2020 Smithsonian Affiliations Virtual Conference Series
September 23-24; October 7-8; October 21-22; November 9-10
Titles and timing are subject to change

Wednesday, September 23
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
IDEA STARTER SESSION: What is the Role of the 21st-Century Museum?
Track: PK-12 Education, Amplifying Voices, Digital First, Network Building
Eduardo Díaz, Director, Smithsonian Latino Center
Terri Freeman, Director, National Civil Rights Museum, a Smithsonian Affiliate
Sarah Pharaon, Principal, Dialogic Consulting
Moderator: Myriam Springuel, Director, SITES and Smithsonian Affiliations
Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III will offer pre-recorded remarks on the role of museums and cultural organizations today, in the age of the “dual pandemics”—COVID-19 and racial injustice. Afterwards, a moderated discussion with three conversationalists will reflect on the Secretary’s remarks and explore the question, How do we respond to the challenges of a global pandemic, racial injustice, and political divisiveness in ways that enable our visitors to take productive action?

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS
Creative Strategies for Leveraging Your Partnership with the Smithsonian
Track: Network Building
Presented by: Framingham State University and Senator John Heinz History Center
Two Smithsonian Affiliates will discuss real-world strategies for using Smithsonian resources and the Affiliate network for more impactful approaches to public programming, exhibition development, object loans and more. Discussion will focus on pre- and post- pandemic efforts to catalyze efforts to foster greater collaboration between departments internally, exploring strategies for identifying new channels for collaboration within the Smithsonian network; addressing some of the barriers that affect efforts to grow and diversify audiences. Speakers will also discuss how they introduce pressing and/or current issues in their programming.

Co-developing Teen Programming: Behind the Scenes with the Creators of the Video Series “Young People Shake up Elections (History Proves It)”
Track: PK-12 Education, Digital First
This session is based on the Young People Shake Up Elections (History Proves It) video series which uses history to inspire and prepare young people as they take part in our electoral system. Panelists will share how this significant youth voting project was developed in full collaboration with the intended audience—teens. This project can be a model and launching pad for other organizations to catalyze their own work with, by, and for teen audiences.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual Resource Fair
4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Addressing Historical Truth in a Divided 21st-Century Society: A Collaborative Problem-Solving Session
Discussing How We Use Collections to Provide Accurate Museum Experiences
Track: Amplifying Voices

Presented by: Western Reserve Historical Society

Museums, historical societies, and historic sites have a responsibility to provide accurate experiences that benefit our society. We use our collections to share stories about the American experience. Increasingly, many museum collections as seen through the lens of the 21st century are controversial, representing a shared history that is troubling, tragic, and unresolved. Using real examples, session leaders will share their experiences and open conversation for an honest, open discussion about mission and our collective responsibility to the truth, when so much of the American experience, as seen through our eyes, is on the wrong side of history.

Social Media in 2020: Balancing Strategy and Self Care
Track: Network Building, Digital First

Presented by: Smithsonian Affiliations and SITES, with a panel of Affiliate and Smithsonian social media experts

A moderated panel of social media managers and digital engagement specialists discuss how 2020 has illuminated the importance of their roles. As buildings closed, social media managers became the new front-of-house, tending to general inquiries, acting as crisis communicators when faced with verbal violence online, and navigating a 24/7 work environment. Dealing with dual pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism, the role of the social media manager is more of a balancing act than ever. How are we navigating this increasingly challenging space? What advice is there for turning hate speech into teachable moments? What are some self-care methods that we can all practice at home for the increasingly digital world we all find ourselves in?

Thursday, September 24
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)

Special guest: Ruki Neuhold-Ravikumar, Smithsonian Acting Under Secretary for Education

2:00 – 3:00 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: Bringing Inquiry-Based Science to Youth During COVID
Track: PK-12 Education, Digital First

Presented by: Smithsonian Science Education Center

The Smithsonian Science Education Center, in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the InterAcademy Partnership has developed COVID-19! How can I protect myself and others?, a new rapid-response guide for youth ages 8–17. Through a set of seven cohesive student-led tasks, participants engage in the activities to answer questions previously defined by their peers. The questions explore the impact of COVID-19 on the world, how to practice hand and respiratory hygiene and physical distancing, and how to research more information about COVID-19. Participants in this workshop will learn how to bring these activities to their communities.

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
Executive Leadership Strategic Plan Feedback Meeting

Join Myriam Springuel, Director, SITES and Smithsonian Affiliations, to learn about the dynamic new strategic plan that will guide the work of both SITES and Affiliations in the coming years. There will be time for Q&A and discussion among participants about how you see your work reflected in the plan.
3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative: How to Help Your Community Before and After a Disaster
Track: Network Building
Presented by: Smithsonian Cultural Rescue Initiative

4:00 – 5:00 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Affinity Group Networking
- Art Organizations
- History Organizations
- Science Organizations
- Air & Space Organizations

Wednesday, October 7
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
IDEA SESSION: How can museums and cultural organizations support racial equity?
Track: PK-12 Education, Amplifying Voices, Digital First, Network Building
Joanne Jones-Rizzi, Vice President of Science, Equity, and Education, Science Museum of Minnesota
Linda Norris, Global Program Manager, International Sites of Conscience
In this Idea Starter session, Joanne Jones-Rizzi will offer thoughts on the question, How can museums and cultural organizations demonstrate racial equity—inside and out? Afterwards, Linda Norris will moderate a discussion with Sites of Conscience partners to explore how they are addressing racial equity and responding to Black Lives Matter and calls for more equity and inclusion in their communities.

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS
Equity and Justice as a Mission
Track: Amplifying Voices
Presented by: Arab American National Museum
For the last two years, staff at the Arab American National Museum (AANM) have collaborated on institutionalizing a committee dedicated to ensuring that equity and justice are fully present in all areas of its work. As a community-based institution, the ethos of equity and justice at AANM seems obvious, however, AANM had never fully articulated that ethos to its diverse audiences or to other communities of color, who are frequent collaborators and share many of the same issues and concerns in the realm of equity and justice. Panelists will share successes and challenges of the work that has taken place over the past two years to include equity and justice across all departments of the museum. Throughout the session, panelists will explore the following questions: Why is equity and justice work integral to all museums, not only community-based institutions? Why focus on equity and justice and not diversity work, and what’s the difference? Participants will leave with ideas for implementing this work at their institutions.

Community Collaboration with Museum on Main Street
Track: Amplifying Voices, Network Building
Presented by: Grinnell College & SITES Museum on Main Street
Grinnell Works is a crowd-sourced exhibition created by Grinnell College, Drake Community Library, and members of the Grinnell community, in collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum on Main Street program. In this session, panelists will share the original idea—crowdsourcing and active citizen engagement—and then how COVID-19 changed the exhibition landscape during the development process. Panelists will share how Smithsonian support, collaborative leadership, and nimbleness during a pandemic resulted in amplifying diverse and unheard voices through crowdsourcing of content.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual Resource Fair

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

What Happens When an Organization Evaluates Its Own Learning?
Track: PK-12 Education, Network Building
Presented by: National Museum of Natural History and Randi Korn and Associates
While museums have long focused on visitor learning, the National Museum of Natural History recently became interested in the learning that happens within the organization. The idea came about at the five-year anniversary of Q?rius, the museum’s science learning center whose development pushed museum staff in new directions — creatively and collaboratively. They sought to explore, uncover, and describe learning that happens within the organization from three vantage points: personal, departmental, and leadership. This session will cover the basics of the field of organizational learning, the evaluation’s methods and findings, and early insights into how NMNH is applying the findings to strengthen the organization and its PK-12 and other programs. Presenters will also share how the evaluation informed their decision making while the museum was physically closed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Museums Respond: Collecting and Comforting in the Face of Disaster and Trauma
Track: Amplifying Voices, Network Building
Presented by: Museum of Sonoma County
This session will catalyze curators, collection managers, and exhibit developers to think and talk about the role their museums might play in the event of a disaster and/or political event. Panelists will share useful and impactful stories of their experiences and strategies for rapid response collecting, emergency preparedness, and community engagement when faced with major disaster or national outrage.

Thursday, October 8
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)
Special Guest: Anthea Hartig, Director, National Museum of American History

1:00 – 3:30 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: Virtual Field Trips that Engage, Reinforce, and Connect Beyond Museum Walls
Track: PK-12 Education, Digital First
Presented by: University of Nebraska State Museum
The University of Nebraska State Museum extends its science education beyond geographical and social boundaries, making its collections and exhibits accessible to all through virtual field trips that have connected students in rural Nebraska as well as 17 states and Canada. After schools and museums’ doors closed because of COVID-19, virtual field trips and virtual learning became even more in-demand. In this workshop, speakers will
share and show what they have learned about creating viable virtual education programs and how those programs have evolved since COVID-19 changed the learning environment.

**3:30 – 5:00 p.m.**
**ONLINE WORKSHOP:** Capacity Building Has a New, Post-COVID Face: Engaging Schools through New Partnerships, Online Learning Connections, Mailable Teacher Kits, and Social Media Streaming  
**Track:** PK-12 Education, Digital First  
**Presented by:** Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory  
Even before COVID-19, decreasing funding for Title 1 and non-Title schools means schools can’t just "go" on field trips. As COVID-19 closed schools, a whole new set of issues came to the forefront—high-speed internet is not in every home in America. Whipple Observatory devised a multi-pronged approach to meeting teachers and kids where they are, even if it’s a county, state, or country away. This session explores the successes (and acknowledges the struggles) of online learning connections, mailable teacher kits, in-classroom teaching, and social media streaming.

**3:00 – 4:00 p.m.**
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Affinity Group Networking:  
• Decolonization & Repatriation  
• Living Collections  
• Non-Collecting Organizations

**Wednesday, October 21**
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
**IDEA SESSION:** What is The Role of Cultural Institutions in Supporting Digital Equity?  
**Track:** PK-12 Education, Amplifying Voices, Digital First, Network Building

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
**CONCURRENT SESSIONS**

**De-Centering Dominant American History Through the Lens of the Transcontinental Railroad**  
**Track:** PK-12 Education, Amplifying Voices  
**Presented by:** National Postal Museum, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center  
Using the Transcontinental Railroad as a lens, panelists will discuss how museums and cultural sites across the nation grapple with challenging and complex histories that have significant relevance to issues today. Panelists will discuss how they approached intentionally de-centering the dominant, white American history that is typically told of the Transcontinental Railroad as the basis for larger discussion and in order to help today’s PK-12 students learn critical analytical skills, build empathy, and use dialogue to find common ground with others.

**Transcription Boom: How Crowdsourcing Projects are Increasing Digital Engagement**  
**Track:** Network Building, Digital First  
**Presented by:** Smithsonian Transcription Center and History Colorado  
When museums shuttered in March 2020, both History Colorado and the Smithsonian Transcription Center staff noticed a drastic uptick in online traffic to their websites. What was going on and who was this new audience engaging with their collections? Both organizations have active crowdsourcing projects developed as a collaborative way to digitally enable and increase public engagement with their
digitized content. But neither organizations expected the sudden increase and importance of their crowdsourcing projects. In this session, learn what implementing and sustaining a crowdsourcing project looks like before and during a worldwide pandemic. Speakers will share best practices, challenges, and tips for embarking on a crowdsourcing project of your own.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual Resource Fair

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

**Multi-Media Story Projects that Bring Urban and Rural Youth Together**
Track: Amplifying Voices, Digital First
Presented by: SITES Museum on Main Street
SITES’ Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program uses digital storytelling as a community engagement tool to amplify youth voices. Rural communities hosting MoMS exhibitions engage youth to create multi-media story projects rooted in local history. MoMS exhibitions provide a national context from which youth participants conduct research and interviews. This experience bridges age gaps and leads to surprising outcomes. Youth feel valued. Relationships are strengthened between youth, schools, and historical cultural organizations. And, youth become more interested in history. This session’s conversation explores ways to collaborate on joint youth initiatives—capturing stories from youth in urban areas, convening conversations about the urban/rural divide, or engaging youth in joint projects about democracy and citizenship.

**Fostering Change Through Difficult Discussions at Every Age**
Track: PK-12 Education, Amplifying Voices
Presented by: San Diego History Center
Engaging in dialogue around -isms for any age can be challenging; however, having these discussions is important for making change. Museums have a responsibility to challenge and support guests in breaking through discomfort and practicing empathy. In this session, participants will actively work through a series of questions aimed at addressing some roadblocks to impactful conversations, how museums and teachers can work together towards a more welcoming and inclusive environment, and the role museum professionals play in supporting and promoting meaningful programming with social justice at the core. Panelists will share current programming which engages K-12 and adult groups in meaningful dialogue around the history of discrimination based on race and ethnicity, and gender or sexual orientation. Participants will leave with new ideas and potential collaborators, with the goal of creating more inclusive and thought-provoking museum experiences.

**Thursday, October 22**

1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)
Special Guest: Lisa Sasaki, Director, Asian Pacific American Center

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: Big Ideas, Small Children: Techniques and Language for Authentically Engaging Children in Complex Topics Using Museum Objects in Developmentally Appropriate Ways
Track: PK-12 Education, Digital First
Presented by Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center
No one is ever too young to experience museums, appreciate diversity, or tackle some of the world’s biggest problems, even if it’s in a small way. During this virtual workshop, attendees will participate in several sample
learning experiences that explore themes such as home diversity, global warming, conservation, and activism. Participants will gain techniques to address issues of DEAI, global problems, and problem solving through single programs that are developmentally appropriate for young learners and help caregivers understand how to approach these topics and use museums as a resource. The virtual workshop will conclude with time for discussion on how these techniques could apply to the participants’ setting and unique collections.

3:00 – 4:00 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)

3:00 – 5:00 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: Catalyzing Critical Conversations
Track: Network Building
Presented by: Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES)

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Affinity Group Networking
- Universities
- Publicly Supported Organizations
- Culturally Specific Organizations

Monday, November 9
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
IDEA STARTER SESSION: What’s Next for Museums and Cultural Institutions?
Track: PK-12 Education, Amplifying Voices, Digital First, Network Building

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS
Reconnecting Communities with Collections and Reversing the Process of Colonization within Museums and Indigenous Communities?
Track: Amplifying Voices
Presented by: Smithsonian Recovering Voices Initiative
Historically, ancestral objects held within the walls of museums have been detached from their indigenous owners and communities. More recently, community scholars and museum professionals have recognized the value and importance in reconnecting with communities and more importantly, the benefits of meaningful collaboration. Programs like Recovering Voices seek to reconnect communities with collections and educational initiatives and are having a profound impact on community revitalization initiatives, social health, and museum stewardship. In this session, learn more about this program and others like it working to reverse the process of colonization within museums and Indigenous communities.

Stronger Together: Building a Supportive and Inclusive Community of Practice for American Women’s History
Track: Network Building, Amplifying Voices, Digital First
Presented by: Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative
Leaders from the Smithsonian American Women’s History Initiative will lead a discussion about building a strong, supportive women’s history community of practice. Through a series of questions, panelists will explore how the Smithsonian and Affiliates can work together to move women’s history forward—being conscious that not all women have been included in history. Through an open discourse about practices, projects, and the future of women’s history, the American Women’s History Initiative hopes to
connect and create a space to allow for innovation, partnership, and the beginnings of a community of practice.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Virtual Resource Fair

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
General Session For Strategic Plan Feedback
Join Myriam Springuel, Director, SITES and Smithsonian Affiliations, to learn about the dynamic new strategic plan that will guide the work of both SITES and Affiliations in the coming years. There will be time for Q&A and discussion among participants about how you see your work reflected in the plan.

4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
CONCURRENT SESSIONS

Engaging All Ages in Museum Programming: A Ten-Strategy Philosophy
Track: PK-12 Education
Presented by: USS Constitution Museum
Over the course of several years, prototyping, and evaluation, the USS Constitution Museum (Boston, Massachusetts) has developed an engagement philosophy of ten strategies that inform the design, facilitation, and evaluation of student and family programs. In this session, panelists will define and illustrate the engagement strategies and discuss how they have changed since COVID-19 closed museum doors. Using their Family Firepower program as a case study for youth and adult engagement, panelists will share what tools were developed, successes and challenges, and evaluation strategies. Participants will leave with ideas and models (including those found on the museum’s engagefamilies.org website) to put similar engagement strategies into action.

Collaborating with Youth to Change the Climate Conversation
Track: Amplifying Voices, Digital First
Presented by: Smithsonian Conservation Commons and Smithsonian Affiliations
Smithsonian Affiliations is collaborating with 20 Affiliates, and colleagues from the Smithsonian’s Conservation Commons and National Museum of Natural History, to cultivate youth leaders in the environmental movement through two projects—National Earth Optimism Teen Videos and National Earth Optimism Teen Conversation. The projects aim to identify, support, and mentor teens to channel their passion for protecting the environment with the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals and turn them into meaningful community actions. When the pandemic hit and museums closed, all partners underwent a major pivot to reimagine how to do this work online and to achieve an impact that would need to be primarily virtual. In this session, project organizers and Affiliate collaborators will share highlights from this journey of empowering teens, and the array of actions teens across the country are taking in response to a changing society and environment. Participants will take away ideas for collaborating with their own future changemakers and opportunities for community action available in the virtual environment with digital natives.
Tuesday, November 10
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)
Special Guest: Machel Monenerkit, Acting Director, Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian

1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: Maximizing Impact with Smithsonian Learning Lab: Partnerships that Achieve Greater Reach and Relevance in the Classroom
Track: PK-12 Education, Digital First
Presented by: Smithsonian Center for Learning and Digital Access

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.
American Women’s History Initiative Meeting
This Affinity Group meeting will build upon the information presented and discussion in the Stronger Together: Building a Supportive and Inclusive Community of Practice for American Women’s History session the previous day. Group leaders will open conversation about ways participants can share stories of lesser-known women in American History through Wikipedia edit-a-thons and other collaborative opportunities. Join this session and help move this community of practice along by helping to create real action steps within the American Women’s History Initiative.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Executive Leadership Meeting (For Executive leadership only)
Special Guest: Kirk Johnson, Director, Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History

3:30 – 5:00 p.m.
ONLINE WORKSHOP: The Whole Truth: Working Across Social, Bureaucratic, and Pedagogical Boundaries to Empower and Connect Marginalized Communities When Building a Public History Platform
Track: Amplifying Voices
Presented by: International Museum of the Horse
Many museums are updating their historical interpretation to tell a more complete history which, in many cases, includes typically underrepresented peoples’ stories. This workshop will provide a space for participants to discuss how to view complex community relationships as an asset, and how to explore solutions that include diverse, sometimes conflicting, voices when building a public history platform. Participants will leave this workshop feeling inspired to work across social, bureaucratic, and pedagogical boundaries in order to empower and connect marginalized communities for many generations to come.

5:30 – 6:30 p.m.
Closing Networking Session