

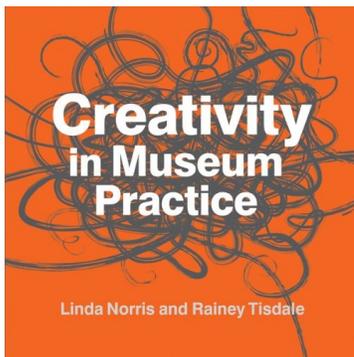


STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF NORTH DAKOTA

LOCAL NETWORK

HISTORICAL ORGANIZATIONS OF NORTH DAKOTA

CREATIVITY IN MUSEUM PRACTICE



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>Pathways to Success</i>	2
<i>Developing Creativity</i>	2
<i>Cross-Pollination: It Isn't Just for Bees</i>	3
<i>Make Something. Anything.</i>	3
<i>8 Blogs You Should Be Reading</i>	4

Creativity in Museum Practice, written by Linda Norris and Rainey Tisdale, is a great resource for any museum staff who are looking for new ways of thinking about and seeing their organizations. Filled with anecdotes and ideas to try, this is a book that can be read cover to cover, or picked through and read in sections as they pertain to a reader. It is also rich with notes and resources to go to in a reader's effort to learn more about the creative process.

This book is about more than just promoting creative practice at the reader's own institution. It calls for change from the individual staff person, the whole museum, and on through to the whole museum field. The authors effectively point out that museums tend to be very insular. Information about successes

and failures is seldom shared, to the detriment of the field as a whole. The book features several granting agencies who have started to document project failures. This change highlights not only successes, but is also an effort to be more transparent and to also help organizations learn from each other's mistakes. This, they argue, is a critical piece of information to build future projects on.

An important take away from this book is that a person does not have to be special or gifted to be creative. Innovation and

creativity are skills that can be developed by anyone with an open mind and some curiosity. Staff can also develop their leadership roles within an organization whether they are board members, executive directors, entry-level, or volunteers. We all have important roles in developing the creative capacity within our respective institutions.

This book can be borrowed from the field service lending library at history.nd.gov/fieldservices.html, or by contacting Danielle Stuckle at 701-328-2794 or dlstuckle@nd.gov.

“Without change there is no innovation, creativity, or incentive for improvement. Those who initiate change will have a better opportunity to manage the change that is inevitable.”

—William Pollard

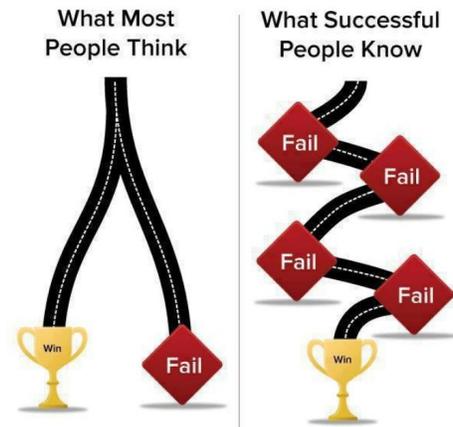
PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

Advocating for greater creativity in the work place is about more than encouraging people to express individualism. It is thinking about old problems in new ways.

The museum and public history fields have a lot of interesting people doing a lot of cool things. Most of us are still fighting every day to

find an audience, increase our funding, and build staff levels. We seem to deal with the same old problems in the same old ways. Hitting upon innovative, game-changing solutions can be a real challenge.

When was the last time your organization tried something that was truly



new, creative, and innovative? When was the last time you tried something that might fail?

Embrace creativity—stop fearing the possibility of failure. Failure is just one step on the pathway to success.

DEVELOPING CREATIVITY

Make the most of your problem solving efforts by expanding the creative methods you use.

Creativity is not limited to just a few gifted people. Decades of research have established that all people have creative potential. Learning how to exercise creative muscle can give people deeper insights into solving problems.

Using creative techniques is more than sitting around and brainstorming. While that may be part of a process, brainstorming is only one of many components toward greater creativity.

Other methods to try can include the following:

1. *Cross-pollination.* Expose yourself to publications and other media you don't normally follow. You might be surprised at the interesting connections you might make.
2. *Change your state of mind.* Take a break and work on something else for awhile. When you return you'll have a fresh perspective.
3. *Reframe the problem.* Ask yourself, "What am I really trying to accomplish here?"
4. *Pitch multiple ideas.* Instead of focusing on only one possible correct answer, create a whole list of potential solutions—even some that seem unlikely. It can help spark one or a combination of ideas that are just what you need.

This is certainly not an exhaustive list of creative thinking processes. Countless resources are available online and at your local library or bookstore to help you become a more creative thinker.

CROSS-POLLINATION: IT ISN'T JUST FOR BEES

Cross-pollination is an interesting, yet critical, method of making connections. It takes seemingly random bits of information and combines them to create something new and innovative. What skills do you need to be a successful cross pollinator?

1. **Be curious.** This is a great quality to have if you want to be more creative and innovative. The desire to explore, investigate, and learn will lead you to some fascinating discoveries.
2. **Have lots of interests and follow trends in other fields.** Think about how processes from different industries can be combined for a new purpose. Take, for example, grocery stores and museums—very different types of organizations with different purposes. However, the barcode scanner so commonly used in a grocery store is also a useful tool for collections management and inventory control.
3. **Keep an open mind.** New ideas come to those who are receptive to other people, cultures, theories, opinions, and technologies.
4. **Take up a hobby.** Not only will you be engaged and inspired, you might make a connection that could help solve a problem at work. Taking a master gardener class could lead to planning a new heirloom garden for a living history site.
5. **Talk to lots of people and actively share information.** Eat lunch with a colleague from a different division, a different museum, or who works in a different field. Share interesting news articles with co-workers, especially if it is from a source that they probably don't read.
6. **Be a lifelong learner.** Stay motivated to pursue knowledge throughout your life.
7. **See constraints as an interesting challenge, rather than a barrier.** Watch Project Runway, Iron Chef, Chopped, or any of the billion other reality shows on TV. You'll see some really good examples of how constraints can add an interesting challenge to a project. Make a swimsuit out of beach balls. Make a cake using mashed potatoes. You get the idea. Museums live with numerous constraints all the time—don't spend any money; don't damage the artifacts; don't offend the donor. We're masters at dealing with constraints.



MAKE SOMETHING. ANYTHING.

If you've missed out on maker culture, you've missed something magical and beautiful. From how-to videos, to open source information and DIY—it is amazing what people can and do accomplish on

their own and through sharing information with others.

A quick internet search for “maker movement” will bring up hundreds of sources for everything from using 3D printers to

knitting a tree cozy.

If you really want to try something new and have fun—hack it, make it, DIY it. Everything old is new again.

State Historical Society of North Dakota

North Dakota Heritage Center
612 East Boulevard Avenue
Bismarck, ND 58505

Phone: 701-328-2666
Fax: 701-328-3710
E-mail: dlstuckle@nd.gov

The mission of the State Historical Society of North Dakota is to identify, preserve, interpret, and promote the heritage of North Dakota and its people.

Find us at:

history.nd.gov     

History for *everyone.*



**STATE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF NORTH DAKOTA**

The Educational Programs and Outreach Coordinator provides outreach and field services to museums, historical societies, and related organizations throughout North Dakota. To learn more about the outreach and field service program, visit history.nd.gov/fieldservices.html or contact Danielle Stuckle at 701-328-2794 or dlstuckle@nd.gov.

8 BLOGS YOU SHOULD BE READING

- **Museum 2.0** at museumtwo.blogspot.com.
Nina Simon is a great advocate of innovation and creativity in museums. Her approach to participation in museum programming is worth considering.
- ArtMuseumTeaching.com.
While this is focused on art museums, it is a great resource for thinking creatively about how to deliver great educational programming at any site.
- DesignThinkingforMuseums.net
Written by Dana Mitroff Silvers, this blog encourages museums to remember the people who visit and work in their spaces.
- **Know Your Own Bone** at colleendilen.com is a great blog to follow if you want to stay on top of new marketing trends and strategies, especially social media.
- mediaplatypus.com is another blog focused on museum programming and marketing.
- sethgodin.typepad.com is always worth reading even if his target audience isn't necessarily the museum crowd.
- springwise.com is a website that follows business and technology trends. Want to be amazed at what your fellow humans are thinking up? Follow Springwise.
- Last but not least, **Backstage Pass to North Dakota History**, at blog.statemuseum.nd.gov was started by the staff at the State Historical Society of North Dakota. Follow the blog to learn more about their projects and programs and what goes on behind the scenes.