum attempts to respond to social issues can seem forced and "one out of guilt... not [to meet] the needs of the community surrounding the museum" (Phillips & Coleman, in Gretchen Jennings, 2016). Sandell (2002) suggests that there should be an external focus when museums take on a

social role, with the museum's needs coming second to the community or individual. Like Phillips and Coleman, Sandell maintains that the social role of museums should be museums' priority.

Relevancy is a key part of the discussion regarding the future of museums (Nielsen, 2015). For Koster (2012), who maintains that this term is only used by museums comfortable tackling contemporary issues, relevancy means "relating to the matters at hand" (p. 204). Simon (2016) suggests that relevancy is something that is in constant flux and that "relevance means waving the flag when it is needed, not when it is convenient" (p. 139). Both Koster and Simon describe relevancy in relation to museums' relationships with their communities and how museums wishing to be relevant must address pressing contemporary issues, often social issues. Whilst Nielsen agrees with this perspective, Nielsen also views relevancy as an individual cognitive process equally as important as the "engagement between people, museums and communities" (p. 364).

Gurian (2010) questions how museums can expand their services so that they are relevant to "all levels of community, and are rated by many more as essential to their needs" (p. 82). Bennett (as cited in Sandel, 2007) agrees, arguing that museums should address all sections of society. Gurian and Bennett approach the idea of relevancy from a field wide perspective. However, considering relevancy on a smaller scale, Simon (2016) notes that one museum can never be relevant to everyone because, as Nielsen (2015) states, relevancy is subjective. A single museum cannot be relevant to every community, but museums in general have the potential to be relevant to many communities. AAM (n.d.-b) supports this view, listing the wide range of social services that museums across the US offer: "programs for children on the autism spectrum, English as a Second Language classes and programs for older adults with Alzheimer's or other cognitive impairments. Some museums also facilitate

job training programs, provide vegetable gardens for low- income communities and serve as locations for supervised visits through the family court system.”

As early as 1942 Theodore Lowe argued that museums need to be willing to adapt to the needs of the ever changing present, lest they become irrelevant. Museum services need to be essential (Gurian, 2010) and address issues that directly affect museum communities (Stocks, 2014; Anderson, 2006) because, as Simon (2016) states, issues need to matter to a person or a community for them to be considered relevant. Crooke (2008) and Simon acknowledge that this will involve expanding the range of people that museums engage with, whilst Neilsen (2015) suggests that being relevant will involve taking a “practical approach” (p. 365).

“Harold Skramstad argued that not only was the museum a wholly pointless institution unless it helped to solve people’s real problems, but also that – if it was to survive – it had to do so in some way that was unique to itself and not redundant with what other kinds of organizations might have to offer” (Weil, 2002, p. 70).

It is this notion of being “unique” that is problematic for some in the museum field. Moore (as cited in Silverman, 2010), for example, maintains that if museums do social work, then they are no longer museums. Gurian (2010) agrees that undertaking social work does make museums less traditional, but she also asks, “should you care?” (p. 71). Unlike Skramstad, Gurian’s primary concern is that museums are useful, and believes that in addressing social issues museums are becoming more relevant. In addition, Gurian maintains that it is how every museum defines its relationship with a community that makes it unique from organizations. She does concede, however, that there are questions around what museum responsibilities are.

Simon (2013) proposes that social work and museum social work are very different, primarily because museums are not responding to crises, which in turn means that museums can be visionary in their work. Simon would prefer that museums focus on “how we [the museum field] can approach the work of community development in a distinctive way,”

providing communities with their wants, not their needs. Simon wants institutions to focus on assets, suggesting that museums build on strengths instead of focusing on weaknesses.

Simon (2013) also suggests that museums work to a different time frame than social services. Silverman (2010) agrees; she notes that museums are less likely to form sustainable, long-term relationships, despite them being considered a key factor in museum social work success (Stocks, 2014). Whilst Simon (2013) is critical of the use of the phrase “social work” in a museum context (she refers to it as “the wrong analogy” and prefers to use the term “community development”), she is in no way opposed to museums engaging with their communities; her most recent book, *The Art of Relevance* (2016), is dedicated to the subject. Crooke (2008) is also committed to engaging with the community and identifies two conditions for doing so: Firstly, museums recognize the diverse communities that they serve; and secondly, museums recognize that they have the potential to be “social agents that can contribute to the alleviation of social problems” (p. 182). There is consensus on a commitment to engaging with museum communities but there is a wide variety of ways to talk about it. Crooke is more comfortable with addressing “social problems” and needs, whilst Simon (2016) wants to build upon strengths instead of fixing weaknesses.

US and UK policy guidance asks museums to foster “social capital” (Crooke, 2008, p. 180) and AAM has pushed for the expansion of museum’s social service role (Silverman, 2010). Yet, despite this push from government and museums’ governing body, there is a lack of field wide best practices for museum social work (Stocks, 2014). As Silverman (2010) notes, museums need to develop a better understanding of and framework for museum social work practices. In the UK, the Generic Social Outcomes (GSOs) (Arts Council England, n.d.) were developed. The GSOs provide “an improvement framework for the arts and culture sector,” yet they are not specific to museums, nor to the US.

Summary

Museums receive funding from a variety of sources. Whilst many types of funding are concerned with museum type, discipline or locale, IMLS, a federal funder of museums (and libraries) provides access to funds for all non-profit museums across the US.

Social services provide help to people and communities, supporting them in life. This is an activity that many museums include in their work. Museum social work is a strand of community engagement that offers practical assistance at the community level.

This research will identify changing museum priorities, in particular whether social work in museums has recently become a sector priority.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to identify the changing priorities in the museum field as reflected in funding opportunities, focusing on the Institute of Museum and Library Services as the primary source. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do funding opportunities currently identify as priorities for museums?
2. How have these priorities changed since 2000?
3. What do these changes suggest about the changing role of museums in society?

Methodology

Document analysis was used in this qualitative study. As Rapley (2007) notes, “analyzing discourse is currently one of the major approaches in qualitative research” (p. xv). This approach is particularly relevant for this type of research because “discourse is “action” [and] it does things for social agents in the real contexts of their living” (Stillar, 1998, p. 5). Document analysis allows for the study of documents whilst acknowledging their broader contexts in society.

Sample

This study examined Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) from IMLS between January 2000- February 2017. The NOFOs were primarily obtained through IMLS’s current website and older versions of it in the internet archives. A Freedom of Information Act was also submitted to IMLS.

The General Operating Support; National Leadership Grants for Museums; 21st Century Museum Professionals; and Museums for America NOFOs were of particular interest. NOFOs from these grant programs in the years 2002, 2007, 2012, and 2017 were examined. This provided a five-year snap shot of museum priorities. Five year increments

were chosen to limit the scale of this research. Five years is also the duration of IMLS strategic plans, so it was presumed that reviewing every five years would provide a reasonable view of trends.¹

IMLS was chosen as an indicator of national museum trends because it funds a variety of projects and is the largest federal funder of museums of all sizes across the US, making it geographically representative of the US. In addition, IMLS grants are peer reviewed, meaning that IMLS is representative of the field.

The NOFOs were chosen because they indicate which activities IMLS has looked to fund in the twenty-first century and they use standardized, accessible language. NOFOs had to have been open to museums but did not have to have been offered across the entire period. The General Operating Support NOFO was selected because it was the first IMLS grant that came to end in the twenty-first century. In addition, general operating funds are typically no longer granted by funders. The Museums for America NOFOs were chosen because they were introduced in 2004 after an evaluation of grants in the early 2000s. The 21st Century Museum Professionals NOFOs were selected because they provide an insight into the professional development of museum professionals and by extension the museum field. The National Leadership Grants for Museums NOFOs were selected because it is IMLS's longest running museum grant since 2000 and it is focused on the development of the museum field and thereby identifies priorities for the advancement of museums.

The following aspects of the NOFOs were selected for analysis: program description and (often included within the program description) grant categories. These sections were selected because they include information pertinent to the grant (rather than general IMLS policy and procedures). If the NOFO did not contain a section titled program description,

¹ The most recent strategic plan from IMLS is "2012-2016: Creating A Nation of Learners" (IMLS, 2015). This plan is still referenced in the 2017 NOFOs,

then sections were selected that contained the same information as what was listed in the 2017 Program Description. For example, the sections “About Museums for America” and “Categories of Funding” from the Museums for America 2007 NOFO were analysed. The General Operating Support NOFO was particularly short and the section “What is General Operating Support?” did not include much information about the grant’s priorities and what is was intended to do. For this reason, the letter from the director of IMLS was also included in the sample. To be consistent in sampling, the letter from the director was also included in the sample for the 2002 National Leadership Grants for Museum. From 2007 onwards the NOFOs were sufficiently detailed and any letters from the director was not included in the sample. See Appendix 1 for sections chosen for analysis.

Analysis

Coding was done using an a priori coding system and emergent codes. The American Alliance of Museum’ (AAM) *Standards Regarding Public Trust and Accountability* (see Appendix 2) was used to create a framework of a priori codes around museum responsibilities. For example, one code was “education” based on AAM’s standard, “the museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role” (AAM, n.d.). An example of a phrase that was coded as “education” is “museums provide learning experiences for everyone” from the 2017 Museums for America document. Emergent codes were identified during the analysis. Emergent codes are themes that occurred three or more times. An example of an emergent code is “professional development.” An example of a phrase that was coded as “professional development” is “the potential to advance practice in the profession so that museums can improve services for the American public,” from the 2017 National Leadership Grants for Museums document. Whilst each code is a single phrase, it was not just those particular words that were coded because it was felt that this was

too constricting and excluded relevant, associated activities. Rather, codes are considered representative. For example, the education code was applied to activities such as learning, interpretation, and curriculum development. See Appendix 3 for code book. Representative quotes from the NOFOs are included in the codebook.

The Program Description, including grant categories, for each NOFO was read and coded. Each action was coded individually. For example, “Planning for the management, care, and conservation of collections” was coded three times for collections care: “planning for the management... of collections,” “planning for the...care... of collections” and “planning for the... conservation of collections.” In addition, phrases associated directly to an indicator were also coded. For example, “the full range of museums of operations,” from the 2007 21st Century Museum Professionals NOFO, was coded as ‘Operations.’

The total instances of coding for each indicator was recorded, and then these totals were added to determine the number of instances for each priority. Descriptive information, such as the language used, was also collected. The reliability of the coding was confirmed through repeat coding and checking for consistency. Voyant Tools was used to identify the most common words related to museum priorities across the sample.

In addition, all NOFOs between 2000-2017, including awards and special initiatives, were recorded and their purposes were determined based upon the most recent Program Overview on IMLS’s website.

Limitations

This study only includes NOFOs from IMLS. Although IMLS is a federal funding agency that has been influenced by different administrations and their choice of IMLS directors, it also peer reviewed and the only federal funding agency that funds museums of all disciplines; for these reasons IMLS was considered representative of the field and the US.

However, because this study only examines federal funding, it does not provide any insight to the impact of private funds.

This study explored four grant programs in detail. The NOFOs did not all contain the same sections. Whilst this does not make for a perfect comparison, it allows for the same information across all the grants and years to be assessed.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Summary of Findings

- Social service work is an aspect of museum activities across the 18 years surveyed.
 - Social service work has been consistently funded.
 - There has been a shift in the way that social service work is talked about.
 - The focus on social service work has increased and become more explicit.
- All grants addressed multiple areas of museum work.
- Professional development is mentioned frequently across the surveyed years.
- Education and social service work are referred to almost equally across the surveyed grants.
- Technology has been funded since 2000, but appears to become less important across the course of the surveyed period.

Description of Sampled Notices of Funding Opportunities

Of the grant programs analyzed, six primarily addressed professional and field development; three focused on a combination of collections care, community service and education; and one was concerned with general museum operations. General Operating Support (GOS) ended in 2002. Museums for America (MFA) has been offered since 2004. 21st Century Museum Professionals (21MP) began in 2005 and ended in 2012. The National Leadership Grants for Museums (NLG) is the only program to run from 2000-2017, the period covered in this study.

Results

Table 1 shows the total number of instances of coding for each grant program. Table 2 shows the total number of instances of each indicator.

| | CC | CS | AC | DI | ED | OP | PD | TE | EV | Total |
|------------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|------------|-----------|--------------|
| GOS 2002 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 21 |
| NLG 2002 | 7 | 16 | 2 | 1 | 19 | 3 | 55 | 18 | 2 | 123 |
| NLG 2007 | 7 | 15 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 6 | 36 | 20 | 2 | 95 |
| NLG 2012 | 12 | 28 | 8 | 5 | 30 | 8 | 72 | 53 | 1 | 217 |
| NLG 2017 | 28 | 32 | 6 | 13 | 35 | 1 | 54 | 21 | 2 | 192 |
| MFA 2007 | 10 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 5 | 2 | 10 | 0 | 50 |
| MFA 2012 | 18 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 13 | 11 | 11 | 8 | 0 | 70 |
| MFA 2017 | 35 | 33 | 8 | 16 | 33 | 2 | 15 | 14 | 3 | 159 |
| 21MP 2007 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 27 | 2 | 1 | 51 |
| 21MP 2012 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 24 | 2 | 1 | 48 |
| Total | 125 | 153 | 27 | 45 | 152 | 59 | 297 | 156 | 12 | 1,026 |

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| CC | Collections Care |
| CS | Community Service |
| AC | Accessibility |
| DI | Diversity |
| ED | Education |
| OP | Operations |
| PD | Professional Development |
| TE | Technology |
| EV | Evaluation |

Table 1 Instances of coding for each grant

| Code | Total |
|--------------------------|--------------|
| Professional Development | 297 |
| Technology | 156 |
| Community Service | 153 |
| Education | 152 |
| Collections Care | 125 |
| Operations | 59 |
| Diversity | 45 |
| Accessibility | 27 |
| Evaluation | 12 |
| Total | 1,026 |

Table 2 Total instances of coding for each indicator

Collections Care

Every grant program reviewed had at least one reference to collections care. Collections care was mentioned most often in the MFA grant programs (2012 & 2017). Of the NLG, collections care was mentioned most often in 2017.

Community Service

Every grant program reviewed (apart from GOS) had at least four references to community service. Community service was mentioned most often in the 2017 grant programs. In comparison, GOS (2002) never mentioned community service.

Accessibility

Not every grant program reviewed had references to accessibility. Accessibility was mentioned the least in the 21MP and GOS. Accessibility was most common in the NLG (2012 and 2017) and MFA (2017).

Diversity

Not every grant program reviewed had references to diversity: the GOS, NLG (2007) and MFA (2007) did not reference diversity. Diversity was mentioned most often in the NLG (2017) and MFA (2017) grant programs.

Education

Every grant program reviewed had at least one reference to education. Education was mentioned most often in the NLG (2017) and MFA (2017).

Operations

Every grant program reviewed had at least one reference to operations. Operations was most common in the GOS (2002) and MFA (2012).

Professional Development

Every grant reviewed had at least one reference to professional development. Professional development was most common in the NLG and 21MP.

Technology

Every grant program reviewed had at least two references to technology. Technology was most common in the NLG.

Evaluation

Not every grant program reviewed had references to evaluation: the GOS (2002), MFA (2007) and MFA (2012) did not reference to evaluation. It was most common in the MFA (2017).

Discussion

Social service work is an aspect of museum activities across the 18 years surveyed.

The community service code occurred at least four times in every grant program that was reviewed (apart from GOS), indicating that social service work was an aspect of museum activities that occurred across the surveyed period.

NLG was offered every year of the surveyed period and it has always included at least one category around social service. In 2002 and 2012 NLG did not use the word ‘community’ in the title of every category, yet much like the other 2002 and 2007 categories it encouraged collaboration with “other community organizations;” collaboration is a key aspect of museum social work. In all the other categories, the use of the word community makes the intent of the grant category explicit: museums were, and are, intended to be involved in serving their communities.

| Year | Category |
|-------------|--|
| 2002 | Museums in the Community; National Leadership Grants for Library and Museum Collaborations |
| 2007 | Library and Museum Community Collaboration Grants |
| 2012 | Library and Museum Collaboration |
| 2017 | Community Anchors |

Table 3 NLG categories related to community.

The word “community” occurred in both the 2002 and 2017 NLG grant programs. When looking at the complete 2002 NOFO, “community” occurred 25 times and

“communities” occurred 4 times, a total of 29 times out of 18,909 words. In the 2017 NLG NOFO “community” occurred 29 times whilst “communities” occurred 12 times, a total of 41 times out of 17,017 words. Whilst there was a slight increase in references to museum communities, this demonstrates that museums have been consistently concerned with their communities and serving them.

Across the surveyed period there has always been an award focused on rewarding museum social service. In 2017 the award was known as the National Medal for Museum and Library Service and it “honors outstanding libraries and museums that have made significant and exceptional contributions in service to their communities... they exceed expected levels of community outreach.” A previous version of the award, the National Award for Museum Service (2005), also honored museums that made “extraordinary contributions to their communities,” demonstrating that social service has always been carried out by museums and has always been considered a valuable enough activity to recognize on a national level.²

Social service work has been consistently funded.

The grant programs talked about museums engaging with or serving their community. For example, in 2007 MFA supported projects that “actively engage museums with their community... [and] enhance a museum’s ability to serve its community.” In 2012 MFA wanted to “strengthen the ability of a museum to serve the public” and was concerned with “engaging communities.” Engaging Communities was an MFA category that was primarily concerned with education, yet it was framed using a service approach. This may suggest that museums were orientating themselves more as social service institutions, or that they were taking a broader educational approach, targeting every level of a community (“adults,

² Information regarding the National Award for Museum Service is not publicly available. It can be accessed using the internet archive at https://web.archive.org/web/20051116053832/http://www.imls.gov/grants/museum/mus_nams.asp.

families, underserved communities, youth”). In 2017 MFA again used the verb “serve” to describe what museums would be doing for their communities and wanted to “strengthen[ing] museums’ capacity for civic engagement.” MFA has consistently funded museums that play a service role and are community orientated and concerned with engaging with communities.

Museum-Community partnerships, a key element of museum social work, have consistently been funded across the surveyed period. In 2002, 2007 and 2012 NLG encouraged collaborations between museums and libraries as well as other community organizations. For example, the 2007 NLG was intended to “help libraries and museums to better serve their communities” (NLG, 2007). The Activating Community Opportunities Using Museums/Libraries as Assets Initiative (ACT) (2017) and the Partnership for a Nation of Learners Grant (NOL) (2005) were also concerned with community service that advocated for partnerships with different (non-museum) types of institutions. ACT directed institutions to work with their communities, whilst the NOL encouraged museums, libraries and public broadcasters to work together. ACT suggested that collaboration can be used “to achieve positive change” and whilst NOL wanted “improve the quality of life in communities across the country” through collaboration with others.³ Community collaborations have consistently been funded to further museum social service work.

There has been a shift in the way that social service work is talked about.

The GOS (2000-2002), LOG (2003), and MFA (2004-present) Program Overviews demonstrated the transformation of the way in which social service was spoken about. GOS made no mention of community. LOG used the word “public” to refer to the people the

³ Information regarding the Partnership for a Nation of Learners Grant is not publicly available. It can be accessed using the internet archive at https://web.archive.org/web/20060111041728/http://www.imls.gov/grants/l-m/lm_pnl.htm.

museum served.⁴ MFA consistently used the word “public” and “communities” (at times alongside other words). “Public” is a very broad and general term, whilst “communities” suggests that museums recognized that they did not serve one homogenous group of people, but rather multiple, different communities.

The 2017 Museum Assessment Program (MAP) Overview listed a “Community Engagement Assessment” option, so that museums could better understand their relationships with their community. Previously, in 2000, MAP called this category “Public Dimension Assessment.”⁵ In 2000 museums wanted to understand “the public’s perception of, experience in and involvement with the museum” to ensure that they met their audience’s needs. In 2017 museums still wanted to assess “communities’ perceptions of and experiences with the museum,” but they also wanted to assess their own “understanding of and relationship with its [their] communities.” The use of the word “relationship” suggests a more sustained two-way dynamic than in 2000: it is not just communities’ perceptions that are being assessed, but also those of the museum.

The focus on social service work has increased and become more explicit.

There were, in general, more references to the concept of museum social service work over the course of the surveyed period. In 2002, the community service code did not occur in every reviewed grant program and made up 8.1% of all coded activities; in 2017 the community service code occurred in every reviewed grant program and made up 18.3% of coded activities. This suggests that activities around social service have become a larger and more visible part of museum work.

⁴ Information regarding the Learning Opportunities Grant is not publicly available. It can be accessed using the internet archive at

https://web.archive.org/web/20021203023704/http://www.ims.gov:80/grants/museum/mus_gen.asp.

⁵ Information regarding the Museum Assessment Program in 2000 is not publicly available. It can be accessed using the internet archive at

https://web.archive.org/web/20000531005455/http://www.ims.gov:80/grants/museum/mus_map.asp.

The creation of a direct link between the MFA grant program categories and museum communities also emphasized museums' increased focus on social service. The MFA categories had been included in the Program Overview since 2009, but it was in 2011 that the grant program was first directly linked to the museum communities. For example, in 2011 that MFA Program Overview stated that "building institutional Capacity... supports projects that serve to improve the infrastructure of museums to better serve their communities." This switch, from just listing the categories to explaining what the categories do for museum communities, suggests that museum social service had become a greater and more visible activity for museums.

From 2010 there have been grant programs focused on research around professional development and social service. This suggests that social service is a growing field wide priority that is worth investing in. For example, the 2016 Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums program was intended to "encourage museums to prototype and evaluate specific innovations" so that the awardees could "offer valuable information to the museum field and the potential for improvement in the ways museums serve their communities."⁶ ACT was another grant program concerned with research; it supported projects "that have the potential to advance theory and practice" so that "LAMs and their communities learn together how to build upon the unique abilities of LAMs to achieve positive change."⁷ These two grant programs suggest that museum social service is a valued museum activity and the field wants to work to improve it for the future.

⁶ Information regarding Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums is not publicly available. It can be accessed using the internet archive at <https://web.archive.org/web/20160809101053/https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/sparks-ignition-grants-museums>.

⁷ LAMs refers to Libraries, Archives and Museums.

All the grants addressed multiple areas of museum work.

Multiple different areas of museum work were identified in each grant program, although not every activity was found in every grant. Across the sampled years, every code occurred at least once, indicating that, to varying degrees, all the identified museum activities have consistently existed and received funding across the whole of the surveyed period.

| 2002 | | 2007 | | 2012 | | 2017 | |
|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|------|
| CC | 6.3 | CC | 10.2 | CC | 9.9 | CC | 17.7 |
| CS | 11.1 | CS | 16.3 | CS | 11.9 | CS | 18.3 |
| AC | 1.4 | AC | 1 | AC | 2.7 | AC | 3.93 |
| DI | 0.7 | DI | 2.5 | DI | 3 | DI | 8.1 |
| ED | 13.9 | ED | 9.6 | ED | 13.4 | ED | 19.1 |
| OP | 8.3 | OP | 9.1 | OP | 7.8 | OP | 0.8 |
| PD | 38.9 | PD | 33.1 | PD | 32 | PD | 19.4 |
| TE | 18 | TE | 16.3 | TE | 18.8 | TE | 9.8 |
| EV | 1.4 | EV | 1.5 | EV | 0.6 | EV | 1.4 |

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------|
| CC | Collections Care |
| CS | Community Service |
| AC | Accessibility |
| DI | Diversity |
| ED | Education |
| OP | Operations |
| PD | Professional Development |
| TE | Technology |
| EV | Evaluation |

Table 4 Total annual percentages of museum activities across all surveyed grants. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole tenth of a decimal.

In 2007 and 2012 two grant programs (21MP and NLG) primarily concerned with professional development were sampled, hence the high number of references to professional development. However, even in 2002 and 2017 professional development was still the most commonly coded indicator (although by a much smaller margin in 2017), despite NLG making up only half of the sample, suggesting that it was a consistent museum priority. The high frequency of references to professional development may due to the very nature of museum grants: they are awarded to support a particular initiative that is designed to introduce a new activity or to improve something, both of which are inherently linked to professional development. In turn, within NLG, the same four codes (collections care; community service; education; and technology) occur most commonly across the surveyed

period, suggesting that these are also significant aspects of museum work and that professional development is part of the ongoing work to further these activities.

Technology, collections care, community service and education occurred across every surveyed year in almost all the sampled grant programs (only community service did not occur in GOS), suggesting that they are core museum activities. However, whilst references to collections care, community service education generally increased 2002-2017, suggesting that they became greater priorities, references to technology decreased in frequency across the same period, suggesting that it became a lower priority.

GOS ended in 2002 and references to operations declined overall 2002-2017. Whilst operations occurred in every surveyed grant program, after GOS it was only ever in association with other museum activities. For example the 2007 21MP grant program states that “examples of activities may include... classes, seminars or workshops that deliver information on how to improve staff practices in the operation of museums.” In this case, museum operations were still recognized as being worthy of funding, but only in relation to professional development activities. This suggests that operations alone was not a funding priority.

Alongside operations, accessibility, diversity and evaluation were referenced the least across all surveyed grant programs. However, unlike operations, references to accessibility and diversity increased across the last 18 years, suggesting that they became of greater importance. However, they also appeared to be referenced only in conjunction with other museum activities. For example, the 2017 MFA grant stated that it supports “digitization activities [technology] designed to provide greater access [accessibility] and stimulate engagement for audiences with different learning styles [education]. Whilst other activities were existed independently, accessibility was referenced primarily in association with other activities.

Evaluation was referenced in every surveyed NLG and 21MP, and the most recent MFA (it does not occur in GOS). This suggests that evaluation is most closely associated with professional development, the primary goal of 21MP and one of the primary goals of NLG. It is logical that grant programs that prioritize museum professional development and provide research for the museum field would use evaluation, given that museums need to evaluate in order to know what is not known, what needs to be known, and what needs to be improved. Whilst there are few references to evaluation across the surveyed sections of grant programs, suggesting that it is a low funding priority, it is important to note that it is still an important aspect of museum work that is advocated for by IMLS. For example, in the 2017 MFA grant program, the Project Work Plan asked “what specific activities, including evaluation and performance measurements, will you carry out?” Despite occurring infrequently in the Program Description, evaluation was singled out as a significant activity in other areas of the grant program that were not included in this study.

Professional Development is mentioned frequently across the surveyed years.

Professional development was referenced in every surveyed grant program, suggesting that it has always been a core activity that receives funding. Professional Development was most common in all the NLG and 21MP grant programs, yet was less common in GOS and MFA. However, the existence of professional development in every grant program suggests that all grant programs were, to a lesser or greater extent, intended to improve the work that museums were doing.

In NLG, professional development was consistently associated with research and new and innovative work, both of which can be replicated and applied to the museum field as a whole. In the 2017 NLG grant, the word “research” appeared 7 times. It was included in the indicators for successful projects; the IMLS agency-level goals; the Learning Experiences

category; the Community Anchors category; and the Collections Stewardship category. Research was a priority of the grant program and this was demonstrated by references to research throughout the NOFO: the word “research” occurred 53 times. The word “new” occurred 11 times, whilst “innovative” occurred 3 times. Both “new” and “innovative” indicate originality and are primarily dispersed throughout the Program Description. “Field” occurred 13 times. 12 out of 13 times “field” was used, it was to indicate that work funded by this program had to impact the field as a whole: “successful projects will help the museum field provide high quality, inclusive educational opportunities.” Similar trends were found in the 2002 NLG grant: “research” occurred 51 times; “new” occurred 14 times; “innovative” occurred 13 times; and “field” occurred 10 times. This suggests that the funding of professional development that focused on research that had the ability to affect the museum field as a whole was a continuous priority.

Whilst professional development of museum activities on a field-wide scale was already a key museum activity, it was not until the introduction of the 21MP program in 2005 that professional staff development became an aspect of that work. In the 2007 grant, professional development accounted for 52.9% of all instances of coded museum activities. Of these references to professional development, 89% of them related directly to the development of museum professionals (as opposed to research designed to have a field wide impact). For example, 21MP (2007) was to “help museum professionals acquire, improve, and maintain their knowledge and skills. In the 2012 grant, professional development accounted for 50% all coded museum activities; of these, 83% of references talked about staff development. The results of the two surveyed 21CM grants are similar, suggesting that the development of museum staff was the program’s goal.

NLG focused more on the different activities of museums, rather than the staff that carry out the activities, until the incorporation of 21CM into NLG. At this point, NLG began

to include a greater focus on museum worker development. For example, each category of the 2017 grant states that it is intended for the “development implementation of training and professional development programs... that build the knowledge, skills, and abilities of museum staff and/or volunteers.” In contrast, the 2012 NLG makes no mention of staff training.

Education and social service work are referred to almost equally across the surveyed grants.

Education and social service were referenced in almost equal measure across the grant programs, suggesting that they have been of equal importance over the 18 surveyed years. However, this is not to say that instances of coding of education and community service were evenly distributed across the grant programs: in 5 grant programs the education code occurred more and in 4 grant programs the community service code occurred more. It was only in the 2017 MFA grant program that the two codes occurred equally. This implies that whilst both education and social work have always been core museum activities, at different times one has been favored over the other.

Within an individual grant program, the highest disparity between references to education and social service was in the 2007 NLG. This is particularly evident in the Library and Museum Community Collaboration Grants category, where the concept of social service was mentioned three times as much as education. The 2007 (and 2002) NLG did not have distinct categories for education and social service, meaning that the two aspects of museum work were placed within one category: in 2007 applicants were instructed to apply with projects that “address community civic and educational needs.” Whilst there is some crossover between education and social service, the placement of both within one category meant that funds would have to have been distributed between the two different areas of

museum work. Given the greater importance placed upon social service activities within the Library and Museum Collaboration Grants category, it seems likely that social service would have been advantaged over education in the 2007 NLG.

In contrast, in 2007 and 2017 MFA had distinct grant program categories focused on education and social service. In 2007 they were “Serving as Centers of Community Engagement” (social service) and “Supporting Lifelong Learning” (education); in 2017 they were “Community Anchors” (social service) and “Learning Experiences” (education). These are also the years in the MFA grant programs in which the number of references to education and social service are equal or almost equal. This suggests that the creation of distinct categories for each priority allowed for them to be perceived as equals.

In 2017 both MFA and NLG had distinct categories targeting education (Learning Experiences) and social service (Community Anchors). NLG saw only a slight difference between references to education and social service whilst, as mentioned previously, MFA referenced the two areas of museum work equally. This suggests that education and social service became to be seen as distinct museum priorities and as equally important. They were the most commonly or second most commonly referenced activities in 2017 (asides from professional development in NLG), suggesting that were high priorities.

The keywords from the three categories of the 2017 MFA and NLG (“community” from Community Anchors; “learning” from Learning Experiences; and “collections” from Collections Stewardship) appeared at different frequencies

| | NLG | MFA | Total |
|--------------------|-----|-----|-------|
| Collections | 19 | 38 | 57 |
| Learning | 29 | 29 | 58 |
| Community | 29 | 34 | 63 |

Table 5 Key word frequencies from 2017 grant programs.

throughout the two grant programs. However, both learning and community/communities appear slightly more frequently than collections across the two grant programs. This suggests that learning and community service are importance aspects of museums’ work, and that

museums are indeed for the people as opposed to being just about collections. That is not to say, however, that the collections are not still an important aspect of museum work. Across all surveyed grant programs, collections care was referenced only slightly less than education and community service. This suggests that museum community service, or museum social service initiatives, can work alongside museums' more traditional roles, such as collections care.

Technology has been funded since 2000, but appears to become less important across the course of the surveyed period.

The 2002 GOS grant program was “interested in how technology is [was] becoming integral to museum practice at all levels,” but by 2017 MFA “promotes the use of technology.” This suggests that in 2002 museums were not sure how to use technology, but by 2017 they knew how to use technology, but wanted it to be utilized more widely. This is a change in goal. This change in goal may be because, over the course of the surveyed period, technology became more prevalent and integrated into museum work, lessening the need for research around technology.

The change in goal regarding technology is linked to the change in categories offered by NLG. 2017 was the first year in the sampled grant programs that NLG did not have a category primarily concerned with technology. As a grant program primarily concerned with research and professional and field development, the realignment of NLG categories suggests that the technology sphere had been sufficiently researched and the implementation of the research became the goal. In turn, this would imply that technology is no longer a priority, especially in regards to research.

This trend is also evident in the previous NLG categories. They appear sequential, focusing on the development of museums' use of technology. Being online was the initial goal, after which point digital resources were built and then advanced. Technology was

| Year | Category |
|------|-----------------------------|
| 2002 | Museums Online |
| 2007 | Building Digital Resources |
| 2012 | Advancing Digital Resources |
| 2017 | n/a |

Table 6 NLG technology-based categories.

also mentioned more frequently in 2002 than in 2017. This suggests that the advancement of museums' use of technology was of higher priority earlier in the twenty-first century.

2002-2007 technology was one of the most referenced museum activities. It was the second most referenced aspect of museum work in several grant programs: GOS; 2007 NLG; 2007 MFA. Despite GOS not having a category related to technology, technology was only slightly less important than the grant's namesake, museum operations. In 2003 LOG encouraged museums to "enhance infrastructure and technology in order to serve audiences more effectively," whilst MFA also went on to include aspects of technology. In the 2007 MFA grant program, there was no category specific to technology, yet it was a top priority, equal to collections care and education. In contrast, in the 2017 MFA collections care and education were mentioned more than twice as much as technology, suggesting that technology had decreased in importance.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

It is widely agreed that museums should and do have a social value, yet what this looks like was not widely documented. Whilst museums across the United States are undertaking social service initiatives, there were questions as to whether it was a field wide priority with the necessary infrastructure.

The purpose of this study was to identify the changing priorities in the museum field as reflected in funding opportunities, focusing on IMLS as the primary source. The research was particularly interested in identifying whether social work in museums is or has been a priority for the museum field. The research was guided by the following research questions:

1. What do funding opportunities currently identify as priorities for museums?
2. How have these priorities changed since 2000?
3. What do these changes suggest about the changing role of museums in society?

To answer these questions, I analyzed four grant programs offered by IMLS. The grants were coded using indicators from AAM's *Standards Regarding Public Trust and Accountability*, a document that identifies the priorities of museums in regards to their responsibilities to the public. The data was then analyzed to find out which museum activities were the greatest priorities.

Museum Priorities

All grant programs addressed multiple areas of museum work. Professional development was the highest museum priority and was evident in every grant program. Work around technology was previously a high priority activity for museums, yet it became less important by 2017. In contrast, community service increased in importance and consistently received funding. However, the ways in which community service was talked about and described changed: it became more frequently and explicitly discussed. Community service

was equally important as education, whilst collections care remained a steady priority.

Accessibility, diversity and evaluation were less visible.

Museum community service can be seen as akin to community social work, given that museums have been working for and with communities to meet their needs. A focus on needs suggests a reactive approach, whilst the grant programs also indicated that museum social work takes a macro approach, focusing on affecting groups and communities. The concept of serving the public was seen across grant programs. Museum social work does not seek to just educate around a topic, but to make a meaningful impact on communities, wanting to improve their quality of life by being involved in the community and providing a direct service specific to community needs.

Implications

This study confirms that museum social work is a museum priority that receives federal funding. Whilst previously it had competed with other areas of museum work, it is now a distinct category in flagship IMLS grants, indicating museum social work is a core aspect of museum activities.

Museums now play a greater, more explicit role in the lives of their communities and whilst museum social work is, and possibly always will be, a work in progress, it is a well-funded and accepted museum activity that can impact communities. For this reason, the museum field should not shy away from using the term ‘social work’ to describe their day-to-day activities. As identified in this study, much of the work museums do aligns with that of macro social work. Whilst using this terminology may seem intimidating, it is an opportunity for museums to demonstrate to the world the extent to which they have an impact on their communities and their commitment in continuing to do so.

Further Research

This research could be furthered by examining the total amount of funds awarded per grant program. Grants provide the range in which applicants can apply for funding, yet in the majority of cases the total amount of funding available on a national level was unknown.

Whilst this research confirms that museum social work is a priority that does receive funding, the field would benefit from knowing the amount of money that museum community service receives and how far that money reaches.

This research was based upon grant guidelines, but cannot comment on the types of museum social work that institutions apply to get funded, or receive funding for. Further research on grant applications and grant awardees would demonstrate which priorities receive the greatest funding. Using this sample, a researcher could compare successful applications primary activities with those identified in this study and see if they align.

This research could also be complimented by examining a selection of private funders in order to determine if the activities identified in this study are equally valued by others.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Notice of Funding Opportunities

| Year | NOFO | Sections included in sample |
|------|---|--|
| 2002 | General Operating Support | Letter from the Director; What is General Operating Support? |
| 2002 | National Leadership Grants for Museums | Letter from the Director; National Leadership Grants for Museums Program; National Leadership Grants for Library and Museum Collaborations Program |
| 2007 | National Leadership Grants for Museums | About National Leadership Grants; Categories of Funding |
| 2007 | Museums for America | About Museums for America; Categories of Funding |
| 2007 | 21st Century Museum Professionals Grant | About 21 st Century Museum Professionals grants |
| 2012 | National Leadership Grants for Museums | What are National Leadership Grants?; What type of activities can be funded under the Advancing Digital Resources category?; What types of activities can be funded under the Research category? What type of activities can be funded under the Demonstration category? What types of activities can be funded under the Library Museum Collaboration (LMC) category? |
| 2012 | Museums for America | What are Museums for America grants? Categories of Funding |
| 2012 | 21st Century Museum Professionals Grant | What are 21 st Century Museum Professionals grants? What types of activities can be funded with a 21MP grant? |
| 2017 | National Leadership Grants for Museums | Program Description (includes all subsections) |
| 2017 | Museums for America | Program Description (includes all subsections) |

Appendix 2. AAM Standards Regarding Public Trust and Accountability

- The museum is a good steward of its resources held in the public trust.
- The museum identifies the communities it serves and makes appropriate decisions in how it serves them.
- Regardless of its self-identified communities, the museum strives to be a good neighbor in its geographic area.
- The museum strives to be inclusive and offers opportunities for diverse participation.
- The museum asserts its public service role and places education at the center of that role.
- The museum demonstrates a commitment to providing the public with physical and intellectual access to the museum and its resources.
- The museum is committed to public accountability and is transparent in its mission and its operations.
- The museum complies with local, state and federal laws, codes and regulations applicable to its facilities, operations, and administration.
- The governing authority, staff and volunteers legally, ethically and effectively carry out their responsibilities.

Appendix 3. Code Book for A Priori Codes

| Purpose | Description | Example |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Collections Care | Objects; collections; conservation; preservation; acquisitions; artifacts; protection; pest management; collections care; collections management; documentation. | Museums for America 2017: "investments designed to contribute to the long-term preservation of materials." 21st Century Museum Professionals 2007: "Project focus areas may also include, but not be limited to, collections care and management." |
| Community Service | Community service; community engagement; community outreach; community space; community need; community partnerships; long-term impact; relationship building; civic engagement; collaboration with community members/groups; serve the public. | Museums for America 2017: "the role of museums as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities." National Leadership Grants for Museums 2017: "Collaborate with, learn from, and co-create experiences with other community-based organizations." |
| Accessibility | Accessible; physical access; intellectual access; online access; special needs; disabled; autism; differently abled; support services. | National Leadership Grants for Museums 2012: "Development of tools to enhance access." Museums for America 2017: "Promoting library, museum, and information service policies that ensure access to information for all Americans." |
| Diversity | Diverse audiences; minority; non-traditional audiences; representative; multicultural; increase diversity; difference; inclusion; social inclusion; leverage diversity. | 21st Century Museum Professionals 2012: "These projects should reach... diverse audiences." National Leadership Grants for Museums 2017: "Creating opportunities to encourage a more inclusive and diverse museum professional and volunteer workforce." |
| Education | Learning; learners; schools; life-long learners; adult education; informal learning; programs; teaching; educator; teacher; lectures; classes; courses; curriculum; critical thinking; STEM. | Museums For America 2017: "Learning partnerships with schools and development of museum resources and programs in support of school curricula." National Leadership Grants for Museums 2002: "IMLS continues to seek projects that support the needs of America's emerging role as a learning society." |
| Operations | Operations; administration; management; planning; funding; salaries; wages; museum building; maintenance; security; day-to-day operations; public accountability. | 21st Century Museum Professionals 2012: "Funding will support projects in the full range of museum operations, involving core management skills such as planning, leadership, finance, program design, partnership, and evaluation." General Operating Support 2002: "Competitive grants to museums for ongoing institutional activities." |

Appendix 4. Code Book for Emergent Codes

| Purpose | Description | Example |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Professional Development | Professional development; advance practice; further the museum field's knowledge and understanding; develop the museum field; improve museum practices; staff training; research; prototypes. | National Leadership Grants for Museums 2012: "Support projects that address challenges faced by the museum... fields and that have the potential to advance practice in those fields." 21st Century Museum Professionals 2007: Providing grants that help museum professionals acquire, improve, and maintain their knowledge and skills." |
| Evaluation | Evaluate; evaluation; summative evaluation; formative evaluation. | Museums for America 2017: "Incorporate formative and summative evaluation strategies." National Leadership Grants for Museums 2007: "Grant funds support projects that are designed to evaluate the impact of library or museum services." |
| Technology | Digitization; develop technology; innovative technology; use technology. | 21st Century Museum Professionals 2007: "Activities that increase and strengthen the use of contemporary technology tools to deliver programs and services." General Operating Support 2002: "IMLS is interested in how technology is becoming integral to museum practice at all levels." |

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