

A Study of Young Adult Programming at American Historic House Museums

Marissa Chamberlin

Department of Museum Studies

The University of the Arts

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For more information, contact:

Marissa Chamberlin

436 Oakville Road

Shippensburg, PA 17257

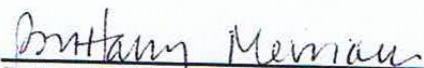
717-386-6283

mcstroupe@gmail.com

To the Faculty of the University of the Arts

The members of the committee appointed to examine the thesis of Marissa Chamberlin find it satisfactory and recommend it to be accepted.

November 27, 2017



Brittany L. Merriam

Committee Chair

Curator

Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society



Allison Schell

Program & Development Manager

Chadds Ford Historical Society



Julie Gannaway

Executive Director

Wharton Esherick Museum



Helen Shannon PhD.

Program Director, Museum Education, the University of the Arts
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Abstract

Historic house museums have been experiencing declining numbers of visitors over the past few decades. One of the groups that they have been struggling to attract are young adults between the ages of 18 and 35. It is important for historic house museums to bring in more visitors of this demographic in order to increase their visitorship, further connect with their community, and entice them to become lifelong donors, supporters, and leaders. One area that historic house museums have found success in bringing in young adult visitors is through programming. Many historic house museums are trying to offer programs that are designed for young adults. Research shows that other programs being offered that do bring in young adults, but are not designed for them are an added benefit.

This paper will explore how historic house museums can increase young adult visitorship through programming, such as “everyday life” programs, entertainment, and social events. In addition, a more in-depth look at what programs and other tactics that historic house museums are currently utilizing to draw in a younger audience will be explored. Simultaneously, this paper examines what young adults are seeking from historic house museum programming in general.

Dedication

To my parents and family for always being there to support me and help me when I need it
the most.

To my best friends, without your support and help I would never have made it through!

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Nomenclature

- **Historic House Museum** – A museum which was a former residence that focuses on the history of the family that lived there, the history of the structure, and/or the history of the community surrounding the museum.
- **Young Adult** – any person who is between the ages of 18 and 35
- **Program** – an event, or series of events, that is planned with specific audiences in mind, often it revolves around a specific theme or topic

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout the past few years, the future of historic house museums has been called into question. Journalist J. Freedom du Lac discusses the complexity of the matter of attracting patrons to historic house museums in his 2012 *Washington Post* article, “Struggling to attract visitors, historic houses may face day of reckoning.”¹ The focus of the article is historic house museums in Virginia and how many struggle to attract visitors, while others like Mount Vernon and Monticello are increasing attendance numbers. Mount Vernon and Monticello are increasing their attendance because they are some of the most well-known historic house museums in America, while the other historic house museums are not well publicized. Overall statistics show a drastic decline in attendance, showing that this could be an alarming trend for historic house museums.²

Many articles have been written about the struggles historic house museums face, as opposed to many other types of museums. When cited in Emily Carrington’s Masters’ Thesis in 2012 about young adults’ relationship with historic house museums, historic house museums ranked eighth in median annual attendance, compared to all other types of museums, at 11,700 visitors.³ Compare this number to science/technology centers which ranked number one in median annual attendance, with 357,103 visitors.⁴ The drastic difference between these two figures, although a few years old, demonstrates the low number of attendance at historic house museums and their struggle to attract visitors, in comparison

¹ “Struggling to Attract Visitors, Historic Houses May Face Day of Reckoning,” *Washington Post*, accessed March 23, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/struggling-to-attract-visitors-historic-houses-may-face-day-of-reckoning/2012/12/22/349116b6-4b93-11e2-a6a6-aabac85e8036_story.html.

² “Struggling to Attract Visitors, Historic Houses May Face Day of Reckoning.”

³ Emily Lynn Carrington, “For the Old, Rich, and Cultured? Historic House Museums and Their Relationship with Young Adults.” 2012, <https://baylor-ir.tdl.org/baylor-ir/handle/2104/8413>.

⁴ Carrington.

to other types of museums (i.e. art museums, science museums, etc.). Studies, such as Carrington's, show historic house museums have been struggling to attract visitors between the ages of 18 and 35, specifically.

In America, 1976 was the year of the bicentennial, in which there became a greater interest in historic house museums, especially ones from the Colonial period. This time seems to be the peak of historic house museums. In the years that followed the bicentennial, it appears that attendance at historic house museums has been on the decline. One example of this decline is General Robert E. Lee's birthplace. In 1976, 80,000 people visited the site; in 1991 there were 51,000. Finally, in 2011, the visitorship sharply declined to 27,000.⁵ This decline can be attributed to economic forces; people stopped travelling as much due to high gas prices and public school budgets are being cut, thus not allowing for many field trips.⁶ Historian Donna Harris's 2007 book, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* also provides dim numbers for historic sites, saying that according to the 1988 National Trust survey, 54% of house museums had 5,000 visitors or less; 65% had no full-time staff; while, 80% had a budget less than \$50,000.⁷ While these data are old, this is the most recent survey that has been conducted on historic house museum visitorship. Many researchers see the decline in visitorship and know that it is a problem, but this researcher has not found an in-depth study of overall attendance and budgets at historic house museums.

⁵ "Struggling to Attract Visitors, Historic Houses May Face Day of Reckoning."

⁶ "Struggling to Attract Visitors, Historic Houses May Face Day of Reckoning."

⁷ Donna Ann Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses* (AltaMira Press, 2007).

Many of the historic house museums referenced in the du Lac article have been forced to close their doors, and some have had to sell museum properties because it was impossible to keep up with bills and other related expenses. A recommendation du Lac provides for how historic houses can improve visitor attendance is to consolidate with other house museums. Consolidation only works when similar historic house museums join together to promote a shared history. This is beneficial for organizations that are struggling; these organizations can join with another that may be in better standing and the shared resources can benefit both institutions. Historic house museums can also “bring themselves into the 21st century,” by using new technology to allow visitors to engage with content at their own pace and explore what they find interesting. Although this seems like a simple task, sometimes historic house museums cannot afford new technologies, so while this is a great recommendation, it is not always possible. By exploring these techniques, historic house museums hopefully can alleviate the severity of the attendance problem, and work toward regaining visitors.⁸

In addition to visitor attendance, another major problem facing historic house museums is the lack of young people to take the place of board members and volunteers who are retiring. Donna Harris puts forth several solutions to help preserve historic house museums and confront the lack of young adult leadership in them. Her solutions are fictional scenarios, but they are all based on real problems historic house museums may already face. Harris suggests one way to improve the lack of young people involved with historic house museums is to make the younger people feel welcomed by making them feel that their contributions are needed and worthwhile. There are many ways in which younger people can

⁸ “Struggling to Attract Visitors, Historic Houses May Face Day of Reckoning.”

be made to feel welcome, but one way is to listen to what ideas they have and even ask for their input on some decisions. By doing this, they will feel like they have a say in the museum and that their ideas and suggestions are important. If this is accomplished, more young people may take on significant roles at historic house museums.⁹

Colleen Dilenschneider, author of *Reaching the Next Generation(s): Three Millennial Characteristics That Challenge Business As Usual For Museums And History Organizations* in 2014 discusses what can be done to engage young adult audiences. Young adults are “civic minded – public service oriented; digitally native – comfortable with and dependent on technology; and constantly connected – socially and technologically in touch with others.” Incorporating these characteristics are integral to designing successful programming for this demographic. For the historic house museum, it is important to discover how to take advantage of these different traits to appeal to young adults.¹⁰

In addition to historic house museums connecting with young adults, they also need to rework their image within their community at large. Stephanie Meeks, president of the U.S. National Trust for Historic Preservation, gave a speech in 2013 entitled “House Museums: A 20th Century Paradigm” which explored next steps for historic house museums in today’s world. According to Meeks, the current model for historic house museums is failing, and there needs to be a change in practice. While many people love going to eat and drink in historic districts, they associate historic house museums with ropes and restrictions. According to Meeks, the millennial generation (people born between 1981 and 1997), which

⁹ Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums*. 12-14.

¹⁰ “Reaching the Next Generation(s): Three Millennial Characteristics That Challenge Business as Usual for Museums and History Organizations,” *Resources*, January 22, 2015, <http://resource.aaslh.org/view/reaching-the-next-generations-three-millennial-characteristics-that-challenge-business-as-usual-for-museums-and-history-organizations/>.

currently coincides with the young adult audience looked at by this researcher, love old buildings for their aesthetics, and do not view them for preservation, but for development. This means that people enjoy viewing old buildings, and see modifications done to the building as development instead of historic preservation. This view creates a disconnect between an appreciation of old buildings and effectively running a historic house museum.¹¹ Even though this demographic enjoys older buildings, it does not necessarily mean that they would become visitors to historic house museums. This mindset is a hurdle that historic house museums face when trying to reach this demographic, or get them involved.

While there are difficulties facing historic house museums, scholars and museum professionals have been working to find new solutions to these problems. This paper provides a closer look at how historic house museums are currently trying to draw in younger audiences to their programs, and simultaneously exploring what young adults are seeking from the historic house museum experience. Through dynamic programming historic house museums can increase young adult visitorship.

¹¹ “House Museums: A 20th Century Paradigm | National Trust for Historic Preservation,” accessed March 23, 2017, <https://savingplaces.org/press-center/media-resources/house-museums-a-20th-century-paradigm>.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To gain a thorough understanding of young adults and their relationship with historic house museums, it is necessary to closely examine existing literature on the subject. While there are few articles written directly dealing with this subject, there are some which provide a foundation. In order to get a full understanding of what goes into programming for young adult audiences at historic house museums, it is imperative to understand how young adults learn; the current state of historic house museums; and some new types of interpretation that are currently being explored at historic house museums.

Young Adult Learners in Historic House Museums

Prior to exploring young adult visitors and historic house museums individually, it is necessary to see how the two fit together. There have not been many articles published on programs for this particular demographic at these sites, but there has been an attempt at expanding the literature. This researcher believes that there is a deficiency of articles published on this subject because programming for this specific audience is a recent phenomenon, so there has not been a sufficient amount of time for researchers to really delve into this subject.

A 2012 Master's thesis entitled "For The Old, Rich And Cultured? Historic House Museums and Their Relationship with Young Adults," written by Emily Carrington at Baylor University, examines the relationship between young adult visitors and historic house museums. Carrington's thesis claims that young adults are not active participants in historic houses. Carrington studied the relationship between these two entities and what can be done

to strengthen it. She found that young adults are interested in participating in historic house museums, but have not found a way for them to do so. Carrington's findings confirmed the theory that the young adult audience is open to visiting, but historic house museums must meet the needs of this demographic.¹² Carrington's work is one of the first studies that was done to show that there is a generation of young adults who are interested in historic house museums, but do not know what they can do to get involved, or where historic house museums are located in their area. In this researcher's opinion, it is imperative for historic house museums to take this piece of literature seriously and to see the need to attract this demographic, and make it easier for them to find out how to get involved.¹³

A 2014 blog post by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) entitled, "Success with a Twist: The Unexpected Benefit of 'Risky' Programming" looks at the results of programs that are specifically designed for young adult visitors.¹⁴ "Historic Happy Hour" held at the Alexander Ramsey House in St. Paul, Minnesota (the focus of this blog post) was a program designed with young adults in mind, but it did not attract just this group. The program involved a lecture with alcoholic drinks and snacks, and the topic for the program changed from month to month. The museum found that while many young adults attended, they also attracted an older audience. This program was one that was of interest to multiple demographics and while the historic house museum felt that it would mainly attract young adults, the older audience who typically attend their programs still participated. The

¹² Carrington, "For the Old, Rich, and Cultured?"

¹³ Carrington.

¹⁴ "Success with a Twist: The Unexpected Benefit of 'Risky' Programming," AASLH Blogs, July 22, 2014, <http://blogs.aaslh.org/success-with-a-twist-the-unexpected-benefit-of-risky-programming/>.

program was an unexpected success; it did not alienate any group from the museum's established audience, but worked to strengthen it.¹⁵

A 2016 leaflet, *Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion into Young Adult Programs* written by AASLH Council members Dina Bailey, Chris Taylor, and Elizabeth Pickard discusses how historic house museums can hold young adult programs that are successful, in terms of attendance, but points out that these programs are not always inclusive of diverse cultural backgrounds. According to the leaflet, inclusion and diversity are an essential part of attracting young adults to historic house museum programs and can increase the reach of the programs through reaching a broader audience.¹⁶

While this leaflet gives some instructions on how to create an inclusive program, the primary purpose of the instructions is to look at other case studies programs and examine how they are not inclusive or diverse enough, which is something young adult audiences seek in historic house museum programming.¹⁷ When talking about inclusivity and diversity in this context, it refers to cultural backgrounds, but it can also refer to knowledge. By having a balance of both of these, the programs are able to reach more people because they can connect with the information being shared on some level and they can learn new perspectives that differ from their own.

Aleah Vinick and Rachel Abbot wrote a technical leaflet for AASLH entitled, *How to Design Programs for Millennials* in 2015. This leaflet examines how millennials are underrepresented at historic sites, both in visitation and membership. Museums have started

¹⁵ "Success with a Twist: The Unexpected Benefit of 'Risky' Programming."

¹⁶ "274: Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion into Young Adult Programs," Resources, July 1, 2016, <http://resource.aaslh.org/view/274-incorporating-diversity-and-inclusion-into-young-adult-programs/>.

¹⁷ "274: Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion into Young Adult Programs."

to target this group with programs to raise their attendance at historic house museums. In this leaflet, there are general instructions and guidelines for historic house museums to follow in order to generate successful programming for this demographic. These instructions and guidelines are to be used as a starting point for the historic house museums. For example, there may be types of programs that are popular with this demographic and then general guidelines on how to create that type of program. While historic house museums can follow the “recipe” for successful programming from other museums, it may not result in the same outcomes. This leaflet confirms that institutions must adapt their programs to meet the needs of their communities and their collections.¹⁸

These few sources show that the topic of programming for young adults in historic house museums is relatively new, and not heavily studied. Carrington’s study demonstrates that the young adults want to be involved in this space, but they do not know how to do so. The two leaflets give directions and a starting place for the historic house museums who want to try to program for young adults, but do not know where to start. Historic house museums, by making programming and other areas accessible to young adults can draw in more of this audience to ensure future stability and prosperity.

Adult Learners

In order to get a better understanding of young adult learning styles, one must look at adult learning in general. Adults in this case are any person over the age of 18; young adults are a subset of this overarching category. One must also examine educational theories, and

¹⁸ “How to Design Programs for Millennials,” Resources, January 11, 2016, <http://resource.aaslh.org/view/how-to-design-programs-for-millennials/>.

how museums currently employ these theories through their programming and exhibitions. Through an examination of these theories, historic house museums can take note of how adults in general learn, since young adults do fall into this category, and supplement this information with the young adult programs that are being created.

Judy Ann Elkins Lowman in her 2015 Master's thesis at California State University, San Bernadino, "Adult Education in a Museum Setting" investigates how museum visits affect adult learners. Her study found that adult visitors absorb new information during their visits, but often do not retain the information unless it is reinforced. Reinforcement of information is hard for museums to accomplish because they have a limited time with visitors and not many visitors come back repeatedly. Lowman believes the best ways for museums to reinforce information is by having visitors reflect on their visit, conducting follow-up interviews with them, and encouraging them to visit the museum again. While this is what Lowman believes to be the best practice to reinforce information, it is a great deal of work for a museum to go through, especially since many visitors are not locals and oftentimes cannot return. Through her study, Lowman found these to be the best way for visitors to retain the information learned at the museum, but she does not show the best ways for museums to accomplish this. These same principles could be applied to the young adult demographic.¹⁹

In the 2002 article, "Motivational factors and the visitor experience: A comparison of three sites" internationally-known visitor experience researchers Dr. Jan Packer and Roy Ballantyne look at motivational factors for visitation and visitors' experience. The article

¹⁹ Judy Lowman, "Adult Education in a Museum Setting Requires Reinforcement," *Electronic Theses, Projects, and Dissertations*, June 1, 2015, <http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd/227>.

studies and compares a museum, art gallery, and aquarium in Queensland, Australia. Visitor expectations, learning opportunities, engagement, and perceptions of experiences are compared across the sites. Packer and Ballantyne suggest that motivational factors are important to the foundation of informal learning. Their study was conducted through questionnaires given to adult visitors; within the article the ages for the adult visitors is not defined. The results of this study show that “learning and discovery goals, capability beliefs, context beliefs, and situational incentives” were important motivational factors to these visitors.²⁰ These factors are what drive visitors to come to museums and galleries and facilitates how they learn. The data obtained for this study was from self-reported answers, and all the data were interpreted by Packer and Ballantyne. These results provide a context for why one may go to museums and how one perceives their learning environment.²¹

A 2016 Master’s thesis by Maria Robinson at University of Washington entitled, “Don’t Forget to Play: Examining what Play looks like in Museums for Adult Visitors” explores what play looks like for adults in museums. Robinson’s study focused on exhibits designed for family learning. The results of Robinson’s study found that adults play in exhibits designed for adults and children, and engage in various types of play. Adults were found to be “typically favoring body/movement play.”²² Robinson also found that adults often engaged in these types of exhibits because adults do not often get opportunities to play. Play reminds adults of being a child and can be exhilarating and relaxing. Even though Robinson’s study was conducted in family learning exhibits, the study has the potential to be

²⁰ Jan Packer and Roy Ballantyne, “Motivational Factors and the Visitor Experience: A Comparison of Three Sites,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 45, no. 3 (July 1, 2002): 183–98, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2151-6952.2002.tb00055.x>.

²¹ Packer and Ballantyne.

²² Maria Robinson, “Don’t Forget to Play: Examining What Play Looks like in Museums for Adult Visitors” 2016, <https://digital.lib.washington.edu:443/researchworks/handle/1773/36370>.

adapted to historic house museums. Recently many museums are exploring ways of allowing visitors to touch and interact with objects, in essence, a form of play. If historic house museums utilize family and play learning, historic house museums can ensure more visitors of diverse demographics. Her study aimed to prove that adults like to play too, but it may come across in different ways than traditionally thought.²³

Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer, et al. in *Adult Museum Programs: Designing Meaningful Experiences* describes the best way to design a program for adult museum visitors. This book is based on the premise that programs can have a significant impact upon adult lives. To give insight into adult programming that museums offer and their importance, the book is written through the lens of many different perspectives. The authors study adult-learning experts, museum education specialists, course instructors, and program participants' views on each of the programs. These perspectives offer a clearer picture of how the programming affects each person. This study was qualitative in nature in order to capture the stories of the people in a realistic way. The results of this study showed what adult programs are offered, and how the instructors are selected, the barriers in the programming, and what makes a great adult program. Some barriers for successful programming that came out of this study are: educators view themselves as unable to improve adult experiences, education and marketing departments do not communicate, and the staff does not advantageously use museum resources. These barriers are things that can be worked on and solved within the museum, so that it is no longer a barrier to programming. Sachatello-Sawyer, et al. found that successful programs are the ones that change lives by getting the participants to continue to want to learn new things and attend more activities to pursue that knowledge. Through this study,

²³ Robinson.

Sachatello-Sawyer, et al. found that 94% of museums surveyed offer some kind of adult programming, with the numbers continually increasing. There were 110 museums surveyed for this study, which all belonged to the American Association of Museums (AAM), or the Association of Science-Technology Centers.²⁴

Young Adult Learners

While adult and young adult visitors experiencing and enjoy learning similarly, there are some major differences that museums must take into consideration. Young adult visitors, as described in Emily Carrington's Master's thesis, "For the Old, Rich, and Cultured? Historic House Museums and Their Relationship with Young Adults," are defined as visitors from the ages of 18-35.²⁵ In order to learn how to engage with these visitors, it is first necessary to examine educational theories for this demographic. After examining the theories, it is necessary to explore how museums are currently teaching young adult visitors.

In 2012, Ariel Beaujot who at the time was a graduate assistant at the Denver Art Museum, published an article entitled, "Creativity, Community, and A Dash of the Unexpected: Adventures in engaging young adult audiences" which describes how the Denver Art Museum served that demographic. Young adults were one of the underserved audiences for the museum and the staff was working to plan programming that attracted and engaged this audience. The art museum created programs with community and social aspects to draw in young adult visitors. One such program was a tour series that was given by experts

²⁴ Bonnie Sachatello-Sawyer et al., *Adult Museum Programs: Designing Meaningful Experiences* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002).

²⁵ Carrington, "For the Old, Rich, and Cultured?"

in fields other than art. Their art tours were given by neurologists, cartographers, and chefs from the perspective of those fields. This was an extremely popular program because there was a more well-rounded view of the art presented to the viewer, and it was something that visitors would not otherwise experience.

Another popular program that the Denver Art Museum offered was called “The Collective.” This was an online program and was a place where all of the young adult programming was listed, but it was an interactive space as well. The website functioned as a combination of sites like Twitter and Facebook, which allowed visitors to interact with each other and the museum as well. The popularity of “The Collective” is attributed to different expertise from the museum and the visitors both, allowing visitors to gain different perspectives on an artifact and learn that there is more than one way to interpret a collection of objects.²⁶ This program was successful because it utilized a similar platform to social media that the young adults are familiar with, which aided in their easy navigation and use of this program.

Young adult learning is very similar to that of adult learning because they are a subset of that demographic. Something that sets young adult learning apart from adult learning in general is the need to include a social and community aspect to their learning. Another piece that sets their learning apart is learning about an object from multiple perspectives. Both ideas are shown through the Denver Art Museum project.

²⁶ Ariel Beaujot, “Balade Blanche: Putting New Museum Theory into Practice,” *Curator: The Museum Journal* 58, no. 1 (January 1, 2015): 17–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cura.12095>.

Future of Historic House Museums

The current state of historic house museums shows that they face a huge problem – a decline in visitors. Stemming from this problem, historic house museums are dealing with insufficient financial resources and a lack earned revenue in many cases. There are a few solutions that have been proposed by museum professionals to solve the visitorship problem, but none are discussed in detail or at length by these professionals because that is not the focus of their literature. While they are not thoroughly discussed, it provides a starting point for historic house museums to look at to begin to determine how to increase their own visitorship.

During the 1998 Athenaeum of Philadelphia Symposium, John Groff presented a talk entitled, “To Thine Own Self Be True: The Small Historic House Museum in the 21st Century.”²⁷ Groff spoke about the future of smaller historic house museums. He looked at the history of historic house museums and how there came to be so many in one area of Philadelphia. The first historic house museum in Germantown, Philadelphia was the Stenton Mansion, built between 1723 and 1730, which was established as a museum in 1899. Following this museum, several historic house museums were established in that greater area, with there being 175 at the time of this speech. Most of the historic house museums that were established had upper and upper-middle class women who were leading the charge to save these sites.

Groff proposes three types of classification for the Philadelphia area’s historic house museums. The first type are sites of high integrity which have original furnishings, historic

²⁷ “American House Museums in the 21st Century: An Athenæum of Philadelphia Symposium,” accessed February 8, 2017, <http://www.philaathenaeum.org/hmuseum/groff.htm>.

landscape, and documentation of the site. These museums are ones that tend to have the highest visitorship and can claim greater authenticity. For this type, he cites historic house museums like Cliveden in Philadelphia.²⁸ Cliveden is in Germantown and was the house of Benjamin Chew (1722-1810), a prominent political figure in Philadelphia and Pennsylvania overall. This site has original furnishings and landscaping which is why this is a perfect example for this first category. It is known that this is what the site looked like because there are documents of the site from the time that Chew lived there.

The second type are sites that have some of the aforementioned elements, but not all of them. The Highlands in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania, built in 1796, and the Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion in Germantown Philadelphia, built in 1859, were what Groff cites as examples of this type. The Highlands are a great example of this type because of the significant Georgian architecture, but the house itself is unfurnished, but has examples of arts & crafts from that era. The Ebenezer Maxwell Mansion is a wonderful example of a Victorian site, but it is not furnished entirely with original furnishings. With the second type of historic sites, the site can still have an air of authenticity because they do have documentation of the site from the time period, or some original furnishings which allows the visitors and the sites to remain connected to the family that lived there.²⁹

The third type mentioned are sites that are of marginal importance or integrity. The museum that Groff lists as an example of this type is Loudoun Mansion in Philadelphia, built in 1801. Loudoun Mansion falls into this category because it has lost much of its authenticity due to a fire, which destroyed any original furnishings or works that were inside. With this

²⁸ “American House Museums in the 21st Century: An Athenæum of Philadelphia Symposium.”

²⁹ “American House Museums in the 21st Century: An Athenæum of Philadelphia Symposium.”

last classification, there is not as much visitorship and little authenticity. How the site is classified depends on which category the historic house museum falls into. These categories are important to keep in mind when thinking about historic house museums. Most of the time when people think about historic house museums they think about the first or second classification. Not many think about the third classification; this researcher believes that it is imperative to remember all of these types can be viable museums.³⁰

As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, in her book, *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America's Historic Houses*, Donna Harris speaks to the problems historic house museums face. Included in her book is methodology to assist museums in preserving the museum's future. Harris's suggestions and methodologies are shown through a series of fictional scenarios based on real-world problems. These scenarios provide a problem, then examines how to alleviate the problem step-by-step. An example of this is the fictional Brown House. The Brown House board of directors are aging and there is no one in place to take over when they retire. The proposed solution for this scenario is to make a concentrated effort to recruit a younger generation to the organization as volunteers and to make them feel welcome. By inviting the new generation to the house and making them feel like donating their time is worthwhile, the young volunteers will feel appreciated. Through gradually incorporating these new volunteers, eventually asking them to take on leadership roles will be less daunting. Not only does Harris provide suggestions for house museums to implement, but the book also shows that it is possible for museums to follow the models that she has put forth.³¹

³⁰ "American House Museums in the 21st Century: An Athenæum of Philadelphia Symposium."

³¹ Harris, *New Solutions for House Museums*.

Aging board members are not the only problem facing historic house museums, raising sufficient funds for the museums is another problem. In the 2010 article, “Bridging the Divide: Mission and Revenue in Museum Programming,” Margaret Hughes explores how museums in general can balance programming that is based on their mission while also raising funds for their museum. The article looks at how the museums chosen for case studies select programs that are profitable, and what lessons can be learned from these experiences. The article also mentions that not all the fundraising programs are directly related to the museum’s other programming or mission, but it does allow for the museum to expand their programming reach. Many museums have had to resort to raising funds in ways not directly related to the organization’s mission.³²

Hughes shows that while it is important for museums to retain integrity, for some museums the only way they can raise sufficient funds is through non-mission related avenues. This is because all of their mission-based programs do not bring in enough revenue to sustain the museum. While these non-mission related activities may bring in sufficient funding that the museums may need to continue to operate, there are some tax penalties that come about because of this programming. Any programs that are not related directly to the mission of the museum (or charitable organization) are subject to federal income taxes. This means that any income that comes in through these programs must be taxed, even though the organization itself is actually tax-exempt. Since the program does not fit under the mission, it is seen as unrelated income and is subject to taxes as if this was a non-tax exempt company. As discussed in the Hughes article, and as this researcher has learned through a visit, one

³² Margaret W. Hughes, “Bridging the Divide: Mission and Revenue in Museum Programming,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 35, no. 3 (2010): 279–88.

museum that is facing this conflict is Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia. Eastern State's "Terror Behind the Walls" occurs around Halloween every year, in which the 19th century prison is transformed into a large-scale haunted house. This event does not correlate with the museum's mission, but it is a widely successful event that helps to keep the institution running. It provides about 60% of their operating revenue. The conflict between the non-mission related event and the integrity of the museum is something that the institution struggles with, but is one way that the museum can promote itself. The Hughes article stresses that museums must remember that one of their main functions is to serve the public and should seek funds through any means in order accomplish this. While this is the case, the museums should try to seek funds that do support their mission through grants and similar avenues. Also, this article points out that these non-related fundraisers are sometimes the only way the museums can expand their programming and outreach.³³

The Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations, also known as the STePs Program, offered by AASLH helps organizations improve best practices for museums. This program helps over 800 small and medium-sized history organizations plan a secure future. It is a three-tiered process which allows organizations to assess their current situation and find the best way to improve. The program focuses on "Mission, Vision, & Governance; Audience; Interpretation; Stewardship of Collections; Stewardship of Historic Structures & Landscapes; and Management." By improving the practice of historic sites, programming can be effectively and successfully implemented. It is recommended that historic house museums follow the STePs program because it can help unstable museums secure their public position

³³ Hughes, "Bridging the Divide."

for the future. The program has helped to revitalized older museums and give them best practices for the future, and it can do the same for many others.³⁴

New Interpretation for Historic House Museums

While the literature in the previous section primarily looked at the current state of historic house museums and predicted their future if they did not change, there were a few solutions that were mentioned, but there were none that were explored thoroughly. This section explores solutions for historic house museums to have a more profitable and engaging future. These solutions are new ways of interpreting the traditional historic house, which does have the potential to increase visitorship.

“Chasing Authenticity: Re-Examining the Authentic Experience in Historic House Museums” written by Kelsie Torreni looks at “authentic” experiences. The founder of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, Ann Pamela Cunningham (1816-1875), set the precedent in 1853 for historic house museums by saying that historic sites should be preserved as is. While at the time it seemed like a good idea, it could be a “death sentence” for historic house museums today. There are some museums clinging to this traditional view because that is the way things have always been run, but there are also many realizing that changes need to be made in order to bring in a stronger visitation. Torreni explains that the new expectation for historic house museums is a fluid authenticity that provides a deep exploration of the voices and stories. Never changing from traditional historic house museum models is dangerous.

³⁴ “What Do StEPs Members Have to Say About the Program? | Tools,” accessed March 15, 2017, <http://tools.aaslh.org/what-do-steps-members-have-to-say-about-the-program/>.

While this model may mostly work for Mount Vernon, which has not changed apart from introducing a new visitor center, not every historic house has the same type of visibility and recognition as this site. Mount Vernon has been able to cling to this traditional model because it is a site that draws in many visitors because it is the house of an important figure in American history; other historic house museums do not have someone who is that well-known or important to American history, so the public in general does not have a great desire to visit. Historic house museums which fail to explore new ways to engage visitors will continue to be unable to attract and retain new visitors. The original model for historic house museums is no longer sustainable and museums need to find new ways to survive.³⁵

The article “On Interpretation and Historic Sites” written by Suzanne Schell in 1985, focuses on how historic sites are interpreted for the public. The definition for a historic site in this article is broad; historic sites can be “historic houses, living history farms, architectural parks, restored villages, folk parks, and open-air museums.”³⁶ There are three categories of historic sites that are mentioned and discussed in this article. These categories are “the documentary site associated with an historical event or person; the representative site depicting a period of history or a way of life; and the aesthetic site displaying exceptional examples of furnishings in period rooms.”³⁷ All of the types of sites she mentions share many of the same characteristics that relate to their environment, collection, and interpretation. While they do have similar characteristics, each of the aforementioned types of historic sites have a slightly different way of interpreting their history.

³⁵ Kelsie Torrenti, “Chasing Authenticity: Re-Examining the Authentic Experience in Historic House Museums”. 1-18.

³⁶ Suzanne B. Schell, “On Interpretation and Historic Sites,” *The Journal of Museum Education* 10, no. 3 (1985): 6–10.

³⁷ Schell. 6-10.

The most common way that historic houses interpret their history is through static rooms which visitors are not able to fully explore due to barriers that are put up in the space. This is in contrast to living history museums which immerse the visitors in a given time period and they can see demonstrations of life during that time. Living history interpretation is fully immersive; the docents working in these museums are in period dress; they talk as if they are from that time period; and they do activities as they would have been done during the specific time period being explored by the museum. Both models have their pros and cons, but visitors tend to like living history more because they are able to be fully immersed in the world and time of the site that they are visiting. The museums that are discussed throughout Schell's article are not ones that can stay complacent with how they are running currently; there needs to be changes to make them successful. This article also speaks to museums having to broaden or change their interpretation in order to gain more visitors and stay relevant.³⁸

The 2002 book, *Interpreting Historic House Museums* written by Jessica Foy Donnelly focuses on how times have changed for historic house museums and what these museums can do to stay relevant. Throughout this book, Donnelly suggests historic house museums must consider their history and how it applies to contemporary issues. While their site's history may be familiar, it is imperative that historic house museums interpret their information in new ways. Donnelly's book explores successful interpretation changes in historic house museums and how they have led to an increase in visitors. Monticello is an example of embracing change due to new facts that came to light. When the results of the Thomas Jefferson-Sally Hemings DNA tests were revealed in 1998, the staff at Monticello

³⁸ Schell.

adapted their interpretation to encompass this new information and they did so successfully. These DNA tests were important because they were done to see if Thomas Jefferson was possibly the father of Sally Hemings's (one of his slaves) children. It was found that it is very likely that Thomas Jefferson was the father of her children. While there is not conclusive evidence that Jefferson was in fact the father, these results were important to take into consideration while interpreting information, which the museum did successfully.³⁹

Another helpful tool from Donnelly's book is her museum self-analysis. This part of the book provides historic house museums tools to help take a closer look at their institution, and determine what they can do to make their site interpretation and collection more relevant to the public. Donnelly provides a resource inventory that assists historic house museums inspect and reflect on things such as their collections, visitor services, current interpretation, staffing, and audiences. By doing a study of their inventory, it can lead to an increase in the appeal to more visitors and it will ultimately help the organization.⁴⁰

Types of New Interpretation

In the previous section, the solutions that are offered are general ideas on how to improve historic house museums. This section goes one step further and gives examples of types of new interpretation that have been discussed to bring in more visitors. Many of these proposed solutions call for an immersive experience. Some museums fall short of that category and others call for another type of interpretation.

³⁹ Jessica Foy Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002).

⁴⁰ Donnelly. 45.

Immersion

One of the most well-known books on the subject of reorienting historic house museums toward the future is *The Anarchist Guide to Historic House Museums*. This book, written by Frank Vagnone and Deborah Ryan in 2013, explores how historic house museums can evolve to provide a more accessible and interesting view of life in their period of interpretation. Traditional historic house museums depict the story and life of one person who lived there statically. What Ryan and Vagnone suggest is that historic house museums demonstrate what family life was like at the site, as well as making connections to the visitors. Another aspect that connects with this is that historic house museums should be showing all parts of the house, including those that are typically not shown like the basement and the attic. These parts of the house are often not shown because they are not thought to be an important part of the house; oftentimes, historic house museums may also use these spaces for storage. While this may have been the primary purpose of these rooms during the lifetime of the person who lived at the house, that may not always be the case. Depending on the historic house museum, the attic or the basement could have been used to house people, like slaves, during the time of the family on which the museum is focused. If that is the case, not showing these rooms is saying that the story of these people is not as important. Through showing the family living quarters and the other parts of the house, there can be a full and well-rounded interpretation of the people who lived there, from the family to the slaves and servants who all lived in the house. The visit becomes more meaningful for visitors when they can personally connect across the generations that separate them from the time period of the house. These changes are things that can increase the visitation rates for the museums. Ryan and Vagnone believe that putting visitors in a more authentic version of the time period

and household, and allowing them to touch and see other parts of the house and the collection, gives them an enriched experience that will stick with them for far longer. Visitors often feel disconnected from the people they are learning about at the historic house museums, but the experiences that are outlined in this book aim to decrease this disconnect.⁴¹

Alevtina Naumova wrote the 2015 article, “‘Touching’ the Past: Investigating Lived Experiences of Heritage in Living History Museums,” which looks at how to change the traditional house museum into something more “sensational” for visitors. Naumova observes how living history can create a “sensory sphere” for visitors. The approach in the paper suggests that living history is multi-sensory and engages the whole body in the experience. Making a visitor’s experience multi-sensory encourages them to share their own experience and make the past and their experience communal. One way the paper suggests to make it multi-sensory is to fully immerse the visitor in the environment. Visitors are immersed in the culture and time that the living history museum is set in and they are able to easily interact with people and items. In a traditional historic house museum, visitors are often not allowed in the rooms and they cannot touch anything. By providing opportunities for visitors to utilize their multiple senses, they gain a better understanding of the space and the content of the space. Immersing the visitor in the context of the time period and providing examples of how life was in that time, enhances a visitor’s experience and broadens understanding of the period and historic house museum.⁴²

⁴¹ Deborah Ryan and Franklin Vagnone, “Reorienting Historic House Museums: An Anarchists Guide,” *ARCC Conference Repository* 0, no. 0 (July 16, 2014), <http://www.arcc-journal.org/index.php/repository/article/view/255>.

⁴² Alevtina Naumova. “Touching” the Past: Investigating Lived Experiences of Heritage in Living History Museums.” *International Journal of the Inclusive Museum*. 7 ¾ (February 15, 2015): 1-8.

The 1989 article, “Open-Air Museums and Historic Sites” written by Debra Ann Reid focuses on historic landscapes and their interpretation. Open-air historic sites are unique and do not have a traditional collection, they often are more about the building, or collection of buildings, than a collection that would be housed inside one of the buildings. Although the landscape is important to the site, many museums do not focus their efforts on the landscaping. The study done for this article identified the difficulties faced in interpreting landscapes because it can be difficult to achieve the complete concept of what the site looked like at the time. Restoring the landscape to its original appearance gives a more dynamic and in-depth context for the visitors. Many sites are attempting to return to the original look of their site, but are having difficulty getting to that point because they do not have the resources available to complete this task. If the sites can return to its original look, it adds another level of authenticity and provides the visitors with a more complete and complex understanding of the site. As stated in the article, while it does not seem that landscape is important to the interpretation of the location, it is an important part of these types of sites. Open-air sites rely on the landscape to help tell the story of the time period and the family that lived there. This article explores the options on how these sites can accomplish this and describes the importance of these sites.⁴³

Other Types Of Interpretation

In 2001, there was a prototype of an electronic guidebook that was made and tested in historic house museums. It was designed by Allison Woodruff, Paul Aoki, Amy Hurst, and

⁴³ Debra Ann Reid, “Open-Air Museums and Historic Sites,” *APT Bulletin* 21, no. 2 (1989): 21–27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1504249>.

Margaret Szymanski. The design and the implications of the guidebook were discussed in the article, “The Guidebook, the Friend, and the Room: Visitor Experience in a Historic House,” written by Woodruff, et al. The visitors are able to construct their own experience through the guidebook and it is highly interactive. The guidebook, which was available on a Personal Digital Assistant or PDA, gave the visitor a collection of imagemaps, which is a photograph of an entire wall in the historic house. With these pictures are a brief description or an audio clip of that information. Visitors were allowed to select how they would interact with the guidebook and the people around them. Since there was no guidance for the visitors, the creators were able to step back and observe how the visitors used the guidebook. What they found was that the interactivity of each visitor was split between the guidebook, the group, and the house itself. It was found that most of the visitors took advantage of all three components in a variety of combinations. Although the technology, a PDA, which was used in this specific study is outdated, it could be updated and adapted to fit the needs of historic houses today. This guidebook could be adapted into an app that would be available on iPads or as an app for visitors to download on their cell phones.⁴⁴

In 2014, the National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites and the National Park Service published an article entitled, “Revealing Women’s History: Best Practices at Historic Sites.” This article looked at five case studies on how to best preserve and interpret women’s history. Through these case studies it is shown how important it is to show women’s history because all historic house museums are connected to women’s history in some way. They can engage an entire portion of the population by telling these stories. The interpretive

⁴⁴ Allison Woodruff et al., “The Guidebook, the Friend, and the Room: Visitor Experience in a Historic House,” in *CHI '01 Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, CHI EA '01 (New York, NY, USA: ACM, 2001), 273–274, <https://doi.org/10.1145/634067.634229>.

resources and programs that are offered at the five case study sites vary, but they are all interactive in some aspect, which has the potential to draw in more visitors. The article aims to point out that it is important to understand that women have contributed to, or been a part of history. By following the examples outlined in the article, historic house museums will be able to show a side of history that has often been ignored by expanding their scope of interpretation.⁴⁵

All of these types of interpretation are new ways and suggestions that historic house museums can use to draw in more visitors. Most of these solutions are immersive in some aspect, but there are other solutions that are possible to use. Looking at these examples can help historic house museums see how updates and changes have been successfully implemented.

⁴⁵ “Revealing Women’s History: Best Practices at Historic Sites,” accessed March 16, 2017, <http://www.ncwhs.org/index.php/projects/publications/150-revealing-womens-history-best-practices-at-historic-sites>.

Chapter 3: Methodology

There were two surveys designed to conduct this thesis research. The first was sent to select historic house museums within the mid-Atlantic region, while the second was sent to young adults who attended programs, or lived within that region. The first survey sent to historic house museums asked questions to determine whether a museum was offering young adult programming and if so, what the programs were. If the museum was not offering a program, they were asked why they believed the museum was not offering a program for this demographic. These questions were asked in order to determine how many historic house museums are programming for young adults, as opposed to how many were not. These questions also were used to gauge why young adult programming was not being offered. Another component of this survey was to determine if there were any programs not designed for young adults that were drawing them in. It also asked museums if their programs were successful and how the museum defined success. These questions were asked so that it could be determined if there were young adults attending any other programming, as well as to begin to define success. Finally, the survey asked if there were any colleges near the museum and if so how many there were to determine if there was a fairly large number of young adults in the area.

The second survey asked young adults if they had attended a program at a historic house museum before, and if so what the program was. The survey also asked if the person thought the program they attended was designed for young adults or not. These questions were asked in order to determine who had attended historic house programming. Along with this, the question about whether or not they thought that they had attended a young adult program was used so that it could be determined if the young adult's perceptions matched

that of the museums where they attended programming. This survey also sought to find out of those surveyed, if they would be more likely to attend a program specifically designed for young adults. It also asked about museum engagement, if they would attend another program at a historic house museum, and if they would consider becoming a member of a historic house museum where they have attended a program. These questions were asked to gauge the interest for these young adults in returning to historic house museum programming or even membership. Perhaps the most important question in this survey was what other types of programming historic house museums could offer to draw in young adults. This question was the most important because the answers from this question are some ideas that historic house museums could use to create programs for this demographic. Along with this use, the answers to this question could also be compared to that of the historic house museums to see if the programming that they are offering is what the demographic said they were interested in.

The first survey was created as a Google Form and sent out to historic house museums to be filled out. To distribute this survey effectively, it was posted on the Small Museum Association Facebook Page, the Historic House Museum Consortium of Washington, D.C. Facebook Page, and the AAM Historic House Museum Network Facebook Page. Through these pages, the survey was distributed to historic house museums in the following states: Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, South Carolina, and New Hampshire. Not many historic house museums responded on the three Facebook pages, so additionally an email was sent out to other historic house museums. To obtain the emails for the historic house museums in the Mid-Atlantic region, this researcher did a preliminary search on Google for a list of historic house museums in each state, and

then this researcher went to each museum's webpage to ensure it fit within the definition of a historic house museum. Each museum that did fit the definition was sent an email containing the survey link.

To complement these surveys, a second survey was administered to young adult visitors attending programs designed for them at historic house museums via an in-person survey and a Google Form survey. This researcher spoke with a few historic house museums including the Chadds Ford Historical Society, the Northampton County Historical & Genealogical Society, and Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites, who agreed to distribute this survey to their program participants and others on their mailing list. Due to this researcher's involvement in programs at Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites, the emails that were collected at the programs were used to send out the survey to those who attended the programs. Despite having multiple museums sending out the survey to their program attendees, there was not a large number response from young adults to the survey. To help improve numbers, this researcher shared the survey on her personal Facebook, so that it would reach more people. From there the survey posts was shared multiple times by this researcher's Facebook friends. Despite this, there was still not a large number of young adult who filled out the survey; at this point there were approximately 26 surveys filled out. This researcher then sent the survey to a professor at Cedar Crest College, where this researcher attended for her undergraduate degree, to distribute to their museums studies class. Due to the survey being distributed in these ways, the data have the possibility of being skewed toward younger people within this demographic. These surveys helped to show if the participants find these programs to be successful, and if they match museum perception of what success is for a program.

The research that was done for this study were limited by some factors out of the control of this researcher. One of these factors was the distribution and completion of young adult surveys. This researcher tried to distribute her young adult survey to several young adult programs at historic house museums, but there were only three museums that agreed to distribute the survey in some capacity. While the survey was distributed through these channels, it was out of the control of the researcher how many people filled out the survey. Another factor that limited this study was the time period, the surveying period only encompassed a few months. It is probable that if the survey period was longer the number of respondents for the surveys would have increased.

Chapter 4: Results and Findings

Through the collection of surveys from both historic house museums and young adults, it is important to examine the results of each of the surveys separately. First there will be a closer examination of the results of the Historic House Museum survey, followed by an examination of the Young Adult survey results.

Historic House Museum Survey

To better understand where all of the historic house museums that responded to this survey are located in the United States, the state where the site is located was collected. After finding the location, it was important to have a base understanding of how evenly, or unevenly, spread out the sites are throughout the different states looked at in this study. It was found that a majority of the historic house museums who answered the survey were from Pennsylvania (28%), New York (29%), and Virginia (19%).

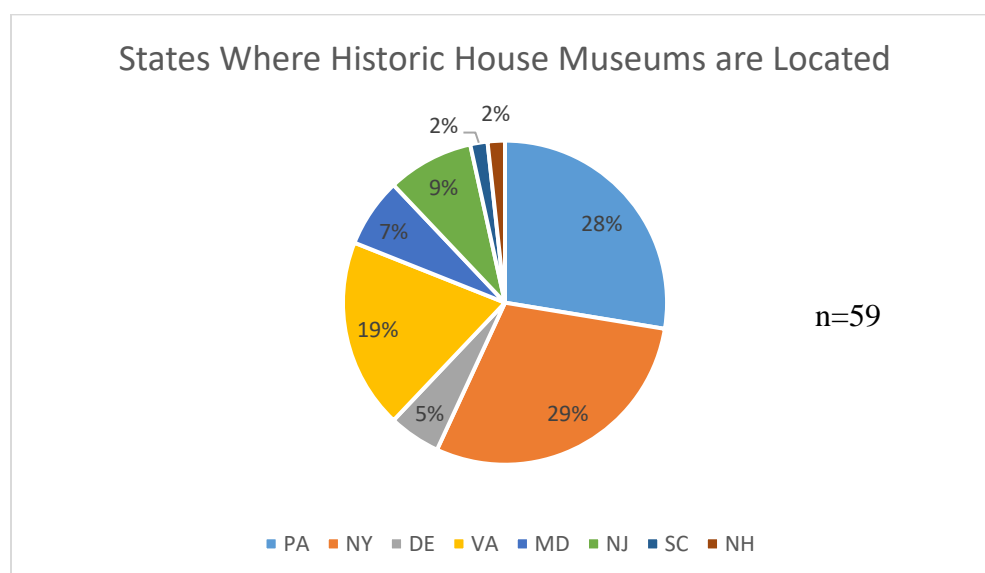


Figure 1. States Where Historic House Museums Surveyed are Located

Following this question, the time period of the historic house museum was included to get a better background on the type of the museums that are a part of this study. The majority of the museums' focus included the 19th century (63%). While this is the main focus of many of the museums, there are representatives of a number of the other time periods. The percentage for this question does not equal 100 percent because a museum could fall into multiple categories.

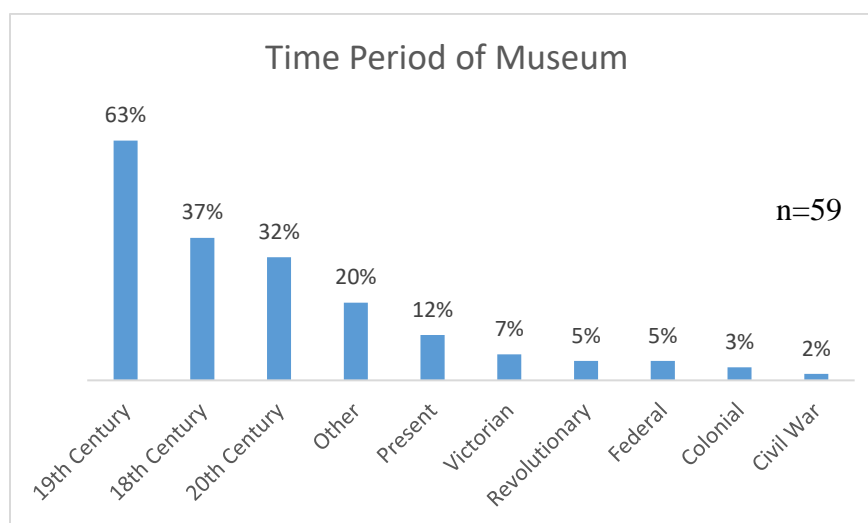


Figure 2. Time Period of the Historic House Museum

The next question that was asked of the historic house museums was the position of the person filling out the survey. There were a variety of people who filled out the survey, but the majority of the people who filled it out were executive directors (31%). The answer could fall into more than one category allowing the total percentage to equal more than 100 percent.

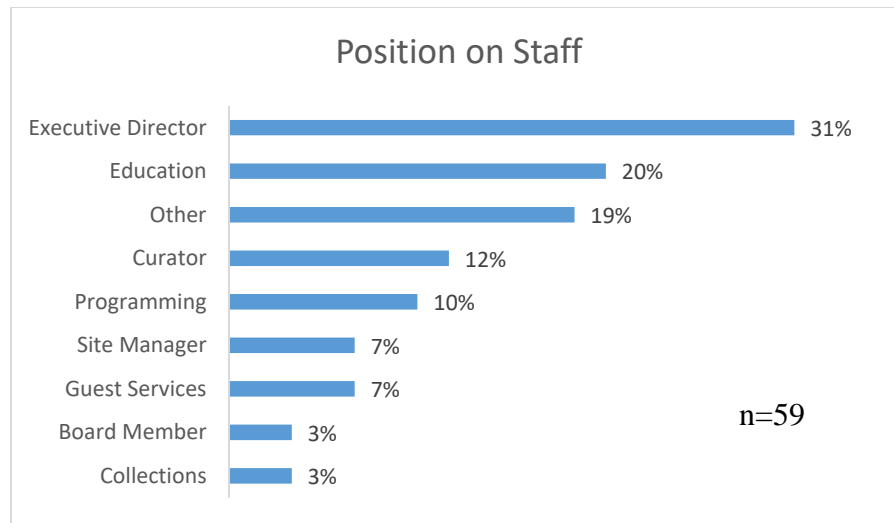


Figure 3. Position on Staff of Respondent

After these establishing questions at the beginning of the survey, the first question that was asked was if the historic house museum has young adult programming. A majority of historic house museums (64%), say that they do offer this type of programming.

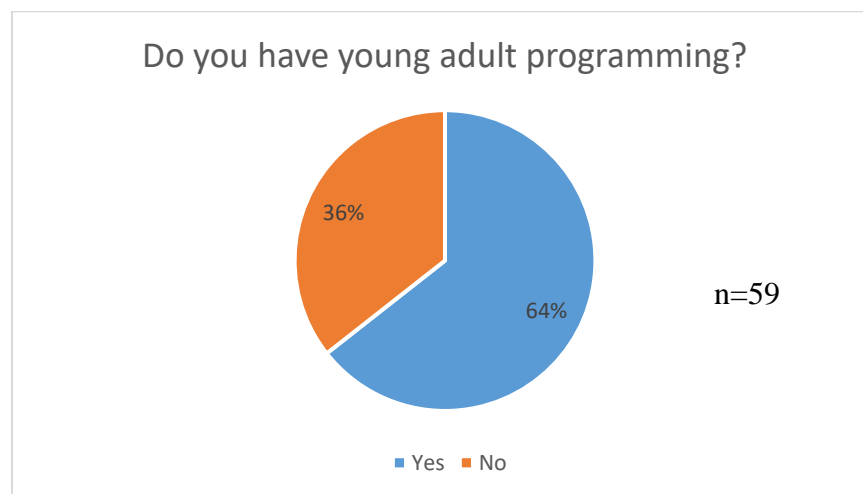


Figure 4. Do you have young adult programming?

After establishing whether or not the museums had young adult programming, they were then asked to identify what type of programs they were offering to this demographic. A complete list of these programs is included in Appendix A. Some examples of the programs that were included are a “Fashion Show,” “Pop-up escape room,” “afternoon teas,” “Hamilton Tour Takeover,” “Tuesday Tunes, an evening roots music program with food trucks on our grounds,” and “wine and cider gardens.” There were many unique programs that were being offered which did not allow them to fall into one category, thus making the “Other” category 29 percent of the responses. Some of the programs that fall into the Other category are “vintage hair tutorials,” “#schenectadydoesntcuck photo exhibition,” and “an Apprenticeship program.” Throughout these categories, there are some that are not surprising offerings because that is what the go-to example is for this demographic. Some of these programs include “Goat yoga,” which falls into the Yoga category; “Tavern Talks (a hands-on adult education series),” which falls into the Happy Hour and Lectures categories; “museum at night, with live music,” which falls into the After Hours and Concerts categories; “Jane Austen Tours,” which falls into the Tours category; and “hands-on restoration workshops,” which falls into the Classes category. The responses to this question could fall into more than one category which is why the total percentage equals more than 100 percent.

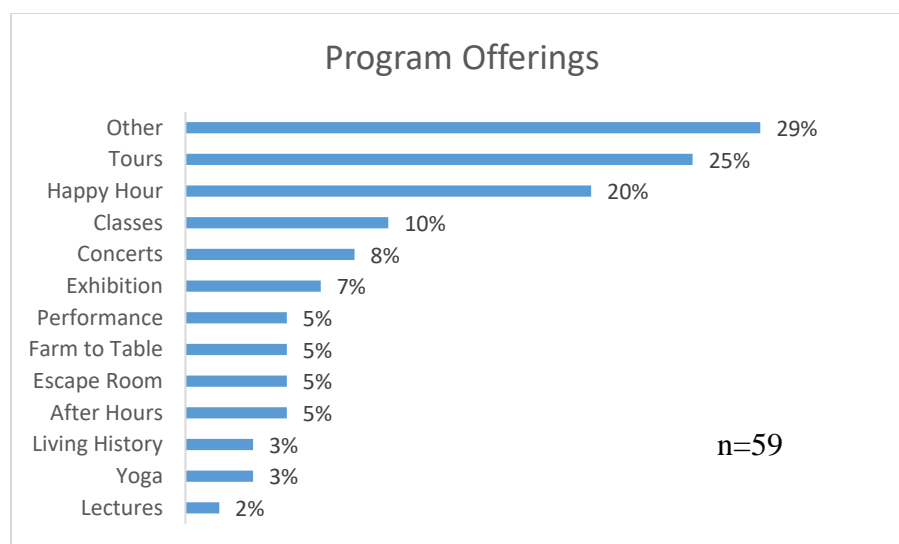


Figure 5. Young Adult Program Offerings

While this previous question was about what types of programs were being offered for young adults, the following question asked why some museums were not offering these programs. The biggest reason that was offered by the historic house museums was that they wanted their programs to be for all ages (17%), not just one particular demographic. One other reason that was important to note was the lack of staff to conduct these types of programs (7%). Another interesting reason that was pointed out in this question was that some museums (5%) offer closed programs for this demographic. Closed programs mean that they do not necessarily benefit the entire public, like internships. The Adult category means that the program is for adults in general. An example from this category, which also ties into the family category is from Agecroft Hall & Gardens in Virginia, “We advertise our events as family friendly or for adults only. We do not specify ‘young adult’.” The total percentage for this question does not equal 100 percent because not all respondents answered this question.

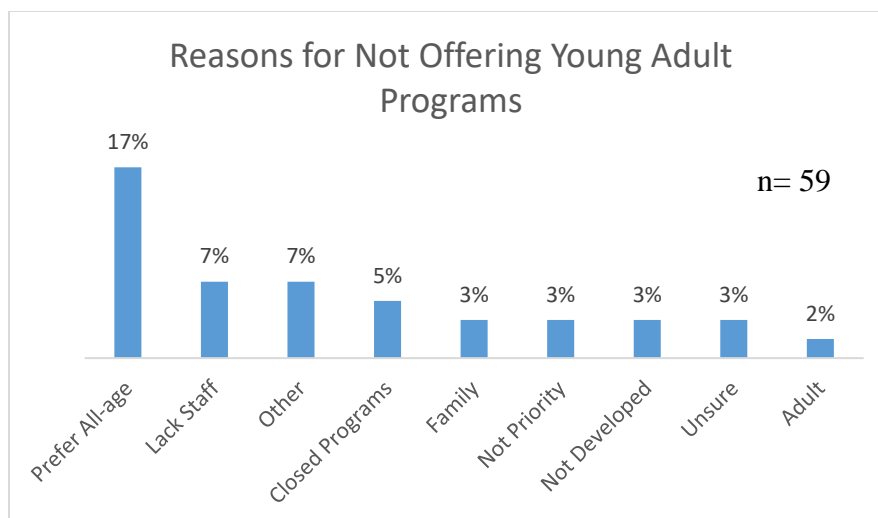


Figure 6. Reasons for Not Offering Young Adult Programs.

The next question asked was if it was important to have programming for young adult audiences. An overwhelming majority, 95 percent, of historic house museums answered yes to this question. The 5 percent that answered no to this question had all listed that their programming was for all-ages, and they do not focus on target demographics.

Following that question, the historic house museums were then asked why it was important or not to program for young adult audiences. Since an overwhelming majority answered positively to the previous question, the responses to this open-ended question reflect that. The long answers that the museums provided fell into five categories: Future, Engagement, Donors, Educate Entire Public, and Other. The total percentage for this question equaled more than 100 percent because the responses could fall into more than one category. The Future category is filled with answers that show the museums believe “[t]hey are the next generation of museum-goers...also raising the next generation of museum-goers and preservationists....” Engagement features answers that focus on how to get young adults

involved and interested in learning about the history. An example from this category, from the 1890 House Museum of New York is, “We want to excite the next generation and have them engage with history, especially local history and their local museum.” The category of donors includes museums that answered that the young adult audience are future donors. The Other category is fairly large, but it has a variety of answers which include answers such as “We would love to do more targeted programming to the 18-35 age group, but are not able to do that just yet, due to current resource levels.” and “Important to provide programming to all ages.”

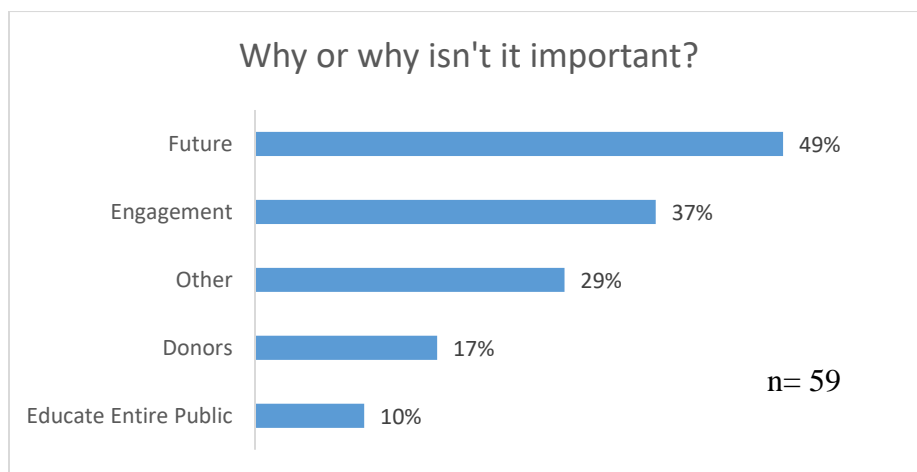


Figure 7. *Why or why isn't it important to program for young adults?*

The next important thing to establish in this survey was how these organizations define success for a program. There is not a universal answer to what is success, so through this question, this researcher hoped to find commonalities that could be used to help create a definition of program success. The biggest factor in success is attendance; 46 percent of historic house museums use that in their definition of success. The other factors that are included in the definitions of success are: Feedback (17%), Education (12%), Profit (12%),

Repeat Visit (10%), Social Media (5%), Membership (8%), New Volunteers (3%) and then Other (17%). The answers to this question could fall into more than one category which is why it equals more than 100 percent. While attendance is a great determining factor in success, feedback was also important to many museums. Feedback in this sense means that the museums receive good reviews and hear positive notes and thoughts on the programs that are being offered. Education is also important to many museums; this means that the museums are looking to see if the visitors have learned anything from their visit to the program and the museum. One of the categories that was important to some museums was social media; with this category, museums wanted to see young adults posting about their experience on social media, liking their pages, and following the museum on social media. The Other category includes answers like “younger volunteers” and “Draws in new demographic....”

The question that followed the definition of success, was whether or not the historic house programs offered were successful by that definition that was just provided. Not all of the historic house museums answered this question, so the total percentage does not equal 100. Eighty-one percent of the house museums surveyed answered yes, while 0 percent answered no to this question.

To better understand the success or failure of programming to young adults, or just programming in general was to see how these programs were being marketed. The largest response was Social Media, with 56 percent of house museums saying that they market their programs using those various platforms. While that was the largest, the historic house museums still rely on other and older forms of marketing, such as newspapers and word-of-mouth. While Social Media can be useful to reach a large number of people, it cannot be

forgotten that things like word-of-mouth have great power to bring in more visitors and attendees. The total percentage for this question equals more than 100 percent because the responses could fall into more than one category.

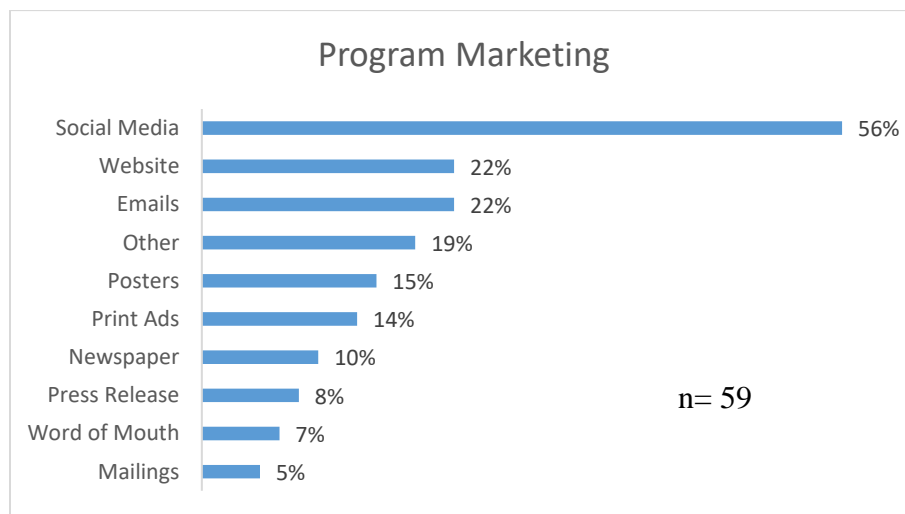


Figure 8. Program Marketing.

While programming can be geared toward a specific demographic, it is likely that it will attract more than just that one particular audience. That is why the next question the house museums were asked was if their young adult programs were bringing in unexpected audiences. Thirty four percent said yes, while 31 percent said no. This split answer was similar to what this researcher had anticipated. Not all of the respondents answered this question, thus the total percentage does not equal 100.

Those who answered yes to the previous question were asked what types of programs were drawing in these unexpected audiences. Since only those who answered yes to the previous question answered this question, the total percentage does not equal 100. The largest category for this question was Demographic at 27 percent because the historic house

museums said the unexpected audience that was being drawn in, instead of the program that was drawing in that audience. The programs that were listed fell into the following categories: Happy Hour (5%) which are programs that are based around the visitors joining together to drink alcoholic beverages, while learning about certain topics; Lectures (3%), which are programs where the visitors sit and listen to a speaker who is an expert in a particular field give a speech revolving around a specific topic; Escape Room (2%), which is a program where visitors come to a space and are locked into a room where they have typically an hour to discover and figure out clues to find the key to unlock the door to the room that they are locked in; Literary (2%), which are programs that are based around literary characters or books, such as the *Outlander* series; Concerts (2%), which are programs that are based around musical performances by both professional and amateur artists; and Other (10%).

Conversely, the question was asked if there were any programs that were not designed for young adults that was attracting that demographic. Sixty-nine percent of house museums said yes there were, while 27 percent said no there were not. Once again, not all respondents answered this question so the total percentage does not equal 100. This researcher was not surprised by this data. In the literature that this researcher read, there were articles, such as the AASLH blog post, “Success with a Twist” previously discussed in the Literature Review which showed that while the young adult may have been in mind when creating the program, it was not actually designed specifically for that demographic. These articles show how certain types of programming designed for other audiences was drawing in young adults. This data helps to support that claim that was found in the other articles.

Following that question, the house museums were asked which programs were drawing in the young adult audiences. Not all of the respondents answered this question, so the total percentage is less than 100. The most popular type of programming that is attracting the young adult audience are tours, such as “Wine & Cheese tours,” “walking tours, especially cemetery ones,” “Halloween tours,” and “the Hamilton Tour Takeover.” There were many unique programs that would not fit into a category making the Other category a fairly large category at 14 percent. Some of these programs include “NPS passport stamps,” “mystery theater,” and “NYC BBQ Cookoff.” The results can be seen in the graph below.

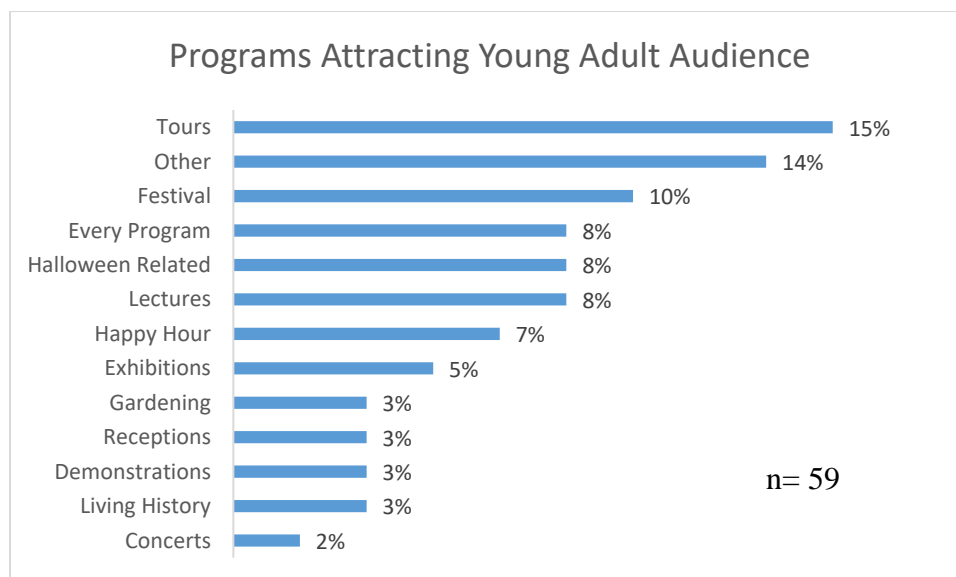


Figure 9. Programs Attracting Young Adult Audiences.

The survey ended with some more background location and information about the house museums. One of these questions was the geographical location of the site. Twenty-two percent of the sites surveyed were Rural, 36 percent were Suburban, 32 percent were Urban, while 10 percent fell into the other category. This question was asked to gain a better

understanding of where historic house museums lie, and to see if there was any specific type of location where most historic house museums are located. From the historic house museums that were surveyed, the number of museums in a rural, suburban, and urban setting are fairly equal; so therefore, there is not a specific type of location that most historic house museums lie in.

The next background question was whether or not there were any colleges or universities nearby. Ninety-seven percent of the surveyed house museums said that there were some nearby, while only 3 percent said no there were not.

After establishing whether or not there were colleges or universities nearby, the historic house museums were asked to identify these colleges and universities. When the results were collected, they were coded using a number to see how many colleges or universities were in the area. Most historic house museums had three colleges or universities nearby, at 22 percent. Nineteen percent said that they had one nearby, 19 percent said two, 10 percent said four, 8 percent said five, 3 percent said six, 7 percent said seven, and 8 percent fell into the Other category.

Since the historic house museums were being asked if they were near a college or university, it was important to see if they were offering programs for college students. This fits perfectly within this paper because college students are the prime young adults that historic house museums should be working to attract. Only 36 percent of historic house museums are offering college programming, while 64 percent offer no programming for this audience.

Young Adult Survey

One of the pieces of demographic information that was collected of the young adults who took the survey was their age. The categories were 18-20, 21-23, 24-26, 27-29, 30-32, and 33-35. The two biggest age ranges that took the survey were 18-20 (41%) and 21-23 (30%). These are the two biggest ranges due to how the survey was distributed. The results of this are seen in the following graph.

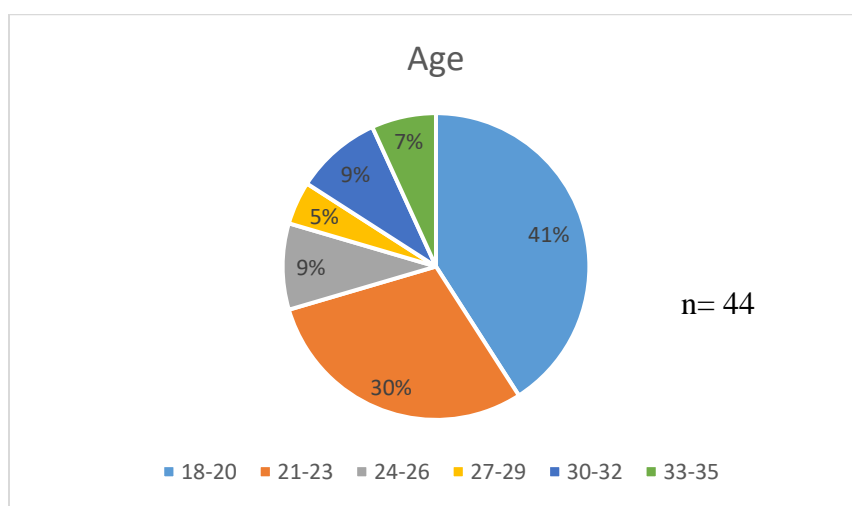


Figure 10. Age of Young Adult Visitors.

The other demographic question was with which gender does the respondent identify. Eighty-four percent of respondents were female, while 14 percent were male, and 2 percent identified as other.

The establishing question for this survey was whether or not the young adult had attended a historic house museum program before. It was an even split with 50 percent of those surveyed said they had attended a program, while 50 percent had not.

After asking whether or not the person being surveyed had attended a program or not, the survey asked what type of program they had attended if they had been to a program before. Due to the fact not everyone who attended a program provided the program that they attended, the total percentage does not equal 100. The responses for this question fell into six categories: Happy Hour (9%), Festival (18%), Living History (9%), Concert (18%), House Tour (27%), and Other (14%). The types of programs and the proportions that these respondents had attended did not surprise this researcher because they are more of the typical programming for historic house museums.

After establishing what programs had been attended, the people being surveyed were then asked how many programs they had attended if they had said yes to the first question. Once again since not all respondents had attended a program, the total percentage does not equal 100. A vast majority of those surveyed had only been to one program, 30 percent. There were some who had been to two programs (9%), seven programs (2%), and a few programs (7%).

After finding out how many programs the respondent had attended, it is important to establish the motivation behind attending a program. Not all of the respondents answered this question, so the total percentage does not equal 100. Most said they attended the program because of interest in the program or the subject matter (16%). The rest of the results can be seen in the graph below.

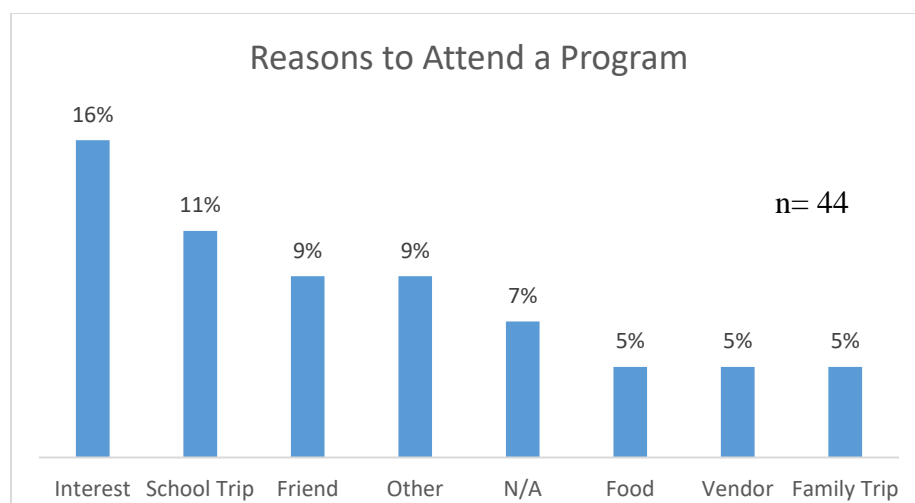


Figure 11. Reasons for Attending a Program

The respondents were then asked if they thought the program they attended was successful. Forty-five percent said yes, 14 percent said they had not attended a program, 2 percent said other, while 14 percent said no. Respondents were then asked why they thought the program was a success. As shown in the historic house museums data, attendance was a large factor in the reason for success. The young adult survey also showed attendance as a large factor in the perception of success at 18 percent. For both of these surveys, the respondents saw the number of attendees as a reason for the success of the program. The rest of the data from this question can be seen in the graph below. Not all respondents answered both of these questions, so that is why the total percentage does not equal 100.

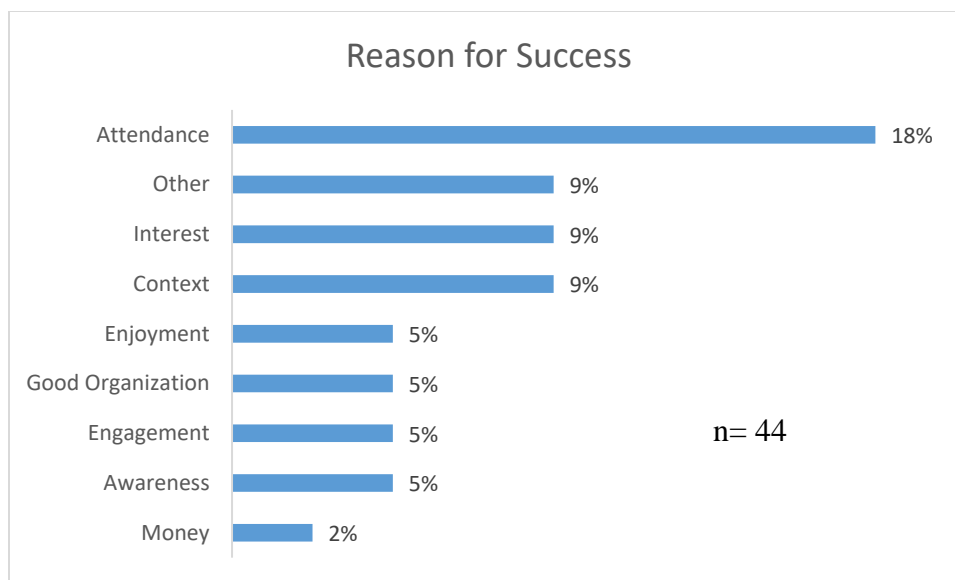


Figure 12. Reasons for Program Success

After talking about the success of the program, the respondents were asked if they thought the program they attended was designed for the young adult audience. Forty three percent said they believed it was not, 18 percent said maybe, while only 5 percent said yes.

Next, the respondents were asked if they would be more likely to attend a program that was designed specifically for the young adult demographic. Thirty-two percent responded yes, 27 percent responded maybe, and 23 percent said no. The answer to this question surprised this researcher because she did not expect that the answer to be so evenly split. This shows that the young adults do not necessarily overwhelmingly care if the program is designed specifically for them; they are more concerned with what the program is about and how it is presented. This is supported more in the following question. Not all respondents answered this question which is why the total percentage does not equal 100.

After it was established whether or not they would be more likely to attend a program for that demographic, the respondents were asked why they would or would not attend a program designed specifically for the young adult audience. Not all respondents answered this question, so the total percentage does not equal 100. There were six distinct categories: Interest, Meet Others, Personalized to Demographic, Demographic Doesn't Matter, Uninterested, and Schedule; and an Other category. The young adults are attending programs that they have an interest in and as a way to meet other people. The attendance of the young adults is also dependent on their schedule. Young adults are also interested in the programs being more personalized to their lives, while for some the demographic does not matter. There are also some people who are simply uninterested in attending programs. Some examples of the answers that fell into the Other category were “I have never been to one but would like to attend one,” “My decision to attend would be based on numerous other factors, so perhaps, but definitely not limiting,” and “its very boring to think small picture. Try it in to my bigger world.” The results are seen in the graph below.

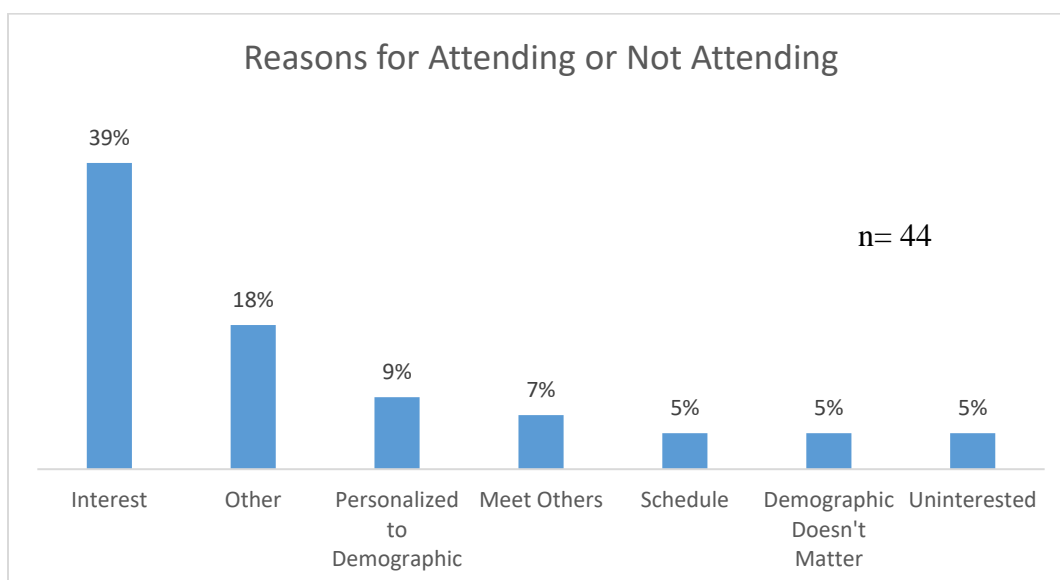


Figure 13. Reasons for Attending or Not Attending a Young Adult Program

The next question was if the respondent would attend another historic house program. Fifty percent of respondents said yes they would. Twenty-seven percent said maybe they would attend another program, while 2 percent said no. Not all respondents answered this question which is why the total percentage does not equal 100. This is a promising trend; there were few respondents that said that they would not attend another program. Most of those that answered this question answered positively.

After asking that question, respondents were asked if they would consider becoming a member at a historic house museum, especially one where they had attended a program previously. Thirty-two percent said maybe, 39 percent said no, and 5 percent said yes. Not all respondents answered this question so the total percentage does not equal 100. This researcher was surprised by this answer because it was expected that a majority of respondents would say they were not interested, with few saying yes or maybe. The respondents answered more positively than was expected.

The next, and what is possibly the most important question in this survey asked what historic house museums could offer as a program that the respondent would like to attend. A complete list of these program ideas is included in Appendix B. There were a variety of answers to this question, which is good to help give some diversity to the responses. The responses fell into these categories: Entertainment, Family, Interactive, Crafts, Tours, Everyday Life, Alcohol, Art, Not Sure, Any, and Other. Some answers that fell into the Other category were “animals” and “History of Electronics.” The most popular categories of programs were Interactive (18%), Everyday Life (14%), and Entertainment (9%). The responses could fall into more than one category which allowed the total percentage to equal more than 100. The results are seen in the graph below.

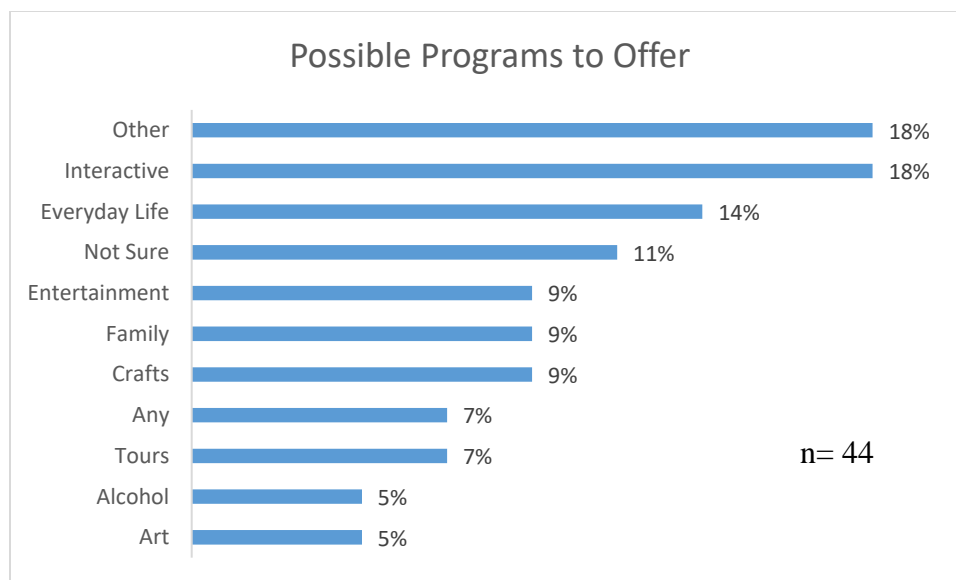


Figure 14. Possible Programs to Offer.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The data that were collected showed that many historic house museums are trying to create programs for young adults, but the young adults who did attend young adult programming did not see that it was designed for their age group. This is a different from what this researcher initially believed, which was that only a few historic house museums, mainly larger ones, were offering programming for young adult audiences. In support of these data, this researcher came to the following conclusions and recommends that historic house museums take them into consideration when they are planning programs for young adult audiences.

A majority of historic house museums are near at least one college, but most do not have any programming specifically designed for that audience. This researcher believes that it is a missed opportunity. With the number of colleges that are near these historic house museums, there is potential to partner with the college for classes, or degree programs. Colleges are also a wonderful resource for interns, so by partnering with colleges, the historic house museums would be able to have a pool of potential interns, and the college students would have an already established place where they could intern if they were interested in the type of internship available at the historic house museum. This audience would be ideal to start young adult programming with because they are in the area and it could help supplement what they are learning in classes, or it could just give them something fun to do while they are in school.

There are some historic house museums that are trying to work with colleges in order to further and create a relationship. One of the main ways that this is currently being achieved is through Mellon grants. The way that this grant works is that a college in the area

is paired with a historic house museum. Once this partnership is created, the historic house museum and the college can come up with projects for the students and museum staff to complete. The suggestions that this researcher mentioned in the previous paragraph are beginning to be addressed with this type of grant. While there are more strides that could be made to increase the effectiveness and inclusiveness of these college students in the programming for the historic house museums, these Mellon grants are great first steps to establish a relationship.

A seemingly automatic young adult program that museums tend to offer is a Happy Hour, or a program that involves alcohol. What is interesting is that there were only 5 percent of the young adults surveyed that said they would be interested in a program involving alcohol. While it is possible that there are some respondents that may have assumed that there could be some alcohol at the program, it is by far not the focus of what they want to experience while they are visiting the historic house museums themselves, or coming to their programs. The respondents had a wide variety of programs, most of which would not fit into any specific category, that they said they would be interested in attending. It is important to remember that Happy Hours are not what the young adult visitors are primarily interested in and that it should not be the only focus of the program.

What surprised this researcher most is one of the types of programs that young adults said that they would be likely to attend, and that is “Everyday Life” programs. Fourteen percent of respondents said that they would like to see programming that deals with everyday life. What this means is that people want historic house museums to enliven these spaces with living history programs and let them experience how the people would have lived during the time period in which the museum is set. For example, if the museum was set in the

colonial times, the visitor wants to see how colonial people lived. The desire for living history program relates back to Vagnone and Ryan's ideas presented in *The Anarchists Guide*. As discussed in the literature review, the ideas presented in that book show that visitors want a more detailed look into the life of the people who lived in the house and how they lived. This researcher's study shows that the ideas presented in Vagnone and Ryan's work is something in which the young adults are very interested. This researcher expected that the young adults would be more interested in entertainment than anything else, but that was not the case. (It is important to note that many of the respondent were students in a museum studies class.) Entertainment was still toward the top, but it was below this category and the Interactive category. The fact that 18 percent of young adults said that they were interested in something interactive did not surprise this researcher.

After doing a small case study on Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites, it is apparent that even though some young adults attended programs that were designed for that demographic, it is not always obvious to the attendees that they have done so. It is not clear exactly why the respondents did not think that they had attended a program designed for that demographic, but it is possible it is due to the ages of the other attendees. If the young adults do not see that there are several other young adults there, they may not believe that this is a program that was designed for their age group.

It is important to note the reasons that many of the respondents had attended programs. Most of the respondents, 16 percent, had gone to the program because they were interested in the program. The other responses that were common were School Trips (11%) and Friend (9%). What this shows is that young adults tend to come if they have a direct interest in the subject or if they want to do something with their friends. It is hard for

museums to know what is interesting to the visitors, but one way to go about programming for interest would be by having a program about something that is extremely popular with a certain demographic at the time. While this is no way to guarantee that this would appeal to everyone, that would provide a starting point for the historic house museums. A visitor's interest in a subject is something that is personal, and it is not something that can always be accounted for, but it is a driving factor for people attending programs. If the visitor feels that the program sounds interesting to them, they will be more likely to attend, no matter what demographic it is designed for. Even the school trips have a social aspect to them because even though the students have to go to the museums, they spend the day visiting this place with their friends and socializing in the context of the museum.

Marketing is an important part to programming; this is how people learn about the program and its details. One of the most important channels of marketing for programs is word-of-mouth. This researcher found through her research that many of the respondents that had attended a historic house museum survey had heard about the program through a friend or a similar channel. While this is the case, many museums sink a lot of time and effort into marketing on social media and email blasts. It is important to market through a variety of different channels because that is how some people learn about the program in the first place. This is what starts the word-of-mouth marketing. It is important to never underestimate the power of word-of-mouth. If a person finds the program to be interesting they will bring more people with them to the program, and share the details of it with others.

Through the data that was collected in both surveys, there are many different conclusions and trends that can be seen throughout both sets of data. Most of the historic house museums are trying to offer programming for young adults in some fashion. Most of

the young adults that were surveyed seem to want to attend a historic house program that is interactive, has to do with everyday life or entertainment, and is a place where some socialization can happen. Historic house museums have to begin programming for this audience, or at least trying to connect with this demographic in some fashion because it could really increase their visitorship. By offering programming along the lines of what has been proposed through this research, it has a greater chance of reaching the young adult audience. With all the data collected, historic house museums can use the ideas that have been generated and included as a starting point for their own programming.

Case Study: Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites

Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites (HBMS) is an organization that was formed in 1993. HBMS is located in historic downtown Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. This city was founded in 1741 by the Moravians, and is particularly noted for being the home of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation. This organization cares for 20 historic sites in Bethlehem, such as the Moravian Museum of Bethlehem, located in the 1741 Gemeinhaus (the oldest building in Bethlehem), the 1810 Goundie House, the Kemerer Museum of Decorative Art, the Single Sister's House, and Burnside Plantation. It offers tours of many of those locations.⁴⁶ Recently HBMS was placed on the US Tentative List for nomination to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List, along with Ellis Island, Early Chicago Skyscrapers, Central Park, and the Brooklyn Bridge.⁴⁷

The data that were used in this case study is drawn from the answers provided by Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites, as well as the answers provided by the respondents to the young adult survey who attended programs at this organization; thus, 100 percent of the respondents in this case study had attended a historic house museum program. There were in total 9 respondents from the young adults surveyed who attended these programs. This means that the numbers and percentages that are shown in this section are not statistically significant, but they can show some trends that emerged. The number of respondents in relation to the percentage will be shown within the exploration of the different questions

⁴⁶ Matthew Praetzel (ternstyle LLC), "About Us," *Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites* (blog), accessed October 29, 2017, <https://historicbethlehem.org/about/>.

⁴⁷ Matthew Praetzel (ternstyle LLC), "US Tentative List Nomination," *Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites* (blog), accessed October 29, 2017, <https://historicbethlehem.org/us-tentative-list-nomination/>.

from the survey. All of the data from the young adult survey was treated and coded the same way that is shown in the overall young adult survey section of the results and findings.

Fifty-six percent, or five of the respondents that attended a program at HBMS were in the age range of 21-23. There were no respondents that were in the 18-20 or 33-35 range. Twenty two percent (2 respondents) were 24-26 and the ranges of 27-29 and 30-32 each had 11 percent (1 respondent per category). Respondents were fairly evenly split between male and female. Fifty six percent (5 respondents) were female, while 44 percent (4 respondents) were male.

The following graph shows the types of programs that the respondents attended at HBMS. There were three specific programs that these respondents attended: Songs for Sisters (4 respondents), Blueberry Festival (3 respondents), and Historic Happy Hour (2 respondents). The Songs for Sisters program was a concert that was held in the Single Sister's House as a part of the Single Sister's Series. For this event, HBMS worked together with Lehigh Valley Underground, a local music collective, which helped to provide the musicians that played throughout the program that night. Also in conjunction with this concert, there was a pop-up zine night, where many local zine makers came out to share and sell their zines (a self-published magazine). The next program that people attended was Blueberry Festival at Burnside Plantation. This festival is one of two large festivals that HBMS holds during the year. For this festival, there were tours available of the farm house and historic barns on the plantation, as well as food vendors, alcoholic beverage vendors, music, pie-eating contests, and activities for the children. The final program that some of these respondents attended was Historic Happy Hour. This program was also the closing reception for the *Bethlehem Brewed & Distilled* exhibition that had been running for two

years. Here the attendees could try some of the beer that had been a part of the exhibition and the tasting was guided by the beer historian and internationally known brewer who helped to guest-curate the exhibition. Also included in this night was a presentation by a local medicinal horticulturist who talked about historic hangover cures.

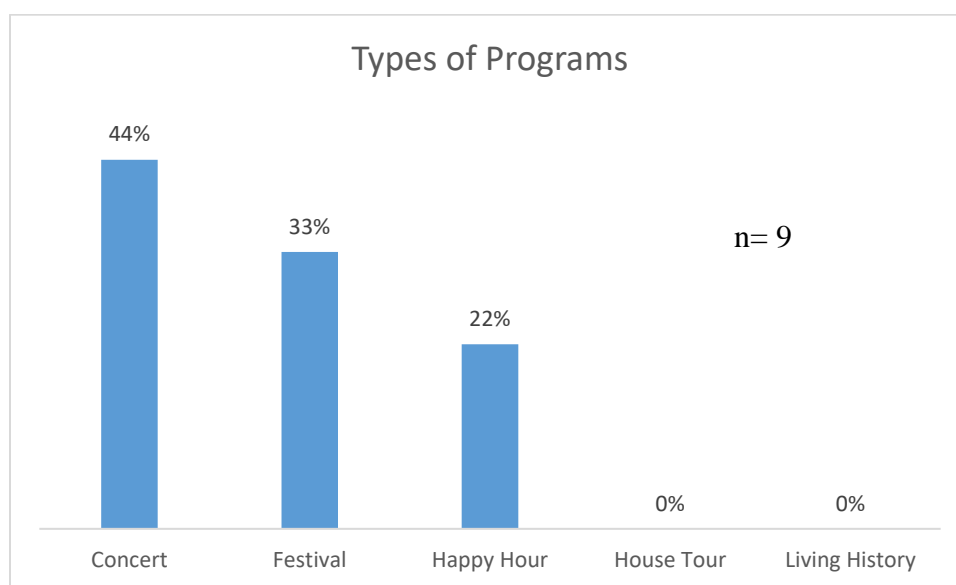


Figure 15. Types of Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites Programs Young Adults Survey Have Attended

After it was determined what programs these respondents had attended, the people who took the survey were then asked how many programs they had attended at historic house museums. One hundred percent of the respondents said that this was their first program they had attended. This means that HBMS was successful at drawing in new visitors to their programming.

Following the question of how many programs that respondents had attended, it is important to establish what motivated the people to attend the programs. The responses for this question could fall into more than one category, so the total percentage equals more than

100. Four respondents said that they came because of a friend; 2 respondents, for each category, said that it was for the food or they were one of the vendors; and, 1 respondent, for each category, said it was because of interest, or it fell into an Other category. The results are also shown in the graph below. Through this question, it is possible to gather some information on how these respondents heard about the programs. Most of the respondents came because they heard about it from a friend, which means that word-of-mouth as a marketing tool could be very important for HBMS to utilize. When comparing it to how the museum said that they market, they mentioned that they focus on social media and email blasts. These two types of marketing could be how friends of people find out about the event, but it is important to never underestimate or forget the importance of word-of-mouth.

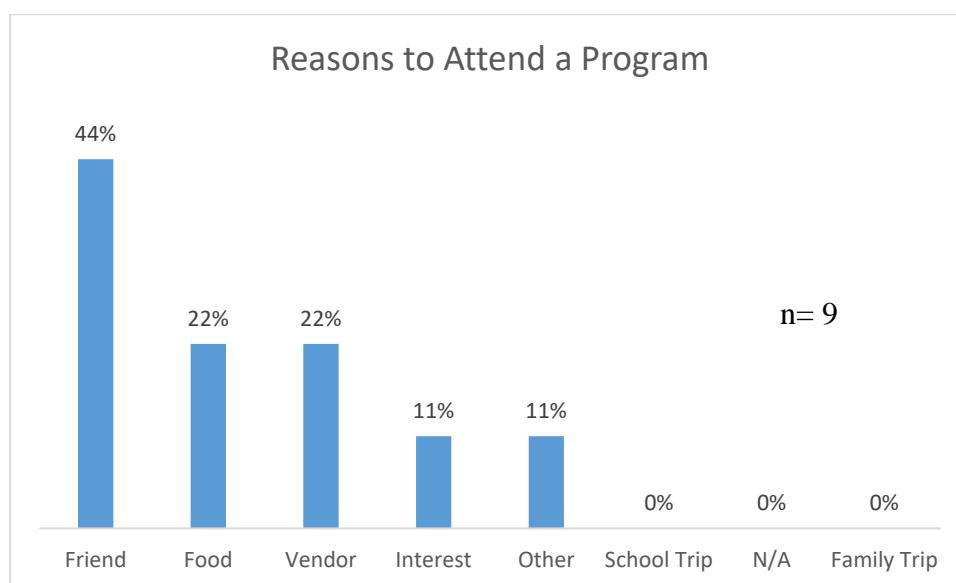


Figure 16. Reasons Young Adults Attended Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites Programs

After establishing the respondents' reason for attending the program, it was then asked if the respondents thought that the programs that they attended were successful. One

hundred percent of the respondents said that they felt the programs were successful. This question led directly into the next question, which was why or why not the program was successful. Since all of the respondents felt that the program was successful, their answers were all positive. The most cited reason for success was attendance (78%, or 7 respondents). Money, Awareness, Good Organization, and Enjoyment each had 11 percent (1 respondent). The Money category in this case deals with the profit that the respondent felt was brought in from the program. The responses for this question could fall into more than one category which is why the total percentage is greater than 100. The young adults' perception of success for these programs line up with how HBMS defines success in programming. The museum stated that they define success primarily on attendance, which aligns with why the young adults surveyed said they thought the programs were successful.

The respondents were next asked if the program that they attended was designed for young adults; the results are shown in the graph below. No respondent said that they attended a program designed specifically for their demographic. Thirty-three percent (3 respondents) said maybe, while 67 percent (6 respondents) said no. This question is one that is important to compare to the answers of HBMS. In the historic house museum survey, HBMS said that the young adult programs that they are offering include "Meet the Brewer/Beer Tasting" and "Concerts" which includes the Historic Happy Hour and Songs for Sisters. What this means is that even though there were 6 respondents who had indeed attended a program that was designed for young adults, it was not clearly perceived by those respondents as a program that was designed for them. This shows that there was some kind of disconnect between the visitors and the museum. One of the obstacles for this could be the demographic of the people who attended the programs. If there were not as many young adults there as the

respondents may have expected for it to be a program designed for their demographic, then they would not have perceived the program in that way.

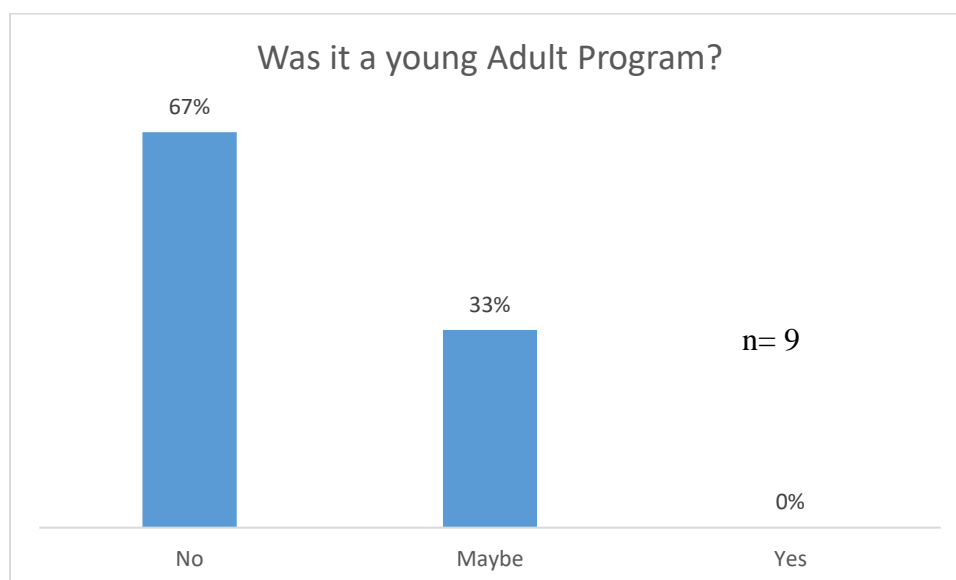


Figure 17. Was it a young adult program that you attended at Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites?

Next, the respondents were asked if they would be more likely to attend a program designed specifically for the young adult demographic. Forty-four percent (4 respondents each) said either yes or maybe, while 11 percent (1 respondent) said no. This led straight into the next question which was why or why would they not attend a program for this specific demographic. The responses for this question could fall into more than one category, so the total percentage equals more than 100. The categories these responses fell into were Interest (4 respondents), Meet Others (2 respondents), Personalized to Demographic (2 respondents), Schedule (1 respondent), and Demographic Doesn't Matter (1 respondent). What this shows is that while a majority of respondents said that they would be more likely to attend a program designed for that demographic based on their interests, there were some respondents

who have done this already, but just did not realize this. What this means is that unless there is an overwhelming number of young adults that are also attending this program, or there is a topic that is often associated with this demographic, like Halloween, they may not understand that the program is designed to be for their age group.

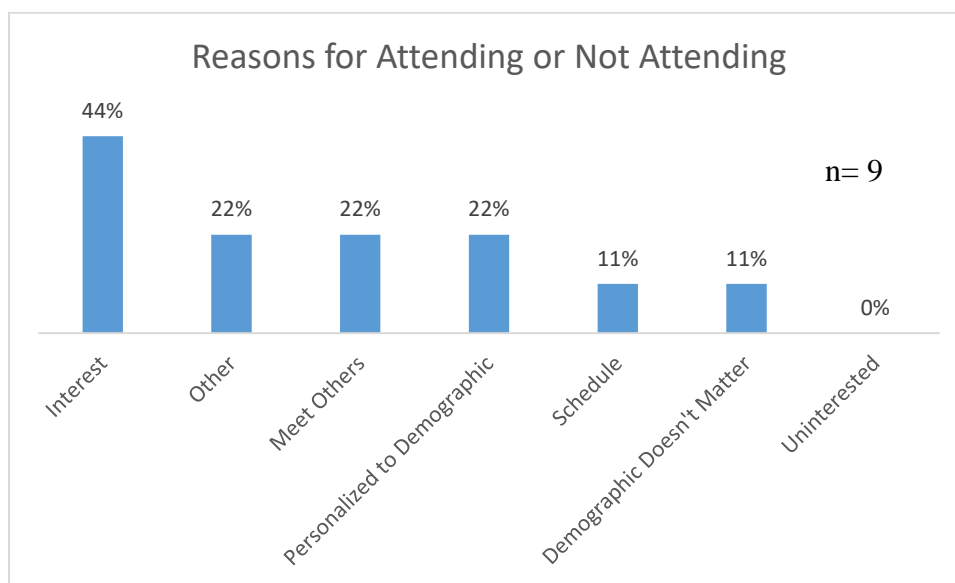


Figure 18. Reasons for Attending or Not Attending a Young Adult Program (Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites respondents)

Respondents were then asked if they would attend another historic house museum program. Eighty-nine percent (8 respondents) said yes, while 11 percent (1 respondent) said maybe. That is promising because no one said that they would not attend another program at HBMS or historic house museums in general. Next, respondents were asked if they would think about becoming a member of the museum where they attended their programs. Sixty seven percent (6 respondents) said maybe, 22 percent (2 respondents) said no, and 11 percent (1 respondent) said yes. These numbers are also promising because in comparison, there are

not many respondents that said no to this question. This means that there is a possibility to get a majority of these respondents to become members at some point.

The next question that the respondents were asked, which was perhaps the most important, was what other types of programs could historic house museums offer that they would be likely to attend. The responses for this question fell into the categories of Tours (1 respondent), Crafts (1 respondent), Not Sure (1 respondent), Art (2 respondents), Entertainment (2 respondents), and Other (3 respondents). The Other responses for this group of respondents were “History of Electronics,” “Holiday events,” and “Typically food, drink, animals...all catch my attention.” Responses for this question could fall into more than one category which is why the total percentage equals more than 100. The results are shown in the graph below.

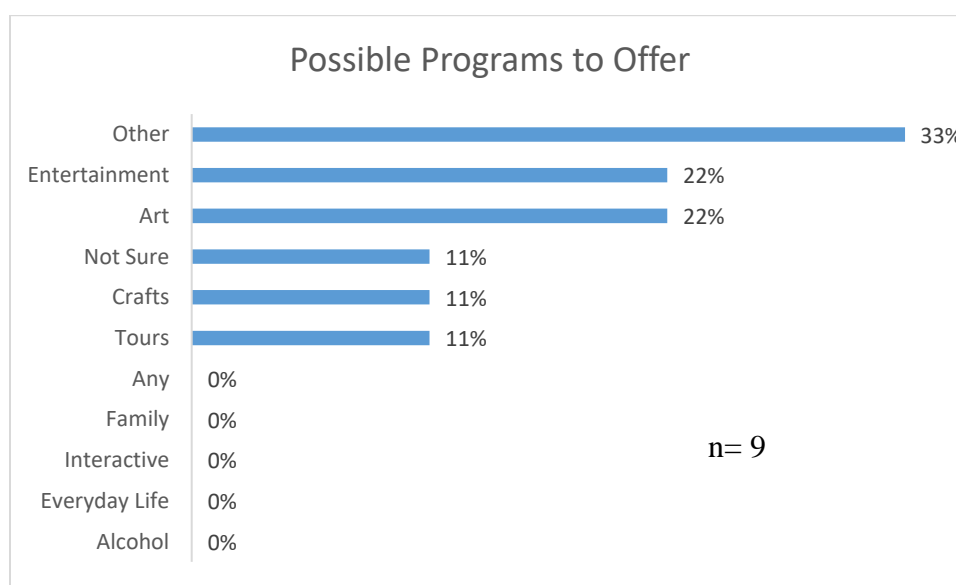


Figure 19. Possible Programs to Offer (Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites respondents)

What is interesting about the above graph and answers is that none of the respondents referenced alcohol in their program ideas. While there were some that attended the Historic Happy Hour, the alcohol part may not have been the most important aspect of the night for them. It was something that they were interested in, but there are also other ideas that the respondents had for programming. Some of the programming ideas aligned with types of programming that HBMS already offers, like tours, entertainment, and art.

HBMS responded that they do have colleges or universities in their area, and they listed 2 (Lehigh University and Moravian College) as those colleges or universities. Although these colleges are close in proximity to the organization, they do not offer programming for college audiences. If it were possible for the organization to begin to work and offer programming to these colleges, it could potentially increase the number of repeat visitors, volunteers, and members. This is because if the young adults feel like they are welcome and that there is something fun and interesting for them to do, they would potentially be more likely to come back and support the organization.

Chapter 6: Areas for Further Research

The research done for this work was limited due to time and resources on the part of the researcher. For future studies, it is important to identify many ways to reach your target demographic to survey. To further prove the findings in this work, it is necessary to gather more surveys to make the findings more statistically significant. In order to obtain this, the method of distributing the young adult survey would have to change. This researcher found that direct emailing increased the number of responses in both surveys. There would also have to be one change made to the historic house survey. The wording on the question regarding what programs designed for other demographics attracting young adult visitors would have to be changed to reduce the confusion that many museums had when answering that question.

The open-ended question on the young adult survey regarding what types of programming that the respondent would be likely to attend, could have some more guidance. When coding the data, this researcher found that the Other category was one of the largest categories, which is due to the fact that most of the answers to this question were vastly different and could not be categorized together. Offering some guidance, like types or categories of programs, could help to reduce the amount of Other responses for this question. Similarly, the questions that asked the historic house museums what programs were being offered for young adults had a larger Other category. The same type of treatment could be applied to this question as well. With both of these questions, an Other option should be included so that if there is something that really does not fit into any category it has a place to go.

Another area to study in the future would be to look at why historic house museums are not programming to college audiences. As it was found in this work, a majority of historic house museums are located near a college, but not that many offer programs for college students. An in-depth study on why the historic house museums do not do this programming and why it would be beneficial to both the museum and college students could show historic house museums the importance of programming to this audience.

One other area for further research would be to do an in-depth case study that would compare the answers of a historic house museum to the young adults that are in the area, or have visited the museum for programming. This research could follow the example that was started in the Historic Bethlehem Museums & Sites case study in this paper. The purpose of that section was to show how the two types of surveys created could be used together and benefit each other. Both surveys are important individually, but it is important to look at them together. It is important to see how the museum perceives itself in comparison to how that particular demographic it is trying to reach perceives it. An in-depth case study would further show this relationship between the visitors and the museum.

Something else that is an opportunity for further research is whether or not young adults expect there to be alcohol at programs, or if they really do not care if their program involves that in any capacity. In this research, few respondents mentioned alcohol in the types of programs that they would be interested in attending. Since happy hours are one of the most popular types of programs that historic house museums like to use as young adult programs, it would be worth studying if the alcohol is really what attracts the young adults to the program.

Chapter 7: Application to the Field

The findings in this work can help historic house museums who do not know where to start to try and design programs to offer the young adult demographic. The museums surveyed have listed some possible programs that they have seen success with, but through a survey with young adults, the young adults themselves provided a list of the types of programs that would interest them.

This research has shown that there are certain types of programs, like Interactive, “Everyday Life,” and Entertainment, which would be more likely to attract young adults than other programs like the staple happy hour. This does not mean that programs such as the happy hour are not useful, or have become obsolete, but it shows that young adults care about more than just drinking; they want to learn more about the people who lived before them and they want to have a social experience.

This researcher also hopes that this research demonstrates that there is a disconnect between what the historic house museums think they are offering and what young adults perceive they are being offered. This is shown through the fact that there are young adults that have attended programs that are designed for young adults, but they do not perceive the program as being for them. It is also hoped that this research provides an idea of how to fix that disconnect through suggesting how to prove to the young adults that the programs are for them.

Overall, this researcher hopes that this paper will help historic house museums find ways to either create new programs, or enhance existing ones designed for young adults to

truly increase visitorship that the historic house museums are targeting with their programs.

Current Historic House Museum Young Adult Programming Offerings (Appendix A)

- Historic House “crawl”, vintage hair tutorials, First Friday
- Goat yoga, history happy hour, various adult ed classes
- Beer, Wine Cheese fest; museum at night, with live music, yoga, mystery theater
- Historic Escape Room, Tavern Talks (a hands-on adult education series)
- Our programs are family-friendly and all ages attend our meetings. Catherine Morrissey of CHAD and Joe Ross, a teacher at MOT Charter, are our youngest Board members. Cate can tell you her observations about age-range.
- History Rocks (Community Party to introduce new people to our offerings, had some collections items on display with volunteers to answer questions.) Hauntings in History (story-telling walking tours) in October. Working on adding additional, recurring programming.
- Full Moon Tours, Cemetery Tours, Jane Austen Tours, After Hours Events
- We offer themed parties and programs connected with our rotating exhibits that are open to everyone but designed to specifically attract young professionals (more in the 21-40 age group). These parties offer a chance to “experience history” in a fun way, combining content with a party and social atmosphere. One example is our Speakeasy event that kicked off a 1920s exhibit. At this event, guests were transported back to the period of prohibition, and our museum and grounds were transformed into a “pop-up” party/bar atmosphere. This event sold out at 125 people and attracted both the younger audience we were targeting and established members in their 50s-80s. Guests walked away with an understanding of 1920s fashion, slang, and prohibition, but also a fun memory with friends.

- programs for school children, music programs and living history programs
- Raised bed organic gardening; farm stand; hands-on restoration workshops; living history event
- BYOB movie nights, wine and cider gardens
- Zombie themed escape the room in October.
- Farm to Fork, #schenectadydoesntsuck photo exhibition, brewing/beer tours, pokemon tours
- Subject specific tours and exhibits
- Art classes
- Our annual Farm2Fork event features an afternoon/evening session of cider making workshops and whiskey tastings; cocktail hours
- digital/audio tours, self guided experiences, continuous touring model, Artist on Art Tours (always changing the story) The Question Tour, a participatory online gallery project, internships, etc.
- After the gala, the museum offers Fall Frolick which is much more casual
- Campfire Conversations - evening programming with a facilitator and performance. Discussions vary - ex. homelessness, use of public spaces, changing political atmosphere; etc. Facilitators are experts in their field, comedians, performers, etc. Wine is included. Exhibits - Witness Tree - student work will be on display from the Rhode Island School of Design
- Victorian Theatre productions such as our annual murder mystery in October, site specific plays set in the Mansion's parlor, annual Dickens Christmas events and more.

These programs appeal to young adults but also to all ages. We do not specifically market to young adults.

- In recent years we've made multiple efforts to modify all presentation at all of our sites to accommodate this younger audience. Feel free to call me for details.
- Mostly working with local college to provide research and volunteer opportunities for students.
- Our museum offers specialty tours of the house such as a Feared Weird Tour where it is an off beat presentation (with audience involvement) on history of the house and the time period. We also partner with our local brewing company to serve local beer during the tour.
- Tuesday Tunes, an evening roots music program with food trucks on our grounds
- We participate every month in our citywide First Friday Art Walk featuring local art, free admission, and refreshments; our community darkroom hosts film photography workshops that tend to attract a younger crowd; we make our facility available to local punk musicians for concerts; we host Paranormal tours that feature history of the house and its historical inhabitants; we host a Social Justice Film Series in conjunction with Binghamton University sociology students (now in its 3rd year); we host a family-friendly junior drag show series that gives young people a forum for artistic self-expression; we partner with our local opera company to run a pre-opera film series where we show films that pertain to the upcoming opera shows and help build interest in attending the operas (the opera company is also trying to attract a younger audience).
- Special themed tours, history happy hours for 21 and over.

- This season we implanted a new tour program called Seeds of Dissent that focuses on this particular demographic. The essence of the tour is to engage in conversation about the ways in which the Bartrams were radical in their time and what this can teach us about how to be radical thinkers today.
- We offer an Apprenticeship program for junior high school through college that gives young volunteers an opportunity to study history and gain hands-on experience with early skills and crafts.
- Not much, except for a Family Fun Day with special areas of events mostly geared to crafts or gardening topics.
- Special Tours for college students
- We develop tours, workshops, and special events that we hope will be of interest to this age group but I think it bears mentioning that these same programs are open to all. See: Heritage Harvest Festival; Hamilton Tour Takeover; TOM Talks; sunset tours; gardening, cooking and decorative arts workshops, etc.
- Regular self guided tours, a program called “Gifts and Spirits”, afternoon teas
- Guided Walk Tours of two National Historic Districts, Gallery events
- MCHS offers a wide variety of exhibit topics attractive to diverse audiences. Features such as QR codes, as well as features on instagram, twitter, and facebook seem to attract younger audiences
- Primarily school tour programming at our historic house museum and one room school
- High school tours
- Pop-up escape room, mid-century modern fair with vendors and cocktails
- Meet the Brewer/Beer tasting, Concerts, Fashion Show

Programs Young Adults Said They Would Be More Likely To Attend (Appendix B)

- N/A (2)
- DIY shows, art galleries
- Live entertainment events, community mixers, museum tours
- Holiday events
- History of Electronics
- Wine-tastings, concerts, craft shows
- Variety works well because I would probably be more likely to attend if it suits my specific interests.
- Unsure
- Programs about significant historical events, or about life on the home front during the World War
- What life was like for young adults, culinary programs, etiquette programs
- Anything kid friendly and fun to do on a rainy day
- Interactive, out-of-the-box programs. I've heard of a ghost walk around historic properties that tell of a famous suicide. A famous local supernatural storyteller was the guide. Sold out almost immediately.
- Any
- I'm a visual and tactile learner, so I always love the interactive displays that show how people lived during that era.
- Food & wine tasting (perhaps period food & drink?), musical performance (again, could be specific to the time period in which the historic house was constructed)
- Fun programs for younger children

- Fun Nights
- Typically food, drink, animals, and entertainment all catch my attention
- A program where I get to walk away with something that I made or did at the event
- I would like to go in general to check it out
- Art exhibits
- Something interactive.
- I can't really think of anything specific. I have many interests so it's nothing specific that would get me to attend. The events just have to be reasonably priced and at times I can attend.
- I would attend more environmental-based historic programs if they were offered.
- Intertwine local history as well as national history of the era. It would make matters more interesting to a younger audience.
- anything hands on
- Programs relating to everyday life of the respective time period
- tours, overnight trips to see what it was like sleeping there, and how they lived back then
- Something craft related, where guests were able to recreate something the way it would have been made in the time period of the house.
- Types where we get hands on idea of what they did and how they did certain things.
- not sure
- I think I would be more likely to attend something with live interactions, visuals, or reenactments
- I, unfortunately, am not very interested with museums concerning historic houses and topics of this nature, so it is unlikely that I will attend a program. On a similar basis, I am

not too sure what types of “programs” would apply in this scenario, as this is truly the first time I have ever approached a question regarding historical housing and communities. I am positive, however, that this will be a topic I will learn about in the near future, though.

- An engaging amount of info, interesting to the viewers.
- Maybe have a program that deals with if the person was living now how their life would be different hypothetically.
- something old, something that isnt from today or yesterday but something that no one i know has seen
- I do not know what historic house museums offer, but an interactive exhibit might be interesting
- I don’t know
- Non age related
- I have never attended so I am not sure.
- Maybe a day in the life type of program, where you start the day off with re-enactors within the home and get to see how a day would have progressed.

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