

Say It Like You Mean It:
Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion in Art Museums

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Abstract:

Approximately 19% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home, yet museums largely continue to be English-monolingual environments. Although museums have long recognized the need to diversify their audiences, bilingualism/multilingualism as a tool for engaging new communities, a practice which is referred to in this thesis as creating *meaningful language inclusion*, is still underexplored. Art museums, in particular, must make greater efforts to include languages other than English as a means of building relationships with their local heritage-language communities. Currently, published research and case studies on this topic focus almost exclusively on children's museums and science centers, which have historically been more community-oriented. By working to create *meaningful language inclusion*, art museums can both amplify the social capital of their local heritage language communities and normalize the use of languages other than English in public spaces. This study both presents the current state of the field with regard to multilingualism in art museums and proposes a framework for future use that will allow art museums to better create meaningful language inclusion.

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Research Question:

How can art museums ensure that their efforts at language inclusion are meaningful for their local, heritage-speaker community/communities?

Glossary of Terms:

I have created the following terms during the course of my thesis research. The sources which I have drawn upon to create these terms are analyzed in detail in the Literature Review chapter of this thesis.

- **Meaningful language inclusion:** Language inclusion used as a strategy for welcoming a museum's local, heritage-language community or communities. Meaningful language inclusion:
 - Is based on culturally competent audience research. This research should ideally mix quantitative information about local demographics with qualitative research that seeks to understand the community from within.
 - Employs holistic multilingual engagement strategies. These strategies include in-gallery interpretation such as label text and video subtitles, but also go beyond communicating didactic information.
 - Commits to sustainable initiatives. The museum uses planning to ensure that they are capable of continuing to create high-quality multilingual materials and continually seeks input and feedback from their communities.
- **Holistic Multilingual Engagement**
 - Holistic multilingual engagement refers to a variety of techniques that a museum can employ to address the desires and needs of its targeted multilingual audience(s). While many assume that gallery interpretation (text labels; audio guides) is the key to engaging heritage-speaking audiences, museums that have successfully connected to these audiences demonstrate that the most meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships are built through:

- Interpretation: label text, audio guides, gallery guides, digital interactives, guided-tours.
 - Staff: staff-trainings, hiring to reflect the linguistic diversity of the community, developing cross-departmental buy-in.
 - Programs: educational programs and events offered bilingually or in the heritage-language(s).
 - Community collaboration: development of community advisory boards; collaborative program and exhibition development.
 - Marketing: using heritage-language(s) in marketing materials; researching and utilizing appropriate methods of communication particular to the heritage speaking communities.
- **Sustainability**- in this thesis, sustainability does not refer to environmental sustainability, but rather to a museum's commitment to implementing language inclusion in ways that can be sustained over the long term.

Existing terms:

- **Heritage language**- identifies languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given social context.
 - In the United States, a heritage language can be considered any language other than English.
 - Heritage-language speakers may speak English at any level of ability, in addition to their heritage language.
 - Preferable to the term foreign language—for heritage-language speakers, the non-English language that they speak is not foreign, but familiar.
 - This term centers the scope of the thesis on local audiences within the United States, rather than tourists audiences, who are often the targets of museum's attempts to include multilingual materials and interpretation.¹

¹ Ann Kelleher. "What is a heritage language?" *Heritage Briefs*. The Center for Applied Linguistics. 2010.

- **Code switching-** “Code switching is a socio-linguistic and grammatical concept that describes the practice of mixing, or switching between, languages or codes of expression in the course of conversation.”²
- **DEAI-** Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, Inclusion. I am including the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) definition for each of these terms. I feel that the AAM definitions are useful for providing a shared understanding of what these terms refer to within the museum field.³
 - **Diversity-** “All the ways that people are different and the same at the individual and group levels. Even when people appear the same, they are different. Organizational diversity requires examining and questioning the makeup of a group to ensure that multiple perspectives are represented.”
 - **Equity-** “The fair and just treatment of all members of a community. Equity requires commitment to strategic priorities, resources, respect, and civility, as well as ongoing action and assessment of progress toward achieving specified goals.”
 - **Accessibility-** “Giving equitable access to everyone along the continuum of human ability and experience. Accessibility encompasses the broader meanings of compliance and refers to how organizations make space for the characteristics that each person brings.”
 - **Inclusion-** “The intentional, ongoing effort to ensure that diverse individuals fully participate in all aspects of organizational work, including decision-making processes. It also refers to the ways that diverse participants are valued as respected members of an organization and/or community. While a truly ‘inclusive’ group is necessarily diverse, a “diverse” group may or may not be ‘inclusive.’”
- **Institutional Body Language-** A term created by the Empathetic Museum to refer to the ways in which “museums embody institutional empathy through staffing policies, workplace cultures and structures, etc.” The pieces which make up institutional body

² Sofia Gutierrez and Briley Rasmussen, “Code-Switching in the Art Museum: Increasing Access for English Learners,” in *Multiculturalism and Art Museums Today*, ed. Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, 147.

³ “Definitions of Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion.” American Alliance of Museums, April 30, 2018.
<https://www.aam-us.org/programs/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion/facing-change-definitions/>.

language combine to send “powerful messages... through unspoken and unwritten manifestations of their being.”⁴

- **Acculturation-** “the process of acquiring a second culture, while maintaining the original one.”⁵ In this thesis, members of heritage-language communities are often spoken of as being high acculturation or low acculturation, with the level of acculturation being determined by factors such as language preference, country of birth, and time spent living in the United States.⁶

⁴ Gretchen Jennings, Jim Cullen, Janeen Bryant, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Stacey Mann, Charlotte Hove, and Nayali Zepeda (The Empathetic Museum). “The Empathetic Museum: A New Institutional Identity,” *Curator, The Museum Journal*, (2019), 6.

⁵ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums* (April 2015), 1.

⁶ Ibid.

Introduction

Hundreds of languages are spoken in cities across the United States. Yet in most art museums, visitors find only one—English. The continued dominance of English in art museums contributes to the long history of language erasure in this country. It gives the false impression that the communities which museums are meant to serve are home to a monolingual, English-dominant culture. This thesis investigates what I have termed *meaningful language inclusion* in art museums. *Meaningful language inclusion* uses bilingualism or multilingualism as a strategy for building relationships with a museum's local, heritage-language community. It requires holistic multilingual engagement strategies, culturally responsive audience research, and sustainable relationship-building with local communities. I believe that it is a powerful tool for increasing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) in art museums for communities which these institutions have traditionally excluded.

Heritage-language speakers in this country have varying levels of comfort in English. Some are fully bilingual, equally at home in either language. Others may have little proficiency in English, or feel more at-ease speaking their heritage language (for many, this comfort level is neither fixed nor static).⁷ Whether as an aid for comprehension, a bridge for emotional and intergenerational connections, or a signal of welcome (or all three at once), multilingualism in museums can positively impact all types of people who have grown up speaking a language other than English.⁸ Museums benefit from language inclusion as well. These efforts entail creating relationships with new audiences or deepening relationships with existing audiences. As the number of U.S. residents who are foreign born and/or speak a language other than English at home continues to grow, museums need to make genuine connections with these communities in order to ensure their own future sustainability. Ultimately, I believe that the museum's entire city stands to benefit when the museum embodies practices of diverse representation that more accurately reflect the multifaceted, multicultural, multilingual nature of the community.

⁷ Jie Zong, Jeanne Batalova. "The Limited English Proficient Population in the United States," Migration Policy Institute. Published July 8, 2015, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/limited-english-proficient-population-united-states>.

⁸ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*. (San Francisco, CA: Contemporanea, 2015), 2.

While language inclusion for the purpose of building relationships with local heritage-language communities remains uncommon in the majority of art museums in the United States, I believe it is incumbent on these museums to consider the importance of creating impactful bilingual and multilingual spaces. As Lord and Blankenberg establish, museums have soft power which they exert in their communities.⁹ They are also trusted above any other type of outlet as sources of objective facts and information.¹⁰ Yet the perceived objectivity of museums arguably rests on the assumption that they are neutral. Recent discourse in the field reveals the ways in which museum neutrality is a false construct which caters primarily to white visitors-- they experience museums as neutral, while visitors of color or visitors who fall outside of the dominant culture often do not.¹¹ Museums must, therefore, make conscious decisions that dismantle invisible structures of oppression. The assumption of an English-only monoculture in museums is one such structure, part of a long history of language erasure in the United States.¹² By deciding to create overtly bilingual/multilingual spaces, museums visibly normalize the linguistic diversity of their communities. In doing so, they also create “blurred boundaries,” which allow members of linguistically non-dominant groups to develop stronger social capital.¹³

As mentioned, even the perceived neutrality of the English language in the U.S. stems from a complex history of language erasure in this country.¹⁴ First European colonizers, then government practices of genocide and coercive education, sought to oppress indigenous peoples in the North American continent and to destroy their numerous languages.¹⁵ While native languages still exist and are spoken today, they must be actively taught and protected in

⁹ Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power* (American Alliance of Museums, 2016).

¹⁰ Elizabeth Merritt, “Trust Me, I’m a Museum,” *Center for the Future of Museums* (blog). Published Feb. 3, 2015, <https://www.aam-us.org/2015/02/03/trust-me-im-a-museum/>.

¹¹ LaTanya Autry, “Changing the Things I Cannot Accept: Museums Are Not Neutral,” *Artstuffmatters* (blog) Published Oct. 15, 2017, <https://artstuffmatters.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/changing-the-things-i-cannot-accept-museums-are-not-neutral/>.

¹² Terrence G. Wiley, “Diversity, Super-Diversity, and Monolingual Language Ideology in the United States: Tolerance or Intolerance?” *Review of Research in Education*, no. 38 (2014): 18, 21.

¹³ Mary Esther Soto Huerta, and Laura Huerta Migus. 2015. “Creating Equitable Ecologies: Broadening Access through Multilingualism.” *Museums & Social Issues* 10 (1): 8–17.

¹⁴ Laura Huerta Migus (Executive Director, Association of Children’s Museums) in conversation with the author, September 20, 2019.

¹⁵ Terrence G. Wiley, “Diversity, Super-Diversity, and Monolingual Language Ideology in the United States: Tolerance or Intolerance?” *Review of Research in Education*, no. 38 (2014): 18, 21.

order to ensure their continued survival (the United Nations designated 2019 the Year of Indigenous Languages for this reason).¹⁶ During the colonial and Revolutionary periods, enslaved Africans, too, spoke a variety of African languages, all of which were brutally suppressed by their enslavers.¹⁷ World War I saw the passage of official English-language policies in many states as panic broke out over the loyalties of German immigrants.¹⁸ These laws were overturned post-WWI, but produced a lasting impact on the English-monolingual dominant culture that persists in many ways today.¹⁹ Of course, this is by no means an exhaustive list or analysis of the many ways in which languages other than English have been suppressed in the United States both through official mandates and social pressures. I include these examples of language erasure to (1) point out that although the U.S. is currently undergoing demographic shifts (discussed more in the upcoming Demographics, Visitorship, and the Importance of Audience-Building section) which cause significant linguistic diversity, the United States has always been the home a wide array of languages which have been suppressed throughout its history and (2) to emphasize that language erasure is a systemic practice stemming from racism and xenophobia. Museums seeking to dismantle practices rooted in the assertion of white supremacy should examine the role that the English language plays in inequitable systems.

I have focused my thesis research on art museums in particular because I believe that they must make greater efforts towards meaningful language inclusion, which has thus far been a significant challenge for art museums. The lack of published research regarding bilingualism/multilingualism and art museums creates a feedback loop in which U.S. museums seeking to incorporate languages other than English find few examples in the field (a complaint commonly mentioned by museum professionals during the interviews I conducted), creating both a lack of positive models and a lack of market pressure. Art museums also must overcome their long and engrained history of exclusion and Eurocentrism-- more pronounced in this

¹⁶ Rosalyn L. LaPier, "How the loss of Native American languages affects our understanding of the natural world," *The Conversation*. Published October 5, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/how-the-loss-of-native-american-languages-affects-our-understanding-of-the-natural-world-103984>.

¹⁷ Terrence G. Wiley, "Diversity, Super-Diversity, and Monolingual Language Ideology in the United States: Tolerance or Intolerance?": 8.

¹⁸ Terrence G. Wiley, "Diversity, Super-Diversity, and Monolingual Language Ideology in the United States: Tolerance or Intolerance?": 26.

¹⁹ Terrence G. Wiley, "Diversity, Super-Diversity, and Monolingual Language Ideology in the United States: Tolerance or Intolerance?": 27.

museum type than almost any other.²⁰ Additionally, art museums often present visitors with challenging art historical vocabulary and context, which can be overwhelming for any visitor, but particularly so for those who are more comfortable in a language other than English.²¹ In spite of these challenges, art museums have affordances which can be activated in the pursuit of meaningful language inclusion. Art is a natural medium for inducing emotional connections, both between a visitor and a work/works of art and between visitors themselves. In an art museum ideologically underpinned by critical multiculturalism, these emotional experiences are made accessible to all visitors.²² I also believe that art museums, especially large art museums, often exert a large amount of soft power over their cities and communities, meaning that language inclusion efforts that they undertake could have broad resonance and impact.²³

Structural Overview

This thesis has two primary purposes. First, it explores the state of language inclusion in museums in the United States today, with a particular focus on art museums. While conducting this research, I spoke with several art museum professionals who expressed their desire to know more about how other art museums in the U.S. are approaching multilingualism.²⁴ Although they have knowledge of their own museum and its target heritage-language community, the lack of published resources on this topic means that they have few examples of methods being used in other museums. As such, I have attempted through the Literature Review and Museum Profiles to illustrate the state of the field today. The second purpose of this thesis is to propose a structured framework for museums looking to either begin or deepen their community-oriented language inclusion efforts. In the Recommendations chapter, I present “Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion: A Guide for Art Museums.” This guide

²⁰ Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, ed. Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), xxv.

²¹ Sofia Gutierrez and Briley Rasmussen, “Code-Switching in the Art Museum: Increasing Access for English Learners,” in *Multiculturalism and Art Museums Today*, ed. Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 147.

²² Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, xxviii.

²³ Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power*, 21.

²⁴ Nick Capasso (Executive Director, Fitchburg Art Museum) in discussion with author, September 6, 2019.

Lisa Silberstein (Experience Developer, Oakland Museum of California) in discussion with author, September 19, 2019.

Alex Kermes (Interpretation Manager), Stace Treat (Exhibit Coordinator) in discussion with author, April 19, 2019.

synthesizes ideas from published literature and my original research. In it, I explain my suggested general approach to creating meaningful language inclusion, provide a rubric in which museums can evaluate their current state, and present a tool which allows them to plan their next steps.

The **Literature Review** chapter is divided into two sections. The first argues for the necessity of increased community-oriented language inclusion efforts. The second section sets forth the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion, exploring the resources which led me to create this cycle and guiding the reader through its three components. The **Methodology** chapter takes the reader through my research process, starting with the selection of and interviews with art museums professionals. Transcripts from these interviews were later analyzed through descriptive coding, which informed elements of my guide to meaningful language inclusion. I then move from discussing my process into showcasing the current state of bilingualism/multilingualism in the **Museum Profiles** chapter. The museums included are: Crystals Bridges Museum of American Art, Fitchburg Art Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, Oakland Museum of California, Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, Denver Art Museum, the Amon Carter Museum of American Art, and the Dallas Museum of Art. The following chapter, **Recommendations**, presents the proposed guide to creating meaningful language inclusion, entitled “Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion: A Guide for Art Museums,” which looks to provide a comprehensive framework for museums seeking to incorporate sustainable and meaningful models of bilingualism/multilingualism. The final chapter, **Conclusions**, explores areas of further research on this topic.

Through this thesis, I hope to demonstrate that while meaningful language inclusion is a complex undertaking, requiring high levels of cultural competency, significant museum resources, and a strong willingness to learn and grow, it consists of a series of doable processes. The exact methods in which these processes play out will vary according to each institution, but I believe that there are general structures and frameworks which can take this effort from overwhelming to achievable.

Literature Review

I have divided this literature review into two sections. The first demonstrates the necessity of community-oriented language inclusion for the museum field. I present my justification for focusing my research on art museums and explain both the challenges and potential affordances inherent in this museum type. I then move on to exploring the intersection of several sociological theories as they intersect with DEAI efforts, particularly that of language inclusion, in museums. After exploring the theoretical rationale, I focus on the demographic trends which make bilingualism/multilingual an imperative for the sustainable future of art museums.

The second section explores the sources which led me to create the term “meaningful language inclusion.” This term refers to bilingual/multilingual efforts intended to build relationships with local, heritage-language communities. Meaningful language inclusion, as I have conceived of it, requires three elements: culturally competent audience research, holistic multilingual engagement strategies, and commitment to sustainability. These elements can be visualized as a cycle, continually influencing one another to fortify the goal of meaningful language inclusion. In this part of the literature review, I analyze the theory, case studies, visitor and non-visitor research, and evaluations which led me to develop each component of the cycle.

The Necessity of Language Inclusion

Why Art Museums?

While increasing meaningful language inclusion is important in all museums (and indeed, all public-facing institutions), I have chosen to focus on art museums for several reasons. Often, the many challenges to DEAI posed by this museum type require institutionally-transformative initiatives. However, art museums also have unique affordances which position them well for creating meaningful impact in both their visitors and their communities when these possibilities are leveraged in the service of inclusion.

Challenges:

Current Lack of Published Research

When researching my thesis questions, I found few published scholarly sources about bilingualism/multilingualism in art museums. Veronica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar's chapter in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, "Engaging Latino Audiences" about Latino audience engagement at the Denver Art Museum (DAM), provides excellent insight how DAM developed and enacted a variety of holistic engagement strategies based on culturally responsive visitor studies. A later chapter in the same book describes the importance of facilitating code-switching in art museums for visitors with low proficiency in English. Yet, unlike science centers, which have been the subject of two comprehensive studies of bilingualism there is no published literature which analyzes bilingualism across a range of art museums.²⁵ In fact, when conducting phone interviews with art museums professionals across the United States, many expressed the desire to learn more about what other bilingual art museums were doing and even which other bilingual art museums currently exist. While my research is not a comprehensive study of art museums, it does attempt to cohere ideas from across the field into a useful guide for art museum leadership, boards, and staff.

Eurocentric & Exclusive

²⁵ Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner, Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibits Research Initiative*, (National Science Foundation, 2013).

Veronica Garcia Luis, Hugh McDonald, Laura Huerta Migus, Alexandra Chili, *Multilingual Interpretation in Science Centers and Museums*, (Association of Science-Technology Centers & the Exploratorium 2009).

As discussed in the section Museums & Social Theory, art museums have been “perceived by many to be unsatisfactory: serving a cultural elite, staffed primarily by whites, reflecting white values, and excluding from the interpretive process the very peoples whose cultures were represented in the collections.”²⁶ When asked how they perceived the Fleisher Art Memorial, Latino audiences in Fleisher’s South Philadelphia neighborhood responded that it seemed like a place for “white, affluent, English-speaking people.”²⁷ Fleisher’s researchers realized that to this audience, the institution seemed Eurocentric and/or irrelevant to personal experiences of art of those in their community. The *Latino Experience in Museums* study (discussed in greater depth in the Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies chapter) reports similar findings:

Among the more acculturated sample in our study— regardless of the content of exhibits and programs— there exists a perception that museums have a strong point of view that is Euro-centric. This is particularly problematic when the exhibit is focused on a Latin American culture and is curated by a non-Latino person, since the implication is that there are no Latinos capable of curating such an exhibit. This perception, *although most pronounced in art exhibits* [emphasis mine], is prevalent across museum types: art, history, science, technology or a combination of these.”²⁸

These ideas are echoed by an earlier report from the Garibay Group, which found that high-acculturated Latino respondents in their study also expected “diverse staff, bilingual interpretation, Latino perspectives, and Latino-themed content” and believed museums to often be “expensive and exclusionary.”²⁹ Latino participants in a bilingual visitor panel at the Denver Art Museum further reiterate this perception of art museums. Facilitated by the English/Spanish bilingual staff interviewers, which allowed visitors to speak in whichever language they felt most comfortable, visitors expressed that art museums generally seemed “designed for “*Americanos*”, that they came across as unwelcoming for families with children, that they “were difficult to get to, are expensive, lack Spanish language information, and feature somewhat

²⁶ Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, xxv.

²⁷ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood: How the Fleisher Art Memorial Is Adapting to Shifting Community Demographics*. (New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation, 2015), 26.

²⁸ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*. (San Francisco, CA: Contemporanea, 2015), 7.

²⁹ Cecilia Garibay, *Washington Metropolitan Area Latino Research Study for the Program in Latino History and Culture*, (Garibay Group, 2006) iii, 23.

hostile staff.”³⁰ For some heritage-language audiences, including Latinos, the museum must focus on dismantling these Eurocentric practices in order to change this perception.

In a conversation with Laura Huerta Migus, President of the Association of Children’s Museums, about why science centers and children’s museums seemed more invested in creating meaningful language inclusion, she pointed to the origins and funding structures of art museums versus children’s museums. Art museums were/are largely the product of the wealthy— wealthy collectors, wealthy donors, wealthy boards. (Huerta Migus also noted that art museums tend to provide one particular type of multilingual support more frequently than other museum types do: multi-language audio guides). Children’s museums, however, more frequently were built by communities. The Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, for example, was begun in 1925 by Mary Stewart Carey using methods “that seem akin to today’s participatory practice.”³¹ She formed the museum’s collection by seeking gifts from local teachers and other adults and even children, founding the museum as a place *for* the families of Indianapolis built *by* the families of Indianapolis.³² Children’s museums have community-centered roots and have therefore often developed with a more audience-centered focus. Conversely, some art museums may fear a loss of prestige as a result of opening themselves up to their communities³³

The relationship between art museums and their funding continues to mold their response to equity and inclusion. The AAM DEAI Working Group report, to which Huerta Migus contributed, argues that “the future of philanthropy will be influenced by increasing racial and ethnic diversity, with funders prioritizing efforts that positively affect historically underrepresented populations.”³⁴ In recent years, this influence has become increasingly evident. In 2017, the Ford Foundation and the Walton Family Foundation provided twenty-one U.S. art museums with six-million dollars in funding to diversify museum leadership. These museums have proposed a

³⁰ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism and Art Museums*, ed. Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, 188.

³¹ Edward P. Alexander, Mary Alexander, Juilee Decker. “Children’s Museums,” *Museums in Motion*, (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 181.

³² Ibid.

³³ Nick Capasso (Director, Fitchburg Art Museum) in discussion with author, Sept. 6, 2019.

³⁴ Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group, “Facing Change,” (American Alliance of Museums, 2018), 9.

variety of uses for the funding. The Art Institute of Chicago, for example, submitted a proposal in which they would hire a full-time staff position to oversee new, stipended internships for college and high school students. Initiatives such as these hope to lower the barrier to entry posed by unpaid internships, a major contributor to the lack of diversity within the field. Art museums seeking strong relationships with these major foundations must now focus on much more than exhibitions, holistically broadening and deepening DEAI.

Cognitive Load & Affective Filter

Particularly for heritage-language speakers who feel more comfortable with their heritage language than with English, art museums can present a challenging experience. “When ELLs [English Language Learners] come to the museum, they encounter not only English, but also multiple modes of expressing English, including new contextual vocabulary and sentence structures of academic language and terms specific to museums and the visual arts. It can be an enormous amount of information, emotions, visual stimuli, and language to process, and often with the expectation for the learner to do so and respond in seconds.”³⁵ This overload can create stress which raises the affective filter (when stress and anxiety “impedes language or content acquisition”³⁶). Rather than shutting heritage-language speakers out of the art museum experience, the museum can shift to practices in which bilingualism is an asset.

Potential & Affordances

In spite of these challenges, I believe that art museums also have many affordances which make them excellent places in which to focus on meaningful language inclusion.

Emotional Connection Through Critical Multiculturalism

In a well-facilitated, counter-discursive multicultural space, art has the potential to create powerful emotional connections both within and between diverse types of visitors. These museums actively challenge dominant narratives, making visible unequal structures of power and institutional inequities as well as the place of the museum itself within this system.³⁷ Critical

³⁵ Sofia Gutierrez and Briley Rasmussen, “Code-Switching in the Art Museum: Increasing Access for English Learners,” in *Multiculturalism and Art Museums Today*, 147.

³⁶ Sofia Gutierrez and Briley Rasmussen, “Code-Switching in the Art Museum: Increasing Access for English Learners,” in *Multiculturalism and Art Museums Today*, 153.

³⁷ Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, xxviii.

multiculturalism creates space in museums for counter-narratives, which “dramatize and give voice to the experiences of people of color.”³⁸ During art educator and co-editor of *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today* Jodi Boyd Acruff’s first museum experience, she powerfully felt the “invisible” structures of white supremacy, denying her an emotional experience within the museum space. By amplifying counter-narratives, critical multiculturalism in museums encourages emotional connection from visitor groups for whom museums have often felt exclusive, Eurocentric, or irrelevant.

Art Museums & Soft Power

I posit that art museums, in particular large art museums, often have especially potent influence over the social agenda. Large art museums have an emblematic status in many cities; for many, they are the institutionalized representation of the city’s social, cultural, and aesthetic values. Historically, art museums have had direct relationships with hard power structures like national governments and private corporations as funding sources, influencing both what museums collected and how it was displayed to the public³⁹. In fact, Lord and Blankenberg note that the U.S. government has long recognized the influence of art and art museums: “During the Cold War [...], the CIA, in its propaganda war against communism at home and abroad secretly financed abstract expressionist exhibitions to promote the superiority of American freedom and creativity.”⁴⁰ While declines in government funding have decreased the impact of hard power on art museums, art museums retain influence in their communities. As economic drivers and tourist attractions, these institutions may have sway with local policy makers and tourism boards. As landmarks, they often have a metonymic relationship with their cities, symbolizing everything that makes the city “unique and creative in the increasingly privatized urban public realm.”⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power*, 10.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power*, 21.

Museums & Social Theory

Examining social theories through the lens of museums provides a foundational rationale for why I believe in the power of language inclusion. In my view, language inclusion in art museums can have a powerful influence on both non-dominant and dominant groups. Museums are emerging as centers of soft power, meaning that they have “the ability to influence behavior using persuasion, attraction or agenda setting” through intangible resources “such as ideas, knowledge, values and culture.”⁴² Soft power is defined in opposition to hard power (primarily exercised through military and economic might); whereas hard power functions most effectively through power *concentration*, soft power is created through power *diffusion*.⁴³ Diffusion can be exercised through practices of inclusion and diversity both within staffing and audience outreach (specifics of which I will be addressing throughout this thesis). I believe that museums have a unique ability to use their soft power to both advance and *normalize* DEAL initiatives in ways that institutions of hard power often cannot.

One of the most potent tools of soft power that museums have at their disposal is public trust and support. In 2017, AAM (American Alliance of Museums) released the Museums and Public Opinion report which quantitatively demonstrated that Americans from across the political spectrum perceive museums positively.⁴⁴ The report segments visitors into “liberal,” “conservative,” “moderate,” and “I don’t care about politics,” as well as “museum visitors” and “non-visitors.” Support for museums is remarkably strong across all categories. The report found that “86% of respondents consistently support museums,” which suggests that “supporting museums is a core value of the American public that crosses the political aisle, bridges divides, between urban and rural communities, and is even consistent among those who do not regularly visit museums.”⁴⁵ In my view, this gives museums a power held by almost no other type of institution. As most other channels for disseminating information (newspapers, websites, social media personalities, news channels) seem increasingly polarized across

⁴² Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power* (American Alliance of Museums, 2016), 9.

⁴³ Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg, *Cities, Museums, and Soft Power*, 203.

⁴⁴ American Alliance of Museums and Wilkening Consulting, “Museums & Public Support.” (American Alliance of Museums, 201), 5.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

political lines, museums enjoy the unique ability to continue to reach individuals across the political spectrum.

The results of the 2017 research back up an AAM study from 2001 which concluded that “87% of respondents viewed museums as ‘one of the most trustworthy sources of objective information.’”⁴⁶ Responding sixteen years later to the 2001 study, Elizabeth Merritt of the Center for the Future of Museums blog posits that the reasons museums enjoy such strong levels of public support is that many people view them as “neutral.”⁴⁷ Thanks to platforms such as #MuseumsAreNotNeutral, museums professionals have become accustomed to dissecting the meaning of “museum neutrality” in recent years. Increasingly, neutrality is viewed as a false construct; things which *appear* neutral often seem so simply because they reiterate cultural norms which white people, who make up the majority of museum staff, leadership, and visitors, experience as invisible. All museums are representative of a series of decisions, whether consciously or unconsciously made, which exist within a social context. What presents as neutral to the culturally dominant group (white, European-descent, high levels of education, affluent, i.e., the traditional museum-goer and those for whom many museums were created) does not necessarily appear neutral to non-dominant groups (people of color; people who are foreign-born and/or low-English proficient; people with lower levels of education and fewer economic resources). In the words of co-creator of the #MuseumsAreNotNeutral movement, museum educator LaTanya Autry:

Many times when I proposed programming centered on issues of racial inequality, white co-workers told me that the museum had to maintain a neutral stance or that my ideas sounded “political.” So they pushed aside my proposals. Each time I encountered that attitude, it was an attack on my body, my presence, my mind.

I have always known that museums are not neutral. They have never have been neutral. I would hope that our colleagues know that museums originate from colonialist endeavors.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Elizabeth Merritt, “Trust Me, I’m a Museum,” *Center for the Future of Museums* blog. Published Feb. 3, 2015. <https://www.aam-us.org/2015/02/03/trust-me-im-a-museum/>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ LaTanya Autry, “Changing the Things I Cannot Accept: Museums Are Not Neutral,” *Artstuffmatters* blog. Published Oct. 15, 2017. <https://artstuffmatters.wordpress.com/2017/10/15/changing-the-things-i-cannot-accept-museums-are-not-neutral/>

While art educators have long strived to make art museums “powerful source[s] for change, inspiration, togetherness, and meaning-making,”⁴⁹ the deliberate, institutional, transformation of art museums into inclusive spaces representative of diverse realities has been slow, particularly in comparison to other museum types (science centers, children’s museums). In the Introduction to *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, editor Joni Boyd Acuff describes what it was like for her as a black teenager to visit an art museum for the first time. She writes of feeling emotionally disconnected, uncomfortable with the assumed behavioral codes which she felt were pretentious, and conspicuous as a woman of color.⁵⁰ In comparison, her co-editor, Laura Evans, a white woman, describes feeling instantly enthralled and at ease during her first trip to an art museum.⁵¹ Their parallel stories clearly illustrate how art museums reiterate exclusive structures that often remain invisible to white visitors.

So how might museums begin to utilize their soft power in order to enact social change, in particular with regard to language? Soto Huerta and Huerta Migus’ article “Creating Equitable Ecologies: Broadening Access through Multilingualism” explores the necessity of integrating multilingual strategies into museums through a sociocultural perspective. It begins by establishing that museums reflect a society’s dominant culture. According to the article, children from upper- and middle-income groups have access to more cultural and social capital; their experiences in museums reiterate the lessons and experiences that they are having outside of the museum, allowing the museum experience to feel more “meaningful and long-lasting.” They generally undergo little dissonance between their home lives, school experiences, and societal expectations.⁵²

Conversely, those with low-income backgrounds have tended to experience stronger dissonance between the various aspects of their lives— a challenge which is heightened when they also speak “a heritage language other than English” at home.⁵³ Relating this framework back to the museum experience, the article goes on to state that museums typically experience positive results when they choose to implement strategies that blur the “bright social

⁴⁹ Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, xxv.

⁵⁰ Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, xiv.

⁵¹ Joni Boyd Acuff and Laura Evans, “Introduction,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, xvii.

⁵² Mary Esther Soto Huerta, and Laura Huerta Migus. 2015. “Creating Equitable Ecologies: Broadening Access through Multilingualism.” *Museums & Social Issues* 10 (1): 8–17.

⁵³ Mary Esther Soto Huerta and Laura Huerta Migus, *Creating Equitable Ecologies*, 9.

boundaries” which often feel exclusive to multilingual communities. The authors then establish the theory of “bright” versus “blurred” social boundaries, stating that museums with “English-only environments” reify the dominant culture, creating “bright” social boundaries which are hard for the non-dominant group to cross over; essentially, the institution has created an unwelcoming environment.⁵⁴ Richard Alba, the sociologist behind social boundary theory, named these types of practices “bright” boundaries because “they are obvious to all societal members... clearly aligned with prevailing laws, edicts, social practices, and pronouncements.”⁵⁵ Soto Huerta and Huerta Migus point out the exclusive use of English in museums as a method of reinforcing bright boundaries. Heritage-speakers who sense bright boundaries may stay away from these museums; unfortunately, this has often been interpreted as disinterest. In contrast, when museums choose to implement interpretation and communication strategies that are inclusive of non-English heritage speakers, they create “blurred” social boundaries, which “lessen social distinction” and allow marginalized groups to participate.⁵⁶ Soto Huerta and Huerta Migus call attention to “strategies such as multilingual interpretation [and] reduced admissions” as a means of demonstrating blurred boundaries.

Exploring social theories as enacted in museum environments demonstrates the importance of the structural inclusion of multilingual exhibitions and programming in art museums. Because they exert a considerable amount of soft power over their cities, large art museums can position themselves as leaders in the field. They have both the staffing and financial resources necessary to commit deeply to broadening audiences through boundary blurring. Conversely, when they choose to maintain traditional paradigms and uphold bright boundaries, they send a far-reaching and deeply-rooted message of exclusion; these decisions are not neutral. With regard to heritage-speaking communities, soft power and social boundary theory go hand-in-hand: if museums are centers of influence within their communities, then establishing practices that blur boundaries brings more diversely representative voices into the museum’s sphere of influence. The museum then has the opportunity to amplify the social capital of its city’s heritage-speaking communities.

⁵⁴ Soto Huerta and Huerta Migus, *Creating Equitable Ecologies*, 10.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Demographics, Visitorship, Language, & Audience-Building

Demographics & Visitorship

Although museums have taken significant steps within the past decade or more to create increasingly inclusive, welcoming environments, overall attendance statistics still fail to match

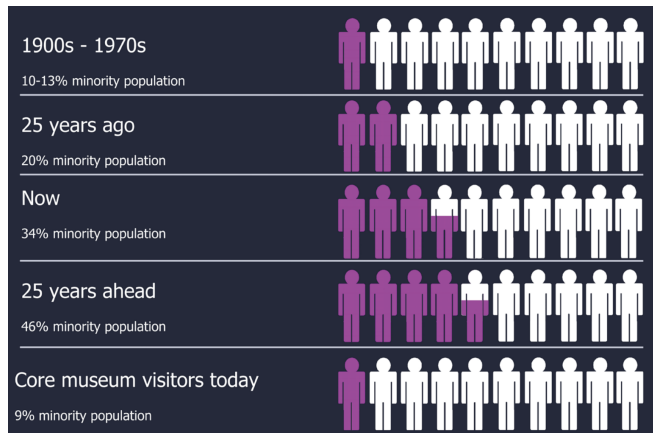


Figure 1: Infographic from Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums report.

the diversity of the community. A 2010 study by the Brookings Institution “concluded that U.S. metropolitan areas have been undergoing the most significant sociodemographic transformation since the huge wave of immigrants arrived in the early 20th century.”⁵⁷ Recent research from the Pew Research Center supports this finding, stating that between 2000-2018, “the white population share fell below 50%” in 109 U.S.

counties; for comparison, just two counties—one

in South Carolina and one in Louisiana, both of which have populations under 15,000—shifted from minority to majority white.⁵⁸ Yet as evidenced by the Center for the Future of Museums’ 2010 report *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums*, within the United States, white visitors still constitute the vast majority of museum attendance. As seen in Figure 1 (above), the country’s minority population at the time of the Center for Museums’ report stood at 34%, while making up only 9% of “core museum visitors.”⁵⁹ The report points out that by around 2050, non-Hispanic whites will constitute a minority population, yet if current museum trends continue on the same path, this group will still make up the bulk of museum visitorship (and

⁵⁷ Brookings Institution, *State of Metropolitan America: On the Front Lines of Demographic Transformation*. (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 2010) quoted in Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood: How the Fleisher Art Memorial Is Adapting to Shifting Community Demographics*. (New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation, 2015).

⁵⁸ Jens Manuel Krogstad, “Reflecting a demographic shift, 109 U.S. counties have become majority nonwhite since 2000,” Pew Research Center. Published August 21, 2019. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/08/21/u-s-counties-majority-nonwhite/>

⁵⁹ Betty Farrell and Maria Medvedeva. “Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums.” Center for the Future of Museums. (Washington DC: American Alliance of Museums, 2010), <https://www.aam-us.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/Demographic-Change-and-the-Future-of-Museums.pdf>.

likely continue to exert a disproportionate amount of influence on the dominant culture). In a purely practical sense, it is therefore in the best interest of museums to develop meaningful engagement with non-white audiences.

Language

A large scale study comparing overall demographics to museum visitorship has not been published since the 2010 report, but the field continues to fail to represent the full diversity of its communities in many ways, including linguistically. The majority of museums present their exhibitions and programs exclusively or almost-exclusively in English. Although English is the *de facto* official language of the United States (which has no legal official language), the country is teeming with an enormous variety of languages. As of 2013, “61.8 million U.S residents spoke a language other than English at home,” approximately 19% of the total population.⁶⁰ By far the most common language other than English spoken in the U.S. is Spanish; currently, an estimated 13.4%, or 41 million U.S. residents, speak Spanish at home (of these, about 22 million report speaking English “very well” and 6.8 million report speaking English “well.”)⁶¹ As of 2013, the next largest linguistic groups in the U.S. were: Chinese (over 3 million speakers; data does not specify between Mandarin and Cantonese), Tagalog (1.6 million speakers) Vietnamese (1.4 million speakers), French (1.25 million speakers), and Arabic (1.0 million speakers).

Although they do not all have as many speakers as Spanish or Chinese, there are at

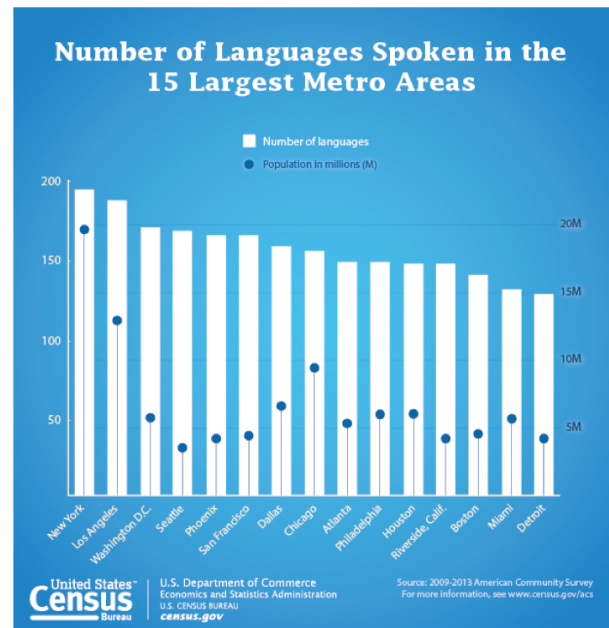


Figure 2: The United States Census Bureau. “Number of Languages Spoken in the 15 Largest Metro Areas.”

⁶⁰ Steven A. Camarota and Karen Zeigler. “One in Five U.S. Residents Speaks Foreign Language at Home, Record 61.8 million,” Center for Immigration Studies. Last updated October 3, 2014, <https://cis.org/One-Five-US-Residents-Speaks-Foreign-Language-Home-Record-618-million>.

⁶¹ “Hispanics in the U.S. Fast Facts.” CNN Library. Last updated March 6, 2019. <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/20/us/hispanics-in-the-u-s-/index.html#targetText=An%20estimated%2041%20million%20US.to%20the%202017%20Census%20survey>.

least 350 distinct languages spoken in the United States⁶². Data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau between 2009-2013 indicates that within the 15 largest metro areas of the United States, between 50 to about 175 different languages are spoken within each city (*Figure 2*).⁶³ Yet this marked linguistic diversity remains hard to find in many museums. In 2011, a study undertaken by the Association of Science Technology-Centers (ASTC) in cooperation with San Francisco's Exploratorium reported that while 50% of U.S. science centers and museums surveyed offered some form of multilingual information, only 10% offered most or all of their exhibits in more than English.⁶⁴ A similar study analyzing multilingual initiatives in art museums has not yet been conducted, indicating that the trend is even less present in this museum type (at least, within the United States). While museums clearly cannot represent *all* languages that are present within their community, the prevalence of English in museums clearly misrepresents significantly the linguistic diversity found within the United States.

Audience Building

Already, evidence shows that holistic, institution-wide engagement efforts contribute to institutional sustainability goals. When the Fleisher Art Memorial began an extensive audience research project in response to the rapidly-changing demographics of their South Philadelphia neighborhood, they recognized two important things. First, that the current iteration of the institution was failing to fulfill the mission of its founder, Samuel Fleisher. In 1898, Fleisher founded the institution, which provides a variety of free and low-cost art classes for adults, teens, and children, with the intention of providing the community with a space in which “art making [could act as] a bridge between economic classes and various ethnicities.”⁶⁵ However, by 2006 only 23% of the institution’s students came from the surrounding neighborhood.⁶⁶ Staff realized that those families which had come to Fleisher as part of its early 20th century audience had now largely moved out of South Philadelphia and into the suburbs as they grew more established and prosperous. A breakdown of the 2010 demographic composition of their neighborhood, defined by geographically by two targeted zip codes shows that in comparison

⁶² “Number of Languages Spoken in the 15 Largest Metro Areas.” United States Census Bureau (2015), <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2015/cb15-185.html>.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Veronica Garcia Luis, Hugh McDonald, Laura Huerta Migus, Alexandra Chili. *Multilingual Interpretation in Science Centers and Museums*. (Association of Science and Technology Centers, 2009), 7.

⁶⁵ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood: How the Fleisher Art Memorial Is Adapting to Shifting Community Demographics*. (New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation, 2015), 11.

⁶⁶ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood: How the Fleisher Art Memorial Is Adapting to Shifting Community Demographics*, 10.

with the rest of the Philadelphia metro area, “the Asian population was three times larger, percentage wise, while the African American population was less than half, [with] a slightly larger Latino population.” Additionally, when compared with the 2000 census, it became clear that these populations had grown rapidly within the previous decade—the Latino population in the area, for example, increased by 220% between the 2000 and 2010 census. This led Fleisher to another realization: just as their initial audience of European immigrants had grown into lucrative, long-time supporters, so would the recent immigrant populations from primarily Latino and Asian countries within several decades. Engaging these communities not only upholds the vision of Samuel Fleisher but also contributes to the institute’s long-term financial sustainability. More about the audience development undertaken by Fleisher will be discussed in the “Museum Profiles” section of this report.

A failure to visualize today’s local, immigrant audiences as long-term, loyal arts supporters is a failure of institutional imagination. Whereas the foreign-born population in the United States primarily came from Europe even up until 1960 (75%), by 2012, “only 12% originated there;” the majority foreign-born population in that year arrived from Latin America (53%) and Asia (28%).⁶⁷ Do museums feel that people who have immigrated to the US from non-European countries are less economically viable long-term audience prospects than those of European descent? Are these audiences not considered sufficiently because they do not constitute current visitorship in large numbers? All this is to say something which should be obvious, yet unfortunately often goes unpracticed: institutions seeking to develop their audiences must communicate with those who are not already regularly attending the museum. When attempting to develop strategies and practices that *broaden* an institution’s audience, institutions must compliment visitor research with research investigating the perceptions, habits, and values of non-visitors. Too often museums have assumed that audiences who are not attending do so because of a lack of interest; this ignores several barriers to engagement. In some cases, these audiences may find that museums present concrete barriers such as price of admission or restrictive hours.⁶⁸ In others, they might not perceive the museum as offering an

⁶⁷ Brookings Institution, *State of Metropolitan America: On the Front Lines of Demographic Transformation*. (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 2010) quoted in Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood: How the Fleisher Art Memorial Is Adapting to Shifting Community Demographics*. (New York, NY: The Wallace Foundation, 2015).

⁶⁸ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*. (San Francisco, CA: Contemporanea, 2015).

experience that they find sufficient for justifying their time and resources.⁶⁹ It also glosses over any institutional bias and conscious or unconscious exclusionary practices on the part of the museum. In Part 2 of the Literature Review, I will discuss further how museums can engage with these issues to build new audiences within their local heritage-language communities.

Cecilia Garibay, *Washington Metropolitan Area Latino Research Study for the Program in Latino History and Culture*, (Garibay Group, 2006).

Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood: How the Fleisher Art Memorial Is Adapting to Shifting Community Demographics*.

⁶⁹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*. (San Francisco, CA: Contemporanea, 2015), 9.

Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion

While reviewing existing published sources discussing bilingualism/multilingualism in museums, I began to conceptualize the term *meaningful language inclusion*. I noticed that much of the published work describing multilingual efforts done by museums in the United States focused on deepening accessibility for heritage-language groups within the museum's neighborhood or city community. European and Canadian museums, among others, are more known for regularly providing language support, but tend to do so to increase accessibility for their tourist, rather than local, audiences. The matter-of-factness with which these museums include many languages is an excellent antidote to the types of concerns which sometimes block U.S. museums from becoming bilingual— too much wall text will confuse visitors and detract from exhibit design, creating audio guides and other interpretive materials will be too expensive etc. However, while European multilingual museums provide excellent aids for *comprehension* (translated visitor guides, audio guides, and label text), they tend to focus less on the social and emotional impact of language.⁷⁰ In comparison, the types of language inclusion that I came across while researching U.S. museums emphasized language as a tool for creating community relationships, decolonizing inequitable power structures, promoting social cohesion and understanding, fulfilling their responsibilities to the public trust, and becoming genuinely welcoming spaces to diverse audiences. These are the types of aims to which *meaningful language inclusion* refers.

Unfortunately, museums seeking to contribute to these ambitious, community-oriented aims through language inclusion may become overwhelmed by the perceived enormity of the task. Through my literature review, I have identified what I believe to be the three key elements of creating language inclusion that is meaningful for a museum's local community: culturally-competent audience research, holistic multilingual engagement strategies, and commitment to sustainability. I believe that visualizing these three elements as a cycle is useful; audience research informs the creation of effective engagement strategies, which translate in the long term into community impact through the museum's commitment to sustaining and

⁷⁰ Laura Huerta Migus (Executive Director, Association of Children's Museums) in discussion with author, September 20, 2019.

evaluating these strategies. In order to ensure that the museum's plan continues to be relevant to its target heritage-language community/communities, they must not stop at Step 3 of the cycle, but rather continue to grow through renewed research efforts. By breaking down language inclusion into a visualizable process, I hope to help museums overcome their trepidation and to feel empowered to commit to community-oriented bilingualism/multilingualism. Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will analyze the sources which led me to create the cycle of meaningful language inclusion (*Figure 3*).

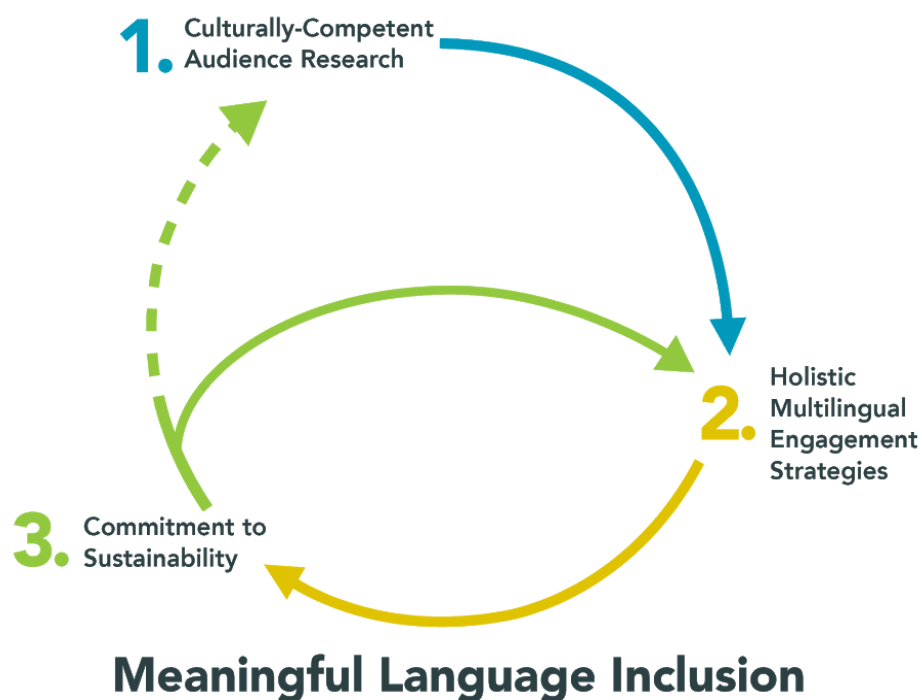


Figure 3: Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion: While sensitively implementing bilingualism will never be simple, museums which conduct their efforts according to the three elements of this cycle set themselves up to achieve their community-centered aims of language inclusion.

Note:

Many sources in this literature review focus on Latino audience engagement. As evidenced by my research question, “How can art museums ensure that their efforts at language inclusion are meaningful for their local, heritage-language community/communities?,” I did not set out to create a framework specifically geared towards Latino communities in the U.S., although I of course realized that this would be a substantial portion of the

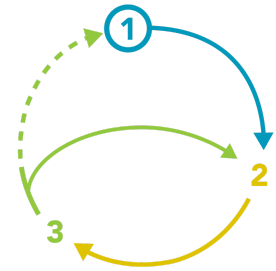
heritage-language audience. As recently as 2012, Latino visitors were “grossly under-examined within museum scholarship,” with little systematic research to illuminate Latino visitorship through a cultural lens.⁷¹ In the intervening time, the efforts of museum professionals—most often Latino museum professionals—to develop a body of research relating to Latino visitors have provided invaluable contributions to the still burgeoning field. I have relied heavily on this research to form my ideas about using a culturally-specific approach for the creation of meaningful language inclusion. I would have liked to be able to include more examples of how this approach relates to other heritage-language communities, but discovered little equivalent research in the field, particularly with regard to art museums. Insights from the San Jose Children’s Discovery Museum trilingual language inclusion (English, Spanish, Vietnamese) demonstrate some of the ways in which engagement strategies differ according to culture. The Oakland Museum of California’s *How Visitors Changed Our Museums* report also briefly describes the influence of the Chinese members of their Asian Pacific advisory council on the translation of that museum’s trilingual labels (English, Spanish, Chinese). However, there are not currently studies like Contemporanea’s *Latino Engagement in Museums* report for other types of linguistic/cultural groups. While I believe that some of the broader ideas about Latino engagement are likely relevant to non-Latino heritage-language communities, I want to clarify that I am not advocating that museums apply the specific plans and strategies which have worked for Latino communities to all communities (and of course, within the broad Latino category, there is an enormous amount of variation which necessitates an engagement approach that takes into account the specific characteristics Latinos in a museum’s city, or even neighborhood).

⁷¹ Verónica Betancourt, “*Brillan por su ausencia*: Latinos as the Missing Outsiders of Mainstream Art Museums,” (masters thesis, Ohio State University, 2012), ii, 8, 51.

Culturally Competent Audience Research

“Learn what aid the community needs . . . and fit the museum to those needs.”⁷²

—John Cotton Dana



Almost 100 years ago, John Cotton Dana pointed out the essential starting point of any community-centered museum work: audience research. Basing initiatives on insular assumptions usually results in wasted time and money on the part of the museum and a community who may feel alienated by or completely unaware of the museum’s efforts to serve them. Dana’s language, visionary for its time, now appears more traditional in an era when museums are striving for participatory and co-creative experiences. In museum discourse, “community” has often been used as a codeword which side-steps conversations about racism, white supremacy, and colonialism, among other issues.⁷³ Additionally, words like “aid,” set up the museum as a one-sided benefactor, making the further assumption that the *community* is in need of the *museum*. While I do believe that the museum can create powerful, even lastingly influential experiences, the community (however the museum chooses to define it) does not often *need* the museum. The museum, however, is certainly dependent on the interest, attendance, and support of its community. I devote this time to analyzing Dana’s vocabulary because the language with which the museum conceives of community engagement informs its approach to audience research, and when working with traditionally excluded communities, an intentional and sensitive approach is key. The precise research methods that different museums use may differ depending on their capacity, resources, and communities. The one thing that they *must* have in common is being culturally competent.

What makes audience research culturally competent?

When examining the engagement of immigrant and heritage-language speaking audiences in museums, museums must first ask themselves questions like: “What does it mean to be an immigrant, particularly within the context of museums?” and “Why [does the museum] want to engage a particular community, towards what purpose, and of what potential value to

⁷² John Cotton Dana, *The New Museum*. (American Alliance of Museums, 1999).

⁷³ Gretchen Jennings, Jim Cullen, Janeen Bryant, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Stacey Mann, Charlotte Hove, and Nayali Zepeda (The Empathetic Museum). “The Empathetic Museum: A New Institutional Identity,” *Curator, The Museum Journal*, (2019), 4.

the community itself?”⁷⁴ In exploring the first question, museums seek to develop an *emic* perspective, using research and relationships to understand of how the target population perceives *itself* from within. Museums develop this *emic* understanding through research, evaluation, and hiring staff from within the heritage-language community. They should be careful to avoid making assumptions based during their research. In an examination of Latino engagement at the Denver Art Museum, Betancourt and Salazar advocate for culturally responsive visitor studies, which take into account the interaction of an individual’s background with their museum experiences. Betancourt and Salazar explain that “At their best, culturally responsive visitor studies are intersectional analyses of how race, class, gender, ethnicity, nationality, linguistic background, psychographic traits, and a host of other contextual factors, shape personal experiences of museums within a visitor’s life.”⁷⁵ The Denver Art Museum uses visitor panels, “informal evaluation[s] wherein education staff recruit members of a key audience segment to participate in an aspect of the museum... then engage with educational staff about their experience, as a culturally-responsive research method.”⁷⁶ These visitor panels are designed to be comfortable experiences for Latino visitors of all backgrounds. Unlike during a typical focus group, visitors are encouraged to “participate in groups of extended family/friends,” childcare is provided, and bilingual facilitators ensure that the conversation moves fluidly whether in English or Spanish.⁷⁷

If the museum instead followed more formal and traditional research structures—English monolingual facilitators forcing participants to express themselves in a single language only, no childcare, friends and family forbidden from the room—visitors would likely feel discouraged, frustrated, and excluded. The museum would also receive lower quality information on which to base future strategies—in some cases because of the language barrier, and certainly because of the museum’s failure to facilitate an environment comfort and openness. Fortunately, the DAM recognized the necessity of cultural responsiveness and was able to collect relevant and useful information which led to the formation of their CelebrARTE program, “a monthly bilingual program that engages Latino audiences and topics.” In order to successfully run this program,

⁷⁴ Jill Stein, Cecilia Garibay & Kathryn Wilson Engaging Immigrant Audiences in Museums, *Museums & Social Issues*, 3:2 (2008), 179-196.

⁷⁵ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 185.

⁷⁶ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 188.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

the DAM also had to ensure that it was staffed by bilingual facilitators, pointing to the importance of hiring staff from within the heritage language who arrive at the museum with an emic understanding, an area which will be explored in more detail in the Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies section of this thesis as well as throughout the Museum Profiles chapter.

In addition to being responsive to the characteristics of the community, culturally competent audience research does not perpetuate traditional research methods which respondents may find reminiscent of uncomfortable, or even traumatizing experiences. Marianna Pegno, Curator of Community Engagement at the Tucson Museum of Art, notes the importance of approaching vulnerable or persecuted communities with sensitivity. She quotes Sinha and Black's reflections on working with young adult migrants:

We did not want our study of the experience of young adult migrants to be conducted under conditions redolent of the criminal justice system or the immigration service. This is because we did not want to reflect the forms of coercive scrutiny that participants had already experienced from the state. Instead, we wanted to widen the parameters of exchange beyond those predicated on surveillance and suspicion, to encourage exchange and dialogue.⁷⁸

A traditional interview might re-traumatize participants by recreating conditions of deep power imbalance inherent in interviews conducted by governments. Pegno's study focused on a co-creative program, *Museums as Sanctuary (MaS)*, for refugees of all ages and nationalities in the Tucson area for which she was the facilitator. Although she began her research using traditional interview methods, she realized that this structure ran counter to her aims of creating a space of shared authority between the museum, its community partner organization, and the program's participants. She decided to stop conducting formal interviews in favor of more collaborative, creative methods. In *MaS*, Pegno worked to create boundary events, "explored as a moment of overlap where identity, experiences, knowledge, and processes are continually being negotiated," arguing that this allows for "multivocal narratives—where no single voice is

⁷⁸ Sinha, S., & Black, L. Making methods sociable: Dialogue, ethics and authorship in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, 14 (4) (2014), quoted by Marianna Pegno. "Narratives of Elsewhere and In-between: Refugee Audiences, Edu-curators, and the Boundary Event in Art Museums." (Phd. diss., University of Arizona, 2017), 24.

being heard as distinctly clear or separate.”⁷⁹ Pegno developed what she calls “a performative multivocal research practice,” which allowed her to retain the authentic, multiple voices of the program’s participants while collecting and analyzing data with sensitivity to their past experiences.⁸⁰ One such method was “the use of poetic prose to effectively disconnect and reassemble narrative data,” which Pegno used for coding and analysis. Taking fragments of data created from things like “descriptions of artwork created or experienced,” Pegno would reassemble the pieces until they created multivocal meaning (one of the voices, as Pegno recognized, being Pegno’s own in her capacity as the researcher and interpreter).⁸¹ While this extremely non-traditional method of analysis may not be appropriate for all research projects, I include this brief description of Pegno’s work as an example of the broad possibilities of culturally competent audience research when approached with creativity and sensitivity.

How can museums go about culturally competent audience research?

How a museum goes about its culturally competent audience research ultimately depends on the resources of the museum and on the community with which it is working. But all worthwhile research efforts should begin by the museum carefully considering its desired impact. Through my literature review and the interviews I conducted with professionals in art museums of varying sizes and audiences, I came across many different methods for undertaking a study of a heritage-language community. Some, usually with grant funding, conducted large-scale studies with the help of audience research firms (Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History, Fleisher Art Memorial). Others, because of limited time and financial resources, relied heavily on their heritage-language community partners for orientation and help in facilitating focus groups (Fitchburg Art Museum). Most of these institutions, however, have been able to develop successful strategies for community-based language inclusion through having a clear understanding of desired impact at the start of the project.

Museum consultant Margaret Kadoyama notes that museums must begin community engagement projects by ensuring that they have a genuine understanding of themselves as an institution. Before jumping into audience research, they must reflect on their own “internal

⁷⁹ Marianna Pegno. “Narratives of Elsewhere and In-between: Refugee Audiences, Edu-curators, and the Boundary Event in Art Museums.” (Phd. diss., University of Arizona, 2017), 24.

⁸⁰ Marianna Pegno, “Narratives of Elsewhere and In-between,” 67.

⁸¹ Marianna Pegno, “Narratives of Elsewhere and In-between,” 79.

capacity.” Kadoyama, who has assisted many museums seeking to increase community involvement, writes,

This work is time-intensive and requires sufficient staff time and energy to establish and nurture relationships over long term. Is there enough staff bandwidth so that staff members can spend sufficient time in the community? This often means evenings and weekends—when neighborhood associations and other community groups meet, and it is important for museum staff to be present and active in these meetings. If the museum does not have sufficient staffing to accommodate this, it will need to move more slowly and on a smaller scale. Perhaps the leadership and staff can identify one or two people in their community to get to know better and nurture a relationship with them. As those relationships deepen, museum staff can slowly add more connections to develop and nurture.⁸²

The museum should make every effort to conduct as comprehensive a plan of audience research as possible, but it is important that they recognize what is within their scope. What *all* museums can do, however, is begin this research with intention. Kadoyama suggests that proceeding with intention means that the museum must ask itself “why” with each step taken. She proposes five key questions to guide intentional planning:

Box 6.1 Key Questions

- What is your intention for engaging in a museum-community involvement initiative?
- Why do you want to have stronger relationships with people and organizations in your community?
- What do you hope will happen as you become more fully involved in your community?
- How does increased involvement with your community align with your organization’s mission, vision and values?
- How do you plan to build your internal capacity, so that when you do begin to learn about your community, you have staff and capacity to act on what you learn?

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These are all questions which museums should develop answers to *before* beginning audience research. Effective research stems from carefully considered aims, goals, and objectives.

⁸² Margaret Kadoyama. *Museums Involving Communities: Authentic Connections*. (New York, New York: Routledge, 2018), 5.

⁸³ Margaret Kadoyama, *Museums Involving Communities: Authentic Connections*, 3.

Answering Kadoyama's Key Questions can help museums develop the necessary framework to begin research with intention.

Additionally, Randi Korn, Founding Director of planning, evaluations, and research firm RK&A, advocates for the creation of an impact statement which clearly states “(1) what a museum would like to achieve among specific audiences and (2) supporting outcomes for a finite number of specific audiences.”⁸⁴ The impact statement drives the museum's decision-making and creates benchmarks by which the museum can judge its success. The museum should return continually to the impact statement throughout the creation, implementation, and evaluation of new initiatives. If the museum is unable or unprepared to answer Kadoyama's key questions, then they seem unlikely to be able to articulate desired their impact. Beginning audience research before a museum has reflected on its internal capacity, motivations for language inclusion, or desired impact and outcomes can produce ineffective research which ripples throughout the rest of the project. The museum's partners and target community may feel abandoned or betrayed if the museum asks for their time and insights and is then unable to develop this into an actionable plan. In contrast, museums who begin research keeping with intention will have the greatest success at turning pieces of data into a coherent strategy.⁸⁵

Philadelphia's Fleisher Art Memorial exemplifies the positive change which can result from impact-driven, culturally-competent audience research. As discussed in the Introduction chapter, Fleisher, an arts institute in South Philadelphia, challenged itself to build genuine relationships with new audiences in their neighborhood. These audiences consisted of primarily Latino (the majority of Mexican nationality) and Asian (from a variety of countries) communities which had been growing in Southeast Philadelphia for almost two decades. Before beginning their research, Fleisher articulated its desired impact and outcomes: to “attract more people from the ethnically diverse neighborhoods to its on-site programming” with the outcome of “hav[ing] one of every three students in its on-site programs come from nearby neighborhoods” within four years. Fleisher began their preliminary research quantitatively, analyzing the demographics of the two zip codes which they considered to be their neighborhood. They also

⁸⁴ Randi Korn, *Intentional Practice for Museums: A Guide for Maximizing Impact*. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2018), 49.

⁸⁵ Randi Korn, *Intentional Practice for Museums: A Guide for Maximizing Impact*, 5.

conducted interviews with neighborhood residents and community leaders to develop an initial picture of the barriers to engagement. On the strength of this initial research, they were awarded a grant from the Wallace Foundation which allowed them to hire an outside research partner to conduct a full-scale ethnographic study. With the grant money, Fleisher conducted several rounds of focus groups, seeking an *emic* understanding of how these communities perceived Fleisher and of the daily lives of the people within each community (how they spent their time; familial relationships; work life; values). Focus groups with Latino residents were conducted in Spanish, whereas groups with Asian residents were conducted in English due to the mix of Asian ethnicities and languages.

As a result of these focus groups, Fleisher developed a motto that guided them as an institution through their transformation: Come to Us, Show Us, Welcome Us.⁸⁶ These simple phrases boil down the essence of what these communities told Fleisher. “Come to us” referred to how residents in the focus groups expressed that they felt more comfortable beginning a relationship with Fleisher if the institution met them in neighborhood spaces and events. “Show us” meant that Fleisher needed to take a more visual approach to informing the community of their offerings. Showing visuals and demonstrations of art-making helped Fleisher overcome barriers of both language comprehension and lack of familiarity with art terms.⁸⁷ The responses which led to the creation of the third tenet, “Welcome us,” dealt more explicitly with language. Latino and Asian respondents explained how language barriers can be both practical and psychological. Impatient responses from visitor services and receptionists sent the message that staff perceived these visitors as burdens. In the words of focus group participants,

“Sometimes receptionists are friendly and they see that you’re a little worried and they say, “Okay, don’t worry, look...” and they help you understand. But there are other receptionists who see that you don’t speak English and [pretend] they don’t see you and they don’t help you.” (Female, Latino group)

“At the very least, speak in slow tones and in a way that would get them to understand, get them to know you care.” (Male, mixed group)

“Even if they have a lot of questions, they just give up. If somebody just keeps talking English to them, they’ll just hang up the phone.” (Female, Asian group)⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 36.

⁸⁷ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 38.

⁸⁸ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 39.

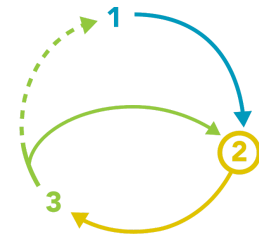
The three-part approach that Fleisher developed through its research allowed it to create specific, holistic strategies aligned with its intended impact (more about these strategies will be discussed in the following section on Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies). Although Fleisher did not fulfill its initial outcome of having one in three students come from its South Philadelphia neighborhood within four years, they have noticed that perceptions of the institute are shifting as they continue to apply their Come to Us, Show Us, Welcome Us strategy,⁸⁹ and remain committed to achieving impact in their neighborhood.

Once an institution is engaged in culturally competent audience research, it can begin to develop the range of holistic multilingual engagement strategies best suited to its community. Museums which begin to implement holistic multilingual engagement strategies without first developing an emic understanding of the target heritage-language community often end up spending time and money course-correcting unsuccessful initiatives (see the Museum Profiles section for examples). It is, of course, normal to try things that do not work the first time, and all language inclusion efforts are usually undertaken with the best of intentions. Being open and willing to fix mistakes is key to any work. This thesis, however, seeks to guide art museums to practice bilingualism/multilingualism through steps that maximize their chances for success. While creating meaningful language inclusion requires significant resources (time, money, staff hours etc.), intentionality during the project's opening stages can save costly and time-consuming corrections down the road. In the next section, I demonstrate how museums have used their intentionally conceptualized, culturally competent audience research to develop language inclusion strategies that maximize impact within their community/communities.

⁸⁹ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 78.

Section 2: Holistic Multilingual Engagement

Holistic multilingual engagement is a term that I have developed to refer to the necessity of spreading language inclusion consistently throughout the museum. While a bilingual/multilingual museum might be commonly understood as a museum which incorporates languages other than English in their gallery interpretation, this is only one (important) aspect of creating meaningful language inclusion. There is a general trend in museum literature which urges museum professionals to consider museums holistically.⁹⁰ Traditional departmental siloing has long impeded museums' ability to make decisions and implement new initiatives as an interconnected organism. Yet again and again, successful museums show that the best results are reached when staff work collaboratively to reach shared goals and objectives. As with any DEAI initiative, language inclusion works best when each department uses its particular expertise in the service of a shared commitment. Once leadership commits and effectively communicates/collaborates with staff about bilingual/multilingual initiatives, they can identify concrete solutions for logistical challenges.



Siloed museum environments impact heritage-language communities by keeping diversity initiatives separate from the rest of the museum. Although museums that employ people of color as “diversity coordinators” may be well-intentioned, they also send the institutional message that DEAI can be “solved” through piecemeal efforts rather than “[fus[ed]... into the nucleus of our museum institutions.”^{91 92} Siloing can also be seen in museums which expect to build visitorship among heritage-speaker communities through one-time cultural events. In the words of the Empathetic Museum, “As staff members begin to wrestle with the implicit and explicit biases influencing how policies or projects are developed and implemented, the need for holistic solutions becomes obvious, sometimes painfully so.” Through published case studies and the interviews that I have conducted, I have found this to be overwhelmingly true. Holistic approaches fight the inertia of siloed museums. They require institutional

⁹⁰ Gretchen Jennings, Jim Cullen, Janeen Bryant, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Stacey Mann, Charlotte Hove, and Nayali Zepeda (Empathetic Museum), “The Empathetic Museum: A New Institutional Identity,” *Curator*, 9.

⁹¹ Gretchen Jennings, Jim Cullen, Janeen Bryant, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Stacey Mann, Charlotte Hove, and Nayali Zepeda (Empathetic Museum), “The Empathetic Museum: A New Institutional Identity,” *Curator*, 4.

⁹² Boyd and Evans, “Introduction,” *Multiculturalism & Art Museums Today*, xxvii

commitment—the combined efforts of leadership, boards, and staff. Developing the appropriate holistic approach to engaging a museum's particular heritage-language communities takes planning and research. Often, the result is institutional transformation. It takes effort, but it is worth it. I believe that museums which commit to holistic engagement strategies and create genuine relationships make use of their soft power in ways that shape how diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion look in their respective cities. In the following section, I will first discuss how institutions can use audience research to develop strategies which suit both the museum's local heritage-language community/communities and its internal capacity and then analyze some common areas which museums can activate to enhance meaningful language inclusion.

Using Research to Develop Strategies

Holistic multilingual engagement strategies themselves are practically limitless. Any area of museum operations can be transformed through a commitment to community inclusion. Once the museum has analyzed its internal capacity, set defined goals and objectives, and conducted audience research, leadership and staff can focus on which holistic multilingual engagement strategies (HMES) best align the community's "needs, assets, [and] interests"⁹³ with the museum's goals and capabilities. The GENIAL and Latino Engagement in Museums (LEM) reports illustrate some general approaches for creating HMES geared towards Latino audiences. In 2017, the Exploratorium hosted the Generating Excitement and New Initiatives for All Latinos Summit (GENIAL). This National Science Foundation-funded summit brought 91 participants together to "identify needs and opportunities for Latinos in informal science learning environments" and "identify recommendations, emerging research questions, and actionable insights with an outlook towards the future."⁹⁴ The report generated from that meeting helps to illustrate the link between language use and a shifting, varied sense of cultural identity. The LEM report was released by Contemporanea in 2015. The report was developed through a mix of surveys and focus groups with Latino audiences in California. Contemporanea conducted six focus groups of 50 participants total. These were divided into "Spanish dominant," in which participants had "limited to no" English fluency (sessions conducted in Spanish), and "Bilingual,"

⁹³ "Santa Cruz MAH Latinx Engagement Plan," Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History, (internal document last edited August, 2019), 4.

⁹⁴ GENIAL Summit Proceedings Report, (San Francisco Exploratorium, 2017), 4.

in which participants had varying levels of Spanish fluency (sessions conducted in English). 75% of all participants were foreign born. In the online survey, 58.9% of the participants responded in English while 41.1% responded in Spanish.⁹⁵ The research sought “...to understand the drivers of engagement and the underlying factors that permeate the experience of Latinos at museums—any type of museums—with the goal of helping organizations to design experiences that are engaging and relevant for this important growing population.”⁹⁶ During the GENIAL summit, Cecilia Garibay, Patricia Lannes, and Jose Gonzalez identified four areas in which museums can consider Latino audiences: **identity and culture, amplification, decolonization, and risk-taking**.⁹⁷ I would like to analyze each of these areas in relation to the LEM report, and discuss how several institutions have put these considerations into practice while developing holistic multilingual engagement strategies.

With regard to **identity and culture**, the Garibay, Lannes, and Gonzalez begin by reiterating that while Latino is often used as a blanket term for all Spanish-speaking populations from the Americas within the United States, those within this group are more likely to develop their identity around their country of origin: “The Latino category, usually imposed by others, can be layered, confusing, and sometimes even mysterious to someone newly arrived. Such categorization becomes a dissection of one’s origins, categories, differences, and similarities—in fact one’s very sense of belonging.”⁹⁸ Similarly, a 2012 study conducted by the Pew Research Center which examined Hispanic/Latino identity in the United States found that Latinos did not generally believe themselves to share a common culture with people from other Spanish-speaking countries. Non-Latinos, however, “perceive[d] Latinos to be one homogeneous group linked by their use of the Spanish language.”⁹⁹ A museum approaching their local Latino community with the belief that all Latino cultures stem from a shared identity would be making a grave mistake. By recognizing that immigrant or language groups are not culturally monolithic and that cultural identity fluctuates depending on social context, museums

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 1.

⁹⁷ Cecilia Garibay, Patricia Lannes, Jose Gonzalez, “Latino Audiences: Embracing Complexity. Generating Engagement and New Initiatives for All Latinos,” (San Francisco Exploratorium, 2017) 2-8.

⁹⁸ Cecilia Garibay, Patricia Lannes, Jose Gonzalez, “Latino Audiences: Embracing Complexity. Generating Engagement and New Initiatives for All Latinos,” 3.

⁹⁹ Steven S. Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner, Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibits Research Initiative*, 68.

can begin to explore how to serve multilingual audiences beyond the inclusion of label content (which, while a crucial step, should not be the limit of the museum's multilingual engagement).

At a base level of cultural competence, therefore, the museum must be aware of the huge variety of Latino identities and experiences and understand the cultural composition of their particular community. The LEM report's findings suggest that this sense of Latino identity and culture can also be complex at an individual level. It identifies two psychographic clusters based on the cultural identity of Latino audiences (Figure 4):

- Cluster A – the need to be identified as Latino by the museum with which they are engaging: *“As a Latina, there is no recognition of my culture at the main museums.”*
- Cluster B – the need to be acknowledged as a regular museum-goer without any classification: *“The good thing about being in a museum is that you can leave behind the labels that we assign to each other and enjoy art together as human beings.”*¹⁰⁰



Figure 4: “The Latino Paradox,” from The Latino Experience in Museums report, 2015.

Although the Contemporanea team initially assumed that these two attitudes depended on a person's level of acculturation (in the report, acculturation is “based on language preference ((Spanish dominant and bilingual)); place of birth ((U.S. born and foreign born)); education and socioeconomic levels; and ((for the foreign born”) number of years living in the United States”), upon further analysis they realized that these two seemingly opposing attitudes are actually part of what they call “The Latino Paradox.” The report identifies the simultaneous need for museums to acknowledge visitors' Latino identity without “sing[ling them] out as different from any other visitor.”¹⁰¹ It notes that while these desires may seem contradictory, they are actually consistent with the everyday experiences of bicultural Latinos.¹⁰² The GENIAL and LEM reports emphasize how the strategies developed by museums to engage Latino visitors must take into

¹⁰⁰ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 5.

¹⁰¹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums*, 6.

¹⁰² Ibid.

account the multifaceted nature of Latino identity. Translating “The Latino Paradox” into a strategic approach by museums, the LEM report notes that “Spanish-language communications and Latino staff” are crucial signals that the museum seeks to include the entirety of a visitor’s Latino identity. Holistic multilingual engagement strategies are important for avoiding reducing a Latino visitor’s identity to their culture or language only.

The second recommendation from GENIAL, **amplification**, refers to recognition of the cultural richness resulting from a bilingual identity in contrast to viewing it as a “deficit model of diversity.” Write L.A.-based art educators Sofia Gutierrez and Briley Rasmussen,

In our museum work, we often encounter deficit language when speaking with museum staff and volunteers about ELLs. Deficit language focuses on what people lack. We hear about how little ELLs know or how little they can participate.”¹⁰³

Instead, museums can amplify the unique ways in which bilingual groups can do things like code-switch, which increases their “linguistic capital” and leads to an “ambicultural” ability of meaning-making.¹⁰⁴

Of the 41 million Spanish-speakers in the United States, 26 million speak English well or very well. Indeed, many may be equally fluent in English and Spanish, or more fluent in English than they are in Spanish. However, it is common that not all generations in a family or group share the same level of English or Spanish speaking ability.¹⁰⁵ This leads to code-switching; families communicating in a fluid mix of English and Spanish, allowing all members to engage equally. The LEM report notes that exhibits and programs related to visitors’ heritage cultures generate initial interest in the museum because families are seeking opportunities to pass down cultural knowledge to younger generations. Culturally specific museum experiences allow parents and grandparents to “teach their children not only the particulars of the content, but also the value of pride in their own heritage and traditions.” However, different members of the family may have differing levels of comfort and proficiency using English (the LEM report points out that these types of museum experiences are most valued by less-aculturated Latinos, whom the report

¹⁰³ Sofia Gutierrez and Briley Rasmussen, “Code-Switching in the Art Museum: Increasing Access for English Learners,” in *Multiculturalism and Art Museums Today*, 147.

¹⁰⁴ Cecilia Garibay, Patricia Lannes, Jose Gonzalez, “Latino Audiences: Embracing Complexity. Generating Engagement and New Initiatives for All Latinos,” 3.

¹⁰⁵ Mark Hugo Lopez, Jens Manual Krogstad, Antonio Flores, “Most Hispanic parents speak Spanish to their children, but this is less the case in later immigrant generations,” Pew Research Center (April 2018), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/04/02/most-hispanic-parents-speak-spanish-to-their-children-but-this-is-less-the-case-in-later-immigrant-generations/>.

defines as generally being Spanish dominant).¹⁰⁶ Bilingual museums are crucial for the multigenerational family engagement that Latino families often seek in museums. Amplification uses the fluid linguistic patterns of code-switching to enrich the museum experience. This applies not only to Latinos but to many bicultural visitor groups. During an evaluation of the trilingual (English/Spanish/Vietnamese) exhibit “Secrets of Circles” at the San Jose Children’s Discovery Museum, a Vietnamese respondent replied “Next time, we’ll bring the children’s grandparents to the museum—they would be thrilled if they could read Vietnamese labels and explain how things work to their grandchildren.”¹⁰⁷

Contemporanea also highlights language as a key tool for both respecting multifaceted conceptions of **culture & identity** and **amplifying** the abilities of bilingual Latino visitor groups.

The presence of Spanish-language communications is considered critical not only to support comprehension of the exhibits or programs (a functional need), but also *to create an emotional connection* [emphasis added]. Low-acculturation respondents frequently mentioned feeling more comfortable reading labels and panels in Spanish and cited largely functional benefits. High-acculturation and bilingual respondents mentioned more emotional reasons, including the concern that Spanish dominant family members also enjoy the visit. In essence, museums can immediately leverage the use of Spanish-language communication in marketing and interpretation to signal inclusion and cultural relevance to Latinos of all acculturation levels.¹⁰⁸

Low and high acculturated respondents may have different motivations for preferring Spanish language inclusion, but all receive emotional benefits from bilingualism (*Figure 5*). Consistently through my research (including the interviews that I conducted with art museum professionals), I have found that language is one of the single

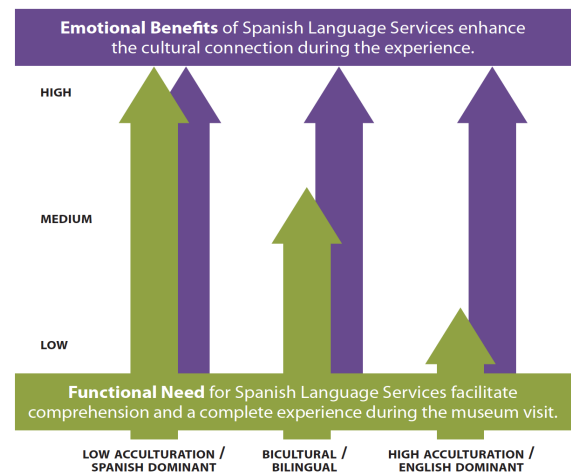


Figure 5: “Emotional Benefits of Spanish Language Services,” *The Latino Experience in Museums report*, 2015.

¹⁰⁶ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 6.

¹⁰⁷ Sue Allen, “Secrets of Circles: Evaluation of a Trilingual Exhibition,” *ASTC Dimensions*. July/August 2009, 6.

¹⁰⁸ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 2.

most important tools that a museum can use simply to show that they care about their heritage-language community.

The third area through which GENIAL recommends considering Latino audiences is **decolonization**. Throughout history, colonialist mentalities and practices have replaced the genuine, lived experiences of non-dominant, non-white groups and replaced them with assumptions which are often based in racism and xenophobia. The findings from the LEM report show that particularly among higher acculturated respondents, the traditional Eurocentric point-of-view of museums is noticed, especially “when the exhibit is focused on a Latin American culture and is curated by a non-Latino person, since the implication is that there are no Latinos capable of curating such an exhibit.”¹⁰⁹ As is consistently emphasized throughout the report, the most important solution is for museums to ensure Latino representation in their staff. During the GENIAL conference, participants discussed the co-creation of museum experiences between the museum and Latino community members as another method of decolonization. Co-creation with Latino communities allows community members to have sovereignty over their own story.¹¹⁰ The museum, as a place of privilege, can leverage its power to support stories which come directly from its local Latino, or heritage-language, community.

The final approach that the GENIAL report discusses for considering Latino audiences in through risk-taking. **Risk-taking**, as might be expected, involves museums being willing to learn from failure, “mov[ing] into potentially unknown territory” in their efforts towards engagement of non-dominant language groups.¹¹¹ An art museum which has typically favored minimal interpretation, featured works within the traditional Western art historical canon, and taken few efforts to welcome visitors who are not white and highly-educated takes risks when shifting towards an approach which includes *all* within their local community. It may alienate traditional supporters, board members, and even staff. Attempting new strategies also poses a potential financial risk— what if the museum invests in them and they later turn out to be ineffective for achieving desired impact? Yet, as was pointed out at the GENIAL summit, “If you

¹⁰⁹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 7.

¹¹⁰ GENIAL Summit Proceedings Report, (San Francisco Exploratorium, 2017), 11.

¹¹¹ GENIAL Summit Proceedings Report, 12.

don't take risks, you don't innovate."¹¹² Museums with strong, community-centered institutional buy-in have often found that the rewards outweigh the risks.

GENIAL and LEM specifically address the steps that museums can take to deepen and improve the experiences of Latino visitors in museums. I have not discovered similar reports which discuss generally what museums can do to engage visitors from other heritage-language-speaking groups. Although the four tenets proposed by GENIAL (identity and culture, amplification, decolonization, risk-taking) might play out differently for different cultural groups (see the Communications subsection which discusses San Jose CDM's navigating the differences in marketing for Latino and Vietnamese visitors), each is a valuable consideration for museums looking to increase inclusion of heritage language groups of any culture. Avoiding assumptions about culture and identity, celebrating the affordances of being bilingual and/or bicultural, dismantling oppressive messages and institutional body language, and pursuing these initiatives while being willing to fail and learn from mistakes are all crucial elements of creating meaningful language inclusion. In the next section, I will examine common holistic multilingual engagement strategies through the lens of these four ideas.

INTERPRETIVE TEXT

While this thesis emphasizes the necessity of *holistic* engagement efforts, reviewing best practices for bilingual label creation provides a useful entry point into some generally agreed-upon best practices. Much of what has thus far been published regarding multilingual engagement deals with bilingual or multilingual exhibit labels. Museum professionals across the field and within a variety of countries have developed bilingual/multilingual label-creation guidelines that take into account both the logistical and cultural necessities of producing high quality didactics in all languages. Carlos Plaza of the Miami Science Museum and Claire Champ of the Canadian History Museum in Quebec, both bilingual institutions, have each published highly practical advice for museums seeking to create meaningful labels in two languages. The two museums' institutional motivation for providing bilingual experiences differs significantly. The Miami Science Museum uses both Spanish and English in response to the significant number of Spanish-speakers in its geographic community, while the Canadian History Museum, as a government-funded institution, must comply with Canada's legal mandate to provide materials in French and English (their labels are written first in French, as the

¹¹² Ibid.

museum is in Quebec, then translated to English).¹¹³ However, their bilingual label creation process has much in common.

Plaza and Champ both emphasize the importance of interpretation over translating—providing labels equally rich in tone, style, and expression as their English counterparts rather than translating word-for-word at the expense of cultural nuance.¹¹⁴ This style of translation ensures that all languages are treated as equally important. Both museums also point out the impact of regionally specific language. Plaza notes that while most Spanish speakers might be familiar with the words *carro*, *coche*, and *auto* (car), a Cuban visitor, accustomed to using the word *carro*, would feel odd using the other two variations. If the museum were to use *coche* in a label, it could send the message to Cuban visitors that the translation was not designed with them in mind. He draws a parallel between the use of the words “flat” and “apartment” in English. While many U.S. visitors might understand the literal meaning of both words, “flat” stands out as distinctly British English.¹¹⁵ The Canadian History Museum also discusses adapting language used in travelling exhibition labels to adjust to regional variations, from British English to Canadian English and European French to Canadian French.

Even museums which have been committed to bilingual interpretation for years may have room for improvement. While evaluating the bilingual English/Spanish labels at the San Diego Natural History Museum, consultant Amparo Leyman Pino recommended several changes to the museum’s label-creation process. The primary audience of the museum’s Spanish-language interpretation is their Mexican and Mexican American community. Leyman Pino, originally from Mexico City herself, quickly noticed some jarring inconsistencies between the museum’s audience and the language presented on the labels. The museum had hired an Argentinian-born translator who had included noticeably Argentinian vocabulary in some of the labels (*largos* instead of the more neutral *patios* as a translation for backyard). As Leyman Pino wrote, “the text cannot sound Argentinian when a museum is serving a Spanish speaking

¹¹³ Claire Champ. “Best practices in Bilingual Exhibition Text: Lessons from a Bilingual Museum,” *Exhibition*. Spring, 2016.

¹¹⁴ Carlos Plaza. “In Other Words: Developing Bilingual Exhibits,” *Dimensions*, July/August 2009, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*.

audience from Mexico.”¹¹⁶ She recommends that museums generally use neutral Spanish when possible.¹¹⁷

Graphic design and word count are also important considerations when creating bilingual/multilingual labels. Well-done multilingual labels avoid the prioritization of English (or in the case of the Canadian History Museum, French) in the visual hierarchy. The size and style of the typography should remain consistent between languages.¹¹⁸

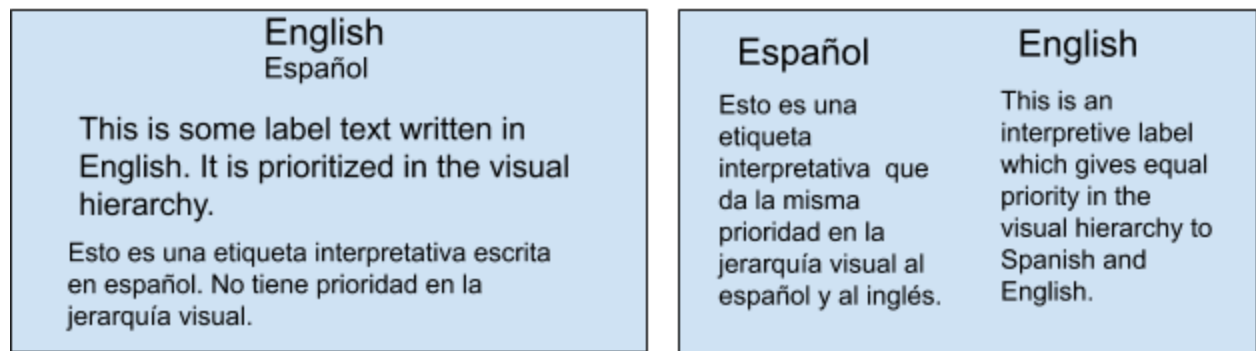


Figure 6: Designing bilingual labels for equal linguistic priority in the visual hierarchy.

In *Figure 6*, (above) the label on the left shows English stacked above the Spanish text. The English text is notably larger than the Spanish. This creates a visual signal that the label is primarily meant for English-speaking visitors. In contrast, the label on the right gives equal graphic treatment to the Spanish and English texts. The languages do not alternate, but rather belong to discrete sections of the label, clearly separated by white space. The font sizes of the title and body paragraphs are the same in both languages. As long as the museum ensures that the design remains readable and balanced between languages, there are a multitude of graphic strategies which can be used to create compelling bilingual/multilingual labels. The Oakland Museum of California conceived of a unique system for designing effective trilingual labels (English/Spanish/Chinese). Rather than creating “one primary text with two secondary translations,” the museum used placement and orientation to distinguish between languages while maintaining equal treatment (*Figure 7*, below). In a report describing the 2010 renovation which gave birth to the translated labels, the museum wrote that

¹¹⁶ Erica Kelly and Amparo Leyman Pino. “Beyond Translations: Towards Better Exhibit Labels,” *Exhibition*, Spring 2016.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Claire Champ, “Best practices in Bilingual Exhibition Text: Lessons from a Bilingual Museum,” 46. Carlos Plaza, “In Other Words: Developing Bilingual Exhibits,” 4.

The English at the top left gave it a conventional ‘firstness.’ The Chinese was set in vertical format, clearly distinguishing it from the two Latin alphabet languages. The Chinese also started at the top right, which is the conventional starting point for that language. The Spanish holds the central position in the cluster, and its first-line appears at eye-level for the average visitor.¹¹⁹

Serrel also discusses several other options aside from labels and wall text that museums can use when they have significant numbers of visitors who speak many different languages.

There are several alternate ways to provide translation without multiple complete sets of labels on view. Laminated, portable, reusable labels can provide two or more languages, as can free handouts, brochures, or audio tours. Museums in large urban center, or with heavy foreign tourism, make use of these devices regularly... There are digital options as well. At the Exploratorium, Spanish and Mandarin-speaking visitors can check out an iPad equipped with a QR code reader and use this to translate some (not all) exhibit labels.¹²⁰

She goes on to recognize that the strategies in which the museum decides to invest depend on the answers to the questions “Who are we translating for? What are their needs? What should be translated?” While each of these options is undoubtedly useful for aiding comprehension for visitors with low proficiency in English, their efficacy as tools for integrating a museum’s heritage-language community into an expected part of the museum experience is limited. These strategies are more reminiscent of the European model of translation as a practical, functional tool rather than as a powerful signal of inclusion for a museum’s local heritage-language community/communities. They still require visitors who need material in a language other than English to have a different museum experience from an English-speaking visitor. Consider a multigenerational family group with varying levels of English. If some members are reading exhibit labels while others are using laminated paper labels or audio tours, the social experience of the visitor group may be less cohesive. Each member will be able to access the same information, but may be cut off from the social opportunities afforded by accessing this information in the same way.



Figure 7: Trilingual label from the Oakland Museum of California's *How Visitors Changed Our Museum* report, 2010.

¹¹⁹ Karen G. Neilsen and Lisa Silberstein, “Translations *Traducciones* 翻譯,” *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, (Oakland Museum of California with support from the Irvine Foundation, 2010) 48.

¹²⁰ Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 108.

These strategies also place more of a burden on low-English proficient speakers to seek out translated materials on their own. While interviewing Laura Huerta Migus, she pointed out that art museums often require visitors to have an existing understanding of museum's behavioral codes in order to access translated materials.

The amount of work that we give to the visitor to get access to the tool they need is so much work that they don't use it. Because the conversation that I often hear is well, it cost so much money [to make] and [now] they won't use it. But when you really pull it back and you look at how the offer is being made—the amount of work, the burden really that's being put on the visitor to be proactive—there's so much assumption of what [the visitor] know[s] and what they need to know in order to be empowered to get that tool. I would say often people that have that power are likely not going to need the tool...Why should somebody who's just speaking a different language have to do [extra work]? ¹²¹

The types of additional translated interpretation mentioned by Serrell all place a burden on the visitor to seek them out. Huerta Migus references the idea that those most confident with the behavioral codes of museum spaces are more likely to not need translated interpretation. As mentioned in the Introduction chapter, in the U.S., white visitors with higher levels of education tend to feel comfortable navigating expected museum behavior. They may not, in fact, even consciously notice that such behavioral expectations exist at all, whereas for a visitor of color who perceives art museums as being for and about dominant, white culture, these behavioral norms may stand out. A visitor from a heritage-language community who is unused to going to the museum may notice that such codes are in place, yet feel nervous and uncomfortable trying to navigate them. For example, the Garibay Group's report on perceptions of the National Museum of American History by D.C.-area Latinos identified "fear or embarrassment about whether they "belong" at cultural venues and how they are to act" as a barrier for lower acculturated respondents.¹²² Including heritage languages as a part of the standard museum experience tells the visitor that they too belong in the museum environment without requiring them to proactively seek out additional linguistic resources.

While I have focused in this section on gallery interpretation through labels, it seems clear that museums looking to provide a fully inclusive multilingual experience must translate all

¹²¹ Laura Huerta Migus (Executive Director, Association of Children's Museums) in discussion with the author, September 20, 2019.

¹²² Cecilia Garibay, *Washington Metropolitan Area Latino Research Study for the Program in Latino History and Culture*, 5.

in-gallery materials—video subtitles, digital interactives which switch seamlessly between languages, printed gallery guides, and audio guides. Of course, this further necessitates careful logistic planning for the creation of multilingual materials, which already require a significant amount of time and resources. Serrell points out that creating multilingual labels “can nearly double the lead time needed for developing an exhibition.” However, research and case studies show the value of bilingual gallery interpretation.

The Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative report was a “3 year project designed to better understand current practices in bilingual exhibitions and Spanish-speaking visitors’ uses and perceptions of bilingual exhibitions” funded by the NSF’s Advancing Informal Stem Learning program.¹²³ Generally, the report aimed to gauge how informal science institutions are currently implementing bilingualism (particularly English/Spanish) and how the staff regarded the efficacy of these strategies. It also sought to characterize the engagement of groups and individuals with bilingual exhibits, and assess the extent to which bilingual exhibits contributed to the comfort of bilingual visitors. The report shows that while staff at many ISE institutions feel uncertain whether the benefits of bilingual interpretation outweigh the logistical challenges, for bilingual visitors, these labels have benefits that go beyond linguistic comprehension. Before conducting visitor research, the BERI team interviewed staff at 22 different ISE institutions in the United States. Tellingly, the interviews demonstrate that while many institutions feel that bilingual labels are desirable, they question to what extent they are truly necessary and whether they are worth the museum’s financial investment. Half of the museums submitted responses saying things such as “It’s hard to accommodate bilingual text due to space and budget. Is [the absence of Spanish text] a deal-breaker for visitors?”¹²⁴ They also voiced both “mission-related” and “bottom-line” concerns.¹²⁵ Several institutions stated that they allocated funds for the translation of labels for their temporary, but not their permanent exhibits. Others expressed that with tightening budgets and staff reductions they felt unable to provide the resources necessary for bilingual interpretation. The design and translation of multilingual labels can more than double the time necessary for planning an exhibition, so these responses are unsurprising.¹²⁶

¹²³Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner and Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative: Institutional and Intergenerational Experiences with Bilingual Exhibitions*, 4.

¹²⁴Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner and Carlos Plaza,, *Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative: Institutional and Intergenerational Experiences with Bilingual Exhibitions*, 38.

¹²⁵ Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner and Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative: Institutional and Intergenerational Experiences with Bilingual Exhibitions*,42.

¹²⁶ Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 106.

All institutions, however, communicated that they considered “bilingual interpretation as a service to the community, and commented on the social and learning benefits for visitors.”¹²⁷ The findings from the BERI team’s study of visitor interaction with bilingual labels in four U.S. ISE institutions, however, demonstrate that for bilingual visitors, these labels have important social and emotional impacts. The labels deepened their interpersonal engagement, allowing for more intergenerational conversations within the exhibit. Spanish-speaking parents felt more empowered to facilitate the museum visit for their children through the use of the bilingual labels, and reported feeling more welcome and comfortable, which created a stronger affinity with the institutions.¹²⁸

An evaluation of the San Jose Children’s Discovery Museum’s first trilingual exhibit, *Secrets of Circles* also demonstrated high support for multilingual interpretation among all visitors. The travelling exhibit, designed by CDM, explored the use of circles as tools for design and engineering, a phenomenon shared by all cultures. The museum wished to gauge whether visitors felt positively towards the exhibit’s trilingual labels or if they instead found the labels overwhelming or alienating. Avoiding the concern of overcrowding on multilingual labels, the label text in *Secrets of Circles* was extremely brief, often comprising of just one word in English with the Spanish and Vietnamese translations underneath. The museum was concerned with both the reactions of their English-language-only visitors and visitors who spoke languages other than English. Of the visitors evaluated, “77% spoke English (58% spoke English only), 8% spoke Spanish, 4% spoke Vietnamese, and 13% spoke Chinese).¹²⁹ Not only did the majority of these visitors feel positive towards the labels, but the evaluation also demonstrated that the trilingual labels improved content comprehension; “91% of visitors whose home language was represented in the labels correctly identified the circles theme, compared with 62% of visitors whose home languages were not represented.”¹³⁰ Additionally, some Latino visitors noted that the labels had actually helped their children develop bilingual language skills—the cognate relationship between the Spanish word “círculos” and the English word “circles” helped a child from a family which spoke primarily Spanish at home incorporate the

¹²⁷ Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner and Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative: Institutional and Intergenerational Experiences with Bilingual Exhibitions*, 43.

¹²⁸ Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner and Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative: Institutional and Intergenerational Experiences with Bilingual Exhibitions*, 7.

¹²⁹ Sue Allen, “Secrets of Circles: Evaluation of a Trilingual Exhibition,” *ASTC Dimensions*. July/August 2009, 6.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

English word into his vocabulary. Noticing that very few local Vietnamese families had attended the exhibition, the museum invited eight families which primarily spoke Vietnamese plus a Vietnamese community leader to come to the exhibition and give feedback. These visitors were also observed using the labels in a variety of ways that deepened the families' intergenerational engagement.

In their introduction to the 2015 edition of *Museums and Social Issues* dedicated to multilingualism in museums, Cecilia Garibay and Steven Yalowitz argue that museums have focused too exclusively on the written content provided to multilingual audiences while failing to take into account the ways in which these groups are influenced culturally by their language practices. Since “our language practices and choices reflect our social relationships and understanding of the world,” as museums deepen their engagement in multilingualism, they must be cognizant of the myriad ways in which language extends beyond label content.¹³¹ I will now discuss four other major areas in which museums can develop multilingual engagement strategies.

STAFF

As has already come up several times in this analysis, including staff which speak the local community's heritage language(s) or which come from the heritage-language community itself is one of the most important ways that museums can create meaningful language inclusion. A museum with this type of bilingual or multilingual staff members in both front-line and back-of-house-roles has many advantages. According to the LEM report, for Latino audiences, it is the single most important way that a museum can display signals of inclusion. States the report,

Participants reported wanting to see other Latinos working at museums, “...but not only as janitors.” Personnel who interact directly with visitors are critical for newcomers because they can help decode the experience, convey behavioral expectations, highlight available resources, and otherwise create a comfortable experience. In addition to seeing Latino staff included in visitor services, respondents would like to see them

¹³¹ Cecilia Garibay; Steven Yalowitz, “Redefining Multilingualism in Museums: A Case for Broadening Our Thinking,” *Museums & Social Issues*, 10:1, 2015, 4.

included in the planning of exhibits and programs, actively contributing a Latino perspective as curators and advisors.¹³²

By staffing roles throughout the museum with Latino employees, the museum demonstrates to Latino visitors that they recognize and respect the abilities and perspectives of Latinos in all of their diversity. With regard to decolonization and sovereignty, having Latinos in exhibit development, programming, and curatorial roles gives them the power to shape narratives which have typically been disseminated by museums through a dominant, Eurocentric cultural perspective. This goes for exhibits of all subject matter, not only those which are related to Latin American arts and culture, although it certainly is important that Latino staff have strong input in these narratives as well. The LEM report notes that Latino representation in staff was even reported as being slightly more important for respondents than having Spanish-language communications, indicating that for these audiences, a bilingual exhibit in a museum which does not also have Latino staff will not suffice. Notably, this response seems to have been shared among both high and low acculturated participants. If institutions truly want to make Latinos feel included during the museum experience, then the museum must commit to hiring Latino staff.

Having a number of bilingual staff members in public-facing positions has repeatedly been found to be one of the most effective ways that a museum can make members of its local, heritage-language community feel comfortable and included during a museum visit. Salazar and Betancourt's analysis of the Denver Art Museum's programs for Latino engagement supports Contemporanea's assertion of the importance of bilingualism and Latino staff. They point out that "Bilingual programs necessitate the museum hiring bilingual staff, especially since friendly, bilingual Latino staff create the greatest sense of inclusion. When museum employees look like the community at all levels, and they can converse in both languages, Latino audiences are much better served and included."¹³³ The Museum Profiles section of this thesis provides many examples of the ways in which bilingual staff have been invaluable for the creation of high quality translated materials and bilingual programs.

¹³² Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 7.

¹³³ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, "Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum," in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 191.

While nothing acts as a replacement for having bilingual or multilingual employees in many positions throughout the museum, museums can also take steps to increase the cultural competency of their English-monolingual employees. After hearing from focus group participants that they perceived the on-site atmosphere as being “uninviting” and “conservative,” the Fleisher Art Memorial activated their community engagement plan by first focusing on changing their internal culture.¹³⁴ They held cultural competency trainings “intended to raise Fleisher staff’s consciousness about how ethnic culture and socioeconomic class impact perceptions and communication styles.”¹³⁵ They conducted staff engagement trainings which included community engagement workshops, topics of which included “relationship building and resources in Southeast Philadelphia; community arts strategies and programming for new audiences; developing metrics for community engagement programs and activities; communication and language strategies for working with English-language-learners; and community engagement messaging and marketing,” demonstrating a holistic approach to community engagement.¹³⁶ Also included in the staff engagement trainings were visits to neighborhood gathering places where staff could meet with leaders of partner organizations (while Fleisher had some long standing partnerships, many employees had never actually been in direct contact with them). These visits allowed staff to better understand the realities of daily life in the communities that they were trying to reach. One of the direct results of these visits was the creation of a bilingual English/Spanish drawing class on Mondays to better suit the schedules of Spanish-speakers in the neighborhood who worked in the restaurant or entertainment industries and typically had Mondays off. The Minneapolis Institute of Art’s Juline Chevalier, Director of Interpretation, mentioned to me a compelling initiative used by her museum for increasing the cultural competency of frontline staff: staff who pass a Spanish language test receive a small pay raise. There are a number of ways in which museums can train all staff to create an atmosphere of inclusion for their local heritage language communities. Combining such training with hiring practices that prioritize bilingualism in a variety of museum roles will contribute to both better experiences for local bilingual visitors and greater institutional buy-in for the importance of language inclusion as a DEAI strategy.

¹³⁴ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 24.

¹³⁵ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 44.

¹³⁶ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 46.

PROGRAMS

Developing a program centered on a signature cultural event is a common strategy for engaging heritage-language audiences. The LEM report notes that these types of events often act as important entry experience for new visitors, who become interested in a museum through an event related to their culture.¹³⁷ These experiences are not only attractive to many Latino visitors because of personal memories and heritage, but also because they provide opportunities to pass on traditions to the next generation. The report analyzes Latino engagement through Robert Putnam's

concepts of bonding ("the value assigned to social networks between homogenous groups of people") and bridging ("[the value] of social networks between socially heterogeneous groups of people").

¹³⁸ Celebrations of signature cultural events provide bonding experiences which the report found tend to be particularly valued by less-acculturated Latino respondents.¹³⁹ Bridging, on the other hand, recognizes that the interests of

Latino visitors are not limited to Latino-specific events and exhibits (*Figure 8*). The report notes that higher-acculturated respondents were likely to seek out both bridging and bonding experiences in the museum. They felt resentful of outreach efforts limited to Latino-specific topics only, and expressed interest in engaging with a variety of cultural traditions.¹⁴⁰ The museum should take care to both understand its heritage-language community (do its members tend to be more high acculturated, low acculturated, or a mix?) and to develop multiple points of entry for engaging with the museum rather than assuming that one event will draw in all local speakers of a certain language.

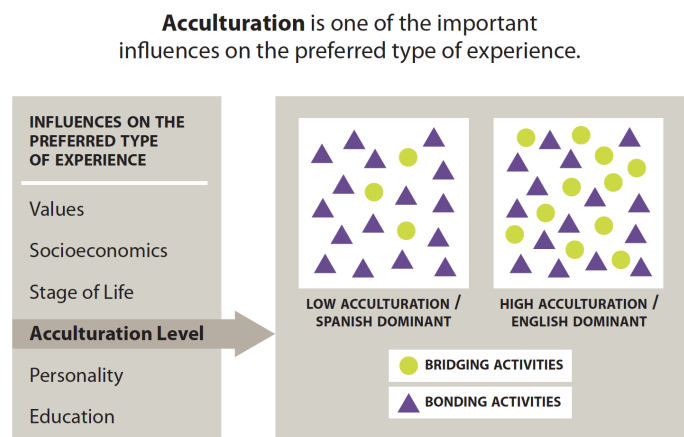


Figure 8: Effect of acculturation on bridging & bonding experiences, The Latino Experience in Museum report, 2015.

¹³⁷ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 3.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

Developing a signature, culturally-specific program for their local Latino community was a key engagement tool for the San Jose Children's Discovery Museum. Realizing that museum visitation "did not match the community demographics," the museum began a two-pronged approach for targeting Latino audiences: "the marketing department created a broad outreach effort, developing a signature annual event for the Latino community, while the education department invested in grassroots efforts designed to build relationships and foster in-depth programs."¹⁴¹ CDM began by identifying what they meant by a "Latino" audience, and which types of events and programming would be most meaningful for this group. In San Jose, the Spanish-speaking population primarily consists of Mexican immigrants or those of Mexican descent. The museum was able to rent a traveling exhibition from a children's museum in Mexico City that already included labels in Spanish and English. The began to create relationships with local Spanish-language media outlets and community centers and to distribute fliers within Latino stores and organizations. A celebration of *Los Reyes Magos* (Three Kings Day/Epiphany, January 6), a holiday which is geared towards children and prominent in Mexican culture but not the dominant culture of the U.S., was chosen as the signature event. From their connection with Spanish-language media, the Museum formed an Advisory Committee that continues to influence the institution's engagement with their Latino community today. Through an *emic* approach which responds flexibly to the needs of their target audience, the museum was able to successfully build a relationship with their local Spanish-speaking community, increasing attendance from Latino visitors to the point where it matched the community's demographics within five years. A key element in creating this genuine relationship has been the additional of several other celebrations specific to Mexican culture, such as *Las Lunadas Familiares*, family celebrations of the full moon, and the Mariachi Festival.¹⁴² By incorporating programs related to Mexican culture throughout the year, the museum signals that they are committed to inclusion beyond one-time events.

The Denver Art Museum (DAM) had already been holding culturally-specific programs for Latino audiences such as celebrations of *Día del Niño* and Our Lady of Guadalupe for roughly a decade when the museum decided to build a deeper institutional relationships with its Latino community. Data collected from their 2012 visitor panels directly informed the creation of

¹⁴¹ Jenni Martin and Marilee Jennings, "Tomorrow's Museum: Multilingual Audiences and the Learning Institution," *Museums & Social Issues*, 10:1, (2015), 84.

¹⁴² "Lunadas Familiares/Family Lunadas," San Jose Children's Discovery Museum. Accessed November 1, 2019. <https://www.cdm.org/celebrate/community-celebrations/lunadas/>

the museum's CelebrARTE program, a bilingual, on-site program which partners with Latino master-artists and promotes intergenerational engagement. The program's design is responsive to the cultural conception of art in many Latino communities, where "creativity is not separate from daily life and is passed from generation to generation, often led by elders or artistas-maestras (master-artists) in the community."¹⁴³ Early evaluations of the program demonstrated that visitors found it contributed—along with increased bilingual staff, information available in Spanish, and focus on Latino arts—to a more welcoming atmosphere. They reported particularly appreciating the program's focus on intergenerational experiences, which aligned strongly with their cultural values. The program is not based on a culturally-specific celebration, but was designed through culturally-responsive research practices which informed the meaning of its design.

Off-site programs can also be an effective engagement strategy, playing the dual role of providing a program while marketing the museum within the local community. Audience research at the Fleisher Art Memorial had shown that one of the most important ways it could raise awareness and increase trust and positive perceptions among new neighborhood audiences was by participating in community events outside of the Fleisher's walls. Fulfilling the "Come to Us" directive, Fleisher expanded its presence in the neighborhood. The 2009 celebration of *ARTspiration!*, Fleisher's annual community arts festival, included performers and artists from a huge variety of cultures. Fleisher relied heavily on community partnerships built through its participation in the Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative, an organization consisting of Fleisher and six other network agencies (many of which focus on providing resources for immigrants, neighborhood students, and the elderly) to source contributors to the festival. All participating community performers and artists were paid a stipend by Fleisher in recognition of their time. Since 2009, Fleisher has continued to use ARTspiration as a strategy for neighborhood engagement, increasing the festival's attendance from within their neighborhood steadily every year since 2009.¹⁴⁴ They also created the ColorWheels program, a mobile art center which Fleisher sets up in parks or at community events. ColorWheels is staffed by professional art instructors who have been trained to manage well the spontaneous environment outside of the institution's walls. However, translating these positive off-site

¹⁴³ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, "Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum," in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 188.

¹⁴⁴ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 58.

experiences into on-site participation proved challenging. Fleisher has since implemented a Día de los Muertos celebration. Local artists, most of whom were born in Mexico, collaborate with Fleisher students to create an *ofrenda* in Fleisher's exhibition space. On November 2, they hold a procession through South Philadelphia which ends at the site of the altar (*Figure 9*). Now in its seventh year, this event is both highly visible within Fleisher's neighborhood and draws participants directly into Fleisher's on-site space.¹⁴⁵



*Figure 9: Day of the Dead Celebration at Fleisher Art Memorial.
Photo by Justin Mayer on assignment for Colibri Workshop*

COMMUNICATIONS

One of the most frequently overlooked areas in which a museum can apply holistic multilingual engagement strategies is Communications. Whether through word-of-mouth, social media, flyers, or newspaper and television ads, marketing is a crucial tool for audience-building. If a museum is seeking to engage a heritage-language community which is not currently active in the museum, the bilingual strategies on-site will have limited impact if the community does not know that they exist. This can lead to a cycle in which museums invest in on-site bilingualism, fail to see their desired impact and outcomes materialize in terms of the creation of a new audience, and either abandon these initiatives or continue bilingualism with very little idea of how the resources are actually being used. This in turn impacts the museum's ability to advocate for more investment in bilingualism (see the Oakland Museum of California's current difficulty in deciding how much to invest in new multilingual materials in the Museum Profiles chapter). In contrast, when a museum develops a communications strategy based on the social and cultural practices of the target heritage-language group or groups, they are more likely to successfully change the community's perceptions of the museum, to achieve desired metrics, and to build new audiences.

¹⁴⁵ "Día de los Muertos— Altar Celebration and Procession." Fleisher Art Memorial. 2019. <https://fleisher.org/event/dia-de-los-muertos-altar-celebration-procession/>

The LEM report found that Latino respondents noticed when museum marketing and communications were not geared towards them. Participants in the study often felt that museums without Spanish-language services or interpretation on-site signal that they are not for Latino audiences. This is particularly pronounced with “low-acculturation, Spanish dominant Latinos, [but] even many bilingual Latinos vividly recalled language difficulty during a visit.”¹⁴⁶ Interestingly, the report also points out that the lack of Spanish in museums stands out in comparison to the more frequent use of Spanish for Latino audiences in the for-profit sector (especially in California, where this study took place). Respondents “[found] it perplexing that museums with public-service missions seem uninterested in reaching and serving Latinos, the largest ethnic group in the state.”¹⁴⁷ Targeted communications are an important way of making Latino visitors feel welcome. The report notes that “with no advertising in Spanish-language TV or radio, most potential Latino visitors rely on personal recommendations to assess the value offered by a museum, which may have the residual effect of perpetuating existing beliefs and behaviors.”¹⁴⁸ In fact, many Latino visitor groups may place more value in word-of-mouth recommendations than traditional marketing. Said one respondent in the Latino Experience in Museums survey “We went [to a museum] because my friend who’s been here longer than I said it was a good thing for us.”¹⁴⁹ The report goes on to suggest that “museums should be aware of these networks, understand how they form and operate, and learn how to connect with them. This could be one of the most important and effective engagement strategies for diversity that a museum could pursue, as it leverages and reinforces valued social connections.”¹⁵⁰ The Fleisher Art Memorial noticed a similar communications pattern among not only within their Latino neighborhood groups but also in their local Asian communities. They harnessed this insight by creating the FAMbassador program. The FAMbassadors consisted of three paid representatives from the communities which they hoped to engage who could promote Fleisher as trusted voices within their communities.¹⁵¹ Fleisher credits the FAMbassadors as key in changing the perception of the institution among their new neighborhood audiences.

¹⁴⁶ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 8.

¹⁴⁹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 4.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 64.

Apart from engaging word-of-mouth, museums can also cultivate relationships with media outlets geared towards their target heritage-language communities. The San Jose CDM's differing media approaches for their Latino and Vietnamese audiences illustrate the importance of developing culturally specific communications strategies. As discussed in the programs section, CDM first focused on Spanish language inclusion and engagement of their Latino community. Their communications strategy focused on bringing the museum's marketing team together with a group of local, Spanish-language media professionals. This group was key in helping the museum identify *el Día de Reyes* as an appropriate signature event. Partnering with members of the local Latino media allowed the museum to build trust through collaboration and communication. The members of the media group supported the museum's initiatives, even giving CDM pro-bono Spanish-language promotion. CDM also created print promotional materials in Spanish with the help of this media group, realizing that in order to create effective Spanish-language materials, they had to work with native speakers of Spanish, rather than using automated translators. Online translation is ineffective for expressing meaning, which can often shift between languages depending on the linguistic and cultural context.¹⁵² Additionally, they were careful to write both marketing and interpretative copy in *Mexican Spanish*.¹⁵³ Through these strategies, the museum achieved a notable shift in Latino visitor demographics, which matched San Jose's Latino demographics within five years of launching these bilingual initiatives.

After finding success in their engagement strategies with Latino audiences, CDM broadened its engagement efforts to include San Jose's second-largest ethnic population, the Vietnamese community. These efforts were modeled after the outreach done with the Latino community, and while many were effective, the museum had to adjust some of their methods to better match the social context of the Vietnamese community. Whereas CDM had quickly formed meaningful connections with Spanish-language media, they encountered difficulty reaching out to Vietnamese media outlets. Unlike the Latino media outlets, which were "owned and operated by single entities, Vietnamese radio and television were operated by different groups." As a result, unlike the pro-bono Latino initiative, Vietnamese "media personnel [hoped]

¹⁵² Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*, 109.

¹⁵³ Jenni Martin and Marilee Jennings, "Tomorrow's Museum: Multilingual Audiences and the Learning Institution," *Museums & Social Issues*, 10:1, (2015), 85.

that CDM would purchase media time and contribute to the fledgling radio and television stations.”¹⁵⁴ However, CDM remained flexible, recognizing that a one-size-fit-all approach to multilingual outreach would be inappropriate. They realized that they “needed to better understand how the museum was viewed by Vietnamese visitors.”¹⁵⁵ Instead of conducting a media campaign, they instead placed calls to community members living in zip codes with high Vietnamese populations. The museums offered these community members a six-month free membership in exchange for touring the museum and completing a survey. This technique generated word-of-mouth advertising among the Vietnamese community, who had become aware that the museum “was interested in being relevant for Vietnamese visitors.”¹⁵⁶ Several years on, evaluation of CDM’s multilingual engagement efforts “shows positive operational outcomes, including increased visitation across demographic groups, improved relationships with community members, and success in competitive funding opportunities.”¹⁵⁷ The museum has managed to build a mutually beneficial relationship with their heritage-speaking community that contributes to its long-term sustainability.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONSISTENCY

When a museum commits to meaningful language inclusion, it is making promises to its community. If the exhibition spaces are bilingual, visitors will likely expect bilingual wayfinding and informational handouts. If program marketing is bilingual, then the institution should ensure there are bilingual offerings readily available at the program. An anecdote from the Fleisher Art Memorial’s early efforts at engaging local Latino audiences illustrates the necessity of linguistic consistency:

In the summer of 2009... when Fleisher made its first large-scale attempt to engage neighborhood residents in the *ARTspiration!* Festival, it created Spanish-language advertisements and distributed them in neighborhoods with large Latino populations. On the program were performances by a Mexican folk dance troupe and art making based on the Mayan and Aztec zodiac calendars, led by a Spanish-speaking artist. But many of the families who came to *ARTspiration!* were dismayed to find there was no

¹⁵⁴ Jenni Martin and Marilee Jennings, “Tomorrow’s Museum: Multilingual Audiences and the Learning Institution,” *Museums & Social Issues*, 10:1, (2015), 87.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Jenni Martin and Marilee Jennings, “Tomorrow’s Museum: Multilingual Audiences and the Learning Institution,” *Museums & Social Issues*, 10:1, (2015), 88.

¹⁵⁷ Mary Esther Soto Huerta and Laura Huerta Migus, “Creating Equitable Ecologies,” *Museums and Social Issues*, 13.

Spanish-language support at information booths or on directional signage, making it difficult for them to enjoy the entire festival. That was rectified in subsequent years.¹⁵⁸

Fleisher's Spanish-language advertising promised an experience that it had not prepared to provide. This story points as well to the importance of creating a plan for the incorporation of language strategies; museums should consider the order in which bilingual/multilingual materials are rolled out in order to avoid creating false expectations.

A well-planned environment of consistent, holistic multilingual engagement strategies is key to creating welcoming institutional body language. Institutional body language refers to "the powerful messages museums convey through unspoken and unwritten manifestations of their being." Each strategy discussed in this literature review (bilingual staff, gallery interpretation, programs, communications, wayfinding, etc.) contributes to creating positive institutional body language for heritage-language visitors. As stated in the LEM report, bilingual staff signal to Latino visitors that they museum respects their skills, perspectives, and authority.¹⁵⁹ Careful translations in bilingual interpretation are so important precisely because inaccurate or tone-deaf translations may demonstrate that the museum considers the heritage language to be less important than English.¹⁶⁰ A mix of culturally-specific and general bilingual programs indicates that the museum cares about acknowledging cultural identity without reducing visitors' identities to a single facet.¹⁶¹ Combined, these strategies form institutional body language which welcomes heritage-language visitors, signalling that they museum considers them part of its community.

Maintaining high-quality holistic strategies throughout the museum takes a deep commitment to sustaining these strategies. In the following section, I will discuss the how the third part of the Cycle of Meaningful Language inclusion, Commitment to Sustainability, defines the long-term impact of meaningful language inclusion.

¹⁵⁸ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 85.

¹⁵⁹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 7.

¹⁶⁰ Claire Champ, "Best practices in Bilingual Exhibition Text: Lessons from a Bilingual Museum," 46. Carlos Plaza, "In Other Words: Developing Bilingual Exhibits," 4.

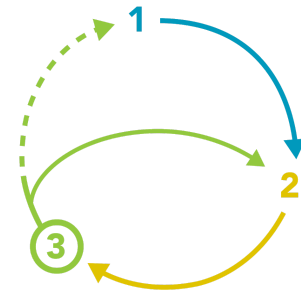
¹⁶¹ Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 4.

Cecilia Garibay, Patricia Lannes, Jose Gonzalez, "Latino Audiences: Embracing Complexity. Generating Engagement and New Initiatives for All Latinos," 3.

Section 3: Commitment to Sustainability

Internal Benefits of Commitment:

Creating meaningful language inclusion may seem daunting. After all, each of its elements— visitor and non-visitor audience research, museum-wide engagement strategies, and dedicated relationship-building— require considerable staff, time, and money. I argue, however, that once an institution makes a formal commitment to meaningful language inclusion, these seeming barriers will become workable pieces of the puzzle. As Erica Kelly from the San Diego Natural History Museum, which incorporated bilingualism into its strategic plan during the 1990's, put it "...having made the decision to go bilingual, all those concerns about its implications have simply become design constraints just like any other."¹⁶² In the realm of art museums, the Denver Art Museum has noticed something similar: "A great success of the DAM is the widespread enthusiasm over considering Latinos in their planning and the museum's support of this audience's needs. The challenge has not been to convince members of the institution that the effort is worthwhile, but to outline what changes need to be made so staff can adopt actionable next steps."¹⁶³



The BERI report backs up these claims with statistical evidence, revealing distinctions between those science museums which have "an institutional commitment, sometimes in the form of a mandate" to multilingual engagement, and those which do not. It notes that museums with institutional commitment, unsurprisingly, hold markedly more fully bilingual exhibits (76%-100% of all exhibits). These institutions tend to be focused on the connections that they can build with their communities; museums "which have formalized their commitment to bilingual interpretation in a strategic plan or policy demonstrated complexity in their awareness of social, culture, and language issues relevant to bilingual audiences."¹⁶⁴ Staff from these institutions raved about the learning experiences afforded to them as a result of the bilingual engagement strategies, reporting increased cultural competency. On the other hand, museums

¹⁶² Erica Kelly and Amparo Leyman Pino. "Beyond Translation: Towards Better Bilingual Exhibitions" *Exhibition*. Spring, 2016.

¹⁶³ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, "Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum," in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 193.

¹⁶⁴ Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner and Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative: Institutional and Intergenerational Experiences with Bilingual Exhibitions*, 76.

without formal commitments to holistic bilingual strategies tended to worry more about logistical elements such as “limitations of space and budget money, and finding the appropriate information delivery mechanism for bilingual interpretation” and spoke less about “the social consequences of bilingual exhibits.”¹⁶⁵ When staff, time, and money are accounted for in institutional planning, the pressure to come up with these resources does not fall on individual staff members who are pushing for multilingual engagement. Staff can focus more on the affordances created by language inclusion than the challenges. While these results may not be particularly surprising, they do provide strong support for laying out a shared vision and process of holistic bilingual or multilingual engagement in a strategic plan.

Briefly examining the differences between U.S. museums and international museums sheds light on the functional differences in bilingualism when an institutional mandate is present. The United States has no legal official language/languages, therefore, museums have no legal mandate to present content in any particular language. Some international institutions, however, have legal mandates that makes bilingualism a functional necessity (particularly because international museums are more likely to be government-funded). For example, Techniquet, a science center in Wales, funded by the Welsh Assembly Government, must use both English and Welsh equally in all aspects of the museum. The museum has faced some common logistical challenges in its conversion to full bilingualism, yet ultimately views it as something that has strengthened the institution as a whole. They reinforce the message of Welsh pride through design, using the colors of the Welsh flag for their bilingual labels. The museum sees its bilingualism as an affordance which allows Techniquet to “use the beauty of the Welsh language to create a unique scientific experience.” As discussed in the “Bilingual Labels” section, the Canadian History Museum also views legally mandated bilingualism as an asset. Their careful translation process has allowed them to strengthen the original language (French) and translated (English) labels, creating a higher quality experience for all visitors.¹⁶⁶

The ASTC *Multilingual Interpretation in Science Centers and Museum’s* report, which compares multilingualism in U.S. and international science museums, illustrates the relative prevalence of institutional mandates for multilingualism in international institutions (56% of U.S. respondents versus 77% of international respondents). It reiterates that U.S. institutions find

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Claire Champ, “Best practices in Bilingual Exhibition Text: Lessons from a Bilingual Museum,” 45.

multilingualism more difficult than their international counterparts in part because of a lack of institutional commitment— “For U.S. respondents, making multilingual labels a priority, or establishing buy-in from the rest of the institution or department, is the third biggest challenge (25%), while ensuring effective label design is the third biggest challenge for international respondents (43%).”¹⁶⁷ (Another factor for the relative ease with which international museums implement multilingualism could be that their motivations are relatively functional, driven by a wish to increase comprehension without necessarily making community connections). The discrepancy in priorities is also reflected in the budgets for multilingualism in U.S. and international museums. Whereas 29% of U.S. respondents reported not devoting any amount of their budget to multilingual strategies, only 7% of international institutions do not include multilingualism in their budgets.¹⁶⁸

Sustainable Practices

Institutional commitment lays the foundation of sustainable community engagement through language inclusion. Maintaining strong relationships with partner organizations and planning for the regular evaluation of multilingual interpretation, programs, and materials are two key ways in which museums can translate this commitment into sustainable practices.

As mentioned in the section describing the San Jose CDM’s communications strategy, the museum convened a group of Spanish-language media professionals to develop their Latino engagement plan. This initial collaboration was so successful that sparked the creation of the institution’s Spanish-language Advisory Committee, which “continues to influence Museum operations and events.”¹⁶⁹ Fleisher’s work with the Southeast Philadelphia Collaborative also exemplifies the collaborative attitude at the heart of sustainable relationships founded in mutual respect. Fleisher began their work with a two-pronged approach to connecting with their communities. They both deepened existing relationships and created new relationships with local social service agencies for underrepresented and immigrant groups. Even before Fleisher

¹⁶⁷ Veronica Garcia Luis, Hugh McDonald, Laura Huerta Migus, Alexandra Chili, *Multilingual Interpretation in Science Centers and Museums*, (Association of Science-Technology Centers & the Exploratorium 2009), 8.

¹⁶⁸ Veronica Garcia Luis, Hugh McDonald, Laura Huerta Migus, Alexandra Chili, *Multilingual Interpretation in Science Centers and Museums*, (Association of Science-Technology Centers & the Exploratorium 2009), 27.

¹⁶⁹ Jenni Martin and Marilee Jennings, “Tomorrow’s Museum: Multilingual Audiences and the Learning Institution,” *Museums & Social Issues*, 10:1, (2015), 87.

began the Wallace Foundation-funded audience-building project, they were already collaborating as the site of one of three SEPC-run Teen Lounges, which provided an afterschool arts space for teenagers. Fleisher also created relationships with a local Buddhist temple and a Catholic Church with many Mexican attendees. As they broadened their reach, other organizations in Southeast Philadelphia began to reach out to Fleisher to form partnerships.¹⁷⁰ The local organizations found Fleisher attractive because the institute made sure to develop solutions which aligned its internal capacity with that of its partners. Said Dr. Jose Gonzales, Fleisher's former manager of research and community engagement strategies, "A program can't be a drain on [a partner organization's] resources. We can't develop programs that are going to be so taxing on them that they're not going to be able to deliver over the long haul. They need to be manageable."¹⁷¹ Fleisher's SEPC partners note that the organization also creates positive collaborative experiences simply through their willingness to listen and engage in dialogue. Both Fleisher and its partners recognize that their long-term relationships serve to strengthen all of their institutions. Through these relationships, community members who are involved with Fleisher's partners see that the institute is serious about its intention to welcome all members of the neighborhood.

Regular evaluation is another crucial practice for committing to sustainable language inclusion efforts. For Randi Korn, "intentional practice stems from having an evaluative mindset where staff ask questions and explore challenges together with the purpose of continually learning and improving as they pursue achieving impact."¹⁷² Korn's Cycle of Intentional Practice provides a wonderful illustration of the role that evaluation plays in creating impact (Figure 10, below). At each stage of the Cycle of Intentional Practice, Korn encourages the museum to continually think in terms of impact; Evaluation helps the museum answer the question



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Figure 10: Cycle of Intentional Practice, Randi Korn, 2018

¹⁷⁰ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 53.

¹⁷¹ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 84.

¹⁷² Randi Korn, *Intentional Practice for Museums*, (Lanham, Maryland; Rowman & Littlefield, 2018) 3.

“In what ways have we achieved our intended impact?”¹⁷³ It provides the necessary data to allow the museum to reflect on results, realign their actions with their intended impact, and then to begin new planning based on the museum’s past experiences. Korn notes that while evaluation, particularly summative, often happens at the close of a project or exhibition, the museum should always use it as a tool for provoking further reflection. Writes Korn, “The intent of the evaluation process, from an intentional practice perspective, is not to judge but to learn. While evaluation may produce concrete products (reports with data) and provide results that symbolize an end point... someone who lives on the Cycle of Intentional Practice will use evaluation and reflection as learning opportunities to affect future work.”¹⁷⁴

Evaluation, like multilingual interpretation, programs, and materials, typically requires the museum to invest money and/or staff time, but I believe that it is key to developing long-term meaningful language inclusion (the recent Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES) initiative also provides evaluation assistance for small museums who may not be able to take on larger projects). An Experience Developer at the Oakland Museum of California, which put such great effort into the creation of its trilingual interpretation, told me during an interview that the museum currently has little idea of how, if at all, visitors are using these materials. The museum conducted initial testing and evaluation when the new Art Gallery opened in 2010, but has not evaluated their multilingual materials since. The lack of understanding of whether Spanish and Mandarin speaking visitors are engaging with their language inclusion efforts makes it very difficult for the Experience Developer, as the visitor advocate on the exhibits team, to convince the museum to invest in new multilingual materials. For example, while the permanent galleries are fully trilingual, the museum currently provides Spanish and Mandarin translations on laminated handouts in most temporary exhibits. Without knowing whether visitors are using the handouts or how they respond to the permanent exhibit labels, further efforts are stymied. Evaluation could propel the museum to reflect on the strategies that they developed ten years ago to ensure that they are aligned their practices with their desired impact.

Achieving Impact?

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Randi Korn, *Intentional Practice for Museums*, 63.

Although I have used the phrase “achieve impact” throughout this thesis, it is important to recognize that true impact is not something that can truly be achieved or perfected.

According to Korn,

[T]he Cycle of Intentional Practice spirals upward. In reality, a museum’s impact statement reflects its most current iteration of what it would like to achieve, which includes what is relevant to the public; both the museum and the public are in constant states of change, and as such, achieving impact is always just beyond a museum’s reach. In that way, ‘the possibility of achieving a final goal’ is denied; however, rather than dwelling on that point, museums need to maintain focus on continual learning and improvement while pursuing impact, which is the essence of intentional practice.¹⁷⁵

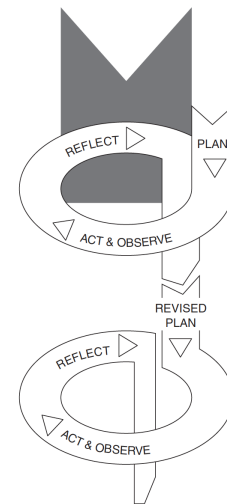


Figure 11: Kemmis & McTaggart’s Action Research Spiral, *Action Research in Healthcare*, 2011.

Although visualized on paper as a 2-D circle, in reality, the Cycle does not loop flatly, but spirals, building on past knowledge and striving for constant improvement. Korn’s conception of the Cycle of Intentional Practice is reminiscent of the healthcare field’s action research spiral, a collaborative model which seeks to improve practice through continual “action, evaluation, and critical reflection (*Figure 11*).”¹⁷⁶ I believe that the process of creating meaningful language inclusion follows such a spiral. Even those museums who employ excellent research, forge deep partnerships, develop a sensitive and culturally responsive plan of holistic multilingual engagement strategies, and see positive initial results must continue to follow the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion, engaging once again in culturally-competent audience research to ensure the continued relevance of their initiatives. This renewed research does not have to take the form of a full-scale ethnographic study, although it can. The Fleisher Art Memorial’s Jose Gonzales “estimated that to stay on top of neighborhood dynamics, some of the earlier research (e.g., focus groups and interviews with community organization leaders and residents) would need to be redone every five to 10 years.”

¹⁷⁷ As discussed in the Demographics, Visitorship, and Audience-Building section of the

¹⁷⁵ Randi Korn, *Intentional Practice for Museums*, 6.

¹⁷⁶ Elizabeth Koshy, Valsa Koshy, Heather Waterman, *Action Research in Healthcare*, (SAGE Publications Ltd., 2011), 5.

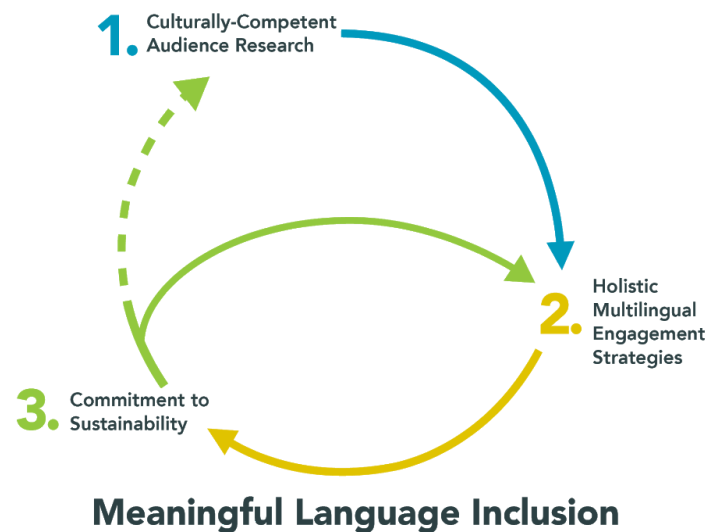
¹⁷⁷ Bob Harlow, *Staying Relevant in a Changing Neighborhood*, 84.

Introduction chapter, the United States is experiencing rapid demographic changes. Even at the beginning of Fleisher’s neighborhood engagement plan, Gonzales recognized that the South Philadelphia community that Fleisher designed for in 2010 might look quite different in 2020. Continuing to “spiral” along the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion keeps museums in close contact with the communities they are trying to reach, forging genuine relationships in pursuit of impact.

Armed with data from evaluation (Stage 3) and the renewed research (Stage 1), the museum can focus again on their Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies— Are current visitors finding them to be effective? How, if at all, have they improved the visitor experience for visitors from the local, heritage-language community? Have they been successful at building a new audience or changing perceptions of the museum? How might the strategies be modified based on evaluation and new research in order to better create meaningful language inclusion? Additionally, upon renewing the research phase of the Cycle, the museum can return to the questions explored before embarking on their initial research, refining not just the specific engagement strategies but also reconsidering their motivations and desired impact. Korn notes that aligning current practice to impact is a key element of intentional practice. She suggests the following questions to guide this reflective process upon the completion of an evaluatory cycle:

- What aspects of the impact statement fall short, given the evaluation results? Why?
- What might you change in the impact statement (and outcomes) so the museum and its potential are better aligned with what is realistic to achieve without belittling your aspirations?
- What actions and practices might you change so the museum and its potential are better aligned with what is realistic to achieve without belittling your aspirations?¹⁷⁸

With regard to meaningful language inclusion, the broader aspiration is to create genuine relationships with local, heritage-language communities. Museums can support this aspiration



¹⁷⁸ Randi Korn, *Intentional Practice for Museums*, 116.

with an impact statement that relate more specifically to the unique characteristics of their target audience(s). As the museum learns about its heritage language community as well as reflects on its own strengths and weaknesses for implementing bilingual initiatives, it should continue to refine its desired impact and outcomes. While truly “achieving impact” may be elusive, I believe that museums who commit to continually undertaking these steps will develop genuine, mutually beneficial relationships with their local heritage-language communities.

Note: Defining *Meaningful*

For the purpose of this thesis, I use the term *meaningful language inclusion* to refer to multilingualism as a strategy for amplifying a museum's inclusion of its local, heritage-language community or communities. The Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion is meant to be of particular use to art museums, as they typically have to take on a great amount of structural change in order to develop spaces which welcome Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI). I have chosen the word "meaningful" to refer to the social and emotional impacts of language inclusion as distinct from an approach based on providing only practical tools for linguistic comprehension, often geared towards tourist audiences. However, I would like to acknowledge that there are models of multilingualism in museums that are certainly meaningful even though they do not fit within my model.

Although I would typically argue that a museum, once they have decided to increase language inclusion, should ideally commit to bilingualism all exhibition spaces in order to be most "meaningful," this is not necessarily the case if the entire institution is a co-creative space with its community. The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience (Seattle, WA) is one such museum, co-creating all exhibits with its Asian Pacific American (APA) communities. Rather than being driven by a top-down model of curatorial expertise, the museum relinquishes traditional authority in favor of amplifying the voices and knowledge of its community partners. As such, the community co-creators decide whether particular exhibits should be bilingual or not, and the museum follows their lead while developing the exhibit.¹⁷⁹ In the past, the museum has created bilingual exhibits in Korean and Khmer.¹⁸⁰ As the Wing Luke represents a multiplicity of Asian Pacific American cultures, this model not only fulfills the desires of community members, but also ensures that no Asian languages are prioritized above others. Unlike many U.S. art museums, which have their roots in the private collections of wealthy philanthropists, the Wing Luke Museum is grounded in representation of its community. This co-creative model ensures that the museum's efforts are inherently meaningful.

¹⁷⁹ Travis Monagle, "It's All Greek to Me: How Museums Use Language to Connect to Community," (masters diss., University of Washington, 2017), 23.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

I have also come across exhibits which are bilingual in order to better represent the exhibit's content creators rather than to increase comprehension and emotional connectivity within the local community. In these cases, only a very small portion of visitors may actually be expected to speak the language(s) other than English on display. The language inclusion, therefore, is a gesture of respect and representation for the creators of the exhibit content. In my research, I came across two examples where Native languages have been carefully incorporated into exhibits in order to showcase the cultures of their creators.

In what certainly represents the exhibit with the greatest number of languages I came across while researching this thesis, the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia) developed labels in over 60 Native languages for its 2019 exhibit *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*.¹⁸¹ Although this decision came with many unique and sensitive challenges, the museum committed to the importance of the project, highlighting Native languages to combat to the U.S.'s long history of Native language erasure. Juline Chevalier, Mia's Head of Interpretation and Participatory Experiences, confirmed that the museum does not expect that many visitors will find a functional use for these translated labels. The translations are "more about cultural respect, cultural celebration, recognizing the individuality of different cultural groups, and showing folks who don't understand or weren't aware of that variety [of Native cultures] by giving them a visual representation."¹⁸² While this does not represent meaningful language inclusion as defined by the scope of my thesis since it is oriented towards representing the artists rather than local communities, I believe that Mia's label translations demonstrate a careful and significant multilingual art museum initiative.

The Anchorage Museum's 2009 exhibit, *Yuungnaqpiallerput/The Way We Genuinely Live: Masterworks of Yup'ik Science and Survival*, similarly created bilingual interpretation in order to create a deep and authentic relationship with their local Native community. Although the museum estimates that only about 5% of visitors spoke Yup'ik Eskimo, the region's Native language, bilingualism became a foundation for the entire exhibit.¹⁸³ The museum worked with

¹⁸¹ Dara Moskowitz Grumdahl, "Mia Celebrates Native Women Artists With 'Hearts of Our People' Exhibit," Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine. May 31, 2009.

<http://mspmag.com/arts-and-culture/mia-hearts-of-our-people-native-women-artists/>

¹⁸² Juline Chevalier (Head of Interpretation and Participatory Experiences, Minneapolis Institute of Art) in discussion with the author, September 10, 2019.

¹⁸³ Ann Fienup-Riordan, "Sharing Yup'ik Language, Knowledge, Heritage" *Dimensions*, July/August 2009, 8.

Yup'ik elders to showcase traditional Yup'ik science. To create the exhibit, the elders spent hundreds of hours explaining these traditions in their own language to two museum staff members, who transcribed and then translated the conversations. To respect the means by which the exhibit information was acquired, the museum then presented all text bilingually. They also created a station where visitors who didn't speak Yup'ik could learn basic words and phrases. By working with Yup'ik elders in their own language, the Anchorage Museum developed an authentic representation of traditional knowledge for its non-Yup'ik speaking visitors.

These three museums demonstrate ways language inclusion as a means of respecting the sovereignty of content creators. While this thesis focuses on bilingual/multilingual efforts geared towards representing museums' local heritage language communities, I felt that this, too, is a type of meaningful language inclusion which should not be overlooked.

In the next chapter, I review my methodology for the original research undertaken as part of this thesis. In order to better understand the current state of the field, I conducted interviews with museum professionals in a variety of art museums across the country. The Methodology chapter guides the reader through my process of selecting bilingual/multilingual art museums to profile as well as the interview coding which informed the creation of my guide to meaningful language inclusion.

Methodology

Starting in Fall 2019, I began to conduct a series of interviews with museum professionals (mostly from art museums) who work or have worked closely with language inclusion. I focused on museums that appeared to have a large degree of bilingualism or multilingualism based on sources in the literature review and my search of museum websites, blog posts, and articles published on museum-centric websites. I then conducted semi-structured interviews with staff from nine museums around the United States as well as two other museum professionals who have been deeply engaged in language inclusion during their careers (Amparo Leyman Pino and Laura Huerta Migus). These conversations allowed me to create profiles of each museum and were instrumental for the construction of the Self-Assessment for Meaningful Language Inclusion.

While the interviews were based on the same series of questions, I varied the wording and question order during each interview according to the particular conversation. In general, I sought information about the following topics:

- Institutional motivation: Why did the museum decide to become bilingual/multilingual? Is there a strong institution-wide commitment?
- Audience: Describe the museum's local heritage-language community/communities.
- Research & evaluation: What research, if any, was conducted prior to becoming bilingual/multilingual? What evaluation has the museum since conducted of their language inclusion?
- Holistic multilingual engagement strategies— what are all the ways in which the museum incorporates languages other than English?
 - Translation: Describe the museum's translation process and language-specific decision-making.
 - Staff: Does the museum employ staff who speak the language of the target heritage-language community? Which positions do they hold in the museum? Are there plans to hire more staff who speak languages other than English?

- Marketing: How, if at all, does the museum market to their heritage-language community/communities?
- Wayfinding & signage: Does the museum incorporate bilingual/multilingual wayfinding and signage?
- Programs: How does the museum include bilingual programs?
- Progress: What changes, if any, has the museum noticed as a result of their language inclusion efforts?
- Challenges: What have been some of the biggest challenges of creating a bilingual/multilingual museum (often, participants answered this without my asking while giving answers to other questions)?
- General questions:
 - What, in your opinion, would be detrimental to creating meaningful language inclusion?
 - What is your vision of the ideal bilingual/multilingual museum?

Museum Profiles

I have then combined the results of these interviews with information gleaned about the museum from their websites and blogs, articles on sites like Medium.com, articles in museum publications, and studies published by the museums to create a museum profile for each institution. Each study begins with a general introduction of the museum. I then describe the museum's target audience for its language inclusion efforts and any research that the museum has conducted within this community. Next, I detail the holistic multilingual engagement strategies being employed by the museum. Finally, I discuss the museum's commitment to sustainability and any next steps that the museum either plans or hopes to undertake. My thesis presents museum profiles for the following museums:

- **Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art** (Bentonville, AR): Crystal Bridges was the first museum that I interviewed after a member of my graduate school cohort told me that the museum had recently become bilingual (English/Spanish). As I conducted this interview during the proposal stage of my thesis, it does not follow the same structure as the rest of the interviews, but still provided similar information. This early interview was instrumental in guiding my thinking for the rest of the project. Crystal Bridges made a

quick decision at an institutional level to become bilingual during a gallery reinstall. The speed of the project meant that they did not have time for audience research of their Latino community. Post-install, visitors have pointed out errors and inconsistencies in the labels. The museum is now undertaking an ethnographic study of Latinos in the Bentonville, AK area. I appreciated the openness of the museum staff to whom I spoke, as this interview began my reflection on the importance of culturally-competent audience research before implementing multilingual strategies.

- **Fitchburg Art Museum** (Fitchburg, MA): I discovered the Fitchburg Art Museum by doing an internet search for “bilingual art museum” (interestingly, it is the only museum included in my museum profiles that appears as a result for this search term). After reading an article about the strong institutional commitment that the museum made to become more inclusive of its Spanish-speaking community, I decided to research the institution further, contacting Director Nick Capasso for an interview. The museum interests me as an example of an institution which has developed bilingualism specifically for the types of aims which I define as meaningful language inclusion.
- **National Portrait Gallery** (Washington, D.C.): I visited the National Portrait Gallery during Summer 2019 and was excited to find that its gallery interpretation is completely Spanish/English bilingual. The museum is currently working to spread bilingualism to other areas of the museum like marketing and wayfinding. As the National Portrait Gallery is a Smithsonian museum, it has a uniquely large and broad scope in terms of its heritage language audience. Creating bilingualism while navigating challenges like sharing a building with another, non-bilingual museum and being inclusive of a wide variety of Spanish-speakers make this an interesting case for exploring what meaningful language inclusion looks like to a national institution. The National Portrait Gallery is the only institution profiled here that I have had the opportunity to visit at this time.
- **Oakland Museum of California** (Oakland, CA): While reading the chapter on multilingual labels in Beverly Serrel’s *Exhibit Labels*, I noticed the innovative design of the Oakland Museum of California’s (OMCA) trilingual exhibit labels (English/Spanish/Mandarin). Researching the museum further, I came across their report on institution’s transformation during their large-scale renovation, *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*. The report includes an entire chapter on the creation of trilingual interpretation for their Art Gallery. I was particularly interested in the museum’s

collaboration with its community advisory councils in creating appropriate translated materials.

- **Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History:** I learned that the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History (MAH) was bilingual during an interview with museum consultant (and thesis committee member) Amparo Leyman Pino. I was somewhat surprised not to have discovered that the museum is bilingual sooner in my research. Although the museum's former director Nina Simon shared much about the museum's challenges, innovations, and philosophies in her two books and her Museums 2.0 blog, she seems to have written little about the museum's bilingual efforts. I spoke with Intercultural Programs Coordinator Helen Aldana to find out more about how this museum, which is famous for its co-creative, community-centered practices, approaches language inclusion. Helen also very kindly emailed me the MAH's current Plan for Latino Engagement and 2014 ethnographic study of their local Latino community (conducted by Contemporanea).
- **Denver Art Museum** (Denver, CO): After learning about the Denver Art Museum's (DAM) longstanding efforts to engage Latino visitors, through Betancourt and Salazar's chapter on "Engaging Latino Audiences" in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums*, I decided that the DAM must be included in my research. I was curious to know how the museum had expanded its engagement strategy since the anthology's publication in 2014. I spoke with Leticia Salinas, who worked as the DAM's Community Engagement Coordinator until January 2018, to discover more about how bilingual initiatives had taken shape during her time at the museum.
- **Dallas-Area Art Museums**
 - **Amon Carter Museum of American Art-** I had not initially planned on contacting the Amon Carter Museum. I reached out to their current Manager of School and Community Outreach, Jessice Fuentes, because I saw a blog post she wrote while working at the Dallas Museum of Art about creating bilingual signage for the museum's C3 Gallery. I emailed Fuentes and found that she had since moved to her position at the Amon Carter, where she had been working to pilot a bilingual school tour program. Although the Amon Carter Museum does not currently provide other bilingual interpretation or experiences, Fuentes spoke of the tours as the starting point for increasing the museum's bilingual efforts.
 - **Dallas Art Museum:** I contacted the Dallas Museum of Art after reading an article on Medium.com about the pilot for a bilingual Spanish/English offsite

school program developed by Bernardo Velez Rico, the DMA's Teaching Specialist for School Programs. I was interested to speak with Velez Rico after having spoken with Fuentes, since they are both Dallas-based art educators piloting bilingual school programs. Our conversation unfortunately failed to record, but Velez's article for Medium.com describing the program covers much of the same territory. I use both my notes from the interview and the Medium.com article as the basis for the DMA's museum profile.

- **Minneapolis Institute of Art:** Although not included in my museum profiles, I conducted an interesting interview with Juline Chevalier from the Minneapolis Institute of Art. We primarily spoke about the museum's label translation for their *Hearts of Our People: Native Women Artists*. For as many pieces, the museum translated the object label into its creator's tribe's Native language. Currently, there are over 60 different languages represented in the exhibition. While speaking with Chevalier, I realized that this represents a different type of language inclusion which seeks to amplify representation and authenticity on the part of the content creators without the expectation that museum visitors will speak the language(s). Mia's approach falls outside of the scope of my thesis, which explores multilingualism with the intent of deepening inclusion and access for the museum's local heritage-language community/communities, so is not included as a museum profile.

Guide to Meaningful Language Inclusion: Foundations Rubric

First-Stage Coding:

Qualitative coding helped me analyze the 11 interviews I conducted for my thesis project (9 art museums and two museum professionals). I manually coded the transcripts and notes for each interview (unfortunately, the file with the recording of my interview with Helen Aldana of the Santa Cruz MAH became corrupted. I coded the portion of the transcript that I could recover and the notes that I took during and post-interview). Using descriptive coding, in which I assigned a code to phrases or sections of text depending on the subject being talked about, I created a total of 59 first-stage codes. Examples of these codes include: Consistent Experience, Programs, Internal Representation, Partnerships, Internal Resistance, and Testing. After manually coding each transcript, I created a spreadsheet which allowed me to group respondent's answers by code and thereby visualize each code's frequency.

Second-Stage Coding:


Next, I grouped the codes into categories. In creating the groups, I was partially guided by ideas which had formed during my literature review as well as by any natural or intuitive connections that I found between the codes.

Example Grouping:

Consistent Experience
Wayfinding & Signage
Marketing
Evaluation
Holistic Strategies
Superficial Efforts
Programs
Collateral Materials
Front-line Staff
Institutional Body Language
Burden on Visitor
Showing Welcome

After assigning the codes to a group, I assigned names to each category based on what I felt it best represented:

Consistent Experience
Wayfinding & Signage
Marketing
Evaluation
Holistic Strategies
Superficial Efforts
Programs
Collateral Materials
Front-line Staff
Institutional Body Language
Burden on Visitor
Showing Welcome



Institutional Body Language

Ultimately, I developed 9 categories as a result of my coding. I have included brief definitions to clarify the scope of each category.

- **Museum Type**
 - Refers to how the type of museum (art, science, children's) affects the process necessary for undertaking meaningful language inclusion and the ways that art museums can both face the challenges and tap into the potential of their museum type.
- **Structural Inequity & Exclusion**
 - Refers to how has the museum contributed to inequity and exclusion both now and in the past. Explores how the museum respond to current events related to things like racism and discrimination and what steps has museum taken internally to confront these issues.
- **Internal Culture**
 - Refers to how things like management structure and hiring practices impact DEAL efforts; how museums can reflect on its own readiness to commit to meaningful language inclusion; and how museums can promote full institutional buy-in.
- **Commitment to Community**
 - Refers to how the museum manifests its commitment to the community and how the museum promotes full institutional buy-in. Refers to how the museum considers the ways in which it exerts soft power on its community and how this capacity for soft power affects both members and non-members of the heritage-language community.
- **Logistics & Practicalities**
 - Refers to whether the museum has the necessary staff, funds, and time (i.e., internal capacity) to take on meaningful language inclusion; what strategies the museum can use to leverage or amplify this capacity; and how the museum has planned for the logistical processes inherent in MLI efforts (research, translation, hiring, etc.).
- **Partnerships**
 - Refers to how local partners have helped the museum better understand and connect with its heritage-language community; how partnerships have promoted collaboration and co-creation; and how the museum has ensured that these partnerships are mutually beneficial.
- **Culturally-Competent Audience Research**

- Refers to how the museum has developed methods of learning from the heritage-language community about their lifestyles, values, and perceptions and whether these methods are responsive to the culture of this community.
- **Institutional Body Language**
 - Refers to the multilingual strategies used to create welcoming institutional body language for heritage-language visitors and how these strategies do or do not mutually reinforce one another throughout the museum.
- **Continued Evaluation**
 - Refers to whether museum conducted an initial evaluation of its language inclusion efforts; whether they have been re-evaluated in the intervening years; and how the museum has responded to this evaluation OR how the lack of evaluation has impacted the museum's ability to move forward?

I have ordered these categories in the rubric so that the three final categories are analogous with the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion developed through my literature review. I view the six preceding categories as guidance for the reflection and goal-setting the museum must carry out before beginning audience research.

Museum Profiles

Although there is little published work on the topic, several art institutions are currently committed to community-oriented language inclusion. In this section, I present museum profiles describing the language inclusion work currently being done in eight museums. Six of the eight have fully multilingual gallery interpretation and employ at least one other type of multilingual strategy. The other two museums, the Dallas Museum of Art and the Amon Carter Museum, located in the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas, have recently piloted bilingual school programs and indicate that their institutions desire to become more bilingual in the future. All of these institutions have implemented language inclusion in order to build connections with local heritage-language speaking groups. Seven of the eight are bilingual in English/Spanish, while the Oakland Museum of California has trilingual English/Spanish/Chinese interpretation. Information about these museums comes from a mix of news articles, museum websites, phone interviews I conducted with staff and leadership, internal documents, and one published report (OMCA's *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*). Examining the ways in which they have succeeded and, at times, struggled in their language-based efforts illuminates what meaningful language inclusion looks like at different levels and in a variety of contexts.

Note on language: In the museum profiles, I sometimes use the word Latino and sometimes Latinx. I have chosen to switch to Latinx, which dispenses with the gender binary of Latino/Latina, when the museum about which I am writing uses this term in their documents and descriptions.

Note on content: My ideas about meaningful language inclusion developed throughout the period of time in which I conducted these interviews. While I attempted to follow the same semi-structured interview script during these conversations (apart from an early interview with Crystal Bridges), some of the interviews, particularly those conducted early on in the research, lack some of the details which I elicited in later interviews. I have presented these museum profiles according to the order in which I conducted each conversation in order to accurately show how the successive interviews influenced my thinking.

Overview (Table 1)

Multilingual Strategies	Crystal Bridges	Fitchburg Art Museum	Oakland Museum of California	Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History	Denver Art Museum	National Portrait Gallery	Amon Carter Museum	Dallas Museum of Art
Documented Commitment	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	No	Some
Culturally Competent Audience Research	Ongoing-post label install	Yes	Yes	Yes-extensive	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes
Labels	Yes- full	Yes- full	*Yes	Yes- full	Some	Yes- full	No	Some
Digital/audio guides	Some	Yes	n/a	n/a	Some	Yes	No	No
Onsite tours	Some	Some	Some	Unnown	Some	Some	Yes	Some
Culturally-specific programs	Some	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Some
Family programs	Some	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Some
School Programs	No	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Yes	Yes
Other Adult Programs	Some	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	Some
Media Outlets	Unknown	Yes	Yes-some	Yes	Yes-some	Yes	Unknown	Unknown
Digital Advertising	No	Yes-some	No	Yes	Yes-some	Yes	No	No
Traditional Advertising	Unknown	Yes-some	Yes-some	Yes	Yes-some	Yes	Unknown	Unknown
Front-line staff	Some	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Some	Yes	Unknown
Back-of-house staff	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hiring strategy prioritizes bilingualism	Unknown	Yes	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wayfinding & signage	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	No	Unknown	Unknown
Input from h.l. community advisory groups	Some	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	No	No
Local partnerships	Some	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Evaluation	No	Unknown	Some	Yes	Some	No	n/a	n/a

Key

- **Yes-** the museum employs this element of language inclusion fully, regularly, and/or to a great extent.
 - *Yes- for the purposes of this thesis, I am primarily considering labels in the Oakland Museum of California's Art Gallery.
 - **Some-** the museum occasionally employs this element of language inclusion. Strategy may be emerging, yet not fully integrated into the regular museum experience.
 - **No-** to my knowledge, the museum is not currently engaged in this strategy.
 - **Unknown-** I did not discover through interviews, the museum's web materials, or published research whether or not they provide this element of language inclusion.
-

While the Museum Profiles are presented according to the order of my interviews, I believe that quickly examining them according to the length of time that they have been engaged in efforts related to meaningful language inclusion provides insight into the power of strong, institutional commitment.

Start of bilingual/multilingual engagement in ascending order:

- Denver Art Museum- 1990's, increased 2012
- Oakland Museum of California- 2010
- Fitchburg Art Museum- 2013
- National Portrait Gallery- 2014
- Santa Cruz MAH- 2015
- Crystal Bridges- 2017/2018

I have removed the two Dallas art museums from this list as they are currently piloting bilingual school programs yet not institutionally committed to language inclusion. As seen here, the Denver Art Museum has been committed to their Latino engagement initiatives for the longest amount of time. Yet of the six museums listed, it is the only institution which provides Spanish-language translation exclusively for temporary exhibitions, usually as booklets if the exhibition content is not related to Latino arts and cultures. The museum cites primarily budget

concerns for the limited Spanish-language wall text. Although the museum created its long-running Día del Niño signature event in the 1990's, it took roughly a decade before it committed to Latino visitor research and the development of an onsite bilingual program. By comparison, in 2015, the Santa Cruz MAH committed at an institution-wide level to bilingualism in order to become more inclusive of their nearby Latino community. In just four years, the museum has installed completely bilingual exhibitions and wayfinding, runs a variety of bilingual programs, involves their Latino community in co-creating programs and exhibitions, and has a clear plan for further development. Within this time, the museum's Latino attendance has doubled, meeting their initial metric for success. While direct comparison between the strategies used by the two museums is difficult due to the differences between their Latino communities, the swiftness with which the MAH created meaningful change and relationships emphasizes the transformational potential of strong institutional commitment.

Crystal Bridges (Bentonville, AR)

Interview conducted April 19, 2009

In April 2019, as I was developing my thesis proposal, I spoke on the phone with Alex Kermes and Stace Treat of Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. Crystal Bridges recently implemented full bilingual (English/Spanish) gallery interpretation. I set up an interview to learn more during the early stages of my thesis about how bilingualism was being undertaken in an art museum. My main aims during the interview were to understand:

- Why and how Crystal Bridges decided to institute bilingual interpretation.
- How Crystal Bridges perceives the benefits of bilingual interpretation for the institution.
- How implementing bilingual interpretation has changed the exhibition planning process logistically.
- Whether the museum sought input from the Spanish-speaking community when introducing bilingual interpretation.
- Whether the museum has noticed a shift in attendance demographics and/or public perception of the museum since implementing bilingual interpretation.

Conducting this interview at an early stage in my research heavily impacted the way I began to consider the elements of meaningful language inclusion. As I reflected on the conversation, I realized the dual importance of planning and audience research. Like several other institutions which will be discussed in this chapter, Crystal Bridges, with the best of intentions, added bilingual Spanish interpretation during a gallery renovation. The decision and subsequent label creation happened rapidly to keep pace with the reinstall. As a result, the museum has had to “work backwards,” beginning in-depth research of Bentonville’s Latino population and choosing an institutional Spanish voice after many labels have already been installed.¹⁸⁴ The good news is that they are taking active steps to improve their translation process and connect more deeply with the community.

Kermes and Treat explained that Crystal Bridges first decided to use bilingual English/Spanish interpretation during a temporary exhibition called *Border Cantos: Sight and Sound Explorations from the Mexican-American Border*, which opened in February, 2017. As the exhibition showcased a collaboration between a Mexican and an American artist, presenting it in both English and Spanish seemed a natural fit. Bentonville, Arkansas, has a large Mexican population, and Kermes states that the museum had been seeking ways to engage more deeply with this audience. Exit surveys conducted during *Border Cantos* indicated bilingual interpretation in the temporary visit was extremely well-received by both Spanish-speaking and non-Spanish-speaking visitors. This success encouraged the institution to incorporate complete bilingual interpretation into the re-installation of their permanent exhibition space, which occurred shortly after the *Border Cantos* exhibition.

Logistically, the most challenging element of instituting English/Spanish interpretation was time. Crystal Bridges has a well-established label-writing process for their English-language text, which Kermes and Treat had to reconfigure to incorporate the translation process. Kermes pointed out that simply ensuring that the label writers—who are all native English speakers and write the label text in English—are aware of new timeline constraints presented some difficulty. Crystal Bridges uses two contracted translation companies for their labels, one for their permanent exhibitions, and one for their temporary exhibition space. Both

¹⁸⁴ Alex Kermes (Exhibit Coordinator) and Stace Treat (Interpretation Manager) in discussion with the author, April 19, 2019.

companies require that all labels are proofread by a native Spanish speaker before being sent back to Crystal Bridges.

Implementing bilingual labels within the pre-established schedule for the permanent exhibition reinstall created challenges that the museum is still seeking to address today. In order to align with the reinstall timeline, Crystal Bridges did not have time to seek input from the Spanish-speaking community (while there are some Spanish-speakers on the overall museum staff, none work in the Exhibitions department). During the *Border Cantos* exhibition, the museum hired a Spanish-speaking advisor who aided them in presenting the material in a way that was both linguistically and culturally appropriate. The time constraints of the reinstall did not allow them to do the same for the permanent exhibition project, and the museum was forced to move forward before fully planning the translation process. After the labels were created, Spanish-speaking staff at the museum pointed out that the translations had inconsistencies in dialect, or used translations that were legal rather than descriptive (for example, a translation of the phrase “We, the people,” used text taken from the State Department, which Spanish-speakers pointed out sounded inappropriately rigid and formal for the context). Because they were unable to develop an “institutional Spanish voice” before undertaking bilingual incorporation, the museum has faced some criticism from their Latinx community, who notice the inconsistencies in the translation. Kermes noted that the experience has brought some “harsh learning lessons.”¹⁸⁵

In order to rectify these early errors, the museum is currently undertaking a large-scale evaluation of their bilingual interpretation and their Latinx community. Through their mistakes, the museum has learned that “language is so personal.” Treat noted that one of the most important parts of the study will be coming to understand the diversity within this community. While jumping directly into the translation process may have been necessary, engaging with the target community during the beginning phases of the project rather than after the Spanish interpretation had been developed could have saved Crystal Bridges time, resources, as well as allowing them to build a positive perception of the museum among their Latinx community more immediately.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

Fitchburg Art Museum (Fitchburg, MA)

Interview conducted September 6, 2019

As I continued my search to find bilingual art museums in the United States, I came across the work being done by the Fitchburg Art Museum (FAM). I was initially surprised to discover that a medium-sized museum in central Massachusetts is among the most fully committed to language inclusion as a strategy for community engagement. Taking advantage of planned renovations, in six years, FAM has gone from entirely monolingual to completely bilingual (English/Spanish). Along the way, they have transformed their institutional priorities, forged lasting partnerships, and positioned themselves as a center of inclusion and equity in a struggling community. At FAM, bilingualism has been a way for the museum to radically redefine its identity, shifting to a community-oriented approach which demands structural inclusion.

Institutional Motivation:

FAM experienced two fortuitous changes that led to its focus on bilingualism and inclusion: In 2013, it was scheduled to begin massive renovations. In that same year, Nick Capasso joined the museum as its executive director. Capasso felt strongly that each renovated gallery should re-open fully bilingual. Capasso steered the museum away from “20th century model elitism and insularity” towards “becoming a museum more directly focused on community service.”¹⁸⁶ In Fitchburg, this meant engaging the town’s substantial Latino audience. As a part of this effort, the first thing Capasso decided to do was become bilingual because “that’s a condition that we can control and we can control it fairly immediately.”¹⁸⁷

Heritage-language community:

The Latino community in Fitchburg, MA, is primarily composed of Puerto Rican families. Fitchburg is an economically depressed, formerly industrial town which has struggled in recent

¹⁸⁶ Nick Capasso in conversation with author, Sept. 6, 2019.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

decades; income per capita is about \$23,000.¹⁸⁸ The Latino community makes up about 30% of Fitchburg's total population and is primarily composed of Puerto Rican families, although Capasso also mentioned some Dominican and Uruguayan presence. According to Capasso, in Fitchburg, structural racism has continually stifled the Latino community's opportunities for growth. He describes Puerto Ricans in Fitchburg as unrepresented in local politics and with "the mere vestiges of a business community" in spite of the continuous Puerto Rican presence in the town since the 1970's.¹⁸⁹ (From reading news articles and speaking with Capasso, I have the impression that the Latino community in Fitchburg is not particularly integrated into the rest of the town, however I do not have concrete information to back this up. It is also currently unclear to me how Spanish and English are used in this community— Capasso speaks of a Puerto Rican community established in town for several decades, yet also mentions the museum's inability to communicate with the Spanish speakers in their town.) What does seem clear is that FAM is making gestures with their Spanish-language inclusion that extend beyond aids for comprehension and into an overall reshaping of their institutional body language.

Goals for language inclusion:

Capasso explained that FAM's ultimate goal is to normalize Latino participation in the museum. He hopes to harness the soft power of the museum to increase the social capital of Fitchburg's Latino community while sending a message of inclusion to the entire town: "For better or worse, our long term goal is to embrace the Latino community as part of our overall audience, part of the culture we're creating here. We're also trying to act as a good example to the rest of the city. Our Latino population here is very poor. They have no political representation and the mere vestiges of a business community after having been here since the 1970s. There's an enormous amount of structural racism in this city and we're trying to show everybody else that you can work with the entire community."¹⁹⁰

FAM has also taken the step of incorporating bilingualism into their strategic plan. The plan is organized into strategic goals, objectives, and actions. I have here excerpted the parts

¹⁸⁸ Andrea Shea, "Lofty Goals to Rebrand Fitchburg Art Museum," *WBUR* online. Published February 11, 2014. <https://www.wbur.org/artery/2014/02/11/fitchburg-art-museum-transformation>.

¹⁸⁹ Nick Capasso in conversation with author, Sept. 6, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

of the plan in which bilingualism and/or an effort strongly related to language inclusion, is named as a key action:

Strategic Goal 1: Every visitor to FAM will discover meaningful and personal ways to engage with art.

- Objective 1: Enhance our service and accessibility to all visitors.
Actions
 - Provide customer/visitor service and exhibition content training to front-line staff to help enable a seamless experience for museum visitors.
 - Enhance accessibility for visitors with physical, cognitive, and linguistic challenges.
- Objective 2: Create an explicitly educational environment throughout the Museum.
 - Design and implement bilingual universal branding/signage for in-gallery educational materials, programs, and activities.

Strategic Goal 2: FAM will partner with educational institutions and civic leaders to create and sustain a livable and vibrant city and region for residents and visitors.

- Objective 3: To more inclusively serve our community, continue outreach to individuals, families, and organizations in the diverse communities in our region.
 - Complete the Bilingual Museum Initiative by translating texts in the Ancient Egypt Gallery.
 - Create Spanish language printed informational and educational materials.
 - Work with the United Neighbors of Fitchburg (formerly the Cleghorn Neighborhood Association), and other organizations, on collaborative cultural and educational programs.
 - Exhibit and collect artworks by Latino artists in New England.
 - Recruit museum staff, volunteers, and FAM Trustees from the diverse communities in our region.¹⁹¹

This plan, particularly Strategic Goal 2 seems to acknowledge and accept the potential soft power that FAM can exert on its community, and recognizes that Spanish language inclusion is a powerful tool for forming forming a “livable and vibrant city.”

CULTURALLY COMPETENT AUDIENCE RESEARCH

¹⁹¹ *Fitchburg Art Museum Strategic Plan*, 2016-2020. Approved March 17, 2016.
<https://fitchburgartmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FAMStrategicPlan2016-2020.pdf>.

In our interview, Capasso stressed the role that listening to Fitchburg's Latino community played in planning the museum's plan for engagement. He credited the success of FAM's approach to creating strategies which responded to what the museum had learned about the "needs and desires of the community," contrasting the museum's community-centered approach to the well-intentioned but ultimately unsuccessful initiatives that museums undertake without first seeking community input. Capasso credits much of the good work that FAM has done in creating meaningful language inclusion to their community partners. FAM has developed relationships with social services organizations that serve Latinos in the area. These partnerships were crucial resources for the museum during their audience research phase. Under the new directorship of Capasso, audience research developed concurrently with the museum's new strategic plan. Through the community partnerships, they were able to create the many focus groups which guided the planning of their engagement efforts. The museum maintains close, ongoing relationships with these partners, which allows them to stay informed about community perceptions, attitudes, and activities without conducting formal research. Capasso and I did not speak about specific findings from the focus groups or particular examples of how this guided the creation of the museum's bilingual strategies.

HOLISTIC MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Wayfinding & Signage

One of the first changes the museum made was to install bilingual wayfinding and signage throughout the museum. Bilingual visitor information signage is installed on the building's facade. This sends a message of welcome before Spanish-speaking visitors even step inside—a simple way that the museum can say "we are here for you" (importantly, FAM follows through with this message once visitors are inside).

Bilingual Galleries

From the beginning, FAM decided that it was important that each gallery become bilingual so that their Latino visitors would feel welcome in the museum at any time. During the renovation, each gallery was reinstalled with bilingual labels. Initially, it was proposed that the museum use students to help with translation, but the museum decided against it, recognizing need for sensitivity and professional presentation of the Spanish-language text. Instead, FAM contracts a translator who works with museums, then has their labels reviewed by a staff

member who has both an art history background and comes from Fitchburg's Puerto Rican community. When possible, the museum adjusts their Spanish labels to reflect specifically Puerto Rican language.¹⁹² Capasso admits that this could potentially alienate the community's non-Puerto Rican Latinos, but feels that recognizing the linguistic specificity of Fitchburg's majority Latino group will be the most meaningful choice for the largest amount of people.

Only one gallery, the Egyptian Gallery, stayed the same during the renovations. In what Capasso describes as "a highly designed environment," it was impossible for the museum to add Spanish-language labels. The museum decided to use technology in order to stay true to their bilingual commitment, creating a dual-language Egyptian gallery app.¹⁹³

When the museum first reopened as bilingual, they made a point to showcase an exhibit in which Fitchburg's Latino community would be able to see itself—literally. They commissioned a Cambridge [MA] based Salvadoran photographer to turn one of the museum's galleries into a portrait studio. Latino families in Fitchburg came to the museum to have their photographs taken. The museum then created an exhibition from the photographs. "So when the community comes to the museum they will see that they're already here," Capasso said¹⁹⁴.

The museum's current exhibitions strategy also sets clear goals for the representation of Latino arts and artists. As stated on the Bilingual Museum page of FAM's website, "FAM's Strategic Plan calls for collecting artworks by Latino artists in New England, and the museum also creates exhibitions and programs designed to reflect and/or appeal to local Latino families."

¹⁹⁵ Since 2013, the museum has held at least two new exhibitions by Latino artists or educational programs geared towards Latino audiences per year, focusing particularly on New England-based Latino artists. Examples include a permanent work of public art on the Fitchburg Main Street by artist Nora Valdez; a group exhibition by 23 New England Latino artists; and a solo exhibition by Puerto Rican artist Lynette Vázquez-Polanco. Each has been accompanied by bilingual educational programming. Fitchburg clearly makes an effort to ensure that their multilingual engagement strategies mutually reinforce one another. If the

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Andrea Shea, "Lofty Goals to Rebrand Fitchburg Art Museum," WBUR.

¹⁹⁵ "Bilingual Museum." Fitchburg Art Museum. Accessed November 1, 2019.
<https://fitchburgartmuseum.org/bilingual-museum/>.

museum had mounted the photography exhibit of local Latino families without then continuing to amplify the presence of Latino artists, the effort would have been a false promise. Instead, they have a documented commitment with measurable exhibition outcomes.

Programs

As previously mentioned, FAM has developed bilingual programming to go along with its exhibitions from Latino artists. Examples of these programs include:

- Uruguayan Film Festival
 - “6 films, in collaboration with the Uruguayan Consulate in New York”
- “Intergenerational Education Programs with United Neighbors of Fitchburg”
- Multiple bilingual artist talks¹⁹⁶

These examples represent a variety of styles of programming, which I feel reflects well on the museum’s efforts. Rather than assuming that all of their Latino visitors will be interested one type of program, the museum has created a variety of events to appeal to different interests and motivations. According to Capasso, these programs have been well-received by local Latino visitors.

Staff & Hiring

FAM has made a concentrated effort to hire more bilingual staff, ideally from within Fitchburg’s Spanish-speaking community. Their receptionist is bilingual and the museum has several other bilingual, Latino staff members. As previously mentioned, the quality of their translated labels is overseen by a bilingual staff member who can assess the labels for both art historical and linguistic accuracy. Additionally, since 2013 the museum has hired several bilingual docents to lead Spanish-language tours.

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Maintaining Relationships: Business

In addition to the ongoing strength of FAM’s partnerships with local non-for-profits, I was interested to hear Capasso highlight the relationships that FAM has developed with Latino-owned businesses in Fitchburg. FAM hires local Latino-owned restaurants to cater museum events— not only during events geared towards the Latino community, but all types of

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

events. Again, Capasso pointed to the holistic nature of true engagement, telling me that “We’re here to serve the community— it can’t just be through the programs. It has to be your business practice.”¹⁹⁷ By building these relationships, FAM ties together their strategic objectives of “more inclusively serving [their] community” and “continu[ing] to support appropriate creative economy and economic development efforts in Fitchburg and North Central Massachusetts,”¹⁹⁸ both of which require an ongoing commitment.

Evaluation:

Capasso and I did not discuss evaluation during our conversation.

Next Steps:

The next step for FAM is board diversification. Capasso notes that this is not easy, but says that the board has told him they are willing and prepared.

National Portrait Gallery (Washington, D.C.)

Interviews conducted September 6 and November 17, 2019

Institutional Motivation:

The National Portrait Gallery committed to bilingual English/Spanish galleries in 2014 and has rapidly developed fully bilingual interpretation.¹⁹⁹ This development came soon after the appointment of director Kim Sajet in 2013. Under Sajet’s leadership, the museum committed to forming a collection which better represented the diversity of the historical and contemporary United States. Sajet hired Taína Caragol as the museum’s first curator of Latino arts and history.

Heritage-language community:

As a part of the Smithsonian, the museum has a national audience as well as a significant tourist audience. Spanish-speaking visitors to the National Portrait Gallery come

¹⁹⁷ Nick Capasso in conversation with author, Sept. 6, 2019.

¹⁹⁸ *Fitchburg Art Museum Strategic Plan*, 2016-2020. Approved March 17, 2016.

<https://fitchburgartmuseum.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/FAMStrategicPlan2016-2020.pdf>.

¹⁹⁹ Peggy McGlone. “Presidents Gallery reopens with a look at both the good and bad of the men,” *Washington Post*, Published Sept. 19, 2017.

from a wide variety of cultures, nationalities, and countries of origin. In Washington D.C., home of the National Portrait Gallery, there is a sizeable Salvadoran population.

HOLISTIC MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES:

Gallery Interpretation

Labels

All labels in the National Portrait Gallery are bilingual. The two languages are presented side-by-side on the same label, with English on left and Spanish on the right, or on separate labels on either sides of the paintings, again with English on the left side and Spanish on the right. The labels tend to be fairly text-heavy in both languages. While some museum professionals advocate for making bilingual label text as short as possible, their Communications Coordinator, who is bilingual and Latina, told me that the Portrait Gallery's long labels serve a purpose. Unlike other art museums, where some might argue that extensive labels and affective art experiences are at odds, the Portrait Gallery's collection is explicitly based in both art and history, making it very context-dependent. If visitors do not have adequate information about the historical context and personal stories of the portraits' subjects, they will significantly lack the tools for meaning-making during the museum experience.²⁰⁰

Apps & Exhibit Website

In the galleries, wall text in both languages makes sure that all visitors are aware that the National Portrait Gallery's exhibit app is available in both English and Spanish. Additionally, in 2017 the museum unveiled a new bilingual website to accompany their signature exhibit, "America's Presidents."

Digital Interactives & Video

All digital interactives in the "America's Presidents" exhibit switch seamlessly between English and Spanish with the touch of a button. Some interactives in other exhibits are also bilingual. The majority of all video in the museum has English audio with Spanish subtitles.

Large Print Exhibit Text

²⁰⁰ Gabriela Sama Fernandez (Communications Coordinator, National Portrait Gallery) in discussion with the author, Sept. 6, 2019.

The museum also provides bilingual Large Print exhibit text booklets in all galleries, addressing both visual and linguistic needs.

Staff

As the museum has worked to diversify their collections and interpretation, they have also hired a number of Spanish/English bilingual staff. As previously mentioned, Taína Caragol joined the NPG as the institution's first curator of Latino art and history. In the museum's back-of-house departments, there are a handful of other bilingual, Latino staff members, including two with the Communications department. These staff members have been responsible for a variety of language and culture related initiatives, such as the creation of bilingual gallery tours, bilingual Instagram posts, and a style guide for translation.

Programs

The NPG holds several culturally-specific programs throughout the year geared towards Latino audiences. In September 2019, they celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month with public programs which “offer insight into the ways in which Latinx cultures, traditions and stories have influenced U.S. history.”²⁰¹ As is particularly appropriate considering the museum's national audience, these programs highlight contributions to U.S. culture from a variety of Latino cultures such as “Cuban Americans, Chicanos, Tejanos, Mexicans, Dominican Americans, Puerto Ricans and Nuyoricans.”²⁰² The month concluded with a Hispanic Heritage Festival celebrated on a Saturday afternoon. Partnering with the Washington Ballet, the Discovery Theater, the D.C. public library, and the Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School, the event including art-making and story-time activities, workshops, dance performances, and tours. In November, the museum also hosted an evening-time Día de los Muertos event which showcased Mexican folk dances and music as well as allowing visitors to participate in a demonstration by Colombian-born artist MasPaz.

²⁰¹ “National Portrait Gallery Celebrates 2019 Hispanic Heritage Month,” Press Room, National Portrait Gallery, Accessed November 2019, <https://npg.si.edu/about-us/press-release/national-portrait-gallery-celebrates-2019-hispanic-heritage-month>.

²⁰² Ibid.

In addition to these Latino-culture specific events, the museum also sometimes holds Spanish-language tours (although these are not well-publicized in online materials) and its weekly Conversation Circles program. This program is not geared towards Latino audiences, but rather visitors of any national or cultural background looking to practice their English. A drop-in program which meets from 10:00am-12:00pm on Fridays, this program takes a content-language integrated learning approach by using discussions of portraiture to engage participants in English-language practice. While this program does not use languages other than English to connect with heritage-language visitors, it does contribute to creating positive institutional body language which welcomes these visitors.

Communications

Traditional Marketing

Many, but not all, of the NPG's press releases are translated into Spanish. Those that are translated usually present a thematic connection to Latino culture or artists. The museum also creates Spanish-language posters and rack cards to promote events like Hispanic Heritage Month. Sama Fernandez told me that the museum is also attempting to advertise more in *El Tiempo Latino*, a Spanish-language newspaper.

Digital Marketing: Website & Social Media

The majority of the museum's website is available in professionally-translated Spanish (some areas of the site appear to be under construction). Recently, the museum has also begun to include English and Spanish captions for Instagram posts, a joint initiative between the Communications and Social Media coordinators. The bilingual posts tend to receive appreciative comments from followers.

Challenges

The museum faces a unique challenge in that it shares a building with a separate museum, the American Art Museum. The museums are not physically separated and wayfinding and signage distinguishing the two museums is nearly non-existent, making them challenging to tell apart during a first-time visit. The American Art Museum does not use bilingual interpretation. Because the two museums use the same wayfinding format, the

National Portrait Gallery has so far been unable to introduce bilingual wayfinding into their side of the museum.²⁰³

Creating a style guide for translation also presented a challenge for the museum. Sama Fernandez remarked that when she began her position at the museum, she noticed instances of Spanish being used inappropriately, such as presenting the museum's name in Spanish in promotional materials (Galería Nacional de Retratos). Sama Fernandez stressed that the museum's name is also its brand, and should never appear translated even if all other text is in Spanish. Following observations like these, Sama Fernandez formed a group with other Latino NPG staff to create a general style guide. She noted that this process was made more difficult because there was no authority figure to help create and enforce these guides.²⁰⁴

Oakland Museum of California (Oakland, CA)

Interview conducted September 19, 2019

The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the most linguistically diverse areas of the United States. Representing this region is the Oakland Museum of California (OMCA). OMCA consists of three sections: the Gallery of California Art, the Gallery of California History, and the Gallery of California Natural Sciences. This somewhat unusual mix was created through the merging of three institutions in 1969, all of which had originally been created for the public good, rather than to house private collections.²⁰⁵ As such, the museum has always had strong civic roots. In 2002, taxpayers of the City of Oakland voted to support major renovations for the museum "to reflect the changing faces and environment of California and include new information, interactive technologies, and multicultural, multilingual presentations."²⁰⁶ In 2006, the Irvine Foundation and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded OMCA with grants to support further support their capital renovation, with a focus on the Art Gallery.

²⁰³ Gabriela Sama Fernandez (Communications Coordinator, National Portrait Gallery) in discussion with the author, November 17, 2019.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Lori Fogarty, "Foreword," in *How Visitors Changed Our Museum: Transforming the Gallery of California Art at the Oakland Museum of California*, ed. Barbara Henry and Kathleen McLean. (OMCA with support from the Irvine Foundation, 2010), 5.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

The museum's 2010 report, *How We Visitors Changed Our Museum*, sheds light on the changes that resulted from this funding. I spoke with Lisa Silberstein, Experience Developer at OMCA who wrote the report's chapter about translations, about multilingualism at OMCA nearly ten years after its big transformation.

Institutional Motivation:

The Irvine Foundation funding challenged the museum to turn the renovation into an opportunity for innovation. According to the Irvine Foundation's definition of innovation, this meant "organizational change that stem[s] from a shift in underlying assumptions and provide new ways to fulfill the mission."²⁰⁷ As a result of this funding, OMCA reformulated their entire interpretation strategy in order to better reflect the voices of the Bay Area community— part of which, of course, included the increased multilingualism voted for years earlier by Oakland taxpayers themselves.

Heritage-language community:

The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse regions of the United States. One analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data reports that the city of Oakland ranks as the 14th-most ethno-racial and linguistically diverse city in the country.²⁰⁸ About 41% of Oakland residents speak a language other than English (LOTE), with Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese as the most commonly spoken LOTEs.²⁰⁹ As a museum which seeks to represent the people of Oakland and of California, OMCA has longstanding relationships with some of the area's heritage-language communities. Prior to the renovation, OMCA had provided Spanish and Chinese translations of temporary exhibit interpretation, as these heritage-language communities are the largest in the Bay Area. They also already had established relationships with representatives of these communities through their Latino Advisory Council and Asian Pacific Advisory Council.²¹⁰ These relationships helped guide many decisions as OMCA developed its label design and translation process.

²⁰⁷ Lori Fogarty, "Foreward" in *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, 6.

²⁰⁸ Dan Brekke, "Hey Bay Area: You Really Are Diverse," *KQED News* online, published February 17, 2015, <https://www.kqed.org/news/10435390/bay-area-cities-among-most-diverse-in-u-s>.

²⁰⁹ "About: Oakland CA," *Data USA*, Accessed November 2019, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/oakland-ca/?compare=walnut-creek-ca#demographics>.

²¹⁰ Karen G. Neilsen and Lisa Silberstein, "Translations *Traducciones* 翻譯," *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, 45.

CULTURALLY COMPETENT AUDIENCE RESEARCH

Before reinstalling the Art Gallery with multilingual interpretation, OMCA sought advice from members of Oakland's Spanish and Chinese speaking communities, including the museum's Latino Advisory Council and Asian Pacific Advisory Council.²¹¹ Members of these groups were crucial for driving decisions about label translation as well. Additionally, the museum researched how multilingualism was being implemented elsewhere in the field throughout the United States and Canada, developing a long list of possible interpretation strategies.²¹²

HOLISTIC MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Gallery Interpretation

Taking into account limitations of wall space, OMCA decided on the advice of their advisory councils to reopen the Art Gallery with translated "gallery theme labels, introductory information about the Gallery and rules, instructions for all hands-on interpretive experiences, and subtitles for the video elements."²¹³

Translation:

The museum chose Traditional Chinese and Central American Spanish for translation of written materials (audio materials were translated into both Mandarin and Cantonese, as they are extremely different when spoken). Through focus groups with the advisory councils, the museum developed a set of guidelines for translation. These included recommendations such as "be sensitive to the political impact of vocabulary," "avoid use of archaic language," "maintain a consistent voice (the same translator from the same translation firm)" and, above all, to "translate for meaning rather than literal representation."²¹⁴

Label Design:

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Karen G. Neilsen and Lisa Silberstein, "Translations *Traducciones* 翻譯," *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, 46.

OMCA considered the design of its trilingual labels carefully, wanting to avoid the visual prioritization of English. Graphic designer Gordon Chun developed a system that “allowed each [language] to have its own primacy in the composition.”²¹⁵ The English is at the top left, with Spanish below, but the Spanish text begins at eye-level with the average visitor. The Chinese text is displayed vertically on the right (see Gallery Interpretation section in Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies chapter).

Community Advisory Council

As mentioned, OMCA's existing community advisory councils were key to its multilingual efforts. Input from a member of the Asian Pacific Advisory Council highlights the ways in which community contribution influence OMCA's choices. She mentioned that “Traditional Chinese is used by ethnic Chinese who are outside of mainland China, such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the San Francisco Bay Area. Simplified Chinese was chosen as the official style in China during the Communist rule and is used in all public communications and is taught in schools in China.” The council member pointed out that as newer Chinese immigrants arrive in the area who have grown up speaking Simplified Chinese, the museum might have to change their labels, but that for now, Traditional Chinese would be more appropriate for OMCA's audience. Throughout the entire process, OMCA staff listened closely to its community advisory council members, allowing it to create relevant translated materials from the start of the project.²¹⁶

Programs

The museum's popular *Días de los Muertos* program is led by the *Día de los Muertos* Committee and made possible through community partnerships, collaboration, and co-creation. The celebration is a multi-day outdoor event in coordination with a related exhibition inside the museum's Art Gallery. The 2019 exhibition, entitled *¡El Movimiento Vivo! Chicano Roots of El Día de los Muertos*, explored the origins of the holiday as it is celebrated in the United States, beginning with the efforts of Chicano activists during the 1970's.²¹⁷ Events and activities include dance and music from a variety of Mexican performance groups, curator-led docent tours of the

²¹⁵ Karen G. Neilsen and Lisa Silberstein, “Translations *Traducciones* 翻譯,” *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, 48.

²¹⁶ Karen G. Neilsen and Lisa Silberstein, “Translations *Traducciones* 翻譯,” *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, 49.

²¹⁷ “¡El Movimiento Vive!: Chicano Roots of El Día de los Muertos,” Oakland Museum of California, Accessed November, 2019.
<https://museumca.org/exhibit/%C2%A1el-movimiento-vivo-chicano-roots-el-d%C3%ADa-de-los-muertos>.

Día de los Muertos exhibition, demonstrations of traditional arts related to the holiday, face-painting, tortilla-making demonstrations, food trucks, and shopping from local vendors. Additionally, local organizations create and display *ofrendas* representing causes such as domestic violence awareness and pacifism. In 2019, eleven groups such as the Xochipilli Latino Men's Circle, Manzanita SEED Elementary School, OMCA Docents, presented *ofrendas*.²¹⁸ The Día de los Muertos Committee also creates a central *ofrenda* each year. Community collaborators and co-creators seem passionate about their contributions to the event, which has become one of the museum's signature programs.²¹⁹

Wayfinding & Signage

Wayfinding and signage in all three of OMCA's galleries (Art, History, Natural Science) is trilingual.

Staff

Currently, OMCA does not seem to have a consistent practice of hiring Spanish and Chinese speaking frontline staff.²²⁰

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Almost 10 years have passed since OMCA published *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, making OMCA the art museum that has been committed to bilingual interpretation for the longest amount of time out of all museums included in my research. I spoke with Experience Developer Lisa Silberstein, who worked on the translated interpretation during the Art Gallery's renovation, to find out about how language inclusion at OMCA had evolved over time. She mentioned that the Art Gallery remains the area of the museum with the most translated materials. Currently, the museum does not typically create multilingual wall text or labels for temporary exhibitions, instead providing packets of didactic materials in Spanish and Chinese in the gallery spaces. For exhibits with content specific to these language/cultural

²¹⁸ "25th Annual El Día de los Muertos Community Celebration," Oakland Museum of California, Accessed November, 2019,

<https://museumca.org/2019/25th-annual-el-d%C3%ADa-de-los-muertos-community-celebration>.

²¹⁹ "Días de los Muertos Celebration 2018 - Oakland Museum of California," Oakland Museum of California, Uploaded September 1, 2019, <https://youtu.be/3CgGFyNumsE>

²²⁰ Interview with Lisa Silberstein, Sept. 19, 2019.

groups, however, the museum does develop fully bilingual (although not trilingual) exhibit spaces.²²¹

Silberstein mentioned two key challenges that have developed over the past decade. Since the trilingual Art Gallery's initiation in 2010, OMCA has not continued to evaluate bilingual/trilingual labels. Without this evaluation, staff are unsure of how this interpretation is being used, or even whether it's being used at all. Advocating for fully multilingual temporary exhibitions or wayfinding is challenging without proof of its use to visitors. Additionally, OMCA does not often specifically market towards Spanish-speaking or Chinese-speaking audiences. When an exhibit or program has a content-based connection to one of these groups, the museum translates some of their marketing materials. However, marketing is generally in English only and not geared towards Spanish or Chinese media outlets. The lack of evaluation and marketing create an interconnected problem: The museum does not know how/if the multilingual interpretation is being used, and even if they did evaluate, it might appear that their multilingual interpretation is not useful or important to a significant amount of visitors, since the museum is not drawing in these visitors through marketing. Silberstein continues to advocate for evaluation as an important piece of continuing the museum's initial commitment to language inclusion.

Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (Santa Cruz, CA)

Interview conducted October 18, 2019

The Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History (MAH) is well known for its focus on participatory experience and co-creation with its local community. Its mission, "to ignite shared experiences and unexpected connections," focuses on enhancing the emotional and interpersonal potential of a museum visit. The museum strives to harness their soft power by enacting their *theory of change*, in which the museum welcomes the community and gives them

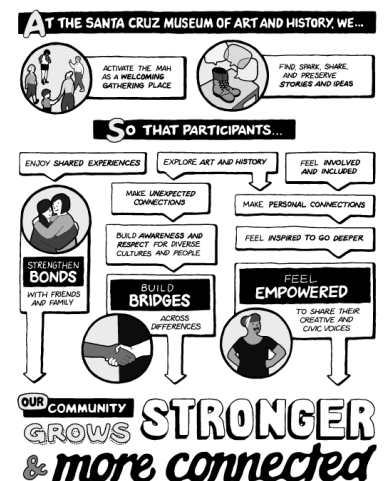


Figure 12: Theory of Change, Santa Cruz MAH.
<https://santacruzmah.org/about>

²²¹ Ibid.

sovereignty over their own narratives to enact positive social change (*Figure 12*).²²²

Institutional Motivation:

Realizing that in spite of their desire to act as a “welcoming, gathering space,” for all those in their community, the MAH realized that they were not adequately representative of their nearby Latino community. The MAH felt that until they developed genuine, reciprocal relationships with these neighbors, they would be failing to truly carry out their *theory of change*. Their long-term goal is to “create a welcome space for Latinx residents in Santa Cruz County.” In 2014, they commissioned an ethnographic study from Contemporanea to better understand the relationship of local Latino families to cultural participation.

Heritage-language community:

Latino residents make up nearly 33% of the population of Santa Cruz County and 19% of the city of Santa Cruz.²²³ The majority of Latinos in Santa Cruz County report speaking Spanish at home (78.4% in 2014), with 43.3% speaking English less than “very well.”²²⁴ About 56% were born in the United States while about 43% are foreign-born. Most are of Mexican or Central American origin or descent. The average Latino resident of Santa Cruz County has an education of high school or lower, and tends to live in a family of four or more.²²⁵

CULTURALLY COMPETENT AUDIENCE RESEARCH

At the time of the study, Latino visitorship made up about 8% of the MAH's total visitors. The study consisted of 10 ethnographic interviews, conducted in either English or Spanish depending on the respondent, with Latino residents in the neighborhoods closest to the MAH. Through these interviews, the museum sought to:

1. Explore and understand the local Latino families' values and motivations associated with cultural and educational experiences in order to increase the Museum's cultural competency and inclusive practices.

²²² “About,” Santa Cruz MAH, Accessed October 2019, <https://santacruzmah.org/about>.

²²³ Helen Aldana (Intercultural Programs Coordinator, Santa Cruz MAH) in conversation with the author, October 18, 2019.

²²⁴ Contemporanea, *Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History Latino Families Ethnographic Study, Final Report*, published December, 2014, 6.

²²⁵ Ibid.

2. Identify leisure and recreational choices of Latinos(as) in the city of Santa Cruz and the most effective communication channels among specific sub-segments of the Latino population (Spanish dominant, bilingual, youth, etc.)
3. Examine general perceptions of the MAH, and of downtown Santa Cruz among Latinos(as) in Santa Cruz.²²⁶

The Contemporanea research team discovered respondents had drastically different levels of awareness of the MAH. A small amount were “very familiar with its programs and exhibits,” while most had “a complete ignorance of its existence.”²²⁷ The report categorizes the team’s findings into key points, such as:

- Arts and culture are opportunities to support family unity.
- Cultural bridging is important for some respondents, particularly in relation to American holidays such as Thanksgiving.
- Whereas American events are perceived as stiff and formal, Latino celebrations are characterized by *ambiente*- a feeling of fun, excitement, and deep emotional connections.
- Families decide together how they spend their free time.
- Barriers to participation are mostly perceptual.²²⁸

The report concluded by giving the museum recommendations for engaging this audience. Some of the strategies recommended were for the museum to become a trusted presence in these neighborhoods by participating in off-site programs, to consider creating a Spanish-language brand, and to “engage Latino families as a full unit.” Based on the information gathered in the ethnographic study, the museum set about creating a plan for Latino engagement.

HOLISTIC MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The MAH employs a broad range of holistic multilingual engagement strategies that act in coordination with one another to create an experience for their Spanish-speaking community

²²⁶ Contemporanea, *Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History Latino Families Ethnographic Study, Final Report*, 4.

²²⁷ Contemporanea, *Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History Latino Families Ethnographic Study, Final Report*, 19.

²²⁸ Contemporanea, *Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History Latino Families Ethnographic Study, Final Report*, 20.

that is nearly equivalent to the experience of their English-speaking community. The museum has strong institutional buy-in for the engagement plan across all departments and by both leadership and staff. Staff members are assigned tasks which connect explicitly to achieving the desired impact, creating a strong sense of accountability for the success of the program.

Gallery Interpretation

Gallery interpretation in the MAH is fully bilingual. The museum took some time to create its institutional voice in Spanish. For smaller amounts of text (using related to marketing and programs rather than gallery interpretation), translations were created by bilingual staff members. Initially, the museum worked with a professional translator to create Spanish-language exhibit labels. After Spanish-speaking staff read the labels, they realized that the tone and style was far too formal for the MAH, which has an upbeat and approachable voice in English. By using this version of the Spanish labels, the museum would have been providing a significantly different interpretative experience for their Spanish-speaking visitors. Staff members Helen Aldana and Leonardo Cruz worked together to modify the label's language, developing a voice that was better tonally matched to the English. Through this experience, the MAH staff realized that in order to ensure that the translated labels suited the MAH's interpretation style, any professional translators that they worked with would have to visit the museum first— how could they create appropriate translations without understanding the institution? Consultant Amparo Leyman Pino also worked with the MAH to help them understand how to use a neutral version of Spanish in order to avoid alienating visitors through overly regionally-specific language. The museum now works with a different professional translator who has a better understanding of their institutional voice, but makes sure that all text is reviewed by a bilingual staff member before it is installed.

Exhibit content at the MAH is driven by community, collaboration, and co-creation. Currently, the MAH has several exhibits showcasing very different facets of Latinx identities and experiences. These include: *Idolos*, a photography exhibition exploring artist Jorge Gomez-Gonzalez's identity as a gay, Mexican man; *Librería Donceles*, a travelling exhibition which is an actual Spanish-language bookstore inside of the museum; and *Mirando al Futuro: The Beach Flats Community Garden*, which tells the story of a nearby community garden, traditionally a space where Latinx residents of the Beach Flats neighborhood have “passed

along agroecological practices, traditions, and knowledge from Mexico and Central America.”²²⁹

The web page for *Mirando al Futuro* also encourages bilingual visitors to participate by volunteering in the garden. These exhibitions represent diverse experiences by and for Spanish-speaking visitors. Since these culturally-specific exhibitions exist within a fully bilingual exhibition system, they also avoid assuming that Latinx visitors will be exclusively interested in culturally-specific content.

Staff

As is clear from the description of their label creation process, the MAH employs several Spanish-speaking staff in a variety of roles. These bilingual staff members were instrumental in ensuring that the MAH creates high-quality translated material. Additionally, part of their documented Latinx Engagement Plan is to “prioritize new bilingual hires,” demonstrating that they recognize the benefits of a robust bilingual staff. Spanish-speaking staff are also greatly important to the museum’s co-creative efforts. As they seek to encourage more Latinx groups to use their facilities for community events, the ability to coordinate these happenings in Spanish both helped communicate necessary logistical information and created more trusting relationships. With regard to the entire MAH staff, the MAH has very strong institutional buy-in for the Latinx Engagement Plan among all staff members. The plan sets clear targets that staff from a variety of departments are responsible for each month. For example, by the end of December 2019, they would like to have “20% of collaborators for events, exhibitions, and programs” be Latinx. These specific metrics help staff members stay accountable, understand how their work fits into the overall plan, and have a clearer picture of whether their efforts have been successful.

Programs

The MAH’s Latinx Engagement Plan seeks to integrate Latinx participants and collaborators more deeply into both culturally-specific and general programs. Like many of the other museums profiled here, the MAH holds an annual Día de los Muertos event. The

²²⁹ “Idolos (Icons),” Exhibitions, Santa Cruz MAH, Accessed November 2019,

<https://santacruzmah.org/exhibitions/idolos-icons>

“Mirando al Future: The Beach Flats Community Garden,” Exhibitions, Santa Cruz MAH, Accessed November 2019,

<https://santacruzmah.org/exhibitions/mirando-al-futuro-the-beach-flats-community-garden>

“Librería Donceles,” Exhibitions, Santa Cruz MAH, November 2019,

<https://santacruzmah.org/exhibitions/librer%C3%ADa-donceles>

museum partners with *Senderos*, a local non-for-profit representing the cultures and languages of Latinx communities in Santa Cruz, to create a day-long event with dancing, art-making, and a procession through the altars installed in the nearby Evergreen Cemetery.²³⁰ In addition to Día de los Muertos, the museum also celebrates El Festival de Maiz and Las Posadas in the Beach Flats community garden, as well as hosting Mercadito, a Latinx art market.²³¹ Apart from these events which relate specifically to the local Latinx culture, the museum is also seeking to increase the amount of Latinx musician collaborators for their weekly music events.²³²

Wayfinding & Signage

Wayfinding and signage inside of the MAH is fully bilingual. Abbot Square, a community partner in the plaza directly outside of the museum, does not currently have bilingual signage. Aldana mentioned that they would like to see Spanish-language signage here, too, in order to create the most consistent experience possible for Spanish-speaking visitors.

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Since the museum initiated its Latinx Engagement Plan in 2014, Latinx visitorship has gone from 8% to 19%, matching the Santa Cruz city demographics. Through the ethnographic study, the MAH was able to develop strategies which suited its target community, allowing it to create a significantly more inclusive environment in just four years. Their next short-term goal is to raise Latinx visitorship to 33%, equal to the amount of Latino residents within their county. As previously discussed, MAH staff are tasked with fulfilling specific metrics and schedules for fulfilling specific Latinx engagement goals. This keeps the museum continually accountable for growing and deepening its bilingual efforts. According to the Latinx Engagement Plan, the museum is planning on renewing their research efforts, working to create updated survey questions for their Latinx community in order to “understand more about Latinx visitors and collaborators.”²³³

²³⁰ “Día de Muertos,” Events, Santa Cruz MAH, Accessed November 2019,

<https://santacruzmah.org/events/d%C3%ADa-2019>

²³¹ “Santa Cruz MAH Latinx Engagement Plan,” Updated August 2019, internal document.

“Mercadito,” Events, Santa Cruz MAH, Accessed November 2019,

<https://santacruzmah.org/events/mercadito>

²³² “Santa Cruz MAH Latinx Engagement Plan,” internal document.

²³³ “Santa Cruz MAH Latinx Engagement Plan,” internal document.

Denver Art Museum (Denver, CO)

Interview conducted October 30, 2019

The material in this profile is drawn from a mix of an interview I conducted with Leticia Salinas, Latino cultural programs coordinator from 2016-2018; the “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” chapter in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, which details the development of Latino-centered family programs as a result of culturally responsive visitor research; and information and materials available on the Denver Art Museum’s website.

The Denver Art Museum has long been committed to both innovative education and building relationships with its local Latino audiences.²³⁴ In contrast to the other Museum Profiles discussed in this section, the museum began its targeted efforts towards Latino engagement as the 1990’s, creating a Spanish language coordinator position. In 2011, it added the Latino cultural programs coordinator position to the education department. Through these staff positions, the museum developed outreach, programming, and exhibitions geared towards Denver Latinos. Additionally, the museum has hired bilingual educators to facilitate programs both offsite and onsite since the early days of these initiatives.

Institutional Motivation

In the early 2010’s, the museum decided to deepen its efforts after customer satisfaction surveys showed that “Latino visitors to special exhibitions somewhat reflected the demographic composition of Denver’s Latino communities.” The museum decided to focus on creating programming which would appeal to local Latino audiences. Salinas also mentioned reputation and perception as motivators for the DAM’s bilingual initiatives. DAM, like many of the art museums here profiled, has an encyclopedic collection, with the subsequent desire of being perceived as a “museum [which is] representative of different world cultures.” By overtly including a language other than English in the museum, the museum may also create an impression of being more culturally savvy than an English-monolingual institution.²³⁵

²³⁴ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 182.

²³⁵ Leticia Salinas (former Latino cultural programs coordinator, Denver Art Museum) in conversation with the author, October 30, 2019.

Heritage-language Community

About 30% of residents in Denver county self-identify as Hispanic or Latino.²³⁶ Notably, a large percentage of the area's Latino population speak English at home. The Pew Research Center reports that as of 2015, 57% of Denver-area Latinos speak Spanish at home, a decrease of four percentage points since 2006.²³⁷ In fact, Latinos in Denver speak English at home more than Latinos in any other metro area in the United States. Pew attributes the relative prevalence of English to the fact that most Latinos in this region are now U.S.-born rather than immigrants. A significant portion, although not all, of Denver's Latinos are of Mexican descent, and the area was the birthplace of the Chicano movement of the 1960's and 70's.²³⁸ Leticia Salinas, Latino cultural programs coordinator at the DAM from 2016-2018, described the Latino audience as spanning those who have recently immigrated to the U.S. to those whose families have lived in Denver for several generations, with use of Spanish or English greatly varied depending on acculturation.²³⁹ In spite of Denver's relatively low amount of primarily Spanish-speaking Latinos, Salinas was quick to note that use of Spanish inside of the DAM was still a key engagement strategy for this audience as it (1) allows intergenerational groups to engage in code-switching and (2) functions as "a signal of inclusion and welcome," echoing the LEM reports findings of the emotional benefits of Spanish language inclusion (*Figure 5*).

CULTURALLY COMPETENT AUDIENCE RESEARCH

As discussed in the Culturally Competent Audience Research section of the Literature Review, the Denver Museum of Art developed their Spanish-language programs through feedback from visitor panels. These visitor panels were intended to take the museum beyond a demographic evaluation of their Latino visitorship towards a more nuanced understanding of how the visitors' personal and cultural backgrounds intersect with their museum experiences. Unlike traditional traditional focus groups, the DAM's visitor panels were conducted bilingually,

²³⁶ "Quick Facts: Denver County, Colorado," U.S. Census Bureau, Accessed November 2019, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/denvercountycolorado>.

²³⁷ Jens Manuel Krogstad, Mark Hugo Lopez, "Use of Spanish declines among Latinos in major U.S. metros," Pew Research Center, October 31, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/10/31/use-of-spanish-declines-among-latinos-in-major-u-s-metros/>.

²³⁸ Lisa Martinez, Antonio Esquibel, interviewed by Neal Conan, *Talk of the Nation*, NPR, June 30, 2011, <https://www.npr.org/2011/06/30/137529484/the-chicano-movements-denver-roots-run-deep>.

²³⁹ Leticia Salinas (former Latino cultural programs coordinator, Denver Art Museum) in conversation with the author, October 30, 2019.

provided temporary childcare, and allowed to participate as intergenerational groups of friends or family. The initial visitor panel included Denver Latinos “from several Latin American nationalities, bilingual abilities, and levels of acculturation— many of whom were frequent museum attendees.”²⁴⁰ Through this research, the museum discovered that panelists perceived museums as :

- “Designed for ‘*Americanos*’”
- Unwelcoming to families and children
- English-monolingual
- Having “somewhat hostile staff”²⁴¹

In response to this initial panel, the museum created the CelebrARTE bilingual family program. The program was designed to foster intergenerational engagement, as Latino visitors tended to come to the museum in extended family groups, and featured local Latino *artistas-maestros* (master-artists) partners. Evaluation of this program will be discussed in the upcoming “Commitment to Sustainability” section of this Museum Profile.

HOLISTIC MULTILINGUAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Programs

The museum’s visitor research approach greatly influenced their approach to language inclusion. Because they can be quickly adapted depending on the results of evaluation, the museum focused their 2012 Latino engagement efforts on programming.²⁴² The CelebrARTE program ran for several years during the museum’s Free Family Saturdays before being replaced with *Cuentos del Arte*. In this program, a Spanish-speaking storyteller shares stories related to works of art in the museum with the aim of facilitating personal connections between its young participants and the selected art. The Free Family Saturday program also includes a Create & Take art-making activity for which the museum makes sure to provide instructions in both English and Spanish.

²⁴⁰ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 188.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 187.

The museum also holds annual celebration of the holiday El Día del Niño (Day of the Child). The Día del Niño celebration has been ongoing since the museum's early Latino engagement efforts. The museum's Latino Audience Alliance collaborates with Denver's Mexican Cultural Center as well as the General Consulate of Mexico to mount a huge showcase of music and dances which celebrate both children and elements of Mexican and Mexican American culture.²⁴³

Staff

In addition to the Latino cultural programs coordinator position, the museum hires other bilingual staff, particularly in the education department to facilitate bilingual events. A current job posting for a Bilingual Programs Facilitator position specifies that the preferred candidate is fluent in both Spanish and English and "encourage[s] candidates that represent and embody the diversity found within our community to apply."²⁴⁴

Gallery Interpretation

During Salinas' time at the museum, the DAM typically created bilingual wall text for temporary exhibitions with content related to Latino art and culture and Spanish-language booklets for other temporary exhibitions. In our interview, she acknowledged this as an imperfect solution, providing an aid for comprehension without giving primarily Spanish-speaking visitors the same, seamless experience had by primarily English-speaking visitors.²⁴⁵ In a city like Denver, where Latino visitors are likely to be fluent in English but appreciative of the inclusion signaled by the use of Spanish in the museum, booklets may fall short of creating welcoming institutional body language as powerfully as Spanish-language wall text does. Currently, the museum's website provides information about temporary exhibitions in both English and Spanish, but does not specify how Spanish-language interpretation is incorporated into the experience.

²⁴³ "Día del Niño Celebration," Denver Art Museum, Accessed November, 2019.

<https://denverartmuseum.org/calendar/dia-del-nino-celebration-2019>

²⁴⁴ "Bilingual Programs Facilitator, Part Time," Careers, Denver Art Museum, Accessed November, 2019, <https://www.paycomonline.net/v4/ats/web.php/jobs/ViewJobDetails?job=38271&clientkey=6F0CCA38B9135DC3CC20883865902788>

²⁴⁵ Leticia Salinas (former Latino cultural programs coordinator, Denver Art Museum) in conversation with the author, October 30, 2019.

At the time of writing, the building which houses the museum's permanent collection is undergoing renovation, and I am not aware of whether it will be reinstalled with bilingual labels. I did, however, find information about an upcoming bilingual temporary exhibition, *ReVisión: Art in the Americas*, which juxtaposes ancient and contemporary Latin American artwork to create "a visually compelling narrative about the formation of the Americas from 100 B.C. to today."²⁴⁶ Interestingly, during the initial visitor panels in 2012/2013, the museum discovered that

more acculturated and bicultural Latinos believed that the DAM should represent their perspectives and artistic traditions throughout the museum. These Latino families wanted to see more than pre-Columbian art, and they also wanted to see the integration of Latino artists into the broader history of art featured at the DAM. Encyclopedic museums often have collections that can highlight the importance of Latino arts production and illustrate thematic ties.²⁴⁷

Although *ReVisión* includes pre-Columbian art, it also appears that the exhibition attempts to recontextualize these works, integrating them into the centuries-long story of Latin American social and political heritage, seeming to better fulfill the desires of the high-acculturation visitor panel respondents. In addition to *ReVisión*, the museum has recently incorporated contemporary Latinx politics and perspectives through exhibition's like Mexican artist Erika Haarsch's installation, *Under the Same Sky... We Dream*, which "uses photography, animation, visual language, and musical performance to capture current cultural, political, and environmental issues faced by children of refugees and undocumented immigrants" at the border between Mexico and the United States.²⁴⁸

Communications

Salinas told me that she worked closely with the marketing team during her time at the DAM. She mentioned marketing department becoming more on-board with bilingual inclusion towards the end of 2018, alluding to the challenges of creating buy-in across departments.²⁴⁹ In

²⁴⁶ "ReVisión: Art in the Americas Announced as Inaugural Exhibition for Denver Art Museum's Martin Building Project Reopening," Press Release, Denver Art Museum, Published September 16, 2019, <https://denverartmuseum.org/article/press-release/revision-art-in-americas-inaugural-exhibition-in-denver-art-museums-martin-building>

²⁴⁷ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, "Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum," in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 187.

²⁴⁸ "Eyes on: Erika Haarsch," Past Exhibitions, Denver Art Museum, Accessed November 2019, <https://denverartmuseum.org/exhibitions/eyes-erika-haarsch>

²⁴⁹ Leticia Salinas (former Latino cultural programs coordinator, Denver Art Museum) in conversation with the author, October 30, 2019.

her opinion, developing a marketing and communications plan specifically formulated for non-English speaking audiences is crucial for audience building— if the target audience is not properly informed of bilingual programs, how can they be expected to attend?²⁵⁰

Website

The DAM website includes a navigation tab labeled “Español.” According to Salinas, this information was previously difficult to find, buried deep in the website. Now, within this tab, Spanish-speaking visitors can easily find information about admissions and hours, programs for children and families, and Free First Saturdays, which always include bilingual activities. Additionally, information about temporary exhibitions is offered in both English and Spanish, although the text does not typically clarify whether the exhibition itself is bilingual.

Blog Posts

During Salinas’ time at the museum, she created Spanish-language blog posts advertising bilingual and Spanish-language programs at the museum.

Traditional Media

Towards the end of Salinas’ tenure at the museum, the marketing team started to advertise more in Latino newspapers and on Spanish-language radio stations.

COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABILITY

Evaluations

In 2013, About six months after the introduction of the monthly CelebrARTE program, the DAM hired an evaluation consultant to assess the program’s cultural relevance to Latino visitors. The evaluation consisted of a demographic survey, a discussion about overall perceptions of the DAM, participation in the CelebrARTE activities, and finally a discussion about the program. Families who had also participated in the 2012 visitor panel noted the effect that “the inclusion of bilingual staff, Spanish-language information, and Latino arts” had on creating a more welcoming museum environment.²⁵¹ However, new participants identified further barriers

²⁵⁰ Leticia Salinas (former Latino cultural programs coordinator, Denver Art Museum) in conversation with the author, October 30, 2019.

²⁵¹ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, “Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum,” in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 189.

to participation, including the perception of museums as one-time activities which they were more likely to attend only during culturally-specific programs like CelebrARTE.²⁵²

While these visitor panels initially guided the development of Latino-focused programs at the start of the decade, formal evaluation of bilingual programs became less frequent over time. Evaluation such as visitor panels tended to occur in the pilot stages of new programs, but not occur longitudinally. Salinas mentions tracking program attendance and informally observations from front-line staff such as herself as the primary methods of measuring effectiveness.

Pilot Programs

The previous museum profiles describe museums in which community-centered bilingualism has taken shape through a leadership-level commitment which allows for initiatives like creating new staff positions or developing strategic plans or plans for engagement. While I believe that this is often the most effective and efficient way of creating meaningful language inclusion, many bilingual efforts in many museums often stem from the work of individual staff members or departments before taking root at an institutional level. The following two museum profiles explore the value of bilingual pilot programs as first steps towards broader language inclusion.

Amon Carter Museum of American Art (Fort Worth, Texas)

Interview conducted September 13, 2019

The Amon Carter Museum of American Art (Amon Carter) is a free museum with the mission of “explor[ing] the diversity and complexity of American creativity through [their] expansive collection and exciting exhibitions.”²⁵³ During the past year, the museum piloted a new bilingual tour program for school groups. An enormous amount of Fort Worth Independent School District (ISD) students tour the museum every year, including all fourth and fifth graders in the Fort Worth Independent School District (ISD). According to Jessica Fuentes, Manager of

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ “Plan Your Visit.” Amon Carter Museum of American Art. Accessed October, 2019.
<https://www.cartermuseum.org/plan-your-visit>

School and Community Outreach, about 60% of the ISD identifies as Hispanic, and about 30% are bilingual or English Language Learners.²⁵⁴ Fuentes headed a pilot program of bilingual school tours in order to create a more comfortable and welcoming museum experience for these students.

Fuentes began by reaching out to 10 partner schools that the educational department had identified as “having a high need for Spanish-speaking tours.”²⁵⁵ She sent each of the schools a simple survey in order to ascertain what types of Spanish language inclusion they would find the most useful before beginning to develop the tours. The school could identify whether they preferred Spanish-language only, mix Spanish and English tours, or preferred to keep their students in English immersive environments. The majority of schools responded that they wanted bilingual Spanish/English tours. In conjunction with the school partners, Fuentes and her team began to develop the tour. Each tour consists of stops at five works, with three stops based on conversation and two on writing activities. Fourth graders in Texas take the STAAR standardized test, so education department decided that the writing stops would be conducted in English even during the bilingual tours, as students will be tested on their ability to write in that language. The three other conversation-based stops are bilingual.

Initially, the biggest challenge that the Amon Carter faced when developing the bilingual tours was the lack of Spanish-speaking staff in the museum. At the beginning of the project, the education department only employed one bilingual staff member. To assist this employ with the large task of translating each tour stop, Spanish-speaking staff from other departments collaborated with the education department. One unexpected benefit of this collaboration was that each of these staff members spoke a regionally distinct version of Spanish, allowing them to discuss among one another how to best use a neutral Spanish voice. The education department has now hired three more bilingual gallery teachers since the program’s initiation. They have also taken some steps to raise the cultural competency of the English-monolingual gallery teachers who lead the non-bilingual tours but often encounter Spanish-speaking and ELL students. Fuentes recounted observing an English-speaking gallery teacher leading a conversation about a landscape with a pre-school tour. A student pointed at the cow in the

²⁵⁴ Jessica Fuentes (Manager of School and Community Outreach, Amon Carter Museum) in discussion with the author, September 13, 2019.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

painting and said, “*vaca*.” Not understanding, the teacher asked the student to repeat himself. “*Vaca*,” the student said again. Fuentes watched as the teacher and student cycled through this mutual incomprehension several times. Now, to create situations which amplify the knowledge of Spanish-speaking students, the Spanish-speaking gallery teachers have created lists of vocabulary which correspond content of the tour stops which the English-speaking gallery teachers study. By training the English-speaking teachers with basic Spanish words and phrases, the education department hopes to create interactions which keep the conversation fluid for all students regardless of whether or not the tour is officially bilingual.

When I asked Fuentes how she had noticed students respond during the pilot of the bilingual tours, she described watching Spanish-speaking students’ faces “light up” when they noticed that the gallery teacher could do even simple things like pronounce their names correctly, excited to realize that there were people in the museum with “the same lived experiences” as they had.²⁵⁶ The tours also benefited the students who spoke English at home by showing them how the Spanish they learn at school can be used functionally outside of the classroom and by exposing them to a variety of accents.

Fuentes describes the tours as the beginning of a larger push for bilingualism in the museum. Although the museum does not currently have a holistic plan for Latino engagement or Spanish language inclusion, they have recently created some Spanish-language such as visitor maps. Fuentes believes that because the Amon Carter is a smaller museum relative to her former workplace, the Dallas Museum of Art, it is easier to create institutional motivation for these types of initiatives. Whereas a large museum often requires a “top-down directive” to spark buy-in for institutional change, the actions of individual staff members or departments can impact the institutional culture at a smaller museum like the Amon Carter.²⁵⁷

Dallas Museum of Art

Interview conducted October 14, 2019

An hour east of the Amon Carter Museum, the Dallas Museum of Art (DMA) has also spent the past year piloting a bilingual school program. Unlike its Fort Worth neighbor, the

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

DMA's program takes place off-site in school classrooms as part of the institution's Go Van Gogh program, which "bring[s] hour-long experiences — traditionally consisting of a discussion of artworks in our collection and an art-making activity— to Dallas elementary schools."²⁵⁸ I spoke with Bernardo Velez Rico, the DMA's Teaching Specialist for School Programs, who joined the museum in 2018 and is responsible for the introduction of bilingualism into this long-standing program. Velez points out that while about 50% of students in the Dallas public school system are English Language Learners, until recently, the DMA offered Go Van Gogh only in English.²⁵⁹ His motivations for creating the tour stem both from institutional leadership, which is seeking to generally broaden its inclusion of the Spanish language and his personal background as "as the son of working-class Mexican immigrants, a member of a transnational family, an English Learner, and a native Spanish speaker."²⁶⁰

Philosophically, Velez takes a generative approach to translation. Importantly, the bilingual program does not set English as the "base" language to which Spanish conversations must then be translated. He points out that translating in order to remold Spanish-language expression into English assumes that the goal of translation is to create equivalency between the two languages while giving English the authority. During the program, the conversations flow between Spanish and English according to the natural patterns of the students. The program honors the lived experiences of many of its students by focusing on art forms specific to their heritage culture, beginning by showing students *retablos* from the DMA's collection. Velez then facilitates a story-writing activity. Unlike during the Amon Carter school tours, in which students must write in English to practice skills for the STAAR exam, the DMA program allows students to write in the language that they choose, "centering their voice without the expectation of translation or standardization."²⁶¹ By amplifying the authority of the students' linguistic expression in either language, the program defies the "deficit model" which views bilingualism or low English proficiency as a problem to be solved.

²⁵⁸ Bernardo Velez Rico. "Traducción sin inclusión: When Inclusion Gets Lost in Translation," Medium.com, published May 12, 2019. <https://medium.com/viewfinder-reflecting-on-museum-education/traducci%C3%B3n-sin-inclusi%C3%B3n-when-inclusion-gets-lost-in-translation-910d85db3be>

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Velez created the pilot with input from local schools with bilingual Spanish education programs.²⁶² As the pilot developed throughout the year, Velez realized that although the students responded well to the bilingual approach, they were not implicitly making the connection between the Go van Gogh activities and the Dallas Museum of Art, often lacking a general context for art museums. He modified the program to include an opening activity which orients the students in the museum environment, using a dry-erase board printed with the outlines of a gallery space to fill in different elements of the museum with the students.²⁶³ Velez points out that the classroom, as a space of trust, is an excellent space to build bridges between the students' daily lives and the museum experience. Similar to the finding of the Santa Cruz MAH's ethnographic report, which suggested that the museum first build a presence off-site in nearby Latinx neighborhoods, the classroom program gives the museum the "opportunity to show students that we are listening without requiring them or their families to take that first step."²⁶⁴

Responses to the bilingual Go Van Gogh program have been extremely positive from both students and classroom teachers. Like Fuentes, Velez notes the excited reactions of students when they see someone who speaks in their home language. Naturally, the pilot has also presented challenges which Velez is focused on tackling in continued iterations of the program. One difficulty has been ensuring that the program represents the multifaceted, multivocal nature of Latinx cultures rather than giving primacy to one culture only or presenting Latinx culture as homogenous. While many students are of Mexican descent, others come from other Latin American cultures, which have distinct cultural and linguistic expression. Allowing students to speak as they choose honors the regional specificity of their Spanish.

²⁶² Bernardo Velez Rico (Teaching Specialist for School Programs, Dallas Museum of Art) in discussion with the author, October 14, 2019.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Bernardo Velez Rico. "Traducción sin inclusión: When Inclusion Gets Lost in Translation," Medium.com, published May 12, 2019.

Museum Profiles: Key Findings

Motivations

Change Creates Opportunity

Many of the museums profiled in this thesis committed to language inclusion in moments of great institutional change, such as the hiring of a new director, a renovation or a gallery reinstall. The efforts of the Fitchburg Art Museum and the National Portrait Gallery both began about six years ago after each museum brought on a director with a vision geared towards inclusion and diversity. OMCA, FAM, and Crystal Bridges all used renovations and gallery reinstallation as an opportunity for installing bilingual gallery interpretation.

Demographics & Visitorship

Consistent with the findings from the *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* report, which demonstrated that even as the United States grows ever more diverse, white visitors continue to make up over 90% of museum visitorship, the language inclusion initiatives in these museums were often spurred by a recognition that the demographics of heritage-language speakers in the local community were underrepresented in visitor demographics.²⁶⁵ Interviewees from FAM, OMCA, the DAM, the Amon Carter, and the DMA all explicitly named rectifying this demographic disconnect as one of their primary reasons for instituting bilingual labels and/or programs. Although the interviewee from the NPG—which, as a national institution, views its audience and community on a national level—did not specifically mention demographics as a motivation, new director Kim Sajet’s decision to diversify the museum’s collections points to a recognition of the need to create a more demographically representative museum. Additionally, OMCA’s Lisa Silberstien echoed the AAM Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility Working Group’s claim that inclusion is imperative for sustaining the future of museums.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁵ Betty Farrell and Maria Medvedeva. “Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums.” Center for the Future of Museums. Washington DC, American Alliance of Museums, 2010. <https://www.aam-us.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/12/Demographic-Change-and-the-Future-of-Museums.pdf>.

²⁶⁶ Lisa Silberstein (Experience Developer, Oakland Museum of California) in discussion with the author, September 19, 2019..

From Exclusion to Inclusion

In order to welcome heritage-language groups which, for a variety of reasons discussed throughout this thesis, have not traditionally formed a part of art museum visitorship, museums must acknowledge the conscious and unconscious biases and practices which have contributed to exclusive environments. Many interviewees referred to bilingualism as a strategy for rectifying such environments. FAM director Nick Capasso framed language inclusion as a way of shifting the museum away from a prior model of elitism towards a community-centered institution. Some institutions had particularly difficult histories with the communities they were now trying to engage. Leticia Salinas, formerly of the Denver Art Museum, referenced the fraught relationship between the DAM and another Denver art institution dedicated to Chicano art.²⁶⁷ For many years, the DAM failed to accept artwork from Chicano artists, leading a group of them to form their own space in which to showcase their work. Although the DAM has now spent many years committed to Latino engagement, changing perceptions as they move from an exclusive to inclusive space has been made additionally challenging because of their history.

Formal Commitments & Institutional Plans

The museums which currently create the most consistent bilingual/multilingual experiences through holistic engagement strategies also explicitly reference language inclusion in documented institutional planning. In their 2016-2020 Strategic Plan, the Fitchburg Art Museum names multiple bilingual strategies as actions for reaching their strategic goals. Consistent with this plan, they have now fulfilled the action items mandating the completion of their bilingual gallery interpretation, Spanish-language wayfinding and signage, and Spanish-language educational materials, among other things.²⁶⁸ The Santa Cruz MAH developed the Latinx Engagement Plan, a living document which they updated as recently as August 2019. In the plan, MAH lays out long-term goals, the process by which their staff will use the plan, the monthly targets for Latino engagement, and which staff members are responsible for meeting each target. MAH staff seem deeply invested in the Latinx Engagement Plan, and their efforts have already doubled Latino attendance between the years 2015 and 2018.²⁶⁹ The Dallas Museum of Art, which is currently engaged in efforts to increase

²⁶⁷ Leticia Salinas (Latino cultural programs coordinator, Denver Art Museum) in discussion with the author, October 30, 2019.

²⁶⁸ *Fitchburg Art Museum Strategic Plan*, Published March 2019.

²⁶⁹ Helen Aldana (Intercultural Programs Coordinator, Santa Cruz MAH) in discussion with the author, October 18, 2019.

bilingualism both inside and outside of the museum, has created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion statement. While the statement does not single out bilingualism/multilingualism, it does commit to museum representing “diverse voices and perspectives” through “vibrant and accessible social space[s].”²⁷⁰ Perhaps as the museum further commits to bilingualism, they will create institutional documentation which reflects this commitment more specifically.

Research

As discussed in the Literature Review, beginning language inclusion projects with culturally-competent audience research increases the likelihood that the museum will develop successful initiatives. In the case of Crystal Bridges, the original bilingual exhibition, *Border Cantos*, was created with the guidance of a community advisory board made up of members of Bentonville’s local Mexican community and other Spanish speakers. However, the short timeframe imposed by the reinstall schedule prohibited the museum from seeking out community input or carrying out audience research when developing the bilingual labels for their permanent collection. Now that Spanish-speakers have pointed out errors of style and interpretation, the museum is having to work backwards, undertaking a large-scale, grant-funded study of their Latino community after having already developed Spanish-language materials. In comparison, the Santa Cruz MAH contracted Contemporanea to carry out a study of their local Latino community prior to developing their Latino engagement plan. This research was conducted in both English and Spanish in order to best suit the preference of the respondents. They then developed strategies directly related to the results of this study, such as creating presence from the MAH at local Latino festivals. Within a few short years, the museum has drastically increased Latino visitorship, even as they continually strive to improve further.

While the Denver Art Museum did not conduct non-visitor research in its local community, it did carry out a series of visitor panels with their Latino visitors which greatly informed the development of Latino engagement initiatives. As discussed in the literature review, these visitor panels were designed to be culturally responsive, providing participants with childcare and allowing them to give feedback in both Spanish and English. From the initial panels, museum staff learned that their Latino visitors highly valued family time, also saw art

²⁷⁰ “Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy,” About, Dallas Museum of Art, Accessed November 2019, <https://dma.org/about/equity-diversity-and-inclusion-policy>

and creativity as integrated into daily life rather than isolated within a museum, and tended to pass down artistic traditions intergenerationally.²⁷¹ With this knowledge, the museum was able to create a program, CelebARTE, which responded specifically to these values and perceptions. Continuing to conduct visitor panels with participants in CelebARTE, the museum learned both about how the program was changing Latino visitors' perceptions of the institution and ways that the DAM could continue to deepen Latino engagement.

Even the two Dallas-based bilingual pilot programs at the Amon Carter and the DMA began the pilots by sending short surveys to local schools in order to gauge how to most effectively develop these programs. While each program naturally faced challenges during its nascent stage, both have been well-received by students and teachers alike and will be innovated further during the coming years. Generally, audience research (or a lack of audience research) has proved critical to the outcomes of language inclusion initiatives.

Importance of Bilingual Staff

The museum profiles emphasize the critical nature of having heritage-language speaking staff in a variety of positions in the museum. Almost every museum profiled here has developed a hiring strategy prioritizing bilingual hires. Even the Amon Carter and the Dallas Museum of Art, currently the museums with the fewest bilingual offerings, have created positions for new bilingual staff members in order to create successful pilot programs. The interviewees from these two museums highlighted the excitement on the faces of Spanish-speaking children when spoken to by museum staff in their home language.

In several museums, new positions were created in order to best fulfill the museums' commitment to its heritage-language audiences. As noted in the literature review, heritage-language speaking visitors notice both the presence and the absence of bilingual staff in both front-line and back-of-house, particularly curatorial, positions.²⁷² Seeking to amplify the presence of Latino portraits in their collection, the National Portrait Gallery hired Taína Caragol as the first Latino art and history curator. Caragol has since, among other things, organized an exhibit about Dolores Huerta, contributed to the NPG's acquisition of works by Latino artists or

²⁷¹ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, "Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum," in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 181-196.

²⁷² Salvador Acevedo and Monique Madara, *The Latino Experience in Museums: An Exploratory Audience Research Study*, 7.

with Latino subjects, and broadened the general presence of portraits of Latinos in general exhibitions.²⁷³ Additionally, during the past year the museum hired a full-time bilingual Communications Coordinator to help drive Spanish-language marketing. The Denver Art Museum chose to focus primarily on developing programs geared towards their local Latino audiences, creating the Latino cultural programs coordinator position in 2012, which helped embed bilingualism more deeply into the museum's institutional culture.²⁷⁴ Each of these new staff positions have contributed to formalizing the museums' commitments to their Latino communities and ensuring that these efforts are both visible and ongoing.

The Museum Profiles also demonstrate that bilingual staff are crucial for the creation of high-quality gallery interpretation. At Crystal Bridges and the Santa Cruz MAH, Latino staff noticed errors and inconsistencies in Spanish-language labels after they had already been installed. The Santa Cruz MAH then undertook a process in which their bilingual staff helped mold an appropriate institutional voice in Spanish. Crystal Bridges is currently undergoing a similar process of revision. At the Fitchburg Art Museum, a bilingual staff member with an art history background reviews all Spanish-language labels after they come back from the translator to ensure that they are both factually, linguistically, and tonally accurate. The Communications Coordinator at the National Portrait Gallery is responsible for a similar proofreading process. Even the Amon Carter Museum, which currently does not provide bilingual interpretive text, benefited tremendously from its bilingual educator, originally the only bilingual staff member in the department, creating Spanish-language stops for the school tour pilot program. For museums wishing to create meaningful language inclusion, bilingual staff are indispensable.

Partnerships

²⁷³ Peggy McGlone, "The Smithsonian can do more and should do more," says advocate for a Latino museum," Washington Post, Published September 25, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/the-smithsonian-can-do-more-and-should-do-more-says-advocate-for-a-latino-museum/2018/09/24/5576164a-bc1e-11e8-b7d2-0773aa1e33da_story.html

²⁷⁴ Verónica Betancourt and Madalena Salazar, "Engaging Latino Audiences: Visitor Studies in Practice at the Denver Art Museum," in *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 187.

Local partnerships have been key drivers of meaningful language inclusion in all of the museums profiled. Community advisory boards, human services organizations, and arts and culture organizations which serve heritage-language groups have been essential for collecting audience research, collaborating on label and program creation, and co-creating programs and events. The Fitchburg Art Museum credits its audience research efforts to the strength of its community partnerships. At FAM, partner organizations helped to organize focus groups, acting as a trusted conduit to the Latino community. Community advisory groups at the Oakland Museum of California guided the selection of the museum's outside translation firms as well as deciding which elements of the galleries were high-priority for translation.²⁷⁵ Co-creation is at the heart of the Santa Cruz MAH's Latino engagement efforts. A large part of their current strategy focuses on facilitating community-led events in museum spaces, ensuring that their Latino communities have an authentic voice. In every interview, interviewees expressed the necessity of strong partnerships for creating successful bilingual/multilingual initiatives.

Challenges

Consistent with findings from the BERI and ASTC reports, common challenges identified in the interviews were cost and institutional buy-in.²⁷⁶ In spite of having a multi-decade long commitment to local Latino engagement, the Denver Art Museum has still struggled with apportioning funds for label translation. While exhibitions relating to Latino arts and culture are fully bilingual, with wall text in English and Spanish, other temporary exhibits use booklets to provide Spanish language interpretation. The booklets allow the museum to provide bilingual interpretation throughout the museum while staying within their budget, but are recognized as imperfect solutions. The DAM and OMCA also described difficulty getting other departments on-board with language inclusion. A particular issue inherent in the challenge of cost is ongoing evaluation. Few of the museums profiled have invested in evaluation after the initial phases of bilingual/multilingual development and installation. Like OMCA, the museum may realize that while their galleries are bilingual/multilingual, they are no longer aware of how visitors are actually interacting with these materials. Informal, observational, data from front-line staff

²⁷⁵ Karen G. Neilsen and Lisa Silberstein, "Translations *Traducciones* 翻譯," *How Visitors Changed Our Museum*, 48.

²⁷⁶ Steven Yalowitz, Cecilia Garibay, Nan Renner, Carlos Plaza, *Bilingual Exhibits Research Initiative*, (National Science Foundation, 2013).

Veronica Garcia Luis, Hugh McDonald, Laura Huerta Migus, Alexandra Chili, *Multilingual Interpretation in Science Centers and Museums*, (Association of Science-Technology Centers & the Exploratorium 2009).

sometimes guides modifications to programs, but for less flexible elements like text-based interpretation, the data collected from formal evaluation can play a key role in convincing the museum to budget for meaningful changes.

In the coming chapter, I present a proposed framework for museums seeking to create meaningful language inclusion. I have formed these recommendations through researching the current state of the field, as seen in the Literature Review and Museum Profiles. Learning directly from art museum staff currently engaged in bilingual/multilingual initiatives was invaluable for the creation of this tool.

Recommendations

During a 2017 AAM-led Twitter conversation in response to the hashtag *#museuminclusion*, museum professionals identified a lack of “practical tools, such as professional development resources, training, examples, templates, and case studies” as an obstacle for enacting DEAI initiatives.²⁷⁷ In response to this need, my recommendations take the form of a proposed tool entitled “Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion: A Guide for Art Museums.” This guide begins by introducing the reader to the term *meaningful language inclusion* and explaining its importance in museums. I then present the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion and describe the relationship between each component. Next, I include the Foundations rubric, which represents the elements which I’ve found to be essential for implementing bilingualism/multilingualism in ways that fit my definition of meaningful. With the rubric, museums can evaluate their current state and set goals for improvement. The last part of the guide is the Developing Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies tool, which allows museums to plan a system of multilingual engagement strategies that contributes to their desired impact without overextending the museum’s resources.

Elements of this self-assessment have been modelled on the Empathetic Museum’s Maturity Model, a rubric which is meant to help museums further institution-wide DEAI. I have adopted their terminology for describing the different phases of “maturity,” or in my case, meaningful language inclusion, in the Foundations rubric: Regressive, Emergent, Planned, Proactive.²⁷⁸ I find these terms useful because they neither condemn nor overpraise a museum’s efforts. A museum at the highest level is Proactive, acknowledging that it is impossible to ever truly accomplish DEAI-centered goals. I thought about changing the Regressive term to something more neutral like “Traditional,” but considering that the rubric primarily lays out the foundations of an inclusive museum space, I do feel that a museum consistently scoring themselves in this category can fairly be considered regressive by today’s standards. Much has been written about the slow pace of change despite the long-time call for

²⁷⁷ Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group, “Facing Change,” (American Alliance of Museums, 2018), 5.

²⁷⁸ Gretchen Jennings, Jim Cullen, Janeen Bryant, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Stacey Mann, Charlotte Hove, and Nayali Zepeda (The Empathetic Museum). *Maturity Model* (2018), www.empatheticmuseum.com/maturity-model.

DEAI in museums.²⁷⁹ I feel using terms like Regressive may give these types of institutions a necessary push. Generally, I find rubrics useful for helping ensure that museums are aware of necessary actionable pieces and what they look like on a progressive scale. For example, a step like evaluation may not immediately seem crucial to DEAI. But rubrics that include it on their scale remind institutions that while “museum administrators often reason that they do not do routine evaluation because of the time and money it takes to conduct them [,] the way time and money are allocated are also two indicators and expressions of values.”²⁸⁰ Assessments make explicit that things like evaluation are unmissable in a “proactive” museum.

Note: Included in this document are scaled-down versions of the guide, which is designed for 11” x 17.” Please see attached PDF for the full-scale guide.

²⁷⁹ Lonnie Bunch, “Flies in the Buttermilk,” *Museum News* (American Alliance of Museums, July/August 2000).

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion Working Group, “Facing Change,” (American Alliance of Museums, 2018), 4.

Verónica Betancourt, “*Brillan por su ausencia*: Latinos as the Missing Outsiders of Mainstream Art Museums,” (masters thesis, Ohio State University, 2012) ,6.

²⁸⁰ Marianna Adams and Judy Koke, “Stuck is Where You Need to Pay Attention” *Multiculturalism in Art Museums Today*, 16.

Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion: A Guide for Art Museums

What is the purpose of this guide?

The purpose of this guide is to help art museum leadership, boards, and staff develop an institutional plan for bilingualism/multilingualism that is meaningful to their target local heritage-language* community and sustainable for the museum.

*heritage-language- any language that is not the dominant language in a given social context. In the U.S., a heritage language is any language other than English.

What is *meaningful language inclusion*?

Meaningful language inclusion (MLI) uses multilingualism as a tool for creating community relationships, decolonizing inequitable power structures, promoting social cohesion and understanding, fulfilling a museum's responsibilities to the public trust, and making museums genuinely welcoming spaces for local heritage-language communities.

Why should your museum commit to *meaningful language inclusion*? If your museum is focused on DEIA (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility) initiatives, then you should consider committing to meaningful language inclusion. Often, MLI requires institutional

transformation, but it is worth it. Museums which make a commitment to MLI at an institutional level are more likely to focus on the quality of their community relationships, see language inclusion as a growth opportunity for staff, and avoid letting valid concerns about things like budget and scheduling become excuses for inaction.

What is included in this guide?

- **Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion**—a visualization of the most effective long-term process for creating meaningful language inclusion.
- **Foundations of MLI Rubric**—a self-assessment of how much the museum's current conditions support meaningful language inclusion as well as general culture of DEAI (Diversity, Equity, Access, & Inclusion).
- **Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategy Planning Tool**—A set of three continua to guide the museum's planning of which multilingual elements (bilingual staff, text interpretation, programs, etc.) to incorporate. The goal is to create an effective combination of strategies that suit the available resources of the museum as well as the needs, wants, and interests of the target heritage-language community.

The Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion (Cycle of MLI) is a visualization of the most effective long-term process for creating meaningful language inclusion. It is important to note that before beginning the Cycle of MLI, the museum must first reflect on its internal culture as well as motivations and goals for language inclusion. Some strong relationships with community organizations should also already be in place. The Foundations of MLI Rubric helps guide the museum through this preparatory process.

Stages of the Cycle of MLI

- 1. Culturally-competent Audience Research**
Before creating specific multilingual strategies, the museum conducts research with their local heritage language community. Leading up to the research, the museum reflects internally on its motivations and desired impact. The research seeks to understand the perceptions, daily routine, cultural and social practices, and personal identities of participants in the community. It seeks to give participants authority rather than creating power dynamics that favor the museum.
- 2. Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies (HMES)**
The museum uses what it has learned about its local heritage language community to develop an engagement plan consisting of HMES. Holistic strategies recognize that language inclusion is most powerful when it is consistent throughout a visitor's museum experience. Specific HMES include multilingual gallery interpretation, programs, wayfinding, marketing, hiring practices, and more. Which strategies are used will vary according to the museum & its community.
- 3. Commitment to Sustainability**
The museum has a documented commitment to language inclusion. Community partnerships are valued and maintained. The museum conducts regular evaluation of HMES and adjusts when necessary. After a pre-determined period of time, the museum once again conducts research to ensure the continued relevancy of their engagement strategy.



The Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion

Tips for Using the Foundations Rubric

The criteria in the rubric require the museum to reflect honestly on their current level of inclusiveness, particularly as related to including their local, heritage-language community/communities. Be open to the sometimes difficult conversations that may arise as a result of using this rubric. They are the path forward to improving your museum. The first six criteria (Creating Commitment to the Community-Valuing Partnerships) guides the museum through the self-reflection and goal-setting, and groundwork necessary to begin the Cycle of MLI. The final three criteria represent the three stages of the Cycle of MLI.

Once the museum has evaluated its current condition, it should plan how to move forward. Consider the speed with which your museum can enact change. Some museums with strong commitment and/or funding may decide to move quickly from the Emergent to Proactive category by enacting bold and transformative initiatives within a relatively short schedule. Others may need to take a more methodological approach, tackling one or two criteria at a time or moving from Emergent to Planned and eventually to Proactive. Neither approach is more correct than the other. Each museum must develop a plan that works for their institution.

Remember that the work of inclusion is ongoing. The Cycle of Language Inclusion demonstrates how even museums which are mostly Pro-active must continually work to improve.

	Regressive*	Emergent*	Planned*	Proactive*
Creating Commitment to the Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unmotivated to develop plan for community engagement. One-time community engagement initiatives siloed in discrete departments. No museum-wide formal documentation of community engagement initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not reflect on its motivations for increasing community engagement. Leadership communicates need for increased community engagement initiatives to a small number of employees or departments. No museum-wide formal documentation of community engagement initiatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines motivations for increasing community engagement. Communicates commitment to key stakeholders. Documents like strategic plan or impact statement identify community engagement as a priority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines motivations for community engagement with language inclusion as key strategy. Develops buy-in & input from all stakeholders. Documents like strategic plan or impact statement identify language inclusion as priority. Recognizes ability to positively influence community through soft power.
Considering the Role of Art Museums	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not seek out funding opportunities which require DEAI initiatives. Interpretive plan communicates curatorial authority without leaving space for visitor perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated by one-time funding opportunities to implement DEAI initiative(s). Interpretive plan communicates curatorial authority while using some key works or spaces to promote emotional, interpersonal, and cultural connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Motivated by arts-centered foundation funding to deepen DEAI initiatives. Interpretive plan uses art to promote emotional, interpersonal, and cultural connections. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foundation funding pursued to support existing & planned community engagement and language inclusion initiatives. Interpretive plan uses art to promote co-creative experiences & emotional, interpersonal, and cultural connections.
Confronting Structural Inequity & Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not responsive to current events, particularly those related to race, discrimination, and white supremacy. Otherizes or ignores works of art outside of traditional Western canon. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not responsive to current events, particularly those related to race, discrimination, and white supremacy. Works from outside of traditional Western canon highlighted only in temporary exhibitions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aware of current events, particularly those related to race, discrimination, and white supremacy, and how they may affect their local heritage language community. Works internally to create an inclusive art historical canon but does not engage community perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds quickly to current events, particularly those related to race, discrimination, and white supremacy; facilitates community expression in reaction to these events. Works to create an inclusive art historical canon and engages heritage-language community's knowledge & perspectives.
Examining Internal Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little or no bilingual staff. Hiring strategy does not prioritize bilingualism. Management structure follows traditional hierarchy. Individual staff members may take on DEAI projects with little support from institution. Has not begun to consider increasing board diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some bilingual staff present in front-line position. Hiring strategy does not explicitly prioritize bilingualism. Management structure follows traditional hierarchy. Individual staff or departments take on DEAI disconnected from larger institutional support. Recognizes the need to increase board diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage-language speaking staff represented in many departments, including, but not limited to, Visitor Services. Hiring strategy prioritizes bilingualism for front-line staff. Management structure supports collaboration. Some departments take lead on DEAI goals & objectives. Initiatives in place to increase board diversity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff who speak heritage-language in all departments, including, but not limited to, Visitor Services. Hiring strategy prioritizes bilingualism. Management structure supports collaboration. Staff members understand how their role contributes to DEAI goals & objectives. Board includes members from local, heritage communities.
Planning the Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Language inclusion generally limited; not a consideration in exhibition schedules. Limited language inclusion efforts are one-time costs. No budget for editing ineffective or incorrect materials. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheduling for language inclusion efforts haphazard and often rushed. Language inclusion considered a one-time cost which extends primarily to label creation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined schedule for long-term language inclusion takes into account museum size, budget, and staff resources. Translation factored into label creation schedule and budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined schedule for long-term language inclusion takes into account museum size, budget, and staff resources. Language inclusion costs form regular part of budget & long-term financial planning.
Valuing Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few partnerships with community organizations, particular those that are not arts-related. Partners benefit the museum as resources for fundraising and/or marketing, but are not invited to collaborate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates and maintains relationships with community organizations but is not necessarily in frequent contact. Community partners sometimes collaborate on language inclusion efforts (focus groups, testing translation quality, ideas for programs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates and maintains relationships with community organizations. Community partners sometimes collaborate on language inclusion efforts (focus groups, testing translation quality, ideas for programs). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates and maintains mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations & businesses owned by members of heritage-language community. Community partners collaborate on language inclusion efforts (focus groups, testing translation quality, co-creating programs, etc.).

Conducting Culturally-Competent Audience Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements strategies geared towards community engagement without first speaking with or listening to the target community. Research methods inflexible to the cultural specificity of the heritage-language community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implements strategies geared towards community engagement based of surface-level observations with few opportunities for conversation. Research methods have some flexibility to the cultural specificity of the heritage-language community but sometimes model authoritarian structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens to community to accurately discern their lifestyles, values, & perceptions and uses research to design engagement strategies. Research methods attempt to be sensitive to and appropriate for heritage-language community but sometimes model authoritarian structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listens to community to accurately discern their lifestyles, values, & perceptions and uses research to design engagement strategies. Research methods sensitive to and appropriate for the culture of the heritage-language community and take into account the multi-faceted identities of subjects rather than reducing them to language or country of origin.
Creating Positive Institutional Body Language* (Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employs few-to-no multilingual strategies. Any language inclusion is limited by department. Little-to-no multilingual gallery interpretation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employs limited strategies across some departments to integrate heritage language community into occasional museum experiences. Some multilingual gallery interpretation, usually in temporary exhibitions related by content to heritage-language community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attempts to employ a variety of strategies across all departments to integrate the heritage-language community into majority of museum experience. Most-to-all gallery interpretation is multilingual. Parts of website are professionally translated. Some marketing with community media outlets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consistently employs a variety of strategies across all departments to integrate the heritage language community seamlessly into the museum experience. As many facets of museum as possible are multilingual (interpretation, way-finding, maps, marketing, web materials, restaurant menus etc.).
Committing to Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not evaluate engagement initiatives Partners are viewed as one-time help rather than long-term collaborators. Focused only on Stage 2 of the Cycle of M.L.I., if making any efforts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluates community engagement initiatives infrequently. Evaluation viewed as success/failure rather than a learning experience. Initial partnerships falter through lack of stewardship. Museum follows only Stages 1 & 2 of Cycle of M.L.I. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluates the use & effectiveness, and adjusting when necessary. Maintains strong, mutually beneficial partnerships. Follows Cycle of M.L.I., through initial cycle, but does not plan to renew the research phase. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks to constantly improve its language inclusion efforts, setting clear metrics, regularly evaluating, and adjusting when necessary. Mutually beneficial partnerships valued and maintained. Follows Cycle of M.L.I., periodically conducting new research to ensure relevancy.

*Term originally used by the Empathetic Museum's Maturity Model. <http://empatheticmuseum.weebly.com/maturity-model.html>

Developing Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies

Before devising specific strategies, your museum should figure out where it falls on the Foundations rubric and consider goals and motivations for further development. Remember to consult the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion. Holistic multilingual engagement strategies (HMES's) should be developed in response to audience research in the target heritage-language community.

Holistic multilingual engagement strategies should always be considered as a system. In a well-planned system, HMES's mutually strengthen one another. For example, bilingual programs and bilingual interpretation require bilingual staff. Although staff represent the largest long-time budget investment, they are often key for both creating other effective HMES's and for creating a welcoming atmosphere for members of the heritage-language community in the museum. An effective system of HMES's creates welcoming institutional body language by providing a seamless museum experience for heritage-language speaking visitors or visitor groups, equal in quality to those of English-monolingual visitors.



Bilingual/Multilingual Staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage-language speaking front-line staff Heritage-language speaking back-of-house staff Hiring strategy which prioritizes bilingualism Incentives & opportunities for professional development 	Bilingual/Multilingual Gallery Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Labels & wall text Digital/audio guides Digital interactives Booklets/laminated paper didactics 	Bilingual/Multilingual Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onsite tours Culturally-specific programs (ie. Día de los Muertos, Chinese New Year, etc.) General family programs School programs General adult programs
Bilingual/Multilingual Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advertising through heritage-language media outlets Translating traditional advertising (flyers, posters, newspaper, TV, radio, billboards etc.) Digital advertising (website/downloadable materials, email, blog posts, social media, etc.) 	Bilingual/Multilingual General Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wayfinding & signage Staff with buttons indicating languages spoken Exterior signage Restaurant/cafe 	Remember! HMES's work together. A well-planned system of HMES's is important for creating an environment of meaningful language inclusion.

The following tool helps museums plan a system of HMES's that help reach the museum's goal of building relationships with the target heritage-language community while staying within the museum's resources (budget, staff, time). It is divided into two sections.

Considerations:

- Museum Commitment** refers to how much the strategy requires institutional buy-in, involvement of leadership as opposed to individual staff members, and long-term investment.
- Input from Heritage-Language Community** refers to the amount of collaboration or co-creation necessary to create an effective version of this strategy. ALL strategies require some input, whether it be from heritage-language speaking staff members, community advisory groups, community partners etc. Consider how this input will enhance the quality of the particular strategy.

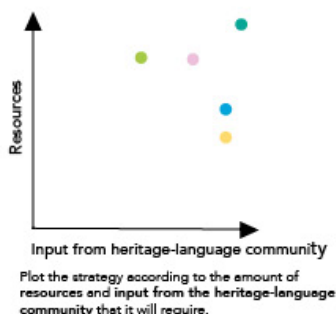
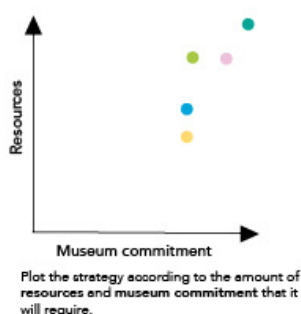
Result:

- Effectiveness for Creating MLI** refers to how much each strategy will contribute to meaningful language inclusion. When the strategies are plotted together, this indicates the system's potential impact. When judging the potential impact, think about how the strategies you have mutually reinforce one another. For example, bilingual gallery interpretation may be effective on its own, but its impact is strengthened by the inclusion of bilingual marketing and front-line staff.

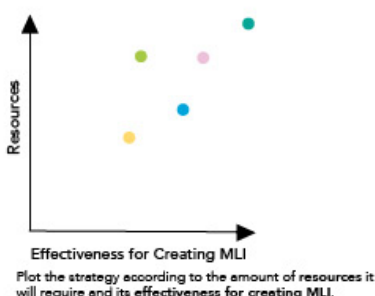
The following are examples of how a museum could plot various strategies across the three continua. Note that the amount of resources stays consistent across each continua. Some strategies require many resources, but are high impact while some require fewer resources but are lower impact. Put together, they become an effective system for creating MLI. Keep in mind that these are just examples—each museum may plot HMES's differently according to their resources and their audience.

- Hiring a full-time bilingual staff member
- Creating & installing fully bilingual labels
- Holding a bilingual family program 4x per year
- Writing bilingual blog posts
- Installing bilingual wayfinding & signage

Considerations:



Results:



How well do these strategies work together as a system to create impact?

Holistic Multilingual Engagement Strategies: Planning Worksheet

The following tool helps museums plan a system of HMES's that will help reach the museum's goal of building relationships with the target heritage-language community while staying within the museum's resources (budget, staff, time). It is divided into two sections.

Considerations:

- **Museum Commitment** refers to how much the strategy requires institutional buy-in, involvement of leadership as opposed to individual staff members, and long-term investment.
- **Input from Heritage-Language Community** refers to the amount of collaboration or co-create necessary to create an effective version of this strategy. ALL strategies require some input, whether it be from heritage-language speaking staff members, community advisory groups, community partners etc. Consider how this input will enhance the quality of the particular strategy.

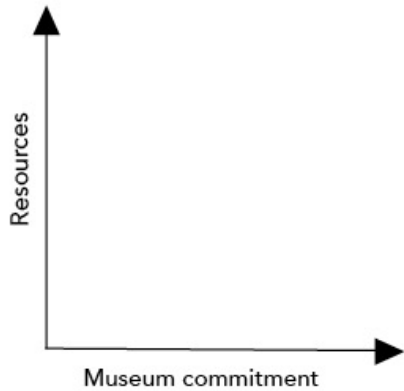
Result:

- **Effectiveness for Creating MLI** refers to how much each strategy will contribute to meaningful language inclusion. When the strategies are plotted together, this indicates the system's **potential impact**. When judging the potential impact, think about how the strategies you have mutually reinforce one another. For example, bilingual gallery interpretation may be effective on its own, but its impact is strengthened by the inclusion of bilingual marketing and front-line staff.

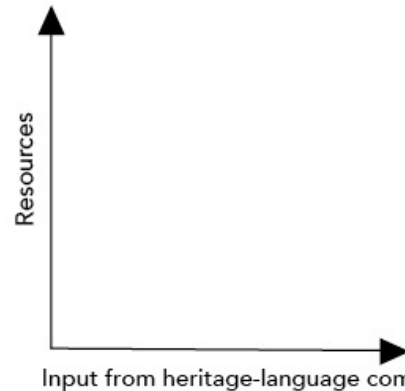


Plot the strategies that your museum is thinking about here.

Considerations:

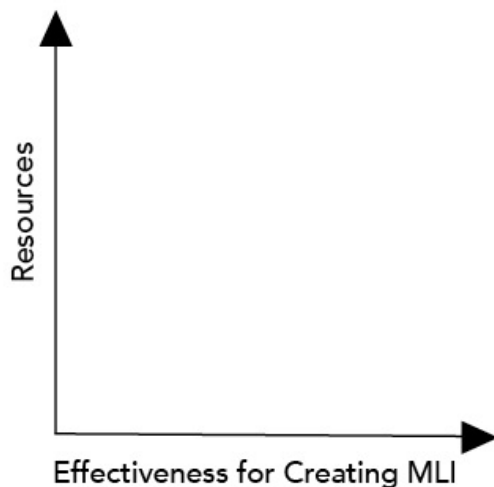


Plot the strategy according to the amount of **resources** and **museum commitment** that it will require.



Plot the strategy according to the amount of **resources** and **input from the heritage-language community** that it will require.

Results:



Plot the strategy according to the amount of **resources** it will require and its effectiveness for creating MLI.

Reflect: How well do these strategies work together as a system to create impact?

Consult this tool throughout the continual process of language inclusion. Each new strategy can be considered according to these three continua.

Conclusion

Further Research

Application and evaluation of the system and in tools presented in “Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion: A Guide for Art Museums.”

I have created the materials in “Creating Meaningful Language Inclusion: A Guide for Art Museums,” based on the ideas which I developed during my literature review and the codes and themes which emerged as a result of my interview research. However, I have not yet had the opportunity to test these materials in the field. I believe that the most important next steps for this project would be to conduct both short-term and longitudinal evaluation of the Guide. This testing could be carried out in several ways. In the short-term, I would proceed by having museums professionals review the Guide. Receiving feedback from a mix of leadership and high-level staff from art museums at a variety of stages of language inclusion would allow me to adapt the tool to be maximally useful for the broadest amounts of museums. Additionally, I would gain an increased sense of the current state of the field—are most art museums Regressive? Emergent? Planned? Where are the specific areas where these museums tend to get stuck? How can the tools I’ve developed help encourage their progress, or how can I adapt the tools to better do so? I would also like to have the opportunity to conduct long-term evaluation of these tools. If, for example, a museum spent a period of five years using the system that I have developed, the tools could be evaluated to see how well they have helped the museum reach their desired impact or meet certain outcomes. I would also be interested in observing the use of these tools over time in several art museums. Evaluating the Guide as applied to a group of museums would allow me to better understand questions like whether it is biased towards museums of certain sizes, budgets, or heritage-language communities.

Extensive interviews and observations to create museum profiles.

Owing to the time constraints of this project, I was only able to interview one museum professional at each institution profiled in this thesis. In future iterations, I would like to be able to develop more fully-rounded case studies by interviewing staff members from multiple departments and in leadership roles for each museum. Since the positions of the professionals

varied for each interview (director, Latino programs coordinators, communications experts, etc.), the focus of the interview shifted somewhat depending on that person's area of expertise. In the future, I feel that familiarizing myself with the perspectives of multiple people in the institution would better allow me to holistically analyze the museum's bilingual initiatives and develop a more nuanced sense of the staff and leadership's institutional buy-in. In addition, I was only able to visit one of the museums, the National Portrait Gallery, in person. I believe that including field observations, timing and tracking evaluations, and visitor interviews would continue to strengthen the profiles and subsequent analysis that I have already developed.

Greater volume of research regarding the intersection between heritage-language communities and the museum field.

While recent Latino visitor and non-visitor studies have greatly aided the development of this thesis, I am interested in knowing more about how the cultural particularities of other heritage-language communities would impact the findings and recommendations set forth in this thesis. As mentioned briefly in the literature review, I believe that some of the more general approaches recommended by studies of Latino audiences likely apply to other communities. However, I am curious about how the results of in-depth reports analyzing the relationships between museums and Chinese, Tagalog, or Arabic-speaking audiences, for example, might influence culturally-competent research approaches or the development of holistic multilingual engagement strategies. Additionally, I hope to see the emerging area of Latino visitor and non-visitor studies continue to grow.

How MLI intersects with museums created by heritage-language communities (ex: the National Museum of Mexican Art, Wing Luke Museum, Asian Pacific American Center, etc).

While I have touched on this somewhat during the note on *Defining Meaningful* at the end of my literature review, I believe that this area merits further research. I would like to know whether the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion and related materials in the Guide for Art Museums remain relevant when the heritage-language community is inherently involved in the creation of the museum. These museums may have fewer perceptual barriers to entry and already be engaged in inclusive practices, including bilingualism (conversely, they may be embroiled in mission-related controversy like New York's Museo del Barrio).²⁸¹ Understanding

²⁸¹ "Mirror Manifesto," El Museo de los Barrios, Published 2019, <https://elmuseodelosbarrios.home.blog/2019/03/27/mirror-manifesto/>.

better how my concept of meaningful language inclusion applies, if at all, to these museums would provide greater depth to this research.

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated both why and how art museums should commit to meaningful language inclusion. Art museums—whether spurred by demographics, funding opportunities, or an internal desire to deepen DEAI—must convert themselves into spaces which are welcoming to and relevant for their local heritage-language communities. *Meaningful language inclusion*, as opposed to purely comprehension-based bilingualism, involves a continuous process of learning, testing, and reflection. The Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion and its three components—culturally competent audience research, holistic multilingual engagement strategies, and commitment to sustainability—provide a pathway for museums to follow when seeking to build or deepen relationships with local heritage language communities. Currently in the field, those art museums whose practices most closely align with those set forth in the Cycle of Meaningful Language Inclusion have most successfully met their goals and contributed to their desired impact. Conversely, those who have skipped important steps such as audience research or the evaluation of multilingual strategies now struggle in various ways to ensure that their efforts are meaningful. By creating my recommendations in the form of a guide, I hope to provide a clear structure for the future efforts of museums seeking to create or improve meaningful language inclusion.

I hope in the coming years to see more and more art museums commit to meaningful language inclusion. I understand that the process entails many challenges: increased budgets, additional staff resources, lengthened exhibitions schedules, potentially uncomfortable insights or interactions as the museum opens itself to evaluation from its heritage-language community. Yet I am convinced that the benefits of such an undertaking are worth the costs. Museums must embrace their soft power in order to affect positive change throughout their *entire* community by becoming more overtly inclusive spaces. The Fitchburg Art Museum, for example, recognizes that bilingual exhibits, signage, and programs serve to both welcome their local Latino community and to take a stance in opposition to the decades of structural racism in their town. For FAM, bilingualism is both a practical audience-building initiative which seeks to make their large Latino community a regular portion of their visitorship and an ideological evolution towards greater diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion. FAM's precise approach may not work for

all institutions—the exact shape taken by meaningful language inclusion will depend on the museum and its local heritage language community/communities. Yet I believe that when approached with intentionality, all art museums that commit to meaningful language inclusion can enact transformational change.

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Appendices

Interview Transcripts & Notes

All interviews were conducted by phone. Transcripts have been lightly edited for grammar and clarity.

Date	Museum	Interviewee	Title	Note
April 19, 2019	Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art	Stace Treat, Alex Kermes	Interpretation Manager, Exhibit Coordinator	Did not record. Notes included in appendix.
September 6, 2019	Fitchburg Art Museum	Nick Capasso	Museum Director	Full transcript.
September 6, 2019- partial interview	National Portrait Gallery	Gabriela Sama Fernandez	Communications Coordinator	Did not record. Transcript of later interview included.
September 10, 2019	Minneapolis Institute of Art	Juline Chevalier	Head of Interpretation and Participatory Experiences	Not included as Museum Profile. Relevant sections of transcript included in appendix.
September 13, 2019	Amon Carter Museum of American Art	Jessica Fuentes	Manager of School and Community Outreach	Full transcript.
September 13, 2019	n/a	Amparo Leyman Pino	Principle of Yellow Cow Consulting	Full transcript.
September 19, 2019	Oakland Museum of California	Lisa Silberstein	Experience Developer	Full transcript.
September 20, 2019	Association of Children's Museums	Laura Huerta Migus	Executive Director	Full transcript.

October 14, 2019	Dallas Museum of Art	Bernardo Velez Rico	Teaching Specialist for School Programs	Recording failed.
October 18, 2019	Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History	Helen Aldana		File of recording corrupted--partial transcript included.
October 30, 2019	Denver Art Museum	Leticia Salinas	Latino Cultural Programs Coordinator/Community Engagement Coordinator, 2016-2018	Full transcript
November 17, 2019	National Portrait Gallery	Gabriela Sama Fernandez	Communications Coordinator	Full transcript

Crystal Bridges Interview Notes 4/19/2019

- Exhibition called "Border Cantos"—photographer and sculptor/sound artist. Reflections of US Mexico border; taking images of border and wall, no people in any of the artworks.. Found objects turned into musical instruments. Opened in February right after Trump's election. Presented fully bilingual; response very favorable.
- Did exit research; majority of guests, even non-Spanish speakers reacted positively (as well as Spanish speakerS); signaled inclusive posture on part of museum.
- Had been wanted to engage the Latinx community much more.
- Had been planning reinstallation of historical galleries (two large galleries that introduce collection ((colonial to WW1)); discussions about integrating Spanish into that project. FULL translations. All labels, panels, digital.
- Just jumped in without checking out what other places were doing.
- Wanted to signal inclusivity; positive feedback within community—enhancement of image; increase visitation from community.
- Installation opened in March of last year. Alex = pivot point for coordinating translation. Worked closely with curator to establish a system for translation. Logistically- label

process in place, Stace shepherds that process through (proofreading, copy editor, getting labels done in English. Established process in English). How to embed translating into the process? Challenging: takes more time. Most writers are English speakers. Alex has to make sure writers AWARE of timeline. 2 offsite translators. One for rotating exhibitions; other for permanent collection labels. Mostly email relationships with translators.

- Typically Stace & curators generate content and didactic info. Sent to Alex; Alex sends to translator. 5-10 working days for translation. Usually working on small word counts (75 words per label); depending on batch size, could be several labels at a time. Translators do proofreading. Sometimes the translators check in.
- Logistics—more cost associated—doubling amount of materials used for labels.
- Staff resources—no one on staff who spoke Spanish; dialects of Spanish different—consternation—inconsistencies in Spanish translation. No one on staff to speak in institutional Spanish voice. Staff member outside of exhibitions department became the institutional voice for exhibit; noted inconsistencies. Installation opened. Need someone who can proofread Spanish to develop institutional Spanish voice.
- Renovation of galleries—opening all at once; no real translation process in place; counterpart project manager handled overhaul at time. Translation process had never been clearly laid out. Miscommunications. Admin assistant; from Chihuahua—very vocal about inconsistencies.
- Had advisor for Border Cantos; internal resource group. But didn't have time in project because of schedule to fully consult Spanish-speakers. "Harsh learning lessons" after opening. Applied for federal grant to study and learn more from local community. Understand local community better; perception of museum, how they use their free time; process will involve bring community to museum. First focus group panel a couple weeks ago. Fundamental to include community members when doing stuff like this. NEED people who speak Spanish. Invaluable to have more than one person who is native speaker. Language is so personal. "We the people" translation= translated as the constitution is translated; taken from State Dept. website. Not spoken language.
- -IMLS grant will seek more info. General synopsis of responses so far: leisure activities; many participants travel big distances for leisure—museum is not necessarily too far, but tend to think of it as being for Anglo Americans. Latino audiences enjoy doing things outside, so maybe Latinx population has tended to attend more outdoor events; family events; large parties.
- Dabbling in creation Marshallese interpretation. Big Marshallese community; trying to translate audio tour. For now, sticking to Spanish. Unique community—Pacific Island culture. Focus group a couple years ago—same general attitude about museum as not reflecting their culture. Large community in area.

HOFFMAN:

I was really excited. I was looking into bilingual art museums and Fitchburg was one of the first that came up and when I read a WBUR article from a few years ago, I was so excited by everything that you guys are doing.

CAPASSO:

Oh, thank you. Yeah, and I'm actually very interested in your research because I'd like to find out which other museums are attempting to do what we're doing.

HOFFMAN::

You know, I haven't come across a ton and especially in the art world, it seems to be so much more common in children's museums and science centers, which is one of the reasons I really wanted to focus on art museums.

CAPASSO:

Yup. That's interesting, I'm just making a note here. It's funny, I was I was approached several years ago by this organization called the National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, and they were having a regional conference here in New England and they asked me to come and speak to the group about the bilingual initiatives here in Fitchburg. And of course I told them I'd be happy to come and talk, but it's just, why are you calling *me*, you know, how'd you find me here in Fitchburg? And the answer was, well, you're the only one who's doing it and I said no, that can't be. I said, what about museums in like the border states, you know, like Arizona and California and Texas. And what they told me was that, well if you think about those places, those are all-- you know, Arizona and Texas are red states, San Diego County is a deep Ronald Reagan territory. The trustees of those museums would never allow it.

HOFFMAN:

Oh, that's so interesting because I have to say, I've been wondering about that myself. And it seems like those museums tend to offer some programs or initiatives, but not as full of a commitment to this.

CAPASSO:

Yeah. Because I think a lot of their attitude is, you know, those people ought to be learning English.

HOFFMAN:

Hmm. I guess that tends to unfortunately be the attitude. Well, I have to say, of what I've found, Fitchburg seems to have the most comprehensive program. So that was really exciting for me to see.

CAPASSO:

Okay. I'll be happy to talk with you.

HOFFMAN:

So in general for my research, I'm hoping to talk with as many museums as possible that are implementing bilingual programs and initiatives to come up with a self assessment that museums can do to see how well, how well they're doing at providing meaningful language inclusion. So language inclusion that's culturally competent and that is responsive to their community or their target audience, I suppose, whether local or not, but the target audience that they have in mind. Because I've seen some museums that have the best intentions, but maybe implemented some efforts in ways that didn't end up resonating. So this would kind of be a guideline so that if people are kind of having the will but not sure where to start, they can jump in. So to start with, I'd like to ask a little bit about the specific efforts at the Fitchburg Art Museum. I think I know a little bit about this from reading up on it, but could you explain in your own words who the target audiences for these bilingual efforts?

CAPASSO:

The decision was made to become a bilingual muse is that the city of Fitchburg has a 30% and growing Latino population-- a third of the city-- and the decision was also made when I became the director about six and a half

years ago, that the museum would do a pivot from, you know, a claim to 20th century model elitism and insularity, becoming a museum more directly focused on community service. We felt that one of the things we needed to do to perform that mission was to try to serve everybody in the community, not just the white people, and there are various ways that we're doing that. And God knows there are a lot of barriers and obstacles where we are. We are hell bent on this and doing it correctly. So the first thing we decided to do was become bilingual, because that's a condition that we can control and we can control it fairly immediately. And there is a cost attached to it, but not a lot. Especially because we phased it in. We didn't do it all immediately. So we made the commitment that every time you changed over an exhibition, the new tech, the labels would appear in English and Spanish. And it took us about two years because-- well, it took us a little longer than that. We were about 75% complete in two years, almost. Well, we were in the process of changing *everything*.

HOFFMAN:

Oh, sure. So it's a big opportunity,

CAPASSO:

Right. It provided an opportunity you know, since we were dying to change everything anyway, we might as well add this change. So it was convenient for us. It was also fairly easy for us because we're not a giant museum, you know, it's not like we had to change the language in 200,000 square feet.

HOFFMAN:

Right, right.

CAPASSO:

We have 20,000 square feet of galleries, which is still substantial. It's not like MOMA or the Newark Museum. So anyway, that's the commitment that we made and the way that we did that. You know, a lot of people suggested to us, "Oh, you could have students or volunteers do that." And we immediately decided against that because the quality of the language in Spanish needs to be the same as the quality in English. If you're going to do this, you have to do it well, and you have to do it sincerely, and it can't be half-assed, or underinvested and you gotta do it right. So we started out with a translator. There are many different companies that will just do translation. And so we, we hired the company and we sent them all the text. And then what we did in addition to that, we have a staff member here who speaks Spanish and he's had artist historical training. And even better than that, he grew up in the Puerto Rican community here in Fitchburg. And the majority of the Latino families here are Puerto Rican. I mean, we have folks from other places, but it's mostly Puerto Rican. And Puerto Rico-Spanish and Spanish-Spanish are not the same, I have learned. So we have this staff member and when the language would come back from the translators, first of all, he would make sure they got the art stuff right and it wasn't just a transliteration. And then he, because of his cultural background, he can also Puerto Ricanize it a little bit, so that it would be more comfortable to the majority of the visitors who would need that language? So that, that's, that's pretty much how we've been doing it. We've found a better translator. It's an individual who does translations for museums, and so all the signage inside the museum and on the outside this year one way or another, and in English and Spanish in most of the galleries are right up on the wall, right next to each other. We have one gallery, it's a gallery about Egyptian art and culture, and that's the one location in the museum that we didn't change for a lot of different reasons. That space was very heavily designed. So trying to replicate text on the wall wasn't going to work. So what we did is we designed an app. We have a Spanish translation app for that space and I think you can access that through our website.

HOFFMAN:

And is that Puerto Rican Spanish too?

CAPASSO:

Yes. And we found out that no matter what Spanish you use, not everybody's going to be happy.

HOFFMAN:

Well that's something I wonder about a lot. I was working on a project with the Puerto Rican community here in Philly, with the local community and just figuring out exactly how to portray the translations, the tone, the style, the language...

CAPASSO:

We're doing the best we can with the limited resources we have. And if, you know, the Dominican's and the Uruguayans don't like it, they can at least read it.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah. I mean you have to make some decisions.

CAPASSO:

We're not going to let the perfect be the enemy of the good here.

HOFFMAN:

Right. Because I think sometimes people get caught up in that and are put off from starting.

CAPASSO:

Yeah, right. Exactly. Exactly. And the other thing that we decided pretty early on was that if we were going to translate stuff, we were going to translate everything.

HOFFMAN:

Hm. Interesting.

CAPASSO:

Not this gallery, or that gallery, or this exhibition or that. We wanted the community to feel that they could always come here and always get translation or whatever they wanted to see here.

HOFFMAN:

I see at some institutions where it tends to be very subject-matter based. So they have a Mexican art exhibit and they might have some translations in Spanish, but elsewhere that's lacking. And so that's something I'm always curious about too, whether it's almost worse to offer just that one thing or only offer that on a temporary basis and then not spread it through the museum. Or is it still a positive move?

CAPASSO:

For better or worse, our long term goal is to embrace the Latino community as part of our overall audience, part of the culture we're creating here. We're also trying to act as a good example to the rest of the city. You know, our Latino population here is very poor. They have no political representation and the mere vestiges of a business community after having been here since the 1970s. There's an enormous amount of structural racism in this city and we're trying to show everybody else that you can work with the entire community.

HOFFMAN:

Sure. And then it doesn't detract from their experience to add in things that include everyone.

CAPASSO:

Right. So in addition to the language, we also have done some really consistent programming that would appeal to the Latino community showing Latino artists. So I'm doing that-- different educational programs and performances and so on and so forth. And that's been well-received. One of the things that's been really important to be successful, this is that we've forged really good relationships with social service agencies in our region. You have nonprofits that

serve the Latino, Latino immigrants and that way they help us to do this the right way and not the stupid gringo way. And also, because this museum had been an elitist institution for so long, we needed to reach out to the community through institutions that they already trust. And that, I think has been the most important thing, because as I was saying, you know, there are a lot of barriers here. So one of the barriers is language. We can control that. But another barrier is just the, the, the museum's past. And by working in partnership with these other organizations, it helps us overcome that slowly. Another barrier is time. It takes a long time, not only to affect this cultural change, but to get the community to embrace it and understand it. And so we're in this for the long haul. You know, I've seen lots of instances of museums saying, "gee, we need to embrace Latino community. Let's do a Latino thing. A show, an opening. Right. Do that. And then they don't come to the next steps of addition. And then you've seen them throw in the towel and say 'Gosh, those Latinos! They didn't come'"

HOFFMAN:

Or they're not interested or something. Yeah.

CAPASSO:

Crazy. It takes a long time... other barriers that we have are, it's an impoverished community. I mean, these folks, they've got other things to do on the weekend. Our admission's not very high, but it's still a barrier

HOFFMAN:

If you're bringing a family.

CAPASSO:

Yeah, which is usually what happens-- the Latino visitation is usually a big family group. And then the other thing, and this is an enormous barrier and just something you have to be extremely patient, is that in Latin America, museums continue to be deeply elitist institutions, right? So why should these folks in Fitchburg from the Dominican Republic feel like they can come to the museum here when they weren't welcome at the museum in Santo Domingo? It means they're just not disposed to go to the museum. Just doesn't make sense for them. So we've got to fight that. And so the other things that we've done is that we've made sure to have a receptionist who's fluent in English and Spanish. And then we just hired a new person who here is a member of the local Latino community, which is great. It's not just, you know, a gringo who speak Spanish. And our collection manager is also Latino. And so we're trying to build diversity on the staff and our next step, and this is something that we're really actively engaged in right now, is to diversify the board. That's a big challenge. It's a great challenge. The board says they want to do it, they're all signed up for it. Okay. Still, it has to be done right. And we're getting all kinds of technical assistance in helping us do this the right way so that we can achieve the result, which is to have our board adequately represent all the communities we serve. That's a process that's gonna take a few years.

HOFFMAN:

And could you talk a little bit about the results that you've seen in the community and in this audience-building. Do you notice that there are more members of the Latino community coming to the museum in general?

CAPASSO:

I can only tell you that anecdotally because you can't tell who is Latino, you know what I mean? First of all, there's no practical way to do it, but just anecdotally, we have, we have increased, I would say, regular attendance. Not huge, but steadily growing. And we always have very good attendance from the Latino community for Latino-themed programs. The other thing we do is we try to do business with Latino businesses. We will also hire caterers that can provide food from the Caribbean or South America and not just for the Latino events.

HOFFMAN:

That's really interesting. That's the aspect that I wouldn't have thought of at all. I hadn't come across that at all. But that makes perfect sense.

CAPASSO:

Well, we're here to serve the community it can't just be through the programs. It has to be your business practice.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah. That's another kind of support.

CAPASSO:

I don't know if you know anything about Fitchburg, Massachusetts. It's a small city and it's a poor city and then some, one of the poorest parts of Massachusetts. So part of our vision of service is that, you know, so we have a, a 1.4 million annual operating budget. 90% of that money is spent here. If we can, if we can get a vendor or a contractor locally, that's the person.. Rather than look into Boston or Worcester or some other place. And that's good for the whole community. It shows the world we're genuine.

HOFFMAN:

And what would you say--we've talked about it a little bit--are there any next steps or, or is there anything if you could say that you didn't have constraints, like the normal constraints of budget, time, staff resources that you would implement in the ideal vision of this museum?

CAPASSO:

Ideal? Boy, I don't know if I have an answer. I'm never in a position where I can think outside of constraints.

HOFFMAN:

Sure. I guess it's all about being creative within the constraints.

CAPASSO:

Well that's it. I mean, we don't have a lot of staff. We don't have a lot of time. We don't have a lot of money. But one thing that art museums and their staffs do have is creativity and we try to leverage that. And the other thing, we try to leverage his partnerships. You know, we, we make sure that anybody that we hire shares our value of community service. We make sure that everybody here understands that our client is not art. You know what I'm talking about? A lot of museums, you walk in the door, you can tell in two minutes who the client is and it's not you. Well we don't feel that way. You know, the art's important, but we're using art to serve people. We're not using people to serve art and that by no means is intended to dumb down the curatorial program.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah, I think it's definitely a misconception that that would have to be at the expense of scholarship.

CAPASSO:

Yeah. Or the quality of our work, quality of the experience. But some museums feel that way. You know, we have a major museum nearby that really shows very little interest in the community, because they do feel that they don't want to be perceived as a community art center, they're a *museum*. You know, there's some kind of higher purpose that they're aspiring to, but, but you know that I feel that in most cases, that kind of duality is false. Any type of duality is false, but you know, especially in this case, just as long as you're clear about what you're doing and you do it well, you can do several things. They don't have to dilute each other. I think there are a few other museums that are, are really making progress with the community engagement. Here's another thing that's important, I think in our desire to serve the community, what we've done in terms of figuring out how to do that has come from listening to the needs and desires of the community, getting people and talking to them and hearing what they want rather than going to big conferences and then come back here and creating programs and wondering why no one's coming to them. So we're very focused on, on listening to our clients.

HOFFMAN:

Were you able to do some focus groups or is it more informal?

CAPASSO:

Both. We did a lot of focus groups. We'd been there on strategic planning process after I got here and we did a lot of focus groups. We have a lot of conversations with the nonprofits that we partner with.

HOFFMAN:

Sure.

CAPASSO:

Trying to get involved with those. Like our membership manager is on the board of an organization for Spanish-speaking Americans. So there's kind of a cross pollination too.

HOFFMAN:

And especially I would imagine in Fitchburg, where everyone's trying to really lift each other up.

CAPASSO:

Well that's one part of the community that's working. One of the good things about it is that there really is a culture of partnership and collaboration, especially among the nonprofits and the city government, private sector is a little bit checked out, working on that.

HOFFMAN:

Well I think as far as questions I have now, that about covers them. Would it be okay if I get in touch if anything else comes up?

CAPASSO:

Oh, absolutely. If you've got follow up questions or something else comes up, you know, shoot me an email and we'll, you know, we'll do it just like we did this time. We'll set up a time to talk.

HOFFMAN:

That sounds good. Thank you so much.

CAPASSO:

I appreciate it. When is your, you've written up your research or if you would send me a copy of this final report or protocol or whatever it is you're writing.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah, I would be happy to do that.

CAPASSO:

I think that's what... I'm so interested in your research because we didn't do that research. So when people say to me, Oh, I've never seen a bilingual museum before, are you the only one? And my answer is, I really don't know. Because rather than doing that research, we listened to people on the ground here. Right. And it's not that they're mutually exclusive. It's just, we just didn't have time to do that research and it didn't seem as germane, us as you know...

HOFFMAN:

Sure. And the most immediate impact is through listening.

CAPASSO:

Right, right, right. So, so that's why I'm really interested in seeing what you find.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah. I will definitely pass that along.

Relevant Portions from Interview with CHEVALIER Chevalier, Minneapolis Institute of Art

CHEVALIER:

So Mia is free and open to the public, no admission charge except for our target shows. And so the target shows are ticketed. So Hearts of our People was a ticketed show. And the exhibition that will go in the target galleries here called Artists Respond: American Art and the Vietnam War-- I'm getting that title probably wrong, but that's the gist of it. That's art from 1965 to 1975 part of US started responding to the Vietnam War and then he created an exhibition calling artists to reflect-- southeast Asian artists who do work dealing specifically with the aftermath of what the Vietnam is known as the American War. So for that exhibition we are also translating the labels into the languages of the artists.

HOFFMAN:

I'm curious because that to me strikes me as a slightly different approach than most museums take. I've more often seen translation based off of the most common languages spoken in the local community. This approach seems to target the languages of the artists. Can you talk a little bit about that decision and why it's important to be representing the voices of the artists in that way?

CHEVALIER:

Sure. So I definitely agree. For Minneapolis and St Paul, we have high numbers of immigrant populations and so with the city of Minneapolis turns out the materials for official city business, there are I believe four languages that they are printed in. You can access on information that's in four languages, English, Spanish, Hmong, and Somali. So those are kind of what we consider generally kind of the Twin Cities or Minneapolis' languages. So we try and connect to visitors in an accessible way. We also are very cognizant of the fact that it's a little bit cart before the horse and that we're not going to get more visitors who would benefit from labels, not in English unless we present them in the first place. So we realized that at first attendance was going to be low. And especially for native women artists, that was... we knew that the usership-- just finding the people that translate in the first place is very difficult. So I did not expect that this is, you know, these are going to be widely used, sort of read, but it was more of a cultural respect, cultural celebration, recognizing the individuality of different cultural groups. Um, and showing people like this, showing folks who don't understand or weren't aware of that variety, um, giving them a visual representation of that and potentially as a way or they don't, I don't know if dizzy and I, I hesitate to say this because it's potentially a little bit paternalistic, but are we potentially helping to continue or preservative languages just by helping, again, making more people aware? I don't know for sure.

....

CHEVALIER:

And one of the things that was interesting that came up with translating for Hearts of Our People was at one point, because some of the labels... the labels are written in English and when possible we were quoting the artists. So there were artists who we had quoted as a label and the translator was concerned and rightly so, that if they translated this, is this going to be, give the impression that this person speaks this language fluently. Which I had not considered, I think in the context of the exhibition that would have been the case. But it ended up being that because we're also translating into languages, you know, it's just so many different languages. We tried to simplify the text, and that ended up changing the connotation of the meaning.

....

HOFFMAN: (16:15)

And are there frontline staff that speaks some of these languages [Spanish, Hmong Somali]?

CHEVALIER: (16:23)

Yeah, and we have a system in place where, definitely for Spanish, I'm not sure about Somali at the moment, but we've got an incentive program for frontline staff so that if they pass a language test, then they can get a slight bump in pay.

HOFFMAN: (16:43)

Oh Wow. That's really cool.

CHEVALIER: (16:45)

Yeah. And then they wear a button that says, you know, in that language, "how can I help you?" We do also have our highlights brochure, we have that translated into Spanish, Hmong, Somali and Japanese because when we do get tourists, they're more likely from Japan than anywhere else.

Full Interview with FUENTES Fuentes, Amon Carter Museum of American Art

HOFFMAN:

Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me today. I really appreciate that. So like I said a little bit in my emails. I'm working on a thesis right now that will ultimately develop a self assessment for art museums that are looking to deepen their bilingual engagement with their local communities. And so I've been looking into what some current art museums are doing and I came across some of the work that you had done at the Dallas Museum of Art through their blog. And so I know you're not there anymore, but I was wondering if we could talk a little bit about the work that you did do there on this topic, and what you're doing now at the Amon Carter.

FUENTES:

So when I was at the DMA, I worked in the Center for Creative Connections. Are you familiar with the space?

HOFFMAN:

I've read about it. I haven't been myself. I've actually never been to Dallas.

FUENTES:

It's an educational space, but it's unique in the fact that it also is a gallery. So there are actual works of art from the collection on view, but it's also has activities and is very active, and it's also an education geared for all ages, so it's not just geared towards children. So in that space, I was really intentional about trying to make sure that we had bilingual text anywhere that we could. And when I was there, it was maybe a little bit more of a push from me and my coworkers because we saw the importance and the need for that, but there wasn't as much buy in from designers, because from a designer's perspective, it means you have to cut your text in half and now you're going to have twice as much text, and just trying to handle how to lay things out with that extra text. So we were successful and being able to get instructional text that was bilingual, but we weren't able to get label texts there. And so right before I left, a new director came on, and from the director's standpoint, it was important to do bilingual programming and bilingual text. And so from higher up now the push is being made there, and they are working towards all bilingual texts on labels throughout the museum and rolling that out. And they've also been hiring more bilingual staff and they have started some bilingual programming with that.

HOFFMAN:

Interesting. That's, that's really interesting that there wasn't initially that full staff buy-in and it has to come from a larger institutional shift.

FUENTES:

Yeah. I think depending on what kind of institution you're at, that can come differently. But since the DMA is such a large institution with so many moving parts, it makes sense that other teams in other departments would need to hear it from somebody higher up. Do a top down directive.

Versus, now I'm here at the Amon Carter, which is a smaller institution, and my position here is manager of School and Community Outreach, and I think it's helpful that I'm here at a smaller institution. My direct boss is the director of education and she has a role on the leadership team and she has a strong voice on leadership team. So we have in the short time that we've both been here--I've been here for about a year and a half, then she's here for almost two years--so in the short time that we've both been here, we've been able to start to make some strides, not quite on bilingual labels yet, but we are getting some of the important brochures, like maps translated into Spanish. And we've also, we've been under renovation over the summer, so we're just reopening. We also have new wayfinding signage, which is all very visual, with very little text, that is also intended to reach multilingual audiences. And so in my role, I oversee our school tour programs, educator workshops, offsite community outreach program, and I have teams of people that lead those programs. So since I've come on, I've been able to hire, we have three bilingual gallery teachers and we're about to hire an additional bilingual community teacher as well. So we've been working just slowly build up that capacity. And last school year we started piloting some bilingual school tours cause we have like our standard school partnerships with every fourth grader at Fort worth ISD every year and every fifth grader, I see every 4th and 5th grader.

HOFFMAN:

Wow.

FUENTES:

And then we also have a pre-K program in the Spring when all the older kids are taking their STAAR test, or you know, their annual tests. We work with pre-K students and we do tours for them during that testing. They're not taking tests.

HOFFMAN:

Sure. I hope not.

FUENTES:

And so last year we piloted some bilingual tours. We had started with the fourth grade ISD program and we chose 10 schools that we knew had a high need for Spanish speaking tours, so we started there and kind of started small and piloted some things. And we really had a chance to do more with the pre-K programs, I guess. Whereas ISD is, I think it's about 60% Hispanic and, I think about 30% of the students in Fort worth ISD, are bilingual or English language learners. We also have a lot of dual language programs in fourth grade as well, so for English speakers who are learning Spanish. So we know that there's a high need in that district and a high desire for different kinds of bilingual in Spanish tours so we kind of started there and pinpointed the schools. We also know a lot of the pre-K students are English language learners, a higher percentage even than regular fourth ISD school. In the pre-K program there's more students who are English language learners. So really being able to offer full Spanish tours or sometimes a hybrid Spanish-English tour, to help the students fill language and feel comfortable.

HOFFMAN:

And is this something that you developed more internally or were you communicating with some of the teachers involved in the pilot program to figure out what would be more useful?

FUENTES:

Yeah, so we kind of started the idea internally and then the first step of piloting was that we created a very simple survey to send teachers, that we, that we selected to ask like, first of all, do you have the needs that we think you have? Then second of all, would you want a full Spanish tour or would you want a hybrid Spanish/English or are you not interested in this at all? Because it might be that some educators are striving to--I'm going to use the word force, but that's not the right--but some educators might be striving to put their students in immersive English language environments. They don't want that Spanish option. So we kind of put out this survey to start to gather kind of some feedback and start conversations with teachers about what they really wanted. And what we've found was that most of the teachers wanted a hybrid English/Spanish tour. And part of what we do on those tours, for example, students will see five works of art over an hour and a half. And on two of the stops that they stopped to look at art, they view a writing activity. So what we decided with the teachers was on the two writing activities, we would have those in English because those students will be taking that test with writing. We need to be able to do it in English. They'll need to practice that English. But on the other three stops where we're just having conversation looking and thinking and talking about art, that those could be more like bilingual, than the writing.

HOFFMAN:

That's really interesting. And how would you say you've seen students respond to the bilingual format? Both Spanish speakers at home and people that speak English at home?

FUENTES:

Definitely with the Spanish-speakers at home, I see a lot of excitement in their faces and their voices when they first see somebody who looks like them in the museum that's leading the tour, they kind of light up. I've heard students say like, "Oh, I want to be on a tour with her. Oh, cool!" And then whenever they have a Spanish speaker who pronounced their name correctly-- it's just the little things like *Monica Monica*, or like, it clicks and there's somebody there that has the same lived experiences as them. And as far as English speakers who are learning Spanish, I think, you know, there's also a sense of excitement because there's an opportunity to explore the language that they're learning in a different setting. Right. It's different than just being in school and kind of going through vocabulary and working on grammar, it's a real opportunity to exercise those language skills that they're learning. And perhaps to kind of learn new vocabulary that they might not be addressing in school.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah, I remember when I learned Spanish in school, it seemed pretty remote, especially growing up in a place that didn't have a high percentage of Spanish speakers. And it wasn't until much later in life that I got that practical experience of seeing it used. So I think if I had been able to experience something like a museum tour, that probably would've had a big impact.

FUENTES:

Yeah. And the teachers of the classes that are teachers that are teaching English speakers Spanish, they decided to [do the tour] because now it's an opportunity for their students to hear another voice, not just the teacher's voice and to maybe hear like a different accent, to hear different vocabulary, and to see it in a real life setting is always so important with any kind of thing that you're learning, you know?

HOFFMAN:

Definitely. And what have been any challenges that you faced when developing these bilingual tours, if any?

FUENTES:

I would say the first challenge that we came upon when we first started piloting these was, we had one Spanish-speaking gallery teacher. And so it's a lot to put on one person to do all those translation because we write six, seven, eight tour stops depending. And so then it's one person who's making those translations. And we're lucky that we have three other, at least three other Spanish-speakers on staff who were willing to come in and help some of

those translations to give, you know, another perspective. And each of the Spanish-speakers we have on staff is from a different Latin American region. So then, you know, there's kind of the question as to which Spanish do we defer to, when we're translating this and if there's like a disagreement between a couple of different Spanish speakers on which word is best, you know, knowing where to land on that. It's been a little bit difficult. But now that we have three gallery teachers who are bilingual or Spanish-speakers, there's a lot more voices at the table. So it's easier, I think, to kind of get to these places. And now that we've piloted it a little bit last year, we also have a sense of where audiences are.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah. It was about to ask, where the majority of the audience is Spanish is coming from. And if you defer more towards, say the audience primarily speaks Mexican Spanish.

FUENTES:

Yes, that's exactly right. And the other thing that's been beneficial and maybe something we didn't originally plan on when we decided we were going to move into this direction is we also have a couple of gallery teachers who are English speakers who are interested in learning Spanish. So what we've been able to do is with our Spanish speaking gallery teachers, they've been able to create resources. For example, for the pre-K tours, they'll translate the whole lesson into Spanish. But then also for the English version of the lesson, they'll create a vocabulary list of words that might come up on the tour and then the Spanish counterpart to those. But if a gallery teacher is in a moment and a kid is saying unfamiliar word, they might be able to look back and remember and recall what that means. And that's something that I had kind of picked up on the need for last year when I was observing the tours. We had a gallery teacher who was talking about a country scene with the students and she them, what do you see in the artwork? And one of the students said "vaca" and she didn't understand. "Vaca, I don't know what you're saying." And the kid repeated it a couple times and she wasn't computing so...

HOFFMAN:

Right. And that could be frustrating for everybody.

FUENTES:

Right. Yeah. So having those kinds of resources for the other teachers to help them learn it helps them be able to communicate better.

HOFFMAN:

That's so smart. Yeah. And just improves the cultural competency all around. And what would you say would be like your ideal vision of bilingualism or language inclusion in the museum?

FUENTES:

So tough.

HOFFMAN:

It's a big question.

FUENTES:

The question, you know, for me, because we're in Texas and because Spanish is such a prominent language here, it would be ideal for me to see Spanish language treated equally, English is in all of the wall text and all of the brochures, and a full Spanish replication, like a completely separate brochure, or on the wall text having the English and Spanish language side by side instead of Spanish underneath the English and maybe smaller, you know, so like a visual representation of the quality of it.

HOFFMAN:

Right, right.

FUENTES:

And also to see, you know, throughout staff, mostly frontline staff, but to have Spanish speakers, represented across the different areas of staff as well. So that, again, it's not just falling to a handful of people to be the people to hold the museum up to the standards. What good is that if we offer Spanish text on the website and Spanish text when you get here, but there's nobody here that can help explain something if you have a question.

HOFFMAN:

Right. And it's not reflected in your interactions.

FUENTES:

Exactly. That's right. But I do realize too that there's whole worlds of other languages, so I think depending on the community and the city, you know, it might not be Spanish and English that that you're working on, it might be more languages than that or different languages from that. And even here in Fort Worth, we might find that there's other languages that we would want to, make accessible to visitors. So it feels huge..

HOFFMAN:

Well you got to start somewhere.

FUENTES:

Yeah. And I think ideal situation is for the museum to be an accessible and welcoming place for everyone. So how do we make that happen?

Full Interview with Amparo Leyman Pino, Consultant

HOFFMAN:

I'm specifically looking at language, but not any language in particular. Just in general, like looking kind of at best practices when you are implementing bilingual labels or bilingual programs, any kind of materials to make your museum more accessible for speakers that either don't speak English as a first language or are more comfortable in a language other than English or even people that are completely bilingual but would feel more welcomed seeing another language represented in the museum.

LEYMAN PINO:

Yeah, exactly. So how can I help?

HOFFMAN:

I'm just interested in what you've found in your experience to work well when museums are implementing, I guess it would be particularly Spanish language. And anything that you've seen in institutions that are doing this work in a really good way or on the other side, some missteps that you've seen when institutions have been going about this work?

LEYMAN PINO:

So best practices, I think that I will put it in two categories. The first one would be, there are museums who go the whole nine yards. And so they, they dive deep and they don't only offer labels or signage in two or more languages, but also they offer programming year round or two languages or more. And there are others for me, my favorite ones are the ones that have that conversation internally with their staff to understand why we're doing this and to have

clarity on the repercussions in the museum and the community for doing this and beyond that or my *favorite* favorite ones, the ones that do best, they have a co-creation with the community.

HOFFMAN:

And can you think of any examples of museums that have enacted that kind of co-creation?

LEYMAN PINO:

Yeah, and I'm now an advisor for our new project for OMSI on growth in STEM and they want to do this exhibit in co-creation with, with their communities. The Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose have done a lot of co-creation. Well, I have a pending project we haven't moved forward with at the California Academy of Sciences but once we did, these guys did a multilingual exhibit. Like they started like, Oh, what if we do an exhibit in four languages, Spanish, Mandarin, Filipino and English and senior leadership said, yeah, go for it. And they were like, "what! We have to do it." And they did very well. And I was a proofreader for that project. Interesting because that also answers your question of the practices that have a room for improvement. So they hired me and a super well known and shi-shi translation company from the East Coast. But the people that were translating, they're not informal science communicators. And that's that. And that's advantage. That's what I do for a living. Right. I worked for the children's museum in Mexico City. I've been a science communicator since 1994, I won't say-- I want you to do the math, but, since 94. So what I'm trying to tell you is that one thing is that you are proficient in the language. And the other thing is that you're proficient in communicating in the language of science. And that's a nuance. Right. So, , with the California Academy of Sciences, we finished up proofreading. They already have a new exhibit on some multilingual, but they haven't done the internal work. And I teach them, what if we do a glossary. You will need a glossary now for things that you're going to say always the same way consistently. And that's an opportunity to do co-creation with the community. For example, there are a lot of species that have common names and the common name you need to use the one that is from the community you're engaging with. Right. So it could be a hummingbird and in Mexico will be called, colibrí, chupamirto and Ecuador it will be called colorín. So you need to say, well, the majority of the community that we're serving is from El Salvador or from Ecuador. Then you choose colorín. Right. And then you can bring in parentheses "in other parts of Latin America, this bird is called blah, blah, blah."

HOFFMAN:

I liked that. I haven't really seen that as a suggestion anywhere so far, but I think that's great. That makes a lot of sense.

LEYMAN PINO:

Well, I was translating some apps for the Lawrence Hall of Science and you can download those apps from, from the Apple store. Anyway, in the app, they were talking about band-aids. In Spanish, there are so many words depending on the country you are. *Curita*, *tirita*, *bandita*, so I use them all. I use them all as a joke, but like I said it was an app, so it was "so what do you need, a *tirita*? *Que necesitas*-- do you speak Spanish?"

HOFFMAN:

I do. Viví tres años en Madrid.

LEYMAN PINO:

Okay. So that's why you have a magnificent pronunciation. "So, in Spain, they call it *tirita*, the band-aid. And so thinking of an app, you don't have a certain audience identified audience, right. It can be any audience for any part of the world. I used all the, all the names for the band-aids.

HOFFMAN:

Just changing between them so that people understand the context?

LEYMAN PINO:

No, it's a dialogue. So one of the characters says-- I don't remember if the character asked for a bandaid or he says to the person "Oh, I have band-aids," and I go, "Oh, *tenemos tiritas, banditas, curitas...*" just to cover everything, you know, and, and to make it even funnier and have humor behind it. Science communication has that opportunity, art not that much. Art is always so serious, right? It's more formal communication, whereas in science you have the proven niche or the opportunity to be more colloquial and more friendly. And because you're communicating in science, you don't want people to, to be scared by it or pushed away.

HOFFMAN:

And would you say you've seen more bilingualism in children's museums and science centers than in art museums in general, because that's how it seems to me. There seems to be a lot more published work including multiple languages and science centers and children's museums and not very much at all for art museums.

LEYMAN PINO:

Well, yeah, it depends where you're talking because if you go to Japan, they're very generous. Everything is in English, in Japanese, in their art museums and you go to [name of museum], which is the national science museum, there's nothing in English. So it all depends on their places. Like in Europe, right. Where for example, the science museum in Winterthure, Technorama has everything and I think it's by law, but they have four languages. I think they should do these things. Of course, wherever I travel, I'm very grateful with life that I have the opportunity to travel anywhere and to see these things and tend to expose myself to these types of museums and I love art. So I always go to the science museums and I always go to that art museums. The museum of modern art in Stockholm, Sweden, they have things in English and Swedish, but also they have programs once a month in Spanish. Oh and Farsi. And I'm just writing that article where I'm mentioning this and I'm missing one, but they do a program, And I have participated in the Spanish one. So is this amazing volunteer, from Spain who's walking you through the permanent collection and asking questions. When this following time I went to Sweden, I didn't have the chance to go again, but their Varsa Museum, which is a history museum, , it's a museum of an object, also in Sweden, in Stockholm. So this ship sank a few meters off shore after the party boom, sunk. And so then after some years they found it intact that shape in the bottom of the ocean.

LEYMAN PINO:

So they put it out and they built the museum around the ship and everything is bilingual there, English and Swedish. So what I'm trying to tell you is that all depends on the case and also the location where things start. Multilingual or bilingual here in the U S , most of my clients, yes, are science centers, but I have worked also with the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History. And those guys have everything bilingual, they have bilingual staff, they went the nine yards, but come on, Nina Simon was their executive director. So we're talking about major leagues, right, and understanding the community that they're serving. Yeah. And I translated things for them. I proofread things for them.

HOFFMAN:

And how have you noticed that visitors tend to react when they go into the museum and they see things in Spanish or in their own language?

LEYMAN PINO:

I usually don't go to the museums see these things in their birth. But nonetheless, for example, I was seeing the California Science Center in LA and I saw families like "*ahhh, como se hace esto, a ver..?*" And then I engaged with them because I have this tendency to, to be the floor staff. I started my career in museums being the floor staff, then when they're engaging, they're super happy. But when we test at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, one of my clients, they're in live presentations and I can see their faces of the audience laughing, engaging nodding. Hmm. I am like in ecstasy. Super biased. I cannot not be excited about it. I mean that's the fun part of teaching and education for me at least. Yeah, it's a victory. But There's a lot of research, I don't know if you're familiar with the BERI report. The Bilingual Exhibit Research Initiative. So those guys, I think identify all these, attitudes, and when the San Diego Natural History Museum did the summative evaluation of the exhibit, this amazing exhibit, and actually you can see

these articles published in that exhibition magazine from AAM. And we're talking about exactly what you asked me, like the pitfalls of bilingual exhibits, et cetera. That's in the 2016 Spring Issue. And the other one that I invite you to read from Beth Redmund Jones, it's in the 2016 fall issue as they're online, You don't need to subscribe over to see the magazine, right?

HOFFMAN:

Yeah, I think I read the one with the San Diego Natural History Museum , and I remember you had come in and done some evaluation and that they were using an Argentinian translator

LEYMAN PINO:

When you're asking pitfalls, is one, they don't use a neutral language.

HOFFMAN:

Yeah. Is there a neutral language in Spanish?

LEYMAN PINO:

It's always, there's some way, there's a way to get to a neutral word. Because when you are translating, for example, some initials or acronyms you say in Spanish, *por su acrónimo en ingles*, NAFTA, right? North America Free Trade Agreement. NAFTA or, then you say, *el Tratado de Libre Comercio de North America*, you make a note, right, right. NASA is NASA everywhere. So you need to put the *National Air and Space Agency por sus siglas en ingles*, NASA. All right. *En ingles y despues en español*. Choose the style guide to do those things, right? So come on. They use the word "*largos*", right? Instead of *patio*, who does that right now? Argentina is the only country, the only Spanish-speaking country, who calls a strawberry *frutilla*.

HOFFMAN:

Do they really? I had no idea yet.

LEYMAN PINO:

See the things that one learns when we're doing this? Everybody else is *fresa*. Now, Mexico is the other way around. How do we call beet? *Betabel*, Right?

HOFFMAN:

Oh, I didn't know.

LEYMAN PINO:

How do you call the beets in Spain? *Remolacha* So these are the nuances when you say, which way are we going to use *betabel* or *remolacha*? And you can say *betabel o remolacha*. Because if it's San Diego, you're catering to Mexicans. You have to say *betabel*, right? But if you're already in Europe, if you're, even the Swedish museum you're gonna say **remolacha**, so there's a way to get to neutral Spanish. There's a dictionary from the Royal Academy of Spanish that will tell you what to say and how to say it. So pitfalls is that, "Oh, we broke our heads doing the English and making it nice, now that it's done, we just tried to like translate it and copy paste it and make it fit in the labels." No, you need to proofread, you need to reinterpret the text. You need to adapt it culturally, not just make a translation of the language, which by the way is one of our services, that's what I do for a living. It's a vision of language and culture. And helping people understand, I guess that language and culture are connected

HOFFMAN:

And that they have to pay attention to the connection to, to do a good job with the translation.

LEYMAN PINO:

Exactly. Well, and, and I don't know if you have more questions, let me see.

HOFFMAN:

I have one more question. I'm curious about what you think when museums do an exhibit that's related, for example, to a Latino culture or Mexican culture exhibit and they do translation for that exhibit but then they don't do more in the museum. Do you think that it is a positive thing to provide those translations in that moment or that it's not a genuine effort so the museum should avoid doing the translation?

LEYMAN PINO:

No, I think that you need to start somewhere, right? Is like the California Academy of Sciences, they started with these exhibits, their exhibits are for six months, so at least they did the first one and now they did a second one. So now they have two, they're not San Diego Natural History Museum where everything is bilingual. Right. Or Santa Cruz MAH, everything is bilingual, they have staff who's bilingual or the children's museum in San Jose, but they are at least doing something. The deYoung museum, the deYoung museum. Great example. Art museum in San Francisco. Their neighbor across the park is the California Academy of Sciences. Right. And they did this exhibit about Teotihuacán. They did it with people from, some people from Mexico were involved. That Mexican consulate was involved. , when I arrived to the exhibit there word "Teotihuacán" was not written with an accent on the last "a". All across. First mistake. And then I noticed that one of the labels, you can tell that they weren't editing and it's incomplete. I sent a message to the museum. Yeah. To whom it may concern blah, blah blah. That, to me, is offensive. They did an effort, great for you, but you didn't have it that delicate touch to review that it was...Accurate. , and then they don't do anything else in Spanish. They have done some, I don't remember if it is every Friday or first Fridays at the deYoung and they have activities for the community and it's free and it's really cool. And by the Dia de Muertos, they do things with the Latinos or that's very common. Right? Dia de Muertos, we're for the community, and we opened the door or even the Monterey Aquarium, they hired me to do exhibits for Latinos and I told them let's do exhibits for everybody and they only do it for Fiesta del Mar community days, and Dia del Nino, which are the festivals for the Latino community, I like told them, you need to start doing this further. So they got authorization from leadership, a few weeks ago, to do it during the summer too, that's a big win. But what I'm trying to tell you is that who knows what happens behind the museum to make that shift and who knows who's the advocate to do that, because maybe they say, oh, the content justifies to have this in Spanish. Right? And then they say, Oh, next exhibition, Picasso, we don't need to go with this plan. And whatever, right? No, we don't need it. But there is no outlook, again, it's an internal process that will have a facade called bilingual access to the public. So when that doesn't happen inside, then it's just an effort. Now I'm judging apriori. I don't know if there's one person inside doing these humongous list trying to get people to do that. That's why I love one of my friends at this. We're going to a gardens in Arizona. They hired me to do the translation or the garden. I invited them to GENIAL. Have you reviewed GENIAL?

HOFFMAN:

I have looked report, yes.

LEYMAN PINO:

Okay, cool. So you know where I'm talking about it. So I told my client, Hey, we're going to have a symposium called GENIAL. Why don't you come to San Francisco? Sign up includes everything. You don't need to pay anything. Sure. Why not? She comes and she said, we need to work internally before doing this in Spanish. And I've been working with them to do this cultural competence, to give them the tools to be culturally competent to do this shift, to understand the *why*. So we started with that part before doing the translations. And we still have to do a lot of heavy lifting inside that at this botanical garden to really do the big shift.

HOFFMAN:

Right. But that's exciting. It's exciting that they recognized if they wanted to do it and do it correctly in a meaningful way, then it had to start from a cultural transformation internally.

LEYMAN PINO:

Internally. Yeah. A cultural shift in side to understand why. So I told her to put together a coalition? Who's your champions? Who's gonna help you do this? You're only one now you need like several people. So she put together a committee and then I went to the garden to do a training and for them, I call it the firecracker training to inspire this coalition. So when it takes a team, it takes a village, it's not just one person. And, and again, when one season, one exhibition, one effort, who knows, how much money they had to do the exhibition that way and who knows his, it's a small wing, but it's still room to do it. Or it was just something that was, , like, in their archives of things we have done, just like an achievement sticker, or it's an initiative, or it's a pilot. They see, for example, with the Lawrence Hall of Science, they had community days? Oh, Amparo, come to be the Spanish facilitator. And, the parents, because there's students or scholars at the UC Berkeley, said "No, no, no, no, speak in English to my, to my kids." Right. And like we've had too many languages to cater to. What should we do? And what if we do it language neutral as much as we can. Well that's a more than language. So they use a lot of graphics and on we do those to explain things to the public and everything has the scientific name so people can use their phones and provide wifi. So using visuals and technology, you can be accessible to all language speakers. Language neutral, why not?

HOFFMAN:

Yeah, I mean if we have so many affordances with technology nowadays, so might as well use them in service of something like that.

LEYMAN PINO:

I think children's museum, you have pre-readers. Why don't we learn from pre-readers on how to communicate things and take out the burdens of language. But of course when you need one to explain something, you need the language. Right? To an extent. Some cases. Yeah, to an extent. Yeah. And in science museums, interactive museums you see how to play with something. So you still have drawings, right? Most of the instruction manuals for anything you buy to have drawings.

Full Interview with Lisa Silberstein, Oakland Museum of California

HOFFMAN: (00:31)

First of all, I was so excited to come across the work that was being done in the Oakland Museum of California. And when I read the How Visitors Changed Our Museum report, it really stuck out to me the level of community involvement and input that had gone into creating the multilingual labels. So that was awesome. I'd be really curious to learn a little bit more about that aspect of the process in particular.

SILBERSTEIN: (01:08)

Yeah, totally. So, I mean as you, as you read there, I was involved-- I kinda came into the reinstallation of the Art gallery process after a couple of other people had already been working on it for a while. And so, I don't know all the ins and outs of like how we got folks who are part of the community, like advisers. But, I kind of came into the reinstallation when we were working on getting the data, basically taking the data and the information that people had been feedback, both giving us that kind of applying it to the gallery and when it comes to do with translation, and, because that was a grant funded project, I mean, I think a lot of my answers will reflect the fact that, that was a funded project and something that we were able to devote a lot of energy to and because of funding we were able to do all of that evaluation and testing and workshopping with community folks. And so that really reflected how what we chose to do it and then what's happened since, to our translations at the museum, and the Art gallery. So, because I worked in the Art gallery, that's what that book is about specifically, but we also reinstalled our History gallery and or Natural Sciences gallery and the Art gallery. The art gallery translations are a lot deeper than the other galleries. We devoted so much time and energy to them. I don't know if this is of interest to you.

HOFFMAN: (03:12)

Oh it is. I'm primarily writing about, art museums, but I'm also interested in the institution as a whole.

SILBERSTEIN: (03:32)

So basically History did very minimal translation. In their gallery, they have the titles of the sections, of all of the galleries, translated into Spanish, in Chinese as well as having them in English. And that was really as deep as they went with translation there. ,

HOFFMAN: (03:59)

Is that a matter of the funding?

SILBERSTEIN: (04:02)

I think it was the funding. I think also, I mean to be totally honest, History was kind of behind and so, I think it was just like this is what we can do, right? Given the bandwidth that we have at this moment, just to be totally transparent. And so for art, we had translations of-- as I'm sure it says... I forget what's in the book... I don't remember all the details, but I know we translated not only the subsections but like their name and then also the text panel for each of the sections. And then we translate all of the inner instructions for all the interactives and then all of the quotes. You have quotes on the wall in a lot of the places in our gallery, all of those are translated into Chinese and Spanish. At the time when we opened anything that was a video we had translated, like had texts, like if it had, subtitling, close captioning, there were options to switch to, to Chinese and Spanish for people, so we went really deep. , and I will say that now, what we do in our temporary exhibitions is much less than what we did in the Art gallery. We basically, what we've committed to doing is for every temporary exhibition, the introductory texts, is translated into Chinese and Spanish. And we've actually moved, that used to be that those were like large scale, like the translation was almost the Spanish and Chinese was on the wall, like the same size as the English. And we've moved to like having that be smaller as like a laminated card, and just available and then it's sort of up to the project team, how deep they want to go and translation to be on that.

HOFFMAN: (06:21)

And then can that depend on content?

SILBERSTEIN: (06:25)

So we have every other year we do a Días de los Muertos exhibition, a Day of the Dead exhibition and that is always translated into Spanish in addition to English. And then I'd worked on an exhibit, it was about a Chinese artist who lived in Oakland and so we translated all of our section text into Chinese as well as what we would normally do for the intro text. And that was just based on the subject matter. Right. Then beyond that, it's up to the project team and it's up to like budgeting and, you know, schedule and like it just cost, time and effort to do it and you have to just like factor it in because in addition to translating and then you have to have it reviewed, it's extra scheduling for our people who are producing text. One of the things that I'm--because I've been at the museum for a long time--so that book was written a while ago, and I've been at museum for almost 12 years, so, yeah. A long time. So one of the things that I really, you know, as sort of a thing that is important to me is I feel like we haven't done further testing around how translations are being used.

HOFFMAN: (08:00)

Yeah, I was wondering about that.

SILBERSTEIN: (08:01)

Yeah. And so it feels like one of my concerns, and something that feels important to me is needing to do evaluation and testing and [inaudible], and maybe focus groups or interviews--we have a full time evaluator on staff--around how people are actually using the translations, because of the effort that it takes to do it. And we know from initial testing after we opened after the reinstallation, that it is a sign of welcome for people that we have multiple languages all around the museum, all of our like wayfinding is translated into three languages.

HOFFMAN: (08:50)

What about like handouts, like visitor maps?

SILBERSTEIN: (08:55)

The visitor maps have a little bit of translation, not fully translated, but they'll have the things like bathrooms and ticketing and stuff like that, but like the other text is not translated like information. So it's really, I would say it's a little haphazard where we choose to translate. So I really believe, I would like to see like a deep study into like how translations are being utilized across the museum and the Art gallery and museum-wide and then the concerted effort to really think about what strategically makes the most sense for us to be doing right translation wise.

And the other piece that I think is critical is how we're marketing, cause if we're, in my mind, if we're not marketing in those languages, it doesn't make a whole lot of sense to be translating into that. There's people who are, you know, for whom English is not their first language and they speak either Chinese or Spanish and non-English. Like if we're not attempting to reach out get them into the museum, why are we translating if we're just translating for welcome, that's great, but to go deeper, I feel like we need to do testing to find out and to really devote effort and money into it, to marketing to people.

HOFFMAN:

And in terms of audience building as opposed to getting people that are already in the museum, it seems like marketing is important because it's obviously a huge goal to have people feel welcome and comfortable and engaged once they're in there, but they're not necessarily going to come in, like you say, if the marketing piece and the media outlets aren't also coordinated in that effort.

SILBERSTEIN:

Yeah. And like, even just translations, I think the introductory texts, like right now as I said they're on these laminated cards that exist next to the English and I'm just curious if people even use them like I have no, we have no sense of like if people look at them. And again, it's not like it's not like a huge, huge lift, but it does take effort to get that special translation, you know, we have to do that ahead of time, get it reviewed, put it in there. I mean, I believe in it, I want it, but I also want it to be something that is being used and like it was a value add for people. Like I don't even know if people notice it.

HOFFMAN: (11:24)

Right. So this is like exactly the kind of stuff that I've been thinking about in my work and I'm trying to create a self assessment that museums, I would say art museums in particular mostly because they seem to be honestly the most behind with things like language inclusion, you know, if you can share to like museums or children's museums there, there seems to be a lot more going on there and a lot more published research as well. But I'm trying to create, a self assessment that takes into account all these different levels of things that we're talking about. So the translation process and the community groups and the marketing and to help the museums, become aligned with the things that are kind of bedrock that they need to be doing, but also the things that they can be doing at different levels, depending on what they find are most helpful for their community.

SILBERSTEIN: (12:31)

Totally. I mean, I think that it was incredibly valuable and I would love to read what you write when it's done.

HOFFMAN: (12:35)

Absolutely. Yeah.

SILBERSTEIN: (12:37)

Yeah. One of the things that is, it's a little concerning to me is I feel like art museums do not think about their audience in the same way as science and history museums. And so I think this is like the last thing that they're thinking about and, yeah, it's, it's changing. I feel like there are definitely art museums across the country. I feel like

other places in the world do it a bit better, particularly like in Europe and Scandinavia, but I feel that like, it's starting to change. There are pockets of museums who are recognizing that they want to be accessible, and to interact and engage their audiences in a deeper way, and allow them to, to have entry points into what they're presenting. But it's still the minority. so I do, I totally agree that art museums struggle with longer way to go. But I think we need to now go to the next level of like evaluating like what we're doing and thinking about like, how could we be doing this? How can we actually meet people where they're at, what they need and, more, let them know what we're doing. Like they don't even know. I don't even think they know what we're doing. So, and maybe what we're doing is not working. So maybe we need to try something.

HOFFMAN: (14:27)

Do you have any more anecdotal evidence or feeling about how people are using, the trilingual labels?

SILBERSTEIN: (14:36)

I mean, we do know, I mean from, from only from like testing. I mean, I haven't, I don't spend as much time in the galleries as I would like to. I mean, I do know that people notice it. Not everybody, but I do know that the people that do notice it appreciate the translation a lot and we've heard that from people. We do get, like, it's funny, there was one of the translations in the art gallery for a quote on the wall. The Chinese apparently was translated incorrectly. A quote it was for, it was an Eames quote in the design section and it was about, we wanted to make, like, I can't remember exactly what the quote was, but it was something about "we wanted to make the best for the least." Like basically like "we wanted to like make really good quality things for the least amount of money," but it was translated in the inverse in Chinese like the "worst."

Which actually made me happy. I mean, as much as it was embarrassing to do it incorrectly, we got multiple people telling us that it was incorrect.

HOFFMAN: (15:49)

So they were looking.

SILBERSTEIN: (15:51)

They were clearly Chinese readers. So like that felt like, okay people are noticing that it's translated, they're using it. It just took us awhile to do it because the quote was on a wall behind a bunch of artwork and we had to take everything down to repaint the wall, take down the text.

HOFFMAN: (16:22)

Oh man.

SILBERSTEIN: (16:24)

It was vital. And so it took us like, it took us like over a year to do it. And so, we got a lot, like we got multiple comments. So I mean, again, that's like a small anecdote, but that means people are reading it.

HOFFMAN: (16:38)

Sure. And they care to a certain extent.

SILBERSTEIN: (16:41)

Oh yeah. They care. They want it to be correct.

HOFFMAN: (16:45)

And they're assuming their museum cares too, to correct it.

SILBERSTEIN: (16:50)

So I think, again, that doesn't paint us in the best light, but like I'm okay with that. I mean, that's real.

HOFFMAN (16:55)

sure. I mean, and the best laid plans... you know, you can do everything right and still have things like that come up. So it seems like it's more important to course-correct.

SILBERSTEIN: (17:06)

Yes, totally. So I mean I, beyond that I, you know, we did like one subsequent test, like evaluation of a new section of one of the galleries and it was just a really small portion of people who, cause I think one of the questions was did you use the translations, it was like the handouts or something, that you used the translations. So it was like a lot of people didn't even notice that they were there. So I also think that is a reflection, this is just my own opinion, that our majority audiences are English [speakers], right? And so they're not actually registering that. Like it's not as important to them that there are multiple languages, which I think goes back to the marketing part of it. And like if we really as an institution we want to diversify our audience as most institutions do. So I think if that is a value that we really hold, do you need to follow through on that and do outreach to people in, you know... We do advertising-- for Days of the Dead, we do advertising that is in Spanish and English. And so if we want to keep doing translations, it feels like we should think about how we're advertising out in the world

HOFFMAN: (18:32)

Right. And so people know it's something that's there all the time and not just during special programs.

SILBERSTEIN: (18:39)

Yeah. Specific exhibitions. And I think, I mean the other thing too is because we only translate so deep, then it gets into this thing of like if someone really is, you know, a non native English speaker, we're not actually providing them with the whole experience, you know what I mean? We're at the current moment, we're just giving them like the topic headlines of the exhibits, at the most, and the intro text. So would that be like, how would that be as an experience if like you're being, you know, you're being marketed maybe as if it's [translated.]

HOFFMAN: (19:14)

Oh, I see.

SILBERSTEIN: (19:15)

I mean again, this is like way down the line because I think we're not even there yet, but, I think that's where it's like a case by case basis. Like if it's an exhibit, like the exhibit that we did that was the Chinese artist, that made sense to, and we did, advertise like that for that show. You know, we're right next to Chinatown. We advertised in Chinatown, advertised, not crazily to like, I don't think the advertisement was in Chinese but maybe had some, a little bit of Chinese in the advertisement indicating that it was a Chinese artist. So that's all I'll say. I think, you know, we have, we've done some things but we have lots of work to be done.

HOFFMAN: (20:06)

And are there frontline staff that speak Spanish or speak Chinese on a fairly regular basis present in the museums?

SILBERSTEIN: (20:17)

There are not. There are gallery guides on staff and they, because it's part time work, you know, they cycle through, there's an attrition rate there and there have been Spanish speaking gallery guides in the past. There have been Spanish tours for Days of the Dead, there's tours in both Spanish and English, but regularly for the museum there are not like regular gallery guides or docent tours in other languages. As far as I know there might be like one guy who's like an art or history docent who is able to do bilingual touring, but it's not a part of our regular offerings.

HOFFMAN: (21:09)

Right. And would you say the museum as an institution is fairly aware of that and would like to change it or it's just not really something that's much of a priority at the moment?

SILBERSTEIN: (21:22)

As far as I know, it's not a priority. I mean I'm, my role is like in an interesting place. So my role is, which I realize I didn't talk about it at all, so sorry about that, my role is experience developer, so it's sort of, in my mind, a combination of curatorial work and interpretation. And so I'm part of the exhibition development team. So I work with the curators and designers to develop the exhibitions, but I'm like a visitor advocate. So I'm really thinking about how to best make the content accessible and engaging for a wide variety of visitors. And I'm working on things like, you know, editing the labels with the curator, thinking about interactive elements, either analog or digital, if we're going to make a video, or include audio, where's the seating going, what's the flow of the exhibition? So translation is definitely in my wheelhouse and I would work with the curator and talk about, okay, how much are we translating for this project? So, my role, which is an unusual role in museums and it's something that we created actually out of reinstallation, out of that whole process, funding and all that stuff. I am not in the education department, I am in the content development department, so education works with the docents and frontline staff and things like that. So like, I'm not sure, I haven't heard of conversations around like, we want to have more multilingual people who can do visitor engagement in the galleries, but that could be being talked about. I just, they have no one's brought it up to me or I, I haven't heard a lot about it, but, there is now kind of a wave of bifurcation-- not that I ever existed in the education department, but like my role is very, it has a lot of components to it that are more traditional education. But I'm, we're kind of separated from that department's initiatives. And so, whereas like I'm in experience development, so it's a little bit funny, and sometimes can result in some challenges because there's overlap in our work. ,

HOFFMAN: (24:20)

Which I guess to a degree is intentional.

SILBERSTEIN: (24:23)

Yes it is. But then I also, you know, with anything new that you try and things, some things work and some things don't. But I think that to me, I feel like if we want to go to the deeper level, in my mind, and I've just kind of been beating this little low drum for a while, we need to do evaluation on what we're doing for translations to find out if this is working and if we'd be better served doing something else and then really thinking about how we're marketing what we're doing. And I think that then thinking about like having folks in the gallery to speak with visitors in multiple languages was like another level to that cause like if people aren't coming already and we don't need to invest in that marketing. Yeah. Yeah. It just doesn't, it just seems a little silly to me to do it like that if we're not even getting people who are interested.

HOFFMAN: (25:38)

And before we wrap up, because I don't want to take up too much of your time, but, could you tell me a little bit about like, have you felt or have you experienced any internal pushback on multilingual interpretation? And also just some of like, I mean we've talked about this I think already, but are there any other challenges, that you've noticed?

SILBERSTEIN: (26:07)

So the, the pushback that I've experienced has been around... So there's a couple of things. There's how much space translations take up. So one thing, you know, for Days of the Dead, they translate everything. So this year, the Days of the Dead exhibition is, there's a lot of text in it because it's a new curator, it's pretty text heavy. So there's a sense that the physical transitions are going to take up a lot of room. So there, in the past there have been, you know, which is why also the translation of the intro text for every exhibition has moved now to like handout, like these packets. So like you need cards where before they, they were weighted equally next to the English, so it was like taking up more physical space. So, there's definitely, I would say that attention has some tension around how much

room the translations can take up. And so I think, again, to me, this reinforces like people, if people are using the translations, if we know that they are, then we can add there. It seems like the argument.

HOFFMAN: (27:33)

So it really comes down to that. Yeah. To me, I think that makes perfect sense.

SILBERSTEIN: (27:44)

Yeah, so I think this is a growing tension in art museums probably in other museums too, but I think it's part of the reason why I think art museums are a little bit slower to jump on this bandwagon is this tension around how much you interpret and how much do you let people [interpret for themselves]. And so I think that, you know, real estate is important for our work. , and interpretation is sort of a little bit relegated to the back. So if the text is double, that can cause some tension a little bit in people. And I think that also there's, I mean it's also complicated because I think we actually had, as you probably read in the book, we have a really tight word count for our labels because we know that visitors don't necessarily read a lot. We want them to like get the idea, we want them, we want them to understand what's going on. We don't want to turn them off by writing too much. Yeah, and so I think there is when there are labels that are written, curated or sometimes can be a little bit long-winded. So I think there's this tension to have, like if you've got your label and English and then you have a limit to how much you can say. Then if the translation comes in that, you know, just starts to get big. And there are some people that on the other side they're like, that's like too much text. And like you can have a panel that even if even if someone's not going to read necessarily in Chinese or in Spanish, it just looks like too much text on the wall. Which is why we, I think we've also moved into the laminated card, but I think, I think it's also you have to think about like what kind of message that sets up for someone if their language is relegated to like the laminated card.

HOFFMAN: (29:56)

Yeah. And I can create some kind of conspicuousness.

SILBERSTEIN: (30:00)

I mean, it can go back and forth. I can go back and forth all of it. Like I totally understand why, again, people aren't coming if we're not marketing to them and they're not coming you know, it makes sense that we would put the text on a laminated card, but if they are coming, then I think it makes sense that you have to have it bigger and at the same level and you know, not have a hierarchy of like what's more important and have it visually read that way.

HOFFMAN: (30:27)

But it really comes back to that evaluation piece. And how are you going to advocate for that without information?

SILBERSTEIN: (30:34)

Totally. So there's that. I think the other thing is that translation does cost money. We do it out of house and then it needs to be reviewed, which also costs money. So sometimes there's tension around like, do we really need to do this to be really to translate so deeply because that is going to cost us extra money. I haven't heard that argument as much as like the visual, like it's too much text on the wall. I think early on when we first started translating, I think people were kind of like, Oh my God, we're having to budget so much money for this. But I think now people are just...

HOFFMAN: (31:16)

People kind of roll with it now.

SILBERSTEIN: (31:18)

Yeah. And like it's just the practice that we do. And so like, people know what to expect. And we found good transition companies who are like quick turnaround, not as expensive. The one thing that we did at the beginning, we didn't pay people outside people to review. We had like, in-house staff review, which I was like, that is not okay. Like we can't do

it like that. So that's something too, I mean you have to budget for that. Like reviewers you're also going to pay. So I mean it's not, it's not a cheap thing. It is an investment. I think again, it just goes back to the support of like that people are utilizing this and that we're marketing to them in order to use it helps reinforce the need to do it and the buy-in for it. And I, so I think that all those things are, to me, they all roll up to like needing to do more to, you know, probably just to continuously have periods where we, you know, like do assessments of like, Hey, is this working? Cause you know, we did the installation in 2010. We did evaluation after that. And that really was the, like the gallery as a whole. Part of the questions were about translation, but really since then we haven't done any evaluation about the transition that we're doing and we are continuing to translate.

HOFFMAN: (32:59)

And it's coming up on 10 years.

SILBERSTEIN: (33:02)

Yeah. So I keep, I keep mentioning it like every couple of months. so I'm, I'm hopeful that will happen, but I do think that is, you know, like anything you need to like check it out and see how it's working and kind of like make adjustments, or decide not to do good or whatever.

HOFFMAN: (33:28)

That's, that's really interesting for me because I haven't spoken with people from many institutions that have been doing these kinds of things for a significant amount of time, and so it's been really great to get the perspective of how that ends up playing out longer term, and what kinds of things should be in place if you want to like, continue the sustainability and the worth of these kinds of initiatives? So that gives me a lot of insight.

SILBERSTEIN: (33:57)

I would be super interested in like speaking with other institutions and whenever I hear about other art museums that are like doing translation, I want to talk to them about it because I'm, I'm curious what other places are doing, and how it's working for them. I feel like it's just, it's one of those things that I'm like, if I had more time I'd probably like be talking to other places about, you know, like,

HOFFMAN: (34:24)

Yeah. Like do a little network of art museums.

SILBERSTEIN: (34:28)

Yeah. And just like, I'm kind of like what you're doing, like thinking about like, not necessarily rubrics, but are there some guidelines or are there some things to think about, you know, as institutions. Cause I mean, I definitely, you're not the first person that I've talked to about this. , you know, who is doing a paper or you know, or like doing research about it. So I feel like it's obviously important and something nice is not being done in institutions. So, and it has value for sure, but like it feels like no one's really like cracked that, like *how* to do it, and I think every place is going to be different. You're going to have different needs, but it would be nice to have some kind of like consortium or something of institutions that we're tracking and it's interesting too cause like I think as like my kind of role is slowly becoming more, a little bit of a thing. There's, there's a group of people, that actually we're meeting around the American Alliance of Museums conferences that were museum interpreters, like they call them like interpretive planners. And , they were meeting before the conference to kind of talk about their unique issues. And these were all people in art institutions and, you know, we're a multidisciplinary institution, but they still invited us anyway. And now they've broken out that conference, that kind of gathering to like separate from the AAM conference. And so often people, you know, we kind of have like an email group and some people like get no questions about translation stuff, but I just think it would be nice to have like, I dunno like a group of people to talk to you about it or like to hear what others are doing.

HOFFMAN: (36:19)

Yeah. And like a community of practice. They're totally, it's just, I haven't found all that many museums, especially museums. Yeah. But that's like the, the really wild part is I feel like museums that are doing this feel that need to create a community discussion and a network and be able to check in with each other. And I mean, as far as I've been able to tell, there's not a ton of art museums that are doing it. I know the national portrait gallery is fully bilingual.

SILBERSTEIN: (36:54)

Are Detroit, like DIA, Detroit Institute of art and or like Dallas and Denver? They're definitely all doing, I don't know if they're doing what they're doing with translation, but they're all doing sort of more work in line with us. They all had similar periods of reinstallation.

HOFFMAN: (37:14)

That's always interesting. The reinstallation like bit of this seems to be a pattern. Which makes sense.

SILBERSTEIN: (37:22)

Well again, it's like getting funding to do this kind of stuff like and like having like a re-imagining of like how to make your institution more visitor centered. I think kind of is the incentive to kind of look at this sort of thing. I mean I think that this, to me, I think there'll be more of this because

it's my deeply held belief that if museums don't start recognizing that they need to engage their audiences in a deeper way, they're going to die. So they have to be relevant. They have to meet people where they're at. They have to, you know, attract them and engage new audiences, otherwise it's over.

Laura Huerta Migus, President of the Association of Children's Museums

HUERTA MIGUS:

However, and I don't know how prevalent it is, although I know that it's quite prevalent at the largest institutions in art museum where I think art museums have had really good practice is with the audio tours in different languages. And I think that that really comes down to a difference in sort of the base expectations of the visiting experience. I think that children's museums and science centers because of their hands-on nature, actually require quite a lot of live interpretation and facilitation. So whether that be in labeling, actually giving instructions, right, a lot of instructions to be able to engage appropriately with the interactive. That's not really the case so much in art museums, right? Because the, the whole visitation experience and what engagement looks like are, they're just different.

HOFFMAN: (01:34)

Right. Right. And it's more like didactic learning as opposed to experiential learning.

HUERTA MIGUS: (01:40)

Right. So it requires a different kind of facilitation. So a visitor is not necessarily excluded from the appreciation of an object in an art museum if there's not language. Now what they do miss out on is if there's not a sort of multi-lingual support offered

HOFFMAN: (02:12)

is all the context that goes in

HUERTA MIGUS: (02:15)

To the exhibit, the exhibition. Right. So what is the point of their curation?, I think some of the things that I see in art museums is actually a real lack of wayfinding or orientation language for anybody. Just in general, so I think that's a real opportunity. So I don't think about it as being ahead or behind, because again, you know what, I have actually

seen people have tried in science centers, not so much children's museums. There's been an attempt in science centers here and there to try to do, you know, audio interpretations and to be able to have a thing where you have the headphones and people can do it, but they're just too loud.

HOFFMAN: (03:10)

Sure. And you kind of want them to be loud

HUERTA MIGUS: (03:13)

But that said, I think this is more about personal experience with me and professional observation that, you know, art museums, it seems to be a relatively known practice to have those multilingual audio guides.

HOFFMAN: (03:31)

That's true. Yeah.

HUERTA MIGUS: (03:33)

Now what is, it's interesting I think to think about there and I've seen, all of the iterations here is that sometimes those audio tours, if it's a museum that has a lot of changing exhibitions might only have the narration for the special exhibition and not the sort of standing exhibits, or vice versa. Right? So I think there's some inconsistency around what is available and visitors may not know when they're going to have access to a particular part of the museum.

And so as you think about, again, that orientation and wayfinding, I think that's probably one of the most important places to have language access. So if you think about the typical visitor desk or information desk, guest services desk at any museum, right? It's kind of, a lot of times, they look optional for stopping by. So this is both a physical design issue as well as a language availability issue. When I think about my work in thinking about multilingual support and in the article that came out in *Museums and Society*, is we were talking about the amount of work that we give to the visitor to get access to the tool they need, and so is it so much work that they don't use it? Because the conversation that I often hear is like, well it cost so much money and they won't use it. But when you really pull it back and you look at how the offer is being made, the amount of work, the burden really that's being put on the visitor to be proactive, there's so much assumption, right, of what they know and what they, what they need to know in order to be empowered to get that tool. I would say often people that have that power are likely not going to need the tool.

HOFFMAN: (06:00)

Interesting. So would that be referring to things in a more specific sense? Like when there's just a tiny sign on the visitor services desk that says for tours in Spanish, please ask.

HUERTA MIGUS: (06:13)

Yes--and also that [sign is] in English.

HOFFMAN: (06:15)

Right. Or I've noticed it a lot with typos and grammar errors in Spanish,

HUERTA MIGUS: (06:21)

That's right. As well as, you know, there are ways to signal the availability of multiple languages. So I think of kiosks that have wraps or graphic boards and I think this is also the thing about children's museums and science centers--we tend to have like big boards of information, right? So when people even see those graphics, or even if it's a video screen right at the desk that they just see that there are different languages. They don't even have to see their language, but they can recognize that there are some different languages available. That's a cue. That's a cue that says, Oh, I'm supposed to ask if there is something for me here, if you know, I can, because the museum is literally broadcasting that.

HOFFMAN: (07:18)

Right. And it takes that first step for the visitor.

HUERTA MIGUS: (07:22)

That's right. It alleviates some of that burden.

HOFFMAN: (07:26)

That's interesting. And that's interesting too with, you know, people saying, well they don't even use it because that does seem to come up.

HUERTA MIGUS: (07:35)

So it's people, I feel like the conversation has often been,, being frustrated because folks are trying to jump to steps F and G, right? Perfect translation and high usage. They skip A, B, C, D, and E, which is, how can I even make people know that this is available? How do I lower the threshold? How do I know which languages I should pursue? You know, there's, there's the first step of self reflection that doesn't ever happen because there's an assumption that the space is accessible to begin with, which we also know is not. So a lot in a lot of ways, thinking about language accessibility, it's the same as thinking about physical accessibility. The steps to implementation are exactly the same. First you need to get, you need to acknowledge what the issue is and what your goal is. Like, what's, what's the museum's goal? Is the museum's goal to enhance the visitation experience? Is this about audience outreach? What is the specific pressure and what do we need to do? What are the accommodations we need to make or changes we need to make to get there? Because first you have to acknowledge that you have to change because if you're not there yet, it's because you're not doing it right. Seems obvious. But it's actually a really, really hard thing for organizations, and it's not just museums, this is sort of all organizations, to accept, right? Because if you're gonna get a new customer base, it means you have to do things differently.

HOFFMAN: (09:56)

And there's kind of an expectation that you can just add in another language. And people will come without the internal examination...

HUERTA MIGUS: (10:05)

Make it in Spanish. Yeah. And you know, and the reality is is that it could work, to a limited extent, but are you going to get the most underserved of whatever that demographic is? Like let's say Spanish speakers-- if you just add Spanish translation, who you're likely to get using it are probably some higher educated, or more highly educated Spanish-speaking tourists or community members who already have an art background.

HOFFMAN: (10:44)

Right. Right. And that can be I think helpful, but it's not an audience broadening step to take. So one of the things I'm really trying to look at in this thesis is the need for holistic strategies adopted by museums in order to do some of these things that we've been talking about. You know, and looking at marketing or even business connections that museums can be making within these communities, and talking about how that really necessitates an institutional commitment, and when I talk about institutional commitment, I'm so far thinking that that would need to be something formal in writing, maybe in a strategic plan. Can you talk a little bit about how you've seen institutions make these types of commitments?

HUERTA MIGUS: (12:21)

You know, actually if I'm being really practical, I'd say that there are, there are two approaches and that they're both valid. They just serve different ends, right? So a commitment to doing multilingual approaches can just be a very straightforward visitor services and operational approach. And I would say I would look to that museums in Europe. You know, they offer multilingual everything. And because it's just practical, they have people coming from

all over that need different language support, you know, so it's not necessarily an equity strategy, that's not necessarily the way that they structure it. It's just practical. And and that is a valid way to get the financial commitment, because it gets done and it gets done very well. And it's part of providing service right to their audience. The second option is some kind of a statement-- language is really a strategy. It should be just part of a strategy for our larger commitment around equity and inclusion. So implementing language accessibility by itself is not going to be transformational. It is only sort of one leg of the chair. You know, you'd also have to have then a new kind of out community outreach and engagement and awareness strategy. You also need to have staff training about multilingualism you need to think about, you know, the content realm. So those are sort of two different ways. They're both valid, but they have really different motivations. Does that make sense?

HOFFMAN: (14:25)

Completely makes sense. I think that's really interesting, because often European museums do come up, but English is such a globally dominant language in many ways that it doesn't really seem necessarily equivalent to the way that I've been thinking about it. But yeah, I think that is exactly what I mean.

HUERTA MIGUS: (14:51)

You know, and I think it, in your thesis thinking really clearly about language as a tool, right? Language as a tool by itself, it's limited just like any other engagement strategy, right? Then you can have, I mean, a museum can have an incredible ground game out in the community, but if the content inside of its museum is super colonialist, you know, right? Like it doesn't, your ground game doesn't fix what's inside your museum. Okay. Or vice versa. You know, there are some museums that have incredible collections and they do a lot internally, but at the end of the day, still function as an ivory tower in their community.

HOFFMAN: (15:43)

In spite of their best efforts

HUERTA MIGUS: (15:45)

Right, in spite of their best efforts. Because art-- do you have ground game? Are you still assuming that everybody needs to come to your building? You know, so I always think of these strategies as, again, like one of the legs of a chair and then what are the things that need to be, it needs to be a part of or needs to be wrapped around it to really help that, make that strategy fulfill the big vision more for the museum. And, and if you're positioning this as an equity conversation, then it really, you need to connect it to, sort of like historical, larger social and political movements in this country about language and racism. Right? I mean, ultimately that's, that's, that's what this is a part of. Right, and then that comes down to how you connect it to systemic inequality, because otherwise just talking about language it's just sort of, kind of like a job modification. Does that make sense? You know, it's like, well, whoever comes here and wants this job, I think about this as an employer. If somebody comes to me and [inaudible] it hasn't needed that, but they want to work for me, then my job is to make an accommodation so they can work for me, but I don't change the job that they have to do.

HOFFMAN: (17:22)

Right. I think that is really interesting and important. I don't want to take up too much of your time, but I just have one more question that I'd like to ask about. Anything that you have noticed, personally or at a more anecdotal level about how visitors have used well-done, or how visitors have interacted with well-done bilingual or multilingual museums?

HUERTA MIGUS: (18:05)

Oh, that's such a good question. I think actually, are you familiar with, there was a study that, me and my friends, Steve Yalowitz, the BERI report. I think what I see is that those, as those findings are pretty universal around what the possibilities are around about multilingual interpretation that, what it helps to do is move attention away from if they don't have it. I guess I would say that what I've seen and in art museums, and I'll say that this is sort of my personal experience at the art museum as well as, just watching when you don't have that language support. And I

would say even in English, and I think there's a whole thing to look at, you know, the difference in labeling or, just in general if you start about like, what's your philosophy of labeling and interpretation at an art museum. And you know, I've seen practice from, you know, that minimal list, author date and then a geographic something, right?

HOFFMAN:

The tombstone.

HUERTA MIGUS:

That's right. But mostly around contemporary art, they are a little bit more expansive where that exhibit space is maybe more immersive and there's a narrative. Okay. So that's just in English. And so when you have that additional interpretation, what it allows, I think is for the visitor to have a sort of a contextual personal experience around it. Otherwise, what's you're leaving the visitor to do is really just to look at the object,

HOFFMAN: (20:44)

Right. Right. And not providing kind of a path towards the connection.

HUERTA MIGUS: (20:50)

Right. And if it's about sort of like figural observation, great. Well that's, that's, that's fine., nothing has to change, but often I don't think [inaudible]. So when you have really good-- and really good, to me the way that I know, and it can be written or again, audio, what I see is really being able to observe sort of the physical response that visitors have. And, so this is not scientific at all, but I don't go around doing timing and tracking, but you can see it and the way that the visitors will sort of take in the entire environment. Versus just sort of staring at the object, I think you see people having more conversation, you know, so you can increase dwell time, you know, what you see when you offer that language is just what you see when you offer really effective, interpretation of any kind. Right? Sure. Orientation and context giving. The reality is if you don't offer it, then you're not offering those audiences the ability to get there.

HOFFMAN: (22:31)

And it's a huge burden to expect them to.

HUERTA MIGUS: (22:34)

It's a big burden, you know. So why should somebody who's just speaking a different language have to do--even when people say like apps, I have not seen that work. I have not seen like additional interpretation on through the museum app work particularly well unless it's people who are coming from a very technologically based culture, like their, their live life is all about gadgets.

HOFFMAN: (23:10)

Sure.

HUERTA MIGUS: (23:12)

You know, you see trends, you see national trends and cultural trends in visitation because cultural norms are super different. You know, some, some folks want to have a person, some people, some cultures are happy to have a tool, but when I've seen it done that best ways, particularly in American museums is when they're really focused on what the language need is of their sort of community. and they've all built different strategies around it. You know, so like the BERI project, in San Diego in particular, they had made a commitment throughout their entire museum to have bilingual labels because they consider themselves a regional museum, which covers both the United States and Mexico. You know, so that was, they didn't have a statement around that. That's just the way they operated. So talking about the operational decisions, it was like, Whoa, we're in San Diego, we do our work in California and Baja California family. Completely practical. So let's just be practical like, nobody is, we're not having an existential crisis.

HOFFMAN: (24:29)

Right. Just geographically it makes complete sense.

HUERTA MIGUS: (24:40)

And so, but in others, it's been more fraught. So I think about, it's not a part of this study, but I actually would need to look to see, you might be able to talk to somebody there, at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry.

HOFFMAN: (25:01)

Hmm, I haven't looked into them.

HUERTA MIGUS: (25:02)

So, and do a little bit of digging. If you can't find somebody or even if you can, I'm still happy to, I'll connect you with Marci Benny in their research and evaluation department. So they have an internal research and evaluation department, they realize there is a growing new Latino and a new immigrant population in Portland that were, again, new immigrants. So not

native English speaking and, you know, they were not serving that community well. And they were like, language is a barrier because these are brand new immigrant families.

So they've gone through a whole lot of different strategies to try to get there and there it has been an existential crisis because the reality is that it wasn't a problem for necessarily for them to diversify their visitorship but they were hearing it about these problems through their partnerships. So they were getting a lot of grant projects for community work and then they're hearing it in that way. And so the research and evaluation department was the one raising the red flag, not their visitor service staff. It wasn't like people were coming in and being dismayed or disappointed that there wasn't stuff being offered in Spanish. But when they started to offer a lot of Spanish interpretation, there were other folks from other language groups who were like, well, how come you don't have mine? So, it's been a really interesting process. But I say that because every community is also different. The thing about the United States is that there all of this gets really tough because we have this very long and rich history of language erasure but no official policy around it. So it's all emotional. It's like we don't have an official language in this country. English is not our official language. It's the practically used language. But if you look at all of our federal, public documents, they all have to be made available in a language you understand, but people just don't know that--I'm going to give you your history lesson. Like people are very unaware of why this is such a... they know it's problematic. It's like, how did racism happen? So I think when you're thinking about your thesis, there are some really interesting ways to pull in some thoughts from and just little thoughts, from critical race theory, just acknowledging that this issue of language and why there is some hesitation around it is that there is just this really interesting cultural practice in the United States where we practice speaking English, but it's not a policy, and so when we start to make an accommodation, there is a feeling of loss of center, from the folks that have been working in the dominant paradigm, right. Because there's really the only thing backing up English only is that everybody's been doing English and its presence. We don't have any of these skills to flex culturally. Like it's, the reason it's so complex is because it's all emotional, right? It's all emotional. And people try to say, it's political. I'm like, no, it's emotional. It *is* political, but mostly in practicality what happens is that there's an emotional reaction to it and people want to find, they want to find a piece of paper. And I can tell you that over 20 years that I've been doing this work and all kinds of diversity work that all people in new museums, they want a piece of paper to tell them what they have to do. Right? And we don't have that. So you know, they're envious in some ways of the formal education system because there are lots of pieces of paper that tell them exactly what they have to do or they're going to get a lawsuit. Museums live in this really ambiguous place of peer curated practice. We are not regulated, really, in any way. So there's no overarching universal policy that sets the norms and term for this kind of practice. So if I'm unpacking the why, because you guys asked me like are art museums behind children and science centers, we just have really different market pressures in terms of audience and visitation. So I think art museums are now starting to be pressured by expectations of funders. No, I'd say it's all about the money. It's all about the money. So art museums tend to have, they have a history of being sustained by the ultra rich of course. And children's museums and science centers don't, they are not on that radar.

HOFFMAN:

They're community created.

HUERTA MIGUS:

That's exactly right. Yes. And publicly funded. That is, I will tell you that is really different than what's motivating children's museums and science centers. And it's because we have really different histories.

HOFFMAN:

In being object centered institutions like art museums versus more experiential?

HUERTA MIGUS:

For me it always comes down to the money. It always comes down to the money at the end of the day. And art museums tend to have a very different history. It's not about the objects themselves, but more about where did those objects come from and the collectors.. And then who becomes their board members and then who are they really for? And that's a historical trajectory that doesn't necessarily set them up to be centers of community service. So you know, I think you're looking at art museums in particular and sort of why they are where they are. That historical trajectory is really interesting to look at. I would also, if you haven't yet, do some digging around the big with the big money. The Ford foundation and the Mellon Foundation have been giving-- I mean giving is a gentle term for it. They put it out there to force art museums to change around their equity practices and some of the language in there. I think that might be a good framing for how it seems like you're thinking about, you know, language accessibility in particular. It's part of this bigger whole [inaudible]. But all that to say is that there's a lot of high profile pressure right now on our museums, you know, like with the-- is it MOCA in LA, one of their major funders just gave them a \$20 million gift or something. But, but the string is, they have to have a plan to transition to free admission in the next five years. So there's a huge accessibility push. Yes. So I would do a little bit of a news trawling in terms of helping to contextualize also the timeliness of your thesis. Hmm. Very interesting because I think that, you know, again, in children's museums and science centers and there was some really direct audience feedback about this barrier and they are very visitor driven, organized museums, right? They're super, super visitor driven. So that was the big sort of, you know, smack on the tush, to get things moving if you will, in those sectors. In the art museum sector I'm seeing it from philanthropy. And it's not driven or internal drive. Not now. Not as far as I've seen. I mean, I could be wrong, but that is not my impression. So what I see is from major philanthropy is the idea of forcing art museums to basically democratize art and art practice, and they're pushing them around representation. And so what I think is going to happen and what I think is really exciting about your thesis is that they're gonna they're gonna work their way to language. It's going to come up and there's not going to be a lot of thought around it.

HOFFMAN: (36:14)

Yeah. And I found very little published about language inclusion in art museums.

HUERTA MIGUS: (36:22)

And so, I think you're out ahead because the conversation is, is starting from a different angle, but it's going to come to language because again, it's one of the basic, it's probably the easiest. Honestly. It's, it's the easiest. It's not the cheapest. Right. But it is, there are translators [inaudible]. There are companies who do translation. You do it the same way you do all your other stuff, you know, like if you want it to do in the steps, they're very concrete steps. How do you make your website multilingual? How do you make your brochure multilingual?

HOFFMAN: (37:20)

You just need to decide. You want to invest in it. Yeah. But then you can do it.

HUERTA MIGUS: (37:25)

So it's very straight forward and it's not like, Oh, what Spanish? I'm like, Nope, there is like standard academic Spanish and like, it's just like, fine, yes, there's British English and there's American English, but I can still read color with a U and without a U. Right. You know, like, same facility exists in Spanish. So, you know, I think that language

becomes very interesting because it has so many opportunities that it opens up while at the same time, again, being the most straight forward, it's really straightforward to provide language support

HOFFMAN: (38:11)

That's so interesting.

HUERTA MIGUS: (38:14)

Like providing physical accommodations. There's really no two ways about it. You know, and you can put the ramp in wrong, like don't [inaudible]. But you know, you get somebody to test it and read it, just like you have a copy editor for all your other stuff. Like, you know, it's actually very easy. Just, it does take money, but you know, but all it takes is money kind of also

HOFFMAN: (38:47)

Yeah. The commitment to providing the money to spending a little more time maybe hiring contractors-

HUERTA MIGUS: (38:54)

That's right. You know? But yeah. So all of that to say is that, the benefits that can come out of it, right. Again, just like the ROI on it is really high.

HOFFMAN: (39:10)

I would hope so. That's, that's my feeling. I guess. I'm not sure if there's been a lot of evaluation and it seems like it's often hard to convince without that.

HUERTA MIGUS: (39:22)

Well, I think the other thing--Oh God, I could talk to you about this for like eight hours-- is there is, and I'm enough to try and find you this article that I was actually using for my own grad work, which is actually on management and organizational behavior, but, the thing about the museum world is that it is in general, you know, like I talked about, it's really sort of peer jury, right, in terms of quality and so that also makes it in some ways very conservative. So where, where the museum world is willing to be on the edge if you will, is kind of around its objects and curatorial practice. But it is very conservative when it comes to business practice. And so, nobody wants to do an innovative business practice unless somebody's promised them money around it. Right. So very risk averse, not entrepreneurial. So the reason you can't really get any evaluation information is because you would've had to have somebody who took it on as a business practice, right? And nobody wants to do that because what if it fails? Then what if we lose money? And what if we, you know, there's, there's a whole other like layer to this around leadership's ability to see an institution as a business and you know, make practical business decisions

HOFFMAN: (41:17)

And involve some of the risk taking that happens in a for profit setting.

HUERTA MIGUS:

Correct. And, and I think I bring that up because it's used as an outlet for a lot of hand wringing. If you're an institution that is barely making it, probably taking on translation services is not what you want to do. But if you're the Met and you've got a hundred bajillion dollar endowment, you have zero reason to not be doing this.

HOFFMAN: (41:53)

That's what I think. But it doesn't seem to happen.

HUERTA MIGUS: (41:57)

So that it comes down to business decisions, right? So that's also a barrier. So you get caught in this catch 22, well show me where it's worked and show me the ROI. Show me that business ROI when the reality is, is that most of the

evaluative work on it has been about the educational and value impact. So we've also been measuring it wrong in the places that it has been work. We've been measuring it in the right way. We've been measuring in the way that we've been important, which is, you know, does this increase the impact of the experience? But we have, there hasn't been anybody who has done this study on the business ROI because that's not been the money that has funded the opportunity. Like a lot of this work has been done under educational grant.

Interview with Helen Aldana, Santa Cruz MAH

HOFFMAN: (00:00)

I'll start by asking you to tell me a little bit about what your role is at the museum and the ways in which it relates to the language inclusion or the bilingualism.

ALDANA: (00:24)

Yeah, so my job title is intercultural programs coordinator. And what that means is I help community members facilitate and lead programs at the museum. That helps community members connect. So I used to do my own programming and it was very well led and with this new role and responsibility, it's providing the resources that I tap into in organizing events and providing them for folks who want to rent the museum. So before it was sort of like a kind of sharing of responsibility, but before it would be [inaudible] to the space, we gave them the space and they kind of just have their event and we kind of saw that as the MAH we have this expectation or folks have this expectation, of what types of experience that they're going to have when they go to a program at the MAH. And so we saw our theory of change and, how can we now make this accessible to the community? And that was through my role. And so I really just kind of guide folks, providing them suggestions cause overall they're gonna they're gonna do what they want, they are paying for the space. But I guide them or I do provide those suggestions of like, how do you hope to engage people in a space other than a lecture? How are people gonna practice those things that you want them to? What are your goals? Intentions with renting the space, right. Just to really hear them out. So it does provide that guidance. Beause a lot of folks also come to us wanting to collaborate, but we're moving away from leading events to really having the community lead event that they want to see.

HOFFMAN: (02:06)

Interesting. So you facilitate them so that they can fulfill their intentions of what they want to do.

ALDANA: (02:16)

Yeah. And so that's one part of my job --it's a nonprofit, so we all wear different hats. And I also am overseeing our outreach efforts. And so what that means is taking things that we do at the MAH and taking it beyond our walls. So it would be an art activity that we do at a festival. It would be a lightning talks lecture that we do in South County. So different things that we've done here and collaborating with folks at the capacity that they're wanting to collaborate outside of the museum and in their space. Through invitation of course, like we don't, we don't just go and take up the space, we either ask if we can be there and share what our intentions are, or we get invited because of something that they've seen happen with him or at another outreach program. But the other thing I do, um, is something that I'll be taking on, later this year is being the lead for Latinx engagement. And so that's a huge kind of foundational tool that we all use, in addition to the theory of change. And so what the Latinx engagement is, it was created back in 2000...Let me see, I started working there in 2016 and I believe it was initiated in 2014 or 15. And I could email you the details for that specifically, but, we thought that 34% of our country is Latinx identified, and we only had--not, I don't want to say only-- but we had about 8% of folks who identified Latinx coming to the museum. And that's just a huge gap as far as who feels that the museum is welcoming, who feels that the museum is their museum. We have all this, we've like very much been proud to say we co-create with the community. We build with the community and we are for the community. Our demographics and those statistics, they didn't really reflect that. And so we are, that's

where that next engagement plan came in and just really putting effort and intention to engaging the Latinx community and seeing really what do they want to see at the museum? Why aren't they coming, where do they go and what can we do to change to make this their museum? And we just recreated and revisited that engagement plan after a couple of years of kind of implementing it to create the new one that we started initiating this past year, 2019, in June. And that's when my job changed to start taking on those tasks that originally Stacy Garcia used to lead. And so that's why all our items are bilingual and are continuing to be bilingual.

HOFFMAN: (06:08)

So that was something that happened as a result of the 2015 Latinex engagement plan?

ALDANA: (06:15)

Correct. And then the interview questions, they were asking, are you bilingual? How do you work with families? And it's because of that Latinx engagement plan and I was to start working towards staff hiring staff that's bilingual, that's going to be public facing, working with communities that we are wanting to see at the museum.

HOFFMAN: (06:35)

And that's huge that they recognized that right away, it sounds like.

ALDANA: (06:38)

Yes, yes. And our exhibition labels are translated. Our flyers were also translated. Our collaborations, one of the big tasks was really tracking how many of our collaborators that we very much create events with and programs with were Latinx representing. Cause that's one thing too, if we are asking the Latinx community to come to the museum and they don't see anyone in the space that looks like them or speaks their language, that's already going to create a barrier of them really engaging with the space fully and fully welcoming. And so that's where the staff were hired. Our collaborations also shifted to inviting more Latinx collaborators to then also be leaders in the space. Um, it's really important to have that representation in all different kinds of capacities and levels, not just as participants. And so that's something that also shifted. Our fliers were bilingual and one thing that we just started doing too is following the visitor journey, or the guest journey that we're seeing. We want them to volunteer. Is all volunteer collateral translated? We want them to collaborate with us. Is our website even bilingual? Cause we added a tab actually that if you click on it, it says English, you click on it and it turns into Spanish. So, yeah, at the moment, the first one that people see is English. But we do have a translator that translates all the pages. So when folks click on the Spanish, right, and it's accurately translated and not Google translate it.

HOFFMAN: (08:55)

[recording garbled]. It definitely backs with a lot of what I've been seeing, some museums where they're completely bilingual inside of the museum, but have no promotional materials translated. And so they haven't seen big shifts in audience as a result of that.

ALDANA: (09:14)

Yeah. I think part of that too, of why we're hiring or why we've been hiring bilingual folks, like myself, my first language was Spanish. I do the outreach, so when I go out and I'm doing these art activities with these families in Watsonville, which is predominantly Latinx, folks, I'm there and I'm able to talk with them in Spanish about the museum. And so if they have any questions that isn't found on our flyers and materials, it'd be really difficult if someone was only English speaking and just saying, well, look at the flyer. So that's really kind of that sense of not making anyone feel exploited to begin with. We really don't want folks to feel tokenized that we're wanting you because we're wanting that diversity and that kind of reached that quota kind of thing. We're really wanting our space to be representative and be the change that you want to see. So we're really trying to build those genuine relationships with our, the, our community, with all the folks that we're inviting. A big part of that is being able to communicate with them, to have them ask questions, to have them feel comfortable to even contribute, I think contribution is a huge thing that folks may not want to do if the spaces and even kind of welcoming them. And so bilingualism goes far and wide. Yes, we've seen

that and it's taken a lot of time. So from the 8% that we had in 2014 when we redid the survey in 2017 or 2018, it went to 19%.

HOFFMAN: (10:52)

Oh wow. That's a significant increase in a really short amount of time.

ALDANA: (10:57)

Again, we, the MAH is really known for producing a lot of programs and really changing fast. So we're all impacted by it, but we're all kind of rewarded by it as well because we see the difference that are in our audiences and within our walls. And so that was exciting. The demographic is 19% Latinx.

HOFFMAN: (11:20)

So it matches. That's really cool.

ALDANA: (11:25)

Yeah. Does that- now I'm available to answer questions- I could go on and on...

HOFFMAN: (12:26)

So I'm curious about the creation of the bilingual interpretation and the translation process that you guys use. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

ALDANA: (12:36)

Yes. So, when I started, when I first started working there in 2016, the folks who were translating the flyers, anything that's really short, shorter than the a paragraph, were the bilingual folks on staff. So that was me, someone who went at the front desk, Yareli, and Claudia. So just a few of us who work at the MAH were able to translate really quickly, just the short stuff. For the exhibition labels, we did go to a company who we sent all the texts and they would translate it and then it would go directly up on our walls. One thing that I then caught when I was, when I started working there, they asked for like a, it was pretty funny, but they asked for a quick little translation for an exhibition label that came in too late for them to send to the translator. And when I was reviewing it, I started thinking the translations by the translator just wasn't aligned with the MAH voice. It was very... Like the MAH's very known for it's like very fun, vibrant, welcoming, and like we just have this kind of neighborhood..

HOFFMAN: (13:47)

Yeah, not didactic sounding.

ALDANA: (13:49)

Yeah. And so when I was reading these translations like, wow, these sound so serious. These are pretty off-putting. And that's when we started, I knew I wasn't the only one that got this, but I think maybe multiple folks caught that who were translating that. We then started looking for a new translator to find someone who can translate in a way that sounds like us. Um, and a big thing that we needed was for those translators to work at the museum and see just like, how we work. Um, just cause I think it goes into this bigger philosophy and this bigger issue of just museums being as elitist and very dry. And so we kind of started thinking like, what are our needs for, like, what do we want and what do we need to make that happen? So for the time being, someone else on staff was hired to manage a different department, but he and I were the name point folks to translate and review after the translator. We would review and shift it into the MAH voice. And so it was a kind of three step process of translating, review, and then second review by like one or the other, um, to catch any typos and those kinds of things.

HOFFMAN: (15:23)

That's so interesting. Yeah. It would create such a different, um, experience for Spanish speaking visitors if, you know, English speakers are having this like, fun, informal museum experience. And in Spanish it's super rigid.

ALDANA: (15:38)

Yeah. Yeah. And that's what, like what, what just was very off putting like, Oh, I don't think people are gonna think we're fun. And so that's what we were doing until a new translator [audio stops].

Interview with Leticia Salinas, Denver Art Museum

SALINAS: (00:00)

If you're interested just in terms of like some of the philosophy and my thinking behind it and my approach, I'm also happy to share that. So at the Denver museum, when I started there, they had created a position called the Latino cultural programs coordinator. And that was because Denver has a large Latino population, it's like 30% Latino. So, you know, that was their second largest, like ethnic group. So basically they created a position and the person that was there before me, she was there for maybe two or three years and she started mostly bilingual programs. Most of the programs that she did were more like Spanglish, you know, so that's really how they approached it, where they did programs bilingually rather than just offering programs in Spanish, versus just programs in English. So, they took kind of the dual approach. And so when I started there, I kinda took over that work. If you want me to go into more specific other questions, just let me know. So they had basically the majority of their efforts really focused, in terms of attracting, Latino audiences, really focused on the free Saturday program every month. And so that's where the majority of the bilingual programming happened. So they had basically everything translated or most everything was translated in English and Spanish, but only for family programs. So that's, yeah, so that's really where this, this started for them, with family programs just because that tends to be where you have multilingual people and it's usually with families, especially multigenerational families, which is pretty common for Latino audiences. So, the first Saturday of the month they have free admissions, free programs. So anything that was family related was translated. They also have a studio space, that's open where you can just come in and make stuff that at the time related to one of the exhibitions and at the time, when I started there, it was pretty, I dunno, like some things got translated, some things got put in. I think there was like a rhyme or reason. The person that was in my position had been gone for awhile, so I think a lot of things just kind of... so basically when I got there, I created a process for what they should and shouldn't be translated, which I, that was really important, just so that there's consistency you want. I think you want people to have a seamless experience, right? We've got to listen to the language that they speak. So when you're walking into the museum as a Spanish speaker and then the museum wants to be a welcoming environment, then being able to have a similar experience to what an English speaker would have, I think is ideal. So, we continued, you know, bilingual programming on Saturdays. There was this one specific program called, Cuentos del Arte which was story telling, and with that one we experimented a little bit, because it was like in Spanglish. It was mostly the stories were told in English with some Spanish words in there. And so then we experimenting with doing one session in Spanglish and then one in Spanish only and then also did a tour, for adults, for everybody, in Spanish on those Saturdays. And, and then the other, so the first part of it was programming; how do we create programs that are bilingual, or that Spanish speaking audience can attend and then hiring staff who are bilingual to be able to facilitate those programs and experiences. And then the second target that was, what about the people who don't want to attend a program and wanted to visit exhibitions and be able to have access to the content. So, for that one, every special exhibition that the museum had, they created booklets, that were basically, it was all the wall text translated into a booklet format, and so they did booklets in Spanish. They also did booklet and in large print for people who are visually impaired, or have low vision. Those were kind of like the two things, in terms of language, I think with language also comes the question, you know, you were talking about how to you use language to serve the community, and I think language is key just in terms of indicating that you are inclusive and that you do want them there, but also I think it's really important to create programs that are relevant to those communities. Chances are they speak another language, then, there are probably some cultural differences too, right? And so, yeah, so then how do you create programs, how do you create exhibitions that are relevant to those communities?, And the other part of that is hiring staff that can relate to those communities as well. And that communities can, you

know, when they walk into the museum, they see themselves represented and not just in the program, the exhibition content, but also in the staff that's working there.

HOFFMAN: (06:29)

Right, and that's definitely getting at, you know, a lot of what I'm trying to write about. And you mentioned the consistency in the experience, and allowing people to walk into the museum and having basically the same types of options and experiences that an English speaking or English monolingual visitor would have.

SALINAS: (06:57)

Yeah, and I mean, I think with that, like ideally everything would be--I don't know, like I know there's digital solutions in terms of having access to information in different languages. Again, I think it's a question of resources with a lot of organizations and so yeah, ideally everything would be offered and the languages that are in your community. But I think you have to kind of sometimes pick and choose, right. Based on budget, all of that stuff. It's just the reality of it. And so I think, yeah, a big part of that, it's also prioritizing. And I think that's something that museums are currently struggling with. How do we welcome a variety of people while still maintaining that current audience and the level of a program with limited resources.

HOFFMAN: (07:55)

And so in your work at the Denver Art Museum, how did you decide what to prioritize in terms of which things were translated or offered bilingually?

SALINAS: (08:09)

Yeah, so for me it was all family programs were translated, just because like I said, that tends to be the, where the multigenerational plays a role. And so anything family related. So the museum has, they call them Create & Takes, so they're art activities in the galleries. So making sure all of the didactics around that were translated, all of the guides so that even if there wasn't a facilitator who could speak Spanish, they would be able to hand them like a written guide with steps of how to do the activity. Right. So, I really thought well, what programs is the audience most interested in? And then those are the ones that will want to provide bilingual materials for. A lot of it was also just like trial and error, right? Like should we try doing a Spanish only tour? And that one, sometimes people came, sometimes they didn't, and our English tours were constantly booked. They were like well-attended whereas the Spanish tours, not so much. So, and then so basically any space that was for families or where you would actually make something, all of those didactics I would say were translated. And then like I mentioned, there's a studio space at the Denver art museum, which is like a big room, interactive. You come and make, art and work with different materials. They also have artists demonstrations on the weekends and things like that. So that's very much self directed. You come in, you sit down on a table, and you look at the guides to make the activities. So that entire space also was translated. And then, in terms of the exhibitions, so the museum has a permanent collection, but then they also do special exhibition. So every special exhibition had a booklet, with all of the wall text in Spanish. I will say the booklet was not my favorite., I think, you know, in terms of creating a seamless experience, having a booklet or something that you carry around with you in the galleries and you have to flip through, is not the same and I think it takes away from being able to spend time with works of art. So, you know, ideally you want to have the text on the walls, or have everything digital, including the English texts. So really thinking about how do we create those experiences that are similar, regardless of what language you speak. And then the other thing that I took into consideration, I mean, resources were a big part. And having to just kind of make those decisions. I think timeline, any program that came out of my division, which was Latino cultural programs was bilingual and translated. So anything that happened in our, any program or new installation that went up in permanent collection for Latin American art, that one was translated too. Actually that permanent collection had a lot more translation in it, when I started there. So yeah, I think just in terms of like being culturally relevant, that was the approach they took., I don't, I mean I think it's good but I don't particularly agree with it. I don't think that every Spanish speaker is interested just in Latin American art. And I think that sometimes that's the message you send, right? And so it's also being aware of that in terms of, Oh, well I think this is what they would be interested in, so I'm going to translate this, but are you

pigeon-holing them and stereotyping people then? So, so yes, it's that tricky. It's tricky, you know, and I think that's where focus groups are really important. And really talking to your community, knowing your community, asking them like, what are you interested in? What would you like to be translated? What do you want, what content do you want access to in Spanish? And starting there first rather than my saying, like, I'm going to try this, and see if it works. I really, I think the community first approach is extremely important, when it comes to welcoming but also figuring out like what, what do they need in terms of language and access to content. Did that answer your question?

HOFFMAN: (13:04)

It's really exactly what I'm talking about. And like, one of the big things that I am considering in my thesis is the necessity of doing audience research and before you develop your strategies for, engaging those communities so that you can use your resources as a museum most efficiently. So not just kind of like making assumptions and guesses and then being like, well, we'll, we'll see. So that is, yeah, very much in line with what I've been discovering as I speak with people in museums. Another thing I'm wondering about is, evaluation. I remember I spoke with one museum and they have fully bilingual galleries, and like permanent collection materials, but they hadn't done much evaluation in a long time and they weren't sure how people were actually using or if people were using the materials and it made it very difficult for them to advocate for the creation of more materials, so I'm wondering, what the process was like at, DAM for evaluating these?

SALINAS: (14:13)

Yeah, I mean, to be honest with you, there wasn't really an evaluation around like booklets from how they're used I think around programs. When they first started creating more bilingual programs, they did pilots and then actually had, people come in to experience the program and then say afterwards for focus group, and then to fill out surveys and things like that. And when they first started, when they first launched the initiative to welcome Latino audiences, there was a lot of evaluation, but then there wasn't really ongoing evaluation past that, unless a new program was created, things like that. I would say for me evaluation was really looking at numbers, and then so how many people were attending our programs. I mean, I attended the program so a lot of it was observational and just talking to people to learn more. It's also this whole thing of like, you know, "if you build it, they will come." No they won't. so yeah. So it's hard, right? Like if you don't have a big audience attending then how do you measure that? In terms of, in terms of like written materials, I would say for that it's mostly like gallery observation, how many people that are picking up their booklets. I'm walking around with them and we had started to do some of that, with the, with our gallery guides, so most of the people who are in the gallery, we worked with that team, because they would like record the observations, you know, they were in the gallery all day, so we started to gather data around like how many people picked up their Spanish booklet, how did they use them, you know, stuff like that. So that was another way to kind of gather data, without doing this like big evaluation. So yeah. So I would say, I mean there's a lot you can do and I was spending all of this money on it. It's just, it's more like, it takes time, right? Like you have to spend time on the galleries and just observe visitor behavior.

HOFFMAN: (16:34)

Yeah, on the floor. And so you mentioned this idea of like if you build it, they will come, well, no, they, they won't, and I think that marketing is another step or communications that tends to sometimes get overlooked. When museums implement all of these bilingual strategies on the inside., was that something that you were thinking about in your position? Like how would you spread the word about these types of programs?

SALINAS: (17:02)

Hmm. Yeah, I actually worked closely with the marketing team. So basically I developed blog content in Spanish and then worked with the person who did our website to create a fully bilingual website. Not everything on there was bilingual, but it was a separate landing page. Because before it was really hard to find. They had like some Spanish content but it was just hidden. So yeah, so while I was there, we created a landing page for Spanish speakers with basically all of the content that had been translated in Spanish. I forgot to mention that we also the Denver Art Museum also does a lot of stuff in schools, and they develop content for teachers that online as well. So that started

to be translated and then basically any exhibition that, cause they do like many exhibitions out in schools and libraries. So depending on the library or the school materials would be translated if there was a large Spanish speaking population where the exhibition was going. But that was also within like the learning and education department. And then that content would also be, a lot of that content would also be online for teachers to have access to and download. I think the marketing team, it brings up a good point too because, and I think this is one of the things that I struggled with a lot in the position is that you have this one department, right? The education department, and they want to bring in bilingual audiences, but they alone can't do it, right? It needs to be a museum wide initiative. And so how do you get all of the other departments to be on board? And part of that is like, how do you get the marketing department? And I think towards the end of my tenure there, the marketing department was on board and they started engaging more. They started doing more marketing in newspapers that Latino audiences buy, radio ads, things like that, right? So really thinking about how do we advertise to this audience so that they know that these programs are happening. What does your marketing and communications plan look like and how is it different in order to reach, non English speaking audiences or audience that are multilingual? I think the other thing is, you have to build that trust with them. I think that's such a huge part of it. And it doesn't matter how much you might get or whatever, you know, I think they're, if you, they don't trust you, or they think there's a lot of misconceptions, right? Some of them may be right, some of them might be misconceptions just about museums and cultural spaces and so how do we slowly start to change that image? Right? And that, so I think for me a lot of it was community outreach, partnering with people with organizations and communities that were already doing the work that already had built that trust. Right? Like we partnered with, project Worth More, which is an organization here in Denver that basically helps refugees. And so we partnered with them because we were going to have an exhibition on photographs of refugees, and so we partnered with them to basically do a focus group but also talk to the refugee community and create programs for them and kind of build that trust. If you come in with someone who already has that trust, then they can vouch for you. That makes it sound so much easier. But then also doing programs in the community, not just for them to come to you. Right. So, thinking about again and like it all goes back to knowing your community- is transportation an issue, is cost issue? Like what are those barriers, that are, that's stopping them from coming, aside from perception, right? Because perception takes a little bit longer to change. But if it's like they literally can't get your to museum because they live too far away or public transit isn't great, then okay, what are those places that we can show up at in the community so that they can get to know us and in a space that they're comfortable and, and then, yeah. And then hoping that they'll eventually come to your museum, but then also like once they come, you have to be ready. You have to be able to offer them that great seamless experience. And that means like, yeah, like I was saying earlier, everybody needs to be on board, right? Like your exhibitions team, your marketing team, your director of the museum needs to be on board with what the initiative, like your frontline staff, all of them, need to be ready and prepared in terms of how to make it a welcoming space for multilingual audiences. I think a lot of it also applies to audiences of differing abilities. So I don't know if you've looked at some of the research that's been done around that, but that might be helpful for you to, just in terms of how we're thinking about universal design in terms of welcoming people with, people of varying abilities, but how does it also help the majority? So, yeah, so that's another thing. I mean that I look at a lot is universal design. How does that fit in with language, et cetera.

HOFFMAN: (23:20)

That's so interesting. I haven't really been exploring it from that angle, but I think that's a great point. How have you, have you seen that play out in terms of language or in terms of cultural, inclusion where it has benefited all visitors? Not only the target community.

SALINAS: (23:43)

Yeah, I would say, I mean, universal design is something that museums use specifically for people with disabilities because that's just the, that's just where it kind of shows up, but I do think that there are some probably universal design principles in terms of language that could be applied... I'm just thinking about how that is sometimes incorporated into exhibitions and things like that. So how can principles of universal design be applied to, to the language? I would say, I think if you approach things with principles of universal design in mind, I think naturally you're thinking about accessibility and being more welcome to a variety of audiences. So I think it helps. It shifts the

thinking of the staff, too. So really thinking about your staff and how do you get them to shift the way they're functioning. And how do they pick up on cultural differences, things like that. So I also did a lot of trainings with them around, what do you do if, with staff and docents, too, when you have kiddos who are multilingual or primarily Spanish speaking family, right? That speaks Spanish only, and so in terms of like, how do you interact with people who are different from yourself? And, and I think that's where a lot of theory behind welcoming people with disabilities to the museum spaces can also be applied to a welcoming multilingual audiences.

HOFFMAN: (25:40)

That makes sense. And I'm thinking almost as well in terms of visibility, like when I was a child, I didn't know people that were vision impaired or that read it with braille, but I knew what braille was because I would see it on things like labels, and you know, just kind of throughout my daily life and so that, you know, sparked curiosity in me as a child. What is this? That's how I found out about it. So I can imagine as well, for people that aren't used to seeing languages other than English in their daily life, it's just kind of a reminder that there's many people in your community that speak another language and it's just a normal part of life here.

SALINAS: (26:22)

Yeah. And, you know, that reminds me of when I was at Denver. So part of it was like, Whoa, what are the benefits of including multiple languages? Right? And really thinking about who do we wanna be as a museum and how do we want to be seeing? And so one the big things at the Denver art museum is that, you know, they have an encyclopedic collection and so they want to be seen as like a, I'm museum that's like representative of different world cultures. And so to someone who doesn't speak Spanish or who is like an English speaker only, then that's sending a message, right? That like, Oh, look how culturally savvy we are. We have different languages here. So yeah, there's also thinking about how to, what is, yeah, what is having multiple languages on your museum? What message are you sending to the larger audience, not just to those specific communities. Of course, like it's mainly for them. Like, you're welcome here. We want you to be here, there's places for you too, but really thinking about what is the larger message that you're sending to your community and how does that benefit you if an institution as well.

HOFFMAN: (27:42)

And I think it probably makes it easier to advocate for if you can come up with some reasons for that.

SALINAS: (27:48)

Yeah, of course. Yeah.

HOFFMAN: (27:50)

Um, and can you talk a little bit about any work that you did or have done with community advisory groups?

SALINAS: (27:59)

Yeah, so, when I was at the Denver Art Museum, I was part of two community advisory groups and they were all centered around exhibitions. So the first one was for an exhibition that we had of contemporary Latino artists, and then the second one was for the one that I mentioned, an exhibition that we had of photographs of refugees. So basically for the Latino exhibition, we brought together a panel of people from the leaders from the Latino community, to really help us figure out how to present the content in a way that was most meaningful to Latino audiences, because that was like our target market for that exhibition, and then also creating programming. So we did a series of meetings with them where they, you know, the curator was there, as well as people from the education department that we're working on programming, etc. So that was just a series of meetings of presenting works of art by artists and talking about how can we present this content in a way that's meaningful and relevant. What programming can we do around the exhibition to engage the Latino community. And then it was the same format for the exhibition on refugees. And so then those yielded different answers, right. And different programs. So the Latino exhibition was fully bilingual, was the first fully bilingual exhibition, the museum had done where like the text was on the wall, both English and Spanish. And there were like a series of programs which basically took some other programs that we

already did, and just switched the format a little bit, so there was a program where I'm blanking on the name, but we basically like a staff person, someone from learning and engagement with would interview one of the artists, and so instead of having someone from our department interview the artist, we had people from the Latino community and people who are on advisory panel interviewing the artist instead, which led to some really interesting conversations., and then, so the exhibition on refugees, we actually ended up doing a big dinner, like a VIP reception. We did a dinner or an invited refugees to the dinner and then do a private tour with the artist. It was photographed by this one artist who basically has spent his whole career documenting refugees, so he did a tour for them. So that was really helpful for me, and I think for the museums, to bring in advisory groups, just because again, each community is so different and they have so many different needs and, and there's no way for one person to know all of that stuff.

HOFFMAN: (31:34)

And can you actually talk a little bit about the Latino community in Denver? Do they tend to come from a specific, like region or are most of them, like more established in Denver? Or have they immigrated fairly recently?

SALINAS: (31:52)

Yeah, honestly, it's extremely diverse. So Denver had a huge Chicano movement in the 1960s, so there's a large Chicano community in Denver, people who have been here for several generations. And there's also a lot of immigrants in Denver, so people who have been here for less than a year, and then everything in between. You have people who, have recently migrated here and people who are like first generation, second generation and then people who have been here, I mean for as long as Denver has been around.

HOFFMAN: (32:41)

Right, Denver wasn't always part of the United States anyway.

SALINAS: (32:47)

So, with that language plays a super interesting role because you have people who Spanish is their predominant language and then people who never learned to speak Spanish and only speak English but still identify as Latino and then everything in between. And then you have the kids who are in school and speak both English and Spanish and so in terms of language, it's extremely diverse. And you have to account for code switching and all of the different family dynamics too. And I will say that I constantly heard that it didn't matter if someone who identified as Latino spoke Spanish or not, seeing Spanish in the museum was a sign of inclusion and welcome. So regardless of whether they could understand it or not, they saw it as, they still it as a signal of "they want people like me here." I'm trying to think if there's anything else in terms of those, you know, community. Yeah. And I mean there's a museum here in Denver that's all about Latin American art and it's all contemporary. It's all contemporary exhibitions. And then there was also a small like of cultural organization that was all around Chicano art. So for the longest time, the Denver Art Museum... Like Chicano artists, they started their own thing cause they couldn't get [inaudible]. So there's also like some tension there and like trying to build those relationships is hard. So it's also, you know, like I said, it goes back to knowing your community, knowing where you as a cultural organization stand in that community and then figuring out what's your approach. So it's really, it just depends on who you talk to. And again, it goes back to knowing your audience.

HOFFMAN: (35:16)

I guess my only other question for you, and I think it's something that we've touched on a lot, throughout this conversation, but could you describe, what your ideal bilingual museum experience would look like?

SALINAS: (35:38)

Yeah, I mean, yeah, if it's, if we're talking just about two languages, I think everything is fully bilingual, right from when you walk into the door. I mean, before you even walk into the door, right, if we're thinking about the entire museum-- what's the outside of the museum look like? Cause there's signage out there, having all of that translated into the museum where everything like down to like bathroom signage, anything on the walls gets translated. I think

exhibitions get translated. And then I think having staff too that's like ready to greet you in whatever language you're most comfortable with is extremely important as well. And like having staff throughout the museum that can communicate with you, I think we see people who have been going to museums for years know what to do and people who grew up going to museums know what to do. I think if it's someone who, has never been to a museum before, it can be a kind of like disorienting experience. Even then imagine not being able to understand the language that everything is being communicated in makes it harder. So, a lot of the times, too, I remember in focus groups, some things we did, people were just like, sometimes like I don't want to read something. I just want to be able to go up to someone and ask them and have them tell me what is going on today and what activities I can go to. Right. So, yeah I think like the ideal bilingual experience would be you are being communicated to about our museum in your language before you even come in the door. So through marketing what you know, and then when you walk in it is, it's like you understand everything, whether it's through written or verbal form.

Full Interview with Gabriela Sama Fernandez, National Portrait Gallery

HOFFMAN: (00:16)

Could you describe your role at the muse, what you do and how it relates to, the bilingual efforts?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (00:25)

I'm the communications coordinator. That's my title. I do mostly marketing for the museum, but also I am in charge of all of the translation for the press releases. I do sometimes some proofreading, so when we have, for example, we have a contractor does all the translations for the labels on the wall. But you know, like when you write you can't remember what you've done, because like, you know, you've done this so many times that there's a point where you don't know anymore, if you have something wrong. So when that's done, sometimes, they send that text to me and I have to go through everything and make sure that everything is correct. And then also when the museum does events or like, programs, they do posters and signage for those events. And I have to make the text for that in Spanish. So we present in both English and Spanish. And then sometimes for the marketing trends, we'll do rack card in both languages if the topic of the program, you know is appropriate to be translated. For example, Hispanic Heritage Month, we're gonna have everything also in Spanish. So like I will do the text for, for that. So that's how, that's how I relate to the bilingual efforts.

HOFFMAN: (02:32)

And do you know much about why the museum decided to become bilingual in the first place?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (02:42)

So I believe-- I'm not 100% sure, as I told you in our previous conversation, but I'm pretty sure it was the new director, when she came into the museum? She's been the director of the museum for I think, like, six or seven years. So, you know, at the beginning, all the pieces from the museum were, related to people that--okay, this is gonna sound really bad, but then you can write it up-- but pretty much was like people, old people, that were dead. So the director decided at some point that we needed to like have portrayed more, like, alive people, like I'm contemporary people, so that more people will be more diverse, right? Like, because you know, they were all like white men or few women. So she decided that after this to be more diverse, and because of that, you know, they started by collecting more portraits of alive people, right? So, so because of that, right, we need to have also a curator, like a Latin curator, right? So, we have with her the curator of Latino history and culture and art. She was hired also six years ago. So that's kind of like also relates to the bilingual

efforts of the museum, you know, like a bilingual employee and curator that was able to bring more diversity into the museum.

HOFFMAN: (04:41)

That's so interesting because now I would never have thought that it was mostly dead old men because it does feel really diverse in the collection now. And you see so many people that are really current and it just feels very natural that way. But it's interesting that that was like a conscious decision pretty recently.

SAMA FERNANDEZ (05:05)

Yeah. It's pretty smart, I think.

HOFFMAN: (05:11)

Yeah, very much. It just like gives it a whole different relevance. And so I would guess that the audience of the translated, Spanish materials would just be like Spanish speakers in general, since it is like a national museum with a national audience. Are there any types of Spanish speakers that you target your efforts to or does it tend to be more of a general audience?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (05:47)

So that's, that's kind of like hard to tell because I really like, audience we track, you know, because it's like free admission, we don't keep any zip codes of people, it's very hard to tell. But we really [inaudible] our audience, like our Spanish audience because of, for example, social media, right, or things like that. Or for example, when we send a newsletter, we kind of see from the comments that it's United States [Latinos] but like also a lot of people from first generation or the second. So definitely our efforts are being appreciated, but I don't know really, which our audience is. I know we do like programs in Spanish, and they get a lot of audience and then you know, I want to think that then, because of, the word of mouth, then it's helpful for bringing all of these people, but it's really hard to tell like the percentage or like the number.

HOFFMAN: (07:34)

So talking about programs, could you talk a little bit about the types of programming that you do either geared towards Latino audiences or that are like bilingual or in Spanish?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (07:45)

Yes. So we, for example, when it's Hispanic Heritage month, we have the Hispanic Heritage Family Day, which is basically like focus on, you know, highlights all these portraits of Latinos that are in our collection and putting all families that are either bilingual or Spanish into the muse. Obviously it's more local. So, you know, everything is bilingual but there are other communities from out of the US. and in those programs we kind of like offer, for example, we partner with the DC library and we read, we read books to the children in Spanish, we have our curator of Latino art give tours, and then we also have the Day of the Dead, el Día de los Muertos, another program for the Latino audience you know, audience where we kind of like celebrate that day. And you know, we kind of like tried to approach to the culture of Mexico. And we bring like all kinds of artists that are either like musicians or bands or like dancers that are originally from out of the States. Yeah. And then like other programs that are based on the, you know, education and I don't know really know how that works that but, for example, the other day I was walking through the museum and I saw a group of people, with one of my colleagues, who is bilingual, and she was doing some kind of tour in Spanish. So, you know, we offer those opportunities to our bilingual audience.

HOFFMAN: (10:33)

And, let's see, so in terms of staff, would you say that the museum has made, it sounds like they have, but would you say that they've made an effort to create a hiring strategy that prioritizes bilingual staff and try and get more?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (10:54)

Okay. Yeah, definitely, yes. Because the museum really is from the transition of becoming fully bilingual. So in order to do that, you need to have like, you know, like a bilingual staff. So yeah, definitely. I think the museum is making efforts to hire as many bilingual staff as they can. So far, on the top of my head, there are up to five or six people that are speaking Spanish at the office right now. We have a curator, we have two curators now that are bilingual, we have the Latino art and history and then we have like one of the curators for photographs is bilingual then we have two in the communications department...yeah, I want to say less than 10, but we have like a pretty good amount. I mean to be fair, a good amount.

HOFFMAN: (13:00)

Sure. And what about on the frontline staff? Do have bilingual front line staff like docents or people that sit at the front desk like visitor services?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (13:14)

Sorry, can you say that again?

HOFFMAN: (13:16)

Are there bilingual members of the frontline staff, like visitor services that you know of?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (13:23)

We don't have anyone at the front desk bilingual, because these are pretty much volunteers that come, like, we have a schedule for our volunteers and they come to the museum maybe two times per month. That means we have like a bunch of volunteers being in the front desk, but what we have is a bunch of docents that offer tours in Spanish, for the audience that speak Spanish. We had like a fellow, an intern that was in the museum for a year, and she pretty much made a whole docent manual for the Spanish [tours]. So she was in charge of museum docents and training, in order that we are able to communicate everything on the tours.

HOFFMAN: (14:36)

And what do you think that the museum would like to do for next steps moving forward with their bilingual efforts?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (14:50)

Yeah, so I guess, I guess we're gonna try and to keep like collecting, focusing collecting efforts on Latino collections, to increase that and then trying to collaborate more in terms of marketing, trying to collaborate more with this audience, with, for example, El Tiempo Latino newspaper, or things like that. But it's also really hard because everything's very expensive, we have very little budget, as you know. So far, I know that we always tried to get bilingual staff if it's possible, so we'll kind of like can help the efforts of becoming fully bilingual.

HOFFMAN: (16:16)

And what would you say in your opinion, is there anything where if a museum is trying to become bilingual, like something that they should avoid doing? Like maybe it would be insensitive to their audience, or not a good process?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (16:43)

What was that? I'm sorry.

HOFFMAN: (16:45)

If a museum is trying to become bilingual, is there anything that you think would make it like a, a negative effort? Like, Oh, if you're going to do it, definitely don't do it like this.

SAMA FERNANDEZ (16:59)

Well, so you know, museums that... it's hard, for example, like, we have an editor, two editors at the museum, so like all the labels and everything, pretty much every single thing that goes out to the audience is being proofread by someone, but when it comes to, when it comes to Spanish, all the time, we have like the opportunity to provide like a real real editor that can proofread text. For example, this is like a small example when I first started working at the NPG, I saw a bunch of press releases that were translated, they were using the name of the institution in Spanish, which is Galería Nacional de Retratos, and that's something that you're not supposed to translate, because, you know, it's the name of the institution, it's like, for example, imagine you're in Spain, right? You don't look for the store "Manzana," you look for Apple. Basically that's like an example. But it tells you, you're not supposed to translate branding, you know? And at the end, we are branding, like the name of the institution is branding. So yeah, you don't translate those. So we kind of like, we had two curators that were bilingual and we kind of like said like a few things that they had to stay the same, so it's kind of like, to create the content is a little bit hard, hard because you don't really have someone that has the authority to say, no, this needs to be like this. Right. But we try our best all the time.

HOFFMAN: (19:50)

That's interesting. Let me think just a couple more questions. Does it-- sounds like the answer's no, but has the museum done any formal evaluation of the bilingual labels that you know of?

SAMA FERNANDEZ (20:05)

No. Unfortunately, you know, and that will be expensive I think. So, we talk, we have these meetings, all-staff meetings, like every two months or something like that. And I remember about two months ago, someone was talking about like, you know how UArts has these collaborations with museums and you do like a study for them, and it's kind of like the target for audience evaluation? We were talking about that, but you know, it's really far off.

HOFFMAN: (20:49)

Interesting. Well I think that is all the questions that I have. Okay. So let me see. I know last time you talked about some of the challenges of sharing the building, and how the Museum of American Art is not bilingual. So that inhibits some of the things that you can do in the National Portrait Gallery.

SAMA FERNANDEZ (21:20)

Yeah. Yeah. So see, I mentioned because, you know, even that we're trying to do efforts to like be bilingual. We share the building with the Museum of American Art, so our building is two museums, so like our side is going to be all bilingual walls, but you know, how do you call these? ...

HOFFMAN: (21:51)

Yeah, like wayfinding and the signage.

SAMA FERNANDEZ (21:55)

So those are not going to be bilingual. So like signs for restrooms, right. Because like, American Art thinks it's very expensive to do something like that. So they are, they don't want to do that, but , yeah, we try our best.

HOFFMAN: (22:15)

Interesting. All right, well yeah, that's all the questions that I have. Thank you so, so much for taking the time to talk with me again.

List of First Stage Codes

1. Art Museums
 - a. Interest in Other Art Museums
2. Non-Art Museums
- ~~3. Recognition of Work~~
4. Lack of Bilingualism
5. Politics
6. Prejudice
7. Institutional Motivation
 - a. Demographics & Visitorship
 - b. From Exclusion to Inclusion
 - c. Mission
8. Barriers
 - a. Language
 - b. Elitist history
 - c. Time
 - d. Poverty
 - i. Admissions
 - e. Perceptions
 - i. Museum culture in country of origin
9. Bilingualism is Actionable
10. Cost
11. Schedule for Change
12. Renovations
13. Museum Size
14. Translation
 - a. Quality
 - i. Culturally appropriate
 - b. Choosing a translator
15. Staff
 - a. Heritage language speakers
 - b. Commitment to diverse hiring
 - c. Opportunities & Growth
 - d. Structure
16. Heritage language community
 - a. Language Specifics
- b. Characteristics
- c. Social organization
17. Wayfinding & Signage
18. Gallery Interpretation
 - a. Adapting to Challenges
 - i. Affordances of Tech
 - b. Necessity of Interpretation in Art Museums
19. Welcome
20. Consistent Experience
21. Goals
22. Soft Power
23. Programs
 - a. Off-site outreach
24. Partnerships
 - a. Strong Relationships
 - b. Cultural Navigation
 - c. Trusted Partners
 - d. Business
 - e. "Cross pollination"
 - f. Schools
 - g. Wants
 - h. co-creation
25. Superficial Efforts
26. Board Diversification
27. Internal Representation
28. Results
 - a. Attendance
29. Economy
30. Commitment
 - a. Community-Centered
 - b. From Staff
 - c. Leadership
31. Listening to Community
 - a. Community Advisory
32. Research

- a. Focus Groups
 - b. Conversations with Partners
- 33. Next Steps
- 34. About Something to For Someone
- 35. Internal Resistance
 - a. Graphic Designers
- 36. Labels
 - a. Challenges
 - b. Reviewed by native speakers
- 37. Testing
 - a. Lessons
- 38. Reactions
- 39. Ideal Vision
- 40. Holistic Strategies
- 41. Multiple languages
- 42. Evaluation
- 43. Benefits to museum
- 44. Development over time
- 45. Funding
- 46. Collateral materials
- 47. Marketing
- 48. Visitors
- 49. Audio Tours
- 50. Entrance space
- 51. Burden on Visitor
- 52. Institutional Body Language
- 53. Self-Reflection
- 54. Accessibility
- 55. Audience Building
- 56. Strategy
- 57. Language Erasure
- 58. Structural Racism
- 59. Museum as business
- 60. Best Practices
- 61. Missteps
 - a. Tokenizing
- 62. Language neutral

Link to Google Spreadsheet of [codes and interview text](#)

Code Groupings & Categories

Art Museums
Interest in Other Art Museums
European Art Museums
Children's and Science Museums
Funders
Museum History



Museum Type

Politics
Prejudice
Language Barrier
Language Erasure
Institutionalized
Racism
History of Elitism
Perceptions of Exclusion
Soft Power
Supporting Local Businesses
"Cross pollination" of Partnerships



Structural Inequity & Exclusion

Bilingualism is Actionable
Cost
Schedule for Change
Renovations
Museum Size
Translators
Physical Accessibility Strategies



Logistics & Practicalities

Heritage language community
Cultural Specifics of Language
Social Organization
Demographic Characteristics of Community
Cultural Behaviors
Research
Listening to Community
Focus Groups



Culturally-Competent Audience Research

Conversations with Partners
Partners as Cultural Navigators
Partners as Trusted Messengers
Overall Strategy
Wants and Needs



Partnerships

Staff
Heritage Language Speaking Staff
Diverse Hiring Practices
Opportunities & Growth
Staff Structure
Board Diversification
Internal Representation



Internal Culture

Gallery Interpretation
Labels
Word Count
Graphic Design
Translation
Translation Quality
Culturally Appropriate
Correct Translator
Editing
Interpretation Philosophy
Physical Space
Use of Technology
Audio Guides
Consistent Experience
Wayfinding and Signage
Marketing
Evaluation
Holistic Strategies
Superficial Efforts
Programs
Collateral Materials
Front-line Staff
Institutional Body Language
Burden on Visitor
Welcome



Institutional Body Language

Institutional Motivation
Mission

Exclusion to Inclusion
Match Demographics to Visitorship
Benefits to Museum
Ideal Vision
Institutional Commitment
Commitment Led By Staff
Commitment From Leadership
Commitment to Community
Goals
Self Reflection
Risk-taking



Commitment to Community

Evaluation
Testing
Results
Lessons Learned
Reactions
Next Steps
Continued Evaluation



Continued Evaluation