

AN ANALYSIS OF ART MUSEUM DIRECTORS, 1990–2010

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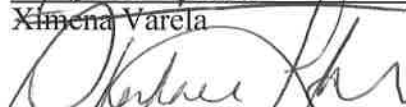
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ABSTRACT

This investigation is to give the reader a better understanding of the role of the museum director over time. First, a typology of museum directors in the United States is developed and presented. This study then examines specific characteristics of executive directors of art museums from 1990 to 2010 with the purpose of discovering any unifying trends focusing on age, tenure, sex, and education. Data was collected in 2011 focusing on five-year intervals from 1990 to 2010 for 177 art museums. The results and trends that emerge are discussed with their implications for the museum world.

PREFACE

As an intern at The Phillips Collection in Washington, D.C., I was given a project that would involve interacting with the executive director, Dorothy Kosinski. To be prepared for the meeting, I did basic research to learn more about the director. I discovered she had a Ph.D. in art history from the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University. I was surprised. As a student of arts management, I expected the director to come from an art and business background. With this revelation, I began to question my beliefs about museum directors and wanted to conduct further research about this important community.

Who are the art museum directors of today? What are their characteristics, and have these characteristics changed over time? Because I am interested in managing museums at the executive level, I need to understand if the traditional management trajectory starts with a specialist degree in art history or if the qualifications for managing museums are changing to a business-oriented background. In addition to educational background, this study addresses the age, tenure, and sex of art museum directors over the past twenty years. Hopefully through the results of this study, the museum community and broader arts community will gain an understanding of the current trends in museum leadership.

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Thank you to my committee members, Juliet Bellow and Sherburne Laughlin, and my chair, Ximena Varela. Juliet gave me my foundational knowledge of museums, Sherburne helped me understand their power structures and the role of a business education, and Ximena guided me through my investigation and helped me organize my thoughts into a cohesive study.

Thank you to my mom, who subtly encouraged me to pursue my graduate degree, and to my dad for unwavering support throughout this process. Thank you to my friends both in and out of the arts management program for keeping me sane and grounded, and to Joe who was there for me every step of the way.

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CHAPTER 1

THE CURRENT ART MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Value and Importance to the Field

Museum management expert, Stephen Weil, first published “The More Effective Director: Specialist or Generalist?” in 1986. This essay analyzes several major aspects of managing an art museum including the responsibility of the director to present and determine a specific, consistent point of view. In his conclusion, Weil definitively reaffirms the view of the Association of Art Museum Directors: “It makes more sense to train art historians to be managers than to train administrators – who are not naturally inclined toward the visual arts – to understand and be sympathetic to art or to comprehend the role of the museum” (Weil 1986).

In 1988, Paul DiMaggio published *Manager of the Arts*, an influential and important study in conjunction with the National Endowment of the Arts, to discover the careers and opinions of senior administrators of art museums, orchestras, theatres, and community arts agencies. In that study, DiMaggio cites several facts about art museum directors, including:

1. Art museum directors had great educational achievement over time, with more than 50% earning a Ph.D. in art history;
2. A degree from a prestigious university indicated the level of resources a director commanded;

3. More than two fifths of art museum directors had been curators;
4. Compared to leaders of orchestras and theaters, art museum directors were the least likely to be prepared for managerial tasks when they first became director, and they were also the least likely to value any management training (DiMaggio 1988).

Since this report was published, the NEA has been relatively quiet on the subject of career paths of art museum directors, even though the NEA is the leading national funder of the arts and contributes regularly to museums. The media, however, has not been silent. *The New York Times* has been particularly vocal about how difficult it has been for museums to retain a qualified director (Goldberger 1994). Is this media perception accurate? Are directors leaving museums more quickly?

Part of this negative media perception stems from the development of the museum itself. As the museum grew and expanded, it called for a more diverse leader with a wider array of skills. In the past, art museum directors have traditionally been art historians. Are museums now hiring directors with business backgrounds or is this perception media hype? A shift away from the traditional director may have an impact on the museum's direction and focus, so it is important to understand how accurate these claims are.

The media has also targeted gender disparities in the hiring of museum directors. In the early 1990s, several articles were published about the glass ceiling for women museum directors. *Museum News* held a roundtable discussion for women directors in 1996. At this discussion Gail Becker said that in the 1960s, a woman could not even consider a career as an executive director. In later decades, she observed, women needed

more specialized training to compete with men, but at least the position was now available (O'Donnell 1997). Has the field now become equal, or is there still a disparity between women and men directors?

This study will address the questions above as well as report on the characteristics of museum directors and how they have changed over the past twenty years, addressing the questions of director age, tenure, sex, and education.

Research Methodology

This study focuses specifically on art museum directors. The membership of the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) was the foundation for this investigation.

This professional organization has the following membership rules:

Membership consists of persons who serve as directors of art museums in the United States, Canada, and Mexico which, by purpose, size, and standards of operation meet the eligibility requirements established by the Trustees of the Association. Membership in the Association is based on the qualifications of both the individual director and the specific art museum and no museum may be represented by more than one individual (Association of Art Museum Directors, 2011).

The organizations selected had directors who were members of the AAMD as of January 2011. This initial list consisted of 198 museums. This study focuses exclusively on art museums in the United States, and members of the AAMD located outside the United States were not reviewed. If no accessible data existed for an organization's director, the institution was not included. The final list consisted of 177 art museums.

In early 2011, information was gathered about museum directors from a variety of publicly available sources such as museum websites, press releases, and newspaper articles. Data gathered included director age, tenure, sex, and education. This process was

completed for the same 177 museums over five-year intervals between 1990 and 2010.

Once the data was collected, it was formatted and analyzed, and the results are recorded in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTION OF THE ART MUSEUM DIRECTOR

Does the ideal museum director exist? Some scholars argue that the director should be a specialist in the field of art history, rather than a generalist manager who is trained in business. Others argue that the job itself is too great for one person to handle. These scholars describe the emerging idea of dual leadership in museums, with one person to direct the museum's vision and another to direct the museum's business operations. Both arguments are confronting the many responsibilities of the art museum director.

Museum directors navigate a multifaceted set of tasks, including setting the direction of the museum, fundraising, inspiring and leading staff, managing expectations of trustees, and creating a connection between the museum and its public. The art museum director confronts complex demands from many constituent parties both internal and external to the museum (O'Doherty 1972; Council 1986; Glaser 1996; Moses 2008). The director is the face of the museum for trustees, staff, museum-goers, and other stakeholders. To quote Nancy Moses, art historian and author, "[A] museum director, to be truly effective, must combine the aesthetic instincts of an artist, the intellectual muscle of a scholar, the negotiating skills of a diplomat, the flash of an impresario, and the business savvy of a corporate CEO" (Moses 2008).

From the early 1970s to the late 2000s, authors have emphasized that museum leaders must use many skills daily to keep their museums functioning. Museum directors

are required to use knowledge of art history, development, finance, public relations, and human resources, as well as interpersonal skills such as patience, attentiveness, and charisma, to strike a delicate balance in their daily museum management.

In the past, the art museum director has been an academic expert (Weil 1990; Genoways and Ireland 2003; Jacqueline Cardinal 2004). Weil states, “The managerial generalist cannot be expected to have the education or experience that would enable him successfully to formulate a consistent, persuasive, informed and authoritative point of view with respect to the museum’s subject matter” (Weil 1990). Glenn Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art, The Association of Art Museum Directors, and others have expressed similar agreement.

However, some voices in the field of museum management discuss the evolution of the specialist versus generalist debate. Hugh Genoways and Lynne Ireland write that museums are beginning to explore hiring individuals from businesses and other nonprofit organizations (Genoways and Ireland 2003). The field of arts management focuses on business practices for the arts and might prepare museum directors of the future.

The concept of equal, dual leadership in museums also has emerged to address the multiple expectations and requirements that art museum directors must navigate on a daily basis (Genoways and Ireland 2003; Voogt 2006; Zan 2006). While still not common in practice, the benefits include one director to lead fundraising and management aspects of the museum, while the other leads the intellectual and program-related aspects (Genoways and Ireland 2003; de Voogt 2006). Alex de Voogt makes a case for dual leadership positions by citing the current, successful practice in Dutch art museums like the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (de Voogt 2006). Although de Voogt relates the

advantages of dual roles for the museum director, Luca Zan discusses the potentially harmful effects this approach can have when implemented without an understanding of and respect for museum culture. Zan writes:

[Museums] are professional organizations where a substantive-aesthetic culture prevails over the culture of a management knowledge that is generic and a-specific in itself... There may be a pressing need for the introduction of managerial and accounting knowledge in the world of art: what is difficult... is to find solutions that do not impose excessive doses of administrative culture and work, in contrast with the nature of these organizations. Unfortunately, the culture of management studies and accounting does not seem to know half-measures and tends, rather, to impose its paradigms and mindset (Zan 2006).

The commonalities among these themes remain that the tasks are complex, and it seems that one person is rarely capable of effectively fulfilling all of the roles expected of them. How can a director balance the needs of scholarship and management? With all of the required characteristics of an art museum director, who can successfully fill this role?

When discussing museum directors, other questions emerge, such as: How have directors changed and evolved over the years? In the past, who were the trailblazing, legendary directors, and who shaped the history of the museum field? Were they all art historians and experts in their specific fields, or were they management generalists? Did directors treat museums as sacred institutions or streamlined businesses?

As the museum evolved, so did the museum director. In Table 1, dominant types of museum directors are identified, and their characteristics are described. While each director type is presented on its own, the typology of directors is an evolution, with each director type building on the director types of the past. This chart is not encompassing of all art museum directors, but it attempts to classify director types by dominant practices over specific time periods.

Table 1. Typology of Museum Directors

Director type	Defining characteristics	Examples	Time period
The Universalist-Impresario	Exhibits broad personal collections, including art and natural history objects Opened to the public Creative enthusiasm for collection, works to increase public interest through entertainment and public financial support	Charles Wilson Peale P.T.Barnum	Early-Mid 19th Century
The Nation Builder	Interested in establishing eternal legacy and bettering society through art appreciation and education	Henry Clay Frick (Collection Opened 1935) Andrew Mellon (1937 Bequest)	Mid 19th-Mid 20th Century
The Disciplinary Specialist	Rigorous art history education Committed to academic, educational exhibitions to improve and advance art knowledge	Alfred Barr (MoMA, 1929–1943)	Early 20th Century
The Social Lion	Strong fundraiser, collection builder, politician wooer	Fiske Kimball (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1925–1950)	Early-Mid 20th Century
The Blockbuster Energizer	Larger than life, publicity-driven personality Produces large, costly, and potentially controversial exhibitions to attract mass audiences	Thomas Hoving (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1967–1977)	Mid-Late 20th Century
The Corporate Art Mixologist	Focuses on efficiencies and attracting audience members Approaches the museum with a corporate mindset	Thomas Krens (Guggenheim, 1988–2008)	Late 20th Century

The Universalist-Impresario

Even before the United States officially was formed, the first museum existed: in 1773, the South Carolina Charleston Library Society exhibited samples from animals, plants, and minerals from the low country (Schwarzer 2006). Museums typically consisted of collections of importance to an individual or group, whether it was a collection of art, natural history, or science. While the South Carolina museum was indeed the first, the best-known museum in the early years of the republic of the United States was Charles Wilson Peale's collection in Philadelphia in the early 19th century.

While Peale did not have formal education in the sciences, he had a deep interest in the landscape of the United States, including plants, animals, rocks, fossils, Native American artifacts, and art. Through public lectures, local societies, and handbooks, Peale learned more about his environment and continued to increase his collection. He also shared his passion for collecting with his large family (Alderson 1992).

Most museums remained closed to the public and operated privately as clubs or special societies (Schwarzer 2006). Charles Wilson Peale and his family changed the norm from a private, invitation-only display to a public institution. *Mermaids, Mummies, and Mastodons* by William T. Alderson discusses the importance of the Peale contribution to modern day museums: "Charles Wilson Peale and his children reflected and promoted a contemporary outlook which emphasized the importance of educating citizens and exploring the topography of the new nation" (Alderson 1992).

Peale, like other collectors of his time, acted as the "director" of the collection, displaying it with immense pride (O'Doherty 1972). Peale had an all-around

understanding of the museum. He was interested in education as well as politics, and the museum also fueled his social ambition and financial stability.

However, as the motivation for greater profit increased, the museum became a place of entertainment. While at first this was a financially successful model, eventually it started to compete with other forms of entertainment such as theatre and music (Alderson 1992). As Peale's ambition steadily increased, and he was quoted as saying his collection would "become the equal of any museum in Europe" (Alderson 1992).

Peale understood the importance of public funding for the museum and petitioned Congress, including Presidents George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and James Madison. Although never successful in attaining government support, Peale argued that the museum would educate the public and inspire patriotism.

Charles Wilson Peale was not the only major collector exhibiting his treasures at this time. During the early 19th century, Peale competed with P.T. Barnum. The museum was not fully formed at this time, and spectacular, entertaining museums were common. Fantastical beasts were presented along with real specimens. Edward P. Alexander, former museum director and professor, lamented museums that presented vaudeville entertainment directed by "unlearned persons" (Alexander 1997). Although Barnum might be considered a controversial "museum director," Jane Glaser discusses Barnum's contribution to the museum world:

With a bizarre collection of curiosities and exotic performers, Barnum exploited, in a commercial way, the demand for popular learning in the United States...Barnum appealed to the public seeking both reality and pleasure. He invited one and all to observe and learn how these exotic and strange things actually worked. He openly invited skepticism, challenge, and debate, and was a genuine pioneer in his understanding of the educational and entertainment power of museums (Glaser, Zenetou et. Al. 1996).

The Universalist-Impresario directors like Peale and Barnum occurred at a time when the idea of the museum was still being shaped. These directors juggled education, financial management, entertainment, and their own enthusiasm and bias for their collections to successfully manage the first museums in the United States.

The Nation Builder

After the Civil War, museums emerged at a rapid pace, echoing the extensive pull of the Industrial Revolution that was taking over the nation (Alderson 1992). People made their fortunes in various industries, including the Nation Builders such as Henry Clay Frick, Andrew Mellon, and J.P. Morgan. Through the National Builders, museums of the United States gained strong art collections.

Civic-minded, wealthy individuals were looking to leave a positive and lasting legacy, sometimes to counteract the negativity they generated in their own lives (Duncan 1995). With the purpose of increasing art appreciation and leaving a positive legacy of their own, they founded many of the nation's important art museums in this period including the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the Detroit Institute of Arts (Schwarzer 2006).

In the late nineteenth century, J.P. Morgan characterized the ideal museum director as someone who possessed 'gentlemanly qualities' including a European accent and the ability to build a striking collection (Schwarzer 2006). The trustees of the museum occasionally doubled as the director, having a direct impression on the public's perception of art. The art they bought was displayed as the pinnacle of taste. The Nation Builders ushered in the major universal museums of today.

The Disciplinary Specialist

By the early twentieth century, the museum field was starting to professionalize. Organizational structures were changing due to the increase in staff and compartmentalization of duties. Museums were hiring conservators, educators, and curators, but most importantly, the position of the museum director fully formed.

In 1922, Paul Sachs launched the first serious museum training course at Harvard University for professional directors and curators. The trained men and women of these groups went on to establish regional museum support groups and write articles on civic value and accessibility (Schwarzer 2006). Sachs' most famous graduate was Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the future director of the newly founded Museum of Modern Art (MoMA).

While at Princeton University in 1918, Barr took a course on medieval art that formed the basis of his art history education. He completed a master's degree in 1923 and earned his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1926. He then enrolled in Sachs' museum training course, where he learned skills to formally manage the museum. These skills were expansive and international in focus, and Sachs arranged a world tour for Barr where he would explore international museums and meet artists. At Sachs' recommendation, the founders of the MoMA asked Barr to become their first director upon his return. Barr was only 26 years old (Einreinhofer 1997).

Barr continuously created catalogues and exhibitions that were educational and scholarly, and Barr defined modern art in the public's eyes. The Disciplinary Specialist has an expertise in the field of art history to educate and advance the role of art in the public's life.

The Social Lion

At the same time as the Disciplinary Specialist was creating exhibitions to shape the fate of art history as well as the public's taste, the Social Lion was a larger than life personality dedicated not only to the history of art but also to procuring and building fine collections.

In the early to mid twentieth century, the director's job was to entertain and eventually to persuade the trustees to donate their collections to the museum. According to Thomas Leavitt:

The directors employed by these wealthy founders reflected their values and like them talked idealistically of art for all the people, all the while presenting priceless treasures with little attention to communication (or scholarship)...In the first quarter of this century most of the major museums grew even more impressively as the founders and their successors died off, bequeathing collections often of remarkable quality to their favorite institutions (O'Doherty 1972).

Fiske Kimball, the director of the Philadelphia Museum of Art from 1925 to 1950, was the embodiment of this type of director. R. Sturgis Ingersoll wrote in Kimball's obituary, "He would sometimes roar with impatience or with frustration from delay in attaining a sought-for objective, but the roar was only a surface manifestation of a dedicated spirit" (Ingersoll 1956). The Social Lion is a powerful and charismatic museum director.

Fiske Kimball was involved in many different aspects of the art world. He specialized in architecture and received his master's degree from Harvard (F.J.B.W. 1956). He was an art historian and practitioner, participating and leading several building projects. While his scholarly publications focused mainly on architecture, he also lectured on art history at various universities.

In 1925, Kimball also became a museum director. He inherited the Philadelphia Museum of Art in the early stages of its development. The museum owned few important works of art at the time. During Kimball's tenure, the museum gained several notable collections including the Foulc Collection, the Crozer Collection, and the Arensberg Collection, which expanded the museum's holdings of medieval, renaissance, and modern art (F.J.B.W. 1956).

Ingersoll ended Kimball's obituary with a passage that eloquently describes the Social Lion:

He belonged to that small group of American scholars in the field of the fine arts whose influence extended far beyond the confines of his country. There seems to be something incongruous between the brusque, domineering, and masculine Fiske whom we knew, and the scholar who wrote 'The Origins of the Rococo' - a monument to his love for the elusive and tender charm of that style (Ingersoll 1956).

The Blockbuster Energizer

The "blockbuster" is characterized as an expensive, flashy exhibition with artists or artwork that has wide public appeal. The blockbuster typically includes a large number of art objects, and the cost, while exorbitant, is normally covered through corporate sponsorship. Special admission prices apply, and museum shops carry merchandise from the exhibition.

The first inkling of the potential success of a blockbuster came in 1962 when the Mona Lisa visited the National Gallery of Art and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Over 1.5 million people came to view the Mona Lisa, including 50% first time museum visitors (Conforti 1986). As demonstrated by the number of attendees, the blockbuster raises revenue and makes the host city an art tourism destination. The blockbuster shifted the

public's focus from the permanent collection to the major exhibition schedule, putting more financial pressure on the museum to turnaround major exhibitions quickly (McClellan 2008). The blockbuster craze continued to explode into the late 1990s and is still a staple of current museum practice.

Thomas Hoving invented the blockbuster of today. As director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art from 1967 to 1977, Hoving measured his own responsibility and commitment to the public through audience attendance numbers, which was not common for other directors at the time (Conforti 1986). In his autobiography *Making the Mummies Dance*, Hoving claimed, "To be effective – and to survive – the director had to be...part gunslinger, ward heeler, legal fixer, accomplice smuggler, anarchist, and toady" (Hoving 1993). Hoving mounted blockbuster exhibitions including "The Great Age of Fresno," "The Year 1200," and "King Tut" (Hoving 1993).

Supporters of the blockbuster claim that the focus on mass appeal breaks down the public perception of the museum as elitist (Conforti 1986). Yet Hoving and the blockbuster are not without their critics. Sherman Lee, former director of the Cleveland Museum, and Philippe de Montebello, Hoving's successor, argued against Hoving's idea of the blockbuster. While the argument is complex, one of the complaints is that the blockbuster is a misguided attempt to win public favor. The blockbuster does not attract repeat visitors and encourages quick views of art instead of genuine art appreciation (Conforti 1986).

Even though this is a controversial director, the Blockbuster Energizer provides the museum with a large number of visitors. This director breaks down barriers to entry

for the public, while causing financial headaches for the museum because of the major push for large audience pleasing exhibitions.

The Corporate Art Mixologist

The newest type of museum director is the Corporate Art Mixologist. These controversial directors mix art with a corporate mindset, and no director exemplifies this more than Thomas Krens. Krens is both hailed and hated as the former director of the Guggenheim from 1988 to 2008. The board of director at the Guggenheim decided to try a new direction when they hired Krens, as the previous director was characterized as a quiet art scholar.

Joseba Zulaika describes Kren's demeanor as the Corporate Art Mixologist:

Living up to the motto 'Work hard, play hard,' as soon as he descends from the airplane with his laptop and checks into a hotel, he is ready to put on his tennis shoes and go jogging. He is truly the entrepreneur who opened the world of museums to previously unknown adventures (Guasch and Zulaika 2005).

Krens treated art as an investment and a source of income. With support of his board, Krens deaccessioned three major museum artworks under the guise of collection building. He then bought new work for the permanent collection through Sotheby's with riskier investments in Minimalist art (Werner 2005). Krens also franchised the Guggenheim brand, creating mini-Guggenheims in places like Las Vegas and Bilbao, Spain.

Other museum directors of the time, most notably Philippe de Montebello, criticized Kren's business moves in the museum world. Six museum directors contributed to a book titled *Whose Muse*, which focuses on museums and the public trust but ultimately was a protest against Krens (Guasch and Zulaika 2005). As Paul Werner

criticizes, “Krens had a master’s in art history and another in management, meaning he had a common fault of the academic half-baked: he imagined he was thinking outside the box simply because the box in which he thought was the latest in boxes” (Werner 2005).

The Corporate Art Mixologist is the newest evolution of the director, and the impact of the corporate-art mindset on the museum world is still being evaluated.

CHAPTER 3
THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR, 1990–2010:
RESULTS

Paul DiMaggio and the NEA's 1988 Study:
Manager of the Arts

In the early 1980s, little was known about the directors of arts organizations aside from salary. In 1981, Paul DiMaggio partnered with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to study arts managers in art museums, theatres, orchestras, and community arts organizations.

For art museum directors, DiMaggio and the NEA surveyed 192 directors and received a response rate of 67.20%. The survey addressed the backgrounds, training, and career experiences of these top administrators. The survey also asked about future employment and the satisfaction they currently received from their jobs. Finally, the survey queried the director's professional activities outside of their organizations as well as their attitudes towards policy and management issues (DiMaggio 1988).

DiMaggio's findings are:

- An art museum director's family background has become less high-status over time;
- Art museum directors had great educational achievement over time;
- More than two fifths of art museum directors had been curators;

- The career pattern of museum director was shifting from curator to art history professor;
- Art museum directors reported higher salaries and higher levels of satisfaction than the directors of other art forms;
- A degree from a prestigious university indicated the level of resources a director commanded (DiMaggio 1988).

In relation to training, the study also found the following:

- Art museum directors were the least likely to be prepared for managerial tasks when they first became director as compared to directors of other arts disciplines;
- On the job training was the main method of learning management tasks;
- More than half of art museum directors had a Ph.D. in art history;
- Art museum directors were least likely to have or value any management training compared with other directors. (DiMaggio 1988).

DiMaggio finished each section with a recommendation to improve the art manager experience. DiMaggio and the NEA published this study in 1988, seven years after the data was originally collected.

The Art Museum Director, 1990–2010 Study Results

The DiMaggio report is the catalyst for this study. In 2011, this study traced 177 art museums over five-year intervals from 1990 until 2010, gathering data on director age, tenure, sex, highest degree achieved, field of study, and institution of study. Once the data was gathered and analyzed, several trends seemed to emerge. Chapter 3 consists

only of the results with a factual analysis of the trends. Chapter 4 discusses possible conclusions and explanations of this data.

Director Age

The average age of director has increased from 47.65 to 57.01. (Table 2) Female directors are slightly younger than their male counterparts.

Table 2. Average Director Age, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Overall	47.65	50.27	52.53	54.36	57.01
Men	48.42	50.69	52.96	54.37	57.25
Women	45.42	49.37	51.82	54.34	56.55

Next, the data was analyzed to look at age groups by directors in their thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, and seventies. Directors in their thirties and forties decreased (10.85% to 0.65% and 57.36% to 19.61%, respectively). Directors in their fifties rose and fell over the 20-year period. Directors in their sixties increased over time (from 7.75% in 1990 to 39.87% in 2010). Less than 2% of directors are seventy or over. (Table 3, Figure 1)

Table 3. Director Age Groups, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
30–39	10.85%	4.86%	3.36%	5.16%	0.65%
40–49	57.36%	40.28%	33.61%	20.65%	19.61%
50–59	23.26%	47.22%	49.58%	45.16%	37.91%
60–69	7.75%	7.64%	11.76%	28.39%	39.87%
70+	0.78%	0.00%	1.68%	0.65%	1.96%

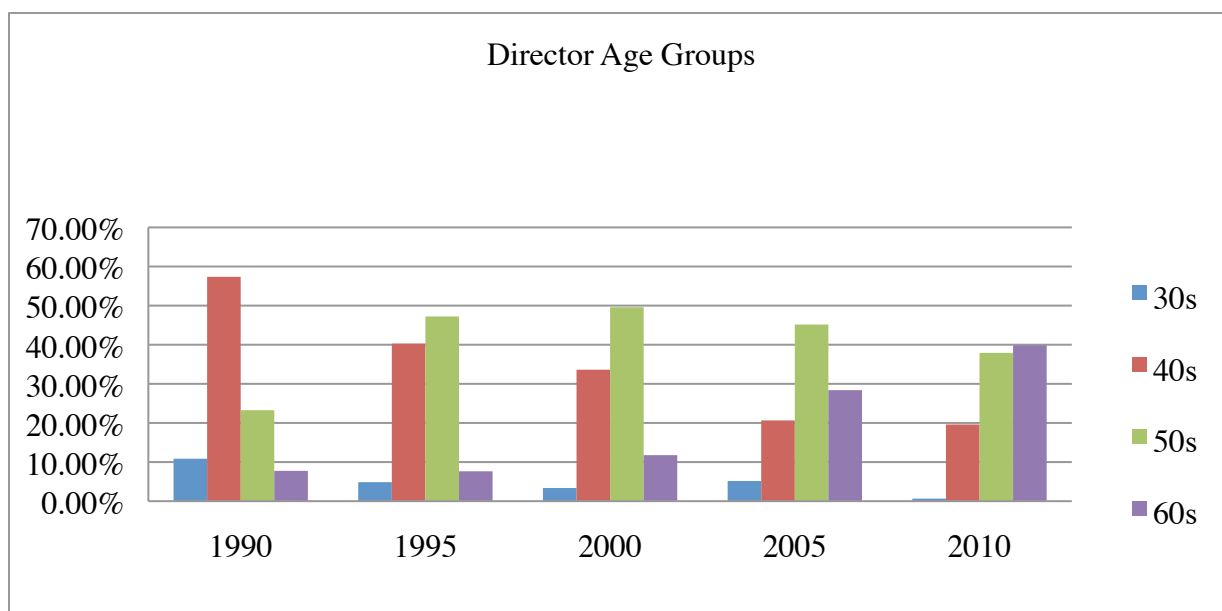


Figure 1. Director Age Groups, 1990–2010.

Director Tenure

The average director tenure increased from 6.71 years in 1990 to 9.17 years in 2010. The average tenure for a male director grew from 7.14 years in 1990 to 9.09 years in 2010. The average tenure for a female director started at 5.61 years and increased to 9.28 years in 2010. (Table 4)

Table 4. Average Director Tenure, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Overall	6.71	6.91	7.85	8.66	9.17
Men	7.14	7.14	8.25	8.64	9.09
Women	5.61	6.48	7.34	8.70	9.28

In tenure age groups, major shifts are occurring. In 1990, 48.97% of directors had up to four years of experience at the same institution, compared with 38.29% in 2010. (Table 5, Figure 2) The percentage of directors who have held the same position for 20–29 years started at 4.83% in 1990 and rose to 10.29% in 2010. While not included in the table because it is statistically insignificant, one instance of a director with a forty-year term occurred in 2010 at the Orlando Museum of Art.

Table 5. Director Tenure, 1990–2010

Tenure	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
0 – 4	48.97%	40.63%	40.24%	36.21%	38.29%
5 – 9	24.14%	31.88%	24.85%	25.29%	25.14%
10 – 14	15.17%	16.88%	18.34%	18.97%	14.29%
15 – 19	6.21%	7.50%	11.24%	10.34%	10.29%
20 – 29	4.83%	3.13%	4.14%	8.05%	10.29%
30 – 39	0.69%	0.00%	1.18%	1.15%	1.14%

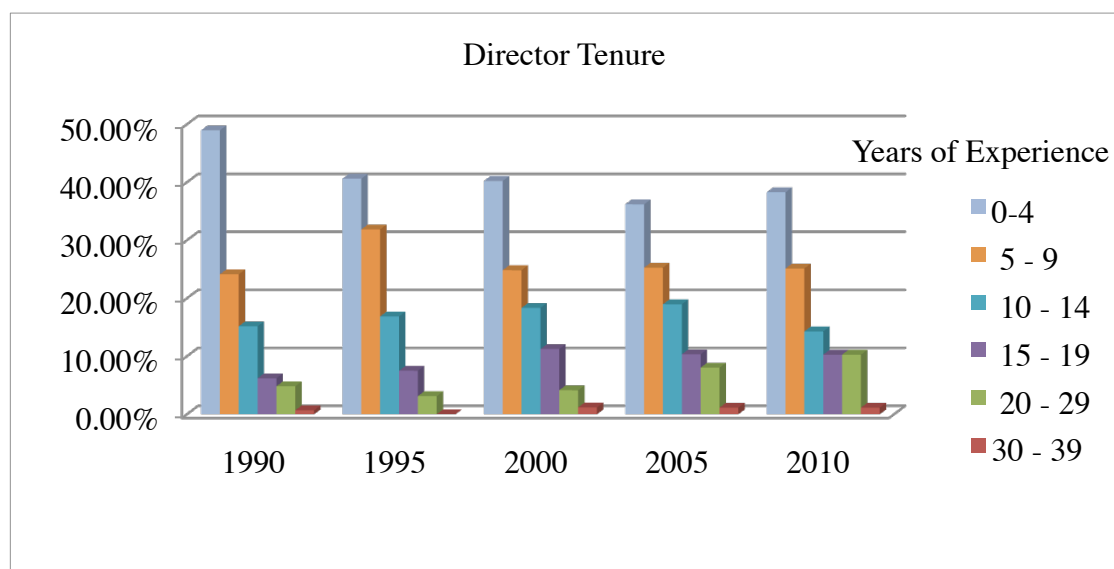


Figure 2. Director Tenure, 1990–2010.

Men and Women Directors

The overall trend of hiring women directors increased from 1990 until 2005 (28.28% in 1990 to 41.04% in 2005). In 2010, there was a decline of overall women directors to 38.29%. The overall trend shows a divergence in the percentage of men and women hired as directors. From 2005 to 2010, the percentage of men and women directors of university museums became equal. (Table 6, Figure 3)

Table 6. Men and Women Directors, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Women Directors Overall	28.28%	35.00%	40.48%	41.04%	38.29%
Women Directors of University Museums	26.67%	35.29%	44.44%	43.24%	50.00%
Men Directors Overall	71.72%	65.00%	59.52%	58.96%	61.71%
Men Directors of University Museums	73.33%	64.71%	55.56%	56.76%	50.00%

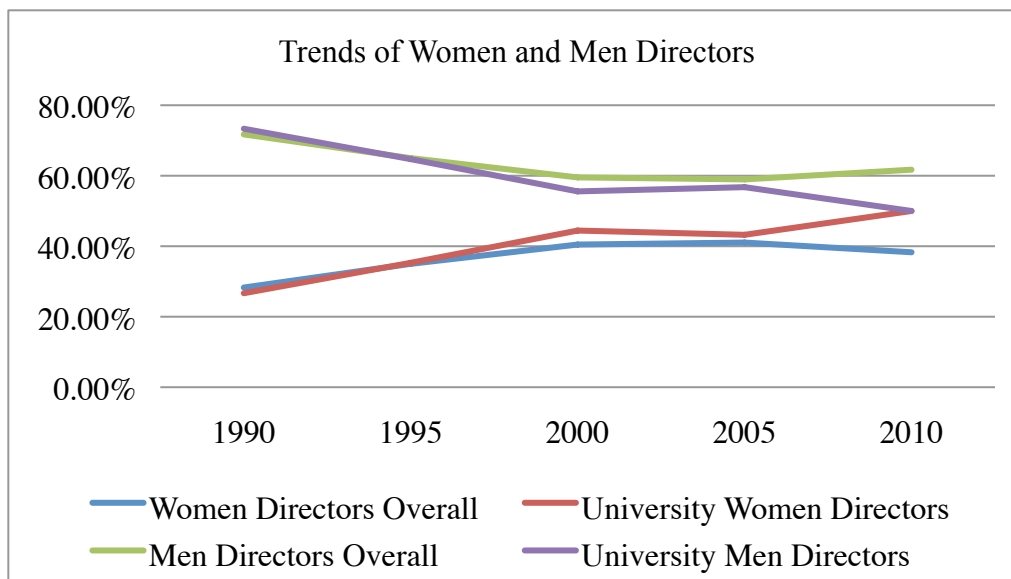


Figure 3. Men and Women Directors, 1990–2010.

Degree Type, Field, and Universities Attended

The next data grouping focuses on director education. In both 1990 and 2010, more directors had master's degrees than doctoral degrees as their highest degree attained. In 1995, 2000, and 2005, directors with doctoral degrees outnumbered those with master's degrees. Directors with bachelor's degrees maintained a similar percentage throughout. While holding just a minor percentage, directors with dual master's degrees are increasing. In 1990, one instance of a director with the highest degree of a high school diploma occurred at the International Center of Photography, but this fact was left out of the data below because it is not statistically insignificant. (Table 7, Figure 4)

Table 7. Highest Degree Attained, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Doctorate	38.81%	41.72%	42.95%	47.62%	41.76%
Dual					
Master's	0.75%	1.32%	1.92%	1.79%	2.94%
Master's	44.78%	39.22%	39.10%	38.69%	42.35%
Bachelor's	11.94%	11.92%	11.54%	10.71%	12.35%
JD	0.75%	1.99%	1.28%	1.19%	0.59%

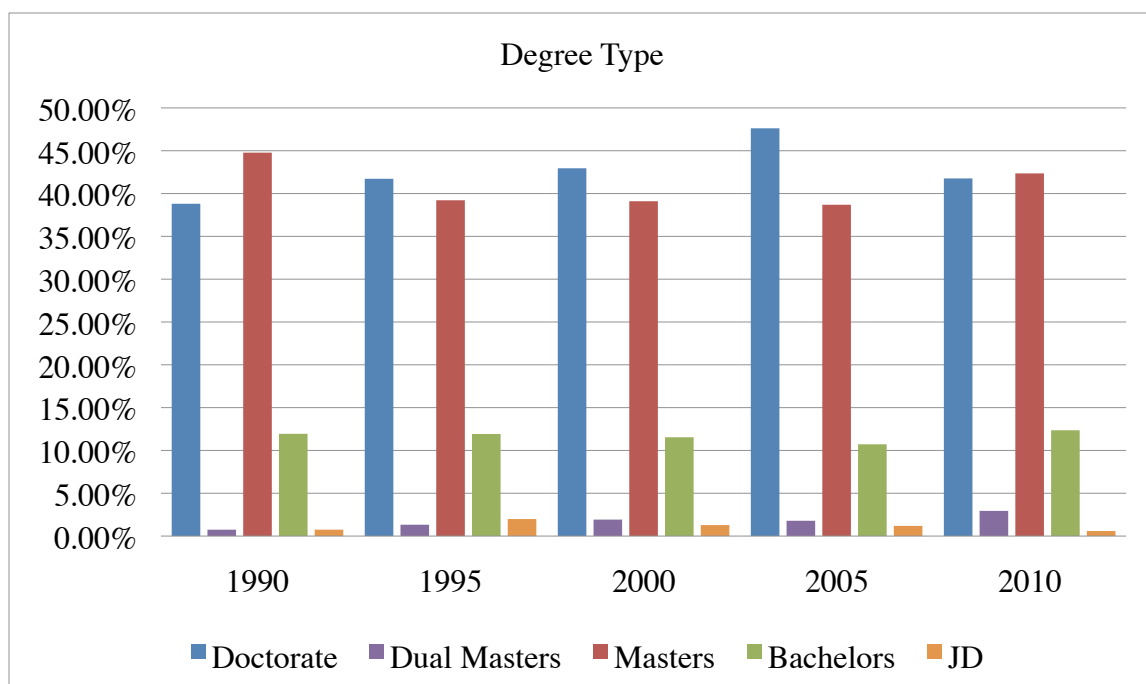


Figure 4. Highest Degree Attained, 1990–2010.

The majority of degrees held by directors are in the field of art history. After a review of the top ten types of degrees attained, the preference for art history and fine art remains over 70% from 1990 to 2010. (Table 8, Figure 5)

Table 8. Field of Degree Attained, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Art History	68.29%	62.68%	61.90%	61.49%	64.81%
Fine Art	10.57%	9.86%	11.56%	9.32%	7.41%
Business	3.25%	3.52%	1.36%	2.48%	2.47%
Law	1.63%	2.11%	1.36%	1.24%	1.23%
Dual Business and Art	2.44%	1.41%	3.40%	3.11%	3.09%
Museum Studies	2.44%	4.93%	4.08%	1.86%	3.70%
History	2.44%	2.82%	3.40%	4.35%	4.94%
Arts Management	0.00%	1.41%	2.72%	2.48%	1.85%
Literature	0.00%	3.52%	2.19%	1.86%	1.23%
American Studies	0.81%	0.00%	2.04%	3.73%	3.70%

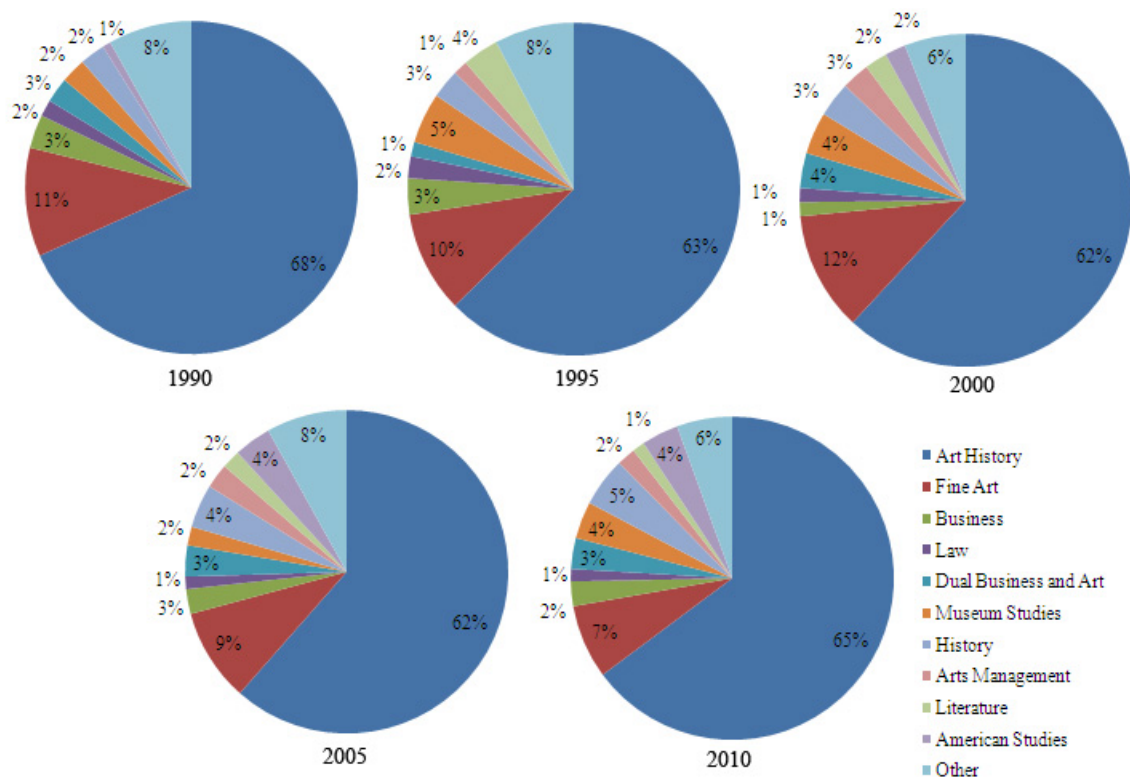


Figure 5. Field of Degree Attained, 1990–2010.

When this data is broken down more, the trend shows a decrease in business, law, and literature degrees and an increase in dual business and art degrees, arts management, general history, and American studies. Museum studies remained the same. (Table 9, Figure 6)

Table 9. Field of Degree Attained, Not Including Art History or Fine Arts, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Business	17.65%	20.69%	6.90%	8.82%	11.43%
Law	11.76%	10.34%	6.90%	5.88%	5.71%
Dual Business and Art	5.88%	6.90%	10.34%	11.76%	11.43%
Museum Studies	17.65%	24.14%	24.14%	14.71%	17.14%
History	17.65%	13.79%	17.24%	20.59%	22.86%
Arts Management	5.88%	6.90%	13.79%	11.76%	8.57%
Literature	17.65%	17.24%	10.34%	8.82%	5.71%
American Studies	5.88%	0.00%	10.34%	17.65%	17.14%

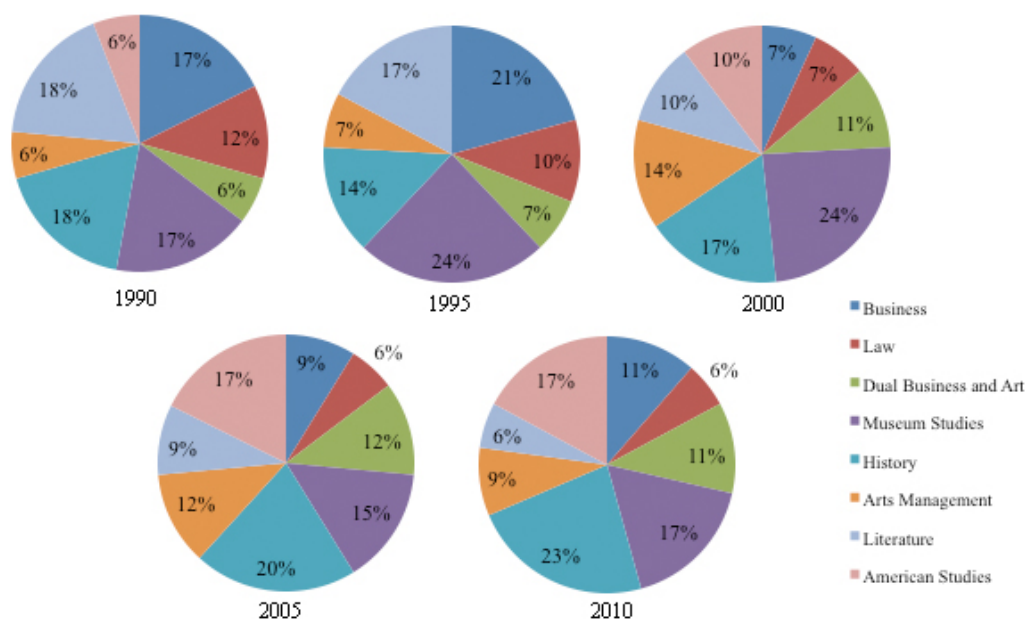


Figure 6. Field of Degree Attained, Not Including Art History or Fine Arts, 1990–2010.

For universities attended, seven universities broke a threshold of four percent director attendance in at least one of the intervals analyzed. Throughout the intervals,

attendance numbers fluctuated, but 2010 shows equalization in the percentage of where directors receive their degrees. (Table 10, Figure 7) The top three universities all attained 6.51% of directors (Harvard University, the Institute of Fine Arts at New York University, and Yale University).

Table 10. Top Universities Attended by Directors, 1990–2010

	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
Harvard University	12.20%	9.40%	11.61%	8.38%	6.51%
Institute of Fine Arts (NYU)	8.94%	7.38%	6.45%	4.79%	6.51%
Yale University	7.32%	5.37%	5.16%	7.19%	6.51%
University of Delaware	4.07%	4.03%	4.52%	4.79%	3.55%
University of Michigan	4.07%	2.68%	2.58%	1.80%	1.78%
University of California	3.25%	4.03%	2.58%	2.99%	1.78%
City University of New York	0.81%	1.34%	1.94%	4.19%	3.55%

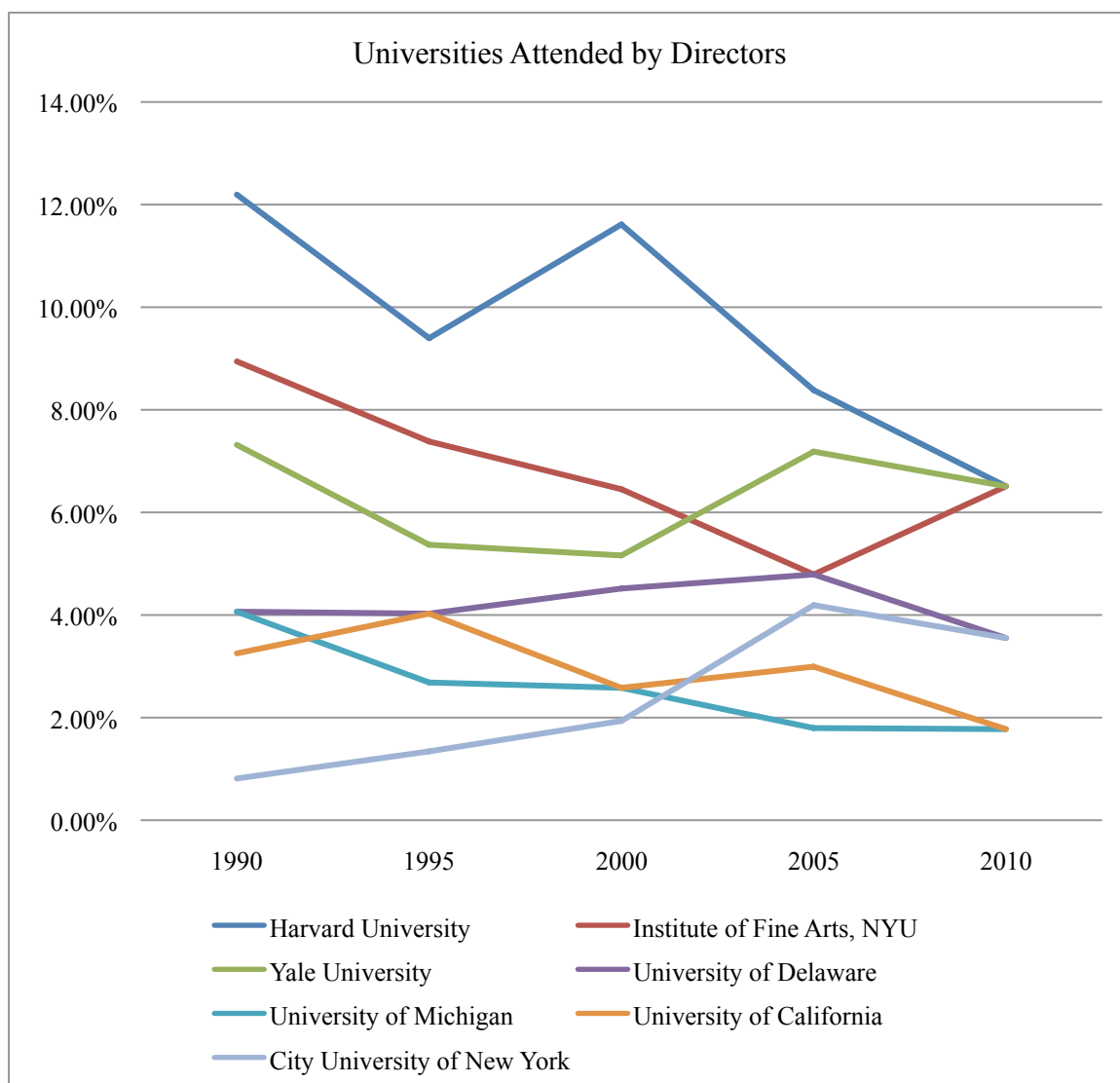


Figure 7. Top Universities Attended by Directors, 1990–2010.

CHAPTER 4

THE MUSEUM DIRECTOR, 1990–2010:

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the 1990s and the early years of the 21st century, newspaper articles discussed the difficulties museums faced in finding and retaining executive directors due to the complex requirements of the job. A particularly poignant article in *The New York Times* posted a “want ad” for a museum director:

Wanted: Charming, erudite executive with the diplomatic skills of a foreign service officer, the financial skills of an investment banker and the social skills of a 1950’s wife. Position requires the academic background of a serious scholar, with the willingness to let most of this knowledge go unused in favor of poring over budgets and staffing issues. Long hours, low pay and the chance to see your name in the papers every time you make even the slightest wrong move (Goldberger 1994).

When this article was published in 1994, thirteen museums in the United States were looking for directors. Another article written in 2005 discussed similar problems with the job of the art museum director; at that time there were fifteen director vacancies in the United States. Both of these articles discussed the difficulties museums were having in keeping their directors due to the very nature of the job.

While these articles highlight several issues occurring in the museum field, they are not representative of the trends in the museum field as a whole as found in this study. Museum directors are staying longer, and this negative media attention is an inaccurate media perception.

Director Age

The average age of director is increasing from 47.65 to 57.01. While this jump of nearly ten year is large, even more telling is the change in director age groups. The percentage increase in the age group for directors in their sixties and the decrease in percentages for directors in their thirties and forties reveals a major generational shift growing among directors. Generational turnover is not occurring as quickly as it did in the past. Director positions for those in their thirties are relatively nonexistent in 2010 as opposed to the 10.85% in 1990.

In 2005, Michael Robinson wrote “The Duty of Succession Planning,” a commentary on aging directors. He states:

“2011 is a big year for boomers—we will be turning mean age 60 then; 2016 heralds mean age 65. Like it or not, we shall as a generation be moving on, and it would be a good idea to do so with forethought and planning. Our institutions deserve it, [and] generations X and Y would appreciate it” (Robinson 2005).

As of 2010, less than two percent of directors were over the age of seventy. Based on this fact, most of the directors currently in their sixties will retire before they reach the age of seventy. When the changing of the guard occurs over the next ten years, museums will have the choice of fewer experienced directors. Proper training and development, as well as access to mentors in the field, will be necessary for directors of art museums to successfully run their organizations.

Director Tenure

The average director tenure increased by 2.46 years. This shows a positive trend for art museum directors. Contradicting *The New York Times*’ article from 1994, it is clear that directors are not leaving museums at a faster pace. However, the data does not

show the same dramatic results as the increase in director age. This suggests that institutions are hiring more mature directors. Directors may be moving to other institutions, in effect playing musical chairs between director positions.

With an older generation of directors staying at their museums for a longer period of time, the same argument can be made about succession planning. It will be crucial to train and guide new directors to successfully fill the positions of leaving directors.

Men and Women Directors

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, articles circulated about a glass ceiling for women in mid-level museum management. The data from 1990 to 2005 shows a positive trend for the hiring of female directors. Gender equalization is occurring in university art museums. However, the overall data from 2005 to 2010 shows a negative shift. The percentage of female directors decreased to 38.29% while male directors rose to 61.71%.

A 2010 Harvard Business Review study has a distinct statement to make regarding women in the workplace: “Reports of progress in advancement, compensation, and career satisfaction are at best overstated, at worst just plain wrong” (Carter 2010). While a positive trend does exist overall, it is important for museums to be aware of the perceived glass ceiling, even if it is not garnering media attention.

Degree Type, Field, and Universities Attended

The data concerning field of study emerged as expected. As previously discussed by DiMaggio, the majority of degrees held by directors are in the field of art history. After a review of the top ten types of degrees attained, the preference of art history or fine art remains over 70% from 1990 to 2010.

While board members may perceive the need of directors from the business world, they have not acted upon those perceptions for hiring the majority of directors. Although there was a perception of an increase in directors with business degrees and backgrounds, the findings do not support this. The perception may be caused by tough economic times for arts organizations. With increased financial pressure, certain board members have made blanket statements to the media about requiring their director to have business experience. These statements may have persisted, even though it is not representative of the overall director background.

The need for management training for directors with an art history background may be addressed through programs designed specifically for museum directors. At Harvard University and the Getty Leadership Institute, programs have emerged to specifically train curators to become managers. While these programs will never replace the formal MBA, they may provide enough managerial support and training for directors to juggle the administrative expectations.

The steadiness in the high percentage of art history degrees might also be explained by the increase in dual-positions at the highest levels of museum management. This study does not take into account whether or not the director was supported by a business manager or a separately defined role dedicated to management functions.

While 1995–2005 shows more directors holding doctoral degrees, directors with master's degrees became more prevalent in 2010. This shows that the director is not always expected to be the top scholar in the museum.

University attendance shows a slight shifting of the field. The top three universities attended by museum directors provide a strong, traditional art history

education. Another perception to address is the supposed prevalence of directors who received a top degree from Williams College. Because Williams College does not offer a Ph.D., directors who may have attended Williams pursued their doctoral degree from another university. Therefore Williams was statistically insignificant for top universities attended by directors.

Final Thoughts

Overall, the results of this study show a positive outlook for museums. Although the media may trumpet the troubles of the art museum director, the field is becoming more stable. Director tenures are increasing as opposed to decreasing, as the media would suggest. While tenures are increasing, so are directors' ages. This suggests that museums are lead by more experienced directors with art history knowledge. To maintain this positive momentum, succession planning will be important for the next generation of museum directors to succeed. Gender disparity is still an issue for women hoping to attain the position of director.

This study is just the beginning of understanding who the current museum directors are. Future areas of study include research about women in the museum, race or ethnicity among museum directors, museum's succession planning practices, and the opinions and viewpoints of museum directors. It is my hope that this research will motivate others interested in understanding museum leadership to follow with additional studies in the field.

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