

Harnessing the Power of Museums: A Guide to Programs for Well-Being

Round 3 Notes

The Big Picture Question Posed by Review

In the reviewer's response, there's one big decision point that would help direct the rest of the response and what you do going forward.

The question is this: Do you want this to be a book that primarily focuses on art museums, or do you want it to more broadly applicable to other types of museums?

This is a question only you two can decide. It's worth considering both options, because each would create a different path forward with the book. I agree with the reviewer that right now, it reads more as if it's pitched to a general museum audience while all the examples invoke art museums, something I wouldn't have particularly noticed because my own default thought of museums is art museums. This is such a great reminder of why peer reviewers—and in this case, one who works in a different type of museum—are so integral to the publishing process!

I'm going to go through and consider each option in turn, think on the page about why you might choose it and what some of the considerations going forward would be.

Considerations for an Art-Museum-Specific Focus

The biggest reason to consider this option is that the book, as it is now, is already aligned this way. Many of the personal examples involve artwork and specific art programs, such as Art Heals, Art of the Athlete, VTS (as the reviewer points out). The case studies involve art. While the images aren't in the files I have for the workshops, each workshop includes objects (named but not pictured in the Word docs) of visual art. They all involve art-making and creative prompts that feel best suited to art museums. The guest contributors in the workshop section explicitly discuss art. Much of the rhetorical framework of the book invokes art-making.

There are benefits of a more specific approach even as it's a bit narrower. It has the potential to resonate more strongly with the intended audience. A narrower scope can be better for marketing your book, too, because with specificity comes clarity and a more defined target audience, which makes the marketing and publicity job of reaching that audience easier and more likely to connect. There's something to be said, for both marketing and for your book

connecting with and impacting readers, in doing something specific really well rather than trying to be everything to everyone in a broader scope.

This path, of honing the focus to art museums, would be the easier approach in terms of workload and time investment, because it so closely aligns with what is already here.

Here is a general overview of what my big-picture thoughts would be on how to go forward in this path:

- Change the title to “Harnessing the Power of Art Museums”
- Change some (not all) of the references to museums to “art museums”
- Incorporate the reviewer’s suggestions for new sources, especially the art-specific ones about MoMA and other art-museum-themed programs
- Could add one chapter about adapting to other types of museums while keeping focus on art museums – perhaps best of both worlds? Not necessary, just a thought

Considerations for Broadening Scope to All Museum Types

The biggest reason to consider this option is that it would be the most inclusive and could widen your book’s reach. You could hear from readers that they used your workshop guides to lead programs in history museums, science museums, botanical gardens (I loved that reference by your reviewer and had never thought of those as museums before). There is potential here to expand to a wider audience, and therefore to reach more participants. This is probably the way to have an impact on the highest amount of people.

Just as there can be an argument for specificity, especially for marketing, there is of course an argument for breadth as well. You have more “micro-audiences” if you broaden the scope.

This option would be the bigger lift. That is not meant to be discouraging, or to put my thumb on the scale in any way. (I truly think this decision would go either way.) It’s more to give a clear-eyed look at the pros and cons and the scope of work for the different approaches.

Here is a general overview of what my big-picture thoughts would be on how to go forward in this path:

- Address the limitations of VTS outside of art museum settings and visual art (already mentioned in your response to feedback)
- Expand and restructure Part II
 - Rename “In the Museum” chapter to “In the Art Museum”
 - Combine community and healthcare as one “community engagement” or “outside the museum” theme
 - Add other case studies for different types of museums – these could be combined in one additional chapter—each type of museum wouldn’t need its

own chapter, you would just need one robust chapter covering other types of museums

- Expand the toolbox, especially close looking/VTS
 - There are already several prompts throughout the book that encourage reminiscence and connection to personal story, which is what the reviewer thinks would be most likely to come up in looking at ordinary objects in a history museum or to natural “objects” in a botanical garden – could add more of these types of prompts throughout the whole book and focus on this aspect in the toolbox here
 - Consider what ways of looking would be involved in other museums and add or adjust prompts and tools to include them
 - History museums
 - Not just ordinary objects – what about looking closely at documents, photographs, other historical artifacts
 - Holocaust museums in several cities – could be great match for this work
 - Botanic gardens
 - Science museums
- In addition to the reviewer’s suggested additional sources, look for studies about other museum types as well as museums in general, so that the rhetorical framework of the book is less art specific and focuses more broadly on museums.
- Provide alternatives to the art-making creative prompts; also acknowledge that outside of art museums, participants might not be prepared or willing to do art projects

Questions to Ask

Before deciding on a direction, here are some questions to ask:

- Does your publisher have a preference? If possible, discuss the pros and cons with them, and then follow their guidance. This is the most important question, so that you and the publisher stay on the same page for a vision of the book.
- Does your contract have a Description of the Work, and if so, does the description point one way or another?
- In the book, you write about being asked for a guide so people can take this work into their own communities and museums. Who are the people who’ve asked for this book? What version of the book were they asking for? What do they want to read? What do they need? You have the benefit of an established audience who wants your work, what most authors only dream of with a first book, so thinking deeply about who they are, what they want and need, and what would have the most impact on their jobs and their practice and their community engagement is an important approach to inform your decision-making here. These questions about audience can be considered in conversation with your publisher, or by you two together if your publisher doesn’t have a strong preference.

Responses to Table “Response to Reviewer”

Here, I’ll go through your reviewer’s remarks comment by comment and offer my thoughts on the reviewer’s words and your response to them so far.

Reviewer Comments

Comment 1: Book Title

Your new title “Harnessing the Power of Museums” (or alternately “Harnessing the Power of Art Museums” if you go the more specific route described above) works great. I noticed that the OneDrive folder is named “Harnessing the Power of Museum Objects,” while in the Table the word “Objects” isn’t included. It reads a little clearer without “Objects.” “Museum Objects” still has the potential to give an unfamiliar reader the same impression your reviewer had before opening the manuscript.

Comment 2: VTS, Close Looking, and Ordinary Objects

Your response here feels spot on, and these approaches can apply whether you’re considering the “art-focused” path or the “broad-museum-audience” path. Loved the bandaid case study addition idea. Could also use examples from sending out packets to NMFT participants? Weren’t we asked to bring a natural object one year, like a rock or leaf? Love differentiating CL and VTS.

Comment 3: Participants

This is a both and situation, where both instincts—including a paragraph in Chapter 4 about participants, and detailing the participant populations in the Part II chapters—are great, practical ways to address the reviewer’s concerns and expand on participant populations. In Chapter 4, Participants could be its own section. Perhaps “Participants” could be integrated in chapter title as well?

Comment 4: Jenna’s Bio in Ch 1

The reviewer’s comment originally confused me. I looked at some of the workshop chapters, the Well-Being chapter, and Chapter 1 and couldn’t see any difference in format. They all have the bio and the collaboration section right before the references. I wasn’t sure why the reviewer was so thrown by the first chapter, but perhaps it was just because that was the first instance? I agree that moving all the bios/collabs to their own section in the back of the book works well and solves any issues of reading flow interruption.

Side notes:

- Adding the authors of each chapter underneath the chapter titles works so well.
- The new title for this chapter is great! A perfect way to say “here’s the problem” in an inviting way. Excellent work!

Comment 5: Off-site Settings

The added wordage (blue text) works great. I agree with adding context around “community engagement” and using that language instead of “outreach.” Explicitly explaining that language evolution is in line with your work and the book, and readers will likely appreciate that perspective.

One more thought: In each of the chapters that take place outside the museums (community, healthcare), could you add context about why you chose locations, and spend more time on the extra considerations these places required—the transportation, training, resources, partnerships that were part of the planning?

Comment 6: Expanding Sources

The wording here works really well.

Quick notes:

- I believe the first sentence in your response box here should be in black (your response to the reviewer) and not blue (new wording). You could also add a line break to separate the two.
- If you have the bandwidth, it could be nice to expand a bit on each of these sources. The first two especially could each get their own paragraph. The source about unapparent disabilities—love to see this language and the move away from “invisible,” this is a shift Tyanne and I have been trying to manifest with our NMFT talks—also could be expanded into a paragraph, though that might fit better in the accessibility section.
- I’m continually impressed by how well you quickly come up with new wordage that always sounds natural, non-repetitive, and like it always existed in the book. That is a skill that doesn’t come so easily to most writers!

Comment 7: Trainings

Including a Trainings section would work nicely, and the list you have is a great sampling. As for placement, this might fit best in the Toolbox chapter. Trainings could come at the end, in the vein of “If you’re looking for more resources or more thorough training in different aspects of this work, here are some suggestions,” and each training could get its own paragraph. You could include info on how to access the trainings. Some are location-centric (Oregon Humanities, the NM symposium), so if you can provide ways for readers in other geographical locations to access—noting if there are virtual options, similar offerings in other locations, etc.—that could be useful for readers.

One more thought here: I worry that listing so many trainings could appear daunting or making this work seem less accessible to readers who want to implement workshops in their own institutions and communities. I would balance the discussion of trainings with some emphasis

that those who want to facilitate workshops like this don't need to do all (or even most) of the trainings listed, and could tailor their training choices to what they want to implement—NM training if they're unfamiliar but want to bring it in, likewise for VTS, and so on. I also wonder if some of the training is already covered in a museum educator's degree program and/or on the job, especially the trainings about specific populations. Of course, we could all always learn more, but at baseline museum educators, especially younger readers who went through schooling more recently, might have some of this foundation already.

It feels important to consider how to frame trainings, to focus on trainings as an extra thing for those who want to develop skills in a specific area, to show that there are lots of options to continue exploring and building a toolbox, without overwhelming the reader or making this work seem so specialized that so many outside trainings are needed before one can start implementing programs. So, this is a place where approach and wording might need to be considered especially closely. Perhaps the trainings can be presented as a sprinkling of options. A lighter touch could go a long way in this section.

Comment 8: Applicability of Framework to Different Settings and Populations

Agree that demonstrations of how the framework IS transferable is the way to go. Perhaps this is another section for Chapter 5 on Adaptations? It doesn't necessarily need case studies (unless you want it to and have some case studies at the ready) and could just be a section you add at the end about times when it at first seems like a program won't work for a setting or a specific participant and what adaptations could help in those situations.

It could be helpful to directly address a situation like the reviewer's with the engineer who was so resistant to participating in any form of art-making. A person reading the book and thinking about implementing well-being workshops is probably going to have some questions or even anxiety about participant resistance. What (quick) stories from your own experiences could you share that would quell some of that worry and make the reader feel like there are ways to deal with and adapt if/when that happens? Were there times you had to adapt on the fly like the reviewer describes doing?

This is where a two-pronged approach will likely work best: describe ways that the framework is transferable, and expand the idea of adaptation to include what to do when a workshop doesn't work for a given participant (or group). Some of this is already present in Chapter 5, but could be developed a bit more and made more explicit.

This is also a place where the decision you make about leaning into the art museum aspect of the book or broadening the scope makes a clear difference. If you focus more squarely on art museums, the participants are probably more likely to expect some sort of art-making at a workshop and the response to this feedback could get a much lighter touch. In going more broad, this might take more expansion and careful consideration, because participants at a workshop in a history or science museum might not be expecting art-making, and every workshop in the book includes the creative project element.

Reviewer's Suggestions for Major Changes

You have already addressed all these topics in the first section of the table. The few lines that are currently blank could have a “see above,” because the reviewer’s comments here were all already covered.

The one reviewer suggestion here I recommend addressing more directly is the last one, about tips, tricks, and what to do when things go wrong. A lot of this, I addressed in my response to Comment 8 above, so if any of that thinking or language resonates with you, feel free to add it. Just to put the thinking here as well: Chapter 5 could be enhanced with a concluding section on this theme. Focusing on tips and tricks could be a great way to fold in the “what to do when things go awry” and “when a participant is resistant” in a more positive frame. This doesn’t have to be long, just a couple of paragraphs with some takeaways and a couple of examples of adapting in non-ideal situations or with participants who were resistant.

You’ve got this! ONWARD!