

Gretchen Jennings  
Editor

from the editor



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Dear Readers,

**O**ur current issue, on *Traveling Exhibitions*, provides a range of perspectives on something that has become a staple of the field. In this period of economic downturn it might seem as if the cost of hosting traveling exhibitions would signal the shrinkage of this format. However, it seems as if the traveling exhibition is here to stay: if there is one constant in almost all of the articles published here, it is the idea of value for dollars spent. The reason most commonly assumed for the hosting of a traveling exhibition is that it is an audience attractor and revenue source, bringing back regular visitors to see something new and attracting new visitors interested in the particular topic of the show. It is heartening to see, however, that there are a number of reasons beyond dollars and cents that museums continue to invest in the creation and hosting of traveling shows. Among the themes that recur in the articles are:

- *The value of collaboration: Traveling exhibitions are by nature collaborative projects, whether in the creation/development or in the hosting. Museums value these collaborations despite the usual challenges of communication, politics, and negotiation that any team effort involves. The collaborations often have economic benefits as well, allowing museums to share staff and resources and to reduce shipping and installation costs.*
- *The impact of staff development: All museums, but especially small and rural organizations value the opportunities provided by touring shows for enhancing the skills of their staff. Working with more experienced colleagues on creating, installing, and maintaining a variety of exhibitions can provide new experiences and on-the-job training.*
- *The involvement of community. Many touring shows have as one of their goals the enhancement of community participation. Traveling show managers work with host museums to encourage the involvement of the community in making the show reflect local values and achievements. This often results in new relationships between the museum and other organizations that can be sustained long after the exhibition has closed.*
- *The long-term impact. A number of articles discuss the enduring legacies that traveling exhibitions can have on both the host museum and its community.*

Along with these discussions of the benefits of traditional traveling shows we also feature a couple of articles that call attention to some questionable trends in the field and that urge museums to look at smaller and more experimental approaches. The three exhibition critiques were written separately, and yet provide a case study for some of the issues raised in "The Shadow Side of Traveling Exhibitions." I hope you'll enjoy reading all of these articles, and perhaps raise some questions for discussion on the NAME listserv.

Sincerely,

*Gretchen Jennings*