

## Staying Relevant: A Case Study of the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society and Community Inclusion

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### Abstract:

Purpose of the Study: The very nature of how CRM and museum practitioners do work is changing based on the increasing interest and need to include the communities where they work in order to remain relevant. Museums, as a result, face new and unique challenges that create barriers they must overcome in order to remain engaged with and relevant to the communities they are a part of. However, most studies focus on large well-funded museums and there is a significant gap in research concerning how small historical museums face these challenges. This research attempts to fill that gap by looking at how the Healdsburg Museum and Historical Society (HM&HS), as an example of a small and local historical museum with an active volunteer force, becomes and stays engaged with and relevant to the Healdsburg community despite all the challenges they face. Procedure: In this research, the HM&HS serves as a case study in which the methods of ethnography are used to extrapolate how other small historical museums can use a variety of strategies to remain relevant to their communities. Museological and anthropological perspectives directed me to the interpretive paradigm as a framework of analysis. Additionally, through my research in the literature, I identified three core concerns in regard to historical interpretation-social inclusion, memory, and civic engagement-and then used these concerns as categories of analysis for the ethnographic data I collected during my fieldwork. Fieldwork took place in two different phases. My ethnographic data-collection methods included the creation of field notes, observation, participation, informal conversations, recorded semi-structured interviews, and the use of photographs as a visual record of events. Findings: Social Inclusion: The ethnographic data showed that there were many barriers to social inclusion. These barriers were expressed in terms of access such as location, appearance, association, and a lack of diverse social networks. The museum utilized many strategies to overcome these barriers, in exhibits and events both within the museum and outside. The success of these strategies and the outcomes of these exhibits and events were highly dependent on the type of collaboration between different social networks within the Healdsburg community and the contexts they took place in (inside the museum vs. outside). The role of volunteers in increasing access was prevalent, but hardly the solution to all of the problems museums face. Research showed that while technology can greatly increase access to historical resources and increase a person's engagement with history, it also creates conflicts around notions of "customer service." While using technological innovations is an effective strategy to increase social inclusion, for the HM&HS, it will never be the primary effective strategy. The realities of having older volunteers, not having a tech department, and suffering from constant malfunctions puts the most effective strategies in the hands of people. Memory: Memory is utilized along with academic history in one of two ways. In the first way, individuals or businesses use a backward gaze, authenticated by the museum, to normalize the newness-and difference--of the present, creating a social and economic "memory as commodity." In the second way, the museum focuses on informing museumgoers of broader pathways to civic engagement through exhibits that bring history up to the present. The museum focuses on a future-oriented connection between the past and present, where the past becomes a vantage point, a fulcrum, to move into the future with a more socially conscious mind. Civic Engagement: Volunteerism is a vital aspect of civic engagement and both need to be understood in relation to the other. The research showed that people are taught how to volunteer through social relations and usually only become volunteers after retirement. Volunteers choose the HM&HS for social reasons or because they have an interest in history, but stay because their skills are needed and appreciated. By working in the HM&HS, volunteers internalize the museum's mission and do not separate out their role from the museum's role. The museum relies on volunteers and this forces the HM&HS to think about the future of volunteerism and what possible skills they can contribute to the museum, which leads into issues of civic engagement. The research showed that by focusing on a future-oriented connection between the past and present, the HM&HS is able to carve a niche within the Healdsburg community that allows for active community dialogue. Doing so changes the nature of peoples' interaction with the museum. Instead of just passively consuming history and the past, people actively engage with it and use it to go out in the world and make choices. If museums in general continue with these innovations, then the nature of their interaction with the communities they live in will also change. They will become an integral part of the community rather than a relic to the past. Conclusions: There was a considerable gap in knowledge concerning how smaller museums are meeting these new challenges to remaining relevant and including communities and a great need for a synthesis of the current issues and strategies. As a case study, this thesis addresses a great number of the shared challenges these small historical museums, as a class, are dealing with on an everyday basis. It lays out a theoretical and methodological framework that can be utilized by

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small historical museums to judge to what extent they are meeting their own community's needs. In doing so, small historical museums could continually access and develop new strategies in response to their community's shifting contexts, helping them remain a vital and relevant community resource.

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The museum has also created a bespoke case with a camera. This will allow them to livestream it at all times for the world to see. Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum also announced a livestream project. Many of the Twitter accounts behind popular UK museums posted a meme related to art, history and even the people that visit. "Look at this absolute unit". Producing viral content is tough but it pays dividends – as the Museum of English Rural Life discovered. Case Study Methods as Applied to the Democratic Peace The Third Generation: Formal Modeling Contributions Methodological Suggestions for Future Research on the Interdemocratic Peace Part II - How to Do Case Studies Chapter 3 - The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison Chapter 4 - Phase One: Designing Case Study Research Task One: Specification of the Problem and Research Objective Task Two: Developing a Research Strategy: Specification. George and Bennett provide a careful analysis of the virtues and pitfalls of comparative case study research and offer valuable advice for any scholar engaged in qualitative research. The more widely this book is read, the better future social science will be."