

Re-Imagining the Traditional Narrative: Understanding and Connecting the Abraham Lincoln

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Re-Imagining the Traditional Narrative: Understanding and Connecting the Abraham Lincoln statue within the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

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Thesis Title

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Re-Imagining the Traditional Narrative: Understanding and Connecting the Abraham Lincoln  
Statue within The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum

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**ABSTRACT:**

Museums are sometimes at the vanguard of cultural innovation, changing the world rather than keeping up with the way the world changes. My intention is to explore the impact of altering traditional narratives in museums. How do we map the connection for change within museums and their context? Reflecting on the necessity and conditions of change becomes a priority. It gives formation to influential and relevant texts that can outlive their creators and the situations in response to which narratives were created. I argue that the current descriptive panel associated with the Lincoln sculpture, located at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum (NCWHM), lacks objectivity and is dismissive of the historical content and context. Utilizing primary and secondary sources, along with associated museum journals, the Dickinson Research Center, and my time as an intern at the NCWHM, I propose that an innovative alternative narrative, including different perspectives, be considered. A content and context relatable alternate perspective allows for a diversified cultural viewpoint and invites community interaction in the museum environment. While acknowledging the different cultural perspectives presented in the descriptive label panel material, I will design and implement a survey studying the impact on the alternative interpretive approaches to museum exhibit panels.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Museums, these quintessential repositories of cultural memory, are built to last. Museums are defined as institutions that collect, preserve, and research objects and materials of cultural, religious, artistic, scientific, and historical significance. These objects in collections are then interpreted and presented to the public for the purpose of education and entertainment. Collections have to be interpreted and sometimes reinterpreted in order to extend knowledge about the collected objects. Together with archives, they preserve the memory, embodied in objects, of a given community. The terminology used in museums has always clearly shown the drive towards permanence and national identity.<sup>1</sup> Museums serve as informal learning spaces that are open to people of all ages and backgrounds. Sometimes a visitor will not recognize the significance of their visit until years after the experience. Museum visitors and the institution itself share an experience that creates new memories. Ultimately, however, effective public history should change people and the ways they think about the world.

Every museum is defined by its collections. What is the significance and expectations of a museum with having the term “national” in its title, like the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum (NCWHM)? Why is the Lincoln statue located at this museum and what does it have to do with western history? Does the missing content from the current panel give justification for a proper educational message for museum visitors? Those are some of the questions I pondered when I interned at the NCWHM in the spring of 2019. I utilized my knowledge base from my time as an intern at the museum, as well as the Dickinson Research Center. Research was conducted using primary documents, congressional reports, and national

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<sup>1</sup>Annie E. Coombes, “Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities.” *Oxford Art Journal* 11, no.2 (1988):

archives. My secondary sources came from numerous books and articles. With the development of the questionnaire, I researched various surveys from universities, museums, and other institutions. An additional source was my paid memberships to museum associations to access their museum journals and materials. I used online web applications to produce my survey form and distribute it to individuals in the museum field, artists, historians, community leaders, students, and professors, both locally and globally.

During my internship with the curatorial department I was challenged to reinterpret the current descriptive panel. I developed an alternative interpretive narrative for the Lincoln statue that allows for a diverse voice which I believe will benefit the museum. It is important for a museum to be objective and the chosen narratives to address multiple perspectives. In museology, we are taught the intention of a museum is to be the voice of all people in its community when interpreting history and culture. The truth is narratives exist in every culture. Communities are diverse, and museums reflect their intentions through what and how they present their collections, which affects the public's knowledge of the subject. Research has shown that individuals who feel their views are not represented or validated are less motivated to visit a museum.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes museums miss opportunities to be more inclusive and equal because the institution is missing an additional perspective, and other times that single museum perspective that is given might be missing the fact which recognizes content and context. Interpretations and narratives in museums have since the beginning constructed the social narrative of social history, while educating the public. The traditional view of history comes from a White-Eurocentric view that is deeply naturalized in museum practice.

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<sup>2</sup>Josipa Roksa, "Engaging with Diversity: How Positive and Negative Diversity Interactions Influence Students' Cognitive Outcomes." *The Journal of Higher Education*, 2017.



Scott Abernathy, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Minnesota explains the intentional concept of constructing more diverse examples is not only inclusive, it also helps visitors understand and explore issues from perspectives that may be different than their own.<sup>3</sup> The idea is that diversity is not just a box you check off from your to-do list. The approach to diverse and alternative perspectives in education at museums is to fulfill a validated connection, context of a subject, and provide a deeper understanding of the museum display. This thesis project was a natural link from the idea of developing alternative interpretive approaches to museum exhibit panels to an analysis proposal and response to a single focused change.

Change in museums can occur *in relation with* or *in spite of* changes in the context in which they function. As it can be rationalized in relation to socio-political changes, cultural transformations, and changes in perceptions that bring about groundbreaking moves and paradigm shifts. While some museums embrace the challenge of change present in their environment and communities, others persist in continuity, remaining strongholds of the old colonial position. Museums encounter questions of how to give new meaning to objects amid interaction with a multicultural community. Some museums have succeeded in opening a dialogue with their communities or their representatives by relating them to the objects in museum collections.<sup>4</sup>

The National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Museum's original mission was to honor and recognize the great cowboys, cattle ranchers, and stockmen of the western agricultural states who

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<sup>3</sup>Scott Abernathy, *American Democracy: Stories of A Nation*. The University of Michigan Press, 2005.

<sup>4</sup>Zvezdana Antos, "Politics and the Presentation of Cultures in Museums." *International Council of Museums IZKO Museum Publications*, 2012.

contributed to the initial development of the West.<sup>5</sup> The first thirty years of the museum did not celebrate or represent men and women of diverse cultural and ethnic communities that helped develop the West. The museum's intended visitor-centered on a traditional white, elite, male audience. The first Western Heritage Awards were presented in 1961 for the best in Western film, literature, and music, and inductions were made into the Great Westerners Hall of Fame and the Western Performers Hall of Fame. With the completion of the building in 1965, the Hall of Fame concept was modified into a full-blown museum focusing on Western art. The museum opened to the public on July 26, 1965. With the emphasis on art, the National Academy of Western Art was established and dubbed the Prix de West. Ten years later it had developed into one of the finest Western art collections in the nation and was generally recognized as having the best contemporary Western art collection in the world. To showcase its collections, exhibits, and events, in 1970, *Persimmon Hill* magazine began publication.<sup>6</sup>

The last two decades of the twentieth century brought much change. The institution became embroiled in internal controversy in the mid-1980s and went into receivership.<sup>7</sup> Receivership is a situation in which an institution or enterprise is held by a receiver—a person "placed in the custodial responsibility for the property of others, including tangible and intangible assets and rights"—especially in cases where a company cannot meet financial obligations or enters bankruptcy.<sup>8</sup> Between 1991 and 1997, the original facility was renovated

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<sup>5</sup> House of Representatives, Congressional Report no.952, July 15, 1957.

<sup>6</sup> Donald C. and Elizabeth M. Dickinson Research Center, Vertical files, National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City.

<sup>7</sup>Bobby Weaver, "National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. Oklahoma History Center.

<sup>8</sup> Legal Information Institute. <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/28/3103>

and an additional 140,000 square feet added, bringing the museum up to 220,000 square feet.

The Western art focus was retained, but a significant history component was added.<sup>9</sup>

Visitors are entering today's national museums with a diverse range of backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences. Inclusivity and not diversity are widespread among Eurocentric museums. Nationally, museums proclaim an inclusive and diverse statements, but fail to actively operate diverse exhibits, programming, minority scholars, or community inclusion. Opinions on why these institutions are not introducing another account of history conveniently ignored in most traditional museums, is just that. Bias as a result of omission. By not providing a diverse range of experiences or perspectives in museum displays and didactic panels, museums continue to preserve bias statements. Some traditional museums are implicitly biased in their content, language, and presentation, which by all accounts controls the public view on the knowledge they receive from institutions and then distribute to others by various means of communication. Darren Walker, president of the international social justice Ford Foundation, suggests that when institutions succumb to prioritizing capital and ignorance over diversity, it is not only immoral, but it weakens the organization. Institutions committed to diversity must be clear that diversity is not a sacrifice but a strength. Walker further explains that having more unique perspectives makes a museum more competent.<sup>10</sup>

A research study published by The Journal of Higher Education found that negative diversity experiences had adverse consequences for critical thinking and cognitive skill development. Conversely, positive diversity interactions and discussions supported the ability to

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<sup>9</sup> Bobby Weaver, "National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*. Oklahoma History Center.

<sup>10</sup>Johnnetta Betsch Cole, and Laura L. Lott, editors, *Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums*. American Alliance of Museums. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

challenge established viewpoints and more thoughtfully reflect upon complex issues.<sup>11</sup> The concept that museums have objectivity and integrity for multiple perspectives and experiences helps define interpretive approaches for future museum missions.

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<sup>11</sup>Josipa Roksa, “Engaging with Diversity: How Positive and Negative Diversity Interactions Influence Students’ Cognitive Outcomes.” *The Journal of Higher Education*, 2017.

## CHAPTER I. LITERATURE REVIEW:

Congressional Reports, House of Representatives, the Congressional Research Services, and the National Archives revealed important information on what is considered a 'national' museum and how an institution proceeds in establishing themselves as a national museum. The Congressional Reports contained the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum's original mission and initial goals of the museum. These reports also addressed who prepared the legal process of congressional recognition for establishing the NCWHM as a national museum in Oklahoma.

The Donald C. & Elizabeth M. Dickinson Research Center at the NCWHM was an essential resource in researching the sculptor James Earle Fraser, the artist behind the Abraham Lincoln sculpture. The Dickinson center houses an extensive collection of the Fraser's Papers, including several art sketches, diaries, log books, commissioned art contracts, and letters. Along with the documents and materials, I was able to view the museum's Fraser Art Collection which comprises both the works of the husband and wife team, James Earle (1876-1953), and Laura Gardin Fraser (1889-1966).

A small selection of thesis and dissertations were chosen for this project. Two of the theses were studies on the artist James Earle Fraser, the times he lived and created his works, during the early twentieth century. These papers looked strongly at his other famous sculpture, *End of the Trail*, which is also part of the NCWHM collection. They explored the politics of new interpretations and representations of a public sculpture that was created by a white man to symbolize indigenous life or, in this case, the end of native lifeways in the frontier. These two theses are a component in this review for two main reasons. One, they were written ten years apart, and it is a telling sign that both have similar criticism about how the sculpture has been

used for marketing and collecting. For example, advertising the characterization of the defeated indigenous civilization and how this image has been widely collected all over the world, presenting and ‘educating’ the public on a particular representation of history.<sup>12</sup> Secondly, these papers give an insight into the topic discussion of how specific public artworks are represented and interpreted in societal views and communities. For example, questioning in what ways does the museum take ownership of issues that have long been created by a colonial establishment and then work towards acknowledgment and solutions.<sup>13</sup>

The dissertation by Lisa Carrole Roberts argues that museum educators represent a set of interests that make an institution’s collections intelligible to viewers, but that this tenet also holds radical implications for what it means to be a museum.<sup>14</sup> The authority of the curator has been affected by debates on methodology and voice in interpreting object narratives. This dissertation offers a view to the particular challenges educators present to traditional museum operations and better illuminates complex agendas which have remained unchanged in the industry for centuries. According to Roberts, it was in the newly established museums of revolutionary America that doors to these collecting institutions were fully opened to the general public. The first use of the term ‘education’ in museum charters was a political and indiscriminate way of promoting the democratic cause of equality for all through rational enlightenment.<sup>15</sup>

The *Persimmon Hill* quarterly magazines helped look at past events, exhibitions, narratives, and values the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum had during the first

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<sup>12</sup> Kristina Borrman, “The Paradoxical Persistence of James Earle Fraser’s End of the Trail: Nostalgia, Souvenirs, and the Politics of Pictorial Representation.” Thesis, University of California, Berkley, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Chandra Powell, “A Study of James Earle Fraser’s End of the Trail: A New Interpretation for the Image of the Defeated Native American.” Thesis, Oklahoma City University, 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Lisa Carrole Roberts, “From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum.” Doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1992.

<sup>15</sup> Lisa Carrole Roberts, “From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum.” Doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1992.

thirty years of its existence. The magazines did not help with establishing a cohesive timeline, as the articles were sporadic with information. However, volume one did provide the most content about the history of the museum and how the founder, Chester Reynolds, saw the museum's role in the American West.<sup>16</sup>

Articles from *The American Historical Review* and *The Public Historian*, along with the other editorials on public history and memory, were chosen for two main reasons. First, the curator I interned under at the NCWHM considered the Abraham Lincoln sculpture a public piece of art with definite ties to public history. The second dealt with the idea that public history is for all people everywhere. These articles examine the link between historical practice and human memory. That interpreting the past relies on the reasoning of the mind and studying how individuals receive information.<sup>17</sup> The most important principle of public history is that it promotes history as a way to teach. The editorials also put into perspective that public history lies in human ideas and in connection through interaction in society.<sup>18</sup>

Of the hundreds of books on Abraham Lincoln, and of the books and articles I used in my research, I chose *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* by Michael Burlingame to add to my literature review. Burlingame retells the life of Lincoln, finding new materials and using resources earlier biographers did not have access to. The author's interest in Lincoln, his background as a researcher, and his personal connection with Anson Burlingame, an anti-slavery congressman who was President Lincoln's minister to Austria, then to China, is appreciated in the author's writing style. I found much of the same information one would find in the numerous books dedicated to Lincoln,

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<sup>16</sup> Jasper Ackerman, "On The Occasion of the First Issue." *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1 (1970-71).

<sup>17</sup> W. Andrew Achenbaum, "Review: Public History's Past, Present, and Prospects." *The American Historical Review*. 92, no. 5 (1987): 1162-1174.

<sup>18</sup> Diane F. Britton, "Public History and Public Memory." *The Public Historian* 19, no. 3 (1997): 11-23.

but a few surprises. For example, he discovered unpublished materials from the Lincoln Legal Papers, along with anonymous Lincoln writings, two-hundred that have been identified, and speeches in the Frederick Douglass papers from 1865 that had not been previously published on Lincoln and race.<sup>19</sup> The book also described his methodology of working online using word-searchables and checking against the photos of the original documents, letters to and from Lincoln, and newspapers. He utilized not only the New York papers or papers with big budgets, but local papers that a senator or general would rather talk to than the prominent newspapers that do not know the local flare.<sup>20</sup> Burlingame included things he wished he knew about Lincoln, like his true feelings about his father and what plan he had about black suffrage. Burlingame explains the misconception in the public record is Abraham Lincoln was murdered because he called for limited black suffrage and not because he issued the Emancipation Proclamation or endorsed the Thirteenth Amendment. In fact, on April 11, 1865, John Wilkes Booth heard Lincoln's speech, which said that some blacks should be allowed to vote, this led to Booth's actions.<sup>21</sup> *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* was beneficial in background research on Lincoln, learning what other scholars saw as his strengths and what he should be remembered for, and how to link this information back to interpreting and modifying alternative narratives in the museum and public spaces.

The essay "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities" is written upon a renewed interest in the multicultural initiative. Annie Coombes explains that multiculturalism has become one of the buzzwords of the educational establishment. The degree to which museums are trying to redeem the discipline's tarnished reputation as a product and

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<sup>19</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.



perpetrator of the colonial process is full of contradictions.<sup>22</sup> The institutions are concerned with attracting a broader and more diverse public, proving the museums' capacity as serious educational resources and awareness of the museums' community cultures. The contradiction lies in the fact that museums want to appeal to a diverse audience, and yet they fail to involve themselves in the cultural diversity in the community. A colonial administration has also conditioned the educational dominance in national identity, which disintegrates the position of true contextual educational programming.

In his article, "The Museum Refuses to Stand Still" Kenneth Hudson reflects on his book *Museums for the 1980s*, published by UNESCO in 1977, describing new changes in theory and practice for the museum world. He is looking at how museology and museum function has evolved in the last fifty years and what may lay ahead in the future. He speaks on the 'old-style' museums that were under no obligation to be visitor-oriented, their sole concern was to put a collection on display and leave it up for years. Museums, according to Hudson, did not have phrases as 'service to the community' and were not interested in educating the public. He believes four main social causes have taken place in the last fifty years to warrant significant changes in how the museum operates.<sup>23</sup> This information has been beneficial to my research because it shows not only that there was an authority expressing that need for museums to change, but also defining what qualifies as a museum according to the International Council of Museums (ICOM) standards, which in itself has been a case for change.

*Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* is filled with essays written by historians in the museum field. These essays challenge the assumption that museum

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<sup>22</sup> Annie E. Coombes, "Museums and the Formation of National and Cultural Identities." *Oxford Art Journal* 11, no.2 (1988): 57-68

<sup>23</sup> Kenneth Hudson, "The Museum Refuses to Stand Still." *Museum International* UNESCO 50, no.197 (1998).

audiences share the same attitudes as the curators who develop the exhibit. The essays look at the pretense of older exhibitions and those made in a cultural context, and the communities are putting forth the right to challenge the established institutions over the control of the presentation of their cultures.<sup>24</sup> In my research, this book has had some essential highlights in helping me understand that two decades later there has not been much progress for community ownership of public museums and exhibitions that have been strategically geared towards cultural groups.

Gaynor Kavanagh in *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts* critiques the methodology of exhibition presentations, including texts, and placement of displays used by curators in museums for the general public. The idea of effective development in museums and the provision of equity of collection relations has been a dominated discussion since the 1980s.<sup>25</sup> She addresses the lack of communication efforts from museums needed for the public viewer. This book also explores the social work of language and its effect on various social groups, especially minorities and previously unrepresented groups.

In Kavanagh's most recent book, *Making Histories in Museums* she discusses the emergence of new history and the nature of communities and histories they represent are featured in this book. Kavanagh relates the curators' work to varying degrees of personal exhibitions to highly public profile shows for museums. The relationships that are built in the new arena of public service with new communities is critical to the success of the museum. She has three essential areas for modern-day history museum practices. She proposes that you have to make a

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<sup>24</sup> Ivan Karp, and Steven D. Lavine. Editors. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Published in Cooperation with the American Association of Museums. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1991.

<sup>25</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts*. Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991.

case for history in museums being developed from an awareness that museums are one of the ways in which people can engage issues and ideas about identity and the past.<sup>26</sup>

In this revisionist theory, Lynne Munson believes that although we go to museums with a basis of trust and that they are producing fact-based exhibits, we expect museums to provide the viewer with the best examples of an aesthetic experience. Munson has the opinion that the revisionist museum is one that replaces the idea of a natural progressive achievement by an artist to a non-hero story of cultural construction.<sup>27</sup> She employs historians, Arthur Danto, Stephen Weil, and Carol Duncan in identifying varying theories of a revisionist theme. Munson surmises the revisionist idea is to create standards where everything becomes art and politics are left free to guide the museum's mission. This article was valuable to me in trying to discern the ideas of revisionist theory in a museum setting and looking at the pros and cons between traditional and non-traditional museums.

*A Brief History of Curating* explores contributions to the curatorial field and the pioneering curators with their innovative practices of stepping out of area criteria to finding new ways of approaching internal politics and policies within the field. It tries to map the curatorial field from some early independent curators in the 1960s and 1970s to the experimental institutional programming developed in Europe and America through the expansion of biennials.<sup>28</sup> Note: this book was published after Obrist's' death, and contains materials collected throughout his decades interviewing and working in the museum field.

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<sup>26</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Making Histories in Museums*. New York: Continuum Collection, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Lynne Munson, "The New Museology." *Public Interest* 127 (Spring 1997): 60-70.

<sup>28</sup> Hans Ulrich Obrist, *A Brief History of Curating*. Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2008.

“Accessible Curatorship: Exhibition Development Based on Relationships with Different Audiences” is an analysis of specific cases of accessibility and curatorial practices in museums and cultural institutions based on the relationship between different audiences. One of Sarraf’s main objectives was to find a methodology to help institutions and professionals produce accessible exhibitions with successful curatorial practices, where target audiences, and representatives of heritage, could contribute their knowledge and experience to exhibition development. In the authors statement about accessible curatorship, Sarraf and Bruno propose that museums are micro-systems within the social system, and as they interact with each other, they can be considered to be the principal agents in the processes connected with humanity and respect.<sup>29</sup>

*Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach* is a good beginner source for museum studies, although she has some misconceptions about narrative labels and the use of cultural tools. The book explains the idea behind interpretive labels in the museum, the different learning styles, and various methods of sharing information to the viewer.<sup>30</sup> The book also has an entire section on the production and fabrication of museum labels. Serrell wrote her first book on exhibit labels in 1979, she admits in subsequent books that some of her initial observations needed updating, what the author does not admit to is the need for fact-based cultural narrative or inclusion of different perspectives in exhibit labels.

*Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era* is a revisionist look on a hopeful ‘new tradition’ in museology, philosophy, and museum exhibitions. The colonial origins

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<sup>29</sup> Viviane Panelli Sarraf, and Maria Christina Oliveira Bruno. “Accessible Curatorship: Exhibition Development Based on Relationships with Different Audiences.” *The Museum Review* 2, no.1 (2017).

<sup>30</sup> Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996.

of the museum continue to have a lasting influence upon institutions and upon the public perception of them. Despite this, some museums are changing the function and the relationships they have or lack of cultures represented in their collections. This is a change that hopefully will reflect the shift in the interactions of dominant western cultures and that of indigenous, minority, and underrepresented groups. Simpson believes international interest of issues dealing with museums and cultural diversity has drawn attention to museum professionals recognizing that museums and curators have not provided adequate representation for culturally diverse communities.<sup>31</sup>

Laurajane Smith challenges traditional Western definitions of heritage that focus on material and forms of ‘old,’ or aesthetically pleasing, tangible heritage, which are used to promote a consensus view of both the past and the present. In *Uses of Heritage* an alternative conception of heritage is developed, which establishes themes of memory, identity, intangibility of difference, and place. Using case studies of material culture and identity, Smith surmises that people are more active and mindful in their use of ‘heritage’ than an institutional museum use of place.<sup>32</sup>

The Abraham Lincoln sculpture and its descriptive narrative is the subject of this thesis project, and James Fraser is the artist who created the piece. Syracuse University Art Collection houses the most extensive collection of art and sculptures of James Earle and Laura Gardin Fraser. The second to have a leading compendium of their work is the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. Fraser’s work is integral to many of Washington, D.C.’s most iconic

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<sup>31</sup> Moira G. Simpson, *Making Representations: Museums in the Post-Colonial Era*. Revised Edition. New York: Routledge, 2001.

<sup>32</sup> Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

structures. *James Earle Fraser: The American Heritage in Sculpture* publication makes use of the many resources of Fraser's papers and those of his wife, sculptor Laura, that are held at the Special Collections Research Center at Syracuse University Library, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art, and the Donald C. & Elizabeth M. Dickinson Research Center at National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.<sup>33</sup>

Jennifer Wachtel a graduate student at the time she was wrote “Archival Authority: Can There be Neutrality in the Exhibit Creation Process?” This article gives a different perspective from authors who have been working in the industry for a time. She questions the neutrality or the degree of bias of archivists and curators who are responsible for the content of an exhibit. She examines how one's authoritative role shapes public discourse and if there are ethical concerns with that authoritative narrative voice.<sup>34</sup> Wachtel adds that one of the objectives should seek a qualitative product with exhibitions and its educational creation. In my opinion, you cannot keep personal bias out of curating most exhibitions, but one way of tapering that bias is collaborating with different disciplines so you can have various voices and narratives represented.

“No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places” explores the myths and consequences of westward expansion. The author studied accounts of two men with distinctive Western frontier history, Frederick Jackson Turner and Buffalo Bill Cody. Each man claimed to represent history, but each engaged in myth-making. Both men turned the truth upside down and

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<sup>33</sup> Syracuse University Art Collection. *James Earle Fraser: The American Heritage in Sculpture*. James Earle Fraser Estate Syracuse University Art Collection. The Thomas Gilcrease Institute of American History and Art, Tulsa, Oklahoma, 1985.

<sup>34</sup> Jennifer Wachtel, “Archival Authority: Can There be Neutrality in the Exhibit Creation Process?” *Theory and Practice: The Emerging Museum Professional Journal*. The National Emerging Museum Professionals Network, The Museum Scholar. Vol.1(2018).

encouraged Americans to think of themselves as the victims of the Indian Wars and erasing Indigenous people from their homeland and frontier, rather than as the aggressors. This article facilitated my look into how few public history programs are addressing the change in narratives by focusing on context in storytelling and not just a whitewashed version of an exhibit about the West, but also audience reaction to different narratives about the West. Weiseger concluded that she was surprised that while some visitors applauded the revised interpretation, others jeered that it was slanted and cynical revisionist crap about their heroes.<sup>35</sup>

Stephen Weil characterizes the worthiness of a museum stems from what it does, not from what it is. Just because you are an institution with the word ‘museum’ attached to it does not inherent worth or dignity. The museum field has scarcely sought to agree on what merit member institutions might be measured. In *Beyond Management: Making Museums Matter* talks about ends and means, the characteristics of the last century giving emphasis to the improvement and development of the institution, the maintenance of a museum's institutional continuity.<sup>36</sup> The book also discusses ideas of system matters, internal planning, and control, and non-quantitative measures of failure or success. Weil debates the attitudes of curatorial desires to shape a collection, the politics in carrying out institutional programming, and the legacy from elitist created museums.

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<sup>35</sup> Marsha Weiseger, “No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places.” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no.3 (Autumn 2011): 289-296.

<sup>36</sup> Stephen E. Weil, *Beyond Management: Making Museums Matter*. University of Michigan. Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000, 2002.

## CHAPTER II. RESEARCHING THE MUSEUM:

### National Museums

Professor of History in Cultural Heritage, Peter Aronsson evaluates national museums as processes of institutionalized concessions, where material collections and display make claims and are recognized as communicating and representing national values and realities.<sup>37</sup> Museums have an established system, as part of their value as an institution is creating themselves as the relevant cultural force. The motives and desires in investing in a national museum are in part ensuring understanding of the national identity, community presence, and cultural dialogue, and part creating engaging experiences for economic impact.<sup>38</sup>

There is no true and accurate definition of a national museum. The Institute of Museum and Library Services estimates there are more than 35,000 museums in the United States.<sup>39</sup> The many types of museums include arboretums, botanical gardens, nature centers, historical societies, historic preservation organizations, history museums, science and technology centers, planetariums, children's museums, art museums, general museums, natural history and natural science museums, zoos, aquariums, and wildlife conservation centers. Some of these museums are termed "national" museums.

Selected national museums are authorized by Congress and operated by the federal government, such as the *National Museum of the American Indian* and the *National Museum of African American History and Culture*. However, most national museums are private museums,

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<sup>37</sup> Peter Aronsson, *National Museum Negotiating the Past for a Desired Future: Museums in an Age of Migration*. European Commission Research: Mela Books, 2012.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Aronsson, *National Museum Negotiating the Past for a Desired Future: Museums in an Age of Migration*. European Commission Research: Mela Books, 2012.

<sup>39</sup>Institute of Museum and Library Services, Government Doubles Official Estimate: There Are 35,000 Active Museums in the U.S. Press release, May 19, 2014.



funded and operated without government involvement. Congressional acts designate certain private museums as national museums.<sup>40</sup> Such congressional designation of private museums is honorary and recognizes a museum as being of national importance. In general, this designation is not accompanied by federal funding, although museums of this type can, without congressional designation, apply for competitive grants from these federal sources, Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.<sup>41</sup> Museums may receive a congressional designation of “national” in several ways. Through bills and joint resolutions, both of which become laws if passed by both chambers and signed by the President and through simple and concurrent resolutions, which are adopted by one or both chambers but do not carry the force of law.<sup>42</sup>

Not all museums designated “national” have received this designation through congressional action. Some museums have designated themselves as national, as did the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, the National Western Art Museum, and the National Museum of Wildlife Art.<sup>43</sup> National museums have, from the start, been idyllic visionary projects carried by politicians, intellectuals, scholars, and citizens in the state and civic society. The hopes of cultural representatives to use museums as tools for education, tourism, and integration interplay with the formulation of the national museum, its professionals, and directors. The museum’s capacity to provide a foundation for legitimacy and representation as both factual and relevant, for a level of engagement is part of the introduction of museums and exhibitions.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Contemporary Federal Museum Authorizations in the District of Columbia, Past Practices and Options for Congress*: Report, January 9, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Congressional Research Service, *Contemporary Federal Museum Authorizations in the District of Columbia, Past Practices and Options for Congress*: Report, January 9, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Congressional Research Service, *National Museum in Brief*: Report, April 8, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> Congressional Research Service, *National Museum in Brief*: Report, April 8, 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Peter Aronsson, *National Museum Negotiating the Past for a Desired Future: Museums in an Age of Migration*. European Commission Research: Mela Books, 2012.

People connect with the past when they visit museums and historic sites and grant these institutions credibility. Once established, they become a cultural asset and a force unto themselves that is to be regarded and rearranged but seldom destroyed by new socio-political groups and visions. The longevity of their existence across periods of political change provides one of the powerful features of the institution that is a museum.<sup>45</sup>

### **The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum**

The founding of the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum took place over several years. The founder of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center was Mr. Chester Arthur Reynolds (1887-1958), of Kansas City, Missouri, chairman of the H.D. Lee Garment Company.<sup>46</sup> Mr. Reynolds's inspiration for a national museum developed from a visit to the Will Rogers Memorial in Claremore, Oklahoma. He saw a good example of a memorial to a cowboy, which prompted thoughts on other cowboys, cattlemen, and ranchers who aided in building the Western frontier.<sup>47</sup> He believed he could develop one of the finest shrines in the country. Mr. Reynolds envisioned the memorial to be modeled after the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York, with a place for objects that contributed to the building of the West, and the personal effects of pioneering and western heroes.

In 1954 Mr. Reynolds started the museum's organization and paperwork. He set up a board of trustees, an outline of the project, proposed by-laws, and certificate of incorporation, for which the bill would be introduced in Congress at the next session. While the H.D. Lee

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<sup>45</sup> Peter Aronsson, *National Museum Negotiating the Past for a Desired Future: Museums in an Age of Migration*. European Commission Research: Mela Books, 2012.

<sup>46</sup> Dean Krakel, "Mr. Reynold's Dream." *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1 (1970-71).

<sup>47</sup> Dean Krakel, "Mr. Reynold's Dream." *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

Company would put five-thousand dollars toward the shrine, Reynolds invited governors, prominent cattlemen, and those with deep pockets and influence to join the board of trustees. Forty cities from the seventeen western states wrote letters to bid for the future spot of the Cowboy Hall of Fame location.<sup>48</sup>

A 1953 editorial in the *Dodge City Globe* declared, “the Old West belongs to America, and the Cowboy Hall of Fame belongs right here in the center of America, in Cowboy Capital, Dodge City.”<sup>49</sup> In April 1954, Mr. E.K. Gaylord (1873-1974), publisher of the *Daily Oklahoman* wrote to Mr. Reynolds expressing his desire to honor past and present cowboys of the Southwest. Gaylord would discuss the interest of locating the shrine in Oklahoma City with Stanley Draper (1889-1976), managing director of Oklahoma City’s Chamber of Commerce.<sup>50</sup> A full year later, Oklahoma City presented its case as one of the ten finalists. The Chamber of Commerce committee purchased the 12-acre tract of Persimmon Hill along Route 66. Future acres were also purchased by the Chamber of Commerce to increase the site to 37 acres at the additional cost of forty-thousand dollars.<sup>51</sup> The Persimmon Hill acreage along Route 66 followed the description of the area being historic to the Oklahoma land run of 1889 and Indian Nation territory. The vote on location was down to three cities, Oklahoma City, Colorado Springs, and Dodge City. Oklahoma City won by twenty votes to Dodge City’s eleven votes after Colorado Springs was dropped from the second ballot.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Dean Krakel, “Mr. Reynold’s Dream.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>49</sup> Dean Krakel, “Mr. Reynold’s Dream.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>50</sup> Dean Krakel, “Mr. Reynold’s Dream.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>51</sup> Dean Krakel, “Mr. Reynold’s Dream.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>52</sup> Dean Krakel, “Mr. Reynold’s Dream.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

As Oklahoma City was chosen for the new shrine site, the Trustees started a five-million-dollar campaign for the building. Lee Sorey from the Oklahoma City architectural firm Sorey Hill Sorey was placed in charge of the architectural competition. While finding a suitable director for the museum, the executive board decided that a trustee from each of the seventeen states would serve on the Hall of Fame selection committee. Mr. Reynolds advised the Trustees that the Hall of Fame would be worth much more to Oklahoma City if it were promoted as a national shrine and not a state project.<sup>53</sup> In 1958 the museum planned a week-long affair to raise \$740,000.00 from the city and \$250,000.00 from the State of Oklahoma, which would go towards the three-million-dollar shrine. That same year Mr. Reynolds died.<sup>54</sup>

Congressional Resolution 32 was put forth by the Subcommittee on Public Lands in July 1957 for the consideration of the establishment at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Museum. The Resolution affirms the museum would be a conventional institution for citizens of the seventeen Western states where the cattle trade contributed to the history of the United States, particularly to the grasslands.<sup>55</sup> To the purpose of the museum was to honor past and present cowboys, stockmen, and ranchers who contributed to the initial development of the West. To perpetuate the contributions by acts and deeds of these men and women, the museum proposed to erect buildings or monuments deemed appropriate to be a lasting memorial to those pioneers. In conclusion, the Resolution upheld the museum's work to preserve historical and present-day documents, mementos, personal effects, and relics of these

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<sup>53</sup> Dean Krakel, "Mr. Reynold's Dream." *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>54</sup> Dean Krakel, "Mr. Reynold's Dream." *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>55</sup> House of Representatives, Congressional Report no.952, July 15, 1957.

pioneers that will be of national interest and will be a valuable contribution to the folklore of America.<sup>56</sup>

Jasper Ackerman, President of the Board of Trustees to the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center in 1970, pointed out, “the museum was a great national shrine, memorialized by Congress of the United States.”<sup>57</sup> He declared the institution “will continue to bring to the minds and hearts of millions from throughout the world, the great virtues of the West, its people, its tradition and heritage.”<sup>58</sup> The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) gave the museum full accreditation in 2000, when it took on its present name as the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum.

Accreditation through the American Alliance of Museums is based on the Core Standards for Museums. The Alliance, founded in 1906, has been a leader in developing best practices and advocating for museums throughout the United States. Core Standards for Museums are the umbrella standards for all museums and includes Ethics, Standards, and Professional Practices, that develop through inclusive field-wide dialogue.<sup>59</sup> Two questions guide every accreditation review, the first, how well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals? Second, how well does the museum’s performance meet standards and best practices as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances? The process is centered on self-study and peer review. It takes 8-16 months to complete and should be completed every ten years.<sup>60</sup> According to AAM, accreditation offers a high profile, peer-based validation of a

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<sup>56</sup> House of Representatives, Congressional Report no.952, July 15, 1957.

<sup>57</sup> Jasper Ackerman, “On The Occasion of the First Issue.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>58</sup> Jasper Ackerman, “On The Occasion of the First Issue.” *Persimmon Hill* A Quarterly Publication of the West. National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Western Heritage Center. Vol.1(1970-71).

<sup>59</sup> American Alliance of Museums. <https://www.aam-us.org/>.

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museum's operations and impact. This recognition can increase a museum's credibility and value to funders, policymakers, insurers, community, and peers.

### **Museum Narratives**

The potential methods in improving museum narratives and the development of alternative perspectives can transform the way history is viewed and taught. Museums are in a unique position to influence and effect social change because of their perception as objective and trustworthy institutions.<sup>61</sup> Museums are ideal places where narratives can be voiced and encourage visitors to make their own meanings. Museum spaces can acknowledge ways for motivation to bridge communication of both personal reflection and public discussion, while also preserving individual and collective memory. Recognizing the idea that content and meaning of a museum collection will be different for every visitor is an important step in developing narratives that speak to people in an innovative and diversified way.

When the historical record reflects only the perspectives of the powerful few, underrepresented populations are left in the distance. To close the gap and make history relevant to all, museum officials, academics, historians, and preservationists must examine their storytelling practices and make room for other voices in local, regional, and national narratives.<sup>62</sup> One of the most important principles of public history is that it promotes history as a way to teach. According to W. Andrew Achenbaum, interpretations in public history should be written as a history of the people, by the people, with the people, for the people.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Patricia Davis, "Memoryscapes in Transition: Black History Museums, New South Narratives, and Urban Regeneration." *Southern Communication Journal* 78, no.2 (2013).

<sup>62</sup> Darlene Taylor, "I, Too, Sing America: Integrating the Voices All Americans in Historic Preservation." *Preserving Places: Reflections on the National Historic Preservation Act at Fifty from the Public Historian. National Council on Public History* (October 2016).

<sup>63</sup> W. Andrew Achenbaum, "Review: Public History's Past, Present, and Prospects." *The American Historical Review*. 92, no. 5 (1987): 1162-1174.

Diane F. Britton notes that textbooks are more likely to try and influence patriotic emotions in students rather than a genuine interest in history. This results in the tendency to overlook aspects of American history that might put America in a negative light, such as slavery or how the Native Americans were treated once Europeans arrived.<sup>64</sup> Change in museum practices includes new ways of making and unmaking the museum, of relating to different forms of representation, and to communities.

Traditional approaches to museum studies have been dominated by an outsider view of museum practice and by the ideas of historical theorists and traditional historians. The possibility of a new approach that might touch on anthropological in style, might also be more observant to the nuances of museum practices and how they are regarded within institutions and from the public.<sup>65</sup> In museums, there is an under-articulated language to descriptive narrative panels. It is a language based on differences in curatorial approaches on how objects are displayed and described, which object is the focus of a display, and the relationship of the object content and context.<sup>66</sup> Some curators believe these are issues of sensibility and aesthetics as much as politics and culture.

Narratives create a stronger connection with visitors. They give difficult concepts real context, and allow language and facts to be notable. Narratives encourage engagement for visitors to share their own experiences. Connections occur in various forms when feelings of empathy increase once relatable perspectives are displayed.

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<sup>64</sup> Diane F Britton, "Public History and Public Memory." *The Public Historian* 19, no. 3 (1997): 11-23.

<sup>65</sup> Zvezdana Antos, "Politics and the Presentation of Cultures in Museums." *International Council of Museums IZKO Museum Publications*, 2012.

<sup>66</sup> Zvezdana Antos, "Politics and the Presentation of Cultures in Museums." *International Council of Museums IZKO Museum Publications*, 2012.

## Sculpture

Sculpture, as defined by the University of New Mexico Art Museum, is a three-dimensional work of art. Such works are primarily concerned with space, occupying it, relating to it, and influencing the viewer's perception of it.<sup>67</sup> Sculpture may be carved, modeled, constructed, or cast. Sculptures can also be described as assemblage, in the round, and relief, and are made in a vast variety of media including marble, bronze, metal, or plaster. Within the term of sculpture is the discussion of what a statue is. A statue can be described as the total structure synthesis of all the visible aspects of the sculpture, which creates its distinctive character. A statue is a three-dimensional representation of a human, animal, or, in some cases, an imaginary figure such as a deity or mythological creature. Statues are representational portrayals of objects that you can recognize in their natural form. The form of the artwork is what enables us to perceive it.<sup>68</sup>

Public sculpture cannot provide a fully objective view of an event or a person, but it can be a useful method in educating histories. Monuments celebrate past events and national heroes. Public art is on display and accessible to the public. Although Fraser's Lincoln statue is located inside the museum, it is considered public sculpture. German art historian Helmut Scharf suggests that a monument exists in the form of an object and also as a symbol.<sup>69</sup> A monument is a type of three-dimensional structure that was explicitly created to commemorate a person or event, or which has become relevant to a social group as a part of their remembrance of historic

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<sup>67</sup> Artful Vocabulary Describing Sculpture, University of New Mexico Art Museum.

<sup>68</sup> Artful Vocabulary Describing Sculpture, University of New Mexico Art Museum.

<sup>69</sup> Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.



times or cultural heritage, due to its artistic, historical, political, technical or architectural importance.<sup>70</sup>

Public sculpture serves multiple functions in the communities in which they are placed. Organizations and institutions that acquire a piece of monumental art are making a statement about the ideas, values, or individuals they think their society should remember or honor. The Lincoln sculpture at NCWHM acts as a historical touchstone. It can link the past to the present and enable its viewers to engage in community discussions.

### **Abraham Lincoln**

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), as the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States brought about many changes to America and its inhabitants. Lincoln was born in Kentucky, one of the few border-states during the Civil War. Although both his parents were illiterate, his step-mother encouraged him to read. As a young boy Lincoln would walk miles to borrow a book.<sup>71</sup> At age 22, during their last move to Indiana, Lincoln left home and made a living as a manual laborer. Many Lincoln biographies contribute his social skills and ability at storytelling from his life as a shopkeeper and postmaster in New Salem, Illinois.<sup>72</sup>

During the Black Hawk War of 1832, the locals elected Lincoln to be captain of the volunteer army. His captainship is believed to be his first connection in politics.<sup>73</sup> Two years later, Lincoln began his political career and was elected to the Illinois state legislature as a member of the Whig Party. After being admitted to the bar in 1837, he moved to Springfield,

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<sup>70</sup> Françoise Choay, *The Invention of the Historic Monument*. Cambridge University Press, 2001.

<sup>71</sup> C. A. Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Free Press, 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Carl Sandberg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and War Years*. Abridged Ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1929.

<sup>73</sup> Carl Sandberg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and War Years*. Abridged Ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1929.

Illinois, and began to practice law. There he met and married Mary Todd in 1842. Lincoln made a good living in his early years as a lawyer but found that Springfield alone didn't offer enough work.<sup>74</sup> He was the lone Whig from the state of Illinois and served a single term in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1847 to 1849.

As a member of the Illinois state legislature in 1834, Lincoln supported the Whig politics of government-sponsored infrastructure and protective tariffs. This political understanding led him to formulate his early views on slavery, not so much as a moral wrong, but as an impediment to economic development.<sup>75</sup> Lincoln joined the Republican Party in 1856, and ran for U.S. Senator Stephen Douglas's seat. In Lincoln's nomination acceptance speech, he criticized Douglas, the Supreme Court, and President James Buchanan for promoting slavery and declared "a house divided cannot stand."<sup>76</sup> Following his election to the presidency in 1860, Lincoln selected a strong cabinet composed of many of his political rivals, which became one of his most substantial assets in his first term in office.<sup>77</sup> He would need them as war loomed over the nation the following year. Before Lincoln's inauguration in March 1861, seven Southern states had seceded from the Union.

The U.S. Civil War was America's costliest and bloodiest war. Defeating the rebellion would be difficult under any circumstances, but Lincoln faced scorn and defiance. He was often at odds with his generals, his Cabinet, his party, and a majority of the American people.<sup>78</sup> On January 1, 1863, Lincoln delivered the Emancipation Proclamation, reshaping the cause of the

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<sup>74</sup> C. A. Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*. New York: Free Press, 2005.

<sup>75</sup> John Stauffer, *Giants: The Parallel Lives of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass*. New York: Twelve, 2009.

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<sup>77</sup> Carl Sandberg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and War Years*. Abridged Ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1929.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Civil War from saving the Union to abolishing slavery. Reconstruction had already begun during the Civil War as early as 1863 in areas firmly under Union military control, and Lincoln preferred a policy of quick reunification with a minimum of reprisal.<sup>79</sup>

Lincoln was responsible for signing into law the Homestead Act of 1862, the Land Grant Act of 1862, and the Railroad land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 that contributed to the settlement and development of the West. Lincoln also signed into law the Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863, that declared freedom for slaves.<sup>80</sup> He helped to preserve the Union as President. His role in the Civil War and subsequent act of signing into law, freeing slaves. Which, accounted for an estimated 3.9 million people, this was one third of the population in America at the time. These principles were his most noteworthy accomplishments that had lingering effects for generations.<sup>81</sup> Some scholars doubt that the Union would have been preserved had another person of lesser character been in the White House. According to historian Michael Burlingame, "No president in American history ever faced a greater crisis, and no president ever accomplished as much."<sup>82</sup>

### **The Lincoln Sculpture by James Earle Fraser (National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum)**

In 1929 James Earle Fraser completed the plaster original of the seated Lincoln statue. Jersey City selected Fraser, a known artist, who had created the Buffalo/Indian head nickel and *End of the Trail*, already an iconic piece of American sculpture.<sup>83</sup> Jersey City, New Jersey, is

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<sup>79</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> National Archives, Emancipation Proclamation, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation>.

<sup>81</sup> United States Census, 1860. U.S. Department of Commerce. [https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/fast\\_facts/1860\\_fast\\_facts.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1860_fast_facts.html)

<sup>82</sup> Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009.

<sup>83</sup> Dana Cooke, "A Different Lincoln." From Maxwell Perspective Maxwell School Syracuse University 1-10.

home to the Abraham Lincoln Association of Jersey City, one of the most ardent Lincoln societies in America, which has celebrated Lincoln's birthday every year since 1866. The Lincoln Association was founded in response to lingering controversy among some city residents regarding Lincoln's policies during the Civil War.<sup>84</sup> The *American Standard* (1859-1875) faulted the abolitionist movement for the Civil War and opposed Lincoln's candidacy in 1860, while *The Evening Journal* (1867-1909), called themselves "patriots" and referred to Lincoln as the Great Emancipator who struggled to save the Union and restore the status of the South within the Union.<sup>85</sup>

Jersey City claimed a special connection with the former president, as his route to his first inauguration in 1861, and as part of the memorial services held for the president in 1865. In 1926 the society launched a fundraising campaign for the bronze statue of Lincoln at the Kennedy Boulevard entrance to Lincoln Park. They raised \$75,000, including \$3,000 in pennies and nickels from local school children. Fraser stated, "I don't believe I have ever had a more enthusiastic feeling toward doing any monument than I have for this one."<sup>86</sup> The monument dedicated on June 14, 1930. Fraser was in attendance at the dedication and was among the over 3,000 people present. Every February 12<sup>th</sup>, members hold a ceremony and place a wreath at the foot of *Lincoln the Mystic* statue or the Abraham Lincoln monument at the entrance of Lincoln Park.<sup>87</sup>

According to Karnoutsos, Fraser's Lincoln Monument on Kennedy Boulevard played a small but meaningful role in the 2013 centennial of the Lincoln Highway project. The roadway

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<sup>84</sup> Carmela Karnoutsos, "Abraham Lincoln Association of Jersey City." Jersey City Past and Present 1-9.

<sup>85</sup> Carmela Karnoutsos, "Abraham Lincoln Association of Jersey City." Jersey City Past and Present 1-9.

<sup>86</sup> Dana Cooke, "A Different Lincoln." From Maxwell Perspective Maxwell School Syracuse University 1-10.

<sup>87</sup> Carmela Karnoutsos, "Abraham Lincoln Association of Jersey City." Jersey City Past and Present 1-9.

was proposed to be the first coast-to-coast highway for the new wave of the automobile. The concept of the highway was to connect already existing, local dirt and isolated roads through twelve states.<sup>88</sup> The private venture predated the federal transportation system (1964), but was not operational until after World War I. This also came before the completion of the Lincoln Memorial in the District of Columbia in 1922 as a national tribute to the president. By the late 1920s, federal and state governments took a larger role in highway construction and developed an alternate route which ended the Lincoln Highway project. These new advances made way for Jersey City to want and build new monuments and places to be dedicated to the legacy of Lincoln, which led to the 1926 commission of Fraser's *Lincoln the Mystic* sculpture. Fraser said of his Lincoln, "I particularly wanted to make a sympathetic and human study of Lincoln."<sup>89</sup> The statue sits at an entrance to Lincoln Park on the west side of town, which borders the Lincoln Highway.<sup>90</sup>

Fraser's version of Lincoln is introspective and melancholic, whose countenance is emotionally complex. As Barack Obama, the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States has said about Lincoln the 16<sup>th</sup> President, "I see in Lincoln an almost brokenness, his eyes averted, his face seems to contain a heartbreaking melancholy, as if he sees before him what the nation had so recently endured."<sup>91</sup> Fraser wanted to create the idea of Lincoln's life and character, to portray his personality and love of open space in the sculpture. Fraser believed that the president was able to think better in the openness of the outdoors.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Carmela Karnoutsos, "Abraham Lincoln Association of Jersey City." Jersey City Past and Present 1-9.

<sup>89</sup> Dana Cooke, "A Different Lincoln." From Maxwell Perspective Maxwell School Syracuse University 1-10

<sup>90</sup> Dana Cooke, "A Different Lincoln." From Maxwell Perspective Maxwell School Syracuse University 1-10

<sup>91</sup> Barack Obama, "What I see in Lincoln's Eyes." CNN.com Politics (June 28, 2005)

<http://www.cnn.com/2005/POLITICS/06/28/obama.lincoln.tm/>

<sup>92</sup> Dana Cooke, "A Different Lincoln." From Maxwell Perspective Maxwell School Syracuse University 1-10

Connections within public history and NCWHM in confronting the West are significant. We can take these examples of narratives from Frederick Jackson Turner (1861-1932) and Buffalo Bill Cody (1846-1917), who spoke at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Both men claimed to represent history. Both men are also prominently exemplified at the NCWHM. Turner spoke on the orderly settlement of a seemingly empty continent and the creation of a distinctive American culture, and Cody told of violently seizing the continent from the Indian peoples who occupied the land.<sup>93</sup> Visitors to the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, made their way through an exhibit *The Frontier in American Culture*. Marsha Weisiger contemplates that visitors came to the conclusion both Turner and Cody engaged in myth-making.<sup>94</sup> And those myths had consequences.

When Turner erased indigenous people from mental maps of the "frontier," he absolved Americans from blame for the appropriation of Indian homelands.<sup>95</sup> Similarly, when Cody focused on Custer's defeat at the Little Bighorn and showed Indians attacking apparently helpless pioneers, he turned the truth upside down and encouraged Americans to think of themselves as the victims of the Indian Wars rather than as aggressors.<sup>96</sup>

The current Abraham Lincoln panel accompanying the sculpture is another example of a traditional descriptive narrative which does not support a museum's diverse community and educational role. Three principal identifiers of the original panel include the commissioned finished bronze to mark the first transcontinental auto road, a personal portrayal of Lincoln's

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<sup>93</sup> Marsha Weisiger, "No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no.3 (Autumn 2011): 289-296

<sup>94</sup> Marsha Weisiger, "No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no.3 (Autumn 2011): 289-296.

<sup>95</sup> Marsha Weisiger, "No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no.3 (Autumn 2011): 289-296.

<sup>96</sup> Marsha Weisiger, "No More Heroes: Western History in Public Places." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 42, no.3 (Autumn 2011): 289-296.

burden, and selected “western” presidential acts. I contest these characters lack a diversified historical perspective. I am specifically addressing the impression of Lincoln’s Western presidential actions referred to on the didactic panel that was written over twenty years ago by now-retired Curator of History, Richard Rattenbury. The presidential acts include, the Homestead Act of 1862 which was encouraged by Congress, the Land-Grant College Act of 1862 or Morrill Act, the brainchild of Vermont Congressman Justin Smith Morrill (1810–98), and the Railroad Acts of 1862 & 1864, which were in Congressional discussion and addressed in the House as an authorized bill contained within the Pacific Railroad Act of 1853. Not mentioned in the Lincoln didactic panel was the Emancipation Proclamation Lincoln signed in September 1862 that freed 3.1 million of the nation’s 4 million black enslaved people.

### **CHAPTER III. DESIGN OF AN ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE PROJECT:**

#### **Designing New Narratives**

Alternate descriptions for an object or museum display consist of awareness to changes in the responses of curators to contemporary cultural concerns and developments of new research and exhibition practices. Ivan Karp, former National Endowment for the Humanities Professor and Co-Director of the Center for the Study of Public Scholarship at Emory University drew upon his vast research in African studies, Cultural Anthropology, and museology for his series of publications with the Smithsonian Institute and others on the subject of determining alternative displays. Karp evaluates that despite the increasing diversity incorporated in museums, curators and exhibition designers struggle to invent ways to accommodate alternative perspectives.<sup>97</sup> Stylistic differences aside, museums have relied on art connoisseurship to determine quality.<sup>98</sup> Relying on particular elite tastes produced such general attitudes tolerated by curatorial traditions that developed into its own belief system.

Identifying methods of display work on the foundation of a description using these three components, how the space looked in the past, how they look now, and how they might be made to look in the future. Individuals involved in organizing display in the past have often not bothered to describe why they have certain objects in a particular way or why the narrative is left without context or missing elements in the script. Most museums presume that the public and

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<sup>97</sup> Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, ed., *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute 1991.

<sup>98</sup> Lynne Munson, "The New Museology." *Public Interest* 127 (Spring 1997).



their fellow colleagues, historians, academics, and curators will recognize how and why objects are displayed, and narratives are written the way they are, without needing an explanation.<sup>99</sup>

Methods of descriptive narratives and displays often accompanying baggage about the power relations within an institution, who is in charge of research and writing the text, and what their attitude is towards the subject.<sup>100</sup> This touches on sensitivities about how institutions are managed and who holds power within them, which leads to what relationship the museum has towards the public in regards to the contextual information in the descriptive panels on display.<sup>101</sup>

What is the curator's priority in approaching the narrative issue? It can be argued that generally most texts in museums are written for the specialist academic audience and are not accessible to the general public, which are the daily consumers, audience, visitors of museums, which are often the non-specialist academic audience.<sup>102</sup> One way to ensure that text communicates with a global audience would be to provide translations into languages other than English. Many national museums have annual visitors from overseas, and our local community museums have an audience where English is a second language.<sup>103</sup>

Many exhibit narratives are attempting to create new methods that demonstrate different cultural interactions, and changes. While not all attempts have been entirely successful, they are essential. In efforts to make exhibits and narrative panels more diverse, thought-provoking, and relatable, museums must focus on active intention and action involving agency. They must share

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<sup>99</sup> Jennifer Wachtel, "Archival Authority: Can There be Neutrality in the Exhibit Creation Process?" *Theory and Practice: The Emerging Museum Professional Journal*. The National Emerging Museum Professionals Network, The Museum Scholar. Vol.1 (2018).

<sup>100</sup> Kenneth Hudson, "The Museum Refuses to Stand Still." *Museum International UNESCO* 50, no.197 (1998).

<sup>101</sup> Kenneth Hudson, "The Museum Refuses to Stand Still." *Museum International UNESCO* 50, no.197 (1998).

<sup>102</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts*. Leicester: Leicester University 1991.

<sup>103</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts*. Leicester: Leicester University 1991.

the histories and stories of those who are no longer content in having their historical perspectives and contributions controlled by the elite or privileged in society. Despite some criticism and pressure, museums must continue their commitment to collective agency.

### **Survey Procedure**

The purpose of the survey was to conduct a research study on the impact of reimagining traditional narratives in museums. With permission from the NCWHM, I looked at descriptive accounts and societal changes in the museum environment. Whether visitors experience cultural interaction in the museum, and what the Lincoln sculpture presented to them or their community. The results of the study will continue to be used for scholarly purposes only. Responses are confidential and will not be misused. No personal identifying information was obtained in this survey and presented no risk to participants. The survey included two written panel descriptions to read and 12- multiple-choice questions. It took participants on average 15-20 minutes to complete. I also conducted the survey on location at the NCWHM, where I explained the consent form to all volunteer participants.

Before the survey questionnaire could be distributed to volunteer participants, I was required to complete an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, which mandated twenty-two class modules for Social and Behavioral Research. After successful completion of the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program and submission of all required documentation, the paperwork was sent to the IRB for review. Following acceptance of the survey, I proceeded with the next steps to placing the questionnaire online and getting it into the hands of volunteer participants. At the beginning of this project, I was unaware of what the IRB was and what it included to continue the work on my thesis project.

An IRB is a review committee established to ensure that the rights and welfare of human research subjects are protected. Although federal regulations use the term IRB, institutions may choose a different name for the committee, such as Research Ethics Board or Independent Ethics Committee. An IRB must have at least five members (including a person not otherwise affiliated with the institution, a scientist, and a non-scientist). Its membership must be diverse, including race, gender, and cultural background. The committee is expected to be sensitive to community attitudes, have knowledge and experience with vulnerable populations (persons potentially vulnerable to coercion or undue influence), and be familiar with applicable regulations, state and local laws, and standards of professional conduct. The most essential requirement is that an IRB must have the expertise and professional competence to evaluate the research it reviews. One or more members must have familiarity with the discipline and methods under consideration. If not, the IRB must seek that expertise through consultation.<sup>104</sup>

Common social and behavioral sciences methodologies such as surveys, questionnaires, and interviews are considered low risk, because they do not involve physically invasive procedures with associated risk of physical harm. A great deal of research in the social and behavioral sciences offers little potential for direct benefits to the subjects themselves. The benefits of the research often lie in the importance of the knowledge to be gained, the contributions it makes to science or the contributions to society in general. There also cases in which a specific community, rather than individuals, benefit from the research. This is balanced

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<sup>104</sup>Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections.

with the fact that most research in the social and behavioral sciences poses little or no risk of harm to the individual subject.<sup>105</sup>

Informed consent forms often are used as a means to provide information about a study, and, when signed, serve as documentation of consent. In a consent form, participants need to be given sufficient information to make a decision about whether they are willing to accept risks and participate. Regulations require that this information be understandable to the subject and presented in a way that facilitates comprehension.<sup>106</sup> The emphasis is on presenting information that a “reasonable person” would want to have to make an informed decision to participate, providing an opportunity to discuss and ensuring subject comprehension.

Recruitment material is part of the consent process because it begins the process of providing information about the study. All recruitment strategies such as fliers, email messages, newspaper advertisements, phone scripts, and so on must be reviewed and approved by an IRB before they are used. The Waiver of Documentation Form, Informed Consent Form, Museum Approval Letter, submitted Questionnaire, CITI Completion Certificate and Report are attached in the Supplemental Materials and Appendix.

## **Methodology**

A multi-method approach was implemented for this project. My expectations during the process of this project was first to evaluate the progress from the development of an alternative narrative panel for the Abraham Lincoln sculpture. Secondly was to assess the consequence of addressing the issues of the traditional descriptive panel of the Lincoln sculpture at the

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<sup>105</sup> Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections.

<sup>106</sup> Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative Program, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Office for Human Research Protections.

NCWHM. Thirdly the project would clarify possible weaknesses within museology and museums and also the connection or lack of connection between museums and the community they are charged to represent.

My research included the use of Congressional Reports, House of Representatives, the Congressional Research Services, and the National Archives were important primary sources for defining the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum status as a 'national' museum. The sources also helped determine when the museum established itself through a congressional act to be considered a national museum, who was involved in acquiring the authorization, and what the initial goal of the museum was. Other primary documents came from the Smithsonian Institution's Office of Policy and Analysis, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, all of these primary organizations mentioned are government institutions.

I utilized my experience from my internship at the NCWHM and the Donald C. & Elizabeth M. Dickinson Research Center at the museum. The Dickinson Research Center was an essential resource in studying the sculptor James Earle Fraser, the artist behind the Abraham Lincoln sculpture. The center houses a sizeable collection of the Fraser's Papers, including several art sketches, diaries, log books, commissioned art contracts, and letters. During my internship and throughout my thesis project, I was able to frequently visit the NCWHM and view the Fraser Sculpture Collection.

A selection of theses and dissertations were chosen sources for this project. Studies on the artist James Earle Fraser discussed the times he lived and created his works. A dissertation by Lisa Carrole Roberts contends the authority of the curator has been affected by debates on methodology and voice interpretation by museum educators on narratives of objects. I also

researched methods for preparing and conducting surveys. Through the “Evaluation Toolkit for Museum Practitioners,” it presented practical questions and information often posed by museums. Survey mapping research that designed a multi-method approach of accessibility, functionality, and aesthetic structures. Within my data research, I looked at the implications of visitor satisfaction and summative techniques in gallery environments.

The data tools used for my survey was Google Tools and Qualtrics Survey Software. Google Forms provide an easy way to create an online survey and questionnaire, where responses would be collected in an online spreadsheet. I invited participants by email and list serves to respond to the survey. Google forms allows you to view each response in a single row of the spreadsheet and analyze the data, with each question shown in a column. Through the Qualtrics Survey Software System at the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) I was able to get the survey distributed online to a selected area on campus. Qualtrics is a management platform designed to gather, analyze and act on business data. I was able to create my survey online through the use of Google Tools. After review and editing by my committee chair, IRB and the NCWHM, I then sent the revised survey to the College of Liberal Arts, Deans Office. The survey then had to get approval from University Communications and Brand Review, before it could be distributed to the students and faculty in the College of Liberal Arts at the UCO campus.

## **CHAPTER IV. IMPLEMENTATION OF INTERPRETIVE NARRATIVE:**

### **Development of Survey Questionnaire**

The graduate thesis questionnaire-based survey was implemented to address traditional narratives in museum settings. The exploration of dominant histories and how they function help with the understanding and impact language and content can be to the local community and global society. Visitors to museums have a personal stake in dominant traditional narratives, and these accounts are often accompanied by values, culture, and identity. Individuals, as well as societal views, may feel invested in believing or disbelieving certain descriptions depending on how they might be impacted.

The Lincoln graduate thesis survey applied visitors to think critically about narratives and how they impact a society's knowledge base. Whether a descriptive panel associated with a display is content and context relatable. Is the narrative apparent in silencing alternative perspectives, in affect the traditional narrative has such a normal facade in the museum that it has the illusion of appearing objective.

In a national survey on the relevance of history and role of museums in Americans' lives, the American Association for State and Local History [AASLH] summarized and synthesized findings from fifteen-hundred people in the United States about their connection to the past and its influence on their daily lives.<sup>107</sup> Important themes emerged from this survey about how and when Americans felt most connected to the past and who they trusted to receive this knowledge from. To date, this study is still considered the most detailed picture of how Americans engage with the past and, therefore, how they view history museums. The survey found that second only

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<sup>107</sup> American Association of State & Local History, Technical Leaflets, Gifts of History Survey I&II, Technical Leaflet no.252, 1998.

to gatherings with their families, Americans most often mentioned visits to museums and historic sites as the situation that makes them feel most in touch with history.<sup>108</sup> When asked which sources they most trusted for knowledge of the past, Americans put museums and historic sites first, ahead of grandparents, eyewitnesses, college professors, history books, movies, television programs, and high school history teachers.<sup>109</sup>

These findings which are more than two decades old have been partially validated and documented only a few times since. For instance, in the 2008 study *Interconnections: The IMLS National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums and the Internet*, surveyed over seventeen hundred adults that rated museums and libraries as the most credible sources of information available to them in society.<sup>110</sup> The IMLS study also shows the amount of use of the Internet is interrelated with the number of in-person visits to museums and that it has a positive effect on in-person visits to public libraries.<sup>111</sup>

Research shows that history museums are the number one most assumed trustworthy source of information in America and Europe.<sup>112</sup> Individuals are likely to consider visiting a museum if it ignites their interest, immerses them in opportunities to explore, learn, and discover, and connects them meaningfully to the past that opens doors to help them better understand the world today. Visitors think it is crucial that museums step up to create a sense of place and community for civil discourse and greater understanding and that museums demonstrate a

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<sup>108</sup> American Association of State & Local History, Technical Leaflets, Gifts of History Survey I&II, Technical Leaflet no.252, 1998.

<sup>109</sup> American Association of State & Local History, Technical Leaflets, Gifts of History Survey I&II, Technical Leaflet no.252, 1998.

<sup>110</sup> Institute of Museum and Library Services, *Interconnections: The IMLS National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums and the Internet*, 2008.

<sup>111</sup> Institute of Museum and Library Services, *Interconnections: The IMLS National Study on the Use of Libraries, Museums and the Internet*, 2008.

<sup>112</sup> American Alliance of Museums, Center for the Future of Museums. Reach Advisors' Research, 2015.



commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.<sup>113</sup> These revelations are important because humanity looks at and learns from history to inform our future. The exploration of the Lincoln survey impacts visitors to the museum through content and context information in history and historical subject, community connections, and accessibility of diverse perspectives.

## **Data**

Online survey data: The First wave of distribution occurred January 8, 2020, one day after IRB approval was granted. It consisted of fifty contacts from my professional artist's contact list, twenty responded. The second wave went out on January 23, 2020, contained members from the Oklahoma Museum Association listserv. I do not have access to the number of members that are on the listserv, but my estimation is over one-hundred followers. During January 23-30, only twelve replied. The third wave circulated on January 31, 2020. It used the Qualtrics system at the University of Central Oklahoma, which was distributed to faculty, staff, and students in the History & Geography Department of the Liberal Arts College, and Political Sciences. The third wave resulted in the largest number of online responses with two-hundred participating between January 31- February 7, 2020. Final numbers as of date March 2, 2020, 245 participants responded through the online link. For graph see supplemental pages 30-35.

Onsite survey data: This process of handing out surveys started on Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2020, onsite at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum. The first response to the survey on February 8<sup>th</sup> was very slow, seven responded within a two-hour window. Saturday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, three participants. Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup>, two participants. From Tuesday, February 25<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, a total of 11 completed the survey at the NCWHM. Final

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<sup>113</sup> American Alliance of Museums, Center for the Future of Museums. Reach Advisors' Research, 2015.

numbers as of February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, twenty-seven participants responded by completing the survey onsite at the NCWHM. For graph, see supplemental pages 36-42.

Each week the location varied at the NCWHM. The first Saturday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, was the opening of the museum's big exhibit, "Warhol and the West." The afternoon crowd composed of mostly families, adults with children. This situation was not ideal for asking these adults to take ten minutes to do a survey, as they did not have ten-minutes to keep their children occupied and relaxed. The other large group of people observed at the opening were adults sixty-five and older. They had so much they wanted to see in the museum and did not want to be bothered with taking a survey that would cut into their time. The surveys were handed out before the visitors went into the Warhol exhibit, as was observed most of the visitors were tired and ready to leave the museum once they exited the exhibit spaces and galleries viewing area. Week two, February 15<sup>th</sup>, the situation was even worse. The weather was better than it had been the entire week, which allowed visitors to stroll the outdoors and sculpture garden. The museum was also scheduled to close early as they were getting ready for an exclusive event. The noise and movement of staff and coordinators for the event occupied most of the museum's hall and corridor spaces. Visitors were not very cooperative or interested in doing a survey that particular day. Saturday, February 22<sup>nd</sup>, the weather was pleasant, not many visitors to the museum for this onsite survey activity. This situation could have played a factor as to why so few people came to the NCWHM. Again, the museum was closing early, this time for the Green Tie Gala event, and the area surrounding the Lincoln sculpture was becoming full of tables, chairs, and a drink bar. The final week of surveys, February 29<sup>th</sup> concluded with a good number of visitors and participants. This week included surveys that were handed out by museum staff earlier during the week, which helped contribute to the final numbers.

## CHAPTER V. SYNTHESIS OF ALTERNATIVE NARRATIVE PROJECT:

### Conclusion

Museums are sometimes at the vanguard of cultural innovation, changing the world rather than keeping up with the way the world changes. Museums have the potential to improve the methods of narratives and the development of alternative perspectives can transform the way history is viewed and taught. So when the historical record reflects only the perspectives of the powerful few, underrepresented populations are left in the distance. To close the gap and make history relevant to all, museum representatives, academics, historians, and preservationists must examine their storytelling practices and make room for other voices in local, regional, and national narratives.<sup>114</sup> Museums have an established system that as part of their value as an institution is creating themselves as the relevant cultural force. The purpose of museums has traditionally been defined by five general structures: collecting, preserving, studying, exhibiting, and educating. Although education has been an institutional mandate for some two hundred years, it is in the last forty years or so that it has begun to attain a level of professionalism equal to that of other museological methods.<sup>115</sup>

My expectations during the process of this project was first to evaluate the progress from the development of an alternative narrative panel for the Abraham Lincoln sculpture. Secondly was to assess the consequence of addressing the issues of the traditional descriptive panel of the Lincoln sculpture at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum (NCWHM). Thirdly the

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<sup>114</sup> Darlene Taylor, "I, Too, Sing America: Integrating the Voices All Americans in Historic Preservation." *Preserving Places: Reflections on the National Historic Preservation Act at Fifty from the Public Historian. National Council on Public History* (October 2016).

<sup>115</sup> Lisa Carrole Roberts, "From Knowledge to Narrative: Educators and the Changing Museum." Doctoral dissertation, University of Chicago, 1992.

project would clarify possible weaknesses within museology and museums and also the relationship or lack of connection between museums and the community the institution is charged to represent.

During the progress of research, I discovered that there is no true and accurate definition of a national museum. Selected national museums are authorized by Congress and operated by the federal government. In contrast, others have a congressional designation of private institutions, which is honorary and recognizes a museum as being of national importance. The National Cowboy & Western Heritage museum fits into this honorary category. It was recognized through Congressional Resolution 32, as it was put forth by the Subcommittee on Public Lands in July 1957 for the consideration of the establishment at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Museum. This designation helped lend credibility to the museum. Connections within public history and NCWHM in confronting the West are significant.

Critical sources of funding are often from direct financial support in the form of grants, government budget allocations, and indirect provision through tax exemption or government-funded and subsidized land and buildings. None of these sources of public funding can occur without public and community support. In addition to the history and tradition of museums and organizational mission statements, many of these institutions are built on legal requirements of service to the public.<sup>116</sup> Which begs the age-old question who and what groups of society are national museums geared towards? Sadly, historians know from decades of research museums were and still are in many cases, focused on the elite, colonial, and Eurocentric audiences. Today

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<sup>116</sup> Johnnetta Betsch Cole and Laura L. Lott, editors, *Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums*. American Alliance of Museums. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

museums of all types and interests should expect their public services to be scrutinized.<sup>117</sup> In part, institutions have to prove their vital importance to the public good and supported by the broadest public audiences. A validity that implores museum leaders to strive for inclusivity and diverse perspectives.<sup>118</sup>

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), as the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States brought about many changes to America and its inhabitants. His role in the Civil War and subsequent act of signing into law, the Emancipation Proclamation Act (Proclamation 95) of 1863. Freeing slaves, which accounted for an estimated 3.9 million people, 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the population in America was one of his most noteworthy accomplishments that had lingering effects for generations.<sup>119</sup> In 1929 James Earle Fraser completed the plaster original of the seated Abraham Lincoln statue that is now on display at the NCWHM. Fraser wanted to create in sculpture the idea of Lincoln's life and character, as introspective and melancholic, whose existence was emotionally complex. The nature and heartbroken soul of a man, a father, husband, and leader of a unified country.

The current Abraham Lincoln panel accompanying the sculpture is an example of a traditional descriptive narrative accorded to not support a museums diverse community and education role. The missing fact of the Emancipation Proclamation Act in the current panel at the NCWHM is content that never should have been omitted from the narrative. What is the curator's priority in approaching the narrative issue? It can be argued that generally most texts in museums are written for the specialist academic audience, and are not accessible to the general public, which are the daily consumers, audience, visitors of museums, and the non-specialist

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<sup>117</sup> Johnnetta Betsch Cole and Laura L. Lott, editors, *Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums*. American Alliance of Museums. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

<sup>118</sup> Johnnetta Betsch Cole and Laura L. Lott, editors, *Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion in Museums*. American Alliance of Museums. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2019.

<sup>119</sup> United States Census, 1860. U.S. Department of Commerce.  
[https://www.census.gov/history/www/through\\_the\\_decades/fast\\_facts/1860\\_fast\\_facts.html](https://www.census.gov/history/www/through_the_decades/fast_facts/1860_fast_facts.html)

academic audience.<sup>120</sup> Alternate descriptions for an object or museum display consist of awareness to changes in the responses of curators to contemporary cultural concerns and developments of new research and exhibition practices.

When I started my thesis project in the fall semester of 2019, I was unaware of what the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was and what is mandated in order for me to continue to work on my thesis project. The IRB process was a stumbling block for the completion time of my thesis and its defense. I was unable to distribute any of the surveys due to the approval process by the IRB. My study had to be put on hold until the following semester. To be able to receive enough data to analyze, the survey required at least one full month of responses from participants, both online and onsite.

I created a poster during the design and implementation process of the project. The construction would hang in the Women's Center on the university campus, however as it was initiated in February, not only was time running out to conduct and conclude the study, but as I discovered, I had reservations about putting the poster up. As the survey was being administered onsite at the NCWHM, individuals inquired if the study had anything to do with Black History Month. This situation did not occur to me, the idea that audiences would assume that a survey about Abraham Lincoln being managed by a black female in the month of February would convey the notion of it being a Black History Month project. These queries made me question the timing of putting the poster up on campus. There was a list of events happening across university grounds during this month, precisely linked to Black History Month.

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<sup>120</sup> Gaynor Kavanagh, *Museum Languages: Objects and Texts*. Leicester: Leicester University 1991.

This was not the perception I wanted to communicate for this thesis project. It would be an interesting viewpoint to consider the implications of conducting an examination about Lincoln during the celebrated month of February, but this was not my intention for the narratives of this particular project. It is an assumption by many people in the United States that black Americans have a connection or veneration with Abraham Lincoln. If this thesis survey were conducted during another time of the year, I would have been more likely to put the poster up around campus.

My intention was to explore the impact of altering traditional narratives in museums. A content and context relatable alternate perspective that allows for a diversified cultural viewpoint and invites community interaction in the museum environment. A major issue has to do with the very foundation of knowledge and the assumptions to which defines the institution and their role in society. To place an object in context for interpretive purposes in an exhibit, additional research is often required. The museum curator or educator applies that knowledge to the questions he or she wishes to answer. Interpretation adds content meaning and places the study of an object within the larger context of history and must then be clearly communicated to an audience.

Information gathered by the survey concluded that almost all participants replied they knew who Abraham Lincoln was and 93% were familiar with his policies. However, just over half of the survey partakers believed Lincoln's views on race were clear. In general, most of the authors I researched came to a similar consensus of Lincoln's personal convictions and the complex political issues of race he faced as the leader of a nation. Over 80% of participants responded yes to have gained new understanding about President Lincoln and public sculpture from the interpretive narratives in the survey. Attaining knowledge from text labels is a key

component to museum displays, information about Lincoln and his policies should be in context to the content of the sculpture. According to the data collected both text panels were considered quite easy to read, while less than 10% deemed the descriptions neutral or somewhat difficult to understand. I account that some of the difficulty can be attributed to the museology of curators writing text at a scholarly level, which has been a long-standing issue of elitism in traditional museums. Coming to terms with interpreting both versions of the Lincoln sculpture's label, the participants considered text panel 'B' historically specific, with its narrative reaching a diversified and broader audience. Text panel 'B' is an alternative interpretation to the traditional and current (text panel 'A') version of the Lincoln sculpture label that graces the walls of the NCWHM. I find that this data is a reassuring and hopeful sign that individuals in a museum environment consider acknowledging the impact full content of knowledge has on society and community. For example, receiving content information within the context of what the president's policies made to the West. To include not just the terrain of Western expansion but the displacement of Indigenous people, lifeways of enslaved African descendants, and exploitation of Chinese immigrants, among others.

For those participants in the survey who have visited the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in the past, 53% regard their culture as being represented at the museum but less than half felt the museum encouraged cross-cultural interactions. These numbers are an accurate reflection of the high percentage of White participants represented in the museum environment. As observed during the onsite survey distribution at the NCWHM, less than 20% of museum visitors were of nonwhite ethnicity. 70% of the survey takers were female, while 30% were men, and most of the age demographics were between 19 and 64. A large portion of the participants were museum professionals, artists, and college educated. This is unfortunate



because it shows that most museum adherents are still part of a certain hierarchal society standard. Further examination with this particular study could explore a broader pool of museum goers, while also extending the time to six months may reveal fuller examples of diverse community participation.

Direct impact from this project has been the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum's consideration of the alternative interpretive narrative I created for the Abraham Lincoln sculpture. The descriptive narrative has gone through the curatorial department and education department at the museum for verbal clarification. With some modification on accredited identification the alternative narrative is now in the hands of the museum's CEO and President. Through the survey the NCWHM will review the findings with the curatorial and education departments, and then share those findings with the visitor and volunteer center. The survey will allow the museum to evaluate what has been working well for them in exhibitions, identification labels, visitor information, and educational programming; and explore what the museum may need to improve on, like diversity, community involvement, tribal inclusion, contextual texts, and language.

Innovative exhibit narratives encourage visitors to participate in the choices the historian or curator made and to think about the possible influences on those selections. Information on such choices are offered about an object's significance in the broader areas of social, cultural, and economic history. A key feature of museum education is the nature of the museums' responsibility to the public. An object alone will not reveal its complete meaning in society. Historians, curators, museum educators, and museum stakeholders must be aware of their limitations and biases. Alternative narratives should be available for audiences as a framework to gain a greater understanding of history and of their own place in the continuum.



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**SUPPLEMENT MATERIALS/APPENDIX:**

**SUPPLEMENT MATERIALS/APPENDIX:**

**I.**

Traditional Narrative: And current descriptive panel on display. Written by Richard Rattenbury, retired-Curator of History, was done around year 2000, for the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Center.

“Abraham Lincoln (1802-1865) Sculpture by James Earle Fraser

During the early days of the civil war, President Lincoln often walked to a hill overlooking Washington to spend the twilight hours in thought and meditation. Fraser’s portrayal has Lincoln sitting on a stone and gazing down on the troubled capitol of the Union, his shoulders revealing the burden of his office.

Considered a “western” president, Lincoln made remarkable contributions to the settlement and development of the West even while preoccupied by war. In May 1862, he signed the Homestead Act into law, permitting the unhindered ownership of farmland in the West by more than one million families prior to 1910. This was followed by the College Land Grant Act of July, 1862, which enabled the establishment of institutions of higher learning in largely unsettled frontier states and territories. Under his tutelage as well, the Railroad Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 were passed, laying the foundation for the transcontinental routes and quickening the pace of western settlement.

The Lincoln Association of Jersey City, New Jersey, commissioned this heroic statue to mark the eastern entrance of the Lincoln Highway, America’s first transcontinental auto road. Fraser was chosen to create the piece because his *End of the Trail* sculpture was associated with terminus of the Lincoln Highway at San Francisco, California. The finished bronze monument was unveiled in June of 1930. This original plaster model was obtained by the museum in 1968 and is the same size as the bronze piece which still marks the forgotten highway to the west.”

## II.

Alternative Narrative: I started working on this proposed re-imagined perspective panel for the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in 2019.

“The sculpture of the 16<sup>th</sup> President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, was created in 1929 by James Earle Fraser for the Lincoln Association of Jersey City, New Jersey, to mark the eastern entrance of the Lincoln Highway.

Lincoln has been known for significant societal changes. The Homestead Act of 1862 was no panacea for poverty but it legalized and unhindered ownership of farmland in the West by white males, cattlemen, miners, and railroad workers. The College Land Grant Act of 1862 established colleges for white males. The Railroad Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 laid the foundation for the transcontinental routes and accelerated western expansion, further displacing Native Americans and exploiting the labor of Chinese immigrants, among others. The Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863 declared freedom for an estimated 3.9 million enslaved people of African descent but did not solve the racial inequality in the country. The struggle to achieve full equality and guarantee the civil rights of all Americans continues today.

Lincoln's sculpture reminds us that the United States has been shaped by multiethnic populations who, including Indigenous people, forced migrants and enslaved Africans. Contemporary discourse gives serious attention to the political landscape in which Lincoln toiled, shaping his words and thoughts. Americans at present still understand little about slavery, to the extent to which slavery shaped American society. America's landscape today is becoming more inclusive of the stories of Black Americans and underrepresented communities, offering voices and different ways to experience the past and present.”

## III.

### **Museum Mission Statement:**

1957 – Purpose of the National Cowboy Hall of Fame and Museum to honor past and present cowboys, ranchers, and stockmen who have contributed to the initial development of the West.

2019 - The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum preserves and interprets the evolving history and cultures of the American West for the education and enrichment of its diverse audiences of adults and children.

**IV.**

**Museum Collection Policy (National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum):**

**NATIONAL COWBOY & WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM**

**COLLECTIONS PLAN**

**Draft, August 18, 2004**

**for**

**Board Collections Committee**

**October 2, 2004**

**by**

**Steve Grafe, Mike Leslie, Ed Muno, Melissa Owens, Charles E. Rand,  
Richard Rattenbury, Don Reeves, Helen Stiefmiller**

**Principal editors: Charles E. Rand & Richard Rattenbury**

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## **I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This comprehensive, collaborative collections planning document represents this institution's first attempt to treat and consider all of its collections holistically. After describing the plan's purpose, discussion ensues about the intellectual framework or vision for the collection (all collections as a whole) which provides a context for collecting and enumerates interpretive themes. These themes help to determine what items should and should not be collected and what should and should not be retained. The framework seeks to answer the question, "Where are we going?"

Curators were responsible for analyzing and describing the existing collections under their custodial care, providing an historical context for their presence, and identifying collection strengths and weaknesses. After surveying connections to other institutions and their collections and identifying opportunities for collaboration, curators compared their existing collections to the intellectual framework and its themes. From what is called a gap analysis, curators were able to identify items necessary to fill the framework, to identify candidates for deaccessioning, and to set priorities for acquisition and deaccessioning.

Finally, an implementation strategy is described along with measures to evaluate the plan's success and by whom the plan will be revisited and revised.



## II. PREAMBLE

### **A. Purpose of the Plan**

This collections plan will guide the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in fulfilling its mission to preserve and interpret the heritage of the American West for the enrichment of the public by setting criteria for collecting and preserving items appropriate to its collections in light of the intellectual framework or vision for the collections. The plan will guide the content and development of the museum's collections. The plan will lead the staff in a coordinated and uniform direction over a period of years to refine and expand the value of the collections in a predetermined way. By creating this plan, the Museum seeks to gain intellectual control over collections and to ensure that it has appropriate staff and resources for collections care.

### **B. Audience(s)**

This document is to be used by curatorial and upper administrative staff, as well as Board of Directors members. Other abridged versions may evolve to meet development and marketing needs.

### **C. Background to the Plan's creation**

The planning process had its genesis following the Registrar and Research Center Director's attendance at the collections planning colloquium sponsored by the American Association of Museums and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History Museum in Washington, D.C. on November 15 & 16, 2002. Coincident with this colloquium, the process of institutional long range planning by this museum was ongoing. The creation of a collection plan became objective 3.1 "develop and implement a collections planning document in keeping with current museum philosophy." At the Board's Collections Committee meeting of April 11, 2003, Chairman Whit Lee expressed his desire to have a draft of the plan by the Board's November meeting.

During May 2003 Charles Rand (Research Center Director) and Melissa Owens (Registrar) identified key staff to participate in the writing of the plan. Staff included Mike Leslie (Assistant Director, previously ethnology curator), Ed Muno (Curator of Art), Richard Rattenbury (Curator of History), Donald Reeves (Curator of Cowboy Culture), and Helen Stiefmiller (Assistant Registrar). A series of meetings ensued throughout the summer and early autumn. In August after a series of revisions, the group reached consensus on an intellectual framework with interpretive themes shown in section 4. Curators were assigned to writing sections 5, 6 and 7 of the plan as they applied to their collections. Rand compiled and edited their writings and wrote sections 1, 2, and 3. Owens wrote sections 8, 9, and 10.

### III. MISSION, VISION & LONG RANGE PLAN

#### **A. Mission**

The mission of the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum is to preserve and interpret the heritage of the American West for the enrichment of the public.

#### **B. Vision**

Our vision is to achieve professional and public recognition as America's premier institution interpreting the cowboy and the American West. The Museum will persistently build on its core strengths of staff and volunteers, collections, scholarly research, educational programming, and facilities to attract, engage and inspire a broad spectrum of audiences, as they experience the diversity of art, history, and cultures of the American West.

#### **C. Overview of relevant goals & objectives of current long range plan**

On June 21, 2001 under the leadership of the museum's executive director, Ken Townsend, selected staff convened under the direction of facilitator Myriam Springuel to review the Museum's 1999 long range plan and to begin to discuss, rethink, and reorganize the plan. Work continued intermittently on components of the plan after the death of Ken Townsend on August 8, 2001 and during Martin Dickinson's interim term as executive director. Planning was undertaken with renewed vigor upon the May 29, 2002 meeting of selected staff under the leadership of the new and current executive director, Chuck Schroeder. In that meeting the working draft of July 27, 2001 by Springuel was scrutinized and served as the basis for discussion. Myriam Springuel returned for one session on July 18, 2002 and following this session the planning was facilitated by Chuck Schroeder. By February 19, 2003 a working planning document was created.

A new organizational structure based on functional groupings was created. Museum Core Programs is the grouping relevant to collections and is described as "those working with the collections, exhibits, archives and research at the heart of the Museum and its mission."

Goal 3 of the long range plan deals directly with collections. It states, "As its collections form the institution's principal and distinct foundation for all activities, the Museum will collect, preserve and improve its holdings and interpret the West with accuracy and authenticity."

Goal 3's objectives are:

Objective #3.1- "develop and implement a collections planning document in keeping with current museum philosophy."

Objective #3.2- "develop priorities for collections care and long-term preservation consistent with professional museum standards."

Objective #3.3- "establish, enhance and utilize relevant, diverse advisory committees of staff, Board members and outside academic authorities to assist with acquisitions in all collecting areas and assist with interpretive programs and contemporary issues."

Objective #3.4- "refine and update permanent gallery exhibits."

Objective #3.5- "refine plans for the new research facility."

It is objective 3.1 which mandates the creation of a collections plan, an intellectual framework, an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of current collections, and the identification of gaps in collections as well as deaccession candidates. Other objectives have an effect upon collections in terms of preservation, advice on collecting, interpretive issues, and repository expansion.

#### **D. Relationship of this plan to museum policies & planning documents**

Other documents expressly related to this collections plan are the collections management policy (March 2002) and the approved charge of the collections committee of the Board of Directors (November 2003).

The collections management policy generally defines four collections areas. These are the permanent, library and archives, education and exhibit prop collections. The policy further delineates acquisition processes, records data preservation, collections use, collections care, deaccession and disposal.

The Board's collections committee is charged with the overall supervision of Museum collections and with the careful review of all recommendations of the Executive Director and curatorial staff regarding the purchase or sale of collections. Furthermore, this committee will review and approve collecting objectives set forth in Long Range Plan documents, including the Museum's collections plan.

#### **IV. INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK (Vision for the Collections)**

The National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum is a public educational institution whose purpose is to illuminate to its audiences the diversity and uniqueness of human experiences and adaptations in the American West as illustrated in both past and present artistic, cultural, technological, and historical traditions.

As a repository, the Museum functions to acquire and preserve its collections in public trust for present and future generations. The Museum seeks to achieve a balance between its responsibilities of acquiring and caring for objects and its responsibilities of fulfilling public expectations as an educational institution.

The Museum recognizes and serves broad and diverse, traditional and virtual audiences in terms of age, affiliations, knowledge, interests, cultures, and nationality. Students, educators, scholars, art patrons, donors, and representatives from media and other social and cultural institutions and organizations are counted among these audiences.

The Museum defines the West as both a distinct historical region from the 19th century to present and a geographic region spanning an area from the Mississippi River to the West Coast and from the present Canadian border to the Mexican border. Through interconnected, thematic investigations of selected facets of the West, the Museum seeks to facilitate public appreciation and understanding of the complexity of issues, traditions, cultures, and interpretations that are interwoven in this region. These facets or themes have shaped and continue to shape and impact the West, its people, and, more broadly, the United States and the world.

This interpretive thematic approach is developed through the strategic, judicious, and holistic collection of artworks, artifacts, and archival materials which serve as a basis for interpretation, documentation, scholarly research and educational programming. While potential themes relevant to the West are innumerable, the Museum currently focuses on, interprets, and documents the following themes, which taken together, define and constitute the museum's vision of western heritage:

\*The ranching and cattle industry in the transformation of the West and the cowboy life and its diverse expressions through rodeos, wild west shows, literature, and popular culture.

\*The cultures, history, experiences, and artistic expressions of those Native American peoples now living west of the Mississippi River.

\*Historic and contemporary western fine arts that capture, portray, and document the truly distinctive character of the American West.

\*The role of the military in the Frontier West as a transforming agent.

\*The significance and impact of hunting and conservation in the West and the technological, historic and aesthetic character and impact of firearms in the western environment and experience.

\*Those peoples, cultural and historical currents, and material, visual, and documentary legacies of the Western experience relevant or pertinent to the past, present and future collecting and programmatic efforts of the institution.

The Museum will aggressively seek artwork, artifacts, and archival materials that support these themes. Staff time and acquisitions funds will be devoted to collection items that support these themes. Additionally, the Museum will seek collaborative opportunities with individuals and institutions to facilitate thematic interpretations.

V.

**Survey Tools:**

**V-A). IRB (Institutional Review Board) Materials:**

**UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA  
INFORMED CONSENT**

**Research Project Title:** Abraham Lincoln Sculpture Narrative, Survey: Graduate Museum Studies Project

**Researcher (s):** Amena Butler

**A. Purpose of this research:** The purpose of this research is to study the impact of reimagining traditional narratives in museums. I will be looking at descriptive narratives and societal changes in the museum environment.

The aim is to learn what factors museum professionals and visitors experience with cultural interaction in a museum setting, and what the Lincoln sculpture may present to them or their community.

**B. Procedures/treatments involved:** Participation involves a willingness to complete a 12- question survey.

**C. Expected length of participation:** 15 - 20 minutes.

**D. Potential benefits:** There are no direct benefits for participation in this study. Potential indirect benefits of participation are for museum professionals and visitors to identify factors that might address traditional and changing narratives in museums. Additional indirect benefits might include awareness of various perspectives of written history in public spaces.

**E. Potential risks or discomforts:** There are no potential or foreseeable risks outside of those individuals take when thinking about reimagining traditional narratives in museums.

**F. Contact information for researcher(s):** For any questions about this research, please contact Amena Butler via email: [abutler3@uco.edu](mailto:abutler3@uco.edu)

**G. Contact information for UCO IRB:** For additional questions about this research, you may contact the Institutional Review Board by telephone: 405-974-5497 or by email: [IRB@uco.edu](mailto:IRB@uco.edu).

**H. Explanation of confidentiality and privacy:** All information given will be kept confidential, and I may refuse to answer any question, or leave the survey at any time. My responses will remain anonymous, and no direct identification of me will be known or retained by the researcher. No publication from this data will include identifying information about me.

**I. Assurance of voluntary participation:** I hereby agree to participate in the above-described research. I understand that participation is voluntary, and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

#### **AFFIRMATION BY RESEARCH SUBJECT**

By completing a survey, I hereby voluntarily agree to participate in the above-listed research project and further understand the explanations and descriptions of the research project. I also understand that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time without penalty; I may quit the survey at any time. I acknowledge that I am at least 18 years old. I have read and fully understand this Informed Consent Form. My participation in the survey constitutes my consent.

**By advancing beyond this Informed Consent Form screen, I consent to participate in this research.**

**National Cowboy & Western Heritage Approval Letter**

12/13/2019 University of Central Oklahoma Mail - Independent Research Study

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=7945ccb6c7&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1652815666765707400&simpl=msg-f%3A16528156667...> ½

**Amena Butler** <[abutler3@uco.edu](mailto:abutler3@uco.edu)>

**Independent Research Study**

**Michael R. Grauer** <[mgrauer@nationalcowboymuseum.org](mailto:mgrauer@nationalcowboymuseum.org)> Fri, Dec 13, 2019 at 8:37 AM

To: Amena Butler <[abutler3@uco.edu](mailto:abutler3@uco.edu)>

To Whom It May Concern:

Please allow this email to suffice as an acceptance of Amena Butler's plan for independent research study at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, during the spring semester 2020. Her research and work during her previous internship at the National Cowboy Museum augurs well for her internship in the coming year. Her plan to conduct a survey will likely require some modification in terms of methodology and nomenclature, however.

We look forward to having Ms. Butler on our Cowboy crew once again. Much obliged.

Respectfully,

Michael R. Grauer

**MICHAEL R. GRAUER**

MCCASLAND CHAIR OF COWBOY CULTURE/CURATOR OF COWBOY  
COLLECTIONS AND WESTERN ART



**NATIONAL COWBOY  
& WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM®**

*The West Begins Here™*

1700 Northeast 63rd Street

Oklahoma City, OK 73111

(405) 478-2250 ext. 230

[nationalcowboymuseum.org](http://nationalcowboymuseum.org)

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Form revised 4/3/13

**UCO IRB REVIEW DOCUMENTATION: Waiver of Documentation**

If you are granting a waiver of the requirement to obtain a signed consent form, you must document the following:

Check one

1. The entire consent (or elements) was waived under 45 CFR 46.116(d). Yes  No
  
2. The only record linking the subject and the research is the consent document and the principal risk is from a breach of confidentiality. Subjects are asked if they want documentation and their wishes will govern. Yes  No
  
3. The research involves no more than minimal risk and involves no procedure for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. Yes  No
  
4. It is not practicable to conduct the research without the waiver. Yes  No   
(i.e. internet survey)
  
5. The participant population is too young to give consent. Yes  No

If you answered “yes” to any of the above, provide a brief description of the reason(s) the waiver is necessary. For this research the identity of the participant is not necessary, therefore the only link connecting a participant to the study would be a signed consent form.

If a waiver is granted, the IRB will still require that subjects are provided with some form of information about the research. Indicate which of the following it will be:

- ✓ Written information sheet/summary
- ✓ Verbal explanation

Other (specify)

*For office use only*

IRB # \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Form revised 4/3/13

### **Recruitment material for In-Person Survey Questionnaire**

Hello my name is Amena Butler and I am seeking volunteer participants for a survey that will be conducted on location at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. I am a graduate student in the Museum Studies program at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma. I am conducting a research study on the impact of reimagining traditional narratives in museums. With permission from the museum I will be looking at descriptive narratives and societal changes in the museum environment. Whether visitors experience cultural interaction in the museum, and what the Lincoln sculpture may present to them or their community.

The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. Responses will be confidential and will not be misused. No personal identifying information will be obtained in this survey and presents no risk to participants. The survey includes two written panel descriptions and 12- multiple choice questions. This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. I will be on location to read the consent form to all volunteer participants.

### **Recruitment material for Online Survey Questionnaire**

Hello my name is Amena Butler and I am seeking participants for an online survey. I am a graduate student in the Museum Studies program at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma. I am conducting a research study on the impact of reimagining traditional narratives in museums. I will be looking at descriptive narratives and societal changes in the museum environment.

The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. Responses will be confidential and will not be misused. No personal identifying information will be obtained in this survey and presents no risk to participants. The survey includes two written descriptions and 12- multiple choice questions. This survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.



**Office of Research Integrity and Compliance**

100 North University Drive / Edmond, OK 73034

Phone (405) 974-5497 Fax (405) 974-3818

January 07, 2020

IRB Application #: 2019-171

Proposal Title: Abraham Lincoln Sculpture Narrative, Survey: Graduate Museum Studies Project

Type of Review: Initial Review-Expedited Exempt

Investigator(s):

Amena Butler

Mark Janzen, Ph.D.

Dear Ms. Butler and Dr. Janzen:

**Re: Application for IRB Review of Research Involving Human Subjects**

We have received your materials for your application. The UCO IRB has determined that the above named application is APPROVED BY EXEMPT REVIEW. The Board has provided expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110, for research involving no more than minimal risk and research category (2) Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests

(cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met: (i) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; (ii) Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or (iii) The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects can readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects, and an IRB conducts a limited IRB review to make the determination required by §46.111(a)(7)..

Date of Approval: January 07, 2020

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. A stamped, approved copy of the informed consent form will be made available to you. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used, where applicable. Any modification to the procedures and/or consent form must be approved prior to incorporation into the study.

Please let us know if the IRB or Office of Research Integrity and Compliance can be of any further assistance to your research efforts. Never hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,



Melissa Powers, Ph.D.

Chair, Institutional Review Board

University of Central Oklahoma

100 N. University Dr.

Edmond, OK 73034

405-974-5497

**Office of Research Integrity and Compliance**

100 North University Drive / Edmond, OK 73034

Phone (405) 974-5497 Fax (405) 974-3818

[irb@uco.edu](mailto:irb@uco.edu)



Completion Date 18-Nov-2019  
Expiration Date 17-Nov-2022  
Record ID 34159337

This is to certify that:

**Amena Butler**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

**Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher** (Curriculum Group)  
**Social & Behavioral Research** (Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic Course** (Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**University of Central Oklahoma**



Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?waaf33832-e998-4f70-8d92-feb59063db3f-34159337](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?waaf33832-e998-4f70-8d92-feb59063db3f-34159337)

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**V-B). Lincoln Survey Supplemental Materials:**

THE LINCOLN PROJECT:  
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL OKLAHOMA & THE NATIONAL  
COWBOY & WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM

**SCAN ME**



## Lincoln Panel Poster

# Re-imagining the Traditional Narrative

## Tell Us What You Think About The Proposed Change!

Amena Butler  
Museum Studies Graduate Program Dr. Mark Janzen

Traditional Narrative

Abraham Lincoln (1802-1865) Sculpture by James Earle Fraser

During the early days of the civil war, President Lincoln often walked to a hill overlooking Washington to spend the twilight hours in thought and meditation. Fraser's portrayal has Lincoln sitting on a stone and gazing down on the troubled capitol of the Union, his shoulders revealing the burden of his office.

Considered a "western" president, Lincoln made remarkable contributions to the settlement and development of the West even while preoccupied by war. In May 1862, he signed the Homestead Act into law, permitting the unhindered ownership of farmland in the West by more than one million families prior to 1910. This was followed by the College Land Grant Act of July, 1862, which enabled the establishment of institutions of higher learning in largely unsettled frontier states and territories. Under his tutelage as well, the Railroad Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 were passed, laying the foundation for the transcontinental routes and quickening the pace of western settlement.

The Lincoln Association of Jersey City, New Jersey, commissioned this heroic statue to mark the eastern entrance of the Lincoln Highway, America's first transcontinental auto road. Fraser was chosen to create the piece because his End of the Trail sculpture was associated with terminus of the Lincoln Highway at San Francisco, California. The finished bronze monument was unveiled in June of 1930. This original plaster model was obtained by the museum in 1968 and is the same size as the bronze piece which still marks the forgotten highway to the west.

Alternative Narrative

Abraham Lincoln (1802-1865) Sculpture by James Earle Fraser

The sculpture of the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, was created in 1929 by James Earle Fraser for the Lincoln Association of Jersey City, New Jersey, to mark the eastern entrance of the Lincoln Highway.

Lincoln has been known for significant societal changes. The Homestead Act of 1862 was no panacea for poverty but it legalized and unhindered ownership of farmland in the West by white males, cattlemen, miners, and railroad workers. The College Land Grant Act of 1862 established colleges for white males. The Railroad Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 laid the foundation for the transcontinental routes and accelerated western expansion, further displacing Native Americans and exploiting the labor of Chinese immigrants, among others. The Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863 declared freedom for an estimated 3.9 million enslaved people of African descent but did not solve the racial inequality in the country. The struggle to achieve full equality and guarantee the civil rights of all Americans continues today.

Lincoln's sculpture reminds us that the United States has been shaped by multiethnic populations who, including Indigenous people, forced migrants and enslaved Africans.

Contemporary discourse gives serious attention to the political landscape in which Lincoln toiled, shaping his words and thoughts. Americans at present still understand little about slavery, to the extent to which slavery shaped American society. America's landscape today is becoming more inclusive of the stories of Black Americans and underrepresented communities, offering voices and different ways to experience the past and present.



Tell Us What You Think About The Proposed Change!

Link to Survey

<https://forms.gle/6t8ecccVrRpYoMaRB9>

\*Abraham Lincoln Sculpture\* by James Earle Fraser. Image Courtesy National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, OK

**V-C). Approved Version of Lincoln Panel Questionnaire (Google Forms):**

**Lincoln Panel Project**

The purpose of this survey is to study the impact of reimagining traditional narratives in museums.

This survey is part of a Museum Studies Thesis Project, being conducted by a graduate student with permission from the University of Central Oklahoma. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only. Responses will be confidential & will not be misused. Personal information (name, email) will not be made public.

Please spend a few moments to complete this survey. Thank you.

**"Abraham Lincoln Sculpture" by James Earle Fraser. National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, OK**



**1. Do you know who Abraham Lincoln was?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

**2. Do you know about any of Abraham Lincoln's policies?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

**3. Are Abraham Lincoln's views on race clear to you?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

**Please read the following narrative below**

---

**Abraham Lincoln (1802-1865) Sculpture by James Earle Fraser  
(panel "A")**

During the early days of the civil war, President Lincoln often walked to a hill overlooking Washington to spend the twilight hours in thought and meditation. Fraser's portrayal has Lincoln sitting on a stone and gazing down on the troubled capitol of the Union, his shoulders revealing the burden of his office.

Considered a "western" president, Lincoln made remarkable contributions to the settlement and development of the West even while preoccupied by war. In May 1862, he signed the Homestead Act into law, permitting the unhindered ownership of farmland in the West by more than one million families prior to 1910. This was followed by the College Land Grant Act of July, 1862, which enabled the establishment of institutions of higher learning in largely unsettled frontier states and territories. Under his tutelage as well, the Railroad Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 were passed, laying the foundation for the transcontinental routes and quickening the pace of western settlement.

The Lincoln Association of Jersey City, New Jersey, commissioned this heroic statue to mark the eastern entrance of the Lincoln Highway, America's first transcontinental auto road. Fraser was chosen to create the piece because his End of the Trail sculpture was associated with terminus of the Lincoln Highway at San Francisco, California. The finished bronze monument was unveiled in June of 1930. This original plaster model was obtained by the museum in 1968 and is the same size as the bronze piece which still marks the forgotten highway to the west.

## **Please read the following narrative below**

---

### **Abraham Lincoln(1802-1865) Sculpture by James Earle Fraser (panel "B")**

---

The sculpture of the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, was created in 1929 by James Earle Fraser for the Lincoln Association of Jersey City, New Jersey, to mark the eastern entrance of the Lincoln Highway.

Lincoln has been known for significant societal changes. The Homestead Act of 1862 was no panacea for poverty but it legalized and unhindered ownership of farmland in the West by white males, cattlemen, miners, and railroad workers. The College Land Grant Act of 1862 established colleges for white males. The Railroad Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1864 laid the foundation for

the transcontinental routes and accelerated western expansion, further displacing Native Americans and exploiting the labor of Chinese immigrants, among others. The Emancipation Proclamation Act of 1863 declared freedom for an estimated 3.9 million enslaved people of African descent but did not solve the racial inequality in the country. The struggle to achieve full equality and guarantee the civil rights of all Americans continues today.

Lincoln's sculpture reminds us that the United States has been shaped by multi-ethnic populations who include Indigenous people, forced migrants and enslaved Africans. Contemporary discourse gives serious attention to the political landscape in which Lincoln toiled, shaping his words and thoughts. Americans at present still understand little about slavery, to the extent to which slavery shaped American society. America's landscape today is becoming more inclusive of the stories of Black Americans and underrepresented communities, offering voices and different ways to experience the past and present.

**4. How easy was it to understand the narrative panel "A" ?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Very Easy
- Quite Easy
- Neither Easy nor Difficult
- Somewhat Difficult
- Very Difficult

**5. How easy was it to understand the narrative panel "B" ?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Very Easy
- Quite Easy
- Neither Easy nor Difficult
- Somewhat Difficult
- Very Difficult

**6. Which interpretation do you consider historically accurate?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Panel "A"
- Panel "B"

**7. Which interpretation do you consider reaches a broader/diversified audience?**

*Check all that apply.*

- Panel "A"
- Panel "B"

**8. Did you gain a new understanding of Abraham Lincoln or public sculpture from these panels?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

**9. Have you visited the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum before?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

**10. If yes, when was the last visit?**

*Check all that apply.*

0-3 months

3-6 months

6-12 months

1-2 years

More than 3 years

**11. Do you feel your culture is represented at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

N/A

**12. Do you feel the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum exhibits cross-cultural interactions?**

*Check all that apply.*

Yes

No

N/A

**13. Demographics: Gender \***

*Check all that apply.*

- Female
- Male
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**14. Demographics: Age \***

*Check all that apply.*

- 18 years
- 19-25 years
- 26-35 years
- 36-50 years
- 51-64 years
- 65+ years

**Thank you for your time.**

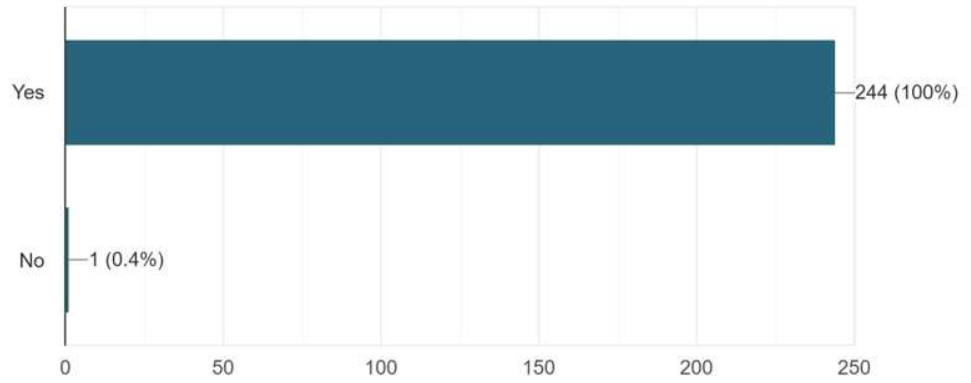
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**V-D). Data**

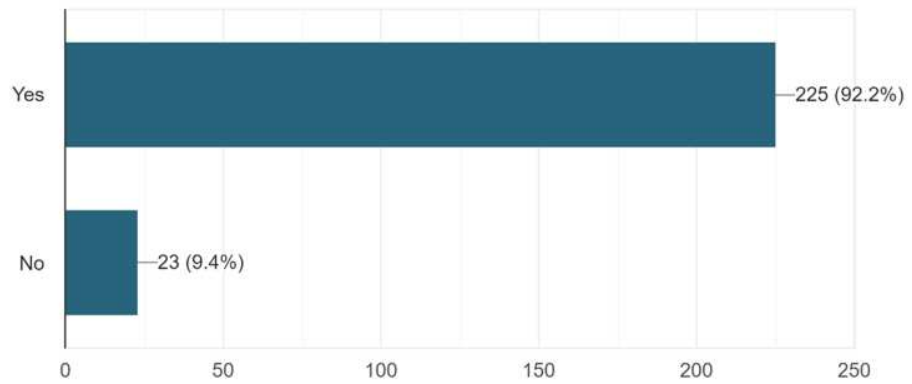
Do you know who Abraham Lincoln was?

244 responses



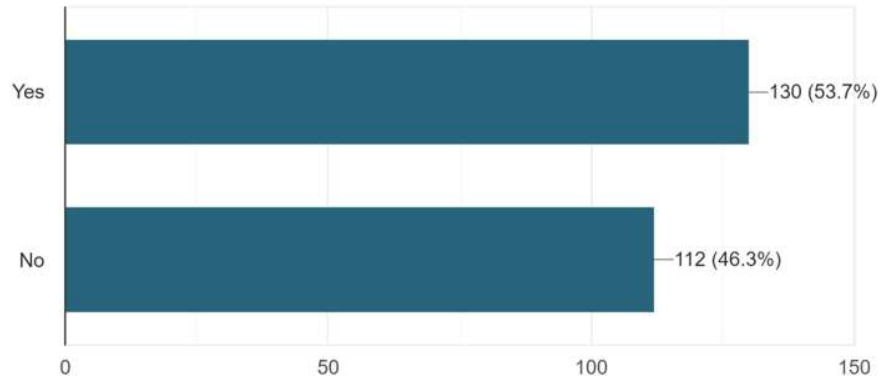
Do you know about any of Lincoln's policies?

244 responses



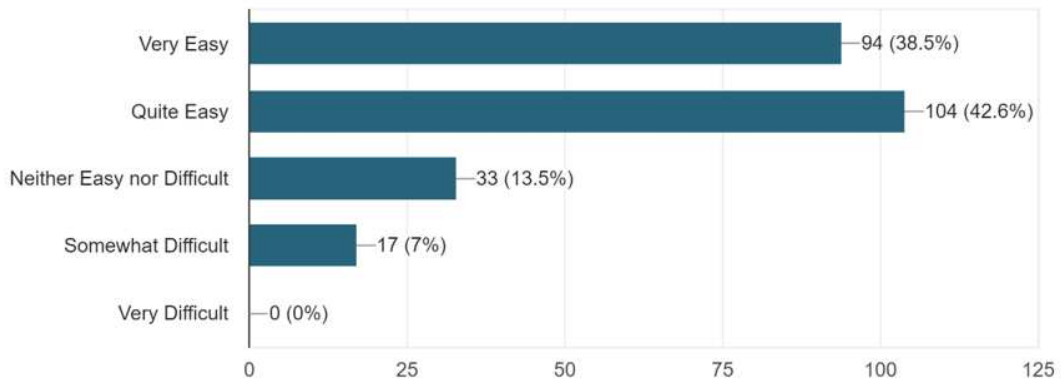
Do you believe Lincoln's views on race were clear?

242 responses



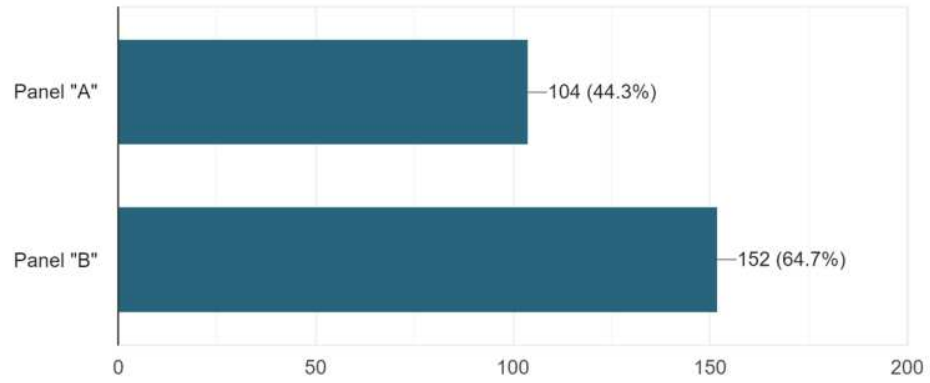
How easy was it to understand or read the narrative panels "A" & "B"?

244 responses



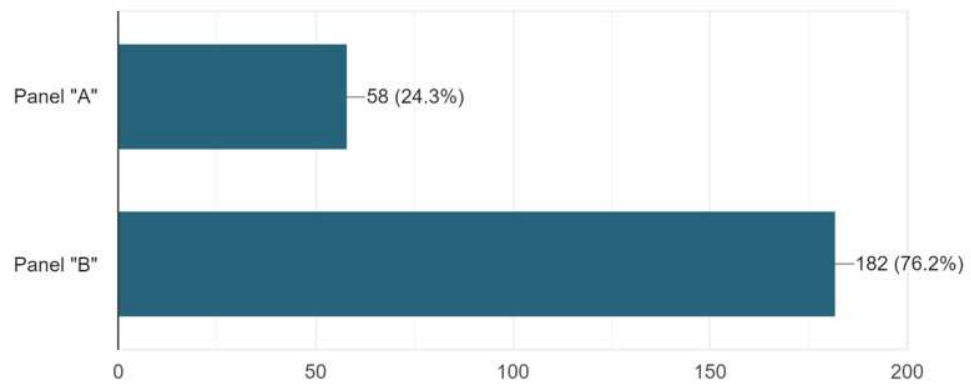
Which description do you consider historically specific?

235 responses



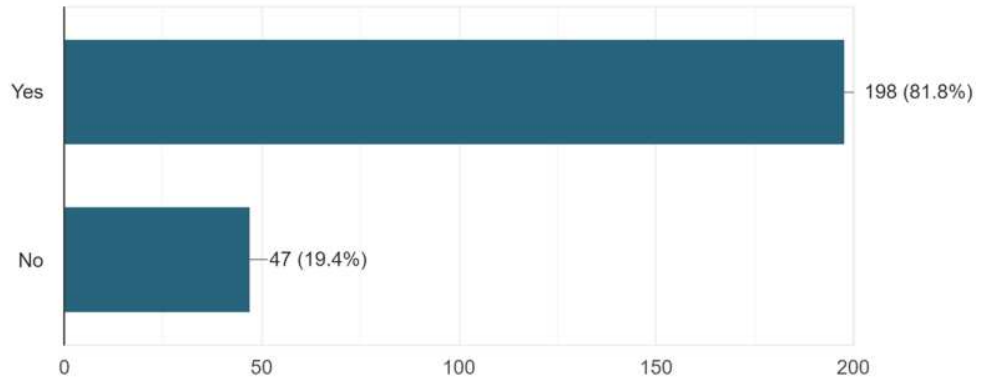
Which description do you consider reaches a broader/diversified audience?

239 responses



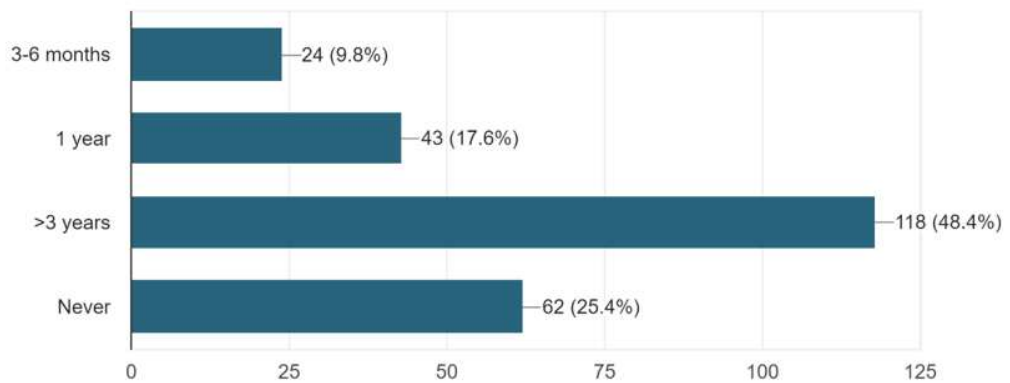
Did you learn something new about Lincoln or public sculpture?

242 responses



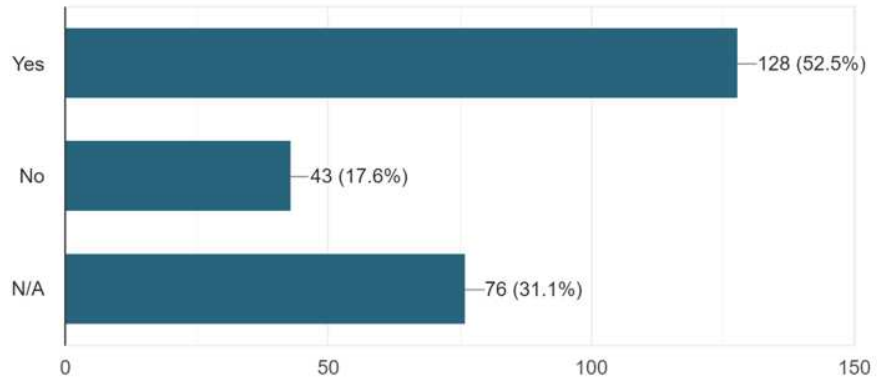
Have you been to the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum in the past?

244 responses



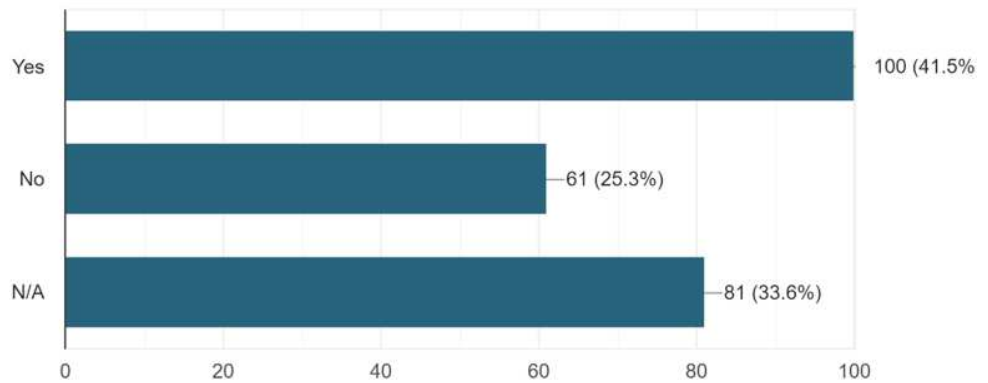
Do you think your culture is represented at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum?

244 responses



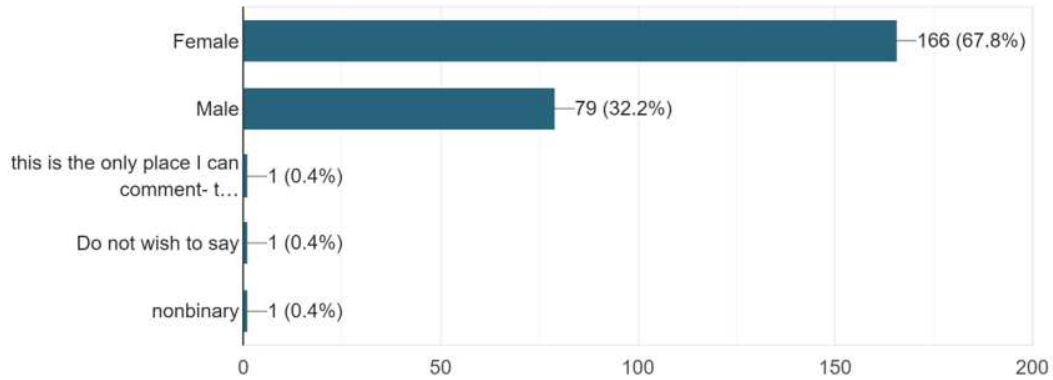
Do you think the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum encourages cross-cultural interactions?

241 responses



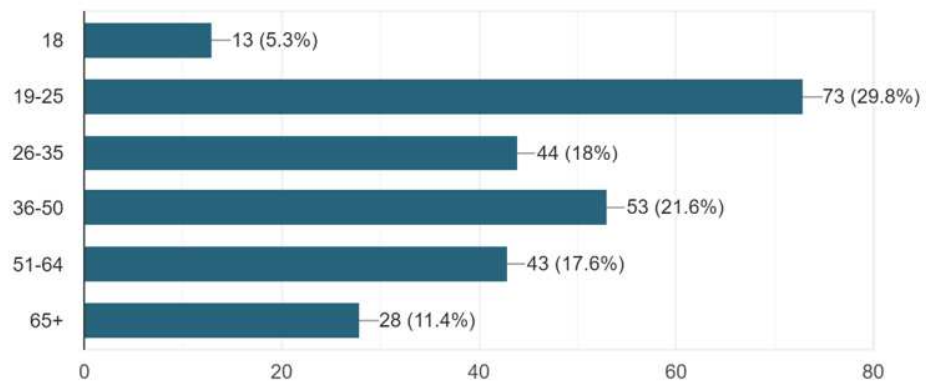
### Demographics: Gender

245 responses



### Demographics: Age

245 responses



**Data:** Onsite National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum Lincoln Panel Project Forms:

7 participants- Completed Forms – NCWHM Saturday, February 8, 2020

3 participants - Completed Forms – NCWHM Saturday, February 15, 2020

2 participants - Completed Forms – NCWHM Saturday, February 22, 2020

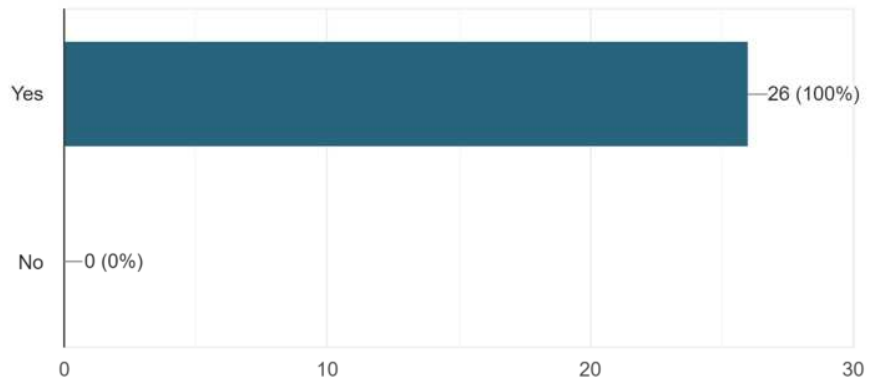
5 participants - Completed Forms - Dr. Janzen Class Tuesday, February 25, 2020

6 participants - Completed Forms – NCWHM Saturday, February 29, 2020

**Compiled Data from NCWHM - Onsite Completed Forms:**

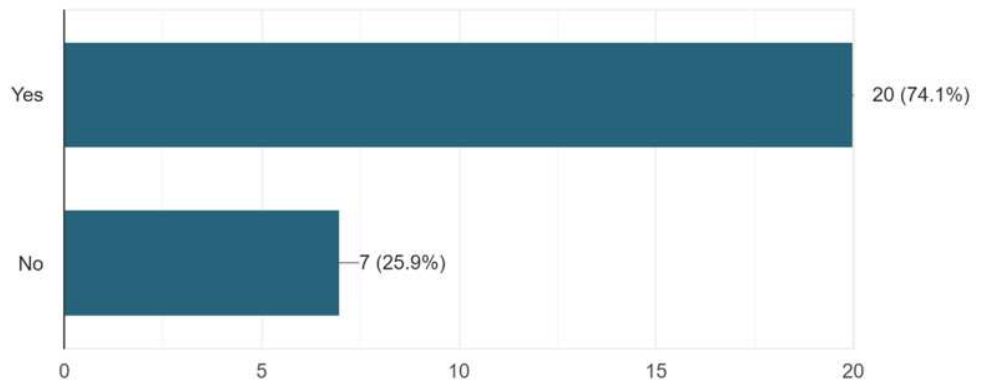
Do you know who Abraham Lincoln was?

26 responses



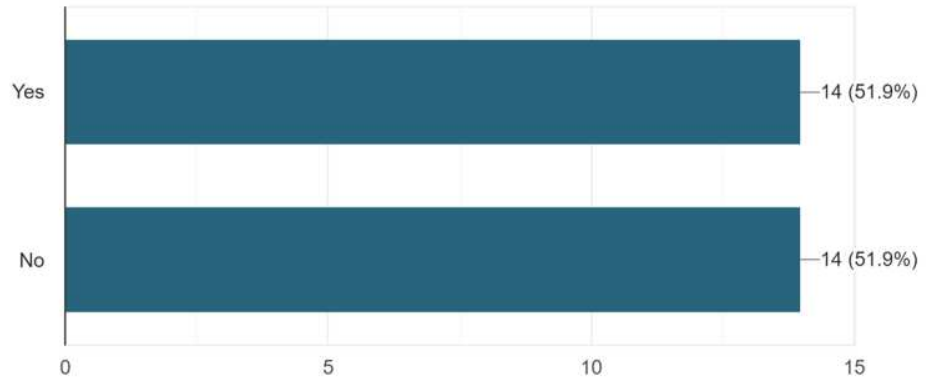
Do you know about any of Abraham Lincoln's policies?

27 responses



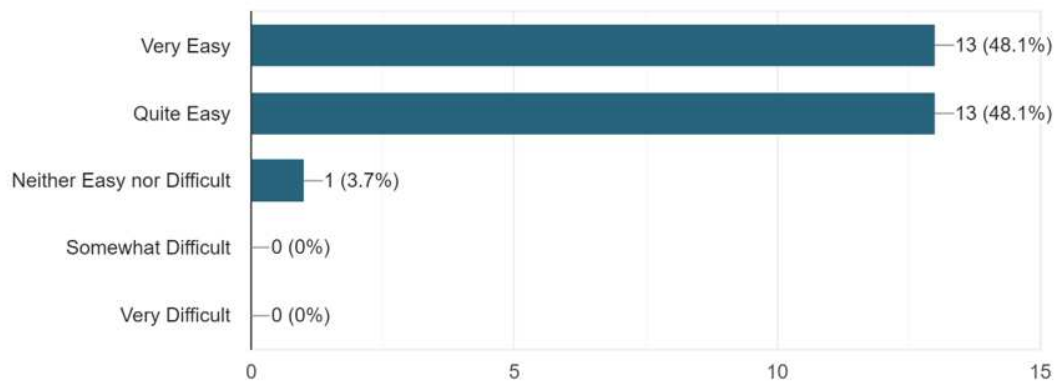
Are Abraham Lincoln's views on race clear to you?

27 responses



How easy was it to understand the narrative panel "A" ?

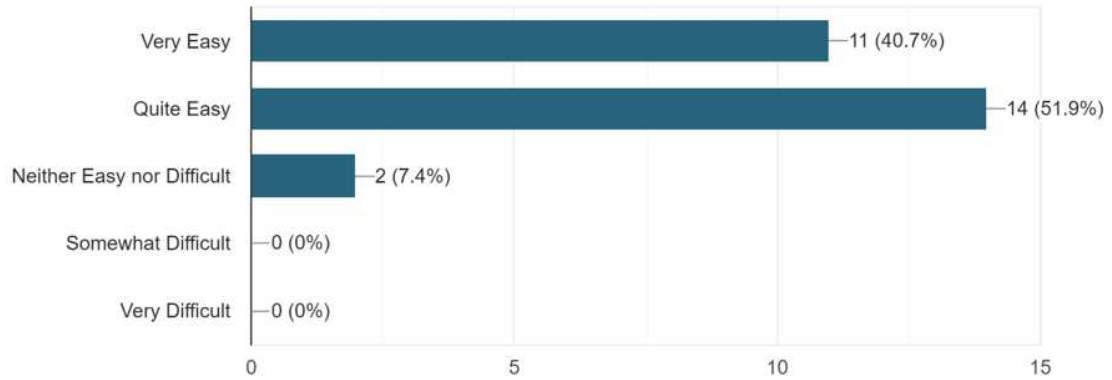
27 responses





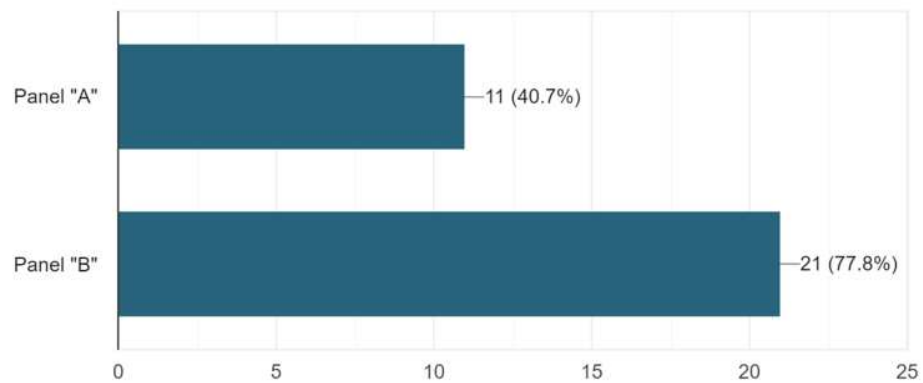
How easy was it to understand the narrative panel "B" ?

27 responses



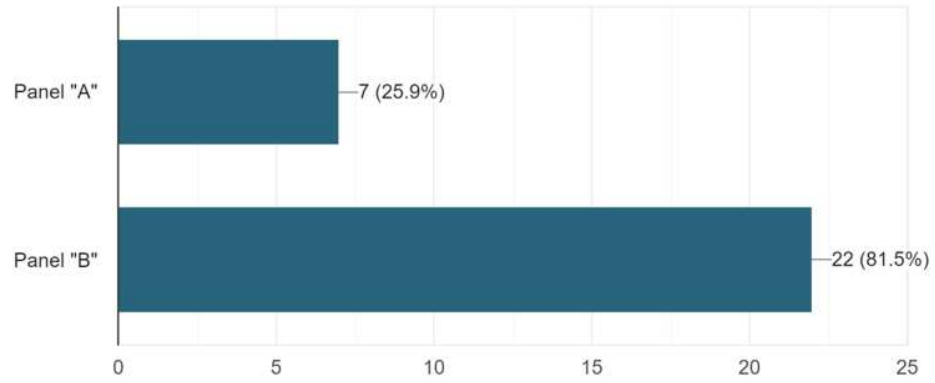
Which interpretation do you consider historically accurate?

27 responses



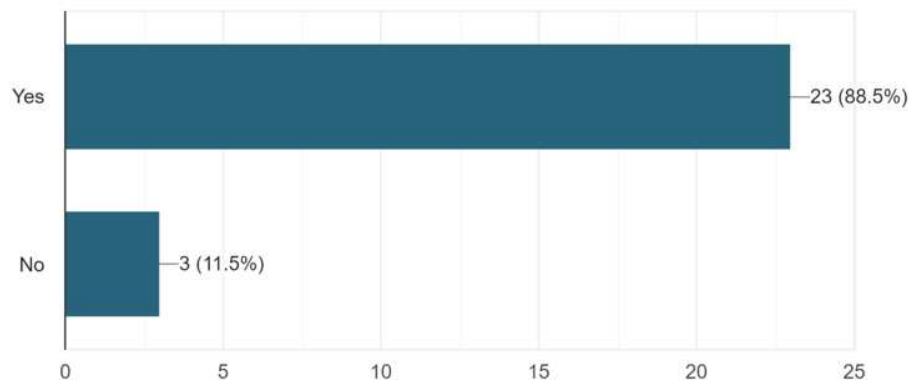
Which interpretation do you consider reaches a broader/diversified audience?

27 responses



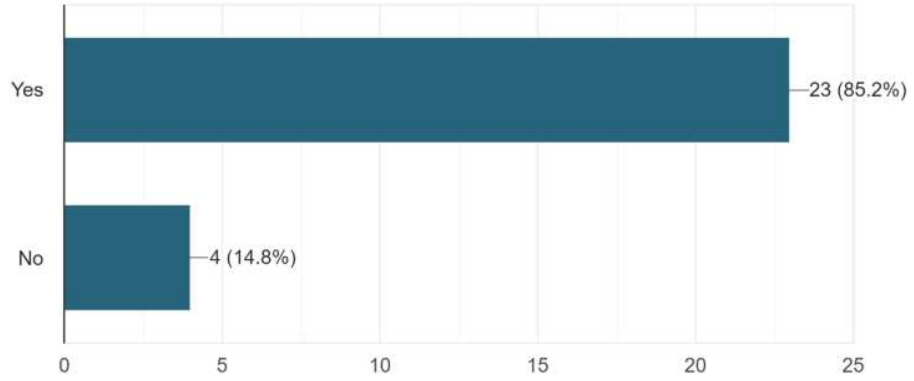
Did you gain a new understanding of Abraham Lincoln or public sculpture from these panels?

26 responses



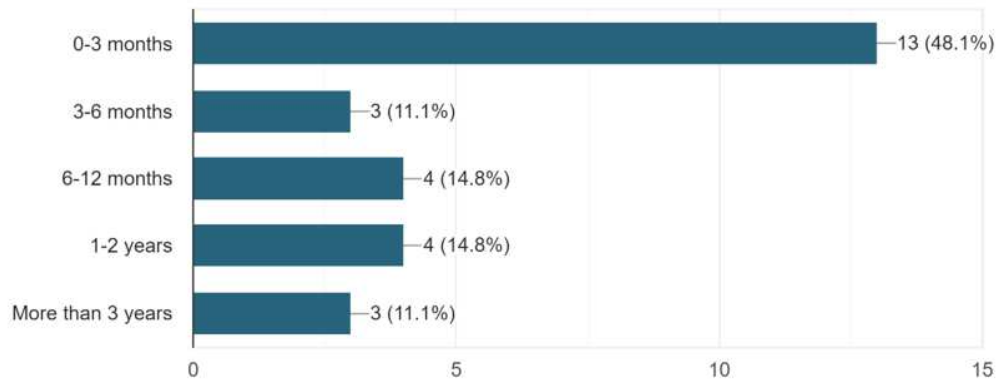
Have you visited the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum before?

27 responses

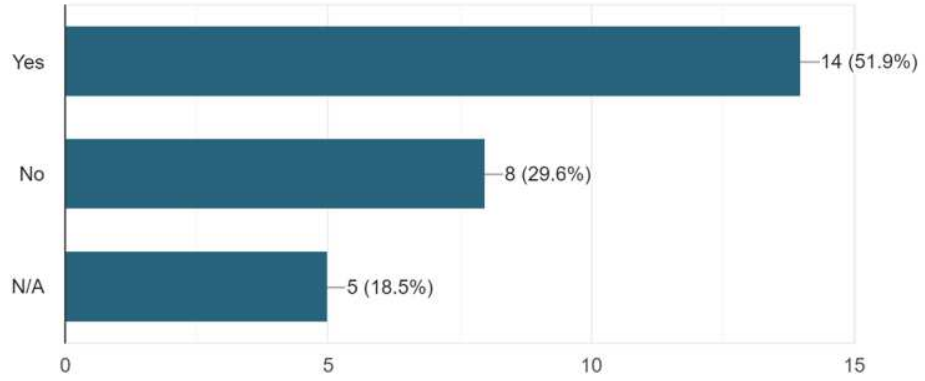


If yes, when was the last visit?

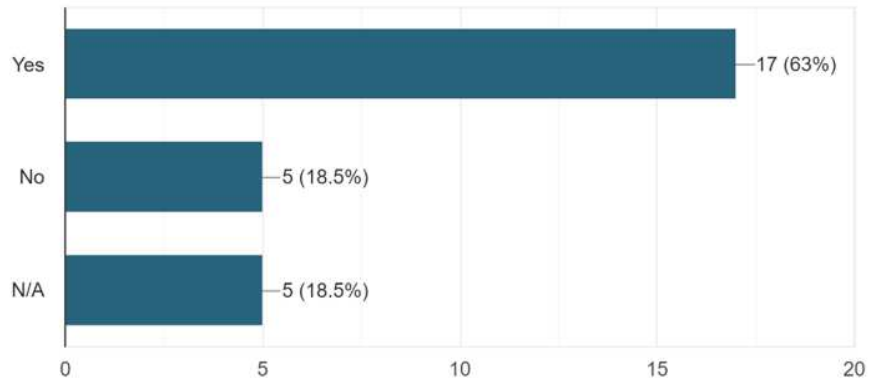
27 responses



Do you feel your culture is represented at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum?  
27 responses

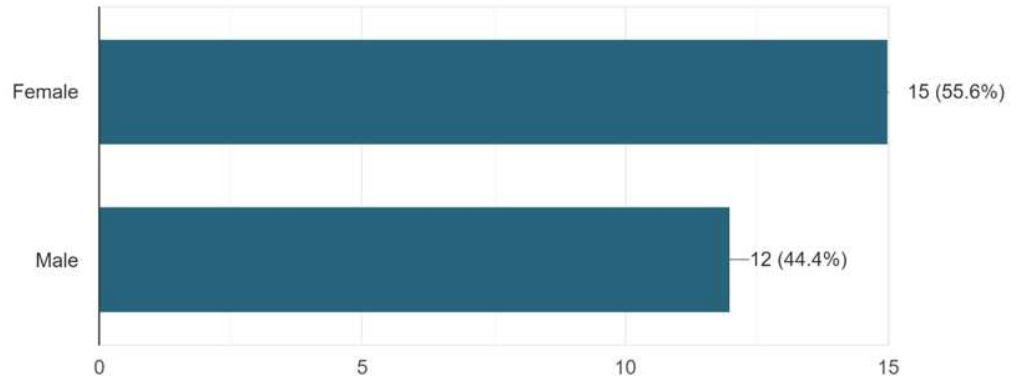


Do you feel the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum exhibits cross-cultural interactions?  
27 responses



### Demographics: Gender

27 responses



### Demographics: Age

27 responses

