

2018 Annual Report and COSMA Strategic Plan 2018-2023

The Coalition of State Museum Associations (COSMA) has completed an exciting year of growth. Stable leadership, in the form of transitional leader Ruth Ann Rugg, and dedicated board members serving two- or three-year terms, has brought consistency to governance and thoughtful progress to the establishment of policies and systems.

We began 2018 waiting for confirmation of our 501 (c) (3) status from the IRS. This delayed solicitation of both memberships and sponsorship support. However, planning for 2018 programs began immediately. A private Facebook group for COSMA leaders, and the COSMA website, both previously established, continued to be used and updated as new plans were made.

In 2018 we were saddened by the loss of **board member Joanne Kluessendorf** (Wisconsin) as she lost her battle with illness. Lisa Craig Brisson of Michigan was elected to fill out Joanne's term. The COSMA Foundation board also welcomed Erika Sanger of New York.

In April COSMA began a **monthly e-newsletter**, sent the first week of each month, and established a schedule for webinars. **COSMA webinars** are offered every other month on the second Tuesday of even numbered months, at 2 p.m. Central time.

April webinar: *COSMA Resources at your Fingertips*, speakers Ruth Ann Rugg, COSMA Transitional Leader and Brenda Granger, Executive Director, Oklahoma Museums Association

The **Annual Business meeting** of COSMA was held Monday, May 7, 2018 at the Sheraton Grand Hotel, Phoenix, in conjunction with the AAM annual meeting. This was an opportunity for state museum association leaders to meet, share information, best practices, and insights. Johnna McEntee, Chair of the COSMA Foundation, noted that this was the **first true meeting of the membership** of COSMA. Ruth Ann Rugg, Transitional Leader of COSMA shared that there were two parts to COSMA, the C-6 to focus on membership services, and the C-3 on public good. She noted that the key priority of COSMA is to strengthen state museum associations.

June 2018 was a banner month, as COSMA's **nonprofit status** was finally received. A "donate" button was immediately added to the website by Treasurer Malinda Horton (Florida).

June 2018 also saw the Board turn their focus to **strategic planning**, led by Johnna McEntee, Chair, COSMA Foundation. Goals were shared with the membership in October 2018 and input sought on objectives. State museum association (SMA) leaders were invited to participate in **COSMA committees:** Communication, Membership, Nominations and Programs.

June webinar: *Project Management: A Model for Streamlining Tasks and Defining Board Roles*, speaker Lisa Craig Brisson, Executive Director, Michigan Museums Association

August 2018 brought the news that the **COSMA website** platform was no longer going to be supported and a new website became an overnight priority. Jennifer Coleman, an independent contractor living in Colorado, and former Texas Association of Museums employee, submitted a proposal for building a new COSMA website which was accepted and executed in two months.

August webinar: *Preventing Digital Disasters*, speaker Erika Sanger, Executive Director, Museum Association of New York

By Fall 2018 **programming and communication structures were firmly established**, as were board committees. Despite all the foundational work required in 2018, transitional leader Ruth Ann Rugg was able to **attend several meetings on behalf of COSMA** including AAM Advocacy Day and AASLH.

October webinar: *Applying Lysol to the Stench of Power: Ten Basic Rules of Board Behavior*, speaker Brian Crockett, Principal, Two-Headed Goat Consulting

The Programming Committee introduced **COSMA Conversations** in November 2018, alternating months with COSMA webinars. The first conversation was led by Jennifer Thomas, Executive Director of Virginia Association of Museums, on the SMA response to the National Emerging Museum Professionals Network campaign to change job board requirements.

December webinar: *Approaching the Powers That Be: SMAs and Advocacy*, speakers Bob Beatty, founder and President of the Lyndhurst Group, Nashville, TN and Johnna McEntee, Executive Director, Ohio Museums Association

When COSMA incorporated in Fall 2017, none of us realized the amount of time and dedication it would take to put in place basic business systems, build a case for membership, and build a financial foundation of committed members and supporters. Our initial expectation for a six-month transition to full membership and paid staff was very optimistic.

However, there has been nothing negative about extending the transition period. The extended transition, which will probably last through 2019, has allowed the Board to carefully plan how to serve state museum associations and to put in place structures and systems that will allow state museum association leaders to build a strong, inter-connected community. The transitional year provided time to test whether such basic services as webinars and newsletters would be valuable membership benefits. With that case clearly made in the affirmative, and many more ideas for serving state museum associations to be planned and implemented in coming years, all state museum associations will be better able to make a case for membership in COSMA in 2019 and every year thereafter.

COSMA is truly a dream come true, an organization that has been dreamt of for decades by those working as leaders of state museum associations. I invite all state museum association leaders to not only join COSMA, but to become actively involved in the only national organization that exists to serve state museum associations.

-Cynthia Sweet, President, Coalition of State Museum Associations
Executive Director, Iowa Museum Association
January 4, 2019