

The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) estimates that there are approximately 33,000 museums in the United States (American Alliance of Museums [AAM], 2021a). 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

(Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS], n.d.)

As of September 2021, there were 1,090 museums accredited by the AAM (AAM, n.d.b). Demographic and operating statistics for 809 American self-reporting accredited museums (as of September 2021) appear in the following tables (AAM, n.d.d).

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION BY REGION	%
Southeastern	24
Mid-Atlantic	18
Midwest	18
Western	15
Mountain-Plains	14
New England	11
(AAM, n.d.d)	

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR ACCREDITED AMERICAN MUSEUMS	
Type of Museum	%
Art	41
History	22
General	10
Natural History/Anthropology	8
Historic House/Site	8
Specialized (e.g. aviation, railroad)	4
Arboretum/Botanical Garden	3
Science/Technology	3
Aquarium	<1
Nature Center	<1
Children/Youth	<1
Zoological/Park	<1
(AAM, n.d.d)	

OPERATING INFORMATION FOR ACCREDITED AMERICAN MUSEUMS	
Budget Size	%
More than \$15 Million	10
\$5 Million - \$14.9 Million	17
\$3 Million - \$4.9 Million	12
\$1,000,000 - \$2.9 Million	30
\$500,000 - \$999,999	18
\$350,000 - \$499,999	6
Less than \$350,000	8
(AAM, n.d.d)	

GOVERNING AUTHORITY	
	%
Private Non-profit	63
College/University	16
State	7
Municipal	6
Federal	4
Other (joint, trust)	2
County/Regional	2
Tribal	<1
(AAM, n.d.d)	

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

“Museums and libraries encourage exploration, analysis, and questioning. They foster among visitors an attitude of discovery, helping cultivate critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration” (IMLS, 2018, p. 4). The ability to formally and informally educate remains an essential and enduring mission of museums.

Annually, museums receive about 55 million visits from students in school groups (grades K through 12), focused on math, science, art, literacy, language arts, history, civics and government, economics and financial literacy, geography, and social studies. In fact, museums spend more than \$2 billion each year on educational activities (AAM, n.d.a). A survey conducted by the AAM in 2017 found that Americans perceived museums as a significant, valuable, and honest tool available for educating students and approximately 97% of them believe that museums are educational assets for their communities (AAM, 2018a).

Museums and libraries are also “trusted stewards of our nation’s knowledge and collections. They care for, conserve, manage, and provide access to information that represents the cultural, artistic, historical, natural, and scientific foundations of our shared heritage. Increasingly, museums and libraries are making their resources more accessible for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. This includes widespread programs and services to accommodate the one in six people in America who have a disability. Through their programs and services, these institutions are building cultural, economic, and geographic connections, helping

contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society” (IMLS, 2018, p.8).

Furthermore, some museums have also begun to shift their focus to environmental sustainability and the need to preserve it. “Museums have helped to rediscover and, in some cases, invent materials that now top the United Nation’ Green List of the most beneficial products and materials for the human-environment system” (AAM, 2017, p.13).

In addition to educational, social and environmental 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 \$50 billion in economic activity annually, supports more than 726,000 American jobs, and generates over \$12 billion in local, state, and federal income taxes annually. Governments which support the arts, on average, see a return on investment of over \$5 in taxes for every \$1 appropriated (AAM, n.d.a). A study done in 2013 revealed that 76% of all U.S. leisure travelers, or 129.6 million adults per year, participate in cultural/heritage activities (Mandala Research, 2013, p.3). “Museum audiences have a strong link to tourism, since tourists are a part of the audiences and for some museums even a large part of the total number of visitors” (Perera, n.d., p.4). 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 benefits such as increased social interaction, which can improve mental and physical health, improve self-esteem, develop emotional stability, and help lower the risk of depression, anxiety, and possibly dementia in older volunteers (American Counseling Association, 2020). “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 and are making more of an effort to incorporate technology into their exhibits. 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. Visitors are now even able to interact with augmented reality, and further immerse themselves into the experience. Incorporating new digital technology into their galleries offers an interactive and engaging platform for visitors of all ages to explore and learn (Hillier, 2021).

Crowdsourcing is “the practice of utilizing the wisdom of a group for a common goal. It is best applied when attempting to solve complex problems in an innovative way or streamline intricate processes” (White, 2019). 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. This allows for a unique opportunity to develop new relationships with the public and ensure a sustainable and meaningful engagement with their visitors (Hibbins, 2020).

Museums continue to play a leading role in intellectual property, digital preservation, and information access. Over the years, museums have also evolved to become more aware of community challenges and proactive in stimulating social change. They “have transformed from symbols of power and elitism to institutions of knowledge and enlightenment and from being about “things” (i.e. objects and collections) to being for people and communities” (Eid, 2019).

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 (Kirk, 2017, p. 872). “The majority of museums tend to rely primarily on wealthy donors, rather than government funding. More established museums struggle to keep up with the rapidly increasing art market, and are often outbid at auction by wealthy collectors” (Kirk, 2017, p. 880). 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 four decades; according to Museums USA (2021) there are currently 702 museums in Texas.

In 2017, a study from AAM and Oxford Economics reported that museums in Texas had a total financial impact of \$3.9 billion on the state's economy. In addition, 62,013 jobs in Texas are supported by the museum industry each year, generating an estimated income total of \$2.7 billion for Texas residents (AAM, 2018b).

MUSEUMS IN KRONKOSKY COUNTIES OF INTEREST

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, n.d.).

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 (The Agricultural Museum & Arts Center, 2019).

Bexar County offers more than 25 museums appealing to a wide range of interests and ages (Visit San Antonio, 2019). 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, 2019).

The McNay houses over 22,000 works of art including Medieval and Renaissance art, Art

Glass, Art of Mexico, the Tobin Collection of Theatre Arts, prints and drawings, and approximately 700 19th and 21th -century European and American paintings and sculptures (McNay, 2021).

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. In 2019, SAMA installed the six-and-a-half ton *Taihu Rock*, given by San Antonio's sister city Wuxi in China. 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, 2021).

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, 2019).

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

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 Pandemic has affected museums across the country. Museums are continuing to meet the needs of their communities by providing spaces for remote and virtual classrooms, providing lesson plans, online learning opportunities, and drop-off kits to teachers and families (AAM, n.d.c).

Museums in Texas have provided ways for their communities to access museum resources and services throughout the pandemic. The Children’s Museum of Houston offers 3D virtual field trips that “help explain topics and provide fun, hands-on activities that can be done in the classroom or at home for distance learners” (Children’s Museum Houston, 2021). The Witte Museum offers “Witte Where You Are” which includes recorded videos of museum exhibits and artifacts, downloadable PDF activities, and a “Backyard Scientist” video series that shows activities that can be done at home (Witte Museum, 2021).

Museums are also facing pandemic-related funding, staffing, and attendance issues. The third iteration of a survey of museum directors, conducted by the AAM and Wilkening Consulting from April 6-30, 2021, assessed the impacts of COVID-19 on the museum field. The results reflected the damage caused by COVID-19 on museums, but also show some good signs at recovery:

- Twenty-nine percent of responding museums remained closed to the public at the time of the survey, with 64% reporting an opening date by July 2021 or earlier.
- Open museums report an average of 41% of pre-pandemic attendance, with 68% of these museums operating under mandated attendance limits with an average attendance cap of 42%.
- Forty-four percent of responding museums did not furlough or lay-off staff since March 2020, 22% laid off full-time staff, and 28% laid off part-time staff.
- Forty-six percent of responding museums report staff size decreases with an average decrease of 29%.
- Forty-four percent plan to rehire or increase staff size, 33% do not plan to, 26% are not yet sure.
- Seventy-six percent of responding museums report operating income decreases in 2020, a 40% decrease on average, with an

average pandemic financial loss of revenue at about \$694,000.

- Sixty-one percent of responding museums report net operating performance decreases of on average 38%, with 59% having cut back on education, programming, and other public services due to budget shortfalls and/or staff reductions.
- Eighty-five percent of directors at the time of the survey believe there is no significant risk of permanent closure this year absent additional financial relief, 5% feel there is still significant risk, 10% are unsure.

(AAM, 2021b)

Museums have access to federal support, specifically grants from sources like the IMLS CARES Act Grants, which awarded over \$15 million dollars to museums and libraries since May 2020 (IMLS, 2020). They were also able to receive funding through the second federal coronavirus economic relief package. The economic relief package included relief for performing venues and museums, extension of unemployment benefits and expansion of eligibility for those benefits, and more funding in the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) (Texas Commission on the Arts, 2020). Sixty-three percent of responding museums received a PPP loan last year, with three quarters of them having the loan forgiven, and a further 94% applied for a second PPP loan this year with 91% receiving one (AAM, 2021b).

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