



# UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES

Continuing with its effort to build the capacity of the Garden State's heritage community, the New Jersey Historical Commission and New Jersey Historic Trust presented **Understanding Audiences** as a part of its Best Practices for Nonprofit History Organizations series on September 22nd. We are pleased to provide you with post-workshop resources offered by our presenter Max van Balgooy. Several of the forms provide you with basic tools to track attendance on a daily and monthly basis, and to plan how you will engage audiences.

Remember to visit our site for more learning opportunities on engaging audiences.

[Understanding Audiences Power Point](#)

[Identifying Audiences Power Point](#)

[Engaging Audiences Power Point](#)

[Daily Attendance Form](#) – This form helps you track attendance every day, and identify the age range and languages your visitors speak.

[Monthly Impact Form Instructions](#)

[Monthly Impact Form](#) – Considering a number of variables, this form helps you track attendance and community engagement with your site.

[Target Audiences Rating](#) – This chart helps you to identify your audiences and assess your relationship with them.

[Planning Canvas](#) – This logic model helps you think through your mission, why it is important for people to visit your site, the resources you'll need, and the outcomes you expect.

[NEA 2012 Survey of Public Participation Report Press Release](#)

Utilizing the American Association for State and Local History's [Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations](#), the workshop will guided participants through national standards for better engaging audiences. This workshop was the first in a series of three learning opportunities that will explore engagement. The latter two workshops will be offered in 2015

(dates TBD), and will focus on using social media to engage audiences and national trends and success stories in audience participation.



Understanding Audiences will be presented by Max von Balgooy, president of Engaging Places is president of [Engaging Places LLC](#), a design and strategy firm that connects people and historic places. He has designed, implemented, evaluated, or consulted on a wide range of projects related to business strategy, historical interpretation, and collections management to museums, historic sites, government agencies, and cultural institutions, including Drayton Hall, Indiana Landmarks, James Madison’s Montpelier, and the Arroyo Seco Parkway National Scenic Byway. He is a Council member of the American Association for State and Local History and an adjunct professor at George Washington University, and received his degrees in history from Pomona College and the University of Delaware (Hagley Fellow).

In his recent *History News* article, [“Turning Points: Ordinary People, Extraordinary Change”](#) Balgooy writes that the 2008 economic downturn has threatened cultural institutions, but the issue extends beyond the economy. Surveys over the past thirty years by the National Endowment for the Arts indicate that attendance rates have dropped from 37% in 1982 to 25% in 2008.

The National Endowment for the Arts 2012 [Survey of Public Participation in the Arts](#) indicates that national rates of attendance for certain disciplines continued to decline between 2008 and 2012. But the highest level of participation was through electronic media. Equally interesting is that attendance rates among non-white and Hispanic Americans did not decline between 2008 and 2012, and that African American attendance at jazz concerts grew. [Research Into Action](#), a research publication conducted by the Philadelphia Cultural Alliance also found that “people of color are more engaged and growing in population.” While there are not isolated statistics on historical museums, societies, and sites [Reach Advisors’](#) blog, [“Museum Audience Insight”](#) indicates that attendance at science museums and children’s centers is declining.

These trends suggest that consumers are engaging with cultural experiences in different ways and that there are growing opportunities to connect with multi-ethnic audiences. With the changes in attendance rates, demographics and forms of participation, **Understanding Audiences** will introduce participants to national standards for learning about audiences; explore practices that integrate visitor interests, needs, and motivations into exhibits, programs, and activities; and help participants apply standards to their programs.

[Additional Articles by Max von Balgooy](#)