

# the courier



Mid-Atlantic  
Association of Museums

from the executive director

## Winter Welcome

The 2003 Annual Meeting in Newark, New Jersey brought together a talented group of professionals from around the region. Although attendance fell below projections, the overwhelmingly positive feedback about the content quality creates exciting momentum for the coming year and signifies a revitalization of the association.

On Monday, October 13, I was honored to escort Charles Osgood, host of *CBS Sunday Morning*, through the



exhibit hall to meet several of our long-time exhibitors. During the annual luncheon, Diana Nyad, host of National Public Radio's *The Savvy Traveler*, delivered a riveting recount of her life's story. I was pleased that so many of you found it to be as relevant and motivational as hoped. Both Diana and Charles expressed their pleasure at speaking to our delegation and will "stay tuned" to association developments as honorary members.

After a two-year hiatus, the Katherine Coffey Award was reinstated and bestowed upon James P. Gold (Jim), an outstanding leader in our region. Read Jim's remarks in this issue, page 3.

The meeting also inaugurated the **Leadership Enrichment and Advancement Program** (LEAP) fellowships. Four emerging leaders received assistance: Carrie Albert, Curator of Industrial History, Baltimore Museum of Industry, MD; Kristen Harbeson,

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## Americans Trust Museums

*The American Association of Museums*

In a skeptical age of information overload, what sources of information do Americans trust most? Is it books? Print and broadcast media? The Internet? None of the above. Almost nine out of ten Americans (87%) find museums to be one of the most trustworthy or a trustworthy source of information among a wide range of choices. Books are a distant second at 61%, and a majority of Americans find print and broadcast media and the Internet to be not trustworthy.

Edward H. Able, Jr., president and CEO of the American Association of Museums (AAM), announced on May 7, 2001, during AAM's 2001 annual meeting in St. Louis, the results of a recent AAM-commissioned national survey of the American people about museums as a source of education and information. The survey, conducted by Lake, Snell, Perry, a nationally recognized survey research firm, reveals that Americans view museums as "one of the most important resources for educating our children and as one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information."

The survey report notes that "among a wide range of information sources, museums are far and away the most trusted source of objective information. No other institution has a similar level of trust." Almost nine out of ten Americans (87%) find museums to be trustworthy, including 38% who see museums as one of the most trusted sources.

Books are a distant second most-trusted source (61% finding them trustworthy, including 18% finding them one of the most trustworthy). Americans indicate a generally low level of confidence in the news media, with untrustworthiness percentages ranging from 50% for television news to 65% for newspapers to 76% for magazines.

"...public confidence in information presented by museums has given parents and grandparents the confidence to serve as teachers ...when they visit a museum"

In addition, the survey reveals, as could be expected, that schools continue to be viewed by Americans as the most important educational source for children. Museums, however, along with libraries, are next in line among the institutions that people believe are important resources for this purpose.

In presenting the survey report, AAM President and CEO Edward H. Able, Jr. noted:

*To some extent we were not surprised by these findings. A 1998 book, The Presence of*

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Serving museums and museum professionals in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C.

**MISSION**

The purpose of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums is to support and promote excellence, ethics, and accessibility in museum practices to make the museums of the Mid-Atlantic region better able to preserve and interpret our diverse cultural, scientific, and aesthetic heritage. The Association will assist museums to carry out their missions for public service by developing and improving communication among the personnel of museums and other appropriate institutions in the region through meetings, symposia, publications, and other professional activities. (Article II, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Bylaws.)

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Please consult the MAAM Web site for a full listing of the MAAM Board of Directors including District of Columbia and state representatives and members-at-large.

*The Courier*, a triannual newsletter of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, is published in the winter/spring, summer and fall. Contributions from individual and institutional members are welcome.

The submission deadlines are March 15, July 15 and November 15. Submissions should be sent via e-mail to: [thecourier@midatlanticmuseums.org](mailto:thecourier@midatlanticmuseums.org).

*Layout by Alexis Bierman*

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president's letter

On October 11, 2003 the MAAM Board of Directors met in Newark, New Jersey to continue planning and reorganizing for the future. The meeting provided the first opportunity to welcome our newly elected Board members: **Martha Morris** (Treasurer), **Laurie Baty** and **Karen Pollard** (Members-at-Large), and **Donna Sutton** (New York Representative). Re-elected board members include **Steve Pulinka** (Vice President), **Bruce Craig** (Secretary), and **Julia Hofer** (Delaware Representative).



Going off the Board are Sally Johnston and David Parke. I would like to thank these folks for their hard work, dedication, and support over the years. MAAM will continue to benefit from their involvement with various committees.

It is not too early to start thinking and planning for next year's 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, October 16-19, 2004, in partnership with the **Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations**. It will be held at the Loews Hotel on Market Street, with space for a larger Exhibit Hall. We will be meeting with representatives of our museum vendors this winter to make the hall as informative as possible for your needs.

Finally, to assist the American Association of Museums (AAM) and to serve as a source of information in policy deliberations that may have impact beyond its immediate membership, the AAM convenes a Council of Regional Associations (CRA). The CRA represents the six regional associations recognized by the AAM and meets biannually to exchange ideas, discuss concerns, and offer a regional perspective of the needs of museums—not only with each other—but also with the AAM and their senior staff. Because we represent the views and needs of our region, please let us know if there are issues that you would like to see addressed at the national level. The CRA will next meet in Washington, D.C. in January 2004.

As we continue to plan the future of MAAM, I encourage you to contact the staff and/or me, about your needs and interests. Please communicate with MAAM about how the association can serve you better. We are eager to provide you with the best value for your membership.

Cordially,

*C. Douglass Alves, Jr.*

President, MAAM Board of Directors  
[president@midatlanticmuseums.org](mailto:president@midatlanticmuseums.org)

# In Museums We Trust

58<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting & Museum Fair 2004  
 October 16-19, 2004 • Philadelphia, PA

## Save the Date!

MAAM's 58<sup>th</sup> annual meeting is presented in partnership with the Pennsylvania Federation of Museums and Historical Organizations (PFMHO) at the Loews Hotel.

## Volunteer Now for the 2004 Annual Meeting

Your expertise and leadership is needed to create an exciting and relevant program. Visit the MAAM Web site and go to "Programs" to register for one of the 2004 Annual Meeting Committees (Program, Local Host, Fundraising, and Marketing).

## Call for Proposals Deadline: February 2, 2004

While we may consider ourselves experts at engaging and educating our diverse audiences, gaining the trust of the community in times of increased public scrutiny is a complicated process. The 2004 MAAM Annual Meeting seeks to address organizational and programmatic issues surrounding trust and the responsibility to preserve and interpret. Please share your experiences in fostering public trust in our museums. Visit the MAAM Web site for details, proposal form, and guidelines.

*Celebrating  
 innovation,  
 Creating  
 the future*

AAM Annual Meeting  
 & MuseumExpo™2004  
 May 6-10  
 Ernest Morial Convention Center  
 New Orleans, Louisiana

**aam**  
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# Musems, Society, Inequality

A book review by Anh-Thu Cunnion

In 2000, the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester organized an international conference of museum professionals to explore the social role of museums and the relevancy of social inclusion to the museum world. From this event, dubbed *Inclusion*, evolved an anthology of essays edited by Richard Sandell of the University of Leicester and representing an array of international perspectives, including those of museum professionals from seven countries on four continents. Together, the eighteen essays compiled in *Museums, Society, Inequality* (2002) serve as a multidimensional discourse addressing the many issues surrounding museums—from their social purpose and responsibilities to their potential to influence social inequality. Regardless of their individual perspectives, the contributors find a unified voice within the idea of social agency—the ability to influence and affect society. Thus, *Museums, Society, Inequality* brings to the forefront three main themes: perspectives and issues surrounding the relationship between museums and society; the strategies museums have employed to promote inclusion; and the future of museums as a more relevant, effective and positive member of society.

In the preface, Sandell states that the aims of this book are “to open up and to move forward debates about the social purpose of museums, to influence and inform practice, and it has therefore set out to provide a forum in which the theoretical and abstract, the practical and professional are brought together.” (Sandell, xviii) Taken individually, each essay would accomplish, to some degree, the objectives set out by the authors of this text. However, as a whole the work corroborates the magnitude and complexity of efforts that are involved in creating and maintaining a framework for museums to practice social agency and challenge social inequality. The three divisions of the book outline an important balance between theory, practice and aspiration and within each section the essays present a logical flow of ideas. More importantly, the compilation of essays strike carefully balanced tone of lofty ideals and practical counsel.

Please visit the MAAM Web site for the complete text of the review.

Richard Sandell, ed., *Museums, Society, Inequality* (Routledge, 2002) 288 pp, ISBN: 0415260604; \$28.95.

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