

# Museum Results

Your Monthly Resource for Philanthropic News  
from Alexander Haas

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from the organized desk of  
**Sandra K. Kidd** | Senior Partner

## Telling Your Story

I started out as a student journalist, and I find that I still think in terms of what budding newspaper writers are taught to do: Answer these five questions — **Who? What? When? Where? How?** — in the lead of the story. As we move toward the end of 2021, it's a good time to apply these journalism basics to our daily work of philanthropy.

The world gets more complex, the number of non-profits keeps rising, and the clutter in our ever-increasing channels of communications grows. So with a nod to some "old school" thinking, let's get back to the basics of telling your story:

**Who? Who does your non-profit serve?** Draw your donors a word picture of someone who benefits from your organization's existence. If you feed the hungry, tell us about someone who came in last week. If you provide scholarships to first-generation college students, give us a profile of a success story. Be specific (while omitting identifying details for privacy reasons), and let the soul of the person being served shine through.

**What? What does your organization do?** Tell your donors, in simple, straightforward language, what you do to carry out your mission. If your organization provides front-line services, this part may be a bit easier than if you are part of a large university system or the United Way. But you should be able to articulate what your non-profit does in a couple of sentences. If you can't, go talk to your colleagues in programs.

**When and Where and How?** Answering these questions can help you move your case for support from the indeterminate to the well-defined. These questions also help you quantify the impact of your charitable mission, *and* what you could do if you had more resources. How many people do you serve a year — and how great is the unmet need? Where does your work typically take place — and where would you expand if you had the dollars to do so? When are the times you most need help, and has that changed over the years?

My aunt is very involved in a program that provides warm clothing and toys for children during the holidays. Until 2020, they used October and November to make a major push for monetary donations. Last year, when people were not traveling so much due to the pandemic, they decided to make their push in the summer months. The result? They not only met their goal for donations; they exceeded it. It turned out that donors completely understood the need to have the money well in advance of the time it was to be spent on boots and bicycles.

The final question is **Why? This is ultimately the heart of your case for support.** Why does your non-profit matter? Why should donors support your mission? Why do people need the work you do, and what would happen if your organization wasn't here to help them?

I have noticed in the field of philanthropy that we often try to answer this question first: we are mission-driven, after all. My advice to you, however, is to answer this question last. After you have defined the **Who What When Where** and **How**, the **Why** should be clearer.

And once you've written your story, send it in advance to a couple of donors who will give you honest feedback, run it by a trusted funder, or let a colleague in another organization read it over for you.

Whether you're trying to craft your year-end fundraising ask for 2021, or getting a head start on your message for 2022, it's always the right time to go back to the basics.

*Alexander Haas wishes you a bright and successful end-of-year fundraising effort.*

## We Think You Should Know

### South Arts Brings \$3 Million to the Southeast from Ford Foundation

Last year, when the **Ford Foundation** announced an initiative to give more than \$100 million to arts groups run by people of color, none of the 20 initial recipients were in the Southeast.

So, **Suzette Surkamer**, the president and chief executive of **South Arts**, a Client Partner of Alexander Haas, reached out to Darren Walker, the president of the Ford Foundation, offering to share some thoughts on the tremendous potential of arts groups in the region.

Now, South Arts is receiving \$3 million from the Ford Foundation, and South Arts is raising an additional \$3 million from other donors, that will be distributed as grants to 12 to 15 arts groups led by and serving Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and people of color in the Southeast. This program, *Southern Cultural Treasures*, continues the Ford Foundation's initiative, *America's Cultural Treasures*, in which Ford and other organizations and philanthropists have donated tens-of-millions of dollars to bring greater resources and recognition to BIPOC populations.

"We have worked in the South, and we know of the deep need among arts organizations in the South where there are less philanthropic resources," said **Margaret Morton**, director of the creativity and free

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expression team at Ford.

Surkamer said that many groups in the southeastern area her organization covers are “persistent and amazing,” often running on shoestring budgets, but having a deep impact on their communities. Because of that, she added, the grant program could make a significant difference to the recipients.

“It can give them the money to operate on an ongoing basis,” she said, calling that “incredibly important.” *NYT*, 11-3

*Alexander Haas is proud and honored to partner with South Arts on this important initiative in our home region.*

### **Columbus Museum Featured in LA Times Gift Guide**

The *Los Angeles Times* published a holiday gift guide titled **11 books your creative friends actually will want on their coffee table**. Topping this esteemed list was **Alma W. Thomas: Everything is Beautiful**, the catalog by Seth Feman, Ph.D. of the Chrysler Museum and **Jonathan Frederick Walz, Ph.D. of The Columbus Museum. The Columbus Museum is a Client Partner of Alexander Haas**. We agree with the *LA Times* that this catalog makes the perfect holiday gift, and we, along with the Museum, are thrilled to see the impact that this catalog and the traveling exhibition are having on art lovers around the country.

The exhibition is of the work of African-American artist Alma Thomas called “Everything is Beautiful” is touring in 2021-22, ending its tour at the Columbus Museum next summer (she was a Columbus native, and the first Black woman to have a solo exhibition at the Whitney Museum). **The book is available here.** *LATimes*, 11-4



## **We Think You Should Know**

### **Attendance to History Museums Plummeted Nearly 70% in 2020**

A new report from the **American Association for State and Local History’s Public History Research Lab**, suggests that visits to history museums, historical societies, and other history institutions declined nearly 70% in 2020. This contrasted surveys in prior years, which indicated strong visitation growth for history museums — especially small, local ones.

There are, of course, a number of reasons for this trend.

- Institutions operated at less than full capacity for about nine months of 2020, generally closed to the public for approximately 23 weeks in 2020.
- Even when operational, most faced significant capacity or other functional restrictions for an additional 16 weeks.
- Small organizations (those with annual operating budgets of less than \$250,000) on average stayed closed longer than their larger counterparts.
- Virtual programming adopted by many institutions as a stopgap measure complicates ideas of what it means to attend a museum.

The AASLH plans to survey the field again in early 2022 to determine if visitation rebounded in 2021, or

if we are preparing to enter a new Dark Age. *Hyperallergic*, 11-1

## **Many Museum Workers Laid Off Despite Federal Aid**

A new report says that despite receiving hundreds of millions of dollars in payroll support from the federal government during the pandemic, museums still laid off thousands of employees. Of the 7,527 institutions to receive funds under the Paycheck Protection Program, 228 received almost half of the pot, more than \$771.4 million through June 1, 2021, according to research by the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. Those larger museums cut more than 14,400 employees, even though many institutions ended the year with a fiscal surplus.

The Philadelphia Museum of Art, which received \$5.1 million, laid off 127 workers, but a spokesperson said "slightly more than half" of those had worked part-time and the cuts would have been deeper without the aid. In Los Angeles, the Museum of Contemporary Art received \$3.3 million but cut 97 positions, which a museum representative said included part-time and temporary employees. Union representatives said the figures revealed museums' skewed priorities. *Artnet News*, 10-14

## **Google Pays Homage to Historic—and Pandemic Hindered—Vermeer Exhibition**

Visitors to **Google's** homepage on November 12th found images of Johannes Vermeer's paintings, which offer up interior scenes with near-photographic detail. Google, which typically honors artists on their birthdays, instead, was celebrating the 26th anniversary of the opening of a Vermeer exhibition at the **National Gallery of Art** (DC).

There are only three dozen paintings in the world that experts agree are by Vermeer, and the exhibition assembled 21 of them. Some of the paintings were also quite literally being seen anew, given that they had just been cleaned prior to the exhibition's run.

The National Gallery is also remembered as a victim of government shutdowns in the U.S. The show opened on November 12, only to close again on November 14. Then it reopened on November 29, and closed once more on December 16. With a lack of a budget left to keep the museum running, the National Gallery relied on private funding to keep the show open after Christmas. *Artnet News*, 11-12

## **More Museum News**

**Jeffrey Brown**, interim CEO and director since April 1, will stay on as CEO of the **Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art** (Hartford, CT). He has served as a trustee at the museum since 2012, and previously was executive vice president and chief administrative officer at the Newman's Own Foundation. The museum will conduct an executive search to hire a new director to work alongside Brown. *COP*, 11-12

**Joan and Wayne Webber** gave \$5 million through their *Wayne and Joan Webber Foundation* to the **Detroit Institute of Arts** to support the work done in the DIA Art Studio, an experimental lab where artists lead courses for people of all ages and abilities throughout the year. Wayne Webber died shortly after the couple gave this gift. With this latest gift, the Webbers have given the museum a total of nearly \$10 million since 2008. *COP*, 10-25

**Emily Rauh Pulitzer** has promised 22 more artworks to the **St. Louis Art Museum** for its collection. The Museum calls the multimillion-dollar gift pieces "masterpieces" that are like a primer of art history in the 20th century. Neither Kim nor Pulitzer would estimate the monetary worth of the pieces, but just a few of the most valuable might have brought some \$200 million at auction. *Post-Dispatch*, 10-19

**Aaron Berger**, executive director of the **Breman Museum** (Atlanta), was named executive director of the **Neon Museum's**. In addition, Jennifer Kleven has been promoted from grants manager to senior development officer. Aaron is a former consultant at Alexander Haas. *COP*, 10-15

**Chris Strand**, a longtime employee of **Winterthur Museum, Garden & Library** (Delaware) has been named Director. Strand, was previously head director of the garden and former estate of Henry Francis du Pont. *Delawareonline.com, 10-13*

## More Philanthropic News

### #GivingTuesday November 30

Yes, it's just a few days away, and by this time you should have crafted your plan of attack for this growing in popularity, and results, international day of fundraising. Let's look at some statistics from 2020:

Key findings include:

- Giving in 2020 grew an estimated 5.2% year-over-year when compared to 2019.
- The sector experienced more donor mobility than ever before, with big gains in new donor acquisition largely offset by big drops in donor retention.
- The multi-year trend of fewer donors overall was reversed in 2020. A 1.3% top-line gain in donors was driven almost completely by an 11% growth in small donations between \$101 and \$500, the highest growth for this donor size in five years.
- Key giving moments in 2020 corresponded to upticks in COVID-19, pivotal events such as action for racial justice and election activity, and #GivingTuesdayNow, a day of unity and giving held as an emergency response to COVID-19 on May 5, 2020 and GivingTuesday (December 1, 2020) giving events. These moments were largely driven by many donors giving smaller amounts.

This should encourage you to work harder. Take last year's new donor and show them what an increased gift can do for your institution. Highlight a student or program. Be loud and be proud of the work you do.

The #GivingTuesday website [has a toolkit](#) that offers advice and resources to help pull your program together. It's not too late.

### More Donors Made One-Time and Monthly Online Gifts in 2020

Charities' revenue from one-time online donations grew more than 15% in 2020, according to a new report from **Blackbaud**. Before the coronavirus outbreak, revenue from one-time online donors declined 1% from 2019 to 2020. But as nonprofits moved the bulk of their fundraising appeals online during the pandemic, the average size of those gifts grew to \$169.59 — a more than 3% increase.

### Other Key Findings

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- The charities in the study recorded 43.2% more gifts in response to a fundraising email in 2020 than in 2019. Revenue from these transactions grew by more than 42%.
- Nonprofits increased the volume of emails they sent nearly 14%, and the volume of readers who clicked on links in the emails jumped 29%.
- The number of one-time donors who gave online grew by nearly 16% in 2020, despite declining in 2019.
- Monthly donors boosted their giving 18% from 2019 to 2020, and the monthly gifts were slightly larger — about \$1 more in 2020 than in 2019.
- One in 40 donors now makes a monthly recurring gift.

- Growth in revenue from sustaining donors has now outpaced growth in dollars from one-time donors for nine straight years.

COP, 10-6

### **America's Wealthiest Got Wealthier in 2020, But Their Giving Was Stagnant**

*Forbes* magazine assigns wealthy Americans a philanthropy score from 1 to 5. The number of those with a top score of 5 (for giving away at least 20 percent of their wealth) dropped from 10 to eight last year. Most of the rich on the list received a score of 1, meaning they have given away less than 1 percent of their net worth, or no philanthropic information was available. George Soros was the biggest giver relative to his wealth for the second year in a row. Others who were notably generous included MacKenzie Scott, Michael Bloomberg, Gordon Moore, Julian Robertson Jr., Amos Hostetter Jr., Lynn Schusterman, Ted Turner and Denny Sanford. The laggards include Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk. *Forbes*, October 2021

## **We Want You to Know**

### ***Transforming Institutions***

For more than 30 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with some of the largest, and some of the smallest, cultural organizations that help make our country a better place to live.

[Take a look at all of our past and present museum Client Partners.](#)

### **Face It: Museums are Different Our Transformational Museum Services**

**Alexander Haas** serves a cross section of museums throughout the country. We specialize (and delight in) what makes you distinctive. As a museum, you have different needs at different times. We can help you create real results.

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