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Museum Publishing:  
Purpose, Management and Evaluation in Small History Museums  
in the San Francisco/Bay Area

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Colleen Joyce Blackler

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis studies the purpose, management and evaluation of publishing by small historical societies. In considering these issues three key research questions were posed. What are museums publishing? Why are they publishing? How can publishing and publications be assessed? Answers were sought by undertaking a literature review of museum publishing to situate the publishing activity of small historical societies within that of the wider museum community, interviewing the staff of two small historical societies in San Francisco about the realities of publishing, conducting a content analysis of a selection of their resulting publications, and using evaluation techniques to elicit the views of readers.

As a result the prevalence of newsletters and journals or magazines is apparent for small history museums, while books were a more prominent feature for larger history museums. The roles of the publications were also identified. Publications contribute to the museum's mission and goals. They record and announce museum activities and influence the museum's professional and public profile. The thesis also shows how publications reflect the museum's nature and priorities. Publications can therefore be an excellent way of evaluating the history museum and its interpretation of the past.

The thesis argues that successful publications have clear and specific goals and that their form and content match these goals, the museum's mission and the needs of readers. To achieve this it is suggested museums must carefully plan and evaluate their publications at a number of junctures using a range of methodologies that consider the desired image, the values portrayed, and the history to be presented. The methodologies used suggest themselves as pragmatic and useful tools that small museums can now use to evaluate and improve existing publications and ensure new ventures are purposeful, intellectually robust and more likely to meet their goals.

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## INTRODUCTION

When thinking of a museum the art and artefacts displayed, the buildings they inhabit, and the experiences packaged during a museum visit most often come to mind. However, museums are active beyond their physical spaces through travelling programmes, digital access and print publications. Indeed print publications can be seen as more far-reaching and permanent than exhibitions, education programmes or a webpage which may be de-installed or discontinued and the associated records, if they exist, filed with limited accessibility (Tietz, 1980, p227). Printed materials are therefore an important avenue for providing access to the museum, its collections and a wealth of information.

That each publication reveals something about the nature of a museum and the image it has about itself and its subject sparked this thesis. Tietz notes that ‘...every publication is an extension of the museum and makes an impression whereby the institution is judged.’ (Tietz, 1980, p236). It was therefore hoped that museums approached publishing with forethought and an appreciation of the power of printed materials as an interpretation and communication tool.

Also of note is the abundance of publications produced by museums even though publishing is expensive and complex and, it has been suggested, the digital age of electronic communications will make print publishing obsolete (Rossen, 1993; Weil, 2002). It was therefore additionally hoped that notoriously financially challenged museums that compete for audiences, who have a plethora of leisure and education choices, approach print publishing with purpose and professionalism.

In conducting background research for this thesis it became apparent that much of the discussion on museum publishing involved large museums<sup>1</sup> and particularly art museums. Thus the history, changing focus, and production of art catalogues and books have received considerable attention (Cannon-Brookes, 1982; Quigley 1993).

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<sup>1</sup> Budgets over \$500,000, large collections inventories, more than twenty staff, and personnel dedicated solely to publications.

Despite the fact that large history museums are prolific publishers (see figure 1.2) and small museums also engage in publishing at various levels, the publications of history museums have not received as much attention. Additionally, while noting publications are a legitimate museum activity, discussions on best practice in managing museum programmes rarely provide details specifically relating to publications (see Lord & Lord, 2001).

In response this thesis aims to accomplish three things: to establish the purpose and management parameters of publications produced by small historical societies; to show how publication and reader evaluation can be used to assess and align publications with the museum's mission, image, historical viewpoint and goals as well as professional and audience expectations; and to support and acknowledge the efforts of small non-art museums to produce professional, well-respected publications that are purposeful, considered, and intellectually robust.

## **Thesis Structure**

To provide context for examining publishing by small history museums Chapter One reviews the different types of American history institutions, their backgrounds, features, purpose, and direction in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Chapter One also situates publishing by small history museums within the wider museum publishing community by discussing the literature, professional discourse and guidelines about museum publishing in America. These discussions highlight how publishing reflects the changing purpose and focus of museums including educational and interpretation aspirations, and financial and political influences. The discussions also identify the variety of professional and management issues that inform museum publishing including planning, teamwork and evaluation.

In Chapter Two, this material is given specific and local context and flavour by considering publishing by two San Francisco based historical societies. A brief organisational and publishing history introduces each museum. Their prominent publications are then considered along with the perceptions and perspectives on publishing and publications of those involved in the management, direction and



production of the publications. This exploration identifies publishing purposes for, and practices by, small historical societies, and situates this within the wider museum publishing milieu.

That these small historical societies have a clear idea of their target audience, have identifiable reasons for publishing, and seek to present specific images and histories is discovered and explored further in Chapter Three. Both museums seek to appeal to the 'educated lay person' through quality publications that move beyond the parochial and 'cheap backyard' produced newsletter of many small organisations. They want to produce substantial publications that enhance the professional standing of the institution, are attractive to a wide audience while also meeting the needs of key readers, their members. A content analysis of a selection of publications provides insight into each publication's success, issues and challenges. Chapter Three provides a methodology museums can use to carry out their own publication evaluation.

Up to this point the thesis has concentrated on publications from the point of view of the museum and museum professionals. Chapter Four considers the role and view of readers, the intended beneficiaries of publications. Drawing on literature and research on evaluation of museum exhibitions and education programmes, this chapter identifies a number of ways readers influence, contribute to and can be involved in the success of publications. The chapter also presents examples of how reader evaluation provides valuable information that can contribute to the success of a publication and future publishing decisions and successes.

Chapter Five brings the discussions together. It identifies the key purpose, management and evaluation parameters and influences for publishing by small historical societies. The impact of the museum's history, environment and management are reviewed along with some perspectives highlighted by the research on historical interpretation and publishing trends.

Chapter Six concludes the thesis with a summary of the key purpose and effects of museum publishing. It also suggests further research and discussion on reader expectations and outcomes, community collaboration, and interpretation through publications. It promotes careful planning and evaluation of publications at a number of

junctures using a range of methodologies to ensure publications match both the mission of the museum and needs of readers, have clear and specific goals, and aim to, if not enhance, at least maintain the reputation and image of the museum.

A CD Rom is enclosed that contains a copy of the December 2003 issue of *The Pioneer* and selections of cover images of *The Argonaut* and *Panorama*. Readers can view this in conjunction with reading the content analysis commentary thus providing a more immediate context for the items and examples discussed. Readers may also consider undertaking their own interpretation using elements of the content analysis format.

## **Methodology**

### Context and Background

This thesis commenced with a literature review on museum publishing to ascertain historical and current issues, concerns and trends in museum publishing. Attendance at the May 2003 National Museum Publishing Conference in Pasadena, California gave insight into the most pressing issues and newest developments of interest to attendees as well as contact with key commentators on museum publishing. A literature review and consideration of museum websites was undertaken to obtain an overview of the history of history museums, management and interpretation trends, and publishing activity both nationally and locally. This helped situate the case study museums within the wider museum and museum publishing community.

As a result the scope of the thesis became apparent. The day-to-day and technical aspects of publication production, while taking up a large proportion of time for editors, staff and contractors, is well discussed and documented with a number of handbooks and templates to provide guidance. The decisions at this level are specific to the publication under consideration and the contracts and participants involved. It was therefore determined that the thesis would limit itself to the purpose, management and evaluation of publications.



It was also noted that in its basic definition publishing is the production of information for distribution to the public. Publishing ranges from small promotional photocopied leaflets to communication through multi-media devices such as videotape, CD-Roms, DVDs, electronic mail and web pages. While comment on the use of the Internet and digital technology is made, this thesis concentrates on publishing in its traditional guise of printed matter and with a particular focus on catalogues, books, journals, and newsletters.

How these selected publications relate to the wide variety of print publications museums produce is shown in the typological table below. Table 1 draws on the work of Tietz (1980) and Cowan (1993) and the sixteen categories in the American Association of Museums design competition. Publications can cross functional areas depending on the purpose, intention and the views of the recipient. For example, a museum may classify a gift card depicting an image from the collection as a commercial endeavour, or a monograph as a serious contribution to ongoing research. The reader could however view these as entertainment or a memento. The specific content may also mean a publication crosses functional classes. For example a magazine may include elements of an annual report, newsletter or research journal.

Table 1: Typology of Museum Print Publications

Functional Area	Type of Publication	Type of Content
Research	Monograph	Authoritative, comprehensive dissertation on a subject.
	Research Paper	Exploratory, introductory or summary discussions of a subject.
	Professional Journal	Record of scholarly research by, or under the auspices of, or using the collections of a museum.
	Bibliography	History of available material on a collection/subject, or by an author or publisher.
Education	Information Sheet	Concisely interprets an exhibit, exhibition.
	Programme Materials	Quizzes, puzzles, games, instruction sheets, classroom materials.

	Study guide/Handbook	Overview of a subject with exercises or reference materials for further learning.
	Instruction Sheet	Description of an activity or question to consider during an exhibition.
	Exhibit Label	Description of an individual artefact.
	Text/Didactic Panel	Overview or introduction to an exhibition, section, or group of exhibits.
	Exhibition Catalogue	Description of items in an exhibition. May be accompanied by additional essays providing history, context, or exploration of themes.
	Books	Explore a topic and may be based on research, collections and may be designed for a specific audience such as text or tradebooks.
Public & Member Relations	Press Release	Important and topical news about museum events, exhibition or book reviews, projects, acquisitions.
	Newsletter	News of exhibitions, activities, acknowledgements.
	Magazine	Articles and less time sensitive items.
	Annual Report	Administrative and financial activities, can foster knowledge and support for the museum.
Publicity, Advertising, Marketing	Posters	Basic enticement and information about the museum, exhibitions, events.
	Pamphlets/Brochures	More detailed information on programmes.
	Fliers/Postcards	Ephemeral widely distributed notifications of programmes, invitations.
	Gimmicks	Bookmarks, stickers to bring attention to, and awareness of the museum.
	Publication Catalogue	Listing of available publications for sale.



Administration	Funding Solicitation Annual Reports Membership Documents Tickets Manuals	Applications, certificates, cards.  Staff, volunteer, procedures, policies.
Collections Management	Collection Catalogue  Directories/Bibliographies	Systematic list of collection items with descriptions, provenance.
Commercial/ Entertainment	Trade Publications Gift and Postcards Prints Posters	Cookbooks, calendars, diaries, travel guides, general interest topics.
Visitor Services	Orientation Guide       Museum Brochure	Provides information for navigating the layout of the museum, general overview of exhibitions and services available. May provide brief information on the museum, staff, sponsors, or benefactors.       Overview of museum history, scope, collections, programmes, hours, contact information.

### Case Studies

The case study museums were chosen based on their small budget and staffing (less than \$500,000, fewer than five full-time employees), independent status, the stability and depth of their publishing programme, and their willingness to be accessible and available. It is posited that with less funding and fewer staff who may not have specialised publishing skills, the publications programmes for these museums provide different challenges and issues than for those faced by larger museums with a staff member and sometimes whole departments devoted to publications. Independent status was chosen over those history institutions attached to larger organisations such as universities or city and government agencies that may have greater access to resources or specialised skills (printing presses, scholarly research, marketing and advertising outlets) that a small stand alone museum does not.

The publishing history, practices, and issues for the case study museums was established by interviewing key individuals responsible for or involved in the publications programme: presidents, editors-in-chief, and executive directors. A review of organisational documents such as Board minutes, web pages, budgets, annual and other

reports, and policy and procedure statements where publications were mentioned was also undertaken. Visits were made to the museum buildings and exhibition sites. Searches of databases managed by major libraries with important holdings of publications of historical institutions including the Bancroft Library, Alice Phelan Sullivan Library, University of California at Berkeley, and the San Francisco Public Library History Center occurred.

These activities provided the institutional view of publications, background to decisions, and the views of a wide range of stakeholders including Board members, a subset of members-at-large. Information on management structures and issues, and how publications sat in relation to other programmes and activities was obtained. Insight was gained about the image, priorities and interests of the museum.

### Publications

The current key publications for the small historical societies were identified as journals and newsletters. It was also identified that the museums had specific views about and goals for the publications, but that they were not evaluated or reviewed to determine if the publications met these views or goals. A content analysis methodology was therefore developed to determine if the form and content met key intended goals, themes or views. The content analysis was developed following a review of a range of methodologies used in the study of material culture, texts, design and communications. The content analysis format is limited in that it provides only a sampling of the possible themes, formats, elements and factors that form part of any communications interchange. It is noted that museums can choose to adjust the format to suit their particular needs or priorities and that it is intended to be a starting point for those whose resources may not extend to more elaborate or detailed content analysis research.

### Readers

The thesis recognises that readers are an important stakeholder in museum publications. Their perspectives and role in the communication cycle and ultimate determination of the success of a publication is incorporated through a discussion of museum evaluation practices involving the public and identifying the appropriateness of front-end, formative, and summative evaluations for publications. An existing member survey that included questions on publications was thus analysed and a focus group convened to



evaluate one of the case study publications: *The Pioneer*. These methodologies identified reader views, use and perspectives. The case study shows the value of these approaches in evaluating existing publications and providing information useful for future publishing decisions.

The advantages of using an existing survey and its data were that recent data was able to be used from a geographically dispersed and statistically robust sampling of members. The limitations were that some questions of interest to this thesis were not canvassed. This was recompensed by convening a focus group where follow-up questions were able to be asked. However, it should be noted that this group was more geographically limited and of smaller representation.

The more concerning limitation is that the views of potential readers were not canvassed. The survey and focus group involved current members who already have some degree of commitment to and knowledge of the museum, its services and programmes, including publications. It should be noted that this is not unusual in current museum evaluation practices and occasions some discussion and admonishment. There is also currently little discussion of reader evaluation practices. Existing published studies provide scant information on the purchase of museum publications by non-museum visitors, book buyer demographics, or the use made of publications during a museum visit. These may be areas for further research by the wider museum publishing community.

An additional limitation of the research is that the publications and publishing of small historical societies with less well developed publishing programmes has only barely been touched on. However, this thesis will, I believe, have something to offer them in considering, developing or extending a publishing programme.

## **Conclusions**

In the course of the research and as a result of these methodologies I have been able to establish that the role of publications for small historical societies mirrors that of larger museums. They establish the image, value, and nature of the museum with members,

stakeholders, and the museum and wider community. They reflect and support the museum's mission and goals: record and announce museum activities; and present, promote and interpret specific histories and views, values and ideas about history. Small historical societies tend to focus on a very specific audience largely comprising members. In some cases publications are the major activity and offering of a small historical society, particularly where the collection is small or negligible. In other cases publications are part of a larger set of programmes.

The research and methodologies have also helped establish that content analysis and reader evaluation of publications are easily adopted and useful ways of assessing the messages expected and received by readers and the alignment of publications with goals, the museum's mission and professional practices. Additionally the research and methodologies have provided a platform for bringing the publications of small history museums from behind the skirts of the publishing activity of large art museums, and identifying and suggesting areas for further professional investigation and debate by the museum publishing community.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Trends in Museum Publishing**

#### **Introduction**

Small historical societies exist within a wider community of history museums and museum publishing. This chapter describes the characteristics, purposes, and activities of these communities to provide a broader context for considering the publishing activities of small historical societies.

The chapter commences with an overview of the emergence and general characteristics of history museums in the United States of America. It considers changes in focus from preoccupation with internal activities and select audiences towards giving greater effect to the educational purpose of museums, increasing social inclusiveness and responsiveness to communities, and defining and adopting professional practices (Weil, 2002). The notion is introduced that publications are an important window into identifying the nature of a museum and the extent it embraces or stands aside from developments within its professional community.

The chapter then provides an historical narrative of the range of publications produced by American museums and highlights major trends and issues since the 1980s. This review shows that publishing is a regular and, some commentators would have it, necessary activity of museums (Rossen, 1993; Brown, 1993; Weil, 2002). Publications are traced from being haphazardly produced and reflecting internal interests, to being professionally managed with an external focus of facilitating public access, engagement, education and learning.

Publications are identified as having four significant roles: establishing the image, value, and nature of the museum with members, stakeholders, and the museum and wider community; reflecting and supporting the museum's mission and goals; recording and announcing museum activities; presenting, promoting and interpreting specific histories, and views and ideas about history.



## **The American History Museum**

### Typology of History Museums

It has been noted that tracing the origins and developments of history museums is complex and, so far, incomplete. This is attributed to the large variety and diverse nature of history museums, the scarcity of research on the sector and the dearth of individual institutional histories for other than the larger and more prominent museums (Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989; Schlereth, 1990). This overview introduces the range of influences, interests, and forms of history museums and locates small historical societies within this wider community of history museums.

History museums have been established by individuals, through the interests and efforts of community groups and with the support of local, state and federal governments. They emerged in response to patriotism, local pride, archeological or architectural interest and preservation, and a devotion to learning and dissemination of knowledge. This is importantly coupled with a desire to capture and share this with others.

One of the largest, most diverse and well known organisations is the national Smithsonian Institution. It was initiated by the bequest of James Macie Smithson to promote ‘...the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men’ and established by an 1846 Act of Congress. A museum did not exist until the United States National Museum opened to the public in 1881. It contained exhibits on art, history, science and new technologies. Today the Smithsonian is a large and complex conglomeration of museums, libraries and research institutions. It has a Board of Regents, a Secretary and each division has its own Director and staff.

The Smithsonian Institution’s museums dedicated to history, The National Museum of American History and the Anacostia Museum and Center for African American History and Culture appeared in the 1960s. Legislation and a committee are in place to establish the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The National Museum of American History focuses on objects and programmes that reflect the diversity of the American people and their experiences. Its programmes range from demonstrations, lectures, and tours, to storytelling, festivals and music programs. The Anacostia



Museum began as a neighbourhood museum in 1967. It has since expanded to include material from around the country but continues to be located in a residential area of Washington, D.C.

State supported history institutions appeared earlier, in the mid nineteenth century. Although based on the efforts and collections of private individuals, the Historical Society of Wisconsin was established with state support and a public orientation in 1854 (Alexander, 1979, p80). Supporting its public education role the Society established school programmes and identified and marked state historic sites (Lord, 1965, p6). Likewise the Minnesota Historical Society benefited from an 1856 resolution in the state legislature for an annual grant (Whitehall, 1962, p269).

State museums developed a variety of structures and received differing levels of support. California had a single museum. The Ohio Historical Society established thirty-three locations over time including community run sites, historic houses and specialised museums (Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989, p xv). A 1905 survey identified that twenty-nine respondents out of seventy state supported history institutions received state appropriations. The largest were in Wisconsin, Minnesota and Iowa (American Historical Association, 1905). The California Historical Society simply received recognition as the state's official historical society and relied on membership fees for funding.

Many City and County historical societies originated through the efforts or collections of individuals. But as publicly supported institutions they came to be dedicated to public access and involvement. The New-York Historical Society founded in 1804 was initially an independent society established by men of leisure and property. It had a Board of trustees, a director and a number of volunteers. In 1809 it achieved incorporation. It was periodically assisted with grants or free accommodation by supporters such as the Common Council of New York, New York University, and New York State. It made successful appeals to the public for donations of artefacts and documents and came to encompass an extensive collection featuring portraits and sculptures of prominent figures, pioneers, Indians, battle scenes and scenic panoramas. It had a broad membership, was open to the general public two or three days a week and presented public lectures, all of which assisted in its financial standing (Heslen, 1965).

Associations and societies devoted to individual sites, buildings or people rather than the broad history of a locale or region were also established during this colonial period. Indeed historic houses have become perhaps the most common type of history institution (Deetz, 2004, p378). Historic house museums generally feature a carefully preserved or restored structure such as a residence, factory or schoolhouse. They sometimes contain original furnishings but more often feature furnishings from a range of periods associated with the structure. Historic house museums are most often run by non-profit groups with four or fewer staff (Regev, 1993, p36).

Historic sites blended civic pride, preservation of history, and dedication to making the past come alive. Individuals again played an important role in their establishment. The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association was founded by Ann Pamela Cunningham in 1854 to save President George Washington's home. Miss Cunningham's efforts were a patriotic quest to memorialise an historic site, individual and era, and remind Americans of their heritage and dedication to the Union (Hosmer, 1965). The younger Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities spearheaded by William Sumner Appleton focused from 1910 on buildings of architectural or community significance (Alexander, 1979, p89; Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989 pxvi). In the West this was represented by the preservation of Indian pueblos and in California the twenty-one Spanish Missions managed, following a long period of neglect, by a mix of state, federal, religious and community groups.

Living history museums modelled on European open air museums are a newer and special form of historic site. Such sites, like Colonial Williamsburg, attempt to re-enact historical activities in restored or recreated settings. The history portrayed is largely agrarian, middle-class, and Protestant (Leon & Piatt, 1990). Like the majority of history institutions, these mostly emerged since 1960. (Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989, pxv). They interpret the past, sometimes serve as a research tool, and provide an enjoyable experience for those interested in discovering what life was like in the past.

The special collections of corporations provide another variant in history interpretation and presentation. Although it would be easy to be cynical about the public relations nature of these museums, that the American Association for State and Local History introduced a classification for Corporate Museums suggests they are an accepted



member of the wider community of history museums. The displays within their corporate buildings or purpose built sites relate specific aspects of regional or national history to which the corporation is intimately connected and through which they present their own institutional history<sup>2</sup>.

Independent historical societies encompass distinguished, long-established societies with origins in limited membership and serious scholarship as well as small, new and community inspired groups. Of the former the Massachusetts Historical Society founded in 1791 is the earliest American historical society. It focused on serious historical scholarship through its library of manuscripts and a commitment to publishing. Privately funded with a membership restricted to elected 'scholars', members were expected to undertake research and publish their findings with a focus on the 'dissemination of historical information that promoted public virtue and patriotism' (Tucker, 1991, p94).

The Massachusetts Historical Society is representative of many historical societies established through to the mid nineteenth century. These tended to be independent, privately funded and the preserve of prominent or learned (if not academically trained) men. They had an almost exclusively literary focus and rarely had large or well-defined collections beyond the 'cabinet of curiosities'. They were devoted to publishing journals or newsletters with varying degrees of frequency and scholarship and with a definite focus on patriotism and the prowess and achievements of white settlers. In later years many incorporated public access and education into their role. California's oldest historical society, The Society of California Pioneers founded in 1850, and the subject of one of the case studies to follow, can be characterised in this manner.

Local, community, and special interest historical societies largely emerged since the 1950s (Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989, p xv; Regev, 1993, p15). They tend to have small budgets, few professional museum management policies or practices, and rely on, or are wholly run by volunteers and amateurs to the history and museum profession (Tolles, 1991, p44). Only a small number (19%) employ professional staff. (Regev, 1993, p11). Local historical societies featured various combinations of historic displays (sometimes

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<sup>2</sup> The Wells Fargo History Centre for example traces the history of San Francisco, California, and the 1840s gold rush, as well as the establishment of banking and the bank's contribution in these areas.

a museum), publications, lectures or other programmes, and often an historic building or site. The impetus to form and continue was often encouraged by or was in reaction to wider events. Influential federal government initiatives include the 1935 Historic Sites Act, the New Deal project that encouraged the examination of local history, and the possibility of support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Taylor, 1987, p3).

An important influence on the establishment of local historical societies was immigration. New immigrants wanted to preserve their heritage in a new landscape. Existing residents sought to preserve what had already been established from the onslaught of new populations. Other influences include the patriotism fuelled by wars, the 1976 bicentennial of the American Revolution, and a revived interest in social history in the late 1960s and 1970s which was sometimes coupled with a sense of lack of representation in existing museums by specific groups (Lord, 1965, p4; Alexander, 1979, p90; Leon and Rosenzweig 1989, pxvii; Taylor, 1987, p3). The origins of the second case study museum, The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society, can be seen in this community environment although it has since also garnered City and County support.

This survey of history institutions shows great variety in type, origin and orientation. The variety extends to the management and presentation of history. Some museums apply themselves to historical scholarship and professional museum practices, others aspire to this, and many operate outside the professional arena (Leon & Rosenzweig, 1990, pxvii; Dressel, 1987, p39). Most list the promotion of learning and education, often along with a public service role amongst their goals (Williams, 2001, p316). This reflects the democratic ideals and the promotion of universal education prominent in the late nineteenth-century when the first museums appeared and the social environment that existed in the 1960s when the majority of history museums were established.

#### Preserving the past, defining the present, educating for the future

The American Association of Museums (AAM) defines the role of the museum as to “...help preserve the past, define the present, and educate for the future” and that they be “essentially educational in nature” (American Association of Museums, 2004). The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) welcomes members who

seek to "...preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful to all Americans" (American Association for State and Local History, 2005). The definition of museums provided by the International Council of Museums in part reads that a museum "...conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment." (International Council of Museums, 2004).

However, a number of commentators have admonished museums for being too focussed on preserving the past and fulfilling their own interests and the needs of donors. As a result the public, educational initiatives and opportunities for linking the past to the present and future were neglected (Dana in Peniston, 1999; AAM, 1984 and 1992; Taylor, 1987; Leon and Rosenzweig, 1989; Weil, 2002).

At the beginning of the twentieth century John Cotton Dana encouraged American museums to be useful, a joy to the community, and to reflect the community's needs and values (Peniston, 1999). Leading by example Dana, as director of the Newark Museum from 1909 until his death in 1929, instituted public tours, lectures, workshops, and explanatory texts for both adults and children (Alexander, 1979, p13). In the 1980s and 1990s AAM's *Museums for a New Century: A Report of the Commission on Museums for A New Century* (1984), and *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums* (1992) clearly stated the need for an increased education role, greater professionalism, better governance, and communicating the value of museums to the public. The reports additionally expressed a desire for diversity of visitors and staff and reflecting this in museum activities.

AASLH's *Common Agenda for History Museums* recommended improved collections management and documentation, and greater involvement in evaluation and critical review to better fulfil the public service and education role (Taylor, 1987, p5; Leon and Rosenzweig, 1989, pxxi). This report also highlighted that funding agencies such as the National Endowment for the Humanities sought more interpretation and exploration of social history and the roles of minorities in shaping American culture.



To support museums in achieving change AAM and AASLH provide leadership and support through the promulgation of ethical codes, newsletters, magazines, workshops, reports and professional networks. These programmes promote the sharing of resources, knowledge, and skills to achieve high standards and professional practices. Each organisation also has a series of awards and recognitions covering such activities as management, exhibitions and publications design.

### The New Social History

The increased discourse on education, interpretation and the inclusion of the public, along with wider social and economic reforms through the 1960s and 1970s that called for inclusion of 'individuals, topics, themes, and cultural traditions formerly omitted from the dominant canon' (Williams, 2001, p317), led to what became known as the 'new social history'. Proponents called for collaborations with local communities (researchers, educators, visitors, people in the street, children) in museum and collections management and the production of exhibitions. They sought to include a variety of viewpoints that recognised the complexity and multiplicity of human experience. They wanted museums to embrace rather than shy away from sensitive topics such as conflict, tragedy, religious and political divergences. Balance was sought between presenting the illustrious along with the average and ordinary. The result would be more complete historical understanding and recognition that not everyone was successful, virtuous, happy or 'important' (Taylor, 1987, p12; Kyvig and Marty, 2000).

Responses to these calls for change varied. Some museums formed 'friends of the museum' organisations and increased public programmes. In particular the position of curator of education was introduced to teach history to school groups. Some museums began reinterpreting exhibitions and examining exhibiting traditions. Artefacts came to be explored within a range of contexts and viewpoints, for example the everyday lives of women, children, blacks, religious minorities, workers and immigrants and Frisch's common people (Frisch, 1990). Presentations moved beyond educating the public on the museum's collection to making, and sometimes defending, social commentary and incorporating the audience's own experiences. Local communities became the source,

center and participants in new programmes<sup>3</sup>. Another response was to conduct visitor surveys that asked museum goers for feedback on proposed and completed exhibitions.

Some museums remained fixed in traditional interpretation and management of the past as noted by Leon & Rosenzweig (1989) and Giglierano & Overmyer (1994). Tension between scholarly and populist presentations of history existed. The views of museum staff tended to dominate those of audiences, volunteers, 'friends' and other supporters. These museums were more likely to continue to present individuals and events in nostalgic and celebratory fashion (Kulik, 1990; Frisch, 1990). Instead of acknowledging change, differences, contradictions between eras, and that the past is not a simpler version of the present, these history museums tended to focus on continuity, the accepted and the well-known (Deetz 2004). West (1986) believes historic houses in particular have been slow to change their modes of presentation and interpretation through lack of training in, ability for, or recognition of the opportunities to do so. There is a resulting narrow interpretation and use of available space and collections which feature exceptional or quaint objects and interpretations rather than, for example, the utilitarian.

These commentators add their voice to the view expanded on by Schlereth (1980) that history museums tend to interpret the American past based on conventionally held distortions of history. He identifies six areas he names the historical fallacies of progress, patriotism, nostalgia, consensus, a simple life, and money. Progress, patriotism and nostalgia lead to presentations of history that celebrate success, great events and great-men (most often white political figures), and the simple, noble, 'good ole days'. Consensus and a simple life result in the presentation of a generalised and simplified life with forebears having unanimity in background, outlook and goals. Money leads to choosing to present the illustrious, grand, and antiquated as the historical commodities favoured by (and therefore able to be sold to) museum visitors. In their stead Schlereth calls for historical interpretation to be more personal, more connected with the present and future and incorporating a variety of perspectives.

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<sup>3</sup> Some excellent examples are discussed in Karp, Kreamer and Lavine's, *Museums and communities: the politics of public culture*.



Publications are one tool museums can use to give effect to their education, interpretation and public inclusion role. Their form and content offer an avenue for exploring the museum's level of commitment to professional standards, public inclusion and presenting history within the 'new social history' paradigm. Publications can indicate constraints or priorities such as a commitment to specific donors, readers, the wider community or the museum profession. The content also reflects the interpretation focus and values of the museum.

## **Publishing Typologies and Trends**

### Private Record

History museums have a long standing tradition of publishing. Preservation of manuscripts and records through publication attracted considerable attention in the nineteenth century. State and independent historical societies began publishing almost as soon as they were established and indeed this was one of their main purposes. This publishing was however usually highly selective (Lord, 1965, p8).

In its first year the Massachusetts Historical Society contributed a series called *Collections* to the weekly newspaper *The American Apollo*. It consisted of reproductions of seventeenth century documents. After the newspaper collapsed the Society produced its own publication that appeared variously as a monthly, a quarterly or at other intervals. In 1859 it commenced publishing *Proceedings* that featured the papers read at Society meetings. In 1870 it produced biographical sketches of Harvard graduates of the 1600s and 1700s. Between its inception and 1962 the Massachusetts Historical Society had produced 228 publications (Whitehall, 1962, p13).

As early as 1855 the Wisconsin Historical Society published its Annual Report (Wisconsin Historical Society, 2004). In 1856 the South Carolina Historical Society published the first of three volumes of its collections (South Carolina Historical Society, 2004). *Ohio History* began as the *Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly* in June 1887 (Ohio Historical Society, 2004) and the Virginia Historical Society's *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* appeared in 1893 (Virginia Historical Society, 2004).



According to Weil, published material prior to World War Two drew directly from a museum's collection and largely came in the form of catalogues comprising lists of works with few illustrations. Occasional guides and bulletins produced by curators provided scholarly consideration of an individual or handful of artefacts (Weil, 2002, p112). In historical societies the artefacts considered were most often documents and manuscripts, and the authors from amongst their select members (Whitehall, 1962, Regev, 1993). The early volumes noted above could likely be described in a similar manner. They have an interest in creating a record of society activities and collections, as well as documenting ideas and views associated with these primarily for the interest and edification of society members and peers.

The 1905 American Historical Association survey found publications from local historical societies focused on localised subjects with over-emphasis, in its opinion, on the colonial and revolutionary period and genealogy with almost no consideration of economic history. It bemoaned the lack of connection with the curriculum in schools and tertiary institutions (American Historical Association, 1905). Small, local organisations, and particularly those concerned with historic building preservation, tended to publish guides on the site, city or nearby region (Whitehall, 1962, p476).

### Widespread Publishing

Publishing continued to be a prolific activity in the later half of the twentieth century. One estimate is that 40,000 titles a year were published by museums across the United States (Liefers, 1986, p1). Gale Research's *Catalog of Museum Publications and Media* lists 992 museums in the United States and Canada from a survey of 4000 institutions that published anything from a booklet to a detailed monograph (Gale Research, 1980). Similarly R. R. Bowkers' *World Museum Publications*, while focusing on art books and museums whose collections focus on art, lists almost 22,000 publications from 10,000 institutions around the world in its 1982 edition (R. R. Bowker, 1982).

Drawing from Gale Research's publication the following figures detail the types of museums that published in the 1970s. It is followed by a breakdown of the types of publications art and history museums published at this time within categories defined by Gale Research.

Figure 1.1 shows a substantial number of publications available from museums. Of the 976 museums featured, art and history museums were the most prolific publishers. They are also the most common of museums with small history museums making up half of the more than 8,000 museums existing in 1997 (Alexander, 1991, p3; 1997, p95). However only 24% of the museums targeted responded. The types of museums who did not respond and their level of publishing activity are unknown. There is also no information on museum staffing, budget or collections size.

Figure 1.1. Museum Publishing between 1950 and 1979

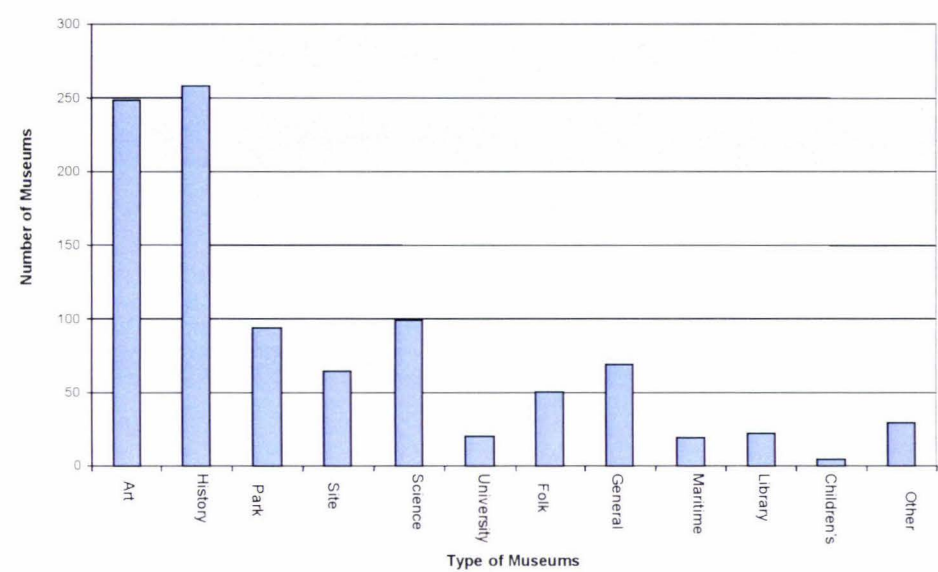


Figure 1.2 Publications Produced by History and Art Museums (1950 – 1979)

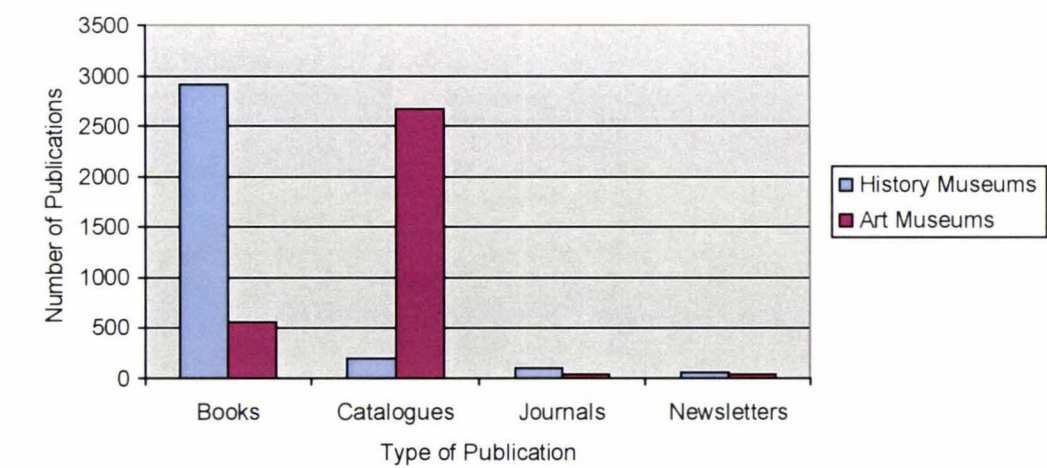




Figure 1.2 shows a preference by history museums to publish books, booklets and monologues. In contrast Art museums have a preference for publishing exhibition and collection catalogues. Both publish a small number of magazines and newsletters. The difference in quantity of magazines and newsletters compared to books and catalogues reflects that a museum may produce only a single magazine or newsletter but many books. We know that over 500 art and history museums published. Of these around fifty published magazines or newsletters, while some, if not all, of the 500 published more than a single book.

### External Influences on Museum Publications

From the 1970s external factors began to exert an influence on museum publications. The 1969 Tax Reform Act officially designated museums as educational institutions. This provided financial incentives for museums to turn their attention to educational pursuits such as publications.

The ability to publish and the tenor of publications were also affected by funding from other agencies. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), both established in 1965, provided grants to museums amongst a range of cultural institutions. Although still favouring academic specialists, these funders now required more interpretation and exploration of collections and ideas and the inclusion of voices from outside the museum (Taylor, 1987, p5).

Recent publishing initiatives supported included in 2003 \$72,715 to the Rhode Island Historical Society under the Scholarly Editions Award to assist in publishing the thirteenth and final volume of the letterpress edition of *The Papers of General Nathanael Greene* (National Endowment for Humanities, 2004a). Support for exhibitions also often included an accompanying catalogue (National Endowment for the Arts, 2004a, 2004b; National Endowment for the Humanities, 2004b).

In the 1980s, large museums attracted corporate sponsors. The sponsors' management philosophies required strict financial controls and returns, and targeted involvement (Williams, 2001, p318). The impression is corporations tended to support blockbuster art exhibitions (presumably because these were seen as prestigious, unique events rather

than everyday and stodgy) in return for prominent visibility at the exhibition and in the accompanying portable, glossy, image heavy exhibition catalogue.<sup>4</sup>

#### New Staff, New Focus, New Audiences

Larger museums began to employ dedicated publications staff in the late 1970s (Brown, 1983, p27; Rossen 1993, p45). The Milwaukee Public Museum hired its first editor in 1979, even though it had been publishing for 75 years (Liefers, 1986, p1). It could be argued that this reflected a desire to ensure well managed publications with a greater measure of consideration in what was being published and how it was being published. However, it should be noted that small museums still often did not have staff with formal publishing skills let alone departments that might consider design, production scheduling, print-runs or reader interest (Rossen, 1993, p44).

In the 1990s these departments felt the effects of financial pressures affecting museums. The range and size of publications offered decreased along with staffing and budgets. The Metropolitan Museum of Art reduced its publications budget for 2004 by one third. As a result its scholarly journal became a bi-ennial rather than an annual publication, the page count of all publications was reduced by 15%, and some on-line elements for managing the editorial process with authors were introduced with stricter adherence to schedules (S. Chun, pers. comm. 30.4.2004). In 2003 Minnesota Historical Society cut the size and frequency of its magazine and used four-colour printing only on the cover (G. Britton, pers. comm. 11.9.2003).

Changes also occurred to the size, breadth and depth of exhibition catalogues. The glossy souvenir booklet of the 1980s turned into 'the' book on explicating not only the exhibition but histories, trends and other topics associated with the subject. The "...traditional line between book and catalogue has now become blurred." (Rossen, 1993, p59). These larger volumes contained long and detailed articles by a variety of contributors providing background to the exhibition as a whole (Vergo, 1989, p46) and with a shelf life well beyond the exhibition. Additionally books about the museum's

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<sup>4</sup> The Museum of Modern Art's 1975 *Modern Masters* catalogue included a statement from representatives of Alcoa, the Australian aluminium manufacturer who helped fund the exhibition. In the preface of *Masterworks from the Museum of the American Indian* the Vice-Chairman of Philip Morris Incorporated, one of the largest tobacco companies in the world, admits to being intrigued by the reverence of the American Indian for tobacco. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973).



collection rather than just the exhibition were produced (Cole, 1993, p49). These changes helped give expression to a range of views, made many aspects of the collection accessible, and focused on education, and reaching wider audiences.

One indicator of seeking to broaden reader appeal was the establishment of trade publications, books for the general public rather than specialised audiences (Rossen, 1993). In 1995 the J. Paul Getty Museum launched a children's book line (See, 1995). Since 1998 it has published around 40 new trade titles per year compared to two or three titles in 1987 (Farmanfarmaian, 1998, p12). It now also publishes tourist guides. Milwaukee Public Museum introduced a trade list as 40% of its publishing operations in 1985. It credits this with the increase in its publications revenue from \$14,000 in 1980 to \$50,000 in 1985. Its most popular title is a cookbook *A Taste of Milwaukee* (Liefers, 1986, p1).

Table 1.1 places publishing trends alongside key museum developments. The table shows a change in the focus of and contributors to museum publications. These changes could be said to parallel the changes promoted by proponents of the new social history, AAM and AASLH. As museums became more accessible to the public and to address topics and issues of wider community interest and concern, publications began to include a greater variety of views and sought to appeal to a broader audience. The changes suggest that the role of publications has moved from scholarly aids and a record of collections and organisational activity with appeal to a narrow audience to a more multi-faceted place of establishing the museum within the community, supporting other goals and programmes, fostering income, and providing education, erudition and entertainment to a range of readers.

The publications of the two case study historical societies are included in the table. This shows some convergence with the trends but also some differences. The Society of California Pioneers appears to respond more slowly to the changes and developments in publications and professional practice. The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society appears to have incorporated from the beginning the philosophies inherent in the 'new social history' but the breadth of activity is somewhat narrower. This suggests that such historical societies are a part of the wider museum publishing community but also influenced by their own goals and influences.

Table 1.1 Key Museum and Publication Developments, 1850 to Present

	1850s-1910	1910-1945	1945-1970	1970s	1980s	1990s-present
Key focus & influences	Museums established	Collect & Preserve	Collect, Preserve & Exhibit	Exhibit & Educate	New Finances & Involvement	Represent, expand appeal, debate
Publication Type	-Exhibit Item List -Collection Catalogue -Journals/Magazines -Annual Report	-Collection Catalogue -Curatorial Bulletin -Journal/Magazines	-Monographs -Exhibition Catalogues	-Booklets -Monographs -Exhibition Catalogues -Information Sheets -Journal/Magazine	-Blockbuster Catalogue - Journal/ Magazine -Education Kits	-Exhibition Book -Trade books -Children's books -Tourist guides -Collection catalogue - Journal/Magazine
Focus/Purpose	-Record of Activity -Scholastic & Collections Care Aid -Scholastic Research Dissemination	-Record of Activity -Scholastic & Collections Care Aid -Scholastic Research Dissemination -Information to Members	-Research Dissemination	-Education -Research Dissemination -Souvenir -Member benefit, education & entertainment	-Education -Prestige -Souvenir -Member benefit, education & entertainment	-Research Dissemination -Income -Education -Member benefit, education & entertainment -Contribution to Community values/issues
Contributors	-Curators/Learned Members	-Curators/Learned Members	-Curators	-Curators	-Curators -Sponsors -Other academics -Other museum professionals & staff	-Curators -Other academics -Community leaders - Volunteer/ member - Researchers
Society of California Pioneers	-Annual reports - Member speeches - Member obituaries	-Quarterly by curator of collection materials -List of library items	-Society histories -Irregular annual of collection transcripts	-Brochure of collection items by curator		-Journal <i>The Pioneer</i> -San Francisco History -Exhibition catalogue -One-off newsletter
San Francisco Museum & Historical Society				Founded 1988	- Newsletter from staff & volunteers -Journal by a variety of contributors	-Newsletter from staff & volunteers -Journal by a variety of contributors



## Key Museum Publishing Developments

Contemporary literature on museum publishing encompasses a handful of small ‘how to’ booklets and leaflets (Kebabian and Padgett, 1990; Laing Research Services, 1991; Calder, 1998; Lankford, 2000), occasional paragraphs, sections or chapters in museum management books (Thompson, 1984; Till, 1994; Shapiro, 1999; Theobald, 2000; Weil, 2002), and articles in professional journals and newspapers. Of these the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*, *Publishers Weekly* and AAM’s *Museum News* provided the best avenues for discovering trends, issues and practices in museum publishing.

Both *Museum News* in 1983 and the *Journal of Scholarly Publishing* in 1995 devoted a substantial part of a single issue to museum publishing and continue to periodically include museum publishing articles. Recently this has been limited to book reviews, recording publishing activity and the state of design standards through comments by AAM’s Publications Design Awards judges panel published annually in *Museum News*.

Through these sources the key purpose of museum publications appear as: supporting the museum’s mission (particularly its education role and desires to be responsive to social issues), increasing community access, fostering the profile of the museum, providing a record of the museums work and its importance and value, and presenting information, insights and views of the museum’s subject matter. Major management issues are also discernable namely the need for clear goals and planning, the integration of publishing with other museum activities, and co-publishing.

### Supporting the Mission: Education and Interpretation

A number of commentators (Rossen, 1993; Quimby, 1983; de Montebello, 1984; Cannon-Brookes, 1982) view publishing as a necessary, basic and central aspect of the mission of museums, whether a single book, catalogue or pamphlet; an annual or more regular journal; or an extensive list of titles. Publishing is ‘...at the heart of what museums can and must do – helping to communicate meanings of history, of science, and of the visual arts to people who are eager to learn and are looking to us for help.’ (Rossen, 1993, p60).

AAM and AASLH mention and encourage publishing as a legitimate programme that sits alongside exhibitions, research and education activities. Since the mid 1980s AAM and AASLH, along with publications practitioners, have commented on museum publishing through conferences, publications, publication design competitions and awards, programme standards and codes of ethics. They recognise that publishing furthers a museum's mission and educational role, enables museums to be responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of society, and advances "...an understanding and appreciation of the natural and cultural common wealth..." (AAM, 2004e).

The focus is on the educational and learning aspects of publications. Being responsive to the community and creating meaning, suggests moving beyond the provision of information towards using publications, like exhibitions, to explore issues of importance to the community. Here publications support the notion expounded by Elaine Gurian-Huemann (1999) that museums are as much about ideas as they are about objects. Publications help extend our understanding beyond a list and description of the objects to an exploration of connections between the past, present and future and an avenue for dialogue that contributes to the wholeness in communities. Indeed it has been argued that publications may be a better medium than exhibitions or objects for providing a broader view or exploring more complex ideas (Alexander, 1979, p94; Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989, pxviii).

#### Supporting the Mission: Access and Professional Practice

One advantage of publications over other museum programmes is that they are more permanent and available than transitory and changeable exhibitions, lectures, tours and web pages. (Quimby, 1983, p34; Rossen, 1993, p59; Alexander, 1979, p203). Publications can extend access to collections and contact with the museum for those that do not visit museums and for those whose visits are short, irregular and mixed with socialising with friends and family<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> The same has been said for technology. CD-ROMs, searchable databases and the Internet web pages are forms of publishing in its broadest definition. CD-ROMs are a category in the AAM publications design awards. Hyperlinks allow readers to make connections to information beyond the museum, and therefore arguably learn about objects in more depth than they could from traditional catalogues. Print publications are advertised, sold, and indexed on the Internet, but rarely is a full issue accessible. As an exception see the Smithsonian magazine on <http://www.smithsonianmag.si.edu/>. Such technology has not however, as suggested by Weil (2002), seen the dematerialisation of print publications.



Publications assist museums in their responsibility to both study collections and ensure collections are managed and cared for responsibly (Cole, 1993; Brown, 1983). They provide intellectual access to collections as well as a forum for recording scholarly findings without subjecting objects to degradation from changes in environment and overuse. Publications can foster research through the need to fill pages. Indeed Cole argues that “in art museums, research is most often related to the development of exhibitions or publications...” (Cole, 1993, p49). Conversely, the development of research programmes should consider publication opportunities whether in a periodical, book or monograph. This will add to the scholarly reputation of the museum as well as make topics more widely available (Alexander, 1979, p164).

Arguably publications could constrain access to collections. A filter may be created between readers and objects or primary resources. Editors and authors choose what is and is not included. As with exhibitions, the fact of inclusion may have the effect of changing the status of an object perhaps suggesting an unintended importance (Ames, 1992, p144; Vergo, 1989). The fact that an artefact or topic is included provides a spotlight for it and the select information presented brings those items into focus. As an abstract medium of descriptions, photographs, diagrams and opinions, publications also do not provide the same sensory engagement that access to the ‘real thing’ engenders thus potentially limiting the meanings and understandings the reader is able to establish.

These issues have been widely discussed in relation to exhibitions but have not been explored in depth for publications. What has been discussed is how publications may create barriers or attraction through design elements such as creativity, visual presentation, format, production quality, tenor, and writing styles (Smyth, 1993). Such design issues are the main focus of AAM’s publications design awards which commenced in 1983. The awards acknowledge excellence in the graphic design of museum publications and encourage a professional approach and the adoption of best practices in publishing. AASLH’s publication awards submission documents seek information on the calibre of authors, budget and funding sources and do not provide information on how publications are judged.

### Museum Profile

Publications, while also expensive to produce, may assist as both a financial and public relations activity. Museums compete with other organisations and causes for attention, attendance, funding and support for their endeavours. Publications can have prestige, commercial and political underpinnings to their creation.

A survey of museum directors by Museums Collaborative Inc. identified potential income as one benefit of publications (AAM, 1984, p114). Publications that herald and celebrate a museum's accomplishments, feature the work of respected scholars and authors, and provide a tangible mark of quality that can be taken home and displayed can encourage funders and interested individuals to be associated with a museum. Publications can distinguish the museum in the eyes of a general audience as well as within the museum professional community. A publication could persuade readers, funders, peers and the public to view the museum as a knowledgeable, worthwhile and even fun place.

### Management

Achieving their educational, social, financial or political role relies on publications not only intellectually reaching readers but also physically reaching readers. Much of the commentary in the literature and in forums such as The National Museum Publishing Seminar that emerged in 1987 (Rossen, 1995, p104) and sessions at AASLH conferences focus on day-to-day practices of editing, ensuring timely submissions from authors, and scheduling, proofing and printing. The reasons for, philosophy behind, and parameters of establishing and developing publications programmes are infrequently canvassed. This is understandable when the majority of attendees already have a commitment to publishing. However, it is possible to discern some trends in planning and staffing publications programmes, and in introducing enhanced skills and experience through co-publishing.

Susan Rossen, Gaye Brown, and Ann Cowan discuss the placement of publications functions and staff in museum structures (Rossen, 1993; Brown 1983; Cowan, 1993). One area of agreement is the need for integration and planning of publications with other programmes and goals of the museum. This will ensure publications meet their



purpose, have consistency in image, message and quality, and make the best use of financial and creative resources (Cowan, 1993, p40; Alexander, 1979, p204).

Less agreed is the need for central coordination by a publications department to ensure this integration. Gaye Brown supports centralisation. Others (Rossen, 1993; Cowan, 1993; and Britton, pers.comm. 11.9.2003) believe this is not necessary or feasible especially when a museum does not have dedicated publications staff or only publishes ephemera. It may also hinder creative and innovative publishing ideas across the museum.

In practice both exist. The Getty Museum once had three publishing divisions, Getty Museum Publications, Getty Research Institute and Getty Conservation Institute. They are now amalgamated into a single entity: Getty Publications (Farmanfarmaian, 2001). At the Field Museum in Chicago each department publishes its own ephemera, one office produces the journal, and another the annual report (Brown, 1983, p27). The Minnesota Historical Society has two press imprints. The Borealis division publishes specialised titles. The Minnesota Historical Society Press promotes a more inclusive and less elitist list and image.

What commentators believe is necessary is to have clear publications policies and standards (style, image, design), a clear understanding of the goals that publishing and publications are to achieve and the audience they are to reach, and clear identification of where responsibility for publishing decisions lies. This is echoed by the professional bodies. AAM's Code of Ethics, accreditation criteria, and descriptions of exemplary interpretation and the Education Committee's *Excellence in Practice: Museum Education Standards and Principles* can be read to include publications. They outline parameters for establishing programmes that uphold professional museological standards. AASLH's *Statement on Professional Standards and Ethics* includes similar guidance.

The parameters stress planning that adheres to the museum's mission statement and public trust requirements, input from all departments, and a clear statement of the purpose and goals of programmes. These parameters apply to publications and, like other programmes, professional publications should be intellectually robust. They will



thus demonstrate subject knowledge, reflect sound educational practice, and provide a point of view and clear ideas.

Publications must show commitment to existing and potential readers. It is advised that this can be achieved by considering and reflecting community concerns and issues, providing multiple points of intellectual and cultural entry through inviting design, appropriate media and formats for the reader and providing a mix of enjoyment and learning. Communities can be asked for contributions and feedback. Importantly publications must be evaluated (AAM, 2004).

### Co-publishing

Although museums are encouraged to work with community groups, schools, libraries and other museums (Taylor, 1987; Weil, 2002), commentary most often discusses partnering with commercial publishing houses. This is viewed as an important relationship that recognises publishing as not only an important act of communication but a skill that does not end at manuscript creation but extends to editing, production, marketing and distribution (Rossen, 1993, p45; Cowan, 1993 p39). Small museums may not have these skills and partnering with others could lead to greater success (Weil, 2002).

Commercial publishers have the expensive and exacting production and distribution skills, networks and resources museums often lack. Co-publishing provides the possibility of reaching wider audiences (Hudson, 1995, p130; Rossen, 1993, p 60). The need for the skills co-publishers offer has seen the emergence of businesses that specialise in distributing museum publications. Leaders in the field include Distributed Art Publishers and Weatherhill Publishers for art books and Heyday Books and AltaMira Press for history publications (Rosen, 2003).

In this relationship publishers and distributors enjoy the prestige associated with museums and their valuable content along with expansion of their market to include museum going readers. However, the partners may not share the same goals, interests or work habits. A commercial publisher will still want a good seller with broad appeal. Sound contractual arrangements for important issues such as format, print-runs, quality, financial arrangements, sharing markets, schedules, and communications are advocated.

Another option used successfully is to work with university presses that have more experience working with specialised, scholarly and short print-run publications (Quimby, 1983).

A production innovation for small print-runs is 'Books on Demand'. It uses digital technology to print small quantities of books on request. This negates the need to pre-print a set number of copies where the demand is not fully known. It is argued that this will save costs in paper, printing, storage and distribution which are all more expensive than the printing equipment, design and software requirements. Chicago Distribution Services, a division of the University of Chicago Press, has provided 'Books on Demand' services since 1991. The service includes digital file storage, searchable metadata files, short-run digital printing for runs of ten to 200 copies, and distribution. Clients include university presses, libraries, non-profit foundations, specialty publishers, and museums such as the Field Museum, Harvard Art Museum and the Minnesota Historical Society (Collins, D. pers.comm. 30.4.2004).

## **Conclusion**

Museums have historically been active in publishing and have produced a wide range of publications. Large or well endowed art museums have tended to focus on collection and exhibition catalogues. Their history counterparts have leaned towards books and monographs. Newsletters and journals are also part of the repertoire. The available information on publishing by smaller, local museums is open to a greater degree of speculation with a suggestion that newsletters and site guides are prevalent.

The nature and content of publications have changed over time. Once limited to a scholarly aid and a record of collections and museum activity with appeal to a narrow audience, publications are now also seen as an important communication and education tool. Trade publications aimed at a general interest readership are now published alongside scholarly volumes. Lists of artefacts and un-narrated reproductions of collection items have given way to discussion of a range of historical and social contexts, issues, and viewpoints. Newsletters, journals and ephemera seek to reach beyond select membership groups to the wider community.

These shifts suggest publications have responded to changes in the socio-economic and professional environment within which museums operate and that calls for greater community involvement and representation, increased attention to how programmes support the museum's mission and goals, and advancing the profile of the museum as a valuable community resource. It is suggested that examining publications is one valuable way of evaluating how a museum interprets the past and how it perceives and whether it achieves its mission, priorities, and goals.

The remainder of this thesis will examine the publications of two small historical societies to identify whether these publishing trends apply to such institutions and to show how publications can be used to evaluate a museum. Using historical narratives, content analysis, and reader evaluation methodologies, key publications are documented and analysed to assess how the publications represent these institutions, how the publications are perceived and received and how they support the mission and goals of the museum.



## CHAPTER TWO

### **Publishing Realities for Small Museums**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter describes the types of publications produced by two small San Francisco based historical societies and how they are managed. These case studies foster understanding of the motivations and issues for publishing by small museums. Also shown is how publications can provide insight into a small museum's values and priorities as well as its approach to history and professional museum practices. The description helps us place small history museums and their publishing practices within the wider activity of historical preservation and presentation, and museum publishing.

The chapter commences with a brief introduction to the museum community of the San Francisco/Bay Area. The two case study institutions are then introduced along with their publications. The Society of California Pioneers (SCP) is the oldest historical society in California with a variety of publications appearing over its 155 year existence. The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society (SFMHS) is one of the youngest and publishes a journal and a newsletter. They were chosen for study based on their independent status, small staffing and budget, the somewhat continuous nature of their publishing, and the personal knowledge and involvement through either membership or employment with the organisations of the researcher to assist access to staff, management and documentary resources.

The narrative identifies the issues that arise and the impact of individuals, funding, and the museum's mission. The chapter highlights the importance of publications as a means to cement relationships with members and to some extent the general public. The chapter also shows that publications clearly reflect the nature and style of the museum.

## Museums of San Francisco

In a magnificent setting on San Francisco Bay and the Pacific Ocean the City and County of San Francisco has over sixty museums in its forty-nine square miles (California Historical Society, 2005). They range from the large and prominent Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, California Academy of Sciences, Exploratorium, and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art with its stunning modernist building by Swiss architect Mario Botta, to small museums focusing on specific populations or themes such as the Museo Italo-Americano, GLBT<sup>6</sup> Historical Society, and Cable Car Museum.

Of these sixty museums more than forty are history alliances, societies, archives, libraries, museums, and houses. The city also has innumerable marked historic sites and landmarks. The Bay Area, the common name for the counties that abut San Francisco Bay, has upwards of one hundred organisations with an interest in sharing with the public local, regional and state history<sup>7</sup>. They make up almost 70% of all listed museums in the region (compiled from Carber, 1996; Danto 1998; California Historical Society, 2005). This historical interest extends across California which has been recorded as having some 700 local historical societies. The 644 member strong Conference of California Historical Societies includes 32 museums, 62 libraries, and 257 local historical societies (Regev, 1993, p9).

A large proportion of history institutions are historical societies. They are financially lean. One local study identifies that the majority have less than ten paid staff. Of these eleven percent have one paid staff member and almost 40% are completely managed by volunteers (Regev, 1993, p10). This appears to be in keeping with general trends for history museums which tend to be smaller than art or science museums and have budgets under \$50,000 (Leon and Rosenzweig, 1989, pxvi; Tolles, 1991, p44). Some have been in existence since California became a state in 1850. Others have had a number of incarnations and chequered histories. Still others are new arrivals.

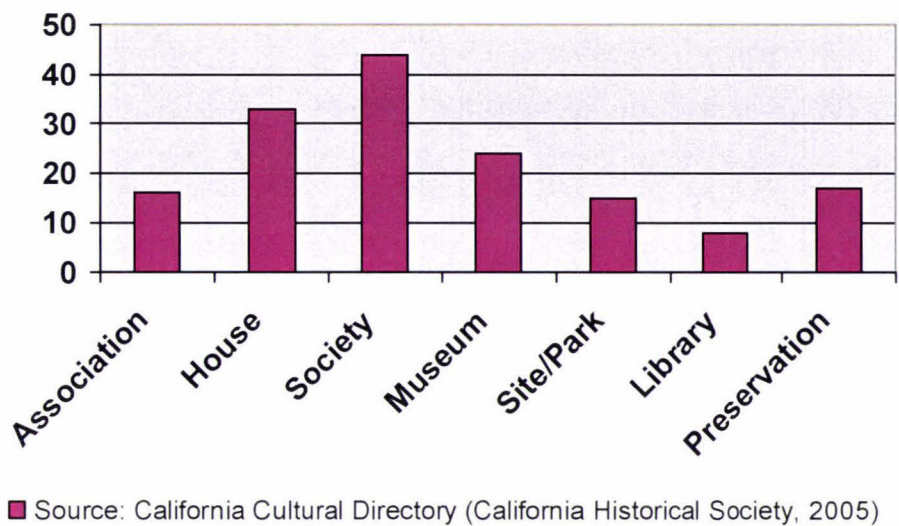
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<sup>6</sup> Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgendered.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that Danto (1998) and Carber (1996) almost entirely omitted local historical societies, although they did include two historic houses and larger museums with a history component.



Figure 2.1 Range of History Institutions in the San Francisco/Bay Area



In common with historical societies established elsewhere in the nineteenth century The Society of California Pioneers (SCP) and the California Historical Society (CHS) began with a small select membership who wanted to preserve materials associated with, and that commemorated the men and exploits viewed as important in the settlement and shaping of the new state<sup>8</sup>. The activities and fortunes of these societies were linked to the level of interest and commitment of the founding individuals and later a small core of members and office holders. Both societies still exist and now employ a handful of professionally trained staff. SCP continues to have an explicit membership criteria and commitment to its original focus but has opened its doors to a broader public through exhibitions and other programmes. CHS now has a broader membership, has extended beyond its original beginnings as a library to include exhibitions and other programmes, and has secured recognition as the official historical society of the state of California.

The younger societies mostly emerged in the later half of the twentieth century. Focused on their immediate neighbourhood and personalities, they are run by a small cadre of people with an interest, although not often formal training, in preserving and presenting local history. These organisations often do not have permanent facilities but rather reach

<sup>8</sup> The California Historical Society founded at Santa Clara College in 1871 stated its purpose as “...collecting and bringing to light and publishing, from time to time, all information on the subject of early colonization and settlement of the west coast of America...” (Regev, 1993, p69)



out to the general public through materials displayed, distributed or presented in libraries or other community and city spaces.

A review of a sample of historical societies in the region shows that many have published and began to do so within the first few years of their establishment<sup>9</sup>. However, with the exception of the California Historical Society<sup>10</sup>, the number of publications is modest at less than ten titles per museum<sup>11</sup>. The range of publications is broad encompassing newsletters, scholarly and general magazines, annual reports, books, booklets, reproductions, and monographs. In line with general publishing trends by history museums there are few catalogues.

## **The Society of California Pioneers**

### Elegant Preserver of History

The Society of California Pioneers sits on the edge of the ‘up-and-coming’ Yerba Buena/South of Market district of San Francisco<sup>12</sup>. The area was once shunned by residents and unknown to visitors but is now home to seven (to be eleven by 2007) museums along with new and heavily promoted residential, entertainment, park, conference and hotel facilities.

SCP is on a busy intersection in an understated, four storey, modern building that draws attention through striking curved floor to ceiling windows with a solid corner column to its second story. These first two floors are juxtaposed with a squared, salmon concrete

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<sup>9</sup> The review involved consulting library databases, museum websites, publicity materials and drawing on personal knowledge and communications. Publications included were limited to those available for purchase by or distribution to the public or members. Volumes published for in-house use only were not included. Also excluded were ephemera such as flyers and postcards, and publicity materials.

<sup>10</sup> CHS has published 93 items. It had ambitious publishing projects in the early 1980s and again in the late 1990s and had a partnership with local specialist commercial publisher Heyday Books. However these projects had negative financial implications and, along with operations and staffing in all areas, were dramatically scaled back in recent times (Becker, S. pers. comm. 14.2.2002; Boyd, A. pers. comm. 13.5.2004).

<sup>11</sup> Compare these offerings to the 24 titles from the Minnesota Historical Society in 2004 alone and the 11 titles per year of the Milwaukee Public Museums (Liefers, 1986, p1).

<sup>12</sup> Yerba Buena is the historic Spanish name for San Francisco meaning ‘good herb’. This seems appropriate for a district that is home to (or will become home to) four history museums and the relocating Mexican Museum.

and glass façade on its two upper levels. Motorists and pedestrians get a glimpse into the museum gallery through a visually interesting internal spiral pathway. Large colourful window and external banners with images of gold miners, grapevines, and historic maps advertise the 'new world' of history, art, lectures, and exhibitions to be found inside.

Visitors are greeted and admitted through a secure entrance by a friendly gallery attendant and shown to the reception area where they are given information and guidance on the exhibition and other amenities such as the museum store with its small collection of postcard reproductions, books on California history and select souvenirs. The professionally trained and almost entirely part-time staff includes an executive director, educator, library director, bookkeeper, registrar, and administrative staff. The staff is motivated to ensure visitors are accommodated and have a sense of a personal and special experience.

The galleries, store, research library and offices are new, carpeted, and decorated in a combination of muted tones, soft sophisticated lighting, cherry wood fixtures and decorative arts from the collection. This creates a warm and elegant environment and combines a sense of the new with the historic. The museum is comfortable, peaceful and conducive to reflection and considered appreciation of the exhibitions and library collections.

Approximately four exhibitions a year are mounted largely using items from the collection. The collection encompasses 10,000 books, manuscripts, maps and journals along with paintings, 50,000 items in a photography archive, silverware, and artefacts dating from the Gold Rush era to 1945. Recent exhibitions include singular mid nineteenth century drawings of California, a prestigious silverware collection and sumptuous and idyllic landscape paintings presented in a simple, uncluttered and traditional manner. The didactic panels accompanying the artefacts present histories that highlight the industrious and adventuresome nature of the subjects, collectors or artists along with the splendour of California. The exhibition style and subject matter cements the traditional, elegant and learned atmosphere.





**Figure 2.2: Joseph & Mildred Rolph Moore Gallery 1**

Reproduced with the permission of The Society of California Pioneers.

### Education and Celebration

On closer interaction, there is also excitement, laughter, active learning and participation in the museum. On average during term time four school groups a week participate in free programmes. The selection includes: “Mission Life: A day at the Mission”, “Mapping America’s West: Maps and Exploration”, “California: This Land of Opportunities (Immigration)”, and “California: Land and Water”. Each programme has a ‘hands-on’ activity. For example, reflecting the life of Native Americans in a Spanish mission, students may grind corn using a mortar and pestle. Or they may make a basic astrolabe to learn about early navigation techniques. These activities make for lively, and sometimes messy, participation and discussion. School groups comprise forty-five percent of museum visitors (SCP, 2004). Other visitors, mostly mature adults, come to the museum to view the changing exhibitions and attend lectures, exhibition openings, musical evenings, Board luncheon meetings and special events and celebrations.



Members of SCP, who almost wholly fund the organisation<sup>13</sup> and provide its governing body, are a particular breed. To join, a prospective member must provide evidence of being a descendant of a pre-1850 California Pioneer.<sup>14</sup> In return members receive the benefit of knowing they are supporting the preservation of an historic collection and legacy from original and past members. In addition, the more than 1400 members ranging in age from newborn to octogenarian, with a preponderance of 'seniors', receive a copy of the annual journal *The Pioneer*, a large certificate on quality card stock illustrated with scenes of early California and stating the member's ancestry in the hand of a professional calligrapher, and invitations to member only events and celebrations, the core of which have an early California theme.

The public, student and member activities continue the tradition of cementing social connections, celebrating California history, and learning and education. They support the Society's mission which is to "preserve, promote and enjoy California heritage through a research library, a museum, a gallery, educational and social activities, and to commemorate those whose sagacity, enterprise, and love of independence induced them to settle in the wilderness and become founders of a new state".

#### Pioneer Sagacity Establishes Itself

The Society of California Pioneers was founded in San Francisco in 1850 by men who saw themselves as the founders of the thirty-first state, and viewed it their duty and honour to collect, preserve and record the pioneer days of California. Incorporation documents of 1863 note the Society as a 'moral, literary and scientific corporation' (The Society of California Pioneers, 1968, p1). It was originally classed by government authorities as a taxable fraternal organisation.

Through to the early twentieth century SCP intermittently operated a men's social club, charitable fund and library as well as receiving income from an hotel. It sponsored balls, concerts, parades, lectures, and celebrations that focused on remembering and celebrating Pioneers. SCP was especially active on Admission Day, 9 September, the

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<sup>13</sup> Other funding sources include interest from a small endowment fund and occasional grants for specific projects such as digitisation and accessibility. Securing such grants attests to SCP's professional management and care of collections.

<sup>14</sup> The Society intends to establish a 'Friends' organisation to encourage participation by, and contributions from, individuals who do not meet the membership criteria in SCP's bylaws.

date in 1850 California was admitted into the Union. Members were men<sup>15</sup> of prominence and prestige and their endeavours and exploits continue to be remembered in history and in the names of towns, buildings and streets of California. Founding members included Sam Brannan, California's first millionaire; General Mariano Vallejo an important figure during Mexican rule and at the capture of California by the Americans; and James Lick, a prominent property owner and donor including the University of California's Lick Observatory.

### Records, Relics and Mineral Curiosities

Beyond social connections and prominence, SCP sought to preserve the artefacts and stories of early California. *This Sudden Empire*, SCP's own publication about its early history, notes that the first library fund was established in 1851 with a library committee elected in 1855. By the end of that year SCP listed forty-nine books and pamphlets. By 1860 there were more than six hundred. An 1853 revision of the constitution included responsibility to collect and care for 'Records, Relics, Mineral Curiosities, &c, connected with the early history of this State...' (The Society of California Pioneers, 1950, p26).

The first recorded item in the collection was a specimen of copper ore from Arizona presented in 1851. By 1855 the few, but important, additions included a painting of the 1853 Admission Day celebrations, The Fremont Flag (used by James Fremont on his topographical expeditions in Mexican territory), and two Bear Flags – one of which was raised after the surrender of Mexico's General Vallejo to the Americans in 1846. The collection began to be more conscientiously, although randomly, amassed and recorded from 1866. One feature was the compilation of obituaries and biographies of deceased members. These were handwritten in substantial, handsome leather bound ledgers and today form an important collection of information on early pioneers.

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<sup>15</sup> Women were, and continue to be, involved in and supportive of SCP. The Daughters of California Pioneers, founded in 1900 but recently disbanded, assisted with, and participated in, many SCP events. A Woman's Auxiliary composed of wives, daughters and widows of pioneers first met in 1901 and remains closely linked to SCP donating artefacts and providing funds for conservation and other projects. The Auxiliary will soon change its name to encompass the husbands of women members. Women have been eligible for membership since 1986.



The collections and fortunes of SCP were closely linked to those of its members and that of the city. Ownership of property, the collections, and financial and social health were built up and depleted by prominent men and events. James Lick donated funds and land to create an imposing home. The deceptions of SCP treasurer, mayoral expectant and, finally admitted, bank defaulter Talbot Green/Paul Geddes bought notoriety and suspicion. The devastations of the 1906 earthquake and fire destroyed the building and bulk of the collection except for a few items (including the obituary volumes) in a safe. The efforts of the first appointed historian and librarian Henry L. Byrne saw considered acquisition and care of a new collection from 1913. And the financial effects of the 1930s depression saw again the demise of home and income.

### New Collections and Programmes

In 1939 SCP revived as a tax-exempt museum and library open and free to the public, and devoted to the ‘...collection and dissemination of the knowledge of the history of California’ (The Society of California Pioneers, 1968, p2). This coincided with the death of the last original members and reflected a change noted in a 1930 address by retiring president, Oliver P. Stidger that “...we are now a Society devoted to research and information.” (The Society of California Pioneers, 2000, p36). Records from the 1950s and 1960s note that SCP welcomed school groups, teachers and clubs to learn about California history through its collections (The Society of California Pioneers, 1959, p2).



**Figure 2.3: Epergne Chalice**

W.H. Vanderslice and Company, 1860s.  
Reproduced with the permission of The Society of California Pioneers.



SCP's collections grew as members responded to requests to donate objects of interest. An acquisition fund also existed from time to time. Thus SCP came to hold a substantial negative and photographic collection (Turrill Collection), pictorial material (Drumm Collection), theatrical playbills and sheet music of the 1830s to the early twentieth century (Sherman Collection) and maps and business contracts (Snyder Collection).

#### Early Publishing 1850 to 1930

The Society actively recorded its activities and opinions from the beginning believing these were 'history in the making', would enhance the organisation's standing, and encourage participation in its events. SCP published leaflets, publicity materials and pamphlets including transcripts of speeches made by members on Admission Day. The address of Edmund Randolph in 1860 used first hand accounts from explorers and state archival documents and was noted for its sound and original research. (The Society of California Pioneers, 1950, p38). Such addresses were recorded, archived and available to members and eventually to researchers and the public when SCP opened its doors more widely. The 1874 Admission Day address resulted in the publication *List of Passenger Arrivals at the Port of San Francisco for the Year 1849*. It is based on original records and newspapers held by SCP. It was SCP's first publication to be widely available.

In 1924 Henry Byrne began, with the assistance of curator Helen Putnam Van Sicklen, an historical quarterly: *Quarterly of The Society of California Pioneers* (The Society of California Pioneers, 2000, p34). The *Quarterly* featured reproductions of materials from the collection, especially extracts of written and oral recollections of pioneers. It was a soft cover 9" x 6" edition of around eighty pages with black and white illustrations. It was suspended during the mid 1930s Depression years.

#### Haphazard Publishing 1940 to 1990

In 1941, SCP resumed publishing with an annual publication of historical papers, and edited transcriptions of original manuscripts in the collection. (The Society of California Pioneers, 1950, p75; 2000, p35). This was titled *The Annual Publication of The Society of California Pioneers* and continued until 1954 although editions appear at irregular intervals.

Various annual publications, newsletters, quarterlies and journals with the title *The Pioneer*, *Newsletter* and/or *Quarterly* appeared with varying frequency and formats from 1949 through to 1990. Some appeared as a newsheet, others as a booklet and others as a slender magazine. Notwithstanding the difference in format, title and gaps in issues, the numbering system suggests SCP viewed these publications as part of a series. Each has a progressive volume and number up to the present day. Each publication documented the social activities of the organisation with photographs of members and supporters. They also included a message from the president; lists of gifts, acquisitions, new and deceased members, and elected officers; programmes and activities and occasionally excerpts from items in the collection. This later depended on the interests and proclivities of the current president or curator and often did not appear at all. Publications were a mix of an historical and social record with a focus on what may be of interest to members<sup>16</sup>.

#### *The Pioneer* Re-visited – The 1990s and beyond

At the urging of a tenacious member and consideration of previous periodicals a reinvention of the annual journal *The Pioneer* was achieved in 1995. *The Pioneer* is distributed to members, contributing authors, VIPs, and select libraries and historical organisations. Additional issues are sold to the public on request. It includes transcriptions and reproductions of collection items and scholarly articles. Contributors include State Librarian Dr Kevin Starr, Professor Emeritus (History) University of San Francisco W. Michael Mathes, and photographic historian Peter Palmquist. A large proportion of *The Pioneer* is devoted to recording the Society's activities along with messages to members and supporters from the President and Executive Director.

SCP's budget<sup>17</sup> makes provision for publishing *The Pioneer* and a small selection of public relations brochures and postcards. Included are amounts for editing, envelopes,

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<sup>16</sup> Other SCP publications over this period included *A list of items of interest in the library and museum of The Society of California Pioneers* (1931); *New Helvetia Diary* (1939); *A Calendar of the Major Jacob Rink Snyder collection of the Society of California Pioneers* (1940); *A Sojourn in California by The King's Orphan* (1945); *This Sudden Empire: California. The Story of The Society of California Pioneers 1850-1950* (1950); *Roster. 1955 & 1957. A list of members*; *Promised Land* (1957) and a small untitled catalogue featuring a selection of collection items (1970).

<sup>17</sup> With a budget around \$500,000 The Society falls within the small museum category as defined by the AAM Design Competition. The bulk of the budget is devoted to staff salaries. Other large and key expenses, often with no corresponding income stream, are building operations and exhibitions.



printing and postage. *The Pioneer* currently has an assured place in the programmes of the organisation, even in the absence of a written or formally stated policy outlining its purpose, philosophy, standards, and future directions and management.

*The Pioneer* is viewed as an important publication and a unifying agent that members want to be identified with (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004). More specifically

“On an annual basis, it gathers and summarizes who the Society is, what it does, what it possesses, and what it represents. It reaffirms the 501(c)(3) standing as well as promoting the worth and the mission of the SCP. It states the priorities of the director, the staff, and the board, and it provides an arena in which to state specific needs and future goals. It is an important agent for fundraising and sharing news.” (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 13.5.2004).

On a more subtle level it has a role in conveying the overall, if somewhat sanitised, stability of the organisation. Although no financial information is included the quality of the publication attests to the health of the Society and the competence and experience of the staff. *The Pioneer* builds confidence of members in the museum that translates into increased financial support (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004).

### Management

A consulting editor manages production. The current editor has been involved with SCP in various capacities for more than ten years. The consultant acquires copy, writes the foreword, and manages editing and production. Occasionally copy editors are engaged. Copy is acquired from those who have used the library archives for their own research, unsolicited manuscripts, materials previously published by SCP, and solicitation of known writers. Significantly, *The Pioneer* is able to include primary source material unique to the Society's collection.

The small budget constrains the time available to pursue material and devote attention to alternative presentation, design or production elements. Thus it is unrealistic to produce predetermined thematic editions, although this is seen as desirable. Each edition is



reliant on what is at hand during the production period with the editor ‘...happy and lucky to get what we can get’, but also fortunate that the region has a cadre of qualified writers on California history (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004). A single page style guide is used. It stresses adherence to the *Chicago Manual of Style* and states the rules for dates, numbers, type, and marks.

The use of professional digital production has “... been nothing short of a revolution” in publishing *The Pioneer* (Boyd, A. pers. comm.. 20.4.2004). The new technology has enabled the introduction of quality materials and savings in time and resources, although still ‘virtually everyone has delays, misses deadlines etc.’ (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004) which makes having a production schedule impracticable. However few, if any, contracts are drawn up to counter this.

*\*The Pioneer* has an aesthetic sensibility at the highest level that we can reasonably afford and is positively distinguishable from other similar publications. It’s a clean looking product that doesn’t suffer from the well-intentioned novices of desktop publishing having a go at it. I’ve seen dozens of patched together, grainy-looking newsletters from larger, more prestigious groups’. (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004).

The Executive Director is consulted about the focus of each edition and other staff asked to contribute. A Board of Directors sub-committee reviews each edition in line with its fiduciary responsibility. This process is informal and aimed at ensuring *The Pioneer* reflects the basic values, goals and image of the organization, and that it is useful, of good quality and pleasurable to read, at least as determined by this group.

*The Pioneer* has in the past been included in periodic member surveys and there is a standing invitation for feedback. Generally there are few comments which tend to be limited to minor suggestions on content with, on the whole, positive feedback. Informal consideration is also given to how the journal compares to similar local and national publications such as CHS’s *California History*, the San Francisco National Maritime

Association's *Sea Letter* and the *Smithsonian*. These journals are chosen for their production quality and topics. In comparison other smaller and local offerings are viewed as of lesser quality and covering historical topics in a more predictable and less scholarly manner with 'endless articles about Fremont, or the Silver Kings...with sepia toned photos of Mr X, occasionally Mrs, and you get their whole life story...rather than to a more scholarly approach to California history' (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004).

The Society is concerned it is not reaching an extended audience. It considers this may be related to the medium. While "...we know who we want to address, the educated reader, the educated viewer... we're going to be continuing to experiment for a while anyway until we get it down to where we feel comfortable that what we're doing is...the right medium with our audience." (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004).

#### Catalogues, Newsletters and Books

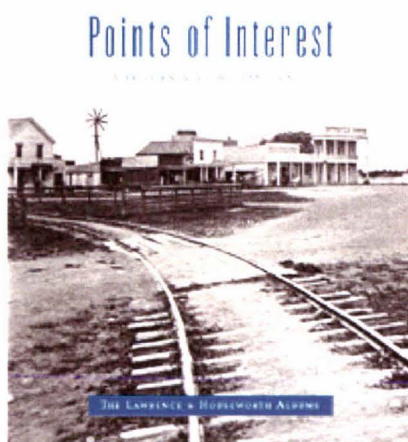
The Society has undertaken other publishing projects in recent years. Each project is approved or rejected on an ad-hoc case-by-case basis. There is no policy to guide the decisions although staff can articulate the influencing factors. These include:

"the ability for a publication to provide a permanent record that benefits the wellbeing of the organisation, the appropriate use of limited resources, a compelling reason or consequence for publishing either now or in the long-term, and the ability of the publication to fulfil any goals and expectations assigned to it" (Boyd, A. pers. comm.. 20.4.2004).

The *Annals of San Francisco*, is a 1998 reprint of an earlier 1855 edition that was dedicated to SCP. Local publisher, Berkeley Hills Books, believed there was a small but lucrative market for a new edition and approached SCP with the project. The launch would coincide with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the discovery of gold in California and would include a roster of current Society members and a foreword by the Executive Director. Much of the production and distribution was handled by Berkeley Hills Books. The resulting edition is an austere, lengthy and detailed publication '...what looks like the most boring book of all time...not conducive to leisure reading' (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004).



*Points of Interest, California Views 1860-1870: The Lawrence & Houseworth Albums* is a catalogue that accompanied a 2002 exhibition of the same name. It is a substantial publication (11½x10", 228 pages, 180 pages of plates) with a foreword by Gary Kurtz of the California State Library and an introduction by pre-eminent photo-historian Peter Palmquist. The works featured are an important part of SCP's photography collection. The catalogue sought to promote SCP's collections rather than the Society itself.



**Figure 2.4: Cover of *Points of Interest***

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A number of factors supported its production. Peter Palmquist was closely, congenially and energetically involved at no fee. He saw the publication as a valuable contribution to the body of photography books (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004). The new museum building had opened to the public creating a new, and possibly book-buying, audience. An anonymous donor emerged who underwrote the publishing costs removing the need to approach potential funders (banks and foundations). The production and distribution was assisted by working again with co-publisher Berkeley Hills Books. While there were frustrations, including difficulties in translating colour requirements from the USA to the Hong Kong based printing and binding facility, there was a comfortable level of control over the content, accord with exhibition deadlines, and acceptable financial and book buyback arrangements with the co-publisher. (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004).



SCP has attempted newsletters to update members of past and upcoming programs and events, the activities of various museum departments and suggestions of ways of becoming more involved. Both the two-page, four sided *Pioneer Express* in 1993 and the *Member Bulletin* in September 2001 languished after one issue due to a lack of budget and staff resources to commit to the project. These issues also impact on the ability to document sales figures for the previous publications.

More recent attempts at a newsletter in 2004 and 2005 have taken the form of an hypertext page sent by electronic mail to members. Sent monthly, it provides updates on upcoming member and public events, exhibitions and museum store specials. Its obvious advantage is one of timeliness. However, the proportion of members with electronic mail accounts, while growing, is small (15%). A separate version that does not include member events is sent to interested outside parties who have supplied their address either when visiting the museum or when making enquiries by telephone, mail, or e-mail.

### Summary

Early publishing by SCP was associated with events and ceremonies and highlighted SCP's and its members' prominence and standing. Emphasis was on the histories, endeavours and viewpoints of founding members. There was also a serious preservation role in keeping with the purpose of SCP. Publications from 1940 to the 1990s emphasised recording SCP's activities. Also included were reproductions of collection items with little commentary, often the result of personal curatorial projects akin to those evident in the early days of publishing in the wider museum community prior to the 1970s. These publications largely served a public relations and prestige role and form an official record of activity.

Publications since the late 1990s drew more heavily on SCP's collections, had a broader range of contributors commenting on the history contained in the collections, and presented a greater variety of subjects. Publications no longer merely presented reproductions or focused on member and organisational activities but became discursive, providing evaluations of the collections and the histories contained in them

albeit in an academic manner. A broader educational element was introduced and the current and future professional health and direction of the organization was promoted. Beyond *The Pioneer*, the management of publishing in the last ten years has been cautious and episodic. That a project proceeded was largely a matter of circumstance rather than a long-term articulated and planned vision. While decisions were made in a thoughtful and considered fashion taking into account the direction of the organisation, budget and personnel limitations, publishing projects largely relied on the motivational, professional or financial support of specific individuals with an interest in pursuing the project.

On the whole SCP has produced handsome, scholarly and traditionally presented publications that show a shift from the interests and aggrandisement of specific individuals to broader inclusion of subjects and contributors. Publications still focus substantially internally on the museum's activities and maintaining its image within a small community of interested parties. And SCP has not ventured into trade and other publications of a wider community appeal.

### **The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society**

#### History is Fun and On My Street

The first physical contact with the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society is an active, entertaining and communal affair. Monthly lectures are held in a full to capacity community space (library, school classroom, university lecture hall) where neighbourhood history is recounted. Recent topics have included the origins of San Francisco street and place names, Russian Hill between 1853 and 1906, and the story of the Palace of Fine Arts, a remnant from the 1915 World's Fair held in San Francisco. The lectures are given by local residents, travel authors and historians, some renowned for their penchant for period dress, diction, and re-enactment.

Others may find themselves accompanied by the raucous cackle of *Laughing Sal* the iconic artefact representing all the fun and bustle of the fair in SFMHS's inaugural exhibition *Amusing America*. The exhibition features items from and the history of American amusement parks, world's fairs, arcades, swimming baths and dance pavilions

from the 1880s to World War II. It is mounted with the assistance of a number of sponsors and guest curators. It appears in space shared with the Musée Mécanique which itself displays and offers access to historic slot and mechanical devices in a building nestled in the heart of tourist oriented and packed Fisherman's Wharf. Another contact may be in participating in a neighbourhood walking tour taking in the sites and spying through them distant and recent history from the idiosyncratic view of a SFMHS volunteer.



**Figure 2.5: Laughing Sal**

Reproduced with the permission of San Francisco Museum & Historical Society

### History for and by the Community

SFMHS was established in February 2002 when the San Francisco Historical Society decided it was "...time to ask the girl to dance" (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 10.3.2004) and merged with The Museum of the City of San Francisco. The museum was an eclectic, although largely unseen, collection accumulated and attended to by an enthusiast and former City archivist since the 1970s. The Society was the 1988 brainchild of a local author and investment banker with a background in medieval history and a passion for bringing local history to the community.



The current programmes and activity draw from the core programmes of walking tours, educational programmes and publications established by and that formed the core purpose of the Historical Society<sup>18</sup>. Most current members were also members of the Historical Society. The original members were recruited by distributing a simple photocopied membership form at a local continuing education history class. Members were promised walking tours, education programmes and publications on San Francisco history of interest to them. Membership now numbers some 3000 individuals and families from all walks of life with the common bond of having an interest in the history of San Francisco. Members receive the newsletter *Panorama* and the semi-annual journal *The Argonaut*, and participate along with the rest of the public in the educational programmes and tours.



**Figure 2.6: Board Member Waldeck Performing at the 2005 Chicken's Ball**  
Reproduced with the permission of San Francisco Museum & Historical Society  
©2005 Larry Rosenberg.

Funding comes from membership dues and much anticipated fundraising events such as an historic home tour, a themed dinner auction whose proceeds were targeted to support publications (SFMHS, 2004), and the Chicken's Ball. The odd name for this event is taken from the film *San Francisco* where a Chicken's Ball talent contest is won by Jeanette McDonald to save her boyfriend Clark Gable, all in the midst of the 1906 earthquake. The SFM&HS event is a quirky celebration presented by Board members

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<sup>18</sup> The Museum of the City of San Francisco did not publish and had a limited membership. Much of the collection was in storage for many years with the exception of items on regular display at City Hall. It was almost defunct at the time of amalgamation. Thus this case study concentrates on the activity, programmes and publications of the Historical Society in its consideration of pre-2002 activity.

and enlisted assistants that includes theatrical musical parody, barbershop quartets, burlesque, and 1906 feather costumes. A VIP reception precedes the show with a tour of the Mayor's Office. The star act is awarded a poke of gold, just as in the movie.

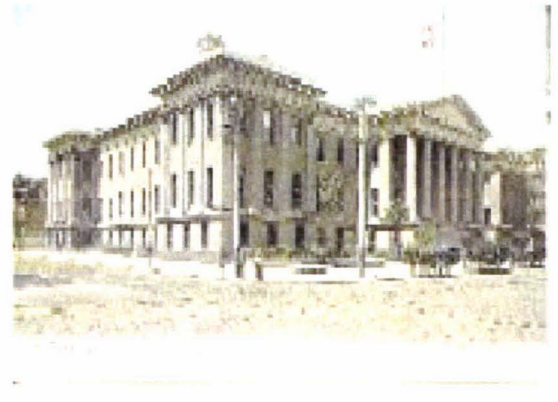
### Finding a Home

The Society began in 1988 when a group of three friends took on the roles of President, Treasurer and Secretary (the minimum necessary to meet incorporation requirements). SFMHS now has a supportive Board of Directors of twenty-five members and six Officers (President, Chairman, Vice President, Executive Director, Secretary and Treasurer). Board members volunteer not only their governance skills but many participate on committees and provide assistance for fundraising, editorial management, web design, printing and exhibition installation. Until 2005 SFMHS had only one part-time paid staff member, an administrative assistant. In March 2005, SFMHS expanded to four paid staff: an office manager, executive director, deputy executive director (development), and a secretary.

The new organisation owes much of its initial momentum to the Historical Society's founder and SFMHS's outgoing President along with a core of Board members and other supporters who were active with the Historical Society. Through their persistent efforts SFMHS was designated the official museum of the City and County of San Francisco with a mission to "...serve as a focal point for discovering the history of San Francisco" and preserve, interpret and present the historical heritage of San Francisco (SFMHS, 2004). It has also secured government, corporate and foundation funding for a major \$55 million project to establish a permanent home and exhibitions in the City's historic Old Mint building.

Work on developing exhibition and collections policies, reviewing the current limited, largely un-documented, and haphazard collection, and acquiring further appropriate collections and exhibitions artefacts is currently underway. This is being carried out with reference to a City appointed advisory committee. The opening exhibition is scheduled to coincide with the centenary anniversary, and present aspects of the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. The Old Mint will house exhibition halls, research and library space, administrative offices as well as the Convention and Visitors Bureau, commercial offices, restaurants and shops.





**Figure 2.7: Views of the Old Mint**  
 Reproduced with the permission of San Francisco Museum & Historical Society

### Publications

SFMHS has two publications it distributes to members and that are available to the general public on request. Launched in 1988 *Panorama* is a quarterly news bulletin that informs readers of upcoming programmes, recognises donors and past members, provides a round up of other local events of interest and is interspersed with occasional articles. *Panorama* runs to fifteen pages on quality paper with well produced, although sometimes grainy, images. Local businesses are encouraged to advertise by providing a business card for reproduction and a \$25 fee.

*The Argonaut* is the flagship publication. It is viewed as the glue that binds the society and members (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 10.3.2004). This is based on the philosophy that publications are accessible to those unable to participate in other programs due to



distance, agility or inclination. It was established to fill a perceived gap in local history publications in the late 1980s. It was believed there were no journals with well written and researched articles for lay people. Other publications were viewed as too parochial or in the case of *California History*, the journal of the California Historical Society, too academic with narrow appeal.

“...you know, the Orange Industry in Riverside County from 1898 to 1900. Well the only person interested in that, unless the writer is something out of the New Yorker, is going to be another... academic... it became a... thing for assistant associate professors to publish in” (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 10.3.2004).

The introduction to the first issue of *The Argonaut* in spring 1990 noted the objectives as “...to publish articles that would be of interest to members of the San Francisco Historical Society on any aspect of this city’s past.” And “....to refine and expand our knowledge of the City of San Francisco.” Aspects of the city’s past were listed as cultural, architectural, minority, natural history, social, sports and entertainment topics (San Francisco Historical Society, 1990). The first issue also acknowledged the prime place of the reader who is identified consistently in the back pages of each issue as members who, while largely of an older generation, is anyone with an interest in the history of the city. Members are invited to let the editor know their interests, provide comments, contribute articles, or assist with production or distribution.

The outgoing SFMHS President is, and will continue to be, publisher and editor-in-chief for both *Panorama* and *The Argonaut*. He is responsible for acquiring writers and copy. Success is largely based on his active and persistent involvement with members and the larger community of people interested in the history of San Francisco. A member provides volunteer copy-editing which includes style (a style sheet is sent to authors), format, ensuring there are no factual ambiguities and decisions on the inclusion of articles to ensure a balanced issue. The administrative assistant coordinates production using a check sheet developed for the purpose. The design is contracted to a graphic designer. *The Argonaut* additionally has an editorial committee made up of members from the Board of Directors and others. The number has ranged from zero to eleven members over the years and active involvement has varied from year to year. From time to time a photographic editor has also been involved. This is not currently the case and

so SFMHS encourages authors to provide their own illustrations with some assistance from the publisher and production coordinator if necessary. The same people (contract designer, editor, publisher and coordinator) have been involved in publishing SFMHS publications since their launch. Contributors have a range of backgrounds with varied writing styles (which are sometimes assisted by the copy editor) and contribute soundly researched articles as evidenced by the accompanying notes, referencing and notations.

*The Argonaut* and *Panorama* are core and established elements of SFMHS programmes. They consume half the budget and are given key consideration from fundraising projects. The invitational letter from the President for the 2003 home tour states that “...the money raised from it is essential to the successful continuation for the SFM&HS programs and publication, *The Argonaut*, (as members’ dues don’t cover the cost of these).” (SFMHS, 2002).

Preparations are being made to establish an endowment fund. As well as funding the management of the new site and collections, it is hoped the fund will enable the expansion of *The Argonaut* to a quarterly rather than a biannual publication, to introduce colour plates, a more captivating design, and to produce collections and exhibitions related publications such as catalogues, occasional books, monographs and fine printing of early manuscripts.

### Summary

SFMHS has a modest publications programme that has been consistent in content, approach and production quality, and has clear goals and objectives. Each publication has a clear and specific purpose distinguishable from the other. *Panorama* is a news and entertainment organ that promotes the activities, priorities and image of the organisation, and recognises the efforts of members, volunteers and directors. *The Argonaut*, is purely an educational offering.

The publications are seen as an important tangible and lasting connection between members and the Society. And while aspirations to extend the publications programme are somewhat frustrated due to the primacy of other priorities such as the ambitious capital project, financial shortfalls and the inability to devote time to obtain all the contributions, articles and input necessary to become a quarterly journal and make other



improvements, the publications look good, have interesting articles and are readable. They represent a sound, professional programme.

The involvement and influence of a small number of committed and long-standing individuals is a hallmark of the programme. It is the motivation and personal efforts of these individuals that ensure the ongoing success of the publications and consistent quality and style. Some authors appear with great regularity and design services have been provided by the same contractor since the commencement of the publications programme. Another hallmark is the informality and volunteer nature of managing the publications programme. The articles and editorial services are provided at no fee. There are few parameters for planning, scheduling, or cementing legal ownership through copyright of articles and issues. While there is generally enough material for the next two issues of *The Argonaut*, obtaining the articles relies on the personal contacts and cajoling of the Editor-in-Chief.

## **Technology**

The impact of computerised and other technology to produce print publications has made the process of editing, designing, and printing publications more manageable. Both case study museums have commented on the improved quality digital technology has provided.

The Internet has had more limited impact on the case study organisations publications programmes to date. Both have websites and are giving greater thought to their Internet presence by contracting assistance to update their web pages with a view to being more sophisticated, professional, attractive, and accessible. The new websites will be available around the time this thesis is presented. While this thesis is concerned with print publications, a brief comment on this form of publication, making information available to the public on the internet, is warranted.

The early 2005 SFMHS website provides details of its activities, ways of participating, and access to a range of San Francisco history, history providers and supporters. It is not always clear which pages are part of the SFMHS suite of pages and which are those of

sponsors, supporters or other parties. The website has an index of articles in back and current issues of *The Argonaut*. Actual copies of articles are not available but can be ordered by mail or telephone.

A significant website publication is the online *Encyclopaedia of San Francisco*. It was commenced at the President's initiative and he continues to seek contributions. The publication is edited and managed by a Board member who volunteers time to oversee the website as Chair of Technology. Contributions of interesting San Francisco history from any interested party are solicited on the web page. There is a clear separation between this initiative and the print publications programme. Discussions on the on-line content between the Technology Chair and the Editor-in-Chief occur only in passing.

The Society of California Pioneers presence, while not sophisticated, provides brief information on the history, activities and collections of the museum and how people can access the collections and participate. Again publications are not available for reading online but people are encouraged to purchase publications from the museum store. There are also fledgling collections access databases with a limited number of photographic reproductions available.

## **Conclusion**

This exposition of the publications of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society and the Society of California Pioneers reveals that, like other history museums, SCP and SFMHS view publications as an integral part of their operations, and have done so from the start. Notably publications are an important aspect of the museum's offerings to and connection with members. Publications consistently devote attention to social activities and recognition of member involvement and what the organisation has offered, and is to offer, members. And while other programmes (tours, lectures and exhibitions) are marketed and available to the general public and have involved collaborations with others, distribution of publications is largely limited to members.



This is also evident in that neither organisation has ventured into publications of a general nature as is becoming prevalent in the wider museum publishing community. While there are collaborations with a range of authors, wider commentary of social interest and, in a few instances, projects undertaken with specific funders and professional publishers, there are no cookbooks, calendars, diaries or children's books. The aspirations for expansion alluded to in personal communications tended to focus on expanding existing publications or other scholarly and collections based projects.

Publications are seen as having, at least in part, an educative function: "The idea is to both entertain and inform" (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 10.3.2004) and to provide "...some knowledge and appreciation and understanding..." (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004). They also have an important role of promoting the health and future direction of the organisations.

The content, format and style of the publications clearly represent and reflect the nature of the museum. SCP publications show a preference for the scholarly, traditional and a sense of the importance of its collection, legacy and place in the history of California. In this respect "...to a large degree publications are... done for purposes of prestige." (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004). SFMHS publications reveal a strong community focused view of history which is more informal, participatory and even 'common' in the sense that anything and anyone is worthy of inclusion not just the elite, well-known and exciting or illustrious.

Like other small history museums in the region the number of publications is modest. What distinguishes our case study organisations is the consistency of publishing, the production quality, and the historically broad and academically robust nature of its content. This likens them to the larger museums and is to be applauded given their more limited financial and professional resources. The professional management of the publications programmes is evident in having at least partially articulated goals for the most prominent publications and through the efforts and commitment exhibited by involved individuals. These individuals spend much of their time, personally and professionally, connecting with others who may further their publishing efforts and

interests in providing excellent publications for members whether as contributors or in providing other skills and resources. This is an important factor in the success of the publications in organisations with such small publishing budgets and limited in-house skills.

This chapter has shown how the publications and publishing practices of a small museum reflects the nature and priorities of the museum. Another avenue for investigating this in greater depth and by which museums themselves can verify the success of their publications is through content analysis and reader evaluation. These methodologies are now considered and undertaken in Chapters Three and Four.



## CHAPTER THREE

### **Content Analysis as Evaluation**

#### **Introduction**

Content analysis is presented as an appropriate tool for evaluating the publications of small historical societies. A methodology is developed and applied to select publications from the case study museums. The analysis demonstrates the ability of content analysis to evaluate the alignment of a publication to the museum's mission, to distinguish the nature of the museum, and to regularly and continuously investigate and improve production quality, design and the messages contained in publications.

The chapter commences by establishing what content analysis is and how it can be applied to publications. The methodology developed uses a checklist that matches the form, content and style of publications against the museums mission, the publications purpose, and historical interpretation themes. The methodology is then applied to a selection of issues of *The Pioneer*, *The Argonaut* and the newsletter *Panorama* published by the case study museums and introduced in Chapter Two. The analysis is accompanied by commentary on the messages contained in the publications, the level of achievement of goals and objectives and the historical perspectives presented.

#### **Content Analysis, Existing Methodologies and Publications**

##### Messages in content, form, and style

Content analysis is the structured, systematic identification and analysis of content, form and style of texts, objects, static and moving images, and arrangements of these in exhibitions, publications, presentations or performances. Content analysis aims to discover the assumptions, values and priorities of the creators and to learn more about the object of the content analysis. Content analysis is based on the premise that narratives, illustrations, arrangements, and textures consciously and unconsciously, directly and indirectly reflect the beliefs and attitudes of those that create them

Schlereth, 1982). They are acts of interpretation with the messages determined by what is chosen for inclusion and what is chosen to be left out.<sup>19</sup>

A plethora of content analysis methods exist within a range of disciplines. Bernard and Ryan (1998) detail six complex methods social scientists use for analysing written texts such as speeches, songs, diaries, interviews and articles. These vary in approach from studying broadly recurring themes, phrases, and patterns to counting and referencing individual words and phrases. Key underpinnings are that people repeat what is important to them, simplify so they are not overwhelmed with information, and assume others understand the phrases and metaphors used. The methods involve citing examples, making judgements and connections, and highlighting irregularities. Pre-established coding schemas, models and hypotheses may be used and applied across texts or within a single text as well as to objects, and images such as photographs and movies.

Models for the study of museum objects and material culture by Panofsky, Fleming, Prown, Elliott et al., Batchelor, and Pearce have been neatly outlined by Pearce (1995). The models view artefacts as embodying physical, social/cultural and functional attributes. Checklists or matrices are used to analyse an object and ask questions of varying complexity and depth about the physical object (size, materials, construction, decoration), external and contextual evidence (maker and place of creation, original and later use, purpose, meaning), and factual, intuitive, and learned knowledge. The result is a description, history and opinion of the artefact, its development, merit, or indicators about its society. Some models are based largely on the single artefact and the observations, experience and knowledge of the investigator (Prown, 1982). Others outline holistic approaches that use observation and supplemental information while comparing and contrasting artefacts, select cultural contexts, and an artefacts own history (Pearce, 1995).

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<sup>19</sup> The selection is also influenced by collection management policies, documentation, classification, and storage. These influence what is available and retrievable for exhibition or publication. While there are growing professional standards, idiosyncratic practices do exist which could also be seen as an extension of a museum's underlying values on history and heritage.



Others draw on semiotics (Barthes, 1973), publications design (Brown, 1983; Ames, 1992; Rossen, 1993; Macdonald, 1998), and communications theories (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000) to show how different variables affect the intentional and unintentional messages established by exhibitions, artefacts and publications. Areas of enquiry include patterns and styles of reading and learning, and how construction, layout and colour create value and suggest what is significant. Each of these models has contributed to the methodology for analysing museum publications.

#### Developing a content analysis format for museum publications

Content analysis provides an avenue for investigating and discovering what a publication's format and content reveal about the priorities and values of the museum and its view of history and heritage. Content analysis can help identify and explore the nature of the historical narrative and interpretation and the implicit and explicit messages contained in a museum's publications. It can be a tool for investigating the extent a museum stays within or moves beyond the traditional stories of progress, patriotism, nostalgia, consensus, a simple life and money, the six fallacies of historical interpretation identified by Schlereth (1980) introduced in Chapter One. Content analysis can also help museums determine to what extent a publication is contributing to the image and standing of the museum; communicating museum activities; conveying the museum's nature, values and attitudes towards the collection, the museum profession, members, visitors and the wider community; and giving effect to the museum's mission.

In developing the methodology consideration was given to its utility for museums with limited resources. The aim was to provide a management tool to help determine whether publications are achieving what was hoped and publications are produced that are purposeful and considered. While grounded in sound theory and methodology, it was not the intention to establish an academic research tool, or rigorous scholarly model with infallible validity and reliability requiring mountainous data or highly structured, formal and expensive interpretation, training and technology.

The analysis format can be used to analyse a single publication, a single element of a publication or a range of publications. The analysis format can be limited to providing a broad overview of the configuration, properties, subject matter and themes of a publication. Or, depending on the complexity of the publication or the museum's goals,

the analysis can provide detail about the prevalence and recurrence of topics, themes, and patterns that show how the museum views history, heritage and its role. Both quantitative and qualitative data can be sought where not only the range of themes is identified but also their prominence and importance as indicated by the number of occurrences, placement, the commentators, and design elements.

Themes to be analysed may be predetermined based on the museum's mission, publications policies or statements, or from other professional standards. The themes may be limited to those that are felt to be most important or a comprehensive list may be investigated. Another area of fruitful investigation may be the type of interpretation the museum supports through its publications. Examples of nostalgia for the simpler 'good ole days', patriotism, progress and success, celebrating great events and great-men (particularly white political figures), presenting a homogeneity of ancestors, and presenting the publication (and therefore the history and heritage it contains) as an illustrious, grand commodity could be searched for to determine the extent the museum falls prey to or expands beyond these common pitfalls of history interpretation.

It should be noted that while the words, images, style and materials used to create a publication can be objectively counted and described, the final meaning and value placed on these is subjective – even emotional. Different evaluators may form different opinions influenced by their motivations, experience, knowledge or understanding of reading publications and their signs, symbols, design, or communications elements<sup>20</sup>. The selection of evaluators is therefore an additional issue to be considered.

## **Content Analysis**

The content analysis format comprises three areas of analysis – description, appraisal, and assessment. A checklist is provided for undertaking and documenting the analysis. Description considers the tangible, tactile and visual impact of a publication. Appraisal turns to the intellectual content. Assessment makes conclusions about what is felt and

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<sup>20</sup> For example one evaluator may view the use of a lot of white space and large strident type as condescending, an affront to an educated reader's ability to concentrate and pay attention to detailed and closely spaced information. In contrast another evaluator may feel any reader would appreciate such a clear, clean and uncluttered layout.



understood. The methodology involves first standing back and taking a broad overview of a publication noting those elements that engage the senses – heft, colour, texture, initial attraction to the presentation and interest as indicated by the titles and list of contents. This is followed by more in-depth intellectual engagement with the images and written word; what is being said and how it is presented. The total impact is then considered to obtain an overall view of the publication.

### Description

The description has three elements: a physical description, identification of the subject matter and overt representations, and consideration of the structure and configuration of the content. The broad description can identify major themes which may reflect the specific goals and objectives from the museum's mission or publications statement.

Physically describing the publication is predicated on the idea that the publication is not only a vehicle for a message but is also an object whose format, size and quality of materials carry meaning. A book printed on heavy textured paper, a magazine of quality glossy stock, and a photocopied newsletter promote and provoke different images of formality, durability, and quality. Focusing on the table of contents, titles, prominent images, and contributors identifies the topics and overt representations. These will allude to the seriousness, audience orientation and goals. This can span from a record of scholarly or technical research to familiar family anecdotes. Describing the structure and configuration, the way the content is put together, and placement and design, also provides indicators about the museum's orientation. Lengthy articles with plain headings and rigid layout promote a traditional and austere image. In contrast colour, boxed text, variety in font and shapes presents a more contemporary and lighthearted persona.

### Appraisal

The publication is examined in detail. The text is read with a view to eliciting examples of themes and how often the themes are represented. Key words, illustrations, and metaphors are noted and counted. Exemplars and 'negative' examples or examples that do not fit any theme or pattern are highlighted. This helps identify elements a museum

may find particularly appealing, elements they may want to ensure they reproduce, pay more attention to or seek to cull from their publications.

Additionally the effects of tone and terminology are considered. The use of jargon, clichés, complex or familiar phrases as well as the level of questioning or unshakeable statements is considered. The amount of education needed to read a publication can also be considered. A number of formulae exist that identify the reading level. They commonly measure the number of sentences, syllables, and compounding within a selection of one hundred words. The Gunning Fog Index as outlined in Birin and Ryan (1991)<sup>21</sup> was used in the content analysis undertaken for this thesis.

### Assessment

Conclusions about the publication are made. Assessment may be as formal as matching the findings with the goals for the publication, the mission of the museum or other professional standards and commentary on museum publications. Or it may be as simple as determining if there is 'clear' communication, namely a publication that is interesting, well organized, deals with the subject at hand, not confusing or repetitive, and pitched at the right level of explanation (Rossen, 1993, p59). In either case, achievements can be summed up, areas of improvement highlighted and researched and new ideas imagined.

### Content Analysis Checklist

The analysis may be documented by annotating the publication, writing a narrative description, or establishing and completing a checklist. Table 3.1 provides a checklist. It incorporates the publication description, shows how themes can be included, and allows for the identification and quantifying of specific exemplars for various themes and publication variables.

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<sup>21</sup> The Gunning Fog Index process: 1. Select 100 words from the middle of a text. 2. Count the number of sentences and divide this into 100 to find the average sentence length. 3. Count the number of words with three syllables or more (not including proper nouns, compound words and those ending in es/ed). 4. Add the totals from steps 2 and 3 and multiply by 0.4. This will give the number of years schooling required to read the text. Sixteen years schooling suggests a graduate education. Newspapers commonly read at six years schooling (Birin and Ryan, 1991).



Table 3.1: Checklist: Description and Appraisal of Publication Variables and Themes

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Physical Form (size, material, format)			
Subject Matter	1. 2.		
Titles	1. 2.		
Images	1. 2.		
Contributors/ Representations			
Design (colour, layout)			
Design - Placement:			
Front Cover			
Inside Cover			
Page 3			
Centre			
Back Cover			
Tone: Language/words	1. 2.		
Tone: Reading Level			

**Undertaking Content Analysis**

This methodology is now used to establish a view of and provide commentary on the journals and newsletter of the case study museums introduced in Chapter Two. What does a reading of The Society of California Pioneer’s *The Pioneer* and The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society’s *The Argonaut* and *Panorama* tell us about the mission, values and ambitions of these museums? Three types of content analysis were undertaken to answer this question and determine if there has been change over time.

First an overview analysis was undertaken of each publication over time to identify any commitments to or changes in themes, images and values. Next a detailed appraisal of the themes contained in the most recent edition of each publication was made. The last evaluation considers a single item, the ‘president’s message’, contained in *The Pioneer* and *Panorama*. This aimed to elicit information about the perspectives, values and attitudes held and presented by what could be viewed a pivotal participant in the

direction and management of these organisations. Finally an assessment in narrative form comments on the themes, images, values and attitudes discovered through content analysis.

The terms used in the mission and historical interpretation columns are those used either by the history museum in discussing its publication goals, or those used by Schlereth in his discussion of historical fallacies and suggestions to overcome these. Thus the use of the term 'nostalgic' is used to suggest the publication uses "The myths and icons that...are usually rooted in a nostalgic wish for a previous golden age that in reality never existed" (Schlereth, 1980, p210). Likewise the use of the term 'personal' is used to suggest that the publication shows "People's history....to show average citizens various ways of knowing themselves and their communities..." (Schlereth, 1980, p220). Individual museums will undoubtedly develop terminology of meaning to them. This is an area where further professional development and research can lead to a common taxonomy.

### ***The Pioneer***

#### Commemorating Pioneers, Recognising Members

A publication with the title *The Pioneer* was published by The Society of California Pioneers for what appears the first time in April 1967. This was subtitled "The Quarterly Newsletter of The Society of California Pioneers". Issues appeared through to the end of 1969. *The Pioneer* reappeared in July 1976 and then made a more or less regular annual appearance through to July 1986. The month of publication varies from year to year. Two further issues appeared in March 1990 and October 1991. The current incarnation of *The Pioneer* appeared in July 1995 with editions being produced each subsequent year with the most recent issue dated December 2003. *The Pioneer* has not been accompanied by any editorial comment about its purpose and no records have been identified that identify its role. There is conjecture that early publications had as first priority conveying '...the sense of stability, order and respectability...' of the organisation followed at a later date by a focus on 'arts and letters' (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 13.5.2004).

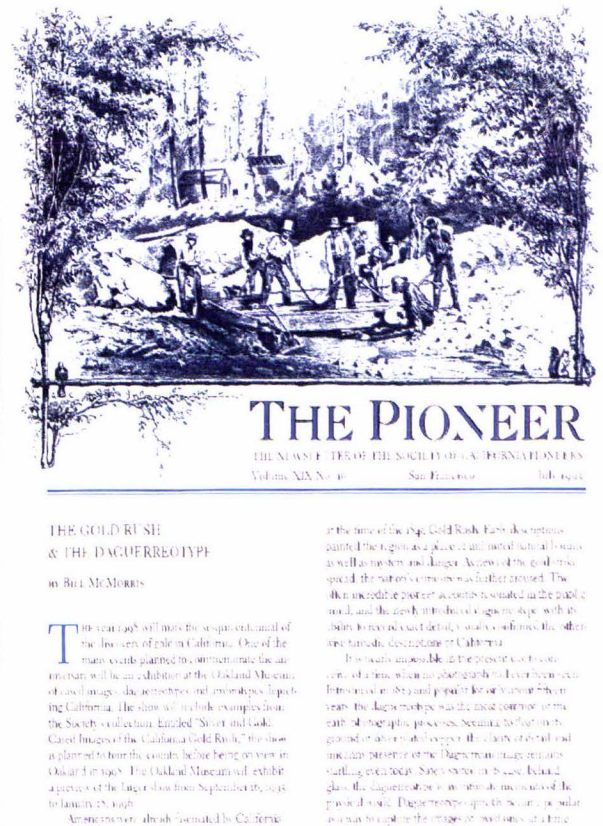
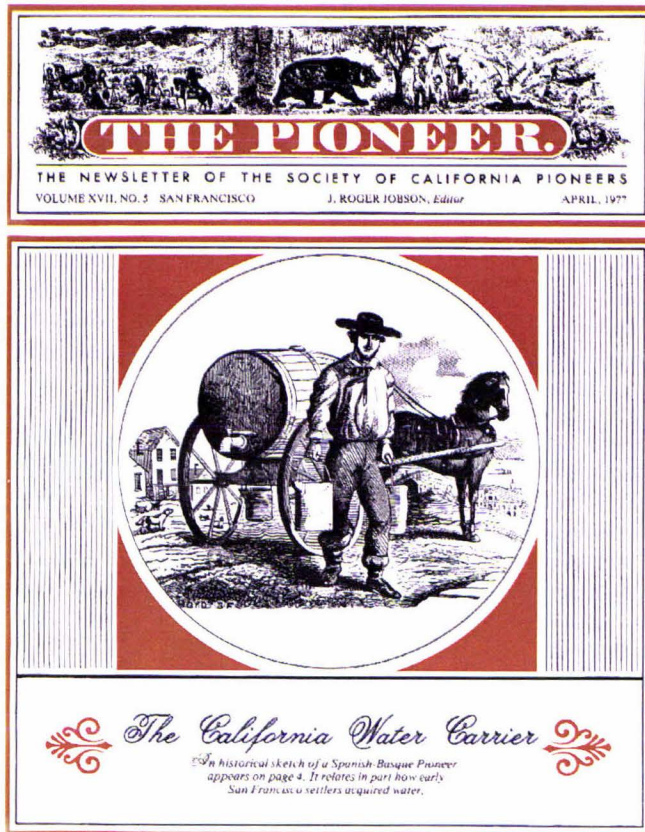


Analysis of *The Pioneer* using the checklist in Table 3.1 above considers a selection of issues commencing with the April 1967 edition. A comparison is made with editions from each subsequent decade namely *The Pioneer* of April 1977, July 1985, July 1995 and the most recent issue of December 2003. The selection of issues is based on the desire to consider an issue from each decade coupled with the availability of specific editions for analysis. The aim is to provide a broad overview of the publication and trace any changes or similarities in the format, subject matter and themes since 1967.

The data show a publication that has changed from a newsletter of social and organisational activity to a journal with serious educational intent and that promotes an organisation of professional practice and standing. The target readers in early editions are noticeably Society members interested in connecting with other members and commemorating their industrious ancestors. Later editions extend the target readership to include others with an interest in the activities of the Society, who are educated and familiar with reading academic and specialised language and who have an established appreciation of the California history The Society is presenting. The analysis suggests *The Pioneer* is aimed at readers who are educated and appreciate a traditional and elegant organisation that regards its purpose of commemorating California pioneers as serious and to be highly regarded.

This analysis suggests the following themes and roles as important across each decade of *The Pioneer*: being a record of the museum's activity; commemorating the industriousness of Pioneers and the continual advance and progress of the state of California (particularly evident in the covers in Figure 3.1 where images of hard work appear to lead to prosperity); and presenting a traditional, respectable and proud organisation. While some of the record of events across each of the issues analysed mention teacher education programs and lectures, the use of *The Pioneer* itself as a vehicle for progressing serious education through articles on aspects of California history do not appear until the 1985 edition.

Figure 3.1. *The Pioneer*: Cover Pages April 1977, July 1995, December 2003.



#### FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE:

The Account Book of George Hollbrook Baker:  
Window into an Urban Community  
BY ISABEL BRESKIN, Ph.D.

The Letters of William Sanford Hillis:  
A Description of His Voyage to California in 1852



Table 3.2. *The Pioneer*: A Longitudinal Analysis, April 1967 to December 2003

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission/Goals	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Physical Form •April 1967 •April 1977 •July 1985 •July 1995 •December 2003	•8.5x11" cream light paper, 4 pages, newssheet •8.5x11" glossy white light paper, saddle stapled, 8pp newsletter •8.5x11" cream embossed heavy paper, stapled, 16pp booklet •8.5x11" glossy white paper, saddle stapled, 16 pages •8.5x11" journal, saddle stapled, glossy card stock cover, 36pp	• Engage Members • Engage Members • Preservation, quality • Engage members • Preserve, quality, serious learning	• Accessible • Accessible • Traditional, nostalgic • Accessible • Accessible, Educational
Subject Matter •April 1967 •April 1977  •July 1985  •July 1995  •December 2003	•Solicitations & donors, President's report, Events lists & reviews, new members, staff, collection donations •1 article (member vignette), President's message, 6 event reviews & photos, donor, staff, new & deceased member lists. •1 article (pioneer biography), director list, capital campaign solicitations & recognitions, donors, staff, new & deceased member list, calendar of events •3 articles (gold rush daguerreotypes, gold rush work, member profile), president's message, department reports (conservation, building, committee), director list, 3 event reviews & photos •3 Articles (business, transport, travel), Editorial, President's Message, Director's Message, Book Reviews, Department Activities, Donor, Director, memorial, new member lists, contribution request, Member events	•Record Activity, Unify, Museum Profile •Record Activity, Unify, Museum Profile, Commemorate Pioneers •Record Activity, Unify, Museum Profile, Commemorate Pioneers  •Learning & education, Record of Activity, Museum Profile, Unify, Commemorate Pioneer •Record of Activity, Learning & education, Museum Profile, Commemorate, Unify members	• Success and Progress  • Nostalgia/memorialisation, progress, 'great men' • Nostalgia/memorialisation, progress, 'great men'  • simple life, nostalgia, progress, 'great men'  • Progress, success, memorialisation, patriotism
Titles: •April 1967 •April 1977 •July 1985 •July 1995 •December 2003	•descriptive, practical, newsletter, roman numerals •descriptive, practical, newsletter, roman numerals •descriptive, practical, newsletter, roman numerals •descriptive, metaphor, practical, newsletter, roman numerals •Practical. Laudatory "attendance record", Evocative "Where past and present intersect", volume numbers in roman numerals.	•Tradition, Informative •Tradition, Informative •Tradition, Informative •Tradition, Informative, educated •Tradition, Informative, Educate, Commemorate	• Nostalgia, Accessible • Nostalgia, Accessible • Nostalgia, Accessible • Nostalgia • success/progress, nostalgia
Images: •April 1967 •April 1977  •July 1985  •July 1995	•few, 2 members at events, 1 historical sketch of gold rush. •member events photos, 2 historical sketches of gold rush workers & landscape  •5 logos, 3 cameos, 1 historical sketch of gold rush workers & landscape, 2 photos of transport & farming •12 images of members/events, 7 reproductions of lettersheet illustrations, 1 photo of miner, 1 photo of SF business	•Unify, Profile, Commemorative •Unify, Profile, Commemorative  •Profile, Commemorate history as industrious •Unify, Profile, Commemorate	• simple life, nostalgia • simple life, nostalgia, success  • success, memorialisation, simple life, progress • success, industriousness, progress

•December 2003	•covers colour reproductions of new city & active, prosperous pioneer, 5 small of pioneer men, 1 full page of pioneer man, 5 small of buildings & new cities, 2 reproductions of letters/cards.		•Commemorate history as progress, industrious, masculine.
Contributor/Representation •April 1967 •April 1977 •July 1985 •July 1995 •December 2003	•Board members, staff •Board members, staff, members •Scholar, staff •Board members, staff, member, Scholar •Staff, Board members, Scholar, first person reproduction	•Official Record •Unify, Official Record •Education, Record • Education, Unify, Record • Education, Unify, Record	
Design •April 1967  •April 1977   •July 1985  •July 1995  •December 2003	•1 colour, banner header, cover dominated by image of California bear & donor, 2 images of events, Headings in western font, signatures in script, solid columns. •2 colour (black & brown), banner header, cover dominated by image of California bear and a working pioneer, 16 member/event photos, Headings in Script, western font, or bordered by scrolls, Pages bordered, 2 solid columns • 2 colour (black & dark blue), banner header, cover dominated by text, plain font for headings with some within upper and lower lines, lists in columns •2 colour (black & dark blue), large banner header, cover dominated by reproduction image of gold workers, plain fonts, minimal item breaks & decoration, •Four colour, front and back cover images. 2 column B&W interior. 11 point font, Times New Roman. 6 page articles. Titles 14 point font, 1 script in shaded box, 1 uppercase shaded. 2 items boxed. Reports, lists in chunks with subheadings. Text heavy first 7 pages only 2 small images, little embellishment	•Traditional, Commemorative  •Traditional, Unify, Commemorative, Museum elegant image.  •Serious, Traditional, Record  •Traditional, Serious Commemorative,  •Formal Record, serious/traditional, Cover Artistic Elegance	• nostalgia, success, consensus, simple life  • nostalgia, simple life/industrious, consensus  • academic  • simple life/industrious  • moneyed, academic
Tone/Reading Level •April 1967 •April 1977  •July 1985  •July 1995  •December 2003	•facts/statements, laudatory. 15 years. Formal, positive •social, laudatory, facts/statements, reverie. 10 years. Positive progress, conversational, elaborate. •academic, facts/statements, solicitous, social. 16 years. Jargon, run-on & compounds, questioning, promotional •academic, reverie, facts/statements, social, evocative. 13 years. Jargon, elaborate, run-on & compound sentences. •Facts/statements, academic (hypotheses), laudatory, evocative, social. 15 years. Traditional, metaphors.	•Profile, Tradition, Record •Educated, Unify, History is progress, Commemorate •Educated, History is commodity, Learning, Record •Educated, Serious, Record, Commemorate, Unify •Educated, Serious, Record, Commemorate, Unify	



### 2003: Presenting a Professional Profile

The second analysis sought specific examples of themes and values within a single edition. The most recent issue of *The Pioneer* is considered to determine which themes are most prevalent and important today and whether the publication supports the museum's mission or goals. For example the mission of The Society of California Pioneers is to "...preserve, promote and enjoy California heritage through a research library, a museum, a gallery, educational and social activities, and to commemorate those whose sagacity, enterprise, and love of independence induced them to settle in the wilderness and become founders of a new state."

Additionally interviews with staff identified that the journal:

"...is a unifying agent that members want to be identified with. The quality of *The Pioneer* helps convey our financial health, the competence and professionalism of the staff and the ability to care for and manage the collections" (Boyd, A. pers. comm. 13.5.2004).

is aimed at "...the educated reader, not the scholarly audience per se, not the ones that would go out and get, you know, academic journals but people who have some knowledge and appreciation and understand what they're reading...and by that measure we're looking for people with wider interests. I think there are probably...members of the Society who would disagree and say they want to hear about what happened between 1840 and 1865 and that's what counts...But I think the mission ... of *The Pioneer*, it takes a much broader approach and California history was what happened yesterday as well as what happened 150 years ago" (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004).

As staff highlighted that *The Pioneer* sought to convey the professionalism of the organisation and aimed to have a broad approach to California history, the analysis specifically sought evidence of this. It did so by determining to what extent the publication supports the 'new social history' by including a variety of viewpoints through its range of contributors and the types of content and images included. Examples that suggest a more traditional view of history such as interpreting history as progressive and celebratory of great men and events are also an indicator. The analysis thus concentrated on the following themes: Commemoration, Unifying Members, Museum Profile, Targeting Educated Readers and Inclusive Historical Interpretation. The results of the analysis are quantified in Appendix II.

### Commemoration

By far the most prominent theme present is commemoration of state founders and pioneers as prosperous and adventurous men who contributed to progress and growth within a harsh but splendid landscape. A notable feature supporting this is the use of full colour images from the museum collection placed in the key locations of the front and back covers. The front cover shows a prosperous man, well dressed with two horses and a buggy, briskly riding through the beautiful San Francisco landscape. These are the only images in full colour and they are two of only four images that occupy a full page. The journal therefore meets that part of SCP's mission dedicated to commemorating the sagacity, enterprise, and love of independence of its male founders.

The articles concentrate on the time period of the early 1850s a period of rapid growth and innovation in California. This places SCP's portrayal of history within the 'History is Progressive' fallacy where there is a 'tendency to organize American history around the watershed 'dates' (Schlereth, 1980, p208). This is also reflected in presenting 'the histories of winners, of individuals who succeeded...a glorious series of technological advancements, and a continual rise in the American standard of living and material progress' (Schlereth, 1980, p209). Thus images fall into a small range of categories: men (mostly of European descent) in nineteenth century California, especially the gold rush era and occasionally with additional family members; taming the landscape and natural resources; and the establishment and growth of pioneer cities, notably San Francisco and Sacramento. Through poise and grandeur the images suggest progress and achievement within a harsh but beautiful environment. Thus the men are serious and well dressed (even in the mines), the houses are large and well-kempt, the factories, businesses and mines orderly and productive and the landscapes rugged and grand.

Women, non-propertied workers and Native Americans do appear in the book recommendations, the record of school programmes, and in one image. These however, provide only a hint of the role and activity of these groups. The publication does not present the enterprise, hard work, success (or failures) of women, Chinese, African American's or Californios all of whom participated in the establishment of the state. There is thus a tendency for the journal to let history fall within the distortions of progress, homogeneous great-men, the illustrious and the elegant. This is at the expense of presenting the everyday and the average.



### Museum Profile and Member Unity

Lists of new members, contributions, acquisitions, and events allude to the health and vitality of the organisation. Presidential and Directorial comments, and reports on museum activities herald the achievements of the museum, point to future directions, and engage the continued support of members. These commentaries are aimed at members as indicated by the frequency with which members are thanked for their contributions, donations and support. Such items appear in key locations in *The Pioneer*, namely page three where the President's report is placed and the editorial on the inside front cover. Thus some considerable weight is given to establishing a positive profile for The Society through the journal. Additional prestige is garnered for The Society and members in listing Board members and donors. For members it is public notification of interest and pride in personal, family and California history. For The Society it is an indication of the depth and calibre of support for the organisation.

### Educated or Inclusive Audiences

The December 2003 edition of *The Pioneer* is a combination of a social and intellectual organ with appeal largely to members who have established a link with the early pioneers in order to gain membership. There is appeal to an additional community of prospective members, potential financial supporters and some academic readers through presenting articles from published researchers. Thus the goals of appealing to an educated reader, commemorating and preserving California heritage and the state founders, and promoting the value of the organisation is well met by *The Pioneer*.

The analysis suggests The Society is presenting itself as a reputable and respected museum with an important historical collection that it cares for by professional access, preservation and documentation practices. The department reports note that a recent exhibition 'served notice that our collection of nineteenth-century California silver...remains amongst the finest and most historically significant anywhere'. It is also noted that The Society was able to 'assist the National Park Service with...research on Fort Mason, Sutro Baths and the newly rebuilt Cliff House.', that a 'professional museum photographer...was hired to photograph...images to produce...transparencies preserving the images and precluding the need for any future handling of the fragile albums', and The Society will '...create descriptive records for each image...according to strict standards developed by the OAC, to ensure accessibility to all users'.

There appears in *The Pioneer* some indication that The Society is seeking to reach a wider audience and to include the community in its activities and the history presented. It comments on its education and learning programmes for the general public and school groups which include ethnic storytellers, music groups, and lectures on women in the gold rush. It asserts that these and its other offerings help to make links between the past and present day issues and concerns. The Executive Director notes in his article 'Fourth and Folsom, Where Past and Present Intersect' that:

"At The Society of California Pioneers, we are exceptionally pleased to be able to offer our members and visitors a wide range of experiences, including exhibitions, lectures, programs and events that expand their knowledge of California history and make vivid connections between past and present through the art and artifacts of a previous era".

However, as the checklist shows, while an analysis of *The Pioneer* suggests an increase in access and learning to a wider audience and making links with present day issues as part of The Society's other activities, these themes are both less developed than other themes and do not extend to the histories presented in the publication itself. *The Pioneer* is not used as a vehicle for advancing inclusion and access to any great degree. This view is supported by noting the preponderance of content focused on The Society's own activities, membership and the commemoration of male state founders.

It should also be noted that this wider focus is not yet firmly included in formal statements of the purpose of The Society or the role of *The Pioneer*. If this does become a stated aim it may be advisable to consider whether *The Pioneer* is the correct vehicle or whether the content and presentation of *The Pioneer* needs reconsideration if it is to incorporate this role.

#### President's Message: Promoting the Museum

The final analysis was of a single element of the publication that has persisted over time. Almost every issue contains a message from the President. An analysis of this item shows another way a publication can be appraised to determine the themes, values and attitudes the museum is supporting. This analysis is presented in Table 3.3 and Appendix III.



Table 3.3: *The Pioneer*: President's Message

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Subject Matter •April 1967  •April 1977  •July 1995  •December 2003	•member events, teacher program, collection management, representation at state events, soliciting collection donations. •reflection on genealogy, list of events, acquisitions, financial & member solicitations •ode to California, building news, member events, pioneer spirit, gifts, staff thanks, president's biography •Management, programs (education, exhibitions, conservation), financial solicitations, member events	•Unify, Profile, Education  •Unify, Profile  •Profile, Commemorate, Information, Unify •Profile, Unify	• Accessible, consensus, progress  • patriotism, money  • patriotism, progress  • progress, money, accessible, professional
Titles •April 1967 •April 1977 •July 1995 •December 2003	•The President Reports, Dear Friends •President's Message •President's Message •The President's Message	•Record, Unify •Profile, Unify •Profile, Unify •Profile, Unify	• Consensus, Access
Images •April 1967 •April 1977 •July 1995 •December 2003	•None •None •male cameo, suited, serious, mature •male cameo, suited, serious, mature	•Not Applicable •Not Applicable • Profile • Profile	   • industry, tradition • industry, tradition
Design •April 1967 •April 1977 •July 1995 •December 2003	•Solid wide single column, script font salutation, first item on inside page •2 column, ½ page, plain heading, inside cover •One page, two column, plain heading, page 3 •One page, no columns, plain heading, page 3	•Unify, Traditional  •Traditional •Serious, Record •Serious, Record	• nostalgia
Tone/Reader •April 1967 •April 1977  •July 1995  •December 2003	•positive, solicitous, congratulatory, thankful, proud, formal, elaborate, archaic, 13 years. •inclusive, solicitous, positive, proud, long, parenthesised, italicised, 19 years. •laudatory, thankful, informative, proud, conversational, casual word contractions, 12yrs •positive, solicitous, proud, thankful, conversational, jargon, 14 years.	•Unify, Profile, traditional •Unify, Profile, educated •Inform, Unify, Profile •Unify, Profile	• nostalgia, patriotic  • access, nostalgia  • memorialise, accessible • progress, access.

A number of themes and comments arise from analysis of the President's Message. Placement of the item as one of the first to be seen on opening *The Pioneer* suggests what the president has to say is worthy of attention, that The Society would not like readers to overlook these comments. There are recurring themes: positively presenting the activities and standing of the museum; providing an official record of events and activities; and soliciting members to become further involved in the museum. Indeed the analysis outlined in Table 3.3 shows the museum profile as one of the most prominent themes in the President's message.

While still targeted at a somewhat educated reader who appreciates a traditional approach, the president's message has become more casual in its terminology, tone and readability both over time and in comparison to the publication as a whole. However, it should be noted that no attempt has been made to correlate for the changes in social standards that may exist between eras. What is considered casual and conversational in one era may be considered formal and traditional in another.

### **The Argonaut – Neighbourhood History**

The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society has been designated the official museum of the City and County of San Francisco with a mission to "...serve as a focal point for discovering the history of San Francisco" and preserve, interpret and present the historical heritage of San Francisco. The first issue of *The Argonaut* in spring 1990 noted the objectives of the magazine as "...to publish articles that would be of interest to members of the San Francisco Historical Society on any aspect of this city's past." And "...to refine and expand our knowledge of the City of San Francisco." (San Francisco Historical Society, 1990).

The biannual issues of *The Argonaut* since 1990 show consistent presentation and vision. Generally each issue features four or five articles with many large images and photographs throughout. It has sparse organisational information limited to a list of officers, the museum's mission statement and contact information. This suggests profiling the organisation takes a backseat to the educational content<sup>22</sup>. The changes have been limited to changing the number of columns on a page, increasing the font size and using different paper stock which has improved the quality of the illustrations, particularly photographic reproductions.

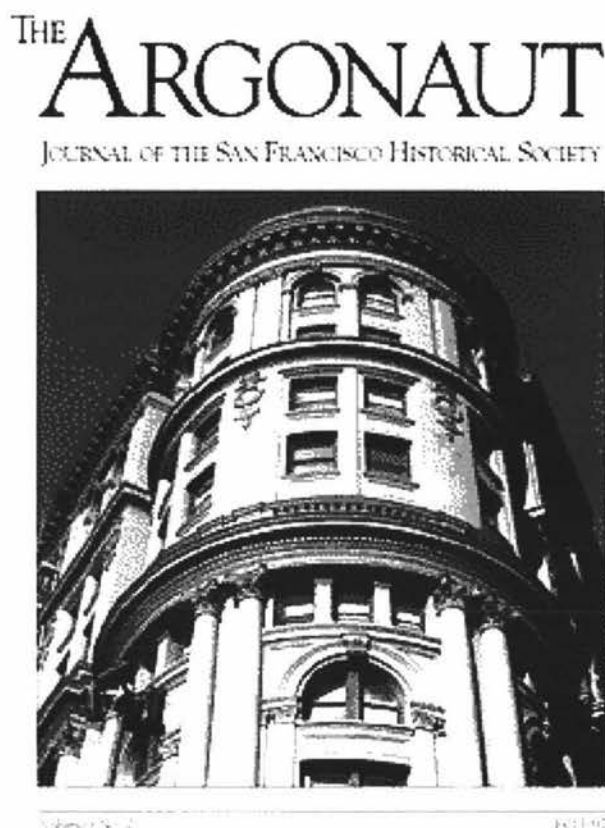
The design, focus of the articles, and the large number of images suggest an accessible publication that, although with a serious educational component, is inclusive in the historical topics presented. Table 3.4 below and Appendix IV highlight these effects and

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<sup>22</sup> It could be argued that this is in itself a way of profiling the organization, for example it is more about education than self-promotion.

themes as presented in the overview of issues from Spring 1990 through Spring 2004 and indepth analysis of the Spring 2004 issue.

Figure 3.2. *The Argonaut*: Cover Page, Fall 1997.



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### History is Personal

*The Argonaut* values and strongly represents personal and local history alongside scholarly historical research and discourse. This is reflected in the tone and language, selection of contributors, mix of subject matter and the structure and design of the journal which is spread between the academic and the more everyday. The range of authors represented supports this commitment. Equal in number to the professional, credentialed and published authors are retired mechanics, pianists, and native San Francisco dwellers. Each has their own voice which ranges from the academic and factual to the personal and emotive. This contributes to expanding our knowledge of not only the subject matter, but also the activity of presenting and interpreting or ‘doing’ history.



A variety of eras and communities are presented and interpreted – photographic and artistic clubs from the 1800s to the 1930s, preservation societies of the present, unemployment schemes of the 1930s Depression, traditional ‘49er miners’ stories, leisured ladies of the 1870s, labourers and immigrants from Armenia, China, Japan, other parts of Asia and Europe, as well as the East Coast. *The Argonaut* seeks to captivate readers, establish a connection, as well as impart new information. The layout is legible and accessible through a medium-large font, many section breaks, boxed and quotation insets and white space. Almost half of the journal is comprised of images, many full page and most at least half page images.

*The Argonaut* also gives the impression that history, and especially local community history, is the preserve of everyone, and everyone is worthy of inclusion and participation both as subject and as interpreters of history. This is reflected in the high production standards and quality of presentation. This accords most fittingly with the Museum and Historical Society’s endeavour to present ‘...any aspect of the City’s past’ and certainly expands our knowledge of different facets and faces of San Francisco.

#### Success in Adversity

In preserving and interpreting these many and varied San Francisco stories some themes recur. These appear regardless of the author and revolve around the idea that San Francisco, while full of adversity, disaster and struggle, is a splendid place, welcoming, full of camaraderie, with opportunity for the industrious, different and unconventional. While contributors to *The Argonaut* allude to those who may be ‘down-and-out’, comments tend to be in the shadow of the main subject who mostly succeed, if with some struggle, and are portrayed as in some way special or heroic whether on a national, city, neighbourhood or personal level.

*The Argonaut* does a valiant job of expanding the portrayal of history beyond Schlereth’s admonitions of homogeneity, simplicity, patriotism and great events. It is also often personal and community based providing a variety of views and faces of history. However, there is still a tendency to favour the successful and to be nostalgic and laudatory. Thus one author achieved historic landmark status for a set of overlooked buildings, and refugees and minorities set up businesses or became celebrated artists.

There are no stories about failures to stop demolitions or of those that died in other than exceptional circumstances in the gold mines for example.

### **Panorama – A Newsletter**

*Panorama* is the newsletter of the San Francisco Museum and Historical Society. It is an informal, accessible publication mostly concerned with keeping members up to date with upcoming events, fundraisers and other news of interest. It has developed from a spare, no-frills publication to a well produced and well considered contribution to promoting the museum and its activities. The incorporation of photographs of events has increased its fun element, but has also brought greater focus on the political profile of the museum. Many photographs feature prominent civic figures such as the mayor, and board members, rather than regular members.

In becoming more sophisticated, it has arguably also slipped into presenting more traditional, and somewhat overdone, historical representations in its captions. Images of elephants and the phrase ‘seeing the elephant’ that evoke the illusions and later disillusion of the gold-rush forty-niners is practically embedded in the psyche of those interested in any small way in local history. While the aim may be to appeal to and attract readers through familiarity and in-jokes, it also perpetuates established ways of viewing history.

*Panorama* has certainly become larger and more sophisticated and so provides an image of a Society that is growing and developing. *Panorama*’s core function of disseminating information on programmes and activities is still represented but, as indicated above this too has become more sophisticated. It now not only includes practical information but also promotes a positive profile of the financial, community and political standing of the Society.

Table 3.4. *The Argonaut*, A Longitudinal Overview, Spring 1990 to Spring 2004

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Physical Form •Spring 1990 •Spring 1995 •Spring 2000 •Spring 2004	•8.5x11" magazine, glued spine, matt card stock cover, 27 pages •as above, 36 pages •as above, 88 pages •as above, 92 pages	•Informal, Accessible •Informal, Accessible •Informal, Serious •Informal, Serious	• Inclusive
Subject Matter •Spring 1990  •Spring 1995  •Spring 2000  •Spring 2004	•publication aspirations; committee members; TOC; location; articles: 1906 & Italian food in the city; book reviews: city guide, crime history, biography, neighbourhood; mission statement •directors list, location, TOC, article: biography, book review: memoirs of the City •directors list, location, TOC, article: Woman's gold rush memoir- introduction, reproduction, bibliography •directors list, TOC, articles: park, two biographies, neighbourhood, mission statement	•Formal Record, Profile, Education  •Profile, Education  •Profile, Education, Inclusion  •Profile, Education	• Inclusive, everyday, familiar, popular, memorialisation  • Memorialisation  • Inclusive, nostalgic, extending ideas  • familiar, memorialisation, inclusive
Titles •Spring 1990 •Spring 1995 •Spring 2000 •Spring 2004	•personal, nostalgic 'great fire', practical, formal •practical •personal, practical, descriptive •personal 'my family', laudatory 'king, greatest', nostalgic 'bygone'	•Inclusive, Informative, Nostalgic •Informative •Inclusive, Informative •Inclusive, Nostalgic, Patriotic	• Nostalgic, inclusive, personal • Everyday • Personal, everyday • Nostalgic, memorialisation, personal
Images •Spring 1990 •Spring 1995  •Spring 2000 •Spring 2004	•1 full page, 2 ½ page, buildings and city scapes •7 men, 9 buildings, 7 broadside reproductions, 5 well known women •9 full page, 3 women, 12 City buildings, 3 transport •6 prominent 'bohemian' men, 3 families, 26 buildings, gardens, museums, 4 scenic	•Adversity •Inclusion, Access, Progress  •Progress •Progress, Inclusion, Grandeur, Artistic, Tradition	• Progress • Inclusive, Progress, Everyday  • Progress, Inclusive • Inclusive, Everyday, progress



Contributor/ Representation •Spring 1990 •Spring 1995 •Spring 2000 •Spring 2004	•first hand accounts, 2 historians, 3 amateurs •MA, member •MA, published author, first hand account •architect, lawyer, PhD, teachers, radio announcer	•Educated, Personal, Local Access •Educated, Local History •Educated, Access, personal local access •Educated, Inclusion, local access	• Personal, Everyday • Illustrious, Inclusive • Illustrious, personal, everyday • Illustrious, personal, everyday
Design •Spring 1990 •Spring 1995 •Spring 2000 •Spring 2004	•B&W, 3 columns, large titles across 2 pages, text large font, notes, 12 images. •B&W, 2 column, large font, 28 images •B&W, 2 column, 25 images, notes •B&W, 2 column, 42 images, notes	•Formal, accessible  •Accessible •Accessible •Accessible	•traditional, inclusive
Tone/Reading Level •Spring 1990  •Spring 1995 •Spring 2000 •Spring 2004	•reveries, first person personal, scholarly, formal, academic, complex run-ons, evocative, 10 years •scholarly with notes, 7 years education •scholarly with notes, first person personal, 9 yrs •scholarly with notes, quotations, 8 years.	•Inclusion, Access, Educated  •Educated •Inclusion, Access, Educated •Educated	• Personal, Traditional, Everyday, Illustrious • Illustrious • Illustrious, personal • Illustrious

Table 3.5 *Panorama*, A Longitudinal Overview, April 1991 to October 2004

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Physical Form •April 1991  •October 1995  •October 1999  •October 2004	•8.5x11" folded 4 side copied off-white newssheet •8.5x11 folded 4 side copied cream newssheet •8.5x11 11 page stapled white newsletter •8.5x11 11 page stapled white newsletter	•Informal, Accessible  •Informal, Accessible  •Informal, Accessible  •Informal, Accessible	• Inclusive  • Inclusive  • Inclusive  • Inclusive
Subject Matter •April 1991  •October 1995  •October 1999  •October 2004	•1906 commemoration ad; contributions requests; president's message; ads for excursions, fundraiser, tours; member biography; events of other organisations •president's message; ads for home tour fundraiser, book sale, monthly programmes, walks, classes; cards of local businesses •president's message; quiz; article-barbary trail plaques; Director biography; book reviews; ads for trips, walks, programmes; Board news; 4 cards of businesses (antiques, construction) •news of exhibition opening, Mechanic's Institute 150th; TOC; President's message; ads for fundraiser, monthly programmes, walks; solicitation for heritage voting; Contributors; Quiz; financial statement; book reviews; invite to contribute to history book; 5 business cards (interior design, banking); membership joining slip, list of officers	•Information, Profile  •Profile, Information  •Profile, Entertainment/ Education, Information  •Profile, Information, Entertainment/ Education	• Nostalgic, inclusive, personal, progress  • inclusive, progress  • personal, inclusive, nostalgic, progress  • nostalgic, personal, inclusive, progress
Titles •April 1991  •October 1995 •October 1999  •October 2004	•nostalgic 'the big one remembered', inviting 'mark your calendar', practical •few, practical 'fyi', 'walks'. •evocative 'tales', practical 'board elections' •laudatory 'rave reviews', practical, evocative 'seeing the elephant', inviting, pointed 'vote yes'	•Informative, Accessible •Informative •Informative  •Profile, Accessible, Inclusive	•Nostalgic, Inclusive  •Nostalgic  • Nostalgic, Patriotic
Images •April 1991 •October 1995 •October 1999 •October 2004	•line drawings lightbulb=idea •line drawing skyline •photos building, line drawings skyline •photos politicians & directors @ opening event; president cameo; book covers: ghosts, scenery, Emperor Norton; line drawing: elephant, 1850s girls; reproductions buildings; tour location map.	•Simple, Amateur •Simple, Amateur •Simple, Amateur •Profile, grandeur, nostalgia, informative	

Contributor/ Representation •April 1991 •October 1995 •October 1999 •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Unknown except for President</li> <li>•Unknown except for President</li> <li>•Unknown except for President</li> <li>•President, Librarian, member</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accessible</li> <li>•Accessible</li> <li>•Accessible</li> <li>•Unify, Educated</li> </ul>	
Design •April 1991 •October 1995  •October 1999  •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•2 column, basic graphics, pages bordered, banner header plain text.</li> <li>•1,2,3 columns, basic graphics, banner header skyline image, pages bordered, Block titles</li> <li>•1,2,3 columns, images, variety of fonts, sizes, shading, banner header with skyline image</li> <li>•1,2 columns, images, banner header with scenic image, large but consistent header fonts, shading, boxes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Casual, Ephemeral, Amateur</li> <li>•Casual, Ephemeral, Amateur</li> <li>•Accessible, Amateur</li> <li>•Accessible, Professional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday</li> <li>• Everyday</li> <li>• Everyday</li> <li>• Illustrious, Inclusive</li> </ul>
Tone/Reading Level •April 1991 •October 1995 •October 1999 •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•facts, cajoling, inviting, jovial, colloquial, bite sized, conversational, 9 years education</li> <li>•as above, 8 years</li> <li>•as above, 8 years</li> <li>•as above, 11 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accessible, Unify, Inclusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyday, Inclusive, Personal</li> </ul>

### The President's Message – Praising Volunteers and Inclusive History

The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society has had the same President from inception until mid 2005. His jovial tone and use of elaborate and evocative terms and phrases such as 'physical fabric of the community', 'mosaic of the past', and 'asking the lady to dance' in reference to signing contracts, are clearly evident in *Panorama* and the President's Message. This, along with a signature appended to the message and accessible reading level, provides a friendly, casual and unifying theme to the newsletter.

The message is most commonly a vehicle for thanking volunteers and encouraging participation and contributions. The notable exception is the 1999 message which promotes the bright and exciting future of the Society and makes a strong statement about supporting and communicating a broad spectrum of social and community history and '...not only a view via the lens of Emperor Norton, Gold Rush tales and 1906.'<sup>23</sup> (Fracchia, 1999, p2). This is particularly significant as this was when the Society began

<sup>23</sup> Emperor Norton is a well-known and eccentric San Francisco historic figure of the late nineteenth century who proclaimed himself emperor of the County, paraded the city in full dress uniform and handed out his own currency. A recent City proposal to name a new span of the Bay Bridge after him was dropped after media commentary that a crazy project was to be named after a crazy man. 1906 is the year of the earthquake and fire that destroyed San Francisco and from which, so the story goes, San Francisco arose again to prosperity with a flourish.



merger discussions with the San Francisco Museum. It had also commenced promoting itself to City officials as the worthy recipient of the status of official city historical society and tenant for the historic Old Mint building whose future was then being discussed. This edition of the newsletter and its messages, content, and design is clearly concerned with The Society's image and profile with the suggestion of political undertones that also becomes evident in later editions where images of city officials are explicitly included in celebratory Society events.

Table 3.6: *Panorama*, The President's Message

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Subject Matter •April 1991  •October 1995  •October 1999  •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•thank volunteers &amp; 6 in particular, lists their activities, invitation to serve, dependent on</li> <li>•objective/role contribute to mosaic of past, gifts, lament lack of storage, event reviews, solicit funds</li> <li>•vigour of local history, outline role especially publications, expand to schools, include not just old stories but new of cultures, ecology, exciting agenda.</li> <li>•thanks for funds, volunteers efforts and announce volunteer merit awards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Unify, Inclusive</li> <li>•Profile, Inclusive</li> <li>•Profile, Inclusive, Serious</li> <li>•Unify, Inclusive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal, progress</li> <li>• nostalgic, progress</li> <li>• progress, everyday, inclusive</li> <li>• personal, inclusive</li> </ul>
Titles •April 1991 •October 1995 •October 1999 •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•President's Message</li> <li>•President's Message</li> <li>•Moving Forward with an exciting agenda – message from the president</li> <li>•Message from the President, yours in perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Profile, Traditional</li> <li>•Profile, Traditional</li> <li>•Profile, Unify</li> <li>•Profile, Unify</li> </ul>	
Images •April 1991 •October 1995 •October 1999 •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•none</li> <li>•none</li> <li>•none</li> <li>•passport sized be-speckled smiling mature cardiganed gentleman.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Casual</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal</li> </ul>
Design •April 1991 •October 1995 •October 1999 •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Inside cover, 2 column, ½ page, signed, plain font</li> <li>•as above</li> <li>•as above</li> <li>•as above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Traditional, Unify</li> </ul>	
Tone •April 1991  •October 1995 •October 1999  •October 2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•facts, cajoling, inviting, jovial, conversational, focus on exceptional, 10 years education</li> <li>•as above, elaborate words, 11 years</li> <li>•as above, long elaborate words, evocative 'explosive', 10 years education</li> <li>•as above, formal, elaborate, compound sentences, 12 years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Accessible, Unify, success</li> <li>•educated, unify</li> <li>•educated, contemporary</li> <li>•educated, traditional</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal, success, progress</li> <li>• personal, success, progress, illustrious</li> </ul>

## Conclusion

Content Analysis of *The Pioneer*, *The Argonaut*, and *Panorama* determined that these publications reflect the values and goals of the publishing museum as stated in their mission statements or formal statements on the intentions for the publications. There is an overall consistency of style, format and content that aids the publications in being recognisable to interested readers and supports the expounded values and goals. The content analysis does present issues to be further considered by the museums if they want to ensure the most purposeful publications.

### *The Pioneer*

Emerging from a social newsletter, *The Pioneer* has come to reflect a dual purpose: recording its activities as a way of promoting the Society's value to members and other interested parties; and being a vehicle for presenting scholarly history research and discourse within confined areas of interest. The Society may be happy continuing this duality, or it may consider other media for achieving each purpose separately. For example a more regular newsletter or extending the reach of the monthly electronic newsletter may meet the social needs of members more effectively. Initiating wider discourse on collections research and management through monographs (either independently or in collaboration with others), contributing to existing professional publications, or establishing a forum on the new website may positively impact on The Society's professional image. These steps would enable *The Pioneer* to have one clear purpose, for example historical interpretation and education, rather than intertwined roles.

A related area for consideration is whether to extend the focus of the journal articles. Currently these almost exclusively commemorate pioneers, progress, great events and success stories within a narrow time period. While this conforms to the stated mission of the museum, there is room to embrace a wider viewpoint and be more inclusive of time periods other than 1840 to 1865, other populations and perhaps challenging traditional historical perspectives. Doing so could enhance The Society's standing as a museum that adheres to professional standards in education and interpretation promoted within the wider museum community, as well as its ability to reach a wider audience. Key staff have commented that they would like *The Pioneer* to reach a broader audience and to

present California history that appreciates that history is also ‘...what happened yesterday as well as what happened 150 years ago’ (Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004). The current content and format of *The Pioneer* do not progress these aims.

#### *The Argonaut and Panorama*

*The Argonaut* preserves and interprets a wide variety of often unheralded and interesting San Francisco history. In addition, it reflects a very clear commitment to accessible local history in a captivating and handsome manner.

*Panorama* is clearly a utilitarian announcement and news vehicle. It has more recently become a promotional vehicle for the Society featuring discussions and persuasions on its future direction and bright future. The short length, jovial tone and positive outlook do not detract from its more news oriented purpose. The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society has done an excellent job of clearly defining and giving expression to its publication goals within a small and tightly focused financial and management structure. It will be interesting to witness what the future holds for publications as The Society moves into a new phase of City funding, increased community profile, and grand plans for a physical home, permanent and changing exhibitions, and collaborations with other civic and history agencies.

This analysis focuses entirely on the goals and objectives of the museum and the format, content and style of the publication. A copy of the most recent edition of *The Pioneer* and the covers of *The Argonaut* and *Panorama* are included in the accompanying Compact Disc for readers to consider this analysis for themselves. However, the analysis does not take into account the views of the intended audience for a publication or those from outside the museum that have an interest in the publication. Davies (1999) and Korn (1994) suggest a variety of methodologies and sources are needed to build a holistic picture of a programme. The viewpoint of readers in particular is essential to gain a complete evaluation of a publication and is the subject of the next chapter.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Involving Readers in Publication Evaluation**

#### **Introduction**

Publications, like exhibitions and education programmes, are a communications tool. They convey specific ideas, interpretations, images and information about the museum, its collection and its activities. Unlike exhibition and education programmes, discourse on the evaluation of publications involving museum audiences is yet to be widely engaged in or critically discussed. This chapter promotes reader involvement in publication evaluation.

The chapter commences by considering the types and methods of evaluation occurring in museums. Using these concepts the chapter then considers research about readers and using the prevalent front-end, formative, and summative evaluation framework to evaluate publications. Two evaluation techniques, the questionnaire and focus group, are then applied to *The Pioneer*, and the results described. This discussion and application shows how reader evaluation of publications can allow a small museum to gain insight into the motivations and expectations of readers and align its publications with its mission, goals and other programmes. It also suggests that reader evaluation of publications is another way for museums to consider visitor-focussed programmes and interests to expand understanding beyond only professional or scholarly positions.

#### **Evaluation in Museums**

##### What is Evaluation?

The ethical codes, accreditation programmes and best practice standards of the professional museum bodies AAM and AASLH require museum programmes to be evaluated and to demonstrate knowledge of the existing and potential audience. Commentators view evaluation as an important element in understanding audiences and creating successful museum programmes (Loomis 1987; Shettel, 1993; Korn, 1994 and 2005; Kelly and Sullivan, 1996; Anderson and Horn 1999; Economou, 1999; Lord and Lord, 2001; Soren, 2001).

These professionals identify evaluation as the ongoing integrated and systematic gathering and analysis of data about audiences and their perceptions of, and responses to, museums and museum programmes. A robust evaluation programme occurs at a range of junctures, elicits quantitative and qualitative data, returns reliable and valid results, and can be longitudinally compared from year to year. The results are used to assess the success of completed programmes and inform the conception, development and production of excellent new programmes of interest to, and for the benefit of, audiences. (Korn, 1994, 2005; Kelly and Sullivan, 1996; Economou, 1999; Soren, 2001).

#### Evaluation Types and Techniques

***Visitor Research, Front-end, Formative and Summative Evaluation:*** Visitor research seeks broad information about museum visitors, and increasingly non-visitors (Hood, 1991). Demographic information about the wider community along with information about who uses the museum, why and how they use it, and what influences their use and enjoyment is collected. This provides a general overview and understanding of the museum's existing and potential visitors. Other evaluation practices combine this data with data collected about specific programmes.

Front-end evaluation occurs at the beginning of a project. It aims to determine readers' interests, opinions and knowledge of particular topics. There are also some recent examples of museums involving communities in the initial selection and planning of exhibitions ranging from advisory to partnership roles.<sup>24</sup> Formative evaluation collects feedback while the programme is taking shape to make sure it works from the audience perspective. The audience may be asked whether they feel their issues and interests are being addressed, if the content is understandable or engaging, or if the format and design attracts them. Evaluation during the development of a programme provides the opportunity to make changes before great effort and expense is devoted to its production.

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<sup>24</sup> See especially Karp, Kreamer, and Lavine (1992). *Museums and communities: the politics of public culture*.

Summative evaluation occurs after the programme is produced to establish the extent it met its goals and its overall effectiveness. There may be a general focus to find out if audiences enjoyed the programme or found it useful or informative. Or the evaluation may seek to determine if the programme met specific goals. For example promoters of outcomes based evaluation (Taylor, 2002; Weil, 2003; Voelker-Morris, 2004) focus on any benefits or changes experienced by the audience as a result of interacting with the museum. Changes or benefits may include new knowledge, increased skill, changed attitude, or modified behaviour.

***Evaluation Techniques:*** The techniques used depend on the type of evaluation being undertaken, the programme to be evaluated, and the combination of time, evaluator skills, audience sample, budget, and personnel to be committed to the evaluation. It is suggested that both quantitative and qualitative methods are used to provide balanced feedback (Hood, 1991; Anderson and Horn, 1999). Qualitative methods collect audience behaviours and opinions. Using focus groups and other techniques that ask open-ended questions, they are effective at eliciting rich anecdotal detail from small numbers of people. Quantitative methods collect numbers and often use predetermined categories and statistical recording and reporting to make generalisations. They are helpful for obtaining the reactions of many individuals.

Common evaluation techniques are observation, interviews, questionnaires and surveys, and mock-ups/prototypes.

***Observation:*** Audiences are observed while interacting with the museum or a museum programme. Audience movements and behaviours are noted including their pathway through the museum and the time spent with a programme component. Observation is based on the idea that by measuring what a visitor pays attention to an assessment can be made about what is important, interesting or salient to them (Crano and Brewer, 2002). This has become as detailed as tracking eye fixation, direction and duration. Generally the type of behaviour to be observed is predetermined. Behaviour may be collected by trained observers or through recording media such as video cameras. There is often no interaction with the researcher and audiences may not know they are being tracked which has raised comment on the ethics of such practices.



*Questionnaires:* Questionnaires can include lists of open and closed questions, standardised tests of attainment, self-reporting forms, and attitudinal scales. They may be distributed by mail or at the museum and can be supported by a help-line or staff member for questions. Most often however, they again do not involve interaction with the researcher. Questionnaires are often the easiest and cheapest to manage (Hood, 1991; Crano and Brewer, 2002). They can be widely distributed in large numbers which enables the results to be generalised across audiences. They elicit a good response rate when mailed to people with an established link or commitment to an organisation (Hood, 1991, p16). Care does need to be taken in the wording of questions and the length of questionnaires so they are not confusing, misleading or leading, and garner as many responses as possible.

*Interviews:* Based on predetermined areas of enquiry, individuals or groups of people are interviewed by telephone, during or at the end of a museum visit, or by invitation to a focus group where a group of individuals participate in a guided discussion. Interviews have a more limited reach than mailed questionnaires but are viewed as more likely to elicit responses when sensitive information is sought or when a topic is to be probed in detail as it allows for a personal and interactive approach (Crano and Brewer, 2002). It is also a good technique where the audience to be researched, for example children, may have difficulty with a questionnaire or other text based approach. Telephone interviews tend to be less expensive than other types of interview and have a good record of reliability and validity (Crano and Brewer, 2002, p224). Focus groups involve the fewest number of participants, typically six to fifteen people per group, but enable large amounts of information to be obtained in a shorter period of time than observations or individual interviews (Gibbs, 1997). However, focus groups are more difficult to control than individual interviews and require much greater leadership and moderating skills to guard against feelings of intimidation in a group setting, domination by individual perspectives, being limited by group conservatism or views (group think), or alternatively bolstered by the backing of the group to make more risky, but inaccurate, responses ('risky-shift') (Gibbs, 1997).

*Mock-ups:* Mock-ups are models or rough versions of parts of a programme. They are used to test an audience's comprehension of or reaction to design, layout, or instructions. A mock-up may form part of an observation technique or of individual or focus group interviews.

### Evaluation Practices in History Museums

A great deal of visitor research and programme evaluation has been undertaken in art museums, science centres and zoos, but relatively little has been done in history museums (Davies, 1999, p1). A study carried out by Davies in the United Kingdom suggests that visitor surveys that may occur are not carried out regularly and tend to be in-house, ad-hoc efforts with small samples and no validity testing (Davies, 1999, p9).

Research and evaluation practices identified in the two case study historical societies support this view. Their practices are characterised by an informal and sporadic approach which they view as adequate. The museums have a general idea of who they want to reach, for example 'the educated reader...who has some knowledge and appreciation, and understand what they're reading' (Flagg, P. pers. Comm. 10.3.2004). They also have a general idea of who their members/readers are '...lots of senior citizens, one of our challenges now is to open this up more to younger people' (Fracchia, C. pers. Comm. 10.3.2004). While these societies occasionally refer to other audience research studies or commission more broadly conceived surveys for their own use, there is no regular, planned or structured programme.

The San Francisco Museum and Historical Society noted that the option of identifying *The Argonaut* as the beneficiary of membership dues in the membership renewal form was widely used and suggested this was a good form of feedback, if not evaluation. The comment was also made that previous general surveys yielded little useful information relative to the effort expended and the belief that '...nobody's going to sit down and make a reasoned out critique of a publication' (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 14.4.2004)<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> The agreement of SCP members to participate in a Focus Group described later in this thesis suggests this is not necessarily an accurate perception.

It may be difficult for small history museums to embrace a systematic publications evaluation programme where there is a perceived lack of resources (staff, expertise, time and funding) or there are unclear goals for, or evident benefits to an evaluation of publications. Small historical societies may however be heartened to learn that while a regular programme of evaluation is suggested, given the diversity of museums, decision-makers, decisions to be made and programmes it is accepted that no single perspective or approach to evaluation is considered 'the norm' (Korn, 1994). Small scale undertakings are valid especially if informed by other research and combine sources and methods to establish a holistic picture (Davies, 1999, p2). It is therefore open for the small historical society to develop an evaluation system that is appropriate for them (Anderson and Horn, 1999).

### **Evaluation and Publications**

Susan Rossen has pondered whether museums should devote time, energy, funds, and staffing to something we are told no-one will read (Rossen, 1993). The view has also been expressed that '...most publishing efforts are met with at best indifference and often extreme lack of attention' (Thom and Brown, 1993, p18). 'By one estimate, 30 to 40 percent of all books printed are never sold' (Weil, 2002, p118). These figures and comments suggest that perhaps museums do not, in the catch phrase of the communications profession, 'know the audience'. Without knowing who the readers are, their expectations of publications and motivations for purchasing, the publication has less chance of reaching its audience (Hood, 1991).

Reader research and the front-end, formative and summative evaluation framework can be usefully adopted to meliorate this lack of knowledge and evaluate museum publications. Although there have been no formal studies, research or discussion on applying this framework to publications, there are indications that the museum profession supports such an approach. Applicants for AAM's 'Excellence in Published Resources Award' under the auspices of the Education Committee are requested to



submit front-end, formative and summative evaluation information<sup>26</sup>. Museums who have shared their publication evaluation experiences have also shown the value of evaluation.

Toledo Art Museum carried out a formative evaluation using a mock-up of a gallery guide. Three focus groups reviewed a sample of text, were asked how they would use the publication outside of the museum, and were asked for their impressions of the publication. The evaluation showed the groups liked the text but felt the guide was too long, had small and meagre looking pages, dense text and layout with too small type. They said they would be deterred from buying the guide because of too many academic references and credits, specifically donor and collection administration information. They were likely to buy the guide as a souvenir and to remember what they had seen rather than as an inspiration to the further investigation of art. As a result the guide was cut from 272 to 184 pages, grew from 5x6 to 8.5x11 inches, and the price was increased from thirteen to twenty dollars (Gustafson & Knudsen, 1994).

There has also been some limited research on museum publishing and publications in the early 1990s suggesting publications can and should be evaluated. This research focused on publication sales and pricing (Laing Research Services, 1991) and the volume and formats of, and tasks associated with publishing in Canadian museums (Cowan, 1993). They do not canvas reader demographics, interests or views and, while the question 'What does the reader want?' has been asked, it has not been answered (Barnet, 2004). Cowan (1993) does continue beyond the research to advocate a more considered look at publishing activity that integrates publishing with the overall management of the museum, establishes clear goals for and assessment of publishing to ensure quality of purpose and design, has a reader orientation, involves partners (sponsors, commercial partners, joint ventures), and collects quantitative and qualitative data to improve publications and publishing programmes.

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<sup>26</sup> This award programme was established in 2003. Information on the evaluation material submitted was not available for review for this thesis. Such submissions may be a valuable resource for further investigating developments in this area.

## Reader Research

Museums can learn about influences on readers from communications, educational, developmental psychology and marketing theories. These teach that a reader is not a 'blank slate' or 'empty vessel'. Readers are actively involved in receiving and creating meaning in response to museum communications (Shettel, 1993; Miles and Giles, 1999, p52; Borun and Korn, 1999, p44; Hooper-Greenhill, 2000). Audience perceptions and the meanings they adopt are also influenced by a range of environmental and personal factors<sup>27</sup> that Hood has called psychographics (Hood, 1991, p282), that Falk and Dierking have placed into three contexts: personal, sociocultural and physical (Falk and Dierking, 2000) and that the National Park Service's Interpretive Development Programme has helpfully researched and listed (Lacome, 2005).

Additionally, readers are not a single entity with a unified or consistent view and approach. The content and format of publications will be approached in a multiplicity of ways resulting in many readings and understandings '...the individual standing in a particular place within history and culture, focuses on those aspects....which s/he is able to recognise and thereby grasp...' (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p103). Furthermore, establishing meaning is not a single event and changes as understanding grows, and new experiences encountered. Expectations and understandings will be modified and never remain static (Hooper-Greenhill, 2000, p118).

The museum's standing within the reading community, say as a respected authority, will influence how the publication is approached – with seriousness, expectations of learning something new or a different slant on a familiar subject, or pure entertainment. The list of contributors: curator, community, children, or best-selling author has a similar influence. Whether a publication is mailed directly to a select group, is free, mass distributed, or represents a specific museum visit or event will support other reader values.

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<sup>27</sup> These factors include: education; physiology (including intuitive responses to colour, texture, or size); age; learning styles; exposure to similar types of resources, events, or perspectives; verbal and linguistic skills; ability to read what Jacobi and Poli (1995, p60) term paratext (illustrations, images, inserts, legends) and infratext (notes, information sources or bibliographies); skills in reflection, speculation and discussion; culture and/or country of origin; world view; traditions, assumptions, and understandings of family, friends, and community; social situation, frameworks, and relationships; religion which may or may not embrace formally defined disciplines of science or history; mood affecting receptivity; and the perspectives of those who are sharing the experience.

These factors determine whether the reader will obtain or read a publication and the response and outcomes it fosters. Ongoing formal reader research will bring to light aspects of these elements that apply to a museum's readers or intended audience. Research can counter the admonition that in the matter of print publications "Most museum staffs only know their professional audiences" (Roth, 1990, p89; Barnet, 2004). The museum will therefore be in a position to ensure the content, quality, format, and delivery of publications reflect and respond to readers issues.

### Front-end evaluation

Front-end evaluation can identify themes for publication, help determine a publication's focus, suggest production possibilities and may even suggest marketable touches such as cover design and titles. (Borun and Korn, 1999, p7; Anderson and Horn, p2). It provides facts, figures and hard data to support or counter gut reactions. Front-end evaluation will indicate the potential success of a publication and so suggest whether a museum should embark on a publications programme or a particular publishing initiative. It is here that the museums goals and objectives are tested and placed alongside the views of readers.

Information may be available through museum visitor or wider surveys and evaluations of other museum programmes. For example exhibition evaluations and observations of the use of labels, text panels and information sheets may have identified areas visitors found particularly interesting or needed further explanation that could form the basis of or be included in a publication. Observations of visitors to the museum bookstore may identify which publications, or sections of publications attract attention.

The views of non-readers and other stakeholders such as authors, publishers and others involved in publication production may be useful. The comments of publications awards judges may provide input to a successful approach. Other research may suggest what can be expected for publications. The Laing Research Services study has shown that, where visitor attendance is from 190 to 500 visitors a week, five percent of attendees will buy an accompanying catalogue. They prefer soft-covered books eight to one and a price between ten and twenty dollars. Smaller museums with a community oriented exhibition could have nineteen to twenty percent of visitors buy catalogues (Laing Research Services, 1991, p28).



Periodicals have the advantage of making evaluation an ongoing process through open-ended calls for comments or the option of contributing through letters to the editor or submitting articles. This would recognise readers as active participants in the development and management of a publication and that the publication depends on sensitivity to the reader.

### Formative Evaluation

Toledo Art Museum's formative evaluation using a mock-up of a gallery guide is a good example of the value of such evaluation for publications. Mock-ups are particularly useful for testing text readability, legibility and comprehension. This involves providing a selection of readers from the target audience with text samples and asking them to paraphrase what they understand an article, section, or proposed chapter to mean. They may also be asked to identify difficult language or elements that hold no interest for them. Other tools include reading level tests such as the Gunning Fog Index introduced in Chapter Three which considers portions of text and evaluates the syllables and word length. This may be a simpler approach for small museums without the resources to produce mock-ups or coordinate focus groups. Through formative evaluation publications can avoid language that is too difficult or technical, presenting 'old-hat' material, or including hard-to-read graphics. Instead publications can introduce vocabulary and concepts more appropriate for readers (Borun and Korn, 1999, p45).

### Summative Evaluation

Summative evaluation occurs after the publication is produced to establish the extent it met its goals and its overall effectiveness. It may have a general focus to find out if audiences enjoyed the publication. Or it may seek to determine if the publication met specific goals set for it. For example did the audience learn something specific? What parts did the reader actually read? An example of summative evaluation of a gallery guide is provided by Loomis (1987). By observing and questioning museum visitors it was found the guide was often only picked up when prompted by an attendant. Visitors viewed the guide as a bibliographic resource, keepsake, and interpretation supplement and did not always use the guide during the exhibition (Loomis, 1987, p269). The museum can incorporate this information in planning for future publications such as how the publication is made known and available to readers and what content and format might be appropriate to meet the expectations of readers.

## A Reader Evaluation Case Study

This case study considers SCP member opinions about *The Pioneer*. The case study seeks to show how reader evaluation is a further way of judging whether the goals for a publication were met. The case study additionally seeks to show whether these goals accord with the interests and expectations of members. Thus the case study queries members about their level of enjoyment, impression, learning, and expectations for *The Pioneer*. It also canvasses views on future directions and involvement in production of *The Pioneer*, as well as gaining a perspective from members of the portrayal of history by the museum and the impact it has on the image of the museum.

Two evaluation methodologies were used: consideration of data from a questionnaire mailed to all members and a focus group comprising a small selection of those members who had participated in the mailed questionnaire. The questionnaire was carried out by SCP prior to the commencement of this thesis but contained raw data of use to this thesis.

The focus group was undertaken to provide an example of another evaluation option, to test and possibly extend the findings of the questionnaire, and to provide a more current perspective on the publications of The Society of California Pioneers. Focus groups are good for obtaining more indepth opinions and views. There is greater flexibility to follow up and explore issues and the approach is more personal than a paper questionnaire with forced choices. In this case members already had a common connection, there is homogeneity in terms of language, interest in the museum, and location, and the topic is not personally sensitive.

### Member Questionnaire

**Methodology:** SCP mailed a questionnaire to elicit member views about the direction of the Society and obtain feedback about its programmes. The first survey was undertaken in January 1994. The most recent survey was conducted in 2001. This case study considers the most recent responses that relate to *The Pioneer*. Although the questionnaire was not developed for this thesis project and was undertaken prior to the commencement of this thesis, the questions asked are relevant and instructive to the

areas of enquiry for this thesis. Questions covered a range of museum programmes and activities including how members view and use the annual journal, *The Pioneer*, and what they would like to see included, changed or improved.

The Membership Survey was developed by a consultant. It includes statistical/demographic requests, forced choice scenarios, ranked responses, and narrative commentary options. It includes quantitative and qualitative data balancing the ability to quickly complete a questionnaire through defined options while also encouraging individual commentary. The questionnaire is an amalgamation of reader research, front-end, formative and summative evaluation.

It could be viewed that the questionnaire is so broad that the data will be difficult to manage, analyse and report. The questionnaire could also be viewed as too long and would thus deter members from completing it limiting the validity of the returns. Alternatively, the inclusion of multiple areas of enquiry could be viewed as one way to integrate museum planning and evaluation and make the best use of the survey tool. One design concern is the selection of forced choice answers. It is unclear whether there was any preliminary sampling or pre-testing to ensure the choices reflect options important to the respondents and do not merely reiterate the proclivities of the organisation.

The questionnaire was administered by the Membership Committee that confirmed the questionnaire, identified the member categories that would receive the questionnaire, mailed the questionnaire, and received responses. A covering letter from the President accompanied the questionnaire. It identified why the survey was being undertaken: to elicit members views on the strategic direction of The Society, to receive feedback on the role and services provided to members, and to update membership files. The survey represents a commitment from The Society to ‘...expanding our membership, offering programs and events that appeal to and support the needs of our members....’ (Rieden, undated). 1079 questionnaires were distributed. Members could choose to complete the questionnaire anonymously. Instructions were provided to ensure both anonymity and



the reconciliation of survey administration records. 432 questionnaires were returned representing a forty percent return rate<sup>28</sup>.

It is evident that the development and administration of the survey had given attention to valid sampling and administrative and analysis controls and skills. This, combined with the existence of specific questions relating to publications, and *The Pioneer* in particular, make the data appropriate for analysis for this thesis. There is little information on the original analysis and reporting of the questionnaire beyond a one page summary. This case study used only applicable raw data.

The analysis began by identifying the questions relevant to the evaluation of publications. This included demographic information: age, marital status, occupation, ethnic background, length of membership, and why the member joined The Society. This was followed by questions that pertained to publications and *The Pioneer*. These included questions that ranked *The Pioneer* in relation to other benefits and those that asked questions about *The Pioneer* directly. A tabulation sheet was developed to record the data from the returned questionnaires. Appendix V contains the original questionnaire. Appendix VI contains the completed tabulation sheet.

### **Results:**

*The Society's Members/Readers.* By and large members are Caucasian males (89%) between the age of 50 and 70 (54%). They are married, or once were (79%), and work in professional/managerial positions (50%). The majority have been members of The Society for more than twenty years (54%). Members joined the society mainly from a sense of family pride and to support their family's pioneer past and pioneer/frontier values. These two reasons were ranked in the top three by 67 percent of respondents. Other high ranking reasons were having an interest in California history (46%) and supporting an institution dedicated to history (29%). Some also value the events and social interchange provided. It is noted that no respondents listed *The Pioneer* as a reason for joining The Society although this option was provided.

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<sup>28</sup> A return rate of 20-40% is considered a reasonable expectation. This rate is affected by how important people view the survey and the length and design of the survey. This rate is necessary to reduce sampling errors and enhance generalisations (Hood, 1991; Soren, 2001).

*Reader Interests:* Respondents want to read about major events in California history (67%). Other popular topics included family histories, the history of members and of The Society itself, and reviews and notifications of events (50-58%). There was mild interest in book and exhibition reviews (13-21%). Topics that readers found interesting included art, pre-industrial crafts, photography, and the transformation of the landscape. Members also showed an interest through memberships in other organisations in science, fine arts and theatre.

*The Pioneer:* Many chose not to provide an opinion on *The Pioneer* (29%). Some commented they were unaware *The Pioneer* existed. Yet others found the free subscription to *The Pioneer* very (17%) or somewhat (33%) valuable. *The Pioneer* ranked third when compared with other member benefits with the most popular being invitations to events and member-only exhibition openings.

Those that had an opinion or other commentary found *The Pioneer* somewhat friendly and interesting. More often however they found it attractive and educational. It was ranked as being of medium to good quality with a good look, good selection of items and in keeping with The Society's image. One respondent commented *The Pioneer* was perhaps in too much keeping with the image and so was not broadly appealing beyond members. Members did not often share *The Pioneer* with others; rather they kept it for their own reading.

*Improvements:* Specific comments on changes or improvements included making greater use of the collections, inclusion of more pictures, and including items of interest to children and younger members. Many felt that communication with members would improve with a more regular newsletter.

### Focus Group

*Methodology:* The members of the group were selected by searching the current membership database for those who were members at the time of the mailed questionnaire, are not junior members (under 21), live within a one hour commute from the museum, and have a current telephone and address. This ensured that members who

have passed on since the survey are not contacted, that participants are contactable and are able to conveniently participate, and that there are no ethical issues of interviewing minors.

The resulting 292 possible participants were sorted by zip code and every 30<sup>th</sup> participant plus the last was selected to provide ten participants to approach. A check was made to see if the possible participant had returned a postal survey. If they did they were kept on the list. If not the member immediately above on the list was selected until a postal survey respondent was found. The possible participants were then contacted. Where there was no response or the member declined to participate another person was identified using the same process. After thirty-five contacts nine members were willing to participate.

Focus group members were sent an information sheet and consent form so they had an understanding of the process including audio recording of the session, and the context of their participation. On the date set for the focus group five members participated. The initial questions asked, including prompts and areas of enquiry are attached in Appendix VII.

The process of identifying and securing participants, determining areas of questioning, and conducting the focus group took a little over one week. In this instance the timeframe may have been assisted by the fact that many of the members contacted had some recent positive contact with The Society (an 'upcoming events' mailer, attendance at an event, or through an article on two collections items in a local newspaper) and had previous contact with the researcher as an employee of The Society. Another factor may be the time of year, April. Many members leave the city over the summer months (July, August) and during the thanksgiving and holiday period (November, December). It may have been more problematic to secure participation at these times.

The clear and identifiable costs for the focus group were inexpensive in comparison to a mailed questionnaire. The provision of a light lunch for nine people is less than the cost of postage and materials for mailing 1300 questionnaires. Other options for recognising focus group members assistance could be even more cost effective such as free passes to the museum. The cost of the time involved is less quantifiable however. The



participation time of the focus group is one hour but the amount of time an individual might spend becoming familiar or comfortable with the process and issues or travel will vary and cannot be easily compared with the time it might take to complete a questionnaire where this is done outside of the museum. The impact of travelling compared to staying home to complete a questionnaire is also difficult to estimate.

Issues relating to possible differences in the characteristics of focus group members compared to those responding to a mailed questionnaire include representing a smaller geographical spread (members need to be within a reasonable travel distance), and that to some extent, in agreeing to participate there is already a positive disposition to being involved with the museum and evaluation.

**Results:** Views expressed by the focus group fell into four main areas: overall impression, topics of interest, personal learning and attainment and use. A summary is provided here.

*Overall impression.* *The Pioneer* and other pamphlets and handouts were seen as of ‘the utmost’ and ‘outstanding’ quality. Members of the focus group were at pains both during the formal interview and before and afterwards to stress this to the researcher and to each other.

“Before we start I want you to know I am slightly biased as I think this is a very professional and classy publication...”

*Topics of Interest.* Very rarely is the full publication read from cover to cover. Initially the publication is browsed with particular attention given to the illustrations. Then one or two, but rarely more, articles are read.

“I might skip an article if I am not particularly interested in its topic or I don’t have the time”

The favoured items were the feature articles but there is also preference for articles of a more personal nature: “I enjoy articles on members’ family histories”. Those members that are or have been part of an auxiliary or committee group with the museum also

favoured reading about new acquisitions and items from the collection or specific projects they have been involved in.

*Personal Learning and Attainment.* The feature articles were viewed as enjoyable and a learning experience. The entire group expressed the sense of pride *The Pioneer* engendered in their own heritage, the existence of SCP, its resources, and its commitment to California history and professionalism.

“It inspires me to remain involved with The Society...”

“The Pioneer makes me feel very proud of the Society...”

*Use.* Most members keep the journal and display it for a time in their home or office. After some indeterminate amount of time the journal ‘disappears’ with many knowing it is still around but unable to locate it readily. Again some members of the group stressed the quality of the journal ‘it is more than just a throwaway newsletter’ and therefore has a long shelf-life and is a good reference journal. In addition one participant would “definitely share it with others to entice them to join”. This response was a new consideration for some of the participants.

*Future Directions.* No suggestions were made for improvements although there was some support for a more ‘newsy’ publication of smaller format distributed on a more frequent basis. Older participants were nostalgic of previous quarterlies of this nature. Newer members thought the current publication was superior in quality and historic content.

“Perhaps a quarterly newsletter stating the goings on of the Society”

“Yes, exhibits, additions to the collection”

“There used to be a quarterly...much smaller...better format and very interesting”

“It was adequate, but the new pioneer is far superior”

“This [*The Pioneer*] shows more an organisation truly committed to California history”

Some members were surprised to learn from others in the group of other Society publications such as *Points of Interest* which was heartily recommended to them: “You must get one, the L&H book is exquisite, a beautiful book...”

### Commentary

The mailed questionnaire suggests that *The Pioneer* does not have a high profile with all members. This may be because it is only produced once a year and it was not uppermost in the members’ minds at the time the survey was distributed. *The Pioneer* was last distributed six months prior to the survey being mailed. It may also be due to a lack of interest in publications by these members. We also see that those that held *The Pioneer* in greater esteem did so only to a medium extent. Responses tended to cluster around the middle ground of ‘good’ rather than ‘excellent’, three on a five point scale, and ‘somewhat’ rather than ‘very’. Respondents to the mailed survey suggested there is room for improvement in the areas of quality, frequency and design.

In comparison members of the focus group were more definitive about the quality and value of *The Pioneer* rating it extremely highly. As commented previously this may be a skewed response in that participation in a focus group could suggest stronger feeling towards a topic (positively or negatively). There is room however to discover what might induce those who responded to the questionnaire to be more attached to *The Pioneer*.

There is success in matching the objectives for and contents of *The Pioneer* with member interests. In particular commemorating the pioneer past and pioneer/frontier values ranks highly amongst member interests and appears prominently in *The Pioneer* as established in the content analysis. *The Pioneer* also provides for the member interests of learning about research on California history. Many also agreed *The Pioneer* reflected an appropriate image of The Society. The questionnaire respondents and focus group members concur that this publication definitely enhances the museums profile, is educative and represents a proud organisation. The feature articles were the main focus for many and supported their pride in and wish to commemorate their ancestors. While meeting the interests of members, these items support some of those fallacies Schlereth (1980) suggests are barriers to broader appeal and inclusive history namely the histories



of successful men, progress and consensus. There may be a conflict of interest between members and a wider readership.

The ability of *The Pioneer* to unify members is more doubtful given the lack of profile of the journal and the medium ranking given to the journal as friendly and interesting in the questionnaire group. This is coupled with both questionnaire respondents and the focus group having less interest in learning about the professional activities of The Society: collection management, rights and reproductions activity and school programmes. These form a considerable element in the most recent editions. There is also room to include other topics members find interesting including pre-industrial crafts and histories of member families and of The Society itself alongside major events and figures.

Some suggestions were offered in the survey and focus group including being more personal to members' histories and covering some alternative topics. There is also the suggestion that there is room for a more timely publication that focuses on events and notifications. A smaller more frequent newsletter was suggested on a number of occasions in both evaluation techniques. It could be viewed that a more frequent and less scholarly publication would be more appropriate for unifying members and being a record of the museum's activity.

The focus group was able to provide more detailed information on the use of *The Pioneer*. While the questionnaire suggested that members do not share the journal with others, the focus group responses suggested this was a simplistic response. These members, while not actively passing the journal to others to read, did display the journal in their homes and offices thereby making it available to guests. As with some respondents to the questionnaire, knowledge of *The Pioneer* and the range of SCP publications was not universal. There is an opportunity to gain a wider readership through broader marketing of the publications.

## Conclusion

The use of focus groups by the Toledo Art Museum and for this thesis project, the use of observation and a brief in-museum interview as described in Loomis (1999) and the use of a mailed questionnaire by The Society of California Pioneers demonstrate the value of reader evaluation as a management tool to discover reader views and develop and improve museum publications. There is also the opportunity to gain valuable insight into the images and historical portrayal the museum is providing and audiences are obtaining and creating from museum publications.

The techniques and formats discussed by evaluation professionals for other museum programmes are shown to be valid for evaluating publications and determining if goals and objectives for them have been met. There will equally be issues that museum professionals continue to grapple with (ethics, representation, involvement of wider communities) that will also apply to evaluating publications. However, museums who wish to improve their publications, want to know what readers think of their publications, want to make publishing decisions that enhance the readers enjoyment of their publication, and want to avoid, at the very least, the expense of producing a publication no-one wants would be well advised to engage in evaluation involving readers. This chapter has provided background, examples of techniques and strategies for doing so, and shown that the information obtained is of use.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Discussion**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter outlines the influences on the publications of small historical societies as reflected in this thesis research. The impact of a museum's history, environment, and management are reviewed along with the presentation of some critical perspectives on publishing by small history museums that incorporate wider professional issues of historical interpretation and museum publishing trends.

#### **Influences on the publications of small historical societies**

##### History and Community

An historical society's age, size, motivations, staffing, location and stability both impact publications and are reflected in them. The research identified that early historical societies had an elite membership that produced publications aimed at peers and establishing the standing of the organisation as a respectable, valuable, and learned institution. Historical societies emerging from the 1950s had a more pluralist although narrow geographic or topical focus. The case study museums reflect these trends.

*The Society of California Pioneers: Beyond Commemoration?* In keeping with its founding purpose of preserving and promoting the exploits and successes of its founding members, the first SCP publications included highly laudatory speeches and biographies of its members and records of its activities. They were freely populated with grand statements about 'the epochs of progress' (The Society of California Pioneers, 1950, p37), great events and great men, and nostalgia for the 'days of old, days of gold, days of '49' (The Society of California Pioneers, 1950, pix). Members were called brilliant, successful and a 'galaxy of heroes', while no public judgement was made on those members who were suspected of and sought for murder, treason or embezzlement. Unanimity of outlook and loyalty was fostered. SCP even expelled honorary member Hubert H. Bancroft, a noted historian and archivist, when revered pioneers were



derogated in Bancroft's historical series. SCP publications were in keeping with the largely commemorative purpose of Pioneer organisations across America that were established to praise the progress and great future developed by enterprising settlers (Lowenthal, 1989, p115).

Publications of the 1940s to the 1990s saw an emphasis on recording SCP's activities and its collections. This fits the view that "The typical reason for publishing journals is because groups of enthusiasts wish to record and circulate information concerning their work and activities" (Page, 1987, p1). The engagement in the last ten years of staff from outside the ranks of members and from within the museum profession saw publications that sought to appeal to a wider audience. They drew more heavily on SCP's collections, had a wider range of contributors, and became more discursive, providing a range of theories and evaluations on the collection and the histories it contained (albeit in an academic manner). This shift supports the direction identified in the mid twentieth century of being a publicly accessible California history museum and research center (The Society of California Pioneers, 2000, p36). It also suggests a desire to be seen as a respected museum not only by members but by the wider museum and local community.

However, the research shows that SCP's current premier publication *The Pioneer* continues to primarily focus on commemoration, and SCP staff acknowledge reaching a wider audience beyond members has been limited (Flagg, pers. comm. 10.3.2004). There are still a small range of histories and viewpoints presented in comparison to the available community of stories and interpretations, and a continued concentration on the 'educated reader' rather than the public 'at large'. The history of SCP, the legacy of previous publications and staff, and the motivations of members who largely join out of pride in their pioneer ancestors are plainly etched on the museum's publications.

This heavy leaning to commemoration and nostalgia is viewed as somewhat of a problem by commentators who support broader, more inclusive historical representation and the 'new social history' (Schlereth, 1980; West, 1986; Leon & Rosenzweig, 1989; Kulik, 1990; Frisch, 1990; Giglierano & Overmyer, 1994; Deetz, 2004). SCP publications can continue to support the historic commemorative role that many members expect with a preponderance of history devoted to the days of and closely

following the gold rush, the lives of the silver kings, railroad magnates, and European businessmen. Or its publications can begin to incorporate more inclusive histories that expand knowledge for example of Native American and Mexican families whose communal and ranching lives changed, and of the economic and social bigotries and hardships occasioned by increased populations and the opening of railroads. Whichever path is taken this thesis suggests adopting a planning and evaluation strategy that considers how new or revised publications meet identified reader expectations and motivations and align with reconfirmed or new mission statements and publications goals.

***San Francisco Museum and Historical Society - Everyday History:*** In contrast, the publications of the newer SFMHS offer a more contemporary historical perspective and a fresh 'new kid on the block' enthusiasm and appeal. SFMHS publications to some extent broke with tradition by having ordinary people tell little known histories alongside the more familiar and esteemed histories presented by professional historians. The publications embraced the ideas promoted by proponents of the new social history of recording the everyday and the average, although it only goes so far as the content analysis shows a tendency to still favour successful and positive histories.

The community focus can be attributed to the museum's age, motivations, community and staffing. The founding president felt local history was not being presented and that there was a preponderance of dryness and pomposity in the telling of familiar regional histories. He sought to fill a perceived gap. Members, the main recipients of the publications, come from a broad audience of those interested in local history and this is reflected in the variety of contributors to and histories presented in the publications.

There is also a clear distinction between the two main publications, *The Argonaut* and *Panorama* that cater for different and specific member needs, the first for expanding knowledge and enjoyment of local history and the second for information on events and museum activities. This gives a sense of cohesion and purpose to the publications. It is suggested that in a new phase of growth and development for the museum with the hope of new, and possibly younger, audiences and the involvement of a wider range of interested parties and supporters that evaluation and planning strategies would assist SFMHS in considering the future of its publications in its new era.

## Management

The initiation of publishing projects in small historical societies is often linked to the interest and tenacity of individuals. SCP's *The Pioneer* was rejuvenated due to the efforts of individual Board members. Its catalogue *Points of Interest* would likely have floundered without the commitment and enthusiasm of the contributing essayist. SFMHS's *The Argonaut* is the lovechild of the founding president. The publications of small historical societies continue in fact and in recognisable form and quality through the sustained efforts of individuals, often the editors-in-chief. Their skills, specialisations, qualifications, subjective eye, and philosophies (and changes in these) are a large determining factor in the resulting publications. The identification and collection of content, the mechanics of publishing and the overall editorial purview is idiosyncratic and largely undocumented.

Reliance on individuals, particularly resting publishing knowledge, skills and responsibilities with one individual rather than across the institution, could create a future of further episodic publishing, a decline of publishing altogether if there is a staffing change, or perhaps worse, the production of inappropriate, inferior or regrettable publications. While there is a style sheet to guide contributions, the resulting editions rely on individual personality and skill. Any change or interruption in the individual's commitment would interrupt scheduling and the resulting publication.

These issues could be mitigated by integrating publishing into general planning and programme management, and having a written publications policy which covers such issues as the role, focus and tenor of publishing (what is produced, why and with what goals) and the standards to be applied. The informal nature of management and the small staff makes this both an achievable opportunity and a challenge. Access to idea generators and decision makers is easy but a lack of structure for ensuring, recording and following up can result in aspects of decisions being overlooked. Inclusion of publications as a standing agenda item at staff and management meetings, presenting an overview to others (staff, Board members) of the intellectual and technical production process<sup>29</sup> and the benefit of publications, and drawing up a schedule of programmes that incorporates publications may assist.

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<sup>29</sup> This in fact occurred at SCP's 26 October 2004 Board meeting where the editor gave an overview of the production process for *The Pioneer*.



## Other Research Findings

### Parochialism of small museum publishing endeavours

Trends and discussions amongst the wider museum publishing community seem to have little impact on small historical societies. There are no interpretation, communications, education, or publications policies. The case study museums comment that they do not turn to the publications awards or standards of professional bodies and do not formally benchmark against other publications (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 10.3.2004; Flagg, P. pers. comm. 10.3.2004; Boyd, A. pers. comm. 20.4.2004).

Small historical societies rarely engage in trade publications or publications that challenge and explore subjects and link them to current issues. Rather they focus on publications aimed at members, very local subjects, and descriptive histories. The content analysis of the case study museum publications suggests the priorities are members, funders, recording activities and their overarching mission. There is a less, but growing awareness of their professional standing within the museum profession. For example SCP includes reports on professional collections care activities and SFMHS publishes inclusive community based history.

Small historical societies do follow some trends however. Like other publishing museums they have collaborated with commercial publishers to take advantage of production and distribution expertise. There are equally few instances of working on publications with other museums, schools, or community groups. And, like the museum publishing community at large, small historical societies do not test the achievement of the purpose of their publications, review the impact of their processes and structures on publications, or reflect on the impact of the histories they are presenting.

Publications still focus substantially internally on the museum's activities and maintaining its image within a small community of interested parties. Moving beyond this, if seen as desirable, would require attention to policy and planning for publications as well as closer attention to the historical perspectives presented.

## Evaluation

There is limited research on what the professional and wider community thinks about the publications of small historical societies. There are also few instances of seeking community views on improving current or proposed publications. Few small historical societies have received publications awards from professional organisations<sup>30</sup>. As the statistics on how many small historical societies enter the awards are unavailable for this research, two scenarios could be supposed. Either small historical societies are not entering the awards, or the quality of publications from small historical societies is insufficient to garner recognition. Whatever the reason such awards should be seen by small historical societies as a useful form of evaluation through benchmarking their own efforts against professionally established standards and publications in their own industry.

The case study museums reflect this wider inattention to evaluation. SCP receives feedback from three main sources: researchers who use the archives and occasionally submit items for publication, teachers who bring their students to the museum for an education programme, and casual visitors to exhibitions. While, the feedback tends to be positive, it does not seek to determine whether the museum's image or values are viewed favourably or the impact of publications on this. Additionally, while publications record the fact that students and the public interact with SCP, it is only researchers that have any discernable input or influence on the publications produced.

Both SCP and SFMHS limit their evaluation of publications to the views of members and then in a haphazard, informal, or random way mostly through unsolicited letters and telephone calls. SFMHS does have one indicator when members select *The Argonaut* as the recipient of targeted membership dues from a list of options including an endowment fund, the general fund and collections. Previous feedback requests met with little response beyond 'a job well done' (Fracchia, C. pers. comm. 14.4.2004). Other publications (*Smithsonian*, *National Geographic*, *California History*) are only considered in the context of comparing *The Argonaut* or *The Pioneer* in a favourable

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<sup>30</sup> The 2003 AAM publications design awards for museums with budgets less than \$500,000 recognised only two history institutions out of twenty-five recipients. None of the recipients of EdCom's 2003 award were history museums. (AAM, 2004)

light given the resources available. There are no plans to undertake more formal evaluation.

However, this thesis has shown the value of evaluating publications both through content analysis and from the perspective of readers. Use of these techniques revealed where publications supported goals and values and where there may be gaps or room for improvement. Indeed it is the view of commentators that continual evaluation at a number of junctures from planning to the finished programme and that this thesis suggests may include reader surveys or publication analysis is the only way to ensure programmes are effective in their content, quality, format and delivery (Lord and Lord, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

The publications of small historical societies reflect the nature and purpose of the publishing museum. They establish the image and value of the museum, provide an official record of and communications vehicle for museum activities, and can support the museum's mission and goals. Publications also reflect the values and attitudes the museum holds about history and historical interpretation as well as its place in the museum and wider community.

For small historical societies this has meant providing an important tangible and lasting connection between members and the organisation and often remaining closely tied to its origins. Thus small historical societies have tended not to expand into new areas of publishing such as trade publications as is the trend in the wider museum publishing community or to update their publications based on structured planning or evaluation. While this does not mean the resulting publications are of poor quality, it does mean small museums have a more modest approach, with a narrower historical focus, only veering from the traditional in defined respects and engaging less often in what would be considered by the profession, professional management standards and concern for wider professional issues such as the new social history.



The content analysis and reader evaluations contained in this thesis aim to encourage small museums to adopt a broader, more planned and systematic approach to publishing. It is suggested that doing so will maintain production quality, improve the overall content and more specifically align publications with future directions, professional practices and the creation of new audiences. The rewards will include improved certainty about the calibre of the publications, the achievement of their purpose, and a deeper sense of their context for the museum and the reading community. It is also hoped it will encourage movement beyond the traditional presentation of history into a more active process of historical discourse that features more overt links with the present and future and greater breadth and relevancy to a wide range of readers.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Conclusion**

This thesis began with the query as to the nature and role of publishing by small historical societies. The thesis described the publishing activity, practices, and goals of two small historical societies. It also provided a methodology for evaluating publications and the achievement of publishing goals and applied this to a selection of publications from the historical societies investigated. The relationship of readers to publications was also considered and evaluation tools of questionnaires and focus groups used to pinpoint reader perspectives.

Through these varied approaches the thesis has been able to demonstrate that small historical societies regard publications as an important aspect of their programmes and activities. Their particular focus is on cementing relationships with members and promoting the value and image of the museum. Thus they offer educationally sound publications with high production quality that are of most specific interest to members and that herald their own achievements and progress.

Also shown is that publications provide an important window on the museum's values, attitudes and view of history and historical interpretation. In the case of the historical societies investigated for this thesis, while the tone ranges from the traditional and elegant in the case of SCP to the fun and casual in the case of SFMHS, the historical interpretations evident both concentrate on promoting success and progress in an heroic manner. While they are aware of and view themselves as part of the wider museum community and its issues, their publications are strongly influenced by their own origins, motivations and history.

Possibly more so than is the case for larger museums the publications of small historical societies are strongly influenced by the efforts and support of key individuals. For regular publications such as journals and newsletters the most influential individual is the editor whose idiosyncrasies and labours are evident in the very existence of as well as the content of the resulting publications. The dedication of an individual financial

backer and/or author has been the key contributor to the success of other publications such as catalogues and books.

The thesis has also shown through the identification and use of a range of evaluation methodologies that, while the publications of small historical societies may meet their longstanding goals and mission, publications may benefit from reconsideration or reimagining in line with the results of publication content analysis and reader evaluations. While museum professionals have considered the design elements of publications, to date museum publishers have rarely critically discussed or undertaken purposeful evaluation in content and reader views on a consistent or formally established basis. This thesis promotes evaluation of publications and reflective publishing practice.

The work comprising this thesis is but one interpretation of a selection of publications and publishing practice. It also only scratches the surface of the history of history museum publishing due to the great variety of institutions, levels of publishing and the lack of documented practices. However the thesis findings imply that the continuation of excellent and considered publishing programmes and expansion into other desired areas (in the case of SCP and SFMHS monologues or broader historical time periods and perspectives, or into trade publications as many museums seem to be branching) may flounder due to lack of planning, documentation, evaluation, and integration with other museum programmes, structures, or personnel.

The investigation also calls attention to areas of museum publishing worthy of wider research, documentation, and discussion: reader expectations and outcomes, community collaboration, and publications and interpretation. While the lack of discourse to date does not mean museums are not undertaking such work, if they are museum publishing would benefit from the work being widely reported and discussed to ensure that museums engaging in publishing create purposeful, considered and the best publications for museums and readers.



### Reader Expectations and Outcomes

Museums cannot fully claim their publications are successful if they do not know what readers think. The survey and focus group process and results presented in chapter four show one way this information can be obtained, the types of questions that might elicit useful information, and the value of the responses. The responses may influence future design, content, distribution or marketing decisions. For example SCP can now review the contents of upcoming editions of *The Pioneer* to ensure there are sufficient pictorial images and consider the inclusion of a children's section, or the introduction of a new publication to satisfy this area of interest and the desire for a more timely news edition.

How readers use publications and what they get out of them is also an area of enquiry that may prove fruitful. While museums have shown they track publication sales and distribution, there is little discussion and research on how readers use a publication and the outcomes for them as a result of reading the publication. This area of enquiry may be as simple as discovering if the publication was actually read. Further investigation may seek to determine what kind of experience the reader had or, ambitiously, whether there was any appreciable change in the quality of life for the reader. These questions have started to be asked in relation to exhibitions and education programmes with suggested methodologies and guidelines presented in museum professional literature. The same could occur for museum publications.

### Community Collaboration

As described in Chapter One the museum profession has expressed the desire in ethical and best practice standards and in reviews and reports on the state of museum practices to be inclusive of all communities in its collection, exhibition and interpretation practices. To be held in good standing by others within the museum community, museums are encouraged to work with and incorporate the visions and opinions of the broad range of people in their community. As a legitimate museum programme and activity, museum publishing should fall within this framework.

To date, discussions on collaborative publishing efforts most often relate to production and distribution arrangements with commercial publishers or financial support from corporate or other funders. The benefits and frustrations of working with authors not on the museum staff also receive disproportionate attention. However, museums may find

they can better connect with readers, be more inclusive of their communities, or have access to and make the most of a wider range of local resources by also working with other museums, schools, clubs, community groups, or local authorities.

Collaboration amongst small historical societies, cultural institutions, and bookstores with compatible missions could be beneficial in providing access to information, equipment, professional development, in enabling projects that may not otherwise proceed, and in spreading the word about publications and getting them to the eye of potential readers. But wider collaboration with the community in asking historical questions, researching and authoring historical narratives may be even more fruitful.

Rosenzweig and Thelan's investigation of what Americans think about and how they participate in the past is an important contributor to considering how communities may be included in researching, thinking about and presenting the past for publication (Rosenzweig and Thelan, 1998). The survey showed people cared about the past and undertook a range of activities related to preserving, thinking and presenting about the past. These included taking photographs and writing journals to preserve memories, collecting items related to the past then researching and crafting their own narratives about them, and researching and producing family trees.

This commitment to 'doing history' and the resulting information should not be overlooked in a desire to connect with readers through publications. It shows how everyone is able to identify important historical questions, investigate them and present a viewpoint. Community collaborations in publications would tap into these myriad sources of sometimes unconventional historical information and have the potential to provide a wider range of views about history and connect with a wider range of readers who have a preference for history as an active and collaborative venture and who place great stock on personal histories as told by friends and families.

That people also think museums are trustworthy sources of historical information would make collaboration even more appropriate (Rosenzweig and Thelan, 1998). The SCP membership survey showed that family pride and histories was a significant motivator for joining the society. And the SFMHS publication *The Argonaut* has to some extent proven the popularity of local and personal histories from non-academic authors.

The benefits of inclusion would not only add to the professional goals of inclusive museum practices but may also mitigate the repetition of longstanding fallacies in the presentation of history. Indeed, the way history is presented in museum publications is another area worthy of study.

### Publications and Interpretation

Like exhibitions, publications can play an important role in stimulating historical interest and thought and establishing a relationship between the past, the reader and current life events. The types of historical perspectives adopted by museum publications influence these relationships but have not been given in-depth consideration.

Discovering these perspectives could be as brief as an examination of publication titles and bi-lines. For example Minnesota Historical Society's title *Potato City: Nature, History and Community in the Age of Sprawl* deals with the 'growth of cities and natures endurance'. This could be read to suggest an historical perspective concerned with growth, adversity, and natural wonder all within a humble and community context.

Another option presented and promoted in Chapter Three is undertaking content analysis of spreads of and individual publications. Thus museums will be able to ensure they are presenting the history they intend. The museum profession can also gain an appreciation of the state of historical interpretation as presented in museum publications that could result in critical assessments such as those seen as important for exhibitions (Leon and Rosenzweig, 1989).

### Conclusion

This thesis has described the major roles large and small history museums have for publications. These are identified broadly as establishing the image, value, and nature of the museum with members, stakeholders, and the museum and wider community; reflecting and supporting the museum's mission and goals; recording and announcing museum activities; and presenting, promoting and interpreting specific histories and views, values and ideas about history.



The thesis also promotes refining publishing practices and studying and discussing museum publishing and publications. In particular it suggests ongoing planning and evaluation techniques that will help individual museums ensure their publications meet the needs of readers, achieve the goals of the museum, and have an impact on the profile of a museum in the wider community. The content analysis format also gives museums the opportunity to be clear about the historical perspective they are presenting.

Publication Programmes in Small History Museums  
Interview: Areas of Questioning

Peter J. Flagg  
Executive Director, The Society of California Pioneers

Amy Boyd  
Editor, *The Pioneer*

A. History/Background

1. There have been a range of publications launched by The Society since its inception mostly annual reports, newsletters and yearly reports on celebrations and milestones. What would you consider to be the first 'considered' publication of The Society? What do you believe its goals were?
2. Who was involved in contributing to it and publishing it? How would you characterize the contents: then/now? Who is it aimed at?
3. The first imprint I can identify of *The Pioneer* is 1949. What information do you have about its launch? Goals, contributors, characterization, audience?
4. What about the publications in the last ten years? *Points of Interest*, *Annals of San Francisco*, Describe how these came about.
5. Have all publications in the last ten years been handled in the same way? If not when did it change, why?
6. Does The Society have a publications policy? An editorial policy? Is this written? What do they cover or can I have a copy? How and by whom were these developed? Are/how are they revised?
7. How does *The Pioneer* and other publications fit into the organizations mission? What do you feel is the publications contribution to the Society's goals and to the readers? What distinguishes it from others? Where does it fit in the level of the Society's priorities?
8. What types of decisions need to be made about publications on an ongoing and one off basis?
9. How are these decisions made? By whom?
10. Describe the main audience and membership.
11. What are some key moments or events either for or that have influenced The Society's publications?

## B. Practices and People

1. How are items acquired? How much predetermination goes into each publication/issue?
2. What is your main role with regard to the publications? What is your background for this role? What do you do?
3. Describe relationships with others involved in the production process? How did they become involved? Are there formal contracts or agreements with them? What do they cover, or can I have a copy? Has The Society been involved in any collaborations? With whom? How did that work?
4. How are publications funded?
5. What is the breakdown of costs for each publication? How are these apportioned?
6. Have there been any financial surprises?
7. To whom are publications distributed?
8. Do you have or use a style guide? Can you describe it or can I have a copy?
9. Have the AAM awards program, national museum publishing seminar and other museums programs influenced your publications or program? If so how?
10. Do you use a planning or production schedule? Can you describe it or can I see one?
11. Do you evaluate your publications? If so, how? How do you measure success? Is your audience involved in this? If so, in what way? What information have you collected about or from your audience? Has this had an influence on what you do? Do you use information from other museum/society programs to inform what is published?
12. What changes in technology have influenced or impacted your publications?
13. What do you see as the role of the Internet or other technologies for both the organization as a whole and for print publications? How do you use these?
14. What is the biggest change you've seen in the last 10 years for your publications?
15. What is the most important thing you've learned since being involved in publishing for the Society?
16. What has been your most successful and unsuccessful publishing moment? Why do you say that?
17. What is the one issue that makes it the most frustrating? And the most rewarding?

## **Committee Approval Statement**

These interview parameters have been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, PN Protocol 2/44. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Palmerston North, telephone 64-6-350-5249, email [humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz).



Publication Programmes in Small History Museums  
Interview: Questionnaire

Charles Fraccia  
President, San Francisco Museum & Historical Society

A. History/Background

1. You founded the Historical Society in 1988. Why did you found it? What was its original mission and structure? Who was involved? What were its first activities? Did it have a collection? Describe this? Did it have a budget? How was that derived?
2. Between 1988 and 2002 how did any of these areas change: mission, structure, collection, activities?
3. Since the amalgamation what changes have been made to any of these: mission, structure, activities, collection?
4. What about the Museum? Can you give me any information about its structure and mission in the beginning?
5. When was the first publication launched (*The Argonaut*, *Panorama*, other)? What were the goals for it? Have these changed?
6. Who was involved in contributing to it and publishing it? How would you characterize the contents: then/now? Who is it aimed at? Describe how these came about.
7. Have all publications been handled in the same way? If not when did it change, why?
8. Do you have a publications policy? An editorial policy? Is this written? What do they cover or can I have a copy? How and by whom were these developed? Are/how are they revised?
9. How do you believe *The Argonaut* and other publications fit into the organizations mission both previous and as currently listed on the website ie “to serve as the focal point for discovering the history of San Francisco”? What do you feel are the publications contribution to the Society’s goals and to the readers? Where does it fit in the level of the Society’s priorities?
10. Describe your main audience and membership.
11. What are some key moments or events either for or that have influenced your publications? What distinguishes it from others?

## B. Practices and People

1. What decisions need to be made about publications on an ongoing/one off basis?
2. How are these decisions made? By whom?
3. How are items acquired? How much predetermination goes into each publication/issue?
4. What do you see as your main role with regard to the publications? What is your background for this role? What do you do?
5. Describe your relationships with others involved in the production process? How did they become involved? Do you have formal contracts or agreements with them? What do they cover, or can I have a copy? Have you been involved in any collaborations? With whom? How did that work?
6. How are your publications funded?
7. Can you give a breakdown of the costs for each production? How are these distributed?
8. Have there been any financial surprises?
9. To whom are publications distributed?
10. Do you have or use a style guide? Can you describe it or can I have a copy?
11. Have the AAM awards program, national museum publishing seminar and other museums programs influenced your publications or program? If so how?
12. Do you use a planning or production schedule? Can you describe it or can I see one?
13. Do you evaluate your publications? If so, how? How do you measure success? Is your audience involved in this? If so, in what way? What information have you collected about or from your audience? Has this had an influence on what you do? Do you use information from other museum/society programs to inform what is published?
14. What changes in technology have influenced or impacted your publications?
15. What do you see as the role of the Internet or other technologies for both the organization as a whole and for print publications? How do you use these?
16. What is the biggest change you've seen in the last 10 years for your publications?
17. What has been your most successful and unsuccessful publishing moment? Why?
18. What is the one issue that makes it the most frustrating? And the most rewarding?

## **Committee Approval Statement**

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Appendix II: Content Analysis: The Pioneer, December 2003.

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission/Goals	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Subject Matter	List Directors, new Members, social events, collection items, masculine success with family biographies, male camaraderie articles. Assets. Directors message, grants received. Lists of References, methodologies. Making research appointments.	Unify (you could be a director), Profile Educated Reader	Exclusive, Preserve/ commemorate heritage & as masculine, progress, respectable, consensus. Money (collection/ asset)
Titles:	'Where I was from', legends (14), Donors, Members, Woman's Auxiliary (4), 'Visualizing', 'Lithographic' (3), Professional (5), Interns, 'Evolution of a myth' (7)	Preservation, Unify, Educated reader, Profile	Nostalgia/commemoration as active (voyagers) and respectable, Inclusive/Accessible, Learning
Images:	Of collection, buildings (4), Men (9), Industry (8), rugged landscape (3), Native American (1), family group (5), Letter reproduction	Profile/Image Educated Reader in attention to script and detail.	Progress, prosperous; Nostalgia of Adventurous, respectable, family oriented, Masculine.
Contributor/Representation	Professional, PhD, Librarian, First hand account	Educated Reader Commemorate	Exclusive
Design	Notes, References, Elegance, Inside front cover editorial & mission, Cover prosperous & active Pioneer painting from collection, centre transcribed letter	Educated Reader, Profile (edited journal), Commemorate, preservation of collection	Exclusive, Nostalgic, Progress
Tone/Reading Level	Diligent, great year, respected, Scrupulous research (25), 'mined extensively their writings and found gold', 'Beehive of activity', Vernacular, dissertation, symposium (32, but gawk, savvy), 'great escape', 'impressive scorecard', 'yours in pioneering spirit' (10), traditions of society & heirloom (22), 'reminds us'/questions (6)	Profile (professional, busy) Mostly educated reader Preservation Unify	Nostalgic icons, Progress icons, Heroic, Learning



### Appendix III: Content Analysis: The Pioneer, President's Message.

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission/Goals	Theme: Historical Interpretation
<b>Subject Matter</b> •April 1967 •April 1977 •December 2003	• Latest acquisitions, Open House, Teachers, seminars, microfilming • California traditions, gatherings, Step up acquisitions, ladies groups, future plans, Study of genealogy •Conservation projects, early state articles, support, integrate Daughters, Outreach & education programmes	• Preservation, Profile/ Professional • Preservation, Unify, Educated Reader, • Preservation, professional profile	• Learning, Inclusion • Nostalgia, consensus, progress, inclusive • Nostalgia, Money, Inclusive, Learning
<b>Images:</b> •April 1967 •April 1977 •December 2003	• Suited, Mature, Male • Suited, Mature, Male • Suited, Mature, Male	• Profile/Professional • Profile/Professional • Profile/Professional	• Money, tradition • Money, tradition • Money, tradition
<b>Design</b> •April 1967 •April 1977 •December 2003	• image plus plain text, 1/3 page, inside cover • image plus plain text, 1/3 page, front cover • image plus plain text, ½ page, page 3	• profile, professional prominence • profile, professional prominence • profile, professional prominence	• tradition • tradition • tradition
<b>Tone/Reading Level</b> •April 1967 •April 1977 •December 2003	• Record, safe-keeping, oldest, Perpetuate the memory, Renew acquaintances, wield, vermin • Padre-conquistador, celebrate, fame & fortune, Focus on ordinary people, Antidote to future shock • pioneer traditions, four generations, ancestors proud, bibliophile (but stepped-up colloquial), Great progress, able leader	• Professional, Preservation, Commemorate, Unify, Educated Reader • Commemorate, educated reader • Commemorate, profile traditional, educated reader	•Nostalgic, Learning, • Nostalgic, Progress, Money, Inclusive • Nostalgia, consensus, progress

Appendix IV: Content Analysis: The Argonaut, Fall 1998.

Variable	Description/Exemplar (frequency)	Theme: Mission/Goals	Theme: Historical Interpretation
Subject Matter	Diary, Lettersheets, Earthquake refugee camps, Bohemian biography, Asian photographer, local neighbourhood, list of officers	Local History, San Francisco stories, community stories, Expand Knowledge, profile	Personal, Inclusive
Titles	Argonaut, Dairy of, 'to the ends of the earth', 'greatest bohemian'		Nostalgia, Personal, laudatory, success, heroic
Images	Buildings, sites, art, variety of people in groups mostly families	People's stories	Personal, Nostalgic
Contributor/Representation	Curator, historian, PhD, library, museums (images), Retired mechanic, native/local of city, pianist	Educated Reader, People's stories	Personal, Everyday, Inclusive
Design	Notes, references, statistic tables, White space, lists, chunks, large images, instalment 3 of 4	Educated Reader	Inclusive, Everyday
Tone/Reading Level	'Keepsake', 'remembrance', Morals 'honor the shacks' 'pastoral', multiple vignettes, stalwart, 'dismisses today's skateboards', 'silent survivor', 'foggy summer days', 'golden era', pictorial/drawing in the round, cheeky, pop, joker, upstart, 'Summer of Love' 'battle to save victims', 'melting pot'	Expand knowledge, icons & idylls, educated reader, people's stories/language.	Nostalgic, respectable, personal, progress, good ole days, Everyday, inclusive, consensus, heroic

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

January 2001

Your answers to all questions will help us to keep our records up-dated. However, if you wish to make your candid feedback anonymous, please Xerox this form: use the original form to provide us information that allows us to reconcile our records and know that we have made contact with you. Use the Xerox copy on which to make your answers confidential; mail the latter under separate cover.

I. BASIC CONTACT INFORMATION

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Last

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City State Zip Code

PHONES: \_\_\_\_\_  
Home Work

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Marital Status: ☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Separated ☐ Divorced ☐ Widowed

Occupation: ☐ Farmer/Rancher ☐ Sales/Retail Sales ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Military ☐ Scientist \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Professional/ ☐ Services/Labor \_\_\_\_\_  
Managerial ☐ Teacher/Professor \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Retired ☐ Secretarial/Clerical \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ Artist ☐ Entertainment \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnic Background: (Please check one.)  
☐ African-American/ ☐ Caucasian/White/ ☐ Native American  
Black Non-Hispanic ☐ Other  
☐ Asian ☐ Chicano/Latino  
Hispanic

When did you first join the Society of California Pioneers? (Please check one.)  
☐ 1900-1930 ☐ 1971-1980 ☐ 2000-2001  
☐ 1931-1950 ☐ 1981-1989  
☐ 1951-1970 ☐ 1990-1999

What category of membership do you hold? ☐ Life ☐ Contributing ☐ Junior  
☐ Daughters of California Pioneers ☐ Women’s Auxiliary

How long have you been a member of The Society? \_\_\_\_\_

If there have been any breaks in your membership, could you tell us why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



How did you become a member of The Society of California Pioneers?

- ☐ Self Initiated
- ☐ Gift from Parents
- ☐ Gift from Grandparents
- ☐ Other relative
- ☐ at suggestion of another member
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the most important reasons you joined the Society? (Please check *three*. For the single most influential reason, write “1”, for an important reason, write “2”, and for the less important reason, write “3”).

- ☐ Family Pride
- ☐ Educational activities
- ☐ Library usage
- ☐ Support of an arts/cultural institution
- ☐ Support of California history institution
- ☐ Support of my family’s pioneer past
- ☐ Recommended by a friend/family member
- ☐ Social events
- ☐ Social interchange
- ☐ To receive newsletter *The Pioneer*
- ☐ Interest in California history
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

In your opinion what makes The Society of California Pioneers unique? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

II. PARTICIPATION AND ACTIVITIES

Have you ever been to a Society event? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Place number of times in last five years on line:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Convivium

\_\_\_\_\_ Opera Supper

\_\_\_\_\_ President’s Picnic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other special events, for example

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever visited Pioneer Hall? ☐ Yes ☐ No

What kind of activities would you like to see offered and to participate in?

- ☐ Convivia
- ☐ Special Events
- ☐ Day Trips
- ☐ Walking tours
- ☐ Overnight travel/tours
- ☐ Lectures in other locations
- ☐ Family values. Father/Son special events
- ☐ Community support: *Coastal Clean-up day* or *KQED Telemarketing* that could muster and raise visibility of pioneers.
- ☐ Book Signing
- ☐ Previews of films and videotapes on California or West
- ☐ Annual Snowshoe Thompson ski trip
- ☐ Annual James W Marshall Gold Discovery Site Overnight
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

What would interest you to get more involved with the Society? \_\_\_\_\_

*(If you need more space, please use the last page of this form)*

Would you like to have Society events in different geographical areas of the state? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you attend Society events if they were held in different geographical areas of the state? ☐ Yes ☐ No

At the present time, The Society of California Pioneers offers limited membership benefits. We would like to be able to increase those benefits to members and find benefits that would be of interest to our members. How valuable would the following member benefits be to you. (Please check one in each category. Please give us your ideas in the "Comments" section.)

	Very Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Not Valuable	Cannot Say
Discounts at the Museum Store	_____	_____	_____	_____
Invitations to previews/openings Convivia/events	_____	_____	_____	_____
Discounts on lectures/classes	_____	_____	_____	_____
Use of pre-paid event passes issued Per year	_____	_____	_____	_____
Museum sponsored trips and tours	_____	_____	_____	_____
Advance notice of events	_____	_____	_____	_____
Free subscription to <i>The Pioneer</i>	_____	_____	_____	_____

In your opinion how can we improve the quality of membership benefits gained by being a member of *The Society of California Pioneers*? Please describe:

Should The Society change the current date of January 1, 1850 to expand the period of membership eligibility? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If not this date, what date?

- ☐ Admission Day
- ☐ 1869 Completion of Transcontinental Railroad
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you currently a member of any of the following organizations? (check all that apply)

- ☐ California Academy of Sciences
- ☐ California Historical Society
- ☐ KQED (TV) or other PBS affiliate
- ☐ KQED (Radio) or other NPR affiliate
- ☐ Metropolitan ballet company
- ☐ Metropolitan fine arts museums
- ☐ Metropolitan modern art/craft museum
- ☐ Metropolitan Area opera company
- ☐ Metropolitan theatrical repertory company
- ☐ Oakland Museum
- ☐ Other historical society, history library, or genealogical association: \_\_\_\_\_

III ABOUT THE PIONEER

In your opinion what makes *The Pioneer* unique? \_\_\_\_\_

What items would you like to see included in *The Pioneer*?

- ☐ Research findings
- ☐ Summary and notification of events
- ☐ Exhibition reviews
- ☐ Reproductions (paintings, photographs)
- ☐ Family histories and genealogies
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Book reviews
- ☐ Articles on California history
- ☐ Reports (board, departments etc)
- ☐ History of the Society, members
- ☐ Manuscripts

Please rate the overall quality of *The Pioneer* (content, design, etc.)

Excellent                      1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      Poor

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How can we improve *The Pioneer*? Please describe.

\_\_\_\_\_



Using the scale please circle the number you believe best describes *The Pioneer*?

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Unfriendly
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	Boring
Attractive	1	2	3	4	5	Unattractive
Educational	1	2	3	4	5	Uninformative
Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	Formal
Fun	1	2	3	4	5	Not fun

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate *The Pioneer* on the following aspects:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Look	_____	_____	_____	_____
Content	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cost	_____	_____	_____	_____
Size	_____	_____	_____	_____
Frequency	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fits Society's image	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please tell us who you share *The Pioneer* with

- ☐ Spouse
- ☐ I read it alone
- ☐ Adults 18 years or older
- ☐ Child(ren) 12-17 years
- ☐ Child(ren) under 12 years
- ☐ Friend(s)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

IV ABOUT YOUR PIONEER HALL EXPERIENCE

In the last four years how many times did you visit Pioneer Hall? (Please check one)

- ☐ I have never visited Pioneer Hall
- ☐ 1-2 times. When?
- ☐ 3-4 times.
- ☐ Over 4 times. How frequently?

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

What are your primary concerns or interests in the location?

- ☐ Parking
- ☐ Public Transportation
- ☐ Security at night
- ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Please tell us about who most often comes with you to Pioneer Hall (Please check one)

- ☐ Spouse
- ☐ I most often come alone
- ☐ Adults 18 years or older
- ☐ Child or children 12-17 years of age
- ☐ Child or children under 12 years of age
- ☐ Friend(s)
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

Using a scale of 1-5 please circle the number that you believe best describes Pioneer Hall in each of the following categories.

Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	Unfriendly
Exciting	1	2	3	4	5	Boring
Attractive	1	2	3	4	5	Unattractive
Fun	1	2	3	4	5	Not Fun
Relaxed	1	2	3	4	5	Formal
Educational	1	2	3	4	5	Uninformative

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate the overall quality (exhibitions, architecture, library etc.) of Pioneer Hall

Excellent	1	2	3	4	5	Poor
-----------	---	---	---	---	---	------

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

How would you rate events that you have attended at Pioneer Hall and at other locations? (Please check one in each category)

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Atmosphere	_____	_____	_____	_____
Menu Selection	_____	_____	_____	_____
Quality of Food	_____	_____	_____	_____
Cost	_____	_____	_____	_____
Hours of events	_____	_____	_____	_____
Parking	_____	_____	_____	_____
Fits Society's Image	_____	_____	_____	_____

If you could, what changes would you make to The Society's events at Pioneer Hall? At other locations?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How often do you come to a Special Event or Convivium without visiting the museum or library?  
(Please check one)

- ☐ Always                      ☐ Often                      ☐ Seldom                      ☐ Never

In the future, which of the following kinds of exhibitions would you like to see more of at The Society of California Pioneers? (Check all that apply)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paintings and drawings  | <input type="checkbox"/> History of the Society and its members                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Early California Pre-Industrial Crafts                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Transformation of the Land, growth and development of cities and state |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Decorative Arts (architecture, furniture ceramics, glass etc) | <input type="checkbox"/> Family histories and genealogy   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Photography   | <input type="checkbox"/> Manuscripts  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Major events and periods in California history                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____   |
|  | _____   |
|  | _____   |

Would you be interested in enrolling in a professionally-certified Volunteer Program through which you would gain transferable skills in Collections Management while working on The Society’s collections?

- ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

V FAMILY GENEALOGY, CURRENT AND PAST

Do you have relatives i.e brothers, sisters, cousins or other family members, to whom we could send membership information: If so would you share with us their names and addresses? How many relatives do you have that might be eligible for membership?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have children?                      ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

Are any of them members?                      ☐ Yes                      ☐ No

Would you share with us their names and addresses, if applicable?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



Do you have grandchildren ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are any of them members? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you share with us their names and addresses, if applicable?

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VI BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

In order to develop its museum and library collections, The Society wants to become better acquainted with the role that members and their families have played in the growth of the State of California and the Far West.

The Society is interested in all pioneers – well-known or historically invisible. The texture and quality of everyday life of California settlers is difficult to document. Sometimes the seemingly smallest piece of evidence about a past time or event is very important.

Specifically, The Society needs to document (1) traditional life styles, (2) cultural traditions, (3) continuity on the land and in businesses and industries, and (4) the lives and times of the founding members.

Please describe your generational involvement in California agriculture, ranching, industry, arts, politics, and/or business etc.

---

---

---

What corporations are you currently or have been connected with in the past? \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

Can you suggest ways that your present business or profession might assist The Society

- ☐ Volunteering
- ☐ Pro-bono consulting
- ☐ Direct giving
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you considered putting The Society in your will? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Would you like information about how your bequest might benefit your estate planning?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Please use this Page

for additional comments and suggestions as well as a continuation page  
for any items on the questionnaire for which you need more space.

**Thank you for your time and assistance  
in evaluating the future directions of The Society!**

## Tabulation Sheet: The Society of California Pioneers Membership Survey

Age Range	Number	Percentage
< 30	17	3.9
30 – 49	71	16.4
50 – 59	108	25
60 - 69	126	29.2
> 70	35	8
No Response	75	17.5
Total	432	100

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
African/American	-	-
Asian	-	-
White	384	88.8
Hispanic	18	4.2
Native American	12	2.8
Other	-	-
No Response	18	4.2
Total	432	100

Marital Status	Number	Percentage
Married	270	62.5
Single	69	16
Divorced	54	12.5
Widowed	10	2.3
Separated	9	2.1
No Response	20	4.6
Total	432	100

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Farmer	-	-
Military	-	-
Professional	216	50
Retired	90	20.8
Artist	-	-
Sales	18	4.2
Science	18	4.2
Labor	-	-
Entertainment	36	8.3
Teaching	-	-
Clerical	-	-
Other	18	4.2
No Response	36	8.3
Total	432	100

Year Joined The Society	Number	Percentage
1900 – 1930	-	-
1931 – 1950	-	-
1951 – 1970	126	29.2
1971 – 1980	108	25
1981 – 1990	72	16.7
1991 – 2000	90	20.8
No Response	36	8.3
Total	432	100

## Reasons For Joining Times Chosen

Family Pride	288
Educational	-
Library	36
Support arts	18
Support history	126
Recommended	72
Events	18
Social Connections	36
<i>The Pioneer</i>	-
California History	198
Family Past	288
Other	18
No Response	-

Why *The Pioneer* is Unique Number Percent of Respondents

Reflects Ancestry	11	84.6
Pride in California History	1	7.7
Collections Reproductions	1	7.7

## Areas of Interest Number Percentage of responses

Research	36	3.5
Book Reviews	90	8.8
Events	216	21.1
Exhibitions	55	5.4
Reproductions	19	1.9
Family History	233	22.7
California History	105	10.2
Departmental reports	-	0
Society/Member history	231	22.6
Manuscripts	39	3.8
Total	1024	

## Topics of Interest Number Percentage of Responses

Art	241	20.2
Pre-Industrialism	107	8.9
Photography	231	19.4
Major California events	251	21.1
Transforming the Land	232	19.5
Science	90	7.6
Theatre	39	3.3
Total	1191	100

Value of *The Pioneer* Number Percentage

Very	72	16.7
Somewhat	145	33.6
No	33	7.6
Can't Say	89	20.6
No Response	93	21.5
Total	432	100

## Other Benefits Number %

<i>The Pioneer</i>	216	50
Store Discounts	129	30
Lectures	181	42
Trips	216	50
Invitations	311	72



Quality of <i>The Pioneer</i>	Number	%
1 – Best	71	16.4
2	117	27.2
3	101	23.4
4	18	4.2
5	-	-
No Response	125	28.8
Total	432	100

#### Suggested Improvements

More frequent communication via a newsletter (2)

Inclusion of items of interest to children and younger people (2)

More pictures

More San Francisco history (2)

Greater Use of the Collection

Sharing	Number	%
Spouse	100	23.2
18+ years	36	8.3
< 12 years	-	
12 – 17 years	-	
Friends	18	4.2
Alone	117	27.1
No Response	161	37.2
Total	432	100

#### Describing *The Pioneer*

	1	2	3	4	5
Friendly	3	4	8		
Interesting	4	3	7		
Attractive	6	4	4		
Educational	8	5	2		

#### Rating Factors of *The Pioneer*

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Look	8	5		
Content	6	5		
Cost	4	6	1	
Frequency	3	7		
Image	5	5	1	

### Focus Group Questions

As a member of The Society of California Pioneers you receive a copy of *The Pioneer* each year.

What is your overall impression of *The Pioneer*? Eg. How does it fit the image and mission of The Society? Does it fit in with other society programs and exhibitions? How does it compare with publications you know of by other museums and societies?

Which parts do you read or like most/least? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Is it the right mix of content? Do you read it all, or only select parts? Which parts?

What do you gain from *The Pioneer*? Eg. Do you find it meaningful? Enjoyable? Do you learn anything new? Does it extend your knowledge of the collection, exhibitions, The Society?

How does it make you feel about SCP? Eg. does it encourage you to visit the museum, inform you about the nature of the museum and society?

How do you use *The Pioneer*? (discuss, display, share, reference, impetus to research) Would you share it with others to entice them to visit or join?

Do you know about or have you read other SCP publications? Which ones? What impression did they leave you with?

Would you like to see other publications? Other topics? Describe (type eg newsletter/catalog, content, contributors, why)

Do you feel you have the opportunity to contribute to or comment on the publications produced?

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