

Although you may not be able to tell it from my accent, I am originally a “Jersey Girl” who spent summers “down the shore.” I was born in Newark and spent the first 13 years of my life in the city before my parents moved to the suburbs. Katherine Coffey was the Director of the Newark Museum during the 1960s when I was growing up in New Jersey and she was the person, I discovered much later, largely responsible for bringing the museum into the everyday life of the city. At least twice a month my parents packed us into the station wagon and took us downtown to the Newark Museum to participate in some program or exhibition. During this almost weekly ritual we visited the Newark Museum, the Newark Public Library, and Lipshitz, the kosher deli on Clinton Avenue. My brother and I loved those Saturdays. Often we attended art classes inspired by the Chinese or African collections and the museum nurtured my brother’s considerable talent as an artist. Other days we wandered or ran around the galleries or hid behind the Greek slave. The Newark Museum also loaned objects to the city’s public schools, a practice I recently discovered was started by John Cotton Dana and continued by Katherine Coffey. So I also had the opportunity to handle “museum objects” in elementary school. From our trip to the museum my family went on to the Public Library, just down the street. The library had a picture loan program. You searched

through folders of pictures of paintings, Mayan pots, or Egyptian mummies clipped from magazines or old books, many from the Newark Museum. You selected your favorites and filled a manila folder with them and took them home to decorate your room for the week. This practice, which I am sure my children, and my students would consider quite primitive enabled us to bring the Newark Museum home.

By the late 1960s the Newark Museum was in the center of a city that was increasingly angry, segregated, and near explosion and still the museum was an oasis that welcomed and inspired everyone with exhibitions of all of the world's cultures and a special emphasis on the history and art of Newark. I don't want to give you the impression that the museum was perfect. In the 1990s when angry minority parents complained that the Museum's Ballantine House, a 19th century mansion attached to the museum, held little of interest for school groups, the museum completely revamped its approach to the interpretation of the house so that it was relevant to the lives of the community's residents.

I was at the Newark Museum last Saturday and as my daughter Meredith and I we were leaving about 1 o'clock in the afternoon the crowds entering the museum's doors were so large that the

security guard had to clear a path for us to exit. It was terrific to see that visitation!

The Newark Museum has always been my idea of a great museum and has always had a special place in my heart. The Coffey award is very, very dear and I thank you for this honor with great humility. I hope you will forgive me these few moments of personal indulgence.

I would like to spend a few minutes talking with you about the future of our profession:

When I was lucky enough to become Director of the Cooperstown Graduate Program I saw it as the best way to change museums, by changing and inspiring the next generation of museum professionals. What I didn't realize was how much that next generation would inspire me with their passion, their enthusiasm, their idealism and their unflinchingly positive belief that museums can and will continue to make a difference in people's lives. I have great confidence that when the baby-boomers retire we will be leaving the profession in good and capable hands dedicated to public service:

“I want to work with cultural and preservation institutions to bring important global and national issues to the forefront,” wrote one graduate student. “Material culture, documentary film, and oral history provide the public with access to ways of exploring issues of immigration, cultural heritage, and identity. I want to create educational and public programs to assist immigrants with the difficult task of settling within the United States.”

“I want to be a museum curator, but not in the traditional sense of the profession. I want to be a curator for the new museum, a museum of the community and for the public. I believe that the future of museums lies in greater focus on the communities that they serve. I want everyone to be able to enjoy and benefit from the resources that museums possess, no matter where they live or what background they are coming from.”

We have NOT achieved much progress with staff diversity despite discussions about it for 25 years. That continues to be an area where we need to do more. But, the people entering the field give us much to be hopeful about.

In other areas there is need for concern. Now 17 years after the publication of *Excellence and Equity*—the 1992 statement by the

American Association of Museums about what museums are, the economic climate has changed dramatically. Perhaps, it is time for us to consider an expanded statement of purpose. Excellence—outstanding educational programming and Equity—access for everyone—and Enterprise or Entrepreneurship—creative, even transformative, self-sustainability.

Museums can no longer depend entirely on public and private philanthropy. They must, instead, depend on their own ingenuity, their business acumen, and the institution's responsiveness to the community. Without losing sight of the core mission—the importance of preserving the collection, as well as doing good and serving everyone, including those who can't afford our sometimes exorbitant admission fees; they must learn to use their own resources and ingenuity to recognize opportunities both to increase revenue and to provide programs that people want. Here are a few examples of success in this area:

The Weeksville Society, dedicated to the history and culture of the African American community in the Bedford Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, hosted a farmers' market that increased their visitation and community support while providing much needed fresh vegetables in a community with limited markets.

The Owl's Head Transportation Museum in Rockland, Maine accepts collectible 20th century cars that are outside the scope of its collection, exhibits them in a special gallery for a period of months and then with the consent of the donors sells them during an on-line auction for a great deal of money that supports the museum.

The Strong Museum purchased a McDonald's franchise for part of its food service and

Proctors' Theater in Schenectady intentionally overbuilt its heating system and sold its excess heat to its not-for-profit neighbors at a reduced rate, but a profit for Proctors.

For the past ten years the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix has sponsored a desert landscapers school in both English and Spanish that is also a jobs training program meeting the demand for people who know how to garden with desert plants.

Whatever you may think of these entrepreneurial projects, they have all resulted in vibrant, service-oriented, healthy and sustainable institutions and broadened missions.

Museums tend to be conservative, non-entrepreneurial, non-risk-taking, even rigid in their interpretation of their mission and purpose. I would argue that with shrinkage of both endowments and donations, it is time to engage in much more entrepreneurial behavior.

- We need to look for and be able to “see” creative business opportunities.
- We need to expand efforts to share authority with the public.
- We need to be willing to take measured risks about what a museum can be that goes beyond the interpretation of period rooms and the development of exhibitions.
- Boards and staffs need to take risks and accept some failure as a part of the entrepreneurial process and to move on to experiment with other creative ventures.
- And, we need to engage our entire staffs from senior staff to security guards and secretaries in looking for solutions to fiscal problems.

Finally, as a part of the economic crisis many museums have eliminated assistant curator and other entry-level positions. This we do at our peril. Young professionals bring enthusiasm and expertise in technology, and social media that many institutions

sorely need. They also offer wonderful suggestions about how to engage younger audiences, the donors and visitors of the future.

When Jim Gold called and told me the good news about the Coffey award he asked me to speak for 15 minutes and gave me the good advice not to stand too long between museum professionals and the bar. So I thank you for this great honor and encourage you to enjoy another glass of wine.

At the CGP we receive many calls each month from individuals wanting to start a museum. On the one hand, we Americans think that museums are the solution to a multitude of problems—from economic development to the commemoration of significant events or the re-use of old buildings. On the other hand [how many hands do you have?] the proliferation of new museums may also suggest that some current institutions are not meeting community needs. And more are being founded every day. Here are three examples: A group of parents in Oneonta, NY is trying to start a children's museum

A group of aficionados of John Coletrane have acquired his raised ranch in Dix Hills, New York on Long Island and hope to create an historic house.

The group of citizens in a neighborhood in Newark is trying to start a museum of African American music.

3 questions to ponder:

How many museums can we support?

Should some museums go out of business as others are formed--

Have some outlived their usefulness?

How can we sustain museums?

