Seattle EMPs

2015 Report

TABLE OF CONTENTS

What is an EMP?

The American Alliance of Museums defines an "Emerging Museum Professional" (EMP) as anyone currently in their **first ten years** of working in the museum field.

Ten years is a significant length of time in one's career. Some museum professionals are EMPs and don't even realize it!

HELLO!

We are Seattle Emerging Museum Professionals, a group that has been serving the greater Puget Sound area since our founding in 2011.

Our value to the museum community

The central Puget Sound area is home to over fifty-six museums and nearly ten-thousand museum volunteers and employees. It benefits the entire museum community for these individuals to have access to the local networking and professional development opportunities that SEMP provides.

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How the American Alliance of Museums can support SEMP

1. Help individuals and groups connect with the EMP community.
As the largest cultural association representing the museum industry, AAM is the go-to organization for emerging museum professionals seeking resources in their area. For this reason, we want EMP groups to be visibly and accurately represented on the AAM website.

2. Provide an active point of contact, but delegate responsibilities.
Although EMPs make up a substantial percentage of the museum field population, supporting EMPs does not need to require substantial AAM resources. Generally, the individuals who are most knowledgeable and passionate about advocating for EMPs are EMPs themselves. AAM support of EMPs would be made much more robust if EMPs were empowered to support one another in AAM's name. Organizing online resources, supporting those working to establish new EMP chapters, and moderating the EMP LinkedIn group are all responsibilities that current EMPs could easily take on.

3. Give official backing to an AAM-recognized EMP leadership board.
With our outside connections—whether to professional networks in other fields or peers in rising generations—EMPs are powerful ambassadors in communicating the value museum institutions bring to communities everywhere. By officially recognizing EMP leadership, AAM would acknowledge EMPs' value to the museum community and endorse our role as active caretakers and directors of the EMP program.

SEMP MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to **engage museum professionals** across all stages of their careers in building a vibrant community of local **networking, information exchange, and resource sharing** in the greater Puget Sound area.

Current state of Seattle Emerging Museum Professionals

With increased participation from members outside the University of Washington, SEMP has transcended its origins as a student-run extension of the UW Museology program. However, SEMP continues to suffer from "two-year turnover." Many former SEMP members are no longer active despite working at museums in the Puget Sound area. SEMP needs to re-define its role within the larger museum community in order to sustain long-term engagement.

Achieving our mission

1. Engage with the broader EMP community.

> **Process***:* Talk with other EMP groups to learn from their struggles and achievements.
>
> **Result***:* The SEMP planning team clarifies a vision of success for our own group, and is able to rally around this vision.

2. Engage with local and regional museum organizations.

> **Process***:* Each member of the SEMP planning team becomes actively involved in at least one other professional organization (e.g. WMA, WaMA, MEPS, UW Museology, etc).
>
> **Result***:* The SEMP planning team becomes better represented within the local museum community and more aware of / able to coordinate with other local efforts.

3. Engage with AAM and the museum community at large.

> **Process***:* Work with AAM to improve EMPs' status and representation within the broader museum community.
>
> **Result***:* SEMP becomes not just a local platform but also an avenue towards greater AAM networking, involvement, and responsibility.

4. Engage with former SEMP members and other experienced local museum professionals.

> **Process***:* Address issues of "outgrowing" and burn-out by (1) expanding the meaningful advancement opportunities available to members in leadership positions, and (2) providing better social value across career stages (including peer support and mentorship opportunities) to members both in and out of leadership positions.
>
> **Result***:* SEMP improves its ability to retain members even after they have achieved greater stability in their museum careers. The increased group diversity that results becomes the cornerstone of a self-sustaining local community of professional networking and knowledge-sharing.

RECENT HIGHLIGHTS

February 2014: SEMP hosts its first annual winter social event

April 2014: Laura Lantz becomes SEMP chair as Erin Bailey and Melissa Beseda step down as co-chairs.

May 2014: SEMP members are excited to welcome American Alliance of Museums Annual Meeting attendees to Seattle! SEMP hosts an EMP networking happy hour in the Museum Room of the Pike Pub & Brewery.

August 2014: Michelle Epps works with Laura and other EMPs around the country to start an unofficial support network for EMP group leaders.

November 2014: SEMP runs an email marketing reactivation campaign. Thirty-four people respond expressing a desire to continue receiving SEMP updates and event invites directly to their inboxes.

December 2014: The Unofficial EMP Leaders Network holds its third meeting, preparing to compile a national EMP Report to present to the American Alliance of Museums.

January 2015: The UW Museology graduate program generously renews its sponsorship of the SEMP website and blog. UW Museology operations manager Maya Farrar writes:

"We think the work SEMP does is wonderful and important, and would like to continue to support your efforts."

February 2015: Jackie Peterson becomes SEMP co-chair, joining Laura. SEMP releases its first formal year-in-review summary, the SEMP 2015 Report.

EVENTS

SEMP offers **3 types** of public events:

NETWORKING & COMMUNITY

LOCAL & INDUSTRY TOPICS

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Recurring events

Every month SEMP holds a planning team meet-up that is open to the public to discuss group operations, brainstorm new events, and delegate responsibilities for upcoming events.

SEMP also runs a quarterly social event, inviting members via Facebook and email newsletter to gather together with colleagues and friends for an evening of food, drinks, and conversation.

Upcoming event goals

- Speakers, panels, roundtable discussions
- Group museum excursions:
    - Free museum days
    - Seattle Art Museum Remix events (3× year)
    - AntiFreeze events at MOHAI (Museum of History and Industry)

- Workshops focused on work/life balance, career transitioning, resume design, etc.
- Additional social gatherings: movie screenings, tours, scavenger hunts
- Events jointly coordinated with other local groups (e.g. Seattle Design Nerds)
- Charity and volunteering opportunities

Event planning goals

Meet member needs and interests

Set 4-6 weeks lead time for planning

Share event ownership beyond core team

Publicize event-planning opportunities

MARKETING

Communication tools

Our primary marketing and communication tools are the SEMP Community Facebook Page, the SEMP Twitter channel, and our quarterly email newsletter (managed via MailChimp).

Facebook use

- Creating group events and tracking event RSVPs
- Sharing local museum-related events
- Sharing links to museum articles and blogs

Twitter use

- Sharing links to museum articles and blogs
- Sharing local museum-related events
- Directing people to our Facebook page for additional content

MailChimp use

- Tracking number of active group members
- Sharing exclusive membership benefits such as event discount codes
- Sending quarterly compilation of museum events, articles, and resources

Facebook goals

- At least 2 official Facebook posts per week
- Encourage members to post links of interest to the wall as well

Twitter goals

- At least two tweets (or re-tweets) per week
- Develop beneficial relationships with other organizations' Twitter channels

MailChimp goals

- Quarterly newsletter
- Share conferences and seminars, as well as links to SEMP blog write-ups of members' event experiences

As event offerings become more regular we plan to add a **SEMP Instagram account** to share event photos and create a **group hashtag** for use across social media platforms.

Membership growth

In order to realize SEMP's mission of building a community of local networking, information exchange, and resource sharing, we work to serve a broad social media audience.

As of February 2015, SEMP has 555 "Likes" on Facebook and 72 followers on Twitter.

Our three most popular Facebook posts of 2015 thus far have reached **360**, **381**, and **522 people**, respectively.

We also focus on developing our core of active participants. In November 2014, to gauge our active membership, we ran a reactivation campaign requiring newsletter subscribers to respond in order to remain on the mailing list. Thirty-four members contacted us expressing a desire to continue receiving SEMP updates and event invites.

Our 2015 growth goal is to increase SEMP mailing list subscriptions by thirty percent, for a total of about forty-five core members.
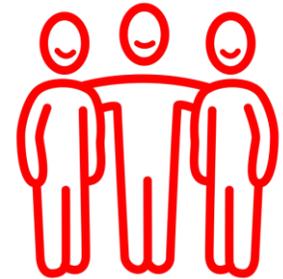
Collaborations

SEMP aims to complete 1-2 collaborative projects in 2015.

- We have identified specific opportunities to join forces with the UW graduate Museology program, including:
    - o participating in the UW Museology Internship Fair as a facilitator/resource
    - o creating designated roles and tasks for UW students participating in SEMP, and
    - o offering feedback sessions and one-on-one assistance with UW Museology student projects and theses.

- We are also cultivating relationships with local and regional museum associations (and groups in other, connected fields) to team up in co-sponsoring workshops and events.

APPENDIX: LEADERSHIP BIOS

SEMP's planning team is led and supported by co-chairs Laura Lantz and Jackie Peterson. The team meets once a month and invites both current and new SEMP members to get involved!

Co-Chair Laura Lantz

Laura Lantz is a UX designer who specializes in games and learning experiences. As an instructional designer for McGraw-Hill Education, she works closely with subject matter experts and software engineers to create new digital resources for the classroom. Before joining MHE, Laura led multiple development teams as a project director and game designer at Schell Games. Her portfolio includes work on educational literary action-adventure *World of Lexica*, experimental web game series *Puzzle Clubhouse*, and massively multiplayer online game *Disney Pirates of the Caribbean Online*. Her degrees are from Carnegie Mellon (Masters, Entertainment Technology) and University of Virginia (B.A. Cognitive Science). A champion for creative hands-on learning, she's run over 100 open-participation circus arts workshops and does freelance exhibit work and regular volunteering for Pacific Science Center.

Co-Chair Jackie Peterson

Jackie Peterson, an educator and independent museum professional, loves nothing more than working with museums to unearth and share their meaningful—and more importantly, untold—stories. Prior to working independently, Jackie spent six years learning the museum trade at Ralph Appelbaum Associates in NYC. There, she served as a content coordinator and developer for a wide variety of projects from the NASCAR Hall of Fame to the S.E.A Aquarium at Resorts World Sentosa to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Education Center (currently in progress). She has always loved the intersection of public service, cultural institutions and education, and has finally landed in the exhibit design world in order to pursue this work.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

Seattle Emerging Museum Professionals thanks the following people for their assistance with the 2015 SEMP Report. This report would not have been possible without their contributions.

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