

The Future's So Bright I Gotta Wear Shades



David Alexander

60 years is a great milestone and BCMA has weathered some significant ups and significant downs during that time. You'll find the voices of past presidents in this issue as well as a nice snapshot of the history of the organization; I have the enviable task of looking into a crystal ball to glean the future.

With a solid GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) partnership, a new program aimed at digital cultural studies, a closer relationship with the provincial government as evidenced by the choice of BCMA to administer the British Columbia/Canada 150 Fund, a new mentorship program, a webinar series attracting audiences from everywhere and adoption of the Rod Naknakim Declaration, the organization is on the rise. And a stronger BCMA means a stronger advocate for members and the sector and more programs, learning and networking opportunities.

So what is the next 60 years going to look like for the organization? The

BCMA and its future is all wrapped up in the needs of members and these aims will be influenced by the evolution of the sector itself. Indulge me, close your eyes, bring up your best Blade Runner-esque tunes and let's free flow on the future of the sector.

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Collaboration

The GLAM sector has come together; similar audiences and similar aims, it makes sense. But why stop there? Collaboration is organizations coming together because two are stronger than one. What about science centres or zoos? Natural cousins. Let's think bigger, what

about media? Museums are one of the few bastions of authenticity and offer some credibility in a time when media isn't seen as credible. What about hospitals? What's better for wellness than the experience of a museum? What about a giant like Disneyland?

Collaboration offers new audiences, new shared projects, new revenue and can refresh the industry. There are sectors that are doing phenomenally well, perhaps museums can add a new dimension to their success and learn some new things along the way.

Authenticity

In this era of fake news, museums have an opportunity to provide an authentic and authoritative voice. It is harder and harder to separate

fact from fiction online; museums can provide a nonpartisan voice and a deeper, more meaningful dive into historical and contemporary events and issues. We are a trusted source of information, we'll need to fight to keep it that way but as such we offer a significant value to our audiences.

As well, our media cycles are quicker and quicker and anyone who has watched the events in Washington, DC lately understands that it can be exhausting. Museums and galleries offer a space, both digital and physical to slow down in and just experience.

Community Connections

Museums and galleries are no longer the collections of dead white guys. There is an opportunity to collect a wider and richer story. The BC experience includes every colour under the rainbow as well as the rainbow itself; it includes the natural world, industry, the new comers and the first peoples – and a huge opportunity for collections to represent the diversity of the province.

As well museums are working with their communities and this is evi-

dent in the breadth of exhibitions and programming. Museums are opening up the authority they hold to others and this will increase as this community voice becomes stronger.

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Technology

Technology is one of the harder areas to predict but we can't look at the future of museums without talking about it. There is little doubt that as virtual reality and augmented reality becomes cheaper, both for the user and the producer, it will impact the museum experience. But in the long run it will likely be AI and automation that are the true disruptors. Already we see drones in libraries cataloguing books each evening, check out the very cool Biblo Tøyen in Oslo, robots providing front desk duties in hotels, and AI chatbots being developed to converse with museum users. As these technologies become more commonplace, prices will drop and we'll see greater adoption.

BCMA has come through a world of change in the last 60 years and will continue to go through change. The one constant, we'll be here working on your behalf, it's our reason for being.

Enough from me, what do you think? Spill some ink on BCMA Facebook and Twitter and share what you think the sector or BCMA face in the coming years. #BCMA2017 and/or #BCMuseums

Thanks to all the smart people who provided me with ideas for the article – you know who you are.

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Below: Science World's Eureka! Gallery hosts many hands-on exhibits that explore physics, like the Dyson air wall for visitors to explore something new. Photo credit: Science World British Columbia.

