

Organizational Capacity and Management

The Detroit Historical Society's mission is to tell Detroit's stories and why they matter. By collecting, preserving and presenting the artifacts and stories of our region through the operation of the [Detroit Historical Museum](#) (DHM), the [Dossin Great Lakes Museum](#) (DGLM) and the Collections Resource Center (CRC), the Society strives to be an important element in Detroit's art and cultural community and an integral part of the city's present and future by providing our community with meaningful experiences that preserve and share the rich history of southeast Michigan.

On May 20, 2015, the Society's Board of Trustees, which consists of a diverse and involved variety of important business leaders and community advocates, approved a new five year strategic plan outlining the Society's strategic focus areas through 2020. Developed with consultation from Ann Arbor's [NEW \(Nonprofit Enterprise at Work\)](#), the plan prioritizes community engagement and increasing the organization's impact on a broad and diverse local population. This has directly informed the planning, management and evaluation of all of our exhibitions and programming, but most specifically the Society's current and most ambitious initiative to date, [Detroit 67: Looking Back to Move Forward](#). By convening this extensive, community-wide effort, the Society aims to firmly establish itself as an important cultural touchstone for all metro-Detroiters, now and in the future.

The Society's financial practices are monitored and executed by our Director of Finance and Human Resources, Norma Jean Zaleski, who has previously held senior corporate finance positions with Altair Engineering and Honeywell and served as a certified public accountant with Pricewaterhouse Coopers. Ms. Zaleski is responsible for all accounting functions of the Society, including financial statements, budget monitoring, accounts payable, accounts receivable, bank reconciliations and payroll. The Society's broader financial policymaking and planning are undertaken by our Executive Director and Managing Director with consultation from Ms. Zaleski and our Board of Trustees Finance Committee which includes several finance, tax and legal professionals. Our annual audit is completed by Detroit's George Johnson & Company.

We have recently made major changes to our Marketing and Sales Department, allowing us to become more nimble, experiment with new technologies and measurements, and focus on growing our attendance, engagement and earned revenue levels. We are currently searching for a new Director of Marketing with a strong marketing and sales background to lead and complement the skills of our two marketing and sales managers, both of whom are experienced in arts and culture marketing, public relations and sales. The new strategic plan has emphasized institutional awareness, branding and marketing as another key focus area over the next five years.

The Society has had a strong historic reliance on earned media through our special events and programs. While this is still one of our strengths, we are working with consultants from the DeVos Institute of Arts Management as well as major local and national creative and advertising firms to expand our institutional marketing plans and activate new media and advertising programs, especially as related to Detroit 67. We believe that the Detroit 67 Marketing Collaborative is setting a new industry standard for integrating new techniques, technologies and perspectives into arts and cultural marketing strategies. The Collaborative's main firms—Mindfield, Team Detroit, 3DEXCITE/Dessault Systemes, Brophy and Saga Communications—

are bringing cutting edge graphic design, videography and app development skills to both the marketing of the Detroit 67 Project and the content of the highly interactive Detroit 67 exhibition. The Collaborative is being managed by Ignition Media Group, whose expertise in messaging, marketing events and public relations are taking the Society's visibility to the next level.

Quality of Cultural Programming

The exhibits and programs offered at the Detroit Historical Museum and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum attract more than 120,000 visitors annually. In addition to our walk-in visitors, so far this fiscal year 10,199 schoolchildren have taken part in the Society's educational tours and programs, a 30% increase from this time last year and a 57% increase from 2014. While we maintain a free admission policy at both of our museums and many of our programs are free of charge, docent led public and school tours as well as some special events are offered at modest prices to offset internal costs. Attendance at our museums has seen consistent annual increases. Over the past four years, the Historical Museum has seen an average yearly attendance increase of 11% and the Dossin, an average increase of 22% per year. In 2013 and again in 2015, the Detroit Historical Museum and the Dossin Great Lakes Museum, respectively, each won Awards of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History for their newest exhibitions.

The Society's curatorial, programming and educational staff defines the quality of the exhibitions and programs they present by evaluating how effectively they meet three criteria: community need, educational standards and constituent feedback. The development of all Society programs and presentations begin with a needs analysis to ensure we are not duplicating the arts and cultural products we produce for our community. We also work directly with our core constituencies to ensure we develop programs that meet their needs. For example, with school audiences, we work with teachers and districts to create programs that meet their learning standards and instructional goals. Finally, through focus groups, prototyping and the solicitation of participant feedback, we test the effectiveness of our programs and exhibitions and make changes and updates as needed.

The [educational programming](#) offered at our museums has been vetted using the above process. The *Adopt-a-Class* Program allows economically disadvantaged students from the metro Detroit area to use the Society as a portal for the many programs, workshops, and tours we offer at no cost. The brand-new *Passport to Learning* is an extension of that program, offering an affordable self-guided tour experience for students. *StoryLiving* brings history to life through drama, role playing, songs and creative problem solving. Other programs include the *History Detective Game*, *Trading Posts and Animal Pelts: Detroit's Early Fur Trade* and the *Great Lakes Transportation* program at the DGLM. In addition to the offerings to students, the Society also provides a variety of public programs. These include [Behind the Scenes Tours](#), which provide attendees the chance to explore historic neighborhoods and structures throughout the region, [Historic Houses of Worship Tours](#) which teach metro Detroiters about the contributions religious institutions have made in the development of our community, and the [Film Series](#) which screens films that cover a range of Detroit history subjects.

However, the Society's core cultural offerings are on display in our two museums free of charge for all members of the community. The Detroit Historical Museum features 11 core exhibits that all work to fulfill the Society's mission by using key pieces in our collection of 250,000 local

artifacts to tell Detroit's stories and why they matter. These include old favorite exhibits like [Streets of Old Detroit](#) and [America's Motor City](#), as well as our host of new interactive [core exhibits](#) added during the museum's extension renovation in 2012. In the past two years, the museum's temporary exhibit spaces featured *Out on the Town: Drinking and Dining in Detroit since 1920* and *Fashion D-Fined: the Past, Present and Future of Detroit Fashion* in the large [Booth-Wilkinson Gallery](#) as well as many other changing [special exhibitions](#) throughout the facility, including the Automotive Showplace and the Community Gallery, which this year featured community exhibitions by Henry Ford Health System, WGPR-TV and a celebration of Al Abrams contribution to Motown Records entitled "[Motown Black and White](#)."

The Dossin Great Lakes Museum is located on Belle Isle's riverfront and explores Detroit's role in national and regional maritime history. It features 4 core exhibits including [Built by the River](#), [the William Clay Ford Pilot House](#), the [Gothic Room](#) in the *Polk Family Hall*, *Outdoor Treasures*—which features the [bow anchor from the legendary Edmund Fitzgerald](#)—and *Miss Pepsi*, the first hydroplane to qualify for a race at 100mph. The *Robert M. Dossin Gallery* recently featured *Troubled Waters: Healing our Freshwater Habitats*, presented in partnership with the Nature Conservancy, and is currently exhibiting [Guardians of the Great Lakes](#), which honors the men and women of the sea services.

Community Impact

Through the strategic planning process the Society completed last year, the organization realized that we have work to do to reach broad and diverse segments of the community with our exhibitions and programming. Therefore, the first strategic focus area presented in the new Strategic Plan is "Community Engagement and Organizational Impact." Over the next five years the Society will increase its relevance in the cultural community by engaging broad and diverse audiences, leading and participating in inclusive community conversations, prioritizing the integration of diverse community stories into the Society's programs and exhibits and maintaining an institution-wide commitment to community engagement.

The Detroit 67 Project has been the major catalyst for the Society's approach to addressing these issues. In June of 2015, as part of the [Detroit Revitalization Fellows](#) program at Wayne State University, the Society hired [Kalisha Davis](#) to fill the newly created position of Director of Community Outreach and Engagement. Additionally, the Society acquired the services of Marlowe Stoudamire as the Project Director for Detroit 67. Both Ms. Davis and Mr. Stoudamire are leaders in their fields, and their skill sets correlate directly with Detroit '67 and its focus on creating meaningful community impact. Mr. Stoudamire is the founder of Butterfly Effect Detroit and he specializes in consulting on the design and execution of engagement strategies that facilitate digital and face-to-face collaborations with targeted groups across public, private and social sectors. Ms. Davis is working as liaison with a variety of community groups to insure the Society is authentically communicating the perspectives and concerns of often marginalized voices.

The Society began its work with Detroit 67 over two years in advance of the its 2017 culmination to build authentic, not transactional, relationships led by and that serve a wide diversity of people. Our core community partners include the Charles H. Wright Museum for African American History, The City of Detroit Departments of Neighborhoods and Parks and Recreation, Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, New Detroit, Michigan Science

Center, Detroit Young Professionals, Detroit Youth Development Commission and Community Development Advocates of Detroit. Ongoing collaborations with all of these entities, and many more, will assist the Society in making a broad and inclusive community impact.

To that end, our institutions also play a major role in the strengthening and revitalization of their neighborhoods, the DHM in Detroit's Midtown and the DGLM on Belle Isle. We have attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors and their spending power as they visit the museums, and we employed many Michigan-based designers, fabricators and contractors as a part of our multi-million dollar facility renovations, and plan to do the same for the planned outdoor renovations and enhancements at the DGLM planned to begin later this summer. The Society is supported by nearly 200 volunteers and supports four different historical auxiliary groups: Friends of the Dossin, Friends of the Glancy Trains, Friend of Detroit's Black History and the 313 Young Professionals group.

Also, to increase public accessibility to its collection of over 250,000 artifacts, the Society has digitized over 36,000 items to date, from historical photographs to scans of important documents and images of artifacts housed at the CRC. The Society's [online](#) digital collection allows anyone from around the globe to access these images. The staff at the CRC has prioritized digitizing frequently requested artifact images, such as ship plans, historical documents and photographs, particularly related to Detroit sports, WWII maps and posters and Historic Fort Wayne. Reported uses of the images and information range from school projects to holiday cards to family lineage research, just to name a few. In addition to making the collection available online, Society staff has interpreted the history of many of the items through a blog titled "[Look What We Found!](#)" and a [Tumblr feed](#). These resources provide the Society with the opportunity to take its collection beyond its two physical museums and to a global audience.

Supplemental Information

A wide variety of the Society's organizational information is available on the Society's website, located at www.detroithistorical.org. It includes [up-to-date event listings](#), [staff information](#), our [Board of Trustees roster](#), [Mission Statement](#), [Annual Report](#) and [Strategic Plan](#). Further pertinent information about the Society can be found on our [Guidestar Profile](#) as well as through our Society [Facebook page](#) and [Twitter feed](#). The Society's [YouTube Channel](#) features new additions to the Society's digital video collection and our [Flickr page](#) highlights the rental capacities of both museums and is used primarily as a sales tool.

As a final note: while the Detroit Historical Society considers itself a cultural and collecting organization (as defined by MCACA), the concept of creative expression and experience looms large not only over the curation of all our exhibitions and the formulation of our presented programming, but also in our support of local artists, performers and storytellers in our museums. For example, in 2015 the Society was the recipient of a Knight Foundation Arts Challenge Award for a project entitled "[\(Re\) Documenting Detroit.](#)" Through the project, the Society commissioned and paid for works from photography students at the nearby College for Creative Studies' in order to re-imagine in current context the black and white photographic work done by the students of notable documentary photographer Bill Rauhauser in the 1970s and 80s. The photographs will be accessioned into the Society's collection (where the original work also resides) and will be featured in an exhibition at the Detroit Historical Museum this June.