

The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) estimates that there are approximately 35,000 museums in the United States (American Alliance of Museums [AAM], 2015). While the sizes and types of these organizations vary, museums must fulfill specific requirements in order to receive federal funding:

- Legal recognition as a non-profit institution or governmental organization
- Educational in nature
- Own, utilize, care for, and exhibit tangible objects on a regular basis
- Maintain a minimum of one full-time professional staff member
- Provide services to the general public for a minimum of 120 days a year

(IMLS, n.d.)

As of July 2015, there were 1,051 museums accredited by the AAM (AAM, 2015).

Demographic and operating statistics for 802 American self-reporting accredited museums (as of January 2016) appear in the following tables.

Geographic Distribution by Region	%
New England	11
Mountain-Plans	14
Western	15
Mid-Atlantic	18
Midwest	18
Southeastern	24
(AAM, 2016)	

Demographic Information for Accredited American Museums	
Type of Museum	%
Aquarium	<1
Nature Center	<1
Children/Youth	<1
Zoological/Park	<1
Arboretum/Botanical Garden	3
Specialized (e.g. aviation, railroad)	4
Science/Technology	3
Natural History/Anthropology	8
Historic House/Site	8
General	10
History	22
Art	41
(AAM, 2016)	

Operating Information for Accredited American Museums	
Budget Size	%
Less than \$350,000	8
\$350,000-\$499,999	6
\$500,000-\$999,999	18
\$1,000,000-\$2.9 Million	30
\$3 Million-\$4.9 Million	12
\$5 Million-\$14.9 Million	17
More than \$15 Million	10
(AAM, 2016)	

Governing Authority	
Governing Authority	%
Tribal	<1
Other (joint, trust)	2
County/Regional	2
Federal	4
Municipal	6
State	7
College/University	16
Private Non-profit	63
(AAM, 2016)	

Four museums in the San Antonio area currently maintain national accreditation:

- McNay Art Museum
- San Antonio Museum of Art
- U.S. Army Medical Department Museum
- Witte Museum

(AAM, n.d.b)

IMPACT OF MUSEUMS

The ability to formally and informally educate remains an essential and enduring mission of museums. When surveyed, Americans perceived museums as a significant, valuable, and honest tool available for educating students. Annually, museums provide in excess of 18 million instructional hours for educational programs to students in grades K through 12, focused primarily on art, history, math and/or science. In fact, museums spend more than \$2 billion each year to implement professional development programs for teachers, traveling exhibits, school visits from museum staff, and guided field trips (AAM, n.d.a).

The relationship between museums and their communities is at a critical intersection, 75% of museums partner with community based organizations to offer safe community gatherings, community vitality, and a venue for cultural learning (IMLS, 2012, p.8). Museums also “offer rich and authentic content, dedicated and knowledgeable staff with deep expertise, and safe, trusted settings for individuals and families, all of which invite and support effective learning. The collections in libraries and museums—books, artwork, scientific specimens, and other cultural artifacts—connect people to the full spectrum of human experience: culture, science, history, and art. By preserving and conserving our material and digital artifacts, libraries and museums link us with humankind’s history. These institutions operate as places of social inclusion that promote curiosity, learning by doing, and discovery. In them, we learn about ourselves and others, and enhance the skills that contribute to empathy, tolerance, and understanding” (IMLS, 2009b, p.6).

In addition to educational and social benefits, museums also economically stimulate local communities by their ability to attract tourists. It has been shown that the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates over \$135 billion in economic activity annually, supports over 4 million full time jobs, and returns over \$22 billion in local, state, and federal income taxes annually. Governments which support the arts, on average, see a return on investment of over \$7 in taxes for every \$1 appropriated (AAM, n.d.a). A recent study revealed that 78% of all U.S. leisure travelers, or 118.3 million adults per year, participate in cultural/heritage activities. While out-of-town tourists typically spend money at local shops, restaurants, and other businesses, tourists who visit museums spend 60% more on their trips than tourists who do not visit museums (McCormick, 2010). One of the reasons why museums succeed in drawing such a large number of visitors is that they are affordable. “In 2012, 37% of museums were free at all times or had suggested admission fees only; nearly all the rest offered discounts or free admission days” (AAM, n.d.a).

Volunteer opportunities offered by museums also have the ability to generate societal value and personal benefits for individuals. Volunteering offers intangible benefits such as pride, fulfillment and achievement, as well as community enhancement, networking and social connections, quality of life improvements and even health benefits (Corporation for National and Community Service, n.d.). “Museum volunteers contribute a million hours of service every week” (AAM, n.d.a).

MUSEUMS: LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Museums in the 21st century are marked by their increased utilization of technology. Online museum resources include artifact databases, web-based exhibits, and educational programs. By providing information about exhibits and offering digital representations of artifacts on the Internet, museums connect with an even greater number of people. The Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS] reported that in 2006, remote online access increased museum visits by 75% (IMLS, 2008). Instead of

reducing the number of physical visits to museums, virtual museums are actually increasing the number of in-person visits. Another IMLS survey concluded that use of the internet positively affected the number of in-person visits (Virtual Museum Exhibit, 2014).

Museums are also incorporating technology into their exhibits for in-person visitors. Many museums offer smartphone application guided tours. Smartphone tours allow visitors to engage with exhibits like never before by offering: maps, videos, audio, pictures, and even interactive games (Schneider, 2010).

Crowdsourcing is “the process of soliciting content, solutions and suggestions from an undefined set of participants via the internet” (AAM, 2012, p.6). Many museums are using crowdsourcing to enable audiences to participate in a variety of ways, from help in selecting exhibit content to transcribing data for large research projects. “Crowdsourcing vastly increases the scope of work museums can tackle, but also increases the burden of oversight and quality control” (AAM, 2012, p7).

Technology products and capabilities are rapidly advancing and will continue to do so throughout the 21st century. Museums and libraries can play a leading role in intellectual property, digital preservation, and information access. They enrich public use of technology by providing the content and context around information resources (IMLS, 2009a).

CHANGES IN CHARITABLE GIVING

Charitable gifts account for more than one-third of museum operation funds. In recent years there has been a decline in donations due to the economy (AAM, n.d.c). The Pension Protection Act of 2006 raised much concern about museums losing out on major funding from their fractional-gift donations. These gifts are usually pieces too expensive for museums to buy. The Pension Act creates two restrictions affecting fractional gifts (H.R. 4, 2006):

- Donations time-frame limited to 10 years or until the time of the donor’s death (whichever comes first). If the gift is not completed in time, then the IRS will recapture all previous deductions, plus interest.
- The artwork loses value due to changes in deductions. The donated artwork receives a fresh appraisal each year, if the art piece either appreciated or depreciated from the previous appraisal, then the deduction will be taken from the lower of the two appraisals.

Museums rely heavily on private collectors to donate collections; more than 90 percent of all art in museums has been donated by private individuals (Beyer, 2013). “Although no empirical study has been conducted to quantify the effects of the PPA, the consensus among scholars and museums professionals is that this statute effectively eliminated the practice of fractional giving overnight” (Beyer, 2013, p.467). Several legislative efforts to revive fractional giving have, thus far, been unsuccessful.

MUSEUMS IN TEXAS

Museums are a relatively recent development in Texas. Two of the state’s oldest museums, the Buckhorn Hall of Horns and the teaching museum at Our Lady of the Lake College, were founded in San Antonio in 1881 and 1896, respectively. The number of museums in Texas has grown rapidly over the past few decades. In 1978, the Texas Historical Commission estimated that there were 410 museums in the state (Tyler, n.d.). That number has increased over the past three decades; according to Museums USA (2015) there are currently 699 museums in Texas.

In Bandera County, the Frontier Times Museum displays a vast and eccentric collection of artworks and artifacts. Honoring the legacy of the American cowboy, the collection includes various Native American and cowboy artifacts as well as artwork from local artist and craftsman (Frontier Times Museum, n.d.).

In Comal County, the Sophienburg Museum and Archives portrays 19th century life in New Braunfels through a wide-ranging display of historic documents such as family genealogies, maps, almanacs, oral history tapes, and church records, to name a few. It also preserves millions of photographs and hundreds of thousands of personal papers and public documents for research purposes (Sophienburg Museum and Archives, 2008).

In Kendall County, the Agricultural Heritage Center in Boerne features items relating to outdoor ranching and farming life in the Hill Country and south Texas (Museums USA, 2015).

Bexar County offers more than 25 museums appealing to a wide range of interests and ages (Visit San Antonio, 2014). Two of its most popular accredited museums are the Witte Museum and the McNay Art Museum.

Established in 1926, the Witte Museum’s permanent collection consists mainly of anthropology, cultural, and scientific artifacts from south Texas. In addition to its in-house collections, the Witte brings in world class traveling exhibitions such as Dinosaurs Unearthed and Mummies of the World (Witte Museum, n.d.).

The McNay houses over 20,000 works of art including Medieval and Renaissance art, Art Glass, the Tobin Collection of Theatre Arts, prints and drawings, and approximately 700 19th and 20th -century European and American paintings and sculptures (McNay, 2015).

Another accredited museum, the San Antonio Museum of Art (SAMA) opened the impressive 15,000 square foot Lenora and Walter F. Brown Asian Art Wing in 2005. In May of 2009, the Museum Reach extension of the San Antonio Riverwalk was opened with new riverfront access along the Museum's north side. SAMA also possesses artifacts from around the world, including an extensive collection of Ancient, Latin American, African and Oceanic, Asian/Oriental, American and European, and Contemporary art (SAMA, 2014).

The newest museum in San Antonio, the Briscoe Western Art Museum, opened in October 2013. Located in the heart of downtown, its mission is to preserve and interpret the “art, history, and culture of the American West through engaging exhibitions, educational programs, and public events reflective of the region’s rich traditions and shared heritage” (Briscoe Western Art Museum, 2016).

Other museums in Bexar County include the San Antonio Art League Museum, the Texas Air Museum, UTSA’S Institute of Texas Cultures, the Texas Transportation Museum, the US Army Medical Department Museum, and the Lackland Air Force Base Aircraft Display (Bexar County Historical Commission, n.d.).

Snapshot of Approximate Annual Attendance in Museums in the Greater San Antonio Region
(as reported to the Kronkosky Charitable Foundation)

Museum	Annual Attendance
Witte	250,000
Institute of Texan Cultures (2014)	155,000
San Antonio Children’s Museum	600,000
McNay Art Museum	134,000
San Antonio Museum of Art	130,900
Briscoe Western Art Museum (2014)	40,000
Frontier Times Museum	9,100
Sophienburg Museum (2014)	2,800
NOTE: All figures are estimates for 2015 rounded to nearest hundred unless otherwise noted	

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