

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do hereby establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

POLITICAL HISTORY AND MUSEUM PRACTICE:

collecting, engaging,
exhibiting

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship.

CRAIG MIDDLETON

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i. Executive Summary

There are only three museums in Australia that take political history as their core topic. They are The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House in Canberra, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka in Ballarat – recently transferred to the Local Council and to be renamed the Eureka Centre – and most recently the Centre of Democracy in Adelaide. Across the country some museums have staff dedicated to political history research and display but are not necessarily resourced for active collecting. Additionally, there are parliamentary libraries, historic houses, and community museums that tell stories related to Australia's political history, but not as their primary function.

Research suggests that some Australians are becoming disengaged with democracy and political processes (Harrington, 2016). While change is inevitable, museums are well situated to provide civic education and lifelong learning opportunities that inform, inspire, and empower visitors from all walks of life to be engaged citizens (Museums Association, 2013). It is now more important than ever that Australia's cultural institutions activate their role in empowering active citizenship through a renewed focus on political history and histories of activism and social change.

In January and February 2018, the Fellow (Curator of the Centre of Democracy) travelled to the United States of America (USA) to undertake applied research in leading museums and cultural institutions in New York City, Washington DC, and Philadelphia. Each site visited took democracy, political history, or social activism as their core topic, or as one of their core focus.

The Fellowship had three primary aims:

- » To identify and investigate approaches to contemporary collecting of political material - particularly at rallies, demonstrations, and political events – including the policies and procedures that inform the practice
- » To identify and investigate approaches to public programming and community engagement projects that aim to engage visitors with political history, democracy, and social and political change
- » To identify and investigate curatorial approaches to exhibiting political histories and histories of dissent in engaging ways

A combination of discussions with professionals, exhibition visits, and observation of visitor experience resulted in a number of learnings that can be adapted and implemented at the Centre of Democracy, and similar cultural institutions in Australia.

These include:

- » Focused approaches to contemporary collecting at political events
- » Approaches to public programming that prioritise debate and discussion between visitors, achieve social outcomes, and promote active citizenship
- » Approaches to exhibitions that prioritise connections to contemporary issues

The Fellow has built on their knowledge of social history museum practice in the USA, and their approach to political history interpretation and programming. They have grown their professional network which will be beneficial to their career and continuing professional development into the future.

The Fellow has identified that the research could be further expanded on to incorporate different geographical regions across not only the USA but also the world to understand how diverse political contexts (not only democracies) shape museum practice.

ii. Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms

DC	District of Columbia, United States of America
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer+
USA	United States of America

Definitions

Collection

Objects, artworks, and ephemera kept by museums.

Community engagement

The process of working collaboratively with community groups to address issues that impact the well-being of those groups.

Contemporary collecting

The act of collecting objects of potential historical significance at the time of their use.

Exhibition

A public display of works of art, historical objects, or other items of interest, held in a museum's collection.

Interactives

A term used by museum professionals to describe participatory elements of exhibitions.

Museum

For the purpose of this Fellowship 'museum' refers to institutions that collect, document, interpret, and share social and political histories. There are other kinds of museums including natural history and art.

Political Ephemera

Items that were originally expected to have only short-term usefulness or popularity and are related to political issues, events, and movements. For example badges, flyers, and so on from election campaigns.

Political history

The narrative and analysis of political events, ideas, movements, government, voters, parties and leaders.

Programs/Programming

Refers to the practice of museums to host talks, workshops, events, kids activities, and so on.

Social history

History that concentrates on the social, economic, and cultural institutions of a people

1. About the Fellow

Name

Craig Middleton

Employment

Curator, Centre of Democracy (History Trust of South Australia)

Qualifications

- » Master of Museum Studies, Macquarie University, Sydney, 2013
- » Graduate Diploma in Art History, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 2014
- » Bachelor of International Studies, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 2011
- » Bachelor of Arts in Italian, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, 2011

Membership and professional appointments

- » Elected Member, National Council, Museums Galleries Australia
- » Elected Member, South Australian branch, Museums Galleries Australia
- » Committee Member, Emerging Professionals National Network, Museums Galleries Australia
- » Committee Member, Art History and Curatorship Alumni Network, University of Adelaide

Biography

Craig Middleton is the Curator of the Centre of Democracy, a collaborative project led by the History Trust of South Australia in partnership with the State Library of South Australia. He is responsible for the permanent gallery, exhibitions, and public programs that engage visitors with South Australia's history of democracy.

His research interests are in Australian political history and museology. His Master's dissertation explored the value of political ephemera to Australia's heritage and identity through critique of collecting practices and priorities of Australian collecting institutions.

He has worked and volunteered in various cultural institutions in South Australia including the South Australian Museum, Art Gallery of South Australia, History Trust of South Australia, and Army Museum of South Australia. He was appointed Resident Curator at Carclew – South Australia's youth arts organisation – in 2014 where he supported emerging visual artists to exhibit their work.

He is a National Councilor of Museums Galleries Australia – the peak industry body for museums and galleries in Australia – and sits on the South Australian branch and Emerging Professionals National Network committees.

Craig has a background in community engagement practice in museums and was formerly responsible for public programming activities at the Migration Museum. His role involved building relationships with diverse ethnic communities in South Australia.

He is also committed to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer+ (LGBTIQ+) access and inclusion in Australian museums. His book co-authored with Dr Nikki Sullivan, *Queering the Museum* will be published by Routledge in 2018/19.



Craig Middleton at the Centre of Democracy (photo by: Elana Bailey)

2. Aims of the Fellowship Program

Aims of the fellowship:

- » To develop knowledge, approaches, and networks that will inform the Fellow's professional practice and their work at the Centre of Democracy and into the future
- » To identify and investigate approaches to contemporary collecting of political material - particularly at rallies, demonstrations, and political events – including the policies and procedures that inform the practice
- » To identify and investigate approaches to public programming and community engagement projects that aim to engage visitors with political history, democracy, and social and political change
- » To identify and investigate curatorial approaches to exhibiting political histories and histories of dissent in engaging ways
- » To disseminate knowledge to a wide range of museum professionals in Australia, including those who work in related areas, through formal and informal public talks, conference presentations, blogging, and writing

3. The Australian Context

The Australian Context

There are only three museums in Australia that take political history as their core topic. They are The Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House in Canberra, the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka in Ballarat – recently transferred to the Local Council and to be renamed the Eureka Centre – and most recently the Centre of Democracy in Adelaide. Across the country some museums have staff dedicated to political history research and display but are not necessarily resourced for active collecting. Additionally, there are parliamentary libraries, historic houses, libraries, and community museums that share stories related to Australia's political history, but not as their primary function.

A Masters dissertation completed by the Fellow at Macquarie University in 2013 demonstrates that political ephemera is an area of cultural collecting that is currently not prioritised by museums and other cultural institutions, like libraries (Middleton, 2013). Although collecting does happen, it is often left to the public to send material to their local, state, or national library (Middleton, 2015; Downer, 2016). This suggests that much important documentary material is being lost to history and that a renewed vision for this type of collecting is needed in Australia. Additionally, without the material, or focus, political histories are being exhibited and interpreted less and less in museums and other cultural institutions.

The Centre of Democracy

Adelaide's Constitutional Museum opened in the late 1970s and shared stories of South Australia's political history. In 1981 the History Trust of South Australia, established by act of Parliament, took over the management of the Constitutional Museum, later known as Old Parliament House. In 1995 the museum was closed to the public and used primarily for parliamentary office space. From 1995 to 2017 there was no dedicated museum in which to share South Australia's contribution to Australia's political history.

A 2014 election promise by former Labor Premier Jay Weatherill in 2014 established the Centre of Democracy as a unique partnership between the History Trust of South Australia and the State Library of South Australia. The institutions were tasked to engage visitors with South Australia's history of democracy through a permanent exhibition, public programming, and online programs. The Centre of Democracy was opened in May 2017, and brought with it a new opportunity to inject political history back into the cultural landscape of the State.



Interior of Centre of Democracy, South Australia, photo by Andre Castellucci

Political engagement in Australia

Research suggests that some Australians are becoming disengaged with democracy and political processes (Harrington, 2016). While change is inevitable museums are well situated to provide civic education and lifelong learning opportunities that inform, inspire, and empower visitors from all walks of life to be engaged citizens (Museums Association, 2013). It is now more important than ever that Australia's cultural institutions activate their role in empowering active citizenship through a renewed focus on, and new ways of interpreting, political history and histories of activism and social change.

Methodology

The Fellow participated in face to face meetings, informal meetings, group discussions, in gallery conversations, gallery visits, and informal visitor observations to gather information. The combination of all of these methods has produced diverse learnings that will inform the Fellow's practice and can contribute to the Australian museums sector positively.

The decision to undertake the research in this way speaks directly to the multifaceted nature of museum practice. Curatorial vision and approach does not always lead to an intended visitor experience. With this in mind it was important to not only investigate the approach of professionals developing and delivering projects and programs, but to also observe how visitors interact with them.

Fellowship Period

The Fellow spent three weeks undertaking research in the USA from Friday 19 January to Friday 9 February 2018. They visited the following cities and institutions:

New York City

- » Museum of the City of New York
- » New York Historical Society
- » United National Headquarters
- » Interference Archive (Brooklyn)
- » Whitney Museum of American Art

Washington, DC

- » Smithsonian National Museum of American History
- » Newseum
- » National Archives
- » Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

Philadelphia

- » National Constitution Centre
- » National Liberty Museum
- » Museum of the American Revolution
- » National Museum of American Jewish History

4. Fellowship Learnings

Three areas of the Fellowship learnings have been identified as most significant. These are collections, programs, and exhibitions.



Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Collections

One of the primary aims of the Fellowship was to investigate approaches to contemporary collecting of political material - particularly at rallies, demonstrations, and political events – including the policies and procedures that inform the practice.

For the purpose of this research ‘contemporary collecting’ was defined as the practice of collecting material that is produced, distributed, and intended to be used in the moment of collecting. An example includes the collection of how-to-vote cards at polling places during an election.

The Smithsonian Institution has since at least the American Civil War been collecting contemporary objects of historical significance. Collecting, according to the Smithsonian Institution, is always an uncertain act which represents a respective museum’s best guess at which objects will help explain a moment in time to future generations.



Election material at Smithsonian National Museum of American History

The Fellow met with curators at the National Museum of American History to discuss approaches to contemporary collecting. It was made clear to the Fellow that contemporary collecting at political events is a unique practice and as such should employ unique considerations that are not necessarily captured in broadly applied museum collecting policies and practices.

Key learnings:

Collect as much as possible - in the moment of a protest, demonstration, or rally a collector must be quick on their feet. Collect as much as they can and sort later. Not all objects collected at a political event must be accessioned into a museum's collection.

Institutional credit lines - when contemporary collecting at political events a generic credit line should be applied to the acquisition. This is for many reasons including the challenge of collecting objects in the moment when using donation paperwork, collecting contact details, and so on. Additionally, protests are often staged against government decisions. For publicly funded museums participants of protests don't necessarily want their names associated with government records, which means that if usual ways of working are employed history would be lost due to administrative processes.

Which events? - limited human resources make it impossible to attend every political event across a sprawling geographical area. It is important for an institution to think about which events to attend and why e.g. is it of national significance? Is it of local significance? Is it the first of its kind? Is the particular event coming at a pivotal moment for a particular movement? and so on.

Networks - maybe a museum doesn't have the human resources to collect at every event, but professionals have networks both professional and personal to draw on. Use networks to achieve the best possible result, particularly if the event is happening in regional or remote locations.

Collective vs Individual - when collecting at a political event think about the goal - is it to acquire individual stories? Or to capture the collective nature of the event? Individual stories are easier to collect after events have happened, but a lot of material created for political events are ephemeral. Individual stories can be shared through objects that relate to the collective, not just the individual who owned the object - a political event is as much about the collective as the individual.

Relationships - when deciding what to accession think about the existing collection. Are there significant gaps that mean some stories are excluded from a museum's narrative? Are there objects historically that relate to contemporary ones being collected that might provide an opportunity to be displayed together in the future to tell a particular story?

These key learnings are ones that can inform contemporary collecting practice in Australia, including in the development of policies and procedures. Although there is no formal policy in place at the National Museum of American History there are internal working guidelines and a legacy of practice to build on.

Programs

The Fellow has identified four kinds of programming that have presented key learnings. They are families and teens, schools and teachers, adult programming, and community recognition.

Families and teens

Family and teen programming, although very different in nature, fall within a category of public programming that is uniquely different to adult programming.



Museum of the City of New York

The Fellow has identified key examples of family and teen programming that employ useful strategies and approaches that can be used to inform the practice of designing, developing, and delivering similar programming in Australia. While some of these strategies and approaches are not necessarily new they have delivered successful outcomes.

Museum of the City of New York

The Museum of the City of New York takes as one of its core themes activism and social justice. With this in mind a range of programs for LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+)

people are offered throughout the year.

The main strategy employed by the programming teams is an understanding that LGBTQ+ programming is of equal status to other programming, not only aligned with LGBTQ+ specific exhibitions or events, but integrated within the museums vision, mission, and values.

The museum's programs teams pursue this strategy with the following values in mind:

1. Cultural institutions and educators have a responsibility to share true, full histories that include diverse voices and multiple perspectives.
2. Museums are always modeling for their visitors and students, which makes and impact for years to come. It is important to be sure that what is being modelled is inclusivity and community building.
3. LGBTQ+ visitors and students deserve to see themselves reflected in museum spaces. Non- LGBTQ+ visitors and students deserve exposure to full histories and cultural competence.

The Fellow discussed with professionals at the Museum of the City of New York their annual LGBTQ+ Teen Summit - a program designed, developed, and delivered for and by New York City teenagers. It is described as a 'prideful' day of experiences for teens and youth - inclusive of LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ friends, chaperones, and allies. The program is a full-day of free programming that celebrates LGBTQ+ cultures and identities in New York City. The event includes tours and talks about the Gay Liberation section of the permanent exhibition *Activist New York*, arts workshops, music performances, and youth-led panels and discussions.

What stands out about this program is the commitment to the core goals of LGBTQ+ programming set out by the museum. That is the responsibility to share diverse histories (permanent exhibitions, talks, tours), modelling inclusivity

(integration of programming, not just for LGBTQ+ teens), and visitors and students seeing themselves reflected in museum spaces (performances, exhibition, visitor-led discussions).

While LGBTQ+ people are being activists in their own lives, fighting for change, and combatting discrimination and marginalisation daily, this program allows young people to take time to celebrate themselves, their identities, and communities in the context of their histories, outside of pride marches and rallies which are often political.

New York Historical Society

The New York Historical Society is one of the oldest history museums in New York City. The Society employs an approach of capacity building for its teen programs. This includes fostering research skills, project design and management, and sharing outcomes publicly.

The Student Historian Internship Program and the Teen Leaders Internship Program are good examples of this approach.

The Student Historian Internship Program is a program for high school aged teenagers in years 10, 11 and 12. Participants undertake supported research projects and share research through creative outcomes. The participants regularly meet with professional staff to learn about careers in museums, history, and libraries. Throughout the process they develop their public speaking and leadership skills.

Following on from the Student Historian Internship Program teens who want to continue to engage can undertake the Teen Leaders Internship Program which is a paid internship in one of three areas: family program; curatorial; and education. Participants further develop their leadership skills and have the opportunity to design, develop, and deliver projects for the museum.

These programs stood out to the Fellow because of their commitment to capacity building. Teenagers are skilled, interested, and wanting to engage. They can offer museums new ideas, perspectives, and directions. These programs draw on the agency of teenagers and offer skills development.

National Museum of American History

The National Museum of American History's goal for all programming is to incite discussion and debate. This guiding principle is one, that for museums with a focus on political history, democracy, and social activism is useful.

Theatre techniques are also employed by programming staff - this is not just actors in period costumes, as is popular in the USA. An example of this approach is a program that is centred on a single object, the Greensboro Lunch Counter. The story of the counter is about activism of African American students opposing racial discrimination during a period of segregation in American history. The program employs participatory theatre scenarios to teach participants about activism. The type of activism employed by the students in Greensboro was not reactionary, but planned. There were rules, and ways of being and doing that constituted the movement. Therefore, program participants are considered potential activists learning the 'how-to' of the movement.

The story of the museum object, moment in history, and type of activism are shared through participatory programming in which program leaders create a scenario to work through with the group. The participatory model of facilitated experiences, using theatre techniques, can be useful for program development that encourages critical engagement with histories of activism.

Schools and Teachers

The following programs investigated by the Fellow demonstrate some key learnings around engagement with schools and teachers.



National Liberty Museum

The Young Heroes Outreach Program (YHOP) is a year-long civics education program designed for students from Year Four to Year Eight. It is inclusive of nine lesson plans and an action phase/project. The nine lessons are taught by both the responsible teacher and YHOP educators (four lessons).

The lesson plans, which take half the year (half the program), explore liberty in the context of active and responsible citizenship. They work to build capacity for young people to become change-makers in their own

communities by exploring social issues

National Liberty Museum

and how to work towards change. This includes identifying an issue, a cause, social research, development of goals, identifying obstacles, determining how to overcome obstacles, and evaluating impact.

The Action Phase is designed around a student-led Action Project. The project is decided on by the students and supported by the responsible teacher and YHOP educators. The Action Project draws on the first half of the program and puts into practice what the students have learned about social issues, research, action, and evaluation.

It is the design of the program that Australian museums can learn from. The concept of long term engagement with groups (12 months) led by committed teachers and engaged groups of students. This is a different model than most museum education programs take in Australia. While there are obvious financial and human resources involved, the onus is on the teacher to lead the group through the program which means the museum's resources can be used to support multiple groups at any one time.

National Constitution Centre

The National Constitution Centre takes as its topic the American Constitution. It explores the story of its development, the amendments to date, and key institutions including the judiciary and electoral system. This is achieved through two permanent galleries, a theatre performance, a temporary and travelling exhibition program, and learning programs.



We the people, National Constitution Centre

In particular the Fellow was interested in a new program of teacher professional engagement - a teachers advisory committee. The committee works with educators at the National Constitution Centre to support the development of lesson plans, and programs. Teachers participate from any location in the country via online platforms like Skype. Into the future engaged teachers will promote resources on behalf of the National Constitution Centre within their own communities/ schools.

The model of community consultation here is taken to a new level, in which the agency/ commitment of the teacher is recognised as active rather than passive. This model is particularly relevant for national institutions with limited resources to travel staff.

Museum of City of New York

A noteworthy initiative run by the Museum of the City of New York in the annual Teaching Social Activism Conference. The conference is in its sixth year and attracts hundreds of educators each year.

The conference is a chance for educators to get together with like-minded people to discuss how education can support students and teachers to build understanding within and across class, race, and gender in museums. This supports the museums goal of being a diverse and inclusive institution. The program also builds a community of engaged educators who believe that education can inform active and responsible citizenship, foster cross-cultural understandings, and break down barriers.

Teacher professional development is an ever-growing area for museums in Australia, and a focus on cross-disciplinary events underpinned by a theme like activism, social change, or citizenship, could be a useful model for museums to position themselves as vehicles to explore change-making in communities.

Adult Programming

New York Historical Society

The Fellow investigated the Citizenship Project, an initiative led by the New York Historical Society.



Gallery detail, New York Historical Society

The Project aims to support more than one million legal immigrants in the New York region to become American citizens. This is achieved through education programming aligned with the content of the citizenship test using the New York Historical Society's museum, collections, and staff as resources.

Of course, new immigrants can learn the test on their own but largely it becomes a game of memory, often not truly understanding the context of each question historically or socially. The program is designed to build informed knowledge for new immigrants to understand their new home, while also participating in a social environment - the lessons - to make friends, build community, and make the journey easier.

Community Recognition

National Liberty Museum

The Fellow identified two awards programs at the National Liberty Museum that recognise individuals within communities as change-makers.

The awards programs are the Young Heroes Awards Program and the Teacher as Hero Awards Program. Each program recognises individual contributions to make their communities a better place.

The Young Heroes Award is awarded to people under the age of 18 who have championed liberty by engaging in civic activities and taking up leadership roles in their communities.

The Teacher as Hero Award is awarded to teacher and educators who are considered exception within their community and by their students.

Both programs recognise the agency, commitment, and work of winners and promote responsible citizenship. An awards model for museums in Australia can be a useful way to build an engaged community of young people and educators,

discover what matters most to young people and educators in a particular community, and to promote the work of museums as socially engaged.

Exhibitions

The Fellow has identified four primary learnings from exhibitions viewed and discussed during the Fellowship. These are broad thematic approach, participatory design, digital interactives, and contemporary narratives. While there are many examples to draw on each learning will be illustrated by one example from the Fellow's experience.



American Democracy: a great leap of faith, Smithsonian National Museum of American History

Broad thematic approach

The Museum of the City of New York's Activist New York exhibition utilises a broad thematic approach to address key themes that emerge from activism in New York City.



Activist New York exhibition, Museum of the City of New York

While there are more than six sections to the exhibition, the core themes that underpin Activist New York are: immigration, gender equality, economic rights, religious freedoms, political and civil rights, environmental advocacy.

Taking a broad thematic approach to an exhibition like Activist New York not only supports the inclusion of diverse historical narratives (prohibition, social purity,

slavery, gay rights, and so on) but it also assists the exhibition to be agile with contemporary content - the most up to date issues and debates. This was demonstrated through the inclusion of stories of contemporary activists (via interviews, and media presentations) whose work sits comfortably under one of the six main themes.



Detail Activist New York exhibition at Museum of the City of New York

Participatory design

The Interference Archive in Brooklyn, New York is a small community archive that collects items of significance to activism locally, nationally, and globally. They have an exhibitions program, and regularly run events.



Interference Archive, Brooklyn

no. NOT EVER. is an exhibition that explores the concept of white supremacy, an historical and contemporary social and political issue in the USA. The exhibition included textual and media interpretation, and participatory approaches to its design.

Each text panel was small, hole punched, and hanging from a hook - one side featuring a statement, and the other side further interpretation, quotes, examples, and answers. Visitors had to pick up, turn over, and hold the panel to interact with the content. This approach places the visitor firmly in the exhibition.

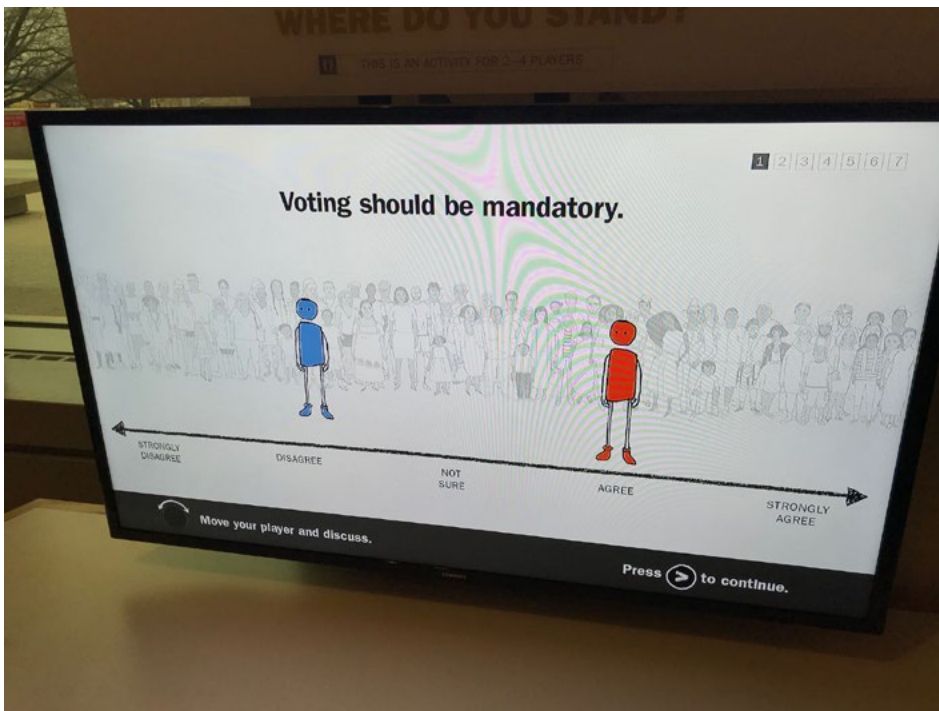
A timeline created with a piece of yarn pinned to the wall, and dates written on colourful post-it notes encourages visitors to share their memories and encounters with white supremacy, and to place them along the timeline at the appropriate year. The timeline adds community voices, everyday occurrences often unheard, and diverse opinions to the exhibition content.

Participatory design can offer visitors an entry into the exhibition that is confronting, meaningful, and immediate.

Interactives

American Democracy: a great leap of faith is the recently redeveloped exhibition at the National Museum of American History that shares the story of the development of American Democracy.

The inclusion to the exhibition of an interactives room is what interested the Fellow. That is a series of participatory interactives that engage with broad ideas that underpin democracy, citizenship, and American values.



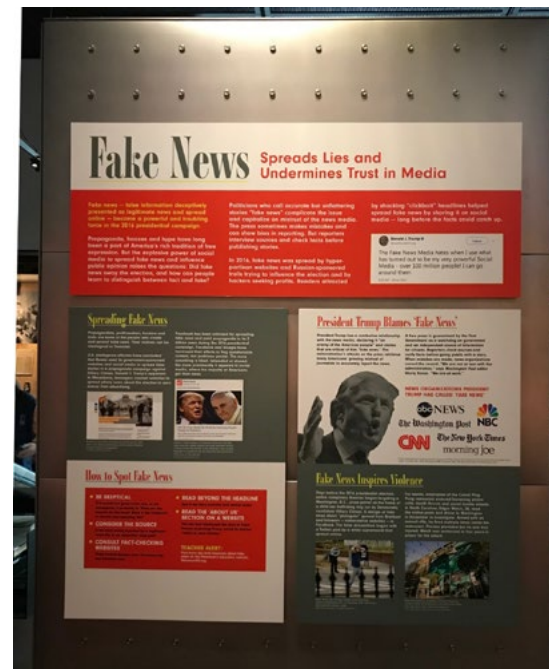
Museum interactive, Smithsonian National Museum of American History

One interactive encourages visitors, groups, and friends to engage with a statement (e.g. voting should be mandatory) and decide on a sliding scale to what degree

they agree, or not, with the statement. Participants turn a knob to indicate visually where they stand. Inevitably visitors display different responses. What follows is conversations, discussions, and debates by informed by the decisions made on the interactive.

What underpins the development of the interactives is a goal to incite discussion, conversation, and debate - which are indicators of active and engaged citizenship. The effectiveness of these interactives are their simplicity. The onus is on the visitor to generate the meaning of the interactives by drawing on personal opinions, experiences, and ideas.

Contemporary narratives



Fake News display, Newseum

The Newseum in Washington, DC is a museum dedicated to increasing public understanding of free press and the First Amendment of the American Constitution.

Contemporary narratives prove important to address the Newseum's mission. A display titled Fake News is a new addition to the permanent galleries that engages with a concept coined by the current US President. The museum uses the contentious contemporary idea as a learning opportunity for visitors and students. That is the identification of accurate and informed media sources.

The inclusion of contemporary narratives promotes the relevance of the museum and the issues it tackles through its exhibitions and programming. It connects the present with the past, in way only contemporary issues can.

Fellowship learnings concluding remarks

The Fellow has investigated many exhibitions, displays, programs, practices, and concepts that have influenced the learnings identified. The detail included is not fully comprehensive of the all interactions the Fellow had, but have been identified as significant learnings and examples that can offer readers a glimpse into the thought process of the Fellow. Examples shared can also offer museum practitioners in Australia ideas that can support project development and strategic planning.



New York Historical Society women's march display

5. Personal, professional, and sectoral impact

The Fellowship has impacted on the personal and professional development of the Fellow, as well as added to a body of research that will have sectoral impact into the future.

Personally

The Fellow has been inspired by the people they met, the projects and programs they investigated, and by the ideas generated as result of undertaking the research. They have been exposed to new cultural landscapes, and experiences that will be a source of knowledge and inspiration into the future.

Professionally

The new ideas generated from the research will have a direct impact on the Fellow's work at the Centre of Democracy, and for the History Trust of South Australia broadly.

The Fellow's understanding of social history museums and practice in the USA has increased far beyond what is written in the academic literature.

Importantly the Fellow's professional network has grown and developed from the experience. They believe networking and the development of strong and supportive professional network will see their career thrive into the future.

Sectorally

The Fellowship learnings demonstrate the need for a renewed focus on political history in Australia, and how it has evolved through the development of social history. Both political and social history, as demonstrated through American examples, are not removed from one another, but interact meaningfully.

The Fellowship has also identified that there is more work to be done in this area. That is not only applying learnings to practice, but the need to undertake further research in other geographically, socially, and politically diverse locations (not just democracies) to identify more approaches to political history museum practice.

6. Recommendations and considerations

Professionals

- » Develop projects that include Australian political histories and focus on issues of citizenship in order to enliven Australians' connectedness to their democracy

The Fellow has identified that further applied research should be undertaken into how political and social contexts (not just democracies) inform museum practice, contemporary collecting, and community engagement projects that focus on political history and issues of citizenship.

Cultural Institutions

- » Develop unique policies and processes for contemporary collecting at political events acknowledging the unique status of such material

Sector

- » Develop a discourse around a renewed focus on political history and its significance to Australia's heritage and identity, including establishing networking groups to support the development of this area of museum practice

Universities

- » Encourage research that explores the connection between political history, social history and museum practice, including how museum practice can promote engaged citizenship, and can have social impact

Government

- » Fund innovative projects that take political history as its core topic to encourage new ways of promoting active citizenship through museums and engagement with Australian democracy

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8. Acknowledgements

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International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The ISS Institute exists to foster an aspirational, skilled and smart Australia by cultivating the mastery and knowledge of talented Australians through international research Fellowships.

The International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) is proud of its heritage. The organisation was founded over 25 years ago by Sir James Gobbo AC CVO QC, former Governor of Victoria, to encourage investment in the development of Australia's specialised skills. Its international Fellowship program supports a large number of Australians and international leaders across a broad cross-section of industries to undertake applied research that will benefit economic development through vocational training, industry innovation and advancement. To date, over 350 Australian and international Fellows have undertaken Fellowships facilitated through ISS Institute. The program encourages mutual and shared learning, leadership and communities of practice.

At the heart of the ISS Institute are our individual Fellows. Under the International Applied Research Fellowship Program, the Fellows travel overseas and upon their return, they are required to pass on what they have learnt by:

- » Preparing a detailed report for distribution to government departments, industry and educational institutions
- » Recommending improvements to accredited educational courses
- » Delivering training activities including workshops, conferences and forums.

The organisation plays a pivotal role in creating value and opportunity, encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice. By working with others, ISS Institute invests in individuals who wish to create an aspirational, skilled and smart Australia through innovation, mastery and knowledge cultivation.

For further information on ISS Institute Fellows, refer to www.issinstitute.org.au

Fellowship Sponsor - The George Alexander Foundation

The Fellow would like to thank the George Alexander Foundation for providing funding support for the ISS Institute and for this Fellowship.

In 1972, George Alexander AM (1910 - 2008) set up an independent philanthropic foundation as a way of sharing his wealth and giving back to the community. Today, the main focus of The George Alexander Foundation is access to education for promising young people, particularly students with financial need and those from rural and remote areas.

The George Alexander Foundation (GAF) Scholarship Programs form the core of the foundation's work, operating in partnership with major tertiary institutions,

while our Fellowships and other Education grants provide a variety of other unique and challenging educational experiences. George Alexander believed in the notion of 'planting seeds and hoping they grow into pretty big trees'. The programs supported by the Foundation endeavour to support this ideal and as GAF students graduate and go on to contribute to the community, George's legacy and spirit lives on through their achievements.

George Alexander came to Australia as a child migrant, and went on to become a mechanic, an entrepreneur and a businessman and later, a generous philanthropist, who held that you do not own the possessions you have, 'you're just minding them'. This philosophy guided him to give during his lifetime and to hope that through his example, he might inspire others to do the same.

Supporters

The Fellow wishes to acknowledge the support of the following colleagues who supported them to undertake the Fellowship:

- » Greg Mackie OAM, CEO History Trust of South Australia
- » Alex Marsden, National Director Museums Galleries Australia
- » Mandy Paul, Director Migration Museum, Research, and State History Collection - History Trust of South Australia
- » Allison Russell, Director History Festival, Centre of Democracy, and Community Programs - History Trust of South Australia

The Fellow wishes to acknowledge the generosity of the following individuals in the USA who shared their time, experience, and expertise during the Fellowship:

- » Mike Adams, National Constitution Centre
- » Gwen Borrowsky, National Liberty Museum
- » Sonya Gavankar, Newseum

- » Jon Grinspan, Smithsonian National Museum of American History
- » Jenna Kehres, National Constitution Centre
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- » Christopher Wilson, Smithsonian National Museum of American History
- » Sarah Winski, National Constitution Centre

Employer support

The Fellow is grateful to their employer, the Centre of Democracy (a museum of the History Trust of South Australia) for the opportunity to participate in the Fellowship program.

The Centre of Democracy is a unique partnership between the History Trust of South Australia and the State Library of South Australia. Opened in May 2017 the

Centre is tasked with sharing the story of South Australian democracy through a permanent exhibition housed in the 1860s Institute Building on Adelaide's North Terrace Cultural Precinct, alongside community and online programming, events, and projects.

The History Trust of South Australia is the statutory body that researches, preserves and presents the history of South Australia. It manages four museums, the State History Collection, South Australia's History Festival, and a state-wide community history program. The History Trust of South Australia's mission is 'giving the past a future now!'.

The Fellow believes that this opportunity has contributed positively to the mission of the History Trust of South Australia.

For further information on the Centre of Democracy, refer to centrefdemocracy.sa.gov.au

Or to find out more about the History Trust of South Australia, refer to history.sa.gov.au

Other supporters

The Fellow would like to thank Museums Galleries Australia for the organisational and collegial support for the project. Museums Galleries Australia is the national association and peak advocacy body representing museums and galleries in Australia.

Finally, the Fellow would like to thank colleagues at the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, Canberra, and the Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka, Ballarat for offering their ideas, thoughts, and support to the project.



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