Inspiring Leaders
Unique Museum Programs Reinforce Professional Responsibility

Jennifer Ciardelli and JoAnna Wasserman

Abstract Since 1998, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has developed educational programs targeting adult audiences. Engaging public service professionals — those charged with serving and protecting our nation's democratic principles — has become a core outreach strategy to achieve the Museum's mission. This article describes the Museum's process for creating and facilitating successful programs — identifying partners, conducting audience research, incorporating adult learning approaches, and building authentic educational models that encourage participants to grapple with complex and difficult issues of professional responsibility. The programs aim to make the Museum a place of relevance, helping participants to identify with the history and reinforcing their commitment to safeguarding our democracy. Through this outreach, the Museum has built a community of new stakeholders who are helping it to achieve its institutional vision: inspiring citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

Recalling [the breakdowns that occurred in the 1920s and 30s Germany] intensifies our concern for the health of the body politic and the processes of democracy, the forms of government, and the importance of human and social values.

President's Commission on the Holocaust Report, 1979

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HOW CAN MUSEUM PROGRAMS STRENGTHEN OUR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY?

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (the Museum) opened in 1993, becoming part of the American landscape in the heart of our nation's capital. The reception of a new Museum exploring the history of the Holocaust, a watershed event for humanity, was uncertain. Not only was this to be a place of education, it would also be our nation's memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Would this be a place that spoke to broad constituencies? With nearly two million visitors each year, the Museum has become a core attraction in Washington. Overwhelmingly, the history of the Holocaust has found resonance with visitors representing diverse age groups, geographic regions, and ethnic, religious, and racial backgrounds.

Envisioned as a "living memorial" from its inception, the Museum has grown to embody this idea. Recent exhibitions, featuring content firmly rooted in the Nazi era, have focused on themes such as propaganda, genocide, and antisemitism, prompting examination of contemporary questions. Furthermore, key educational outreach has engaged top and emerging leaders in professions that safeguard the values embodied in the Constitution. These public servants—ranging from the fields of law enforcement to civil service to the military and diplomacy—are charged with defending the freedom and rights of American citizenry. When these professionals visit, they are invited to examine the history of the Holocaust, discuss the nature of ethical leadership, reaffirm the core values of their profession, and reinforce the importance of individual choice and moral responsibility in a democratic society. By reaching those who safeguard our liberties, the Museum strives to achieve its vision to inspire citizens and leaders worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

THE POWER OF THE HISTORY TO SPEAK TO PROFESSIONS THAT SERVE OUR DEMOCRACY

Acknowledging that the Holocaust was not inevitable but the result of large numbers of individual choices complicates this history. The process of genocide does not happen overnight; it involves many players with varying degrees of agency and responsibility. When visitors ask, "How could one man, Adolf Hitler, do so much harm," the answer is: he didn't do it alone. He couldn't do it alone. Many individuals, institutions, and nations played roles that enabled the history to unfold as it did. Contextual factors also con-

tributed. Turbulent conditions in Germany, including its rapid shift to democracy, economic distress, latent antisemitism, and the need to recover from stunning WWI losses contributed to a climate in which people hungered for security and national pride. As the Nazi party gained power and promoted its exclusionary ideology that elevated "Aryans" above all others, legislation and policies were needed to translate these ideas into day-to-day realities. The implementation of the laws and procedures that removed Jewish children from public schools, stamped "J"s in Jewish passports, and organized the auctions and redistribution of property left behind by those forcibly deported to ghettos and camps required support from rank and file professionals who extended well beyond the Nazi elite. These were the teachers, police, civil servants, military personnel, and judges—those who in our own society directly influence the health of our democracy. The tasks performed by these professionals may have remained much the same—processing passports, teaching children, enforcing laws. The context, however, had shifted and the ramifications for their actions held new intensity. The Holocaust couldn't have happened without the complicity—whether active or passive—of these professionals who never pulled a trigger or shut a gas chamber door.

Examining the actions of ordinary people—not monsters or zealots—removes the distance between today's participants and their historical counterparts. When Charles Ramsey, then chief of Washington D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department, visited the Museum in 1998, he was struck by the complicity of law enforcement during the Holocaust. He wondered, "How did those police officers, that probably took an oath very similar to the one I took ....become part and parcel of something so horrible?" Questions about choices, motivations, and influences such as economic interests, peer pressure, careerism, job security, and a "keep-my-head-down" attitude emerge when confronting the Holocaust. Chief Ramsey's insight prompted the Museum to develop an ethical training program for law enforcement professionals to examine these very issues. With that program's success, a Leadership Programs division was created, consisting of a team of educators and historians, to create similar educational experiences for other civic leadership audiences. Currently, we serve professionals in the fields of law and justice, military, and government, with other educational initiatives in development to serve new audiences including medical and communications professionals. With the programs' demonstrated success, grants have been secured to fund these educational efforts. Since 1998 over 80,000 profes-

sionals have experienced the Museum's professional development programs. The Museum ran over 350 programs for professional audiences in 2010 and the numbers are on course to rise for 2011.

A UNIQUE APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Museum's programs for adult audiences offer a unique opportunity for a level of engagement uncommon in typical professional development settings. The Museum's physical setting establishes this from the start. Upon entering the Museum, visitors are displaced from official Washington as the building's architecture evokes a visceral sense of disorientation. The Permanent Exhibition, which Jeshajahu Weinberg, the Museum's Founding Director, described as a narrative "about bystanders for bystanders," raises questions about individual responsibility. More than an historical introduction to the events of the Holocaust, the exhibition provides a personal encounter with individual stories of suffering and death. The exhibition's guiding question, "How did the Holocaust happen," prompts visitors to consider the mechanisms that allowed such atrocities to occur. Participants leave the exhibition touched by the personal stories and shaken from having witnessed the transformation of a young democracy and one of Europe's most educated societies into one in which genocide was possible.

The exhibition experience works on both an emotional and intellectual level. The central question, "How could the Holocaust have happened," propels educational programs that meaningfully unpack issues of professional responsibility. Because programs reflect on the ideals of leadership, ethics, and responsibility against the backdrop of the Holocaust—an historical event for which most modern participants have no immediate connection—participants can step back from their day-to-day responsibilities and grapple with difficult issues in a neutral environment. This creates a safe space for participants to contemplate their own professional values, responsibilities, and challenges.

KNOWING THE AUDIENCE AND BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

Program success depends upon clarity about institutional goals and knowledge of each unique audience. The strength of the U.S .Holocaust Memorial Museum rests in the history it presents—the massive, challenging human story of the Holocaust. The Museum's exhibitions and its world-re-

nowned collection of artifacts, photographs and documents are the core of the institution. Meaningful programs occur when participants connect with personal stories and encounter relevant primary resources. Developing programs requires expertise in the historical content, as well as knowledge of the unique professional group. Each possesses specific codes, goals, perspectives and values. Engaging in substantial conversation about delicate topics demands knowledge about the world in which the professionals operate. Thus, Museum staff conduct thorough audience research prior to a group's visit. This research takes a variety of forms, including discussions with representatives from the group, reading professional articles or journals, visiting the workplace or attending conferences or educational programs to learn about the current ethical challenges the profession faces. Learnings affect choices in content and approach, as well as informing strategies for outreach. What types of ethics courses might a Justice Department lawyer encounter in her training? What ethical challenges do law enforcement officers face on the street? What professional needs might Museum resources address? Because we learned that a majority of today's top military leaders attended a Command and General Staff College earlier in their career, we know these institutions are important partners for engaging those who will take on critical leadership positions.

Teams of educators and historians apply this understanding when working together to build programs: selecting photographs, documents, case studies and guiding questions intended to spark relevant discussions. The program models vary by profession. The discussion structure is prompted by the selected resources to allow flexibility for participants to insert their own experience throughout. For example, law enforcement programs incorporate primary sources involving the police while the program for government executives examines a case study that follows the bureaucratic paper trail of the persecution and exploitation of German Jewish author, Else Ury. Although Ms. Ury was deported to Auschwitz and murdered in 1943, paperwork involving the reallocation of her apartment, her electric bill, and royalties from her books continued to be processed until 1945 and justified in the name of national security. For professionals who oversee key agencies, this raises questions about individual knowledge of and responsibility for policy. Participants often cite post-9/11's Patriot Act as an example of U.S. national policy that raised questions about the balance between individual rights and national security. One participant was reminded of "the implications of public policy and to be concerned when it

Portrait of Else Ury. House of the Wannsee Conference, Berlin, Archive, Exhibition Else Ury, 1997.

begins to oppress human and individual rights." Knowing the audience well enables the facilitator to know which questions to ask, which questions to avoid and how best to respectfully engage the group in discussion.

It is vital to find common ground between institutional goals and those of the professional partner. Educators will be hard-pressed to engage participants in meaningful discussion if participants simply expected a field trip. Establishing shared goals prior to the Museum visit, such as exploring issues of professional responsibility, alleviates this concern. Knowing the ranks and roles of those in the group before each session also helps Museum staff to craft relevant educational experiences. Recruits face different challenges than seasoned veterans. Groups come to the Museum in a variety of ways — sometimes they know the Museum only by reputation. Other times, they have heard about educational programs but lack specifics. In some cases, the Museum approaches a particular group. Refining expectations and customizing the Museum experience together establishes shared expectations. Partners are often impressed and appreciative when such attention is paid to their unique needs.

The long-term goal of this outreach rests in establishing ongoing partnerships in which mutual goals are clear, program delivery becomes systematic, and the Museum visit becomes a common experience that

professionals share. Programs embedded within ongoing professional development structures increase the likelihood that participants will continue to discuss the themes raised after they leave the Museum. For example, an initiative within the Partnership for Public Service (PPS), a non-profit organization whose mission is to revitalize public service and improve government performance, includes a one-year training program for leaders from key federal agencies. When a few trainers started to bring their "fellows" to the Museum as a part of this course, Museum staff worked with them to create a program that met the course objectives. The session considers how ethical principles and values guide everyday management decisions. Now all PPS trainers bring groups to the Museum. Because the participants have working relationships that extend beyond the Museum visit, conversations about the history's implications and relevance can continue. One coach expressed that "throughout the year, we talk about ethical values and challenges as critical elements of what distinguishes effective leaders from mere functionaries ....The afternoon that we spent with you helped charge that conversation in a most dramatic and useful way." The power of the Museum program becomes enhanced when offered within a larger professional development context so that colleagues may continue to reflect together upon key issues raised.

AN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH FOR ADULT LEARNERS

Effectively interacting with accomplished professionals warrants intentional pedagogy. Museum programs incorporate principles and best practices of adult education to maximize participants' learning experiences. From the moment groups enter the doors, educators work to form a rapport and to promote a sense of trust. Establishing a positive dynamic with the group is essential—especially since most participants arrive through a professional obligation, not on their own volition. Educators must honor individual entrance narratives and overcome barriers including confusion about the goal of the visit, worry that they will be compared to Nazis, and fear of emotional vulnerability in front of colleagues. Therefore, educators take care to provide an orientation that introduces the Museum's mission, the program's rationale, and the day's agenda. This creates a sense of comfort among participants. From there, groups embark on a guided tour of our Permanent Exhibition led by volunteer docents familiar with the programs who can identify artifacts relevant for each audience. A police officer who entered the

Museum unsure about how the visit would relate to him, commented that "after I completed the tour, I was very much surprised on how it was tied into my career as a police officer." The shared experience in the exhibition is crucial for the follow-on program as the heightened emotional state can enhance both the meaning and memories created in the space and thereafter.[1]

Museum educators recognize the need for a psychological transition out of the exhibition experience and into focused conversation dealing with issues of professional responsibility. A relaxed lunch is provided for participants in the Museum classroom, allowing time for informal conversation. Afterwards, educators launch each session by inviting participants to share with staff and colleagues what they saw, heard, or experienced in the Permanent Exhibition that resonated for them. This provides an opportunity to process difficult content, while also creating a foundation for discussion of more complex issues. Participants comment on the emotions experienced walking through the railcar, the visceral reactions to piles of victims' shoes, and the difficulty they faced as parents seeing drawings done by children in ghettos. Done well, this session creates an environment of respect and support which sets the stage for an honest examination of issues of personal and professional relevance.

An open conversation becomes more structured as the discussion turns to the societal conditions in Nazi Germany and then to the role played by the audience's historical counterpart. Factors including the context of war, dictatorship, and propaganda are examined as questions about specific professions are explored. What role did the profession play? In what ways were professionals complicit? How were professional values altered over time? Using interactive discussion strategies, Museum staff present profession-specific primary sources, testimonies, and case studies while relying on the participants' expertise to bring the discussion to life. For example, when examining the resources relating to Else Ury, participants discuss specific documents in small groups before sharing their insights with the group at large. Questions begin with concrete observations, "What is the document saying?" and move towards the reflective "What is the responsibility of the individual processing this document?" and then to the universal, "How do we as professionals deal with the inevitable tensions between security and freedom?"

The goal is for participants to see themselves in the history and to draw out the lessons that are most relevant for them — both personally and professionally. A leader in the Department of the Treasury expressed that "there [is] a lot we can learn (beyond the moral issues) from the Holocaust that

[Form used by the Berlin electricity company]

Berlin Power and Light **Report concerning**
Stock Corporation **evacuated Jews**

Our previous customer Else Sara Ury
Location Berlin N.W., Solingerstr. 10
Present address evacuated
Has a~~n unpaid electricity bill a~~ credit from an electricity deposit including interests RM 34.41 according to the following calculation, which is due 3.4.43

Debt from electricity consumption according to bill from 25.3.43 RM 9,76
....
.... RM 9,76
Credit from electricity deposit RM 40,-
Interests up to RM 4,17 RM 44,17
Remaining de~~bt~~ ~~cr~~**edit** on account 3550/14/554 von RM 34,41

Excerpted English translation of electric bill pertaining to Else Ury. U.S. Holocaust Museum, 2010.

Berliner Kraft- und Licht (Bewag) - Aktiengesellschaft
Reichsbetriebs-Nr. 5/0250/5003
Berlin NW 7, Schiffbauerdamm 22
Fernruf: 42 00 11, Apparat 263
Postscheckkonto: Berlin 381 22

Meldung über evakuierte Juden

40/23072, Zimmerstr. 17
Rechnungsbüro
Buchzeichen: ~~...~~ 6356-16:
Aktenz. d. K/R: 03260
Aktenz. d. Finanzamtes: Der Oberfinanzpräsident Berlin 20. APR. 1943 Vermögensverwertung-Außenstelle

Unser früherer Abnehmer Sara Else Ury
in der Anlage Berlin N.W., Solingerstr.
mit der jetzigen Anschrift evakuiert
hat eine Rest-~~Schuld für Stromverbrauch — aus dem E³-Geschäft — für Gebühren und Unkostenbeitrag~~ RM 34.41
Forderung aus der hinterlegten Stromsicherheit einschl. Zinsen
lt. untenstehender Aufstellung, die seit dem 3. 4. 43 fällig ist. (Rückseite beachten!)

Schuld f. Stromverbrauch lt. Rechng. v. 25. 3. 43 RM 9.76
„ aus dem E³-Geschäft lt. Geschäfts-Nr. RM —
„ für Gebühren und Unkostenbeitrag RM — RM 9.76
Forderung aus der hinterlegten Stromsicherheit RM 40.--
Zinsengutschrift bis RM 4.17 RM 44.17
Es bleibt eine ~~Rest-Schuld~~ / **Forderung** auf dem Konto 3550/14/554 von RM 34.41

Rechnungsbüro				K/R				K/FA	
ausgeschrieben		Dienststellenleiter		eingegangen	bearbeitet		weitergegeben		eingegangen	
3. 4. 43	Mo.		i. V. [illegible]	16. 4. 43		[illegible]	15. 4. 43			
Datum	Zeichen	Datum	Zeichen	Datum	Datum	Zeichen	Datum	Zeichen	Datum	Zeichen

K/R 248 Bewag 2000.1.43 Din A 5

Else Ury's Electric Bill. House of the Wannsee Conference, Berlin, Archive, Exhibition Else Ury, 1997.

specifically relates to our roles as civil servants and leaders . . . .the importance of being responsible in my decision-making, offering my opinions and questioning actions that I disagree with, and the dangers of losing sight of ethics in everyday situations." This process provides an opportunity for transformative learning. As described by Malcolm Knowles, participants reinterpret a previous experience from a new set of expectations, thus giving new meaning and perspective to the old experience.[2] The role of the Museum educator is to facilitate a rich and nuanced dialogue, rather than teaching or lecturing the audience. Museum staff enhance the discussion with historical knowledge while participants articulate the relationship between the history and their roles in ways only an insider could. For example, one military officer stated, "the choices facing soldiers in that time are little different from those facing soldiers on today's battlefields, although at a different scope." A Museum educator lacks the authority to make such a claim, yet once stated, the educator can facilitate the conversation so as to complicate and challenge assumptions. Thus, Museum staff use their skills and knowledge to create opportunities for participants to make their own meaning and draw their own conclusions. In this environment of mutual trust and responsibility, participants view the educator as a fellow learner and accept responsibility for their learning; they take initiative.[3] A hallmark of adult learning, respect for participants' entrance narratives and expertise becomes a centerpiece of the educational program. One participant articulated this aim well, commenting "the discussion following a most meaningful tour raised/articulated considerations that generally remain 'in the background' only. Talking aids thinking."

CHALLENGES

The Museum's professional development programs have evolved over time, adapting and changing as we learn and experience more with the audiences we serve. Educators know, in the moment, when a discussion has become honest and introspective. We know when the history touches a chord with participants and the Museum experience has led them to suddenly view something very ordinary in a new way. And yet, it is difficult to know how this experience will translate into the world outside once they leave the Museum. This is just one of the challenges that comes when undertaking this educational work.

All museum educators know the difficulties of working with groups as

part of a one-day program. There is little time to become acquainted with the audience — a five hour session goes quickly. The hope is to bring visitors back for repeat visits, believing that increased exposure and deepened relationships will make the history a more immediate resource in challenging times. The Museum has had success in delivering programs for alumni of the training institutions we serve, providing an opportunity for multiple visits and exploration of new themes. In some cases, we have considered holding multi-day conferences for these audiences to explore the content more intensively. However, adult professionals in leadership roles often have busy schedules which can make finding time for such opportunities challenging and, at times, unrealistic.

As a result, the methodology for reaching busy professionals is not one-size-fits-all. Creativity and flexibility help replicate success. For instance, we have found that journalists, professionals who play a vital role in the public dialogue, are unable to visit the Museum due to the incredible pressures and deadlines they face. Therefore, we have chosen to partner with a journalism training institution to develop an online course using Museum content and educational approaches. Similarly, twenty-three state chief justices have requested training for their state's judges. This involves off-site presentations conducted without the benefit of the Museum's exhibitions. Educators struggle with the idea of separating the learning experience from the Museum experience — and yet it must happen if we are to achieve our larger mandate to educate the nation about the history of the Holocaust. As we write, a team of educators is tackling a challenging project — creating an introductory film to outline key points of the Permanent Exhibition experience — to enhance off-site programs.

So, how is an institution to measure the success of programs such as these? How do educators set realistic and measurable outcomes, while striving to achieve transformative learning? How are we to evaluate our effectiveness in strengthening democracy, a supremely lofty goal? We know many institutions struggle with these challenges. Donors increasingly require accountability from museums, demanding quantifiable evidence of our programs' results. We continually fine-tune assessment techniques to gauge impact. Post-program surveys and long-term evaluations, which include pre-program assessments, have sought data to confirm program relevance. For example, a recent pre- and post-visit evaluation of the Museum program for U.S. Naval Academy officers-in-training indicated that after the program, these emerging professionals had a heightened awareness of their roles and

responsibilities in making ethical decisions. Results such as these confirm that our programs make a difference. Partners indicate the value Museum programs serve in reinforcing their sense of professional responsibility and commitment to safeguarding our democracy. Individual leaders have become advocates and spokespeople for the programs within their professions. And, the demand for programs has increased, as more professional segments learn about our work and determine that our programs fill a gap in their professional development curricula. We know we're getting somewhere based on the qualitative feedback of participants. As one government leader expressed, "the program reminded me — like a 2 × 4 — of the centrality of core vales and thoughtful decision-making. It's easy to lose sight of the mission. [The program] is an excellent way to bring back to reality what is really important."

Notes

1. Pat Wolfe, "The Role of Meaning and Emotion in Learning." *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education* 110 (2006): 39, DOI 10.1002/ace.217 (accessed November 4, 2010).
2. Jack Mezirow, *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 8.
3. Malcolm Knowles, The Adult Learner (Houston: Gulf, 1973), 223.

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