

Public Relations and Communications Policy and Procedures

Fostering positive relationships and communications is an important part of your museum's functions and directly relates to the museum's accountability and sustainability. Good public relations can promote the good will and understanding of the public and encourages community involvement. Informing the public of what the museum has to offer and demonstrating how the museum contributes to the community and culture can increase visitors and improve museum revenues and financial support. In fact, establishing good public relations and communications is the first step in marketing your museum. Creating public relations and communication policy and procedures is essential in ensuring that the museums decisions on their relationships and communications are effective, clear and consistent.

Your public relations and communications policy should be based on an identification and assessment of your current internal and external relationships and communications. The museum's "public" not only includes visitors but also the staff and volunteers, members, government officials, potential sponsors, the media, members of the travel industry and education providers. You should examine these relationships and determine how you currently communicate and how these communications can improve. Your policies and procedures should address the following areas:

- Internal relations and communications between governing bodies, administration, staff and volunteers
- Special interest groups such as with government departments and schools and other organizations.
- General public i.e. the general museum community and potential visitors.
- Corporate and business groups

Once you have determined with whom the museum communicates and the nature of that relationship you should consider means and methods of communication. Schedules and methods of staff communications should be established. Methods of communications with the public, businesses, media, government, schools and other special interest groups should be developed. These should address media releases or publicity, advertising, museum presentations as well as public and private meetings. Policy and procedures should also define who will have the authority to communicate for the museum and how and when these communications will be conducted.

For more information on this topic see:

Guidelines for the Operations of Community Museums in Newfoundland and Labrador
Publications, Public Relations & Policy – Page 72

Resources for Developing Public Relations and Communication Policies

Western Australian Museums - Public Relations

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/musmanage.asp>

Western Australian Museums - Liaising with the Media

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/musmanage.asp>

Australian Museums Online – Museum Methods – Customer Service and Public Relations

http://sector.amol.org.au/publications_archive/museum_management/museum_methods/customer_service_and_public_relations?MySourceSession=5f7e61b419a7366510531a5575f100f2

Museum Marketing Tips – Advertising and Public Relations

http://www.museummarketingtips.com/links/links_pr.html

Special Libraries Association - Public Relations Handbook

<http://www.sla.org/pdfs/prhand.pdf>

Examples of Public Relations and Communication Policy Documents

National Museum of Australia – Communications Policy

[http://www.nma.gov.au/shared/libraries/attachments/corporate_documents/policies/communication_policy/files/18350/POL-C-012_Communication_policy-1.0_\(public\).pdf](http://www.nma.gov.au/shared/libraries/attachments/corporate_documents/policies/communication_policy/files/18350/POL-C-012_Communication_policy-1.0_(public).pdf)

The Peabody Museum of Natural History – Who We Are – Information for the Media

<http://www.yale.edu/peabody/contact/media.html>

Special Libraries Association – Media Practices

<http://www.sla.org/content/SLA/governance/Policies/33-95.cfm>