

1973

## National Museum Act Program (1973-1974): Speech 06

Duncan F. Cameron

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_I\\_69](http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_69)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cameron, Duncan F, "National Museum Act Program (1973-1974): Speech 06" (1973). *National Museum Act Program (1973-1974)*. Paper 1.  
[http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell\\_neh\\_I\\_69/1](http://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_69/1)

This Speech is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in National Museum Act Program (1973-1974) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@etal.uri.edu).

Statement

prepared for the

Special Subcommittee  
on the Arts and Humanities

by

Duncan F. Cameron, Director  
The Brooklyn Museum  
New York City

July 19, 1973

Two years ago, commenting on the plight of The Brooklyn Museum, one of my trustees said, "We know the frustrations of directing this museum. It is hard to get on with the business of living when you have to use all your energies to stay alive."

I did not understand this remark which was offered as a mixture of sympathy and encouragement when I heard it two years ago, but I understand it well today. The Brooklyn Museum does struggle, and with some enthusiasm, to stay alive and to serve the people of the borough of Brooklyn. We do this in the knowledge that our efforts, no matter how valiant, to fight off bankruptcy serve only to keep us alive and permit only the most minimal efforts in public service in a community where the needs for the services which we could offer are not only great but in a sense, desperate.

When it was first proposed that I testify at the hearings of the Subcommittee, it was suggested that I speak on behalf of the museums in my region. Subsequently, it was argued that The Brooklyn Museum in many ways typified the plight of the museums in the region, and it would be more to the point to deal with the specifics of The Brooklyn Museum than to deal in generalities. Permit me then to sketch an outline of the condition of The Brooklyn Museum which I will describe for these purposes as one of the seven major art museums in America, striving to serve a population of 2,600,000 persons in the borough of Brooklyn, which is sometimes described as the fourth largest city in the United States.

It must be remembered that this great institution was conceived before the turn of the century when Brooklyn was a very wealthy and flourishing city. It stands today, architecturally grand and imposing and unbelievably rich in its collections, in the midst of a borough of the City of New York which is plagued with severe urban problems, and can no longer be described by any measure as wealthy and flourishing even though we all have great hopes for the future.

The Museum operates on a budget of about \$3,500,000. a year. In my opinion, the budget necessary to a healthy operation which would meet the needs of our public and would maintain professional standards, should be no less than \$4,500,000. in the current year. The \$1,000,000. that we do not have is needed for the most practical and essential purposes, and not for any glamorous pattern of growth and extension.

The building itself is owned and maintained by the City of New York which is also responsible for the security of the building. Yet, in spite of an exceptional spirit of cooperation between the Museum and the City, it has not been possible to maintain the building at a standard which would meet reasonable requirements for the safety of the collections, the convenience and safety of the public, and the preservation of the landmark building itself. I am implying no criticism of the City of New York, but it must be observed that we have shared in that City's financial difficulties in recent years.

There are City funded plans for important improvements over the next ten to twelve years, but in the meantime, we must cope with collapsing masonry walls, leaking roofs and a security staff so small that we are forced to close to the public two days of the week.

The conservation and restoration of our collections is a most distressing problem. Although we have a long-standing reputation for excellence in the conservation of works of art, our Conservation Department is minimal, and we carry on in the knowledge that the deterioration of collections each year represents a far greater loss than the growth of our collections through gifts and purchases. It is not, of course, that we do not know what needs to be done. It is simply that we do not have the financial resources to engage, on a continuing basis, the necessary professional staff.

The Museum has had for decades a reputation as one of the successful innovators in art education both for children and for adults. We continue to experiment and take pride in the results which we achieve, but at the same time we know that we turn away three out of five requests from schools for services. We have the knowledge, we have the experience. We do not have the dollars that are necessary to put that knowledge and experience to work in a truly effective way in our community where the need is, as I have said, desperate.

Virtually all of our departments are understaffed, and the operating budgets of departments are miniscule when compared with those

in comparable institutions in other cities. The virtue in our poverty is that we have learned over the years to do a great deal with very little. Special exhibitions are produced; there is an array of interpretive programs for children, teenagers, college students, adults and senior citizens. Our audience is about 900,000 visits per year. It is drawn primarily from the borough of Brooklyn, and we have a faithful and an enthusiastic clientele drawn from the lower socio-economic levels and from the minority populations, unlike that to be found in any other major art museum in the country.

If you will agree that our problems, though perhaps extreme in some cases, do typify the problems of museums in my region, and especially those which are among the larger and longer established institutions, then you might ask, "What assistance do we most need from the Federal government and in what form should that assistance be given?"

I must reply that we most need assistance with the maintenance and improvement of our physical plant, with the conservation and restoration of our collections, with the costs of our educational and interpretive programs on a continuing basis, and in support of general operating and administrative budgets. It is in these less visible and not so politically attractive areas where the need is greatest.

I cannot make these remarks without giving due credit to the support of projects and special programs which has been given by the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities in recent years. Only with the help of these grants

have we been able to present most of our important exhibitions, to reinstall certain permanent galleries, and to carry out useful experiments in new methods of installation and interpretation and new uses for audio-visual techniques in museums.

The importance of the role of the National Endowment in Federal support of museums is unquestioned in my mind, but it is apart from the role which I would hope that the Museums Services Act could play in the years ahead. To expand on that point and perhaps to clarify, special project grants from the Endowments of \$100,000. in the coming year would permit us to do some things which we could not otherwise undertake. We would, of course, be matching those Endowment grants primarily through expenditures from our private funds operating budget. Thus, while our program activity would increase, our financial dilemma would remain, and the probability of a deficit at year's end would not be lessened by this support.

On the other hand, support under the Museum Services Act would, I trust, supplement our private funds operating budget and permit us to do some of those things which we are already doing but with Federal funds offsetting the probability of a deficit, while enabling us to perform our essential tasks more effectively.

I realize that there is no glamour and rarely much enthusiasm for programs to offset the operating deficits of arts institutions. The importance of grants for general operating purposes cannot be underestimated,

however. You should know that for a period of many years, The Brooklyn Museum, in order to maintain essential services to the public, annually budgeted deficits ranging from roughly \$40,000. to \$100,000. These deficits were covered by invading unrestricted capital. As a result, two years ago the Museum had reached a point where the continuation of this practice would have meant true bankruptcy within three years. Current operations therefore do not permit deficit financing, and every measure is taken to avoid the possibility of deficit through either misfortune or unwarranted optimism. Only by providing grants to support the private funds operating budget of the Museum can the Museum Services Act contribute to the long-term health of the institution, while at the same time assuring that public services will not be cut back in order to balance the books.

On reading the stated purpose of the Museum Services Act, it would appear that its authors were in accord with the point of view I have been expressing today. However, a review of Section 6, Activities of the Institute, leaves me uncertain that we are in accord. The suggested activities, while recognizing the need for support of administrative costs, conservation programs, educational services and staff salaries, also include a variety of special, one-time projects which could now be funded by the Endowments.

I would argue that clarification of Section 6 is needed and the guidelines should be limited to grant programs that do not in any way



duplicate those already in the guidelines of the National Endowments. I would also urge that the language of the act recognize the need for grants that extend over a period of years so that the users of these grants may project their financial affairs some time in advance and be assured of stability in their operations.

I have submitted to the Special Subcommittee answers to a number of questions regarding museum services to the public and especially educational services, the present sources of income which make these services possible, and present and future financial needs. The form of these questions to which I was asked to provide answers calls for comment.

Whenever a foundation or a government agency providing support to museums asks about attendance statistics and such things as the number of school children or classes served, one wonders if consideration is being given to the use of these statistics as criteria in awarding grants. Should this be the case, a word of caution is in order.

In a less sophisticated era it was certainly true that museums did everything possible to increase reported attendance and especially increase the reported numbers of school children who were being processed by the museum's education department. It is no secret that attendance and school visit statistics were inflated by ingenious means and that the reliability of attendance statistics left much to be desired. But the facts of the case were that raw attendance data was considered to be the only

measure of the quality of museum services available. Those responsible for governmental support or foundation grants had little else to guide them.

Today, program evaluation by qualitative as well as quantitative means is accepted practice in the world of education and so it should be in the world of museums. Any major funding program that rewards museums for increasing no more than the number of children processed or the number of visitors clocked through the turnstiles will encourage a lowering of the quality of public service being offered in the interests of popular appeal by means fair or foul. Effectiveness in public service is not necessarily reflected in attendance data and I cannot urge the Special Subcommittee too strongly to consider alternative qualitative criteria in the evaluation of museum programs.

Finally, and in summary, I wish to express my whole-hearted support for the Museums Services Act and for increased federal support of the museums of this country. It is my firmly held opinion that without substantial increases in the level of federal support, and within the spirit of this act, the museums of the United States will be unable to meet the ever-increasing public demand for services. Some museums will be unable to continue at all. There is urgency in these matters for there are many museums that are struggling to stay alive day by day and month by month. Support through the Museums Services Act cannot be given too quickly.

INFORMATION SOUGHT BY SENATOR PELL'S  
SPECIAL SUBCOMMITTEE ON ARTS AND HUMANITIES

APPENDIX

1. Museum services to the public -
  - I a) attendance levels and growth
  - II b) school groups attending the museum and utilizing its resources
  - III c) school age level of museum audience in organized tours
  - IV d) educational programs provided by museum (i.e. education department, docent program, grade level served)
  - V e) adult education
  - f) field trips
  - g) support services for local schools
  - V h) number of requests for organized school tours denied because of lack of funding, space, teachers, time, etc.
  - i) examples of intermuseum cooperation
- VI 2. Present financial means of providing these services -
  - a) local government
  - b) private contributions
  - c) admission
  - d) bequests
  - e) corporate
  - f) evidence of support through revenue sharing
  - g) other
- VI 3. Present and future financial needs -
  - a) operations
  - b) maintenance
  - c) salary
  - d) program
  - e) trends in museum funding, i.e. comparison of budget in 1971 versus 1972
4. Nature and use that the Federal Government has made of museums.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND PUBLIC WELFARE  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, (202) 225-5375

Democrats

Harrison A. Williams, Jr. (N.J.), Chairman\*  
Jennings Randolph (W. Va.) \*  
Claiborne Pell (R.I.)\*°+  
Edward M. Kennedy (Mass.)\*  
Gaylord Nelson (Wis.)+  
Walter F. Mondale (Minn.)\*°+  
Thomas F. Eagleton (Mo.)\*°+  
Alan Cranston (Calif.)\*  
Harold E. Hughes (Iowa)  
William D. Hathaway (Me.)\*

Republicans

Jacob K. Javits (N.Y.) \*°+  
Peter H. Dominick (Colo.)\*  
Richard S. Schweiker (Pa.)\*  
Robert Taft, Jr. (Ohio) °+  
J. Glenn Beall, Jr. (Md.)\*  
Robert T. Stafford (Vt.)\*  
-----  
\* Education Subcommittee  
° Arts & Humanities Subcomm.  
+ Smithsonian Subcommittee

## THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

1. Museum services to the public

## a) attendance levels and growth

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1967-68	810,643
1968-69	791,631 <sup>(1)</sup>
1969-70	864,238
1970-71	1,243,478 <sup>(2)</sup>
1971-72	746,406 <sup>(3)</sup>
5 year average	891,279

- (1) Public schools closed for six weeks due to teachers' strike.
- (2) Van Gogh exhibition, Feb. 14 - April 11. Attendance, 260,000.
- (3) Beginning of electronic counting of visitors; beginning of new education programming.

July 19, 1973

## THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

1. Museum services to the public

- b) school groups attending the Museum and utilizing its resources

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Number of school children</u>
1967-68	95,403
1968-69	74,747 <sup>(1)</sup>
1969-70	100,762
1970-71	159,216 <sup>(2)</sup>
1971-72	38,323 <sup>(3)</sup>

- (1) Public schools closed for 6 weeks due to teachers' strike.
- (2) Van Gogh exhibition, Feb. 14 - April 11. Special school programs.
- (3) Beginning of new education programming.

(NOTE: See attached for student hours per school program.)

July 19, 1973

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Calculations of Student Hours

by program

<u>1967-68</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Hours per visit</u>	<u>Student hours</u>
<u>Supervised School Programs</u>			
Elem. schools	51,927	1.5	77,890
Jr. High schools	8,784	2	17,568
High schools	2,219	2.5	<u>5,548</u>
Total student hours, supervised			<u>101,006</u>
Other school services*	<u>32,473</u>		
Total (Appendix 1-(b))	<u>95,403</u>		
<u>1968-69</u>			
<u>Supervised School Programs</u>			
Elem. schools	47,451	1.5	71,176
Jr. High	4,763	2	9,526
High schools	2,857	2.5	<u>7,142</u>
Total student hours, supervised			<u>87,844</u>
Other school services	<u>19,676</u>		
Total (Appendix 1-(b))	<u>74,747</u>		

July 19, 1973

<u>1969-70</u>	<u>No. of students</u>	<u>Hours per visit</u>	<u>Student hours</u>
<u>Supervised School Programs</u>			
Elem. schools	73,935	1.5	110,902
Jr. High	4,239	2	8,478
High schools	3,121	2.5	<u>7,802</u>
Total student hours, supervised			<u>127,182</u>
Other school services	<u>19,467</u>		
Total (Appendix 1-(b))	<u>100,762</u>		

1970-71

<u>Supervised School Programs</u>			
Elem. schools	112,965	1.5	169,447
Jr. High	6,184	2	12,368
High schools	5,164	2.5	<u>12,910</u>
Total student hours, supervised			<u>194,725</u>
Other school services	<u>34,903</u>		
Total (Appendix 1-(b))	<u>159,216</u>		

1971-72

<u>Supervised School Programs</u>			
All schools	16,606	25	415,150
	21,000	2	<u>42,000</u>
Total student hours, supervised			<u>457,150</u>
Other school services	<u>717</u>		
Total (Appendix 1-(b))	<u>38,323</u>		

(\*Children's concerts, teacher's courses, etc.)

THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

1. Museum services to the public

- c) school age level of museum audience in organized tours

Based on 5-year average:

64%	elementary school (4th grade - 6th grade)
6%	junior high
3%	high school
<hr/>	
(27%	adult)
<hr/>	

July 19, 1973



## THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

1. Museum services to the publicd) educational programs  
provided by Museum

	<u>1967-68</u>	<u>1968-69</u>	<u>1969-70</u>	<u>1970-71</u>	<u>1971-72</u>
Children's Art Classes, etc. (Jr. Membership)	11,307	13,251	11,429	23,565	15,662
General programs (concerts, gallery talks, films, etc.)	41,801	43,207	148,520	70,471	23,368

July 19, 1973

## THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

1. Museum services to the public  
 e) adult education

## Art School enrollment

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Attendance</u>
1967-68	2,768
1968-69	2,603
1969-70	2,367
1970-71	2,500 (approx.)
1971-72	3,562

- g) Number of requests for organized school tours denied because of lack of funding, space, teachers, time, etc. : 3 out of 5.

July 19, 1973

## THE BROOKLYN MUSEUM

2. (a-g) Sources of Museum Income  
and  
3. (e) Comparison of 1971 versus 1972 Budgets

Based on actual operating budgets:	<u>1972-73</u>	<u>1971-72</u>
a) Local government (City of New York)	49%	47%
Local government (State of New York)	6%	5 1/2%
b) Private contributions	3%	4%
c) Admission	=0=	-0-
d) Bequests	22%	22%
e) Corporate	1 1/2%	1 1/2%
f) Evidence of support through revenue sharing ?	?	?
g) Other (sales desks, special fund-raising, memberships, tuitions, etc.)	18 1/2%	20%
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	100%	100%
In addition, special grants for designated purposes were received and expended outside operating budget at % value of total expenses of	32%	32%

Figures on which above percentages are based:	<u>1972-73</u>	<u>1971-72</u>
Actual Expenses	<u>\$2,758,500</u>	<u>\$2,503,250</u>
a) From City of New York	1,364,120	1,177,460
From New York State Council	163,410	139,200
b) Unrestricted contributions	82,000	97,700
c) Admission	---	---
d) Wilbour, Lever, Kevorkian, and other endowment	643,300	548,300

	<u>1972-73</u>	<u>1971-72</u>
e) Restricted contributions (corporate)	\$ 42,100	\$ 37,150
f) ?		
g) All other income and deficit *	463,570	503,440
Special grants for designated purposes	\$ 900,000	\$ 800,000

\* 1972-73 deficit \$29,600

1971-72 deficit \$66,400