

**Museumwise - MANY Member Survey Summary  
November 2011**

The Museumwise - MANY member survey about consolidation of the two organizations was launched in early September and ran for 21 days. One hundred institutions, individuals and vendors participated, representing more than a 16% response rate.

Pages 1-7 offer a summary of the responses. Complete comment detail begins on page 8.

**Background Information on the Respondents**

On a scale of 1-5, please rank your familiarity with the Museum Association of New York and Museumwise (1=not at all familiar; 5=very familiar)

<b>MANY</b>		<b>Museumwise</b>	
1	9.3%	1	4.1%
2	11.3%	2	10.3%
3	14.4%	3	13.4%
4	28.9%	4	45.4%
5	36.1%	5	26.8%

**Institutional Members: Are you a member of (check all that apply)**

MANY	76.8%
Museumwise	67.9%

**Institution Discipline**

Art	10.5%
Children's	3.5%
Culturally/Ethnically Specific	5.3%
History	68.4%
Science	8.8%
Library	0.0%
Archive	1.8%
Local Government	1.8%

**Institution Location**

Long Island	6.9%
NYC	8.6%
Hudson River Valley	8.6%
Capital District	24.1%
North Country	5.2%
Central NY	13.8%
Southern Tier	8.6%
Western NY	24.1%

**Institution Operating Budget**

Under \$100K	16.1%
\$101K - \$500K	44.6%
501K - \$1M	8.9%
\$1M - \$3M	14.3%
\$3M - \$7M	5.4%
\$7M-\$12M	1.8%
Over \$12M	3.6%

**Individual Members: Are you a member of (check all that apply)**

MANY	47.2%
Museumwise	75.0%

**What primary relationship to museums/heritage organizations best describes you (check all that apply):**

employed professional staff member	73.8%
board member	19.7%
volunteer	19.7%
retired professional staff member	6.6%
unemployed professional	1.6%
consultant	18.0%
colleague in a sister professional association	0.0%
Other (please specify)	

**Where do you reside:**

Long Island	6.1%	North Country	6.1%
NYC	6.1%	Central NY	13.6%
Hudson River Valley	9.1%	Southern Tier	12.1%
Capital District	22.7%	Western NY	24.2%

**Vendors: Are you a member of (check all that apply)**

MANY	100.0%
Museumwise	33.3%

**What relationships have you most recently had with MANY or Museumwise (check all that apply)**

underwrote or sponsored a program	15.4%
exhibited at the annual conference	23.1%
presented a program	61.5%
purchased advertising	15.4%
responded to a member/listserv query	84.6%
posted a member/listserv query	38.5%
provided a service or discount to the membership	0.0%
Other (please specify)	

**Your location**

Long Island	12.0%	North Country	0.0%
NYC	0.0%	Central NY	20.0%
Hudson River Valley	4.0%	Southern Tier	16.0%
Capital District	28.0%	Western NY	20.0%

**Thinking about each organization independently as they now are, what do you see as the Museum Association of New York's three greatest strengths?**

Advocacy	76%
Information: data and issues research	65%
Communications/networking/outreach	44%

Others mentioned: board and staff leadership (24%) and MANY's statewide focus (15%)

**MANY's three greatest challenges?**

Funding/Sustainability	44
Capacity to cover a large state with many diverse institutions; many issues	42
Being visible and relevant with a clear identity and value proposition	22

**Thinking about each organization independently as they now are, what do you see as the Museumwise's three greatest strengths?**

Programs/Sagamore/conference	86%
Grants/funding	54%
Focus on small organizations	22%
Catherine/staff	22%

Others mentioned: connection/network (16%), information resource (16%), and accessible/approachable (15%)

**Museumwise's three greatest challenges?**

Funding/Sustainability/Ability to make grants to the field	43
Capacity to reach statewide audience	33
Identity, visibility and relevancy	29

**In your opinion would consolidation improve the strengths you have identified?**

Yes	47.6%
No	8.5%
Don't Know	43.9%

Nearly half of the respondents think that consolidation would allow the strengths of both organizations to expand and/or become stronger, stating "combining resources may help eliminate some overlapping areas and make more efficient use of available funding." Respondents anticipate that consolidation could result in greater focus on execution of the mission. The combination of complimentary services is also seen as a benefit to the field. Noted one, "Consolidation would give NY museum professionals one organization to turn to for lobbying, professional development, resource sharing, and more. In terms of advocacy, that organization would unequivocally represent museums

from across the state, hopefully strengthening its pull.”

There were words of caution, also. One respondent wondered if consolidation would, in fact, dilute the strengths of each organization “by over diversifying and not balancing the offerings in the best proportion of focus.” Concern about bringing two organizational cultures together was noted and several respondents felt that smaller organizations could be eclipsed by consolidation (this is a concern that runs throughout the survey comments and, thus, needs to take a priority in future planning).

**In your opinion would consolidation address the challenges you have identified?**

Yes	47.6%
No	4.9%
Don't Know	47.6%

The majority of respondents cited long-term funding and sustainability as the top challenge for both organizations. In their comments about how consolidation would address this issue, respondents often cited the need to eliminate confusion about which organization does what and duplication of effort. As one respondent wrote, “I see the challenges both organizations face as similar, particularly in the areas of staffing, funding, and reaching their intended audience, so I would hope that consolidation would better enable them to meet these challenges.”

**What positive developments for your organization or the field in general, if any, do you anticipate coming from a future consolidation of MANY and Museumwise?**

Respondents see many positive developments for their organizations with a consolidated organization, most notably in the range and depth of services and resources that could be offered. In addition to the expectation that operating efficiencies would be achieved, respondents cited a clearer identity and increased focus would result in better coordination of programming and communications. Said one, “A very strong advocacy, educational, communications organization. We'd rather support and get information from one NYS organization.”

Many respondents expect that the strength in numbers resulting from consolidation will lead to greater visibility and a “bigger voice”, and broader conversations and connections. “Potential for a far stronger and consistent statewide voice and services for the field. Having the two organizations brought together would strengthen the entire field.”

**What are some of the drawbacks you anticipate for your organization or the field if MANY & Museumwise were to consolidate?**

While a sizeable number of respondents indicated that there appear to be few or no drawbacks in consolidating the programmatic strengths and expertise of the two organizations, the following remarks sum up a number of comments:

“That a statewide organization may seem more distant or focused on concerns of larger museums and lose support from the smallest, often more local, organizations; that these smaller organizations may feel abandoned or that the consolidated organization is no longer relevant to their needs & concerns.”

“Every organization has a different culture; and I don't see so much a drawback as a period of adjustment. I also think it's critical that the staff and board leadership be focused on those big picture ideas, in addition to the details and that staff leadership can really represent the museum field effectively on many different levels--in New York State and elsewhere.”

**Thinking about each organization independently as they are now, what strengths or**

**attributes from each organization do you consider “must have” strengths or attributes for a consolidated organization?**

Topping the list of must have’s are: advocacy, a range of educational and professional development opportunities, including an annual conference; robust networking and communications programs; the NYSOA regrant program; a diverse and active board; and a highly professional and accessible staff.

As one respondent summarized, “Broad constituency and energetic stakeholders. Inclusive service mission. Broad and frequent communications. Large menu of programs and services for all levels of museums and historical agencies.”

**What programs and services must a consolidated statewide association be able to offer your organization in order for you to continue your support of it?**

The responses to this question were lengthy, but almost universally reiterated current activities and programs. The annual conference, advocacy, Sagamore Institute, surveys and publications, workshops, regional meetings, regular communications, being an information resource, and the regrant program were cited repeatedly.

Access to legal advice and devising a sustained regional presence seemed new to the mix.

One respondent summed it by writing, “Ability to deliver a variety of programs to a variety of organizations and individuals--a need to really think about what's needed rather than doing the same over and over.”

**What key issues and trends do you want to see a consolidated organization focus on going forward?**

The comments in this section clustered around the issues of relevancy, community involvement and value, audience development, sustainability and funding. Advocacy, education, training and technical assistance were mentioned repeatedly as the means by which a consolidated organization could inform and provide leadership to the field.

“I think we all need to focus on where the field can go, what it can do (especially small and local organizations) in a future economy that is continuing to suffer and with all of the demographic and cultural changes that are happening across the state,” wrote one respondent.

Another concurred, “Giving the museum community a wider voice and influence so that its value is readily identifiable plus the direct services that increase professional proficiency and widened knowledge and use of best practices.”

**Given the current and foreseeable funding climate, what are your suggestions for how a consolidated statewide association should focus its development and fundraising efforts to be as effective and efficient as possible?**

Many noted that the case for support of a consolidated organization must be strong, focused and absolutely clear. “It must first develop its argument about its value in order to preserve its present funding streams. It must then develop relationships with local community foundations and statewide funders who will see the consolidated organization as the best way to provide services to the field.”

It may sound obvious, but respondents hammered home the need to diversify funding streams as much as possible with the expectation that a consolidated organization would have the clout to attract foundation funders and perhaps some major individual donors.

“I think that consolidation will make it much easier to cultivate support. The new organization should be the GO TO place for museum advocacy and a national role model. It should get several leading

philanthropists on board to lend their voice to fundraising efforts. People like Ruth Abram, Phoebe Bender and others who have supported the arts and humanities across the state may be willing to assist."

There were also several programmatic ideas raised in this section that need to work their way into planning.

**If you were to create a brand new statewide museum service organization, setting aside MANY and Museumwise for the time being, what would you want this new organization to look like and to do?**

There are many nuggets of wisdom and ideas in the comments in this section; interestingly, many of them describe what the two organizations attempt to do already. The following quotes give you some idea of the hopes respondents have for a consolidated or a brand new organization:

"Be inclusive across the state; be cutting edge on promoting best museum practices; represent its member organizations professionally; promote communication among members; support its members in as many ways as possible."

"Be a leader in the museum field, help drive forward museums in NYS."

"A membership organization that also provides services/information in some way to non-members (history/museum organizations that are not members, but also other segments of the general public who may be potential members/advocates/interested parties); a source for professional information/resources/guidance on museum issues; an advocacy organization that promotes museum issues; a source of grant funding, if possible, with a focus on professional development (organizational & for staff/volunteers); a consolidated statewide organization should have regional staff, at least part-time positions, perhaps 4 to 6 of them throughout the state, to maintain closer ties to local member organizations (something like the regional archivists of the DHP program)."

"Be thoughtful, respectful, inclusive, creative, joyful and passionate about museums (of many kinds) and historical agencies. Patiently mentor the "amateurs" and volunteer organizations. Their collections of story and material culture are just as important as those of larger museums and organizations. (And, sometimes, much more important to their audiences and communities.) Do not be just an urban/suburban organization. Remember that most of the state is not. At the same time, challenge the "professionals" and larger organizations to step up to the plate of community engagement and creative programs and services. Encourage us to become more than museums have ever been or could ever dream to be. Keep the core of research and curatorial care - but bust through the walls into the lives of our audiences. And- yes, continue to advocate for museums and historical agencies. If we do what is mentioned above- making the case for these organizations should not be difficult. Their communities will speak for them."

**How would you like it to engage with and communicate to you?**

Not surprising, the overwhelming majority of respondents prefer electronic forms of communication to keep them informed: email, listservs, a robust website, RSS feeds, Facebook and Twitter, webinars, e-newsletters, a blog with multiple voices from the museum community.

But many noted that electronic communication needs to be tempered with face-to-face interactions, including an annual conference, regular regional meetings and training opportunities, and site visits. Conference calls bridge geography while providing a personal exchange.

A few respondents noted that some print communication is still good, citing electronic overload or difficulty accessing the Internet.

**What do you see as your role in or on behalf of a consolidated statewide association, if consolidation were to take place?**

Given the fact that the vast majority of survey respondents cared enough to take the survey and hang in for 20+ questions, it is not surprising that the majority of comments in this category were affirmative in maintaining their support, volunteering when asked (including board, committee or task force service), willing to promote the organization within their institutions and to colleagues outside their institutions. Several pointedly stated that they would like to have the opportunity to comment on the future plans of the consolidated organization.

### **Final Thoughts/Suggestions/Red Flags**

Overall, the comments in this final section were very encouraging. Here are some representative examples:

"Consolidation, I hope, leads to something bigger, even more compelling, not just the mashing together of two organizations. A challenging time for board and staff and hopefully each organization can embrace this process with transparency and forward thinking."

"I wholeheartedly support a consolidated association. There are too many small organizations struggling to survive. As long as a statewide organization doesn't lose the regional aspect I think it is a worthwhile endeavor."

"Balance the need for support from the large institutions with the need to help the small museums in the state that are ignored and need so much help. Keep the plight of the museum in front of the Board of Regents and the Legislature!!"