

web 2.0 meets museum 2.0

from virtual worlds to
bricks and mortar

by *Corinne Cunningham,
Laura Colon, and
Diana Cimadamore*
The Hetteema Group



The Hetteema Group's *Diana Cimadamore, Corinne Cunningham and Laura Colon*

Who knew that the coolest, hippest, hang-out in San Francisco on a Thursday night was the California Academy of Sciences. But it's true. Credit this to very savvy museum marketers and their creation, Nightlife!

Before the museum closed at 6pm, there were 250-plus people in line for the remaining entrance tickets. The event is sold out weeks in advance. When the doors reopened, hundreds with tickets started showing up. The lines were processed. ID's checked. Wristbands issued. And a party ensued. How'd that crowd all get there? Via the Academy's website and their actively followed Facebook and My Space pages. Contemplate if you will that on Facebook they have 5923 fans! (Note: Vatican Museum has a puny 1044.)

This is just one of many initiatives that are springing up across the country as museums rush head long into the world of social networking. And social networking (aka Web 2.0) goes hand in hand with Museums 2.0 where a hearty band of experience designers are toiling to bring interactivity and entertainment to life in a meaningful way for museums.

On board at museums is a new crop of staffers who came of age as part of the Millennial Generation. When the 2009 California Museum Association programs conference workshops entitled "Building Community with Web 2.0" or "User-generated Content: What Good Is It" you know there has been a sea change.

Our experiential industry has, over the years, been involved in plenty of discussion about bringing entertainment and interactivity into the galleries of museums. All in an effort to

speak to today's audience—whether that's the video gamer from junior high school or the iPhone wielding 30-something.

This ongoing, polite tussle between conservative curators and entertainment exhibit designers has quite dramatically turned into a non-issue—just as fast as Apple sells iPhones, as Facebook signs up the next million new members, and as folks tweet in digestible 140 character chunks.

This is change needs to be part and parcel of future programming and future planning. It needs to be built into the fabric of individual exhibits as well as new buildings as they are designed and planned. So The Hetteema Group turned to its in-house team of social networkers. We gave ourselves the assignment of pulling together some things to share about how we'd like to see museums and their experiential designers begin to integrate Web 2.0 into Museum 2.0.

We're going to assume that you already have your own Facebook page. And that you actually know what Twitter is. If you don't, stop right here. Turn to your computer and do a little research. And we're also going to state the obvious: newspapers and magazines as a way to get the word out are over. No one using stamps or the US Postal service for that, either.

So how do we get our news? What's going to get us in the door of a museum or a new exhibit? It's pushed to us via an RSS feed from a website or a blog to our Google reader. Or we read it because we're following someone (or something) on Twitter. There are of course a zillion other ways but museums can drive

traffic and keep themselves top of mind this way.

Think about sudden and spontaneous surprises for your followers and fans. Is it a rainy Wednesday and there's no one in the building? Create an event. We recently got free cupcakes from a neighborhood baker because we had signed up to follow them on Twitter. We love the fact that subscribing to a Twitter feed paid off in real life with a real cupcakes. And in return we were responsible for generating free, word-of-mouth advertising.

We think that social networking offers a myriad of viral marketing opportunities. There's a club on the Sunset Strip that gets alerts every time someone tweets or posts about planning an evening there. The owner (one very smart guy) immediately contacts the poster and sets aside VIP access for them. The social networks immediately start buzzing!

Our generation doesn't mind non-invasive marketing. In fact we welcome information about things that we've signed up to receive. Send us invitations and comment cards. Allow us to express our interest and opinions. Allow us to rate and comment.

The marketing potential of Web 2.0 for the world of museums is the most obvious application. Let's take a look at how people are integrating Web 2.0 into museum. We're big fans of Nina Simon's blog Museum 2.0. She's been sharing her thoughts on participation, engagement and using Web 2.0 tools since 2006. Her experience and her passion are infectious.

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LOVE OF LEARNING, CONTINUED

This kind of work requires constant honing of technical expertise on the part of Mad's team, but keeping up to speed on the latest innovations has long become a lifestyle for them.

"There are a number of reasons why people get involved in this kind of work. One of them is because they enjoy what they are doing, learning, and making something really cool," says Ensing. "This is why we enjoy collaborating with designers, architects, media producers and fabricators, and bringing our capabilities together to create the best possible interface. In this case, you end up with an unbeatable team." **ipm**



Maris Ensing

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MUSEUM 2.0, CONTINUED

We also recommend you spend some time exploring how Second Life can be used to generate designer and community involvement. At The Tech Virtual Museum Workshop a worldwide talent base collaborates on creating exhibits in the virtual space of Second Life. This San Jose bricks and mortar institution has carved out a dynamic sphere of the virtual space. Their goal is to create exhibits in the virtual space that ultimately become "real" exhibits. Current online collaborative projects include:

TechChallenge for grades 5 through 12 to introduce the scientific process using real-world problems.

Program for the Future. to develop a practical method, tool or technology that connects people so that they collectively act more intelligently.

Also from the world of Second Life is the Aloft project which saw Starwood Hotels creating a new hotel brand in second life and soliciting feedback from future guests.

This is just the tip of the social networking iceberg. The software applications may change names but the participatory aspect of using social networking for marketing as well as designing is here to stay.

And oh by the way...you do know that we're already on to the next generation-- Web 3.0, Feedback 3.0...clearly Museum 3.0 is next. If Moldavia can bring together revolutionaries via social networking, imagine what it can do for you and your projects. **ipm**

Links for more information:

<http://www.calacademy.org/events/nightlife/>

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/San-Francisco-CA/NightLife-the-California-Academy-of-Sciences/45502198189>

Nina Simon's blog <http://www.museumtwo.blogspot.com/>

<http://thetechvirtual.org/>

<http://www.virtualaloft.com/>

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