



ENGAGING MILLENNIALS IN THE HISTORIC HOUSE MUSEUM

ABSTRACT

Historic house museums across the country indicate that the group that frequents their sites least frequently are Millennials. Visitor engagement and involvement in museum activities may be low for this age group, but it is not for the reasons that might first come to mind. While many house museums may believe that dwindling numbers of young adult visitors are due to a lack of interest in local history and architecture, this explanation is far too simplistic. In general, millennials are interested in local history and their communities, and are open to exploration and involvement in both areas. However, it is a lack of connection that causes this age group to focus their museum dollars and energies elsewhere. This paper will consider the disconnect that exists between millennials and historic house museums in terms of understanding the value or relevancy of the other. In doing so, it will offer historic house museums points of consideration for engaging millennials through marketing, programming, and community that will ultimately lay the foundation for ensuring the house museum's legacy for the enjoyment of future generations.

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In 2002, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) jointly hosted a conference gathering representatives from twenty-seven historical house museums in the United States of America, specifically to discuss the collective difficulties house museums often encounter. While several important issues were considered, one of the major concerns was one of prolonged relevance—*how do we get young people to care about old places?* More important to consider, perhaps, is how historic house museums can engage young people so that when the time comes, the Millennial generation has a vested interest in protecting the legacies of these historic sites.

According to a February 2018 survey (“*Millennials and the Historic House*”), historic house museums across the country consider Millennials to be those who visit their museums least frequently. Based on this survey, the low rate of Millennial visitors has been attributed to a lack of interest in local history and an aversion to historical architecture and design. However, this explanation is perhaps too simplistic and isn’t necessarily accurate. A second self-conducted survey from the same time period indicates that Millennials do have an interest in learning about local history, architecture, and design, but the presentation methods of historic house museums typically do not suit their interests or needs (“*Museum Visiting Habits*”). Additionally, many Millennials say that they are unaware of house museums in their local area, though there is typically at least one museum of this variety in every county of the country (George 22). There appears to be a disconnect occurring—one that involves a failure to adapt to the needs and interests of a younger generation that is a valuable resource when considering legacy and longevity.

This paper aims to provide a framework for historic house museums to develop an understanding of Millennials as a generation, their needs and interests, and how to incorporate these understandings into the house museum to encourage active engagement from the Millennial community. With carefully planned social networking efforts, re-contextualizing of collections, programming initiatives, and community involvement, the

house museum can potentially build a new visitor base, one that over time may develop a vested interest in preserving its legacy for future generations.

Background and Approach

The ideas that will be proposed in this paper are based on an understanding of problems that house museums routinely face that are distinct from those faced by other types of museums. Following the conference mentioned previously, Gerald George, former Executive Director of AASLH, published a report of the conference findings in *History News*. The document, *Historical Home Malaise: A Conference Considers What's Wrong*, provides a basis for identifying the struggles of house museums and what these institutions are currently doing to ensure they maintain relevance in their communities.

To understand how Millennials might provide a source of solutions to some of these problems, we must first understand who Millennials are. It is important to note that there is not an officially agreed upon date range for this generation. Characteristics are fluid and can apply to those older and younger. For the purposes of this paper, the broader "Millennial" term will be used to characterize a generation of people born between the years of 1982 and 2004, which is the range provided by Regina Luttrell and Karen McGrath in *Millennial Mindset: Unraveling Fact from Fiction*. This text, too, provides a basis for the development of the proposals recommended in this paper. *Millennial Mindset* explores the generation as a culture unto itself, and clarifies the common characteristics, interests, and values. Together, these texts help to ground the surveys and case studies that will be used to frame the proposed actions house museums may consider in order to engage a Millennial audience.

Get Social and Create Buzz on Social Media

Social media is an influential presence in today's modern society and one of the key driving forces in a Millennial's life, with social media revolutionizing "how this generation defined *friends, community and relationships*" (Luttrell and McGrath 70). This generation has seen the internet as being a place where one simply seeks information to becoming a place where one shares, collaborates and builds community through a variety of networks like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. By harnessing the power of these tools, house museums

can build interest among Millennials, entice them to visit, and continue to engage them and develop relationships after the visitation has occurred.

The February 2018 survey of Millennials showed that social media is a driving factor in making decisions about museums. Forty-five percent reported that the content museums share on social media networks helps them to decide which museums to visit. Similarly, seventy-five percent of Millennials agreed that their decisions on whether to visit museums were influenced by their friends-- their personal network.

While universal museums, art museums, and others may use social media as a tool to boast of their rotating exhibitions and renowned names and items in their collections, house museums may not typically have this advantage. However, because Millennials place such a high value on the idea of community, this is a true opportunity for house museums to shine on social media. By sharing stories of the house's past residents (and making these stories relevant to modern lifestyles), linking items in the collection to past and present businesses in the community, and other regional tie-ins, house museums have the potential to create locally driven content that will build interest, establish relevancy, and encourage visitation.

The consideration of social media does not end with visitation however. It's important to recall how many Millennials make decisions—based on peer influence (Williams, et al. 9). When visitors are encouraged to *share* their experiences via their social networks, the house museum establishes a reputation of trust with the generation that has the potential to spread across networks, which can then be translated into a valuable marketing tool for the house museum. The fact that a large percentage of Millennials are eager to share images and videos of themselves in public situations without receiving anything in return (Luttrell and McGrath 78) should not be ignored by house museums. Presenting opportunities for photography on-site in ways that encourage social sharing and promoting conversations on social media *after* the visit ends are chances for house museums to take advantage of Millennials' inclination to share, "create buzz" and make decisions based on peer influence.

It's important to note here that social media should not be considered a replacement for traditional marketing efforts, but rather an avenue of reaching a broader audience where traditional print marketing and newsletters may not. Likewise, it's important to consider the difference between simply "having" social media and using social media with purpose.

Engagement on social media should be encouraged organically by presenting opportunities without making the situation feel forced or required. For museums to have success with engaging Millennials on social media, time and effort must be invested. This involves appropriating resources to managing the accounts, monitoring trends, and carefully approaching social media with a clear plan of action and a unified and authentic voice. While this may present a challenge to some house museums, the investment of resources may result in rich connections with a new audience of potential visitors, volunteers, and engaged supporters of the museum.

Treasure Hunting in the Storage Attic: Re-Contextualizing Collections

Redundancy was a topic of focus at the 2002 conference, with many participants agreeing that, “within the houses, historical interpretations often seem repetitive, boring and questionable” (George 22). This sense of redundancy comes not only from house museums following similar frames of exhibition theme and style, but from individual houses failing to update their narratives in ways that reflect the community’s current interests and values. House museums typically do not have the capacity to showcase traveling exhibits, and the missions and operating nature of house museums often limit exhibits to the stories told by the houses’ previous residents. Despite these limitations, items in collections can be re-contextualized to provide new insights into old stories and settings. By incorporating methods such as focused themes and crowd-sourced exhibits, house museums can begin to stand competitively against other museums who are also competing for Millennials’ leisure dollars.

House museum collections are often vast and varied, with several individual pieces held in storage, tucked safely away in attics and basements when they don’t fit the traditional narratives told through the period rooms. These items can serve as opportunities to reimagine the traditional narrative of the house museum. Seasonal holidays provide possibilities to showcase items that may typically not be seen by the general public. The Camron-Stanford House Museum in Oakland, California, for example, has in their collection a number of traditional Victorian mourning garments and ephemera on the subject of funerals and death. While the topic might be considered too morbid for regular display and is out of context with

the standard narrative of the period rooms, the items do provide a valuable resource come Halloween. During the months of September and October, these items emerge from the attic as part of the museum's annual *Morbid Desire* event, where these items are set on display and brought into focus on tours and in text. As part of the February 2018 survey, house museums did indicate that they saw success among this age group during Christmas, when house museums display traditional décor in line with the period of the house. As Millennials seek opportunities for leisure during traditionally festive times of the year, house museums can fill a niche in the museum market that other museums may not.

In a similar case study, the Dickenson Museum in Amherst, Massachusetts has seen success in targeting a younger audience by offering carefully planned tours and experiences on themes of interest to Millennials. One prominent example is their *Dickenson in Love* tour, which reframes the narrative of the museum and its collection to examine themes of love, sexuality, and LGBT representations and relationships during the period of Dickenson (Lowe 58). Guests are invited to examine private letters, journals, and photographs from the museum's collection to challenge the traditional stories told about Emily Dickenson and women of the period.

Allowing visitors to write their own narratives in museums via re-examined collection items has potential to expand the stories that house museums tell. A common trait of the Millennial generation is the need to contribute and create content, rather than acting as a passive bystander (Luttrell and McGrath 54). Museums can capitalize on this by putting history and storytelling into the hands of visitors and encouraging active participation in the storytelling process. On site, this can be facilitated through the use of found objects and collective memory storytelling. In 2015, The Bishop's House Museum in the UK offered visitors opportunities to connect to local history by selecting a panel of individuals to create "containers of stories" (Claisse et al. 2). These individuals were guided by staff to examine the museum's collection and find objects that spoke to them. They used their individual containers to organize and display these objects and share written and visual stories of their personal connections. The containers were then put on display throughout the museum for visitors to interact with public interpretations of the past within the museum. By allowing Millennials the opportunity to participate in the "act of communicating, remembering, and

meaning making” (Claisse et al. 3), Millennials would have the opportunity to fulfil their desire to create content and document their lives. The act of creating is a personal one—one that involves investment and care, and that investment and care has the potential to translate into a vested interest in the museum itself.

House museums that operate on a system of period rooms with little space for temporary or rotating displays still have a chance to place storytelling and re-contextualization into the hands of Millennials by utilizing online tools. “Crowd sourcing” involves the act of a group collectively working towards a common goal, usually by putting the power of execution or design into the hands of the community. The collective decision-making process is often facilitated through online tools such as social media, blogs, and online campaigns. By utilizing tools such as social media or museum websites, participants can submit stories, videos, and photographs that relate to objects being shown online. This material can then be used to create a crowd sourced online exhibit, and this type of interaction may very well present an opportunity to reframe objects in the house, without the need for additional space resources at the museum itself.

Crowd sourcing does present its own set of challenges. In order for crowd sourcing to be successful, parameters must be set that provide a clear framework and guidelines for participants. In 2016, Britain’s National Environmental Research Council learned first hand the value of placing parameters on their crowd sourcing activities when their “Name Our Ship” campaign resulted in a vessel winning the name of Boaty McBoat Face. This example, while a humorous antidote, serves to illustrate the need to maintain effective guidelines and oversight on crowd-sourcing activities. However, when planned with care, crowd sourced exhibits offer unprecedented potential for active involvement from the larger community.

Here We Are Now, Entertain Us: Connecting Through Programming

While much focus has been spent on the digital lives of Millennials both here and in other literature relating to this generation, it is important to note that this age group does crave in-person communication and values face-to-face experiences (Lutrell and McGrath 45). House museums can take advantage of their locations to provide a space to facilitate

those peer-to-peer and community connections through carefully planned programming initiatives.

In the 2018 survey of house museums, one participant noted that at their museum they have, “expended our ‘social’ events this year and have had an increase in this demographic. This appears to be key to their attendance. They seldom come for an exhibit alone.” (*“Millennials and the Historic House Museum”*). Several museums shared the sentiment about the popularity of certain programming efforts. On the Millennial side of the survey, of the twenty-six who left comments about what they felt would encourage their own age group to visit house museums, ten wrote in ideas about parties, lectures, and other social gatherings, largely unrelated to the museum exhibit itself.

House museums have at their disposal unique settings and architecture that may prove to be a valuable asset for organizing events and programs to support the mission of the museum. Arts and crafts, for example, are popular amongst the Millennial age group. The National Trust for Historic Preservation notes that in their own Millennial research, seventy-one percent reported that they value handcrafted items and forty percent indicate arts and crafts as a personal interest (*“Millennial Research Report”*). House museums might consider hosting a craft activity that was popular during the era of the home’s reign, or one that mimics the style of an object in the collection. In the same vein, genealogical research with local librarians and historians, home and furniture preservation and restoration talks geared towards new homeowners, and lectures from local university professors and local business people all present opportunities for enriching programs that may pique Millennial interest while also linking to the history and mission of the historical home.

As mentioned, many Millennials indicated support of social events that do not necessarily directly relate to the museum itself, with cocktail parties and food and drink events mentioned in numerous comments. House museums in general are architecturally significant spaces. Each house museum, then, may be a space which might lend itself to events beyond the historical narrative of the museum. While consideration must be taken for the safety of the home and its contents, and understandably, food and drinks may not be appropriate in many of the period rooms, it’s important to consider outdoor spaces, dining rooms, and other areas of the house where such gatherings might occur. House museums

with Victorian gardens, for example, might utilize the space for garden tea parties or a *Midsummer Night's Dream* themed evening cocktail event. The house may be an acceptable venue for hosting professional networking events, candid dinner parties, and intimate musical performances. These events, while they may not relate directly to the museum's narrative, do take advantage on the house as a community institution to connect to the Millennial generation.

Seventy percent of Millennials said that past visits influence their decision to return to a museum. If, as the afore mentioned director noted, Millennials are likely to visit a house museum because of an event, there exists the possibility that those who come for the event may return, whether simply because another programming opportunity fits their interests, or because they develop an interest in learning more about the museum itself. In either scenario, a foundation of rich community spirit is developed through programming initiatives.

Investing in Community and Building “Social Capital”

Robert R. Janes proposes an argument that “social capital” is as important to a museum's prosperity and survival as financial capital. Social capital, he explains, is built when a museum confirms its “relevance, accessibility, and value to its community” (Janes 549). As explored in this paper, social capital can be secured through building strong, trusting communities on social networking sites, through involving Millennials in the narratives told in the museum, and through developing programming initiatives that reflect shared community values and interests.

A common attribute many Millennials share is a history of service. A larger portion of Millennials grew up with schools expecting completion of community service hours as a requirement for graduation or admission into certain college programs, rooting the value of community from a young age. The interest in participating in community service activities is relevant to so many Millennials, that many consider community engagement opportunities when evaluating job prospects (Dixon 20). By establishing themselves as a community resource and an important hub of community connection, house museums have the potential to appeal to Millennials' predisposition for service and involvement.

Focused programming is just one method to build a foundation of community. While many museum boards may choose to remain a-political, there still exists the opportunity for house museums to form valuable relationships with other groups to support a foundation of caring spaces and community. Examples might come in the form of special programming geared towards women's education and gender-neutral rights advocacy. Lectures and open dialogues can be facilitated by partnering with other groups in the community and can be hosted at the house museum, resulting in museums becoming places of care (Munro 54). If a house museum can implant itself in its local community of a site of discourse and care, the Millennial generation is likely to respond favorably, as most Millennials perceive organizations as pathways for accomplishing social change in their communities (Williams et al. 10).

The boards that serve to ensure the legacy of house museums warrant a closer examination. In general, these boards do not present themselves as embracing to Millennials. The average board member is considerably older than Millennials (typically in their 70s or 80s) and most boards are self-perpetuating in nature, in that board positions typically do not expire, and regular elections are not held (Harris 13). This potentially closes off board membership and leadership roles to a lucrative sources of volunteers, new ideas, and philanthropic donations. As the Millennial generation enters their prime earning years, organizations who embrace this age group as valued members of the museum community stand to reap great benefits from this group who values social causes and places a high value on donating to non-profits where they've felt a connection (Trovato).

As a generation who values social change, volunteerism, and community engagement, Millennials are a prime resource for house museums. This largely untapped source of volunteers and philanthropists may be crucial for ensuring the legacies of house museums as the responsibilities of preserving community history pass to this younger group. Positioning house museums as a site for Millennials to have active voices, and sites where they can both participate in act of care and feeling cared for will perhaps generate the social capital necessary for protection of these sites for future generations.

Conclusion

It is important to note at this juncture that house museums often face challenges that may make implanting the ideas proposed here difficult. House museums are often plagued by minimal budgets, small, or volunteer-based staffs, and operating hours that are often dependent on volunteer availability. The proposal is not to reinvent the house-museum, but rather to take advantage of the unique assets that house museums already possess. Each of the proposals outlined here require a certain amount of investment of time and resources, however, the investment is relatively minimal when considering the potential benefits. If house museums engage Millennials and continue to prove their relevancy, house museums may find a new source of volunteers, revenue, and ideas that will carry them into the future.

Additionally, the ideas proposed here are not meant to isolate current house museum visitors and volunteers. While these proposals were conceived based on the interests and character traits of the Millennial generation, all museum visitors stand to benefit from when these ideas are implemented. Other generations enjoy using Facebook to connect to their communities and appreciate their voices being heard on a variety of platforms. Retired baby boomers may find joy in attending workshops and other programming initiatives that reflect the hobbies they now have time to pursue. This framework was developed to speak to Millennials' interests and needs to promote their engagement, but the benefits are by no means limited to this age group alone.

When the National Trust for Historic Preservation was founded in the late 1960s, it was a group of young to middle aged adults who spearheaded campaigns to ensure the protection of local landmarks across the country as a response to “urban renewal” (*Preservation for the People* 1). Those radical young preservationists are, at present time, the same aging board members in their 70s and 80s. It is the responsibility of the house museum to ensure that the protection of sites of local heritage is a cause of importance to each generation that follows. This can only be achieved when museums are successful in actively engaging the generation coming into the position of decision-making and influence. As we approach the time when Millennials will be charged with the legacies of historic homes, the best way to safeguard the future of historic house museums across the country is to ensure Millennials remain engaged and invested in the protection of these treasured pieces of local heritage.

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Appendix

Summary of Survey Results I

Survey Title: Museum Visiting Habits and Interests

Brief Description: This survey was conducted over a two week period in February 2018 in order to gather information about museum visiting habits of people in the millennial age group. Specifically, this survey was designed to develop an understanding on millennials' opinions about historic house museums. All 117 survey participants were between the ages of 13 and 36, which adheres to the definition of "millennials" set by Luttrell and McGrath, authors of *Millennial Mindset*.

Results:

How many times did you visit museums or cultural heritage sites in 2017?

A majority of respondents visited museums in 2017. 53.5% visited 1-4 times, 26.3% had 5-10 museum visits, and 16.7% visited over 10 museums last year. Only 3.5% reported not visiting any museums in 2017.

How Important are the following factors when you decide to visit museums?

111 out of 117 agreed that visiting or touring exhibits were either very or somewhat important in making decisions about visiting museums. 73 out of 117 agreed that new or rotating exhibits was very or somewhat important in making museum decisions. 85 noted that interesting programs for their age group was very or somewhat important to them. Other factors, like cost and preference for lectures were evenly distributed.

How do you feel about the following at museums?

There were several categories for which the participants had a strong preference, including interactive activities (91/117), use of video, audio, or other technology (80/117) and freedom to explore on their own (113/117). Virtual exhibits were interestingly rated at 22 strongly preferring and 75 having no preference.

What influences you to visit a museum?

Results showed 44.7% were influenced by what museums were posting on social media, and 75.4% influenced by what their friends have told them about the museum. 29.8% rely on social media personalities and bloggers for museum advice. This indicates that millennials rely heavily on their personal networks, digital or otherwise, when making decisions. 61.4% said past experiences at the museum influenced their decision to visit again. The responses here also show that older forms of advertising are not as effective with this age group. 11.4% said advertisements in newspapers and magazines influence their decisions, and 21.9% said outdoor advertisements such as buses, billboards influence their decision. While this group placed a strong emphasis on the opinions of their friends, only 22.8% said their museum choices were influenced by what their family said about the museum.

Of the museums you visited last year, how many were historical house museums?

43% said they did not visit any historical house museums and 46.5% said they visited 1 or 2 house museums. Encouragingly, there were two people who visited 5 or more house museums in 2017.

Where did you visit historical house museums in 2017?

Only 26.3% said they visited house museums in their own cities or towns, while 43% noted they visited house museums while on vacation. This indicates that participants have either little interest or knowledge about historical house museums in their own areas

Which elements of historical homes interest you?

73.8% said they enjoy learning about local history and 40.5% noted that they were interested in architecture and furniture design. 64.3% agreed that historical house museums are a fun way to experience life from another era and 56% agreed that preserving significant sites is important to cultural heritage. Only 10.7% said they find the programming at historical house museums of interest to them,

What reasons steer you away from house museums?

31.4% said they didn't visit house museums because they weren't aware of any in their local area. 37.3% said they didn't travel anywhere where they could visit house museums. Only 4 of 117 noted that they were not interested in the time periods typically associated with historical house museums, and only 9 said they had little or no interest in historical architecture or furniture design.

Can you share any remarks about what you feel historic house museums can do to increase attendance of visitors in your age group?

This freestyle text box was an optional field, and 24 opted to leave feedback. The majority of feedback centered around inclusion of social events.

- *Better social media outreach and marketing. This would keep people in touch with upcoming events and happenings.*
- *The Belle Meade Plantation offers a wine tour in combination with their ticket which was a deciding factor for this event. Truthfully though, I loved the guides. They made the experience fun and enjoyable because they had personality and character.*
- *Another idea would be to increase awareness by using the space for talks/lectures that pertain to something the community cares about (social issues, feminism, etc) and then attendees would be likely to come back to visit and tell others about it.*
- *Night tours. Self guided tours. Family history and fun facts, etc*
- *Better marketing, include some kind of party aspect I.e a tea party in a historic home or an era specific cocktail party*
- *Social media meet up events.*
- *Make them more interactive.*

Conclusion: The most important take-away from this survey is that millennials do care about history, and they have the predisposition for caring about old places, based on these results. It is important to register

that millennials *are* spending their leisure dollars on museum fees, as well. However, many are unaware of opportunities that exist in their local areas, or feel that house museums aren't the best option for them for a variety of reasons. The open responses indicate that social events would be a likely draw for millennials.

Summary of Survey Results II

Survey Title: Millennials and the Historic House Museum

Brief Description: This survey was created with the intention of having a dialogue with house museums about their experiences with the millennial generation. The survey comprised primarily of open response questions where museum professionals could share their insights, as well as some multiple choice questions. Surveys were sent to 50 museums across the United States, and 23 responded.

Results:

Museum Name:

Providing museum name and location was optional, but most did choose to specify their location.

Responses came from

- Winchester Mystery House (San Jose, CA),
- Hearst Castle (San Simon, CA)
- Betsy Ross House (Philadelphia, PA)
- Adamson House (Los Angeles, CA)
- Hollyhock House (Los Angeles, CA)
- Rengstroff House (Mountain View, CA)
- Bloss Home Museum (Atwater, CA)
- Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home (Savannah, GA)
- Camron Stanford House (Oakland, CA)
- Alden Dow House (Midland, MI)
- Elsie K. Powell House (New York, NY)
- Belle Grove Plantation (Middletown, VA)
- Elfreth's Alley Museum (Philadelphia, PA)
- Belle Meade Plantation (Nashville, TN)
- Dunsmuir Hellman Estate (Oakland, CA)
- Craigdarroch Castle (Victoria B.C)
- John J. Glessner House (Chicago, IL)
- Grumblethorpe (Philadelphia, PA)
- The Hermitage (Nashville, TN)
- Cohen Bray House (Oakland, CA)
- Fioli Estate (San Mateo, CA)

Position/Role

Many did choose to specify their roles at the museum. Responses came from Executive Directors, Visitor Services Managers, Marketing Coordinators, Education Directors, Exhibition Managers, Board Presidents, and others.

What would you say is the age group that visits your museum most frequently? Least Frequently?

All participants indicated that their most frequent visitors were *not* in the millennial age group. While descriptions varied, a common description was "seniors," "50+," "older adults" and other signifiers.

While many did not indicate who visited least often, those who did used terms such as “teenagers,” “young people,” “20s and 30s” to indicate their view of age perception. What these answers provide is that most museums feel that their visitor base is rooted in mid-older adults, while young adults are not frequently visiting in ways that are meaningful enough to stand against the older generations.

Can you recall any exhibits or events that seemed particularly interesting for the millennial age group?

This open response field indicated that when museums put in effort to alter exhibits or provide out-of-the-box opportunities, millennials responded favorably. An example of responses:

- *Special holiday tours*
- *Learning about films made on site*
- *Our annual art exhibit where we collaborate with the local art school*
- *The Explore More Tour that offers insight into the paranormal mysteries of the house*
- *Morbid Desire: The Victorian Obsession with Death*
- *History of Beer exhibit*
- *3-d civil war photography exhibit*
- *The Duel: an interactive exhibit that explains how and why duels were fought*
- *Food and wine pairings*
- *“Step Back in Time” a 1920s style event because they get to take pictures with their friends in costume*

In what ways are millennials involved in the operations at your museum?

Only 5 museums indicated that people in this age group serve on the board in some capacity. Other small numbers of museums (i.e 1 or 2) indicated that they have interns on site in this age group, or that they have regular volunteers on site in this age group.

Is exhibit planning or programming geared towards young adults a priority at your museum?

9/14 participants indicated that they are not actively planning exhibits or events that target millennials specifically, the remaining 6 responses indicated that it either was a priority, or at least a consideration.

If you feel your visitor stats for the millennial age group are low, why do you think this is the case?

In general, most of the comments indicated that museums associate a lack of millennial visitors with a lack of subject matter interest, or a preference for other types of amusements. A selection of responses that highlight the overall themes are below:

- *Most ages 20-30 care about dances or concerts not the museum part.*
- *Younger generation folks are not as interested in period architecture as are older folks*
- *Lack of Historical interest from that age group*
- *We have expanded our "social" events this year and have had an increase in this demographic. This appears to be key to their attendance. They seldom come for an exhibit alone.*
- *Generally as a group there is a lower interest in history; have to hook them with another interest such as beer or wine festival, art show, family activities*

- *Most people visit as kids, then return with their children. Need more that pertains to childless adults*
- *Many younger visitors (and some older ones!) have the perception that the Civil War is an old subject, boring, or very conservative. We need to do a better job of dispelling that impression.*
- *Millennials just do not have as much free time as retirees*
- *We have not communicated well with them*

Please share any additional observations or thoughts regarding visitors of this age group at your museum

Themes of perceived lack of interest in history were present, as were considerations that programming beyond the house museum's focus has been critical in reaching this audience. Some responses are included below.

- *This demographic was 'totally' engaged for the opening due completely to the social media hype generated by our PR firm.*
- *The few millennials we do see are parents of young children.*
- *We've had good success with this age group with evening programs not necessarily tied to history*
- *They are more inclined to participate in our audio or augmented reality tour content and attend non museum events such as our theatre program.*
- *We believe they are looking more for experiences rather than traditional tours and lectures; our current strategic plan addresses this issue and need to grow in this area.*
- *Most visitor's in this age range are unaware of Andrew Jackson's role in history.*
- *Many have stated that they live nearby their whole lives and have never heard of it. Those who have, haven't visited since they were children.*

Conclusion:

The focus of this survey was to gauge house museums' existing perceptions of millennials and millennial visitors, and to evaluate what programs they have felt to be successful at their own museums. By allowing participants to answer questions freely, participants were able to explore the theme and provide answers that reflected their personal experiences. While it is difficult to provide a statistical analysis using this method, analyzing free responses does provide clarity on the topic at hand. In general, house museums are in agreement that millennials do not visit their museums frequently, and most are under the perception that there is a lack in subject-matter interest, but other activities are of interest.