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Introduction:

The following material was originally presented as a shared working document on the original Museum Worker Task Saturation web site that was severely truncated by Google and essentially made inoperable in August 2011.

The purpose of this document is to help solve the museum workers' task saturation problem by sharing their own workable solutions.

This document was begun by participants in an Ideas Café session “Fully Loaded Camels: Strategies for Survival” that was held at the October 2006 British Columbia Museums Association annual conference in Prince George. A second discussion occurred at the October 2009 Ontario Museum Association conference in Hamilton, ON. The suggestions arising out of this latter session have been shown in red. Group Moderator Paul Thistle has made additional suggestions throughout based on his draft Problem Statement paper & subsequent research.

A third discussion among participants in the American Association of Museums 2012 annual meeting in Minneapolis, MN at the Ideas Lounge session “Rising Expectations, Task Saturation, & Time Poverty for Museum Workers: Fully Loaded Camels Seeking Solutions” identified suggestions that are shown in blue text.

Brief comments relating to solutions from participants at the Canadian Museums Association 2014 conference in Toronto, ON session “Museum Worker Overload & the Ethics of Exploitation” are shown in pink font.

In this venue, please be a part of the solution by posting your own valuable experience in coping with task saturation and time poverty so that all museum workers can benefit.

**FULLY LOADED CAMELS: STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL**

Representatives of seven museums participated in an Ideas Café discussion at the 2006 BCMA Annual General Conference in Prince George, BC. The session was aimed at identifying strategies for museum workers to deal with the problem of continually rising expectations in the museum field that are sustained by insufficient resources to meet them. A second conference session was offered at the 2009 Ontario Museum Association annual conference in Hamilton, ON, a third at the 2012 American Association of Museums annual conference in Minneapolis, MN, and a fourth at the 2014 Canadian Museums Association annual conference in Toronto, ON.
Various kinds of ideas have been proposed by museum workers. The first set at the 2006 BCMA conference are shown here in black font. Those solutions suggested at the 2009 OMA conference appear here in red. Some suggestions were practical while others were philosophical, but all were based on years of experience dealing with the problem of continually increasing expectations and the unavailability of sufficient resources to meet these demands. Solutions suggested at the 2012 AAM conference appear here in blue. Those briefly mentioned at the 2014 CMA conference are shown in pink font. As recorder, I have taken the liberty of organising the comments by theme and have made editorial clarifications and posed questions in square brackets [...].

Please post your comments about these suggestions and add other workable strategies on the lists below and/or the new categories as needed from your own experience. We need to share ideas that will help museum workers deal with our reality of being fully loaded camels working in a continual downpour of straws (read rising and altogether new expectations).

Anyone visiting the site can read this document, but you must join this Yahoo Group in order to post your ideas.

Many thanks to the BCMA Ideas Café participants who generated the original ideas to begin this process: Darla Dickinson from Historic Yale Museum, Jordana Feist from the Maple Ridge Museum, Viviane Gosselin a PhD student from UBC, Tammy Hardwick from the Creston Museum, Edith Henning from the Mackenzie & District Museum Society, Jim Millar from the Port Moody Station Museum, Paul Thistle [recorder] from the Langley Centennial Museum & National Exhibition Centre, Dianne Willgress from the Regional District of Fort George Cultural Services Advisory Committee, and a representative from the Quesnel & District Museum whose name I failed to record. Unfortunately, your recorder did not collect the names of participants in the larger 2009 OMA session nor for the AAM discussion in 2012 or the 2014 CMA comments.

First Things First:

• museum workers are our own worst enemies; we are part of the problem [we accept new expectations despite existing overburdens]

• say no; we need to take a stand

• [In order to be successful in this strategy, William Ury, Director of the Global Negotiation Project at Harvard, presents a plan of action for basing "No" on first saying a positive "Yes" to the worker's own values and core interests (Ury, William. 2007. The power of a positive no: How to say no and still get to yes. New York: Bantam Dell, pp. 2, 17-18, 34, 43, 80-1, passim).]

• STOP working more hours than you are paid; keep track of those unpaid hours that you still cannot avoid & report these totals [volunteers need to record and report similarly]
• be realistic [about what can be accomplished with the resources available]; be honest with yourself

• only do routine tasks as often as necessary. For example, write cheques and update financials mid-month and at the end of the month – set them aside at other times. Limit email checks to two or three times a day - morning, after lunch, before you leave for the day. Otherwise you wind up whittling away at the blocks of time needed for big projects

• [Use the Solving Task Saturation for Museum Workers Blog or the Museum Worker Task Saturation Wiki Yahoo Group to share workable solutions with colleagues. Indeed, if museums can become "happiness machines" for our visitors and use "wiki" processes to solve world problems as envisioned by McGonigal (2009. Fiero! Museums as happiness pioneers. Museum 88 (2), pp. 51-52), perhaps they need to begin such a laudable project internally with their own workers.]

• [Trying to do too much to meet the exponential expectations curve simply reduces the quality of everything we attempt–not to mention the quality of our own working lives (Erica Maniez 2002. Survival secrets for the heritage professional. History News 57 (3), p. 10). Instead, let us determine to do a few top priorities well, rather than attempt everything expected of us in an under-resourced and therefore unavoidably and frustratingly mediocre–not to mention personally stressful–fashion.]

• [It must be said here that museum workers have been much too passive about our overburdened work lives and the growing debilitating impact of constantly increasing, yet unsupported, expectations. Indeed, it is recognised that denial of the problem is one of the main hindrances to corrective action in this realm (Chen, Charles P. 2006. Improving work-life balance: REBT for workaholic treatment. In Research companion to working time and work addiction, ed. Ronald J. Burke. Cheltenham, UK & Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar, p. 316). Museum workers have failed to make this an important priority for our professional organisations and other stakeholders. Arguably, therefore, it is museum workers who must now take the initiative collectively to identify our real needs to professional organisations, governments, employers, and supporters in order to obtain some relief from ever rising expectations. A collective movement to "humanise the workplace" in our museums is needed to seek reductions in the common situation of overwork and to create the possibility of more work/personal life "balance" for museum workers (cf. Bunting, Madeline. 2004. Willing slaves: How the overwork culture is ruling our lives. London: HarperCollins Publishers, p. 325).]

• really small museums are affected disproportionately and have no voice in the matter. We need to reach out to mid-size museums [for assistance??? What about our professional museum organisations?]
• museum workers require a sense of humour

• most important thing is to avoid the idea that we as museum workers have “failed.” The task saturation problem is not our failure. [Rather, it is a Post-Modern, contemporary socio-economic, and significantly IT-driven problem. See the “Problem Statement” document in the Files page on this site for an analysis of the origins of task saturation and time poverty in the museum field.]

• Re work load increased dramatically: Additional compensation OK if have the ability to say no. Would be a wonderful advantage. [Stress/overwork] is our main problem.

Interpretive Services:

• offer alternatives to first person interpretation; employ stand-alone outdoor exhibits; use of animals like “guard donkeys” was suggested to keep visitors occupied until first person interpretation is available

• keep the front door closed when workers are not available, on lunch, etc.; provide self-serve visitor activities, e.g., provide site pets such as a Great Pyrenees dog and hands-on activities or walking trails and interpretive signage to keep visitors occupied until first person interpretation is available

• provide access by appointment only

Exhibitions:

• Writing label copy is time consuming. One museum ditched all but essential label copy and gives out a takeaway instead. [Do the latter take less time to compose than the former?] Tours of exhibits are given 1-to-1. This personal touch increased donations. Engage visitors with information at other places or access points.

Volunteers:

• find more volunteers in the community

• reward volunteers with an annual event, e.g., BBQ; apply "warm fuzzies" to volunteers; thank you [public service] ads can be used as space fillers in local newspapers

• use school volunteers [for credit]
• hold artifact parties to carry out routine tasks such as numbering artifacts; engage the community; let volunteers participate in [and truly understand] the work

• say no to bad volunteers because they take too much time & energy

• find out how to deal with a “dead weight” co-worker [start with http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2011/10/03/can-you-revive-dead-weight-employees/ or http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/05/03/how-to-protect-yourself-when-you-inherit-an-incompetent-staff]

• focus on training volunteers

• Get people engaged in the museum [to increase volunteerism].

• Communicate why I am excited about this museum work & what interest is found in the artifact. Present the artifact through behind the scenes processes. The stuff we like to do keeps us engaged & allows us to attract new people.

2009 OMA Keynote Address by Dr. Candace Matelic “Thriving on the Edge of Chaos:” [PowerPoint found at OMA web site http://www.museumsontario.com/ in the Members' Resources section]

• More work for us to do from Dr. Matelic's keynote. We must balance consultants' views with internal perspectives. Take the long view; past institutional experience is important.

• Refocus on effectiveness rather than efficiency. We put too much emphasis on details. A shift in museum culture is required.

Personnel:

• work at home [to be away from interruption?]

• In one participant's experience, it's best not to work at home. Go in a little early or stay a little later if you have to, but taking work home just means less time for you - there are endless tasks at home, too, like housework and laundry and your favourite TV show. Keep home and work separate.

• take appropriate rest breaks [days off & holidays without doing museum mission work] and forget about a 9-5 schedule if you can. If you're feeling caught up, take the afternoon off once in a while instead of looking for the next task.
• [for both paid & volunteer staff] track [and report to powers that be] spare time spent on museum tasks as an unpaid volunteer [Note that in 2014 a Canadian class action suit now has been certified by the Supreme Court of Canada. It is centres on whether it is legal under the Canada Labour Code for paid staff at a federally regulated bank to work unpaid overtime—**even if they want to do so.** See the commentary file on this Blog’s Task Saturation Documents Page under Legal Background and the full Canada Labour Code at http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/L-2/]

• security issues were mentioned; walkie talkies were recommended

• learn how to delegate tasks to volunteers and subordinate staff; this means learning how to lead effectively [vs leading only by example]

• once you've delegated a task, leave it delegated - check back occasionally, be prepared to help if problems arise, but don't micro manage

• need leadership and training skills to implement above [train others to do the work; this is management vs mission work]

• accept offers of help when you get them

• **Remember that you set a dangerous precedent when you do something heroic** [i.e., be realistic about what can be accomplished given available resources. More broadly, this impacts expectations not only of your own performance, but others' as well.]

• **Work flexible hours.**

• Volunteer time outside of work hours. [Isn’t this part & parcel of the task saturation & time poverty problem? How can we avoid the necessity to do this?]

• we need to point to what we are losing as experienced museum workers are burnt out and leave the profession in the hands of those with less experience

• many museum staff are leaving [Do we need to ensure that we know the reasons for turnover—e.g. exit interviews to identify **why** museum staff members are leaving their jobs?]

• unions help protect museum workers through restraints on overtime, but we are living in a tough economic climate . . . [Should museum institutional sustainability be dependent on exploiting museum workers?]

• labour laws provide protection [against unpaid or otherwise uncompensated overtime, etc.]
• museum HR departments need to be supportive about the time poverty & task saturation problem and be “trustworthy” for museum worker best interests.

• HR departments need to plan for a time when laid off museum workers die and are no longer available to return to work as volunteers

• museum HR departments as employers need to become true “Resources for Humanity” [See Elaine Heuman Gurian (ed.) (1995) Institutional Trauma: Major Change in Museums and Its Effect on Staff. Washington: American Association of Museums: “Even if impaired work performance were not the outcome of unabated staff stress, I would proffer another, and perhaps better reason to pay attention to staff needs. If our work in museums is evidence of our collective commitment to enhancing the quality of life for society, then we must be attentive to maintaining a high quality of life for our work community.”]

• HR calls museum workers on the carpet for working too many hours because management becomes liable for breech of employment laws requiring compensation for overtime. HR did not want time cards used in order to hide overtime and avoid allowing comp days. [In this light, do museum workers need to study, evaluate HR performance, and work with HR managers to set departmental goals, objectives, and performance evaluation schedules so that the work HR departments can be improved so that this management function actually serves to improve the quality of museum working lives–HR as “Resources for Humanity”?

• employers might need to provide access to psychologists, masseuses, and implement required staff exercise time.

• one participant does yoga two times/week, a DIY project

• find out how to deal with a “dead weight” co-worker [start with http://management.fortune.cnn.com/2011/10/03/can-you-revive-dead-weight-employees/ or http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2011/05/03/how-to-protect-yourself-when-you-inherit-an-incompetent-staff]

• negative attitudes about museum workers who leave work on time [need to change museum work culture]

• CMA [every professional museum organisation] needs to address it at a CMA [every professional museum organisation] meeting. A huge issue. Human rights issue. Make sure this becomes a governance issue. Personnel needs to be one of the main issues for CMA [& museums]
Teamwork:

• Build teams.

• Find knowledge & skills required internally. Many people have hidden talents that we can use.

• Delegate.

• [In the challenging book *Museums in a Troubled World*, Robert R. Janes (2009, 64-6) makes an interesting case for radical change to replace the common “lone director” hierarchical model of museum leadership. Janes recommends an alternate *primus inter pares* model to save overwhelmed museum CEOs from their excessive workloads.]

Partnerships:

• Get partners to help share the work load. Museums can gain increased exposure through cooperating with new partners.

• Trust your partners in order to allow relinquishing your control over aspects of joint projects.

• Communicate widely to begin keeping more people in your network. This is not just a marketing strategy: dynamic organisations plan to communicate.

• Sometimes if a partnership falls through, we end up disappointing people. Sometimes this results from the success of a third party's aggressive lobbying for use of scarce resources. [Would brief written partnership agreements help to protect previous commitments in cases like this?]

• Look for local sponsors, use neighbours' parking, invite non-traditional partners, social service agencies, etc.

Boards:

• educate boards about the human and other resource impact of their “bright ideas;” be very clear to explain the implications of their bright ideas [“management by the next—not the current—bright idea” is a serious problem that prevents proper consolidation of present efforts when constant streams of new bright ideas are expected to be implemented at the same time]
• ask the board to do the work so they can understand what they ask

• education of boards is needed to identify exactly what day-to-day museum work pressures and current work overloads involve. Awareness of the real work situation will help boards make good decisions.

Planning:

• [Establish priorities in the areas that we control and, as Janes (2009, 156) reminds us, deciding what not to do is a crucial part of planning.]

• evidence of task saturation problem is only anecdotal at present. We need to determine how much of the task saturation problem is attributable to us museum workers and how much is on our institution [. . . professional organisations, university programmes, professional development trainers, governments; audiences, & other stakeholders such as business-oriented culture, and general socio-economic pressures. Probably all of these influences play a greater or smaller role.]? on the problem [before we can rationally plan solutions.]

Curatorial/Collections Management:

• Re-evaluate registration/catalogue backlog issues on which museum workers have been taught to place emphasis. Why catalogue vs. inventory? Does traditional records management really matter in all cases? Changing this priority would allow taking things off our plate [cf. argument of Dubé (2001) in Muse 19 (1): 8-9 that professional standards may need to be differentiated according to museum size and available resources]. Perhaps we might do exhibits visually from a picture rather than detailed catalogue records. Such an approach might allow us to “back off” 90% of our tasks. Get out of your own way with much of collections management. [We need conference sessions and training to deal with this issue.]

• Procrastination is sometimes helpful. Use interns & cooperative students.

• Many museums are decades behind cataloguing and it is impossible to catch up. We need to be sane when attempting to do all this work. We need to find people who have talents for the work.

Management:

• make work plans with completion dates; celebrate when the project is finished–this builds sense of accomplishment and confidence
• work with what you have [this necessitates realistic assessment of what is doable given the resources at hand]

• take advantage of every opportunity [Note that this risks spreading oneself too thin, which is the main problem of task saturation. Hard-headed analysis of every opportunity is necessary.]

• Prioritise & choose the tasks that have to be done. The public is the priority.

• Management is about deciding where you put the museum's capacity. If a newly suggested project is not in the current budget, do not permit discussion of the project until the next budget cycle [vs. “management by the next bright idea”]. Cross-reference priorities. Get budget priorities in writing and establish initial consensus. Base decisions on the budget. In budgeting process, get staff to tell management what they are able to do. Stop holding out a large laundry basket and asking people to throw things into it. Record lists of the bright new ideas for future consideration.

• Above approach would have to be “on a different planet” given a large municipality's framework where upper management sets the agenda. It is people who energise us with new ideas. Within the status quo, we need to think way beyond the budget.

• use the museum's strategic plan to avoid newly proposed ideas that will add unplanned tasks to workloads: “If it's not in the strategic plan, we are not going to do this [now].”

• leadership teams need to identify goals and priorities [& “stay the course”]

• for dealing with new ideas, projects, standards . . . , etc. ask your supervisor “What would you like me to let go [in order to carry out this new task as an already fully loaded camel]?”

• Priorities are important. We need to see consensus among staff. We need to make expectations match available resources. We need to focus on the set of goals agreed upon [i.e. be realistic on what can be done]. Staff resources & enthusiasm need to be spent wisely.

• Everybody becomes change leader, including summer and part-time staff, etc. All voices need to be heard. Concentrate on working within existing resources.

• Procrastination can be useful. You need to make deliberate choices about what you do & what you don't do [cf. Janes (2009: 156) Museums in a Troubled World]. Need to select between doing what is urgent vs. doing what is important. Get help from people around you to get the job done more effectively [cf. Janes (2009: 62, 65, 72-3) primus inter pares management model?].
• Manage to distribute tasks to other people. Flatten organisation [Janes' primus inter pares as above]. Large structures are difficult. A new culture in our work environment is needed—the top down boss is not the best model. Execution needs to be based on more discussion among staff.

• In museum that has 6.5 staff, we work in a relaxed conversation organisation. [Commentary presented here was not recorded.] Changing the physical work space makes a difference. An Emphasis on ergonomics, & air quality, etc. is important.

• A plug for e-mail: It allows for a whole series of conversations that could not happen in other ways (e.g. face-to-face), however, we need to manage it. [With regard to managing e-mail, see Email Charter web site http://emailcharter.org/. E.g. severely restrict use of cc & reply all to cases that absolutely require it.]

• In our busy working lives, we do not even eat lunch together with other museum workers [To combat this, one museum foregoes the daily morning break in order for all staff to take a half hour "afternoon tea" together in order to keep a consistent time for sharing, connection, and collegiality.]

• How do we stop straws from falling on our workload? What is needed is smaller bits of workload [i.e. "chunking" of the work].

• Decide that the world is not going to end if everything is not done.

• In one museum, a department of a larger non-heritage focussed organisation, staff always need to be validating their position. There is not enough support and tight guidelines are applied. Expectations come in by e-mail. [Do we need to educate our parent organisation as much as we do our audiences?]

• The hierarchy assigns more tasks. Workers need to negotiate what has to be dropped in order to meet new expectations. We must be honest that we can't do it all. There is a finite amount of me. Priorities need to be established & followed. Negotiate on priorities to bring greatest benefit. [William Ury's 2007 book The Power of a Positive No: How to Say No and Get to a Positive Yes is highly recommended in this context.]

• We exist in a society characterised by consumers who are demanding and lack patience. Special interest groups pressure politicians with "I pay my taxes." Society needs a new mind set. [Do we need to focus on educating taxpayers about the current work overload?]

• Saying "we can't do it" starts us on a guilt trip. Offload guilt on superiors. At a certain point your hands are tied.
• We do a wide range of crazy things. People do not know what it takes and it is very hard to explain. Educating stakeholders is time-consuming, but time well spent.

• Say no & let go of the guilt. We don't have to collect every last arrowhead. Nothing is an emergency.

• Use silence to move forward [i.e. do not respond to unresourced expectations. If silence is not permissible, try implementing William Ury’s (2007) Power of a Positive No survival strategies].

• Constant communication is needed to educate the public about the situation.

• Re "just in time" management: we need to push planning horizons farther out into the future in order to permit carving up sufficient time & space to accomplish goals [This planning must be realistic and include contingency time for the unexpected emergency flood, etc., etc.].

• We must become better at knowing when resources are not sufficient to achieve our objectives. We need to become better at going after new resources to avoid such limitations.

• Seize the moment; plan.

• Don't do anything unless it serves at least 2 purposes.

• [Solutions to the problem of voluntary commitmen[t of unpaid time by paid museum workers that are recommended by Best, Leah. 2007. Giving back or giving out?: Community obligation. Museums Roundup (237): 10-11] include careful planning, delegating, managing expectations by being up front about time limitations, and setting boundaries. See the analysis of this approach in the Blog Task Saturation Document page in the Problem Statement file.]

• [Museum workers also will have to become somewhat subversive if we are to deal effectively with ever-increasing expectations. For example, one element of a solution could and should be to identify aspects of our continually growing load of obligations that can be eliminated from museum mission statements, the policies, and procedural rules that we write.]

• [We must start being brutally realistic about what is doable given the relatively minuscule human and other resources available compared to our own lofty expectations and those placed on us by others.]
the web site http://emailcharter.org/ ] Museum workers often compete to chime in on after hours messages [cf. Workopolis job search web site that advertised it helps employers hire “Mr. Works all Weekend.”].

- Management idea: List all your tasks & drop existing ones to make room for a new one.
- Need more formal networking group. [see Solving Task Saturation Blog & Museum Worker Task Saturation Wiki]

Management of Expectations:

- Most of our work to be done on the task saturation issue should focus on the escalating expectations problem. We need to educate partners and other stakeholders about the tremendous demands engendered by the museum field's own standards and the significant changes that the world faces. Managing these expectations needs more attention than finding additional resources [see analysis in the Problem Statement file on the Task Saturation Documents page]. The most serious gap is in expectations. Museum workers need to take time to think so we can answer the question about what is our priority & to chart a path accordingly.

- Accept expectations given the external pressures, but there is a need to educate decision makers about the situation.

- Visitor expectations are inflated through experience at museums with big operating budgets. For small museums, it is important to focus on the quality of artifacts. Some visitors are not all that happy with paying admission to small museums. In this case, consider free admission with encouragement to go through the museum first and then place whatever seems a corresponding value in the donation box. Full-time staff are needed at all times to give tours. [Are there ways & means of doing this while at the same time reducing the strain on museum worker resources?]

- [Museum workers must begin to take responsibility for and more control over the quality of our own working lives. Kahn and Garden (1994. Job attitudes and occupational stress in the United Kingdom museum sector. In Museum Management, ed. Kevin Moore. New York: Routledge, p.194) found that one important cause of stress and related negative outcomes in museum working lives is a feeling of powerlessness. This is among the causes of unrelenting strain in working lives (Janes 2009, 75, 149).]

- [Perhaps it also is time for museum workers to begin adopting strategies associated with “working to rule.” As part of such an initiative, museum workers also need to take firmer control of the professional organizations that represent us. We can start to do this by strongly directing these organizations to adopt the work intensification, overwork, task
saturation, and time poverty problem as a top priority over the next five to ten years.]

- supervisors expect museum workers to be available by phone on weekends & there is an inferable impetus to comply for purposes of being considered for advancement. No punitive measures should accompany museum worker resistance to comply with such expectations.

Operational Funding:

- establish endowments–community [and museum-specific?]; [Concern was raised here about an endowment making a museum ineligible for grant funding. If this is the case, another need for lobbying presents itself.]

- carefully evaluate grant programmes that may be more trouble than they are worth to a museum

- student grants need to be organised properly and exploited

- help student grant employees to learn to love the work; show your passion for the work–it is infectious

- have a retention plan to encourage summer grant staff to return in subsequent years in order to reduce the training demands every summer; [A problem was reported here concerning the negative attitudes of grantors to this type of serial hiring–another target for lobbying?]

- [Museum organizations, museums as employers, and other stakeholders must begin reflecting seriously on their attempts to advance the cause of museums one might argue primarily by relying on–and therefore by default exploiting–museum workers and their love for their work (Friedman, Renée. 1994. Museum people. The special problems of personnel management in museums and historical agencies. In Museum Management, ed. Kevin Moore. New York: Routledge). Absent additional resources, the vast majority of the increasing and altogether new burdens associated with improving museum performance fall on the backs of existing museum volunteers and/or employees. In this regard, another initiative by museum association members might well be to instruct the executives of our professional organizations to make a top priority in their next five year plan to work toward increasing basic operating funding for museums. This would permit museums to hire more museum workers to begin dealing with the overwhelming backlog of tasks. Perhaps this initiative could begin with volunteer run museums to enable them to hire their first full-time permanent paid employee. Here–and this is critical, it should be acknowledged that the evolution of a completely volunteer-run organization to become one with a single paid staff member is fraught with its own danger: i.e., dumping all tasks...]}
formerly carried out by several volunteers on a lone paid person (Graffagnino, Kevin. 2003. Do you really want to be a CEO? History News 58 (4): 7-11.). This guarantees that the first paid museum employee immediately becomes a fully loaded camel.

- **Small community museum:** Obtains money from CMA [Canadian Museums Association, a national museum organisation that administers a federally funded programme that partially funds museums to help hire summer staff]. Funding needs to be increased so we can pay for job positions. CMA needs to advocate for more funding.

**Political:**

- find allies; seek support
- lobby for more resources and stable funding at a sufficient level; town councils were mentioned [but there are at least 2 or 3 senior levels of government that also require lobbying]
- use the BCMA [or other professional organisation] list serve channels
- [Collective action is required. Museum workers should not rely totally on their own resources in isolation to try and deal with the problem. There is incremental strength in numbers.]
- AAM professional standing committees are moving away from the idea of silos regarding interdisciplinary standards [Is this a help or hindrance?]
- question regarding the focus of the AAM: Is it an organisation focussed on institutions as opposed to individual members? Is the AAM mechanism set up to work for individual members? [In other words, the AAM needs to address this issue?]
- we need help from the professional institutional levels with regard to identifying the [unreasonable levels of?] expectations

**Grant Work:**

- Don't create projects to take advantage of a new grant opportunity. Make planned
projects fit the opportunity if you can; if not, ignore the funding opportunity

- part of the problem of overwork is fear of loss of dollars [Is the solution therefore increased operating resources, and/or addressing the task saturation problem by reducing expectations?]

Training:

- From onmuse-l-request@chin.gc.ca on behalf of Cathy Blackbourn (cate@golden.net)  
  Sent: February 11, 2010 11:01:05 AM  
  To: onmuse-l@chin.gc.ca

Hello all!

I want to share the professional development approach of a Regional Museum Group that I admire and that is Ottawa (they actually have two groups whose members work together for major helpful impact). Most of us can't afford the time or the $ to attend all (any!) of the professional development opportunities that they know would be worthwhile. Why not have one member of your museum network/group/cluster attend (and if your group has a professional development fund they could even support it) with the understanding that they will "report back" or share the learning at your next museum network meeting following. Members could even submit their specific questions to this representative in advance for maximum benefit! Maybe your group could make "upcoming professional development" a regular discussion item on your agenda.

I'm suggesting this because of the upcoming Ontario Museum Association seminar:
HST: Impact on your Organization  
Friday, February 26, 2010  
9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.  
Textile Museum of Canada, Toronto ON  
http://museumsontario.com/publications/whatsnew/feb04_10.shtml#HST
Is someone from your museum network already planning on attending?  
Could/would someone attend on behalf of all of you?

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The 2010 Certificate in Museum Studies schedule is available on in  
the Professional Development section of the OMA website.  
Don't forget to visit the Ontario Museum Association website <http://www.museumsontario.com/>www.museumsontario.com regularly to find out what's new in advocacy and other museum issues,  
download tip sheets and other useful information shared by your colleagues, check current job postings and learning opportunities.

How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world. -- Anne Frank

• [Museum training sessions inevitably and unavoidably raise expectations among museum organisations, governments, other funders, trustees, museums as employers, and museum workers themselves. In light of their inflationary effect on expectations, museum workers should consider passing resolutions at their professional organisation annual meetings that require all training sessions to address how to find the time, tools, and personal resources to actually implement new learning about professional museum approaches.]

• a level of naivete in the labour market exists; high number of interns & applications; universities keep churning out museum studies grads [Is the solution to provide more paid museum positions or limit the number of museum studies programme admissions?]

• joke re entry level museum workers who have already “drunk the Kool-Aid” & overwork [Is the solution to include additional information on current levels of increasing expectations, time poverty, task saturation, and overwork situation in museum training and professional development programmes along with ways and means of maintaining an effective work/life balance?]

• museum workers are high achievers [also “occupational devotees” see Stebbens, Robert

- we need to survey staff about what drives raising expectations and/or have training available about how high achievers can maintain a sustainable work/life balance?


**Standards:**

- [In light of all the issues created by the exponential expectations curve, it may not be too subversive simply to examine the potential for redefining how we expect small and medium-sized museums to operate in the absence of resources sufficient to meet rising expectations. Cf. Dubé, Philippe. 2001. View: Towards a new generic model for small and medium-sized museums. *Muse* 19 (1): 8-9 who recommended that we look for an alternate model of what small and medium-sized museums can, could, and should be instead of expecting them to meet the myriad of standards in the field.]

- a participant in the 2012 American Association of Museums conference discussion reported that one museum was not re-accredited under the AAM's Accreditation Programme due to an unreasonable amount of work expected from that institution's staff. [It is extremely encouraging that this issue was considered to be so significant in the AAM accreditation process given that organisation's response to questions about museum worker time poverty and task saturation. The AAM cannot confirm nor deny this report. Provocateur Paul C. Thistle reports the opinion of AAM's Sr. Director, Museum Standards and Excellence, Julie Hart et al. in his University of Toronto Museum Studies 40th anniversary conference presentation forthcoming article that the AAM can do nothing other than advocate increased resources for museums as institutions. This approach ignores the issue of managing what Thistle believes is the most important variable, i.e. the constantly rising expectations from all stakeholders.]

- we need to re-evaluate accreditation standards and identify what are reasonable performance criteria. Museum workers need to negotiate reasonable performance standards.

Ethics:

- the unreasonable expectations of museum workers is an ethical issue [Both International Council of Museums, 2006, *ICOM code of ethics for museums*. Paris: International Council of Museums (accessed 23 February 2011), p. 1 and Association of American Museums. 2000. *Code of ethics for museums*. Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, p. 2 assert that museum governing authorities have a responsibility to protect the human resources that carry out their missions. This is in line with Elaine Heuman Gurian (ed.) (1995) *Institutional Trauma: Major Change in Museums and Its Effect on Staff*. Washington: American Association of Museums: “Even if impaired work performance were not the outcome of unabated staff stress, I would proffer another, and perhaps better reason to pay attention to staff needs. If our work in museums is evidence of our collective commitment to enhancing the quality of life for society, then we must be attentive to maintaining a high quality of life for our work community.”]

- we need to frame this issue in terms of the need for additional museum positions to avoid currently overloaded workers being taken advantage of

- **Marketing & Promotion:**

- **Fund Raising & Development:**

- **Capital Projects:**

Please Add Any Additional Topics Required.