ARE YOU REALLY WORTH WHAT YOU COST, OR JUST MERELY WORTHWHILE? AND WHO GETS TO SAY?

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To begin *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen memorably wrote, “It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.” To begin this morning’s presentation, let me suggest another truth that’s almost as universally acknowledged: that this country’s museums—both that small handful who find themselves in possession of a good fortune, and those many more that do not—are in the midst (or even, perhaps, close to the end) of a profound transformation. In little more than a generation, we have witnessed the museum’s metamorphosis from an institution that’s turned primarily inward and concerned above all with the growth, care and study of its collection to an institution that’s turned primarily outward—an institution striving, above all, to provide a range of educational and other public services to the individuals and communities that constitute its target audience.

Not so universally acknowledged, however—in fact, scarcely acknowledged at all—is this: that it would defy all reason—defy sheer common sense, even—to think that museums could undergo so fundamental a transformation without there having been some equally fundamental series of changes in the scope, nature and basic responsibilities of museum trusteeship. Setting aside for later those two challenging questions that Phil Nowlen chose for our title—ARE YOU REALLY WORTH WHAT YOU COST, OR JUST MERELY WORTHWHILE? AND WHO GETS TO SAY?—the basic task that Phil assigned me for this morning’s opening session is to explore with you just what some of those changes might be.

What we will, in short, be looking to see is just what new and different duties might be expected of the board of trustees of a museum whose orientation has evolved from a primarily inward concentration on the acquisition, care, study and display of collections to a primarily outward concentration on providing services to its various publics.

In what some people in museums still consider "the good old days"—the days when the museum often seemed to be its own excuse for being, and collections remained at the very heart of its work—there was substantially general agreement about what was expected of a not-for-profit board. Under the twin headings of prudence and loyalty, individual trustees were expected to discharge a cluster of what were generally described as "fiduciary" duties. They were to act in good faith, they were to be diligent in overseeing the museum's affairs, and they were to perform those duties with at least that degree of care and skill which an ordinarily prudent person would exercise in similar circumstances. Trustees were also expected to avoid any conflict of interests and, in every instance, to put the museum's financial and other interests ahead of their own.

Beyond those individual expectations, the entire board of trustees, acting as a group, was expected to formulate organizational policies, to appoint the members of the organization's senior staff charged with the execution of those policies, to review the performance of those appointees on some regular basis and to assure that the organization had the resources necessary for its operation. As one veteran museum trustee described it, the job of the board was not so much to run the museum as it was to see to it that it *was* run. What trusteeship equated with, in essence, was stewardship. Within the organization, it was the primary responsibility of the trustees—as a body—to assure that the museum's resources were not diverted from its public purpose or otherwise wasted and to keep its financial affairs in order.

As early as the 1970s, though, commentators began to recognize that the duties of trusteeship were starting to evolve well beyond this relatively simple stewardship model. Writing for the Association of Governing Boards in 1975, J.L. Zwingle, the former President of Park

College in Missouri, pointed out that trustees were increasingly responsible for "a *process* as well as for *property*, for *activities* as well as for *assets*." In the years since, those expanded responsibilities have continued to grow. If trustees, once, were not expected to run an organization but only to see to it that it *was* run, what is expected of them today is considerably more. Not only must they see to it that the organization *is* run but they must determine as well toward what goal it's to run, and how fast. Not least, they are also being asked to see to it that it actually succeeds in reaching that goal and, moreover, that nobody else gets there first.

What I will propose this morning is that—as what's expected of board members continues to expand beyond their long-standing stewardship obligations—the trustees of a service-oriented museum must be prepared to assume three new, distinct, and additional responsibilities. I stress the word "additional" here because these new responsibilities are in no way "instead of" their customary fiduciary duties. They are above and beyond. Although each of these can, to some extent, be traced back to the board's traditional duty of organizational oversight, their recent emergence into prominence truly does, I think, warrant their singling out for separate treatment. For convenience I will refer to these three new responsibilities as the duty to define the museum's institutional focus, the duty to monitor and assure the museum's institutional performance, and the duty to maintain the museum's institutional competitiveness.

Before we start to tackle these new responsibilities, though, two warm-up exercises may be helpful. First, I want to provide our discussion with a touchstone—an example to which we might come back from time to time and use as an ideal standard against which other instances can be compared and evaluated. That touchstone will be a new Washington, D.C. museum that's still in its planning stage: the Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial, now scheduled to open in 2007 and to occupy a former bank building at 14th and G Streets, Northwest, a prime downtown location just two blocks from the White House.

A majority of historians, Turkish ones aside, today accept it as a fact that more than

1,000,000—perhaps even as many as 1,500,000—Armenians were killed by the Ottoman Empire during a 1915-1916 campaign to uproot them from the region of eastern Anatolia that was ultimately to become Turkey. Hundreds of thousands more were forced to flee into exile, many coming to the United States. Descendants of this latter group—estimates are that one million or more people of Armenian descent are today resident in the United States—have been the ones primarily responsible for organizing the new Genocide Museum and raising the capital funds required to get it built and open (currently estimated at some $75,000,000). Among the goals of the Museum will be to make and disseminate a historical record of the 1915-1916 massacre, to tell the story of the Armenian diaspora, and to celebrate the survival, the re-birth, and the many remarkable successes of the Armenian community in the United States and elsewhere. As some of you may recognize, this double emphasis on both a tragic historical event and on the community's subsequent efforts at recovery in many ways echoes the programs of such institutions as the Museum of African American History in Detroit and the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York City.

What should make the Armenian Genocide Museum so useful to us as a touchstone this morning is the degree to which—in common with many other new museums—its starting point is not in a collection or a building or even a staff but, rather, in a concept, in a purpose, in a clear sense of exactly what—overall—it hopes ultimately to accomplish. We'll be returning to the Genocide Museum later but, for now, there's a second warm-up. Because the concept of organizational "outcomes" will play so central a role in exploring these new trustee responsibilities, I want to take a few minutes, first, to consider what—in an organizational context—we might mean by such "outcomes" and, second, to examine just where and how this notion of "outcome" might fit into some larger conception of what a museums is and of what it does.

The first thing to be understood here is how deep a gulf divides these organizational "outcomes" from those personal "outcomes" that all of us as individuals, whether acting alone or in such aggregates as families and communities, ordinarily pursue on a day-to-day basis. Because, as a society, we value individuals as ends in themselves, personal outcomes may frequently be internal. They can include such desirable states as the satisfaction of attaining a long-sought goal, pride over a particular accomplishment, or even the pleasure provided by a treasured relationship, object, occasion, or experience. Organizational "outcomes," by contrast, are something wholly different. Because organizations are essentially purposive—entities created to serve us as means rather than ends—their outcomes are invariably external. As Peter F. Drucker has explained this distinction in his 1993 book *Post-Capitalist Society*: "Results in an organization exist only on the outside. Society, family, community are self-contained and self-sufficient; they exist for their own sake. But all organizations exist to produce results on the outside."

Beyond distinguishing organizational "outcomes" from personal ones, though, we'll also have to consider how those organizational outcomes differ from another concept with which they're frequently confused: an organization's "outputs." The difference is this: "outputs" are internal, "outputs" are the goods and/or services that an enterprise is organized to produce. "Outcomes," by contrast—as Drucker notes—are always external. "Outcomes" are what happens outside an organization as a consequence of distributing the goods and/or services that the organization produces. In the for-profit organization, that consequence is an economic outcome. For the not-for-profit, it must—of necessity—be a social one.

As to what precisely such a social outcome might include, the best analysis, to my mind, is one that was proposed in the mid-nineties by United Way of America's headquarters office in Alexandria, Virginia. For those not familiar with its role in this context, United Way was a pioneer in using outcome-based evaluation to determine the allocation of grant funds among the various health and human-service agencies that regularly compete for its support. In the United

Way analysis, the key concept is “difference.” To be successful, a United Way applicant must be able to demonstrate its ability to make a positive difference (i.e., to bring about beneficial changes for individuals and/or populations that participate in its programs). The range of these beneficial changes is, though, remarkably broad. They may “...relate to behavior, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, condition, status, or other attributes. They are what participants know, think, or can do; or how they behave; or what their condition is, that is different following the program.” Another truth universally acknowledged, I think, is that the museum is a remarkably effective instrument for making just those kinds of differences for individuals and/or communities—most particularly, differences in skills, knowledge, attitudes, and values.

How, though, does this notion of “outcome” fit into some larger conception of what the museum is and does? By way of an answer, let me walk you through what’s come to be called the “social enterprise model”—a conceptual framework for not-for-profit organizations developed primarily by Professor J. Gregory Dees, now at the Stanford Graduate School of Business, but first proposed in the early 1990s when he was teaching at the Harvard Business School. Let’s begin, albeit a little indirectly, by thinking about a button factory. Envision a large box. That’s the button factory. To get it cranked up, investors will pour money in through the top. Using that initial capital, the factory will purchase the equipment and raw materials that it needs in order to make buttons. It will also hire the people who work inside the box—mechanics, designers, machine operators, and clerks—to design, produce, and keep track of the buttons. Now, coming out from the bottom of the box, we can see the factory’s output: buttons. Millions and millions of buttons. Do those buttons, though, constitute the button factory’s real bottom line? Are those millions of buttons the outcome that the investors were seeking when they made their investments? Of course not. One more thing still has to happen. Somebody has to be found to buy those buttons so that they can be converted into money.

And that money, that’s the bottom line, that’s the outcome in pursuit of which the whole enterprise was constructed in the first place. The buttons were only an output, something wholly within the factory's capacity to produce. To get to the really desired outcome, though—the money —one more ingredient, a critical and wholly external ingredient, was needed: what economists call "demand." For the buttons to be converted into money, there had to be a market that wanted those buttons, a market to which those buttons represented value. Assuming the factory finds such a market and is able to sell enough buttons to be successful, some of that bottom-line button money can then go back to the investors in the form of dividends. Most of it, however, will recirculate back to the top of the box so that the factory can purchase more materials, upgrade its equipment and start a new cycle of button-making. With luck, it may even be able to sustain itself perpetually, able to continue these cycles indefinitely with no further infusion of capital.

To see in just how comparable a way this notion of "outcome" functions in a museum, let's now envision a second box. Again, money will pour in through the top. This time, however, the money won't come in the form of invested capital but, rather, as contributions, grants and other support from a variety of public and private sources: individual donors, foundations, corporations and various levels of government. Again, some will go to acquire equipment and raw materials: computers, storage racks, objects for the collection, books for the library. The rest may be spent to hire workers—in this case, such specialists as curators, conservators, exhibit specialists, and educators—to add value to those raw materials by processing them into such finished products as special exhibitions, permanent collection galleries, scholarly and other publications, and a wide range of public programs.

In time, just as those millions of buttons began to emerge from the bottom of our first box, so too these exhibitions, publications, and public programs will eventually emerge from the second. Those are the museum's outputs. Here, though, we come to that same crucial question that we encountered with the buttons. Are these programs, these outputs, really the museum's bottom line? Are these really the outcomes that the museum's donors and grant-makers were seeking when they provided funds for its support? And, again, the answer is "of course not." Something more still has to happen. Those programs need, first, to reach an audience and, second, to have some positive impact upon that audience. Unless there's an audience for whom they've made some kind of a beneficial difference, they might just as well have never happened at all.

For the museum, that beneficial difference is the bottom line, that's the outcome in pursuit of which the whole enterprise was constructed in the first place. Just as the button factory could only convert its *output* —buttons—into its desired bottom-line *outcome*—money—through a market that found those buttons to have value, so the museum, similarly, can only convert its *output*—programs—into its desired bottom-line *outcome*—a beneficial impact—if there is a potential audience that finds its offerings to have value.

This parallel is by no means perfect. As Dees himself has pointed out, at least two major differences distinguish the business enterprise from the social enterprise. One relates to the manner in which they acquire their operating resources. The business enterprise must typically pay a full market price for these. The social enterprise, by contrast, may receive many of its resources—not only fiscal resources and property, but volunteer labor as well—in the form of gifts. The other difference concerns the manner in which their outputs of finished goods and/or services are distributed. The business enterprise will generally charge the highest price that the market can bear. The social enterprise, again by contrast, may either distribute its services without charge or, if it does impose a charge, will typically charge something less than the cost of producing those services. For the social enterprise, the consequence of this second difference is that—unlike the business enterprise—it can never fully replenish its working capital out of operating income and—unless it has sufficient endowment or other guaranteed income to close this gap—must, of structural necessity, continually solicit new contributions on an annual basis.

Here, then, we can finally turn to the first and probably the most critical of these three new and additional board responsibilities: the duty to prescribe the museum's institutional focus. What that means, in essence, is that somebody has to decide what the museum's bottom line is to be—to decide exactly what all of the considerable cost and effort that go into operating the museum are ultimately intended to achieve. And that somebody is the board. As Harold Skramstad, the now-retired director of the Henry Ford Museum has pointed out, such a clear and focused statement of institutional mission meets two critical needs. Not only does it serve as a guide to institutional action, but it also functions as "a powerful yardstick against which the museum itself can assess each and every activity it carries out."

The magnitude of this task can vary considerably from one kind of organization to another. Approaching these in ascending order of difficulty, we might begin with a for-profit enterprise. There, the bottom line is virtually a given. Whether a button factory or a beet farm—regardless of how different their outputs may be—the intended bottom line of every such enterprise is the same: an economic outcome. Likewise, in museums that still adhere to the old collection-centered model, outcomes or bottom lines are rarely problematic. What those museums continue to concentrate on instead is a variety of internal activities—most particularly on the accumulation, preservation, study, display, and interpretation of their collections. Whether or not those activities even have any external consequences may be considered largely irrelevant.

Requiring more effort—but still relatively simple—is establishing the bottom line for a museum that is only first coming into being. Most often, those responsible for its creation will have a pretty specific idea of what they are trying to accomplish. If they can prescribe its outcome up front, then it should be a relatively easy matter to bring the rest of the enterprise—its policies, collections, operations, and exhibitions—into alignment. Consider our touchstone, for example: the Armenian Genocide Museum with its admirably clear goals of both educating a non-Armenian public about the terrible events of 1915-1916 and inculcating pride in its

Armenian public about their accomplishments in the subsequent diaspora. Or think here of such recently opened and clearly focused museums as the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore with its emphasis on self-taught and inwardly driven artists working outside any specific artistic tradition, or the Carnegie's Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh with its frank embrace of art forms that may be mass-produced and broadly distributed. Or think of the Experience Music Project in Seattle, the D-Day Museum in New Orleans, or the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles.

In contrast to these recent examples, the task faced by the board that must retrofit a bottom line—some coherent cluster of outcomes—to an older collection-centered museum that is only now turning toward public service may be very far from simple. Having operated for decades without any clear central purpose to guide it, such a museum will most likely have sprawled in a dozen different directions. To distill some clear mandate out of that sprawl may well require a complicated, protracted, and often frustrating effort. In my own observation, the most difficult case may be that of a fine-art or decorative-art museum that was originally established because one or another personal collection happened to be available, nobody wanted to see it broken up and—with no better rhyme or reason—it was, *ipso facto*, declared to be a museum.

If defining a museum's bottom line required nothing more than the board getting together to reconcile the different and possibly conflicting preferences of its members into some kind of working consensus, that might be daunting enough. What can make this task truly formidable, however, is that the consensus required of the board will almost invariably require that it take into account not only the opinions of its members but also a variety of viewpoints and interests from well beyond its own membership.

Consider this. For a museum to function at all there must, at a bare minimum, be (1) an unmet community need that the museum has the capability to meet; unless there is some public demand for what the museum is able to offer, then the museum's offerings will ultimately be in vain; (2) a body of employees and/or volunteers who are both willing and capable to meet that need; and (3) resources available at a level at least equal to what the organization must necessarily consume in the course of meeting that need. This set of interlocking considerations is by no means unique to museums. It can be found, characterized in one way or another, throughout the entire not-for-profit sector.

One particularly felicitous description comes from Bud Cheit, former Dean of the Business School at the University of California, Berkeley. He personifies these factors as three stakeholders whom he calls (1) the "public" (i.e., the members of the community whose needs are to be met), (2) the "participants" (i.e., the governance, staff and volunteers of the organization that will actually be utilized in order to meet those needs), and (3) the "patrons" (i.e., the donors and grant makers who will supply that organization with the resources necessary to meet that need). Across the country, at the Harvard Business School, a different vocabulary is reportedly used. There, the elements of any successful program are characterized as (1) substantive plausibility (i.e., can this program be reasonably expected to provide its intended benefit?), (2) operational practicality (i.e., does the organization have the capability/determination to execute this program successfully?), and (3) political feasibility (i.e., can this program attract the required support?).

For a rough and ready street-wise version, we might simply say that no museum or other not-for-profit organization can last very long unless there's (1) an audience to be attentive, (2) somebody willing to do the work, and (3) somebody willing to pay for that work. Whatever the description, though, there seems to be general agreement that such organizations can only formulate and achieve clear program objectives when these three key elements are in alignment. The case is not that any of these stakeholders—to use Cheit's terminology—can alone force a museum to adopt a particular purpose. The case, rather, is that any one of those stakeholders can by itself veto any purpose of which it disapproves. The public votes with its feet. Patrons vote with their checkbooks. And participants—those inside the museum who actually do its work: staff, volunteers, other board members—vote with their labor. As a general rule, they will not undertake work that violates their own convictions. At best, they may resign and go elsewhere. At worst, they may stay and—whether they do so consciously or not—sabotage the work.

As it carries out this task, the essential thing for a board to understand is that there is no one focus which is “right” for all museums generally or even for the museums of any particular discipline. It is precisely because this country’s museums are not centrally managed—not simply the local branches of some bureaucratic tree—that they have evolved in such varied and vital ways. Consider, for example, the range of possibilities open to art museums. One might focus on maintaining a community’s pride in its cultural heritage. A second might choose to be a place through which contemporary artists could disseminate their ideas. A third might conceive of itself as a stimulus to creativity. A fourth might aspire to induce in its visitors a purely aesthetic response—by definition a disinterested experience intended to be a rewarding end in itself and not instrumental toward some other purpose. A fifth might conceptualize itself primarily as a teaching institution and define its success by how much about art, artists, and art history its visitors were able to learn in its galleries. A sixth might see itself as a sort of school for seeing, a place in which visitors could enrich their lives by learning and practicing new visual skills. And a seventh or eighth could, of course, choose for its focus some combination of those others.

To summarize, then, the first of these three new and additional board responsibilities is to prescribe the museum’s institutional focus. In the case of a new museum—the Museum of the Armenian Genocide is our example—the board’s task may be to shape the initial cornerstone of ideas, values, and objectives on which the rest of the institution can subsequently be built. In the older museum, the trustees face a more complex task. They must, first, find what the Washington, D.C. museum consultant Mary Case has called “the sweet spot,” that special place where the interests of the public, the participants, and the patrons overlap, and then, second, formulate and nurture a consensus as to the museum's institutional purposes that is firmly rooted in that overlap, a consensus to which all of those stakeholders can give their assent regardless of whether those program objectives would necessarily have been their first choices if they were able to choose alone.

The second of these additional board responsibilities—to monitor and assure the museum's institutional performance—is directly related to the first. What it means, at bottom, is that having once determined what outcomes the museum is seeking to achieve, the board is then responsible, as well, for seeing to it that those outcomes *are*, in fact, achieved. Put somewhat more bluntly, the issue here is institutional failure versus institutional success. Good intentions are not enough. A museum that's unable to carry out its good intentions—unable to achieve its intended outcomes—must be deemed a failure. The successful museum, by contrast, is the one that, on some continuing basis, is able to translate its aspirations into achievements.

That the ability to distinguish success from failure is critical to sound institutional governance was among the major premises underlying the series of tough-minded maxims that David Osborne and Ted Gaebler set out in their widely-read 1992 book *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*. Five of these are no less applicable to museums today than they were to government then: (1) If You Can't See Success, You Can't Reward It; (2) If You Can't Reward Success, You Are Probably Rewarding Failure; (3) If You Can't See Success, You Can't Learn From It; (4) If You Can't Recognize Failure, You Can't Correct It; and (5) If You Can Demonstrate Results, You Can Win Public Support.

In considering this second responsibility—to monitor and assure the museum's institutional performance—some commentators have approached it as a matter of accountability. Peter Swords, for example, the now-retired Director of the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of

New York and former Assistant Dean of the Columbia University School of Law, has suggested that boards should be charged with a double accountability. One part of this would be what he calls “negative accountability”—that would involve the traditional fiduciary safeguards to assure that nobody in a position of institutional authority was doing anything wrong (i.e., engaged in conflict of interest transactions, taking bribes or kickbacks or making personal use of insider information). The second—and novel—part would be what he calls “positive accountability.” This would seek to assure that the institution itself is doing things right (i.e., that it is, in fact, demonstrating a high degree of competence in achieving its institutional objectives).

A similar idea is reflected in the proposed Standards for Charitable Accountability published in January by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance, a not-for-profit watchdog group formed last year by the merger of the National Charities Information Bureau with two sub-units of the Council of Better Business Bureaus. Intended to “assist donors in making knowledgeable giving decision,” these twenty-one proposed standards include one wholly new provision that had not previously appeared in any similar compilation. Described by the Alliance as an “effectiveness standard,” this new provision, it says, is intended “to ensure that an organization has a defined process in place to evaluate the success and impact of its program(s) in fulfilling the goals of the organization and that [it] also identifies ways to address any deficiency.” Under this standard, boards of trustees are required to assess, at not less than two-year intervals, an organization’s performance and to consider specifically what future actions may be required for the organization to achieve its mission.

Here, though, a warning light should blink. Damaging as it might be to fail to assess a museum’s performance, it could be equally or even more damaging to conduct such an assessment using an inappropriate set of measures. That point was forcefully made in a recent *Chronicle of Philanthropy* article (May 30, 2002) by Peter Frumkin, Assistant Professor of Public Policy at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. Writing about the widespread and continuing failure among not-for-profit organizations of every kind to develop more meaningful ways to document the effectiveness of their programs—what he calls their "programmatic bottom line"—Frumkin warned that there may be a growing tendency in the field to substitute financial measures instead. For the casual observer, unfamiliar with the not-for-profit sector, the great advantage of these financial measures is the ease with which they can be plugged into to a whole series of already familiar and quantitative benchmarks—return on endowment, for example, or year-to-year fluctuations in membership income, or the relationship of annual revenue to annual expense. "The problem that this creates in the nonprofit world is clear, " Frumkin writes. "From foundations and universities to hospitals and museums, nonprofit groups of all kinds, but particularly large institutions, are understandably led to focus on financial measures of performance because they are so much more concrete and robust than programmatic ones. They are also what outsiders can observe easily and compare quickly in sizing up one organization's management compared with another."

To underscore Frumkin's point, consider just how preposterous such financial measures would be if—to return to our touchstone—they were to be used in evaluating the success or failure of the Armenian Genocide Museum. From the point of view of those providing its support, the Genocide Museum is not about dollars and cents. It's about hearts and minds. Success or failure will be determined by whether or not its programs are having their intended impact on the public, not by whether or not its revenue has consistently exceeded its expense or whether or not the value of its endowment continues to equal or better one or another stock market index. It's not the case that those financial concerns are inconsequential. A museum, like any organization—just like the button factory, even—must be attentive to its revenues and expenses. What makes the museum so different from the button factory, though, is the inadequacy of those terms to define its success or failure. For the museum, the bottom line must always be a programmatic outcome, not a fiscal one.

What of Frumkin's observation that there has been a widespread and continuing failure by not-for-profit organizations to develop more meaningful measures to document the impact of their programs? Among museums, at least, that has not been for any lack of serious effort. For a variety of reasons, though, museums have turned out to be a tough case when it comes to evaluation. One problem is timing. Think, for instance, of a nutrition program for pregnant women established with the objective of increasing the birth weights—and also, presumably, of improving the health—of their expected children. From an evaluation perspective, this should not be problematic. The results will all be available in nine months or less. Recorded in pounds and ounces, the results will all be quantitative. Moreover, to help assess those results, innumerable databases will be available—birth weights in the same community prior to the introduction of the program, birth weights in an adjacent and demographically similar community with a different program, birth weights in the same program at an earlier cycle.

Museums, though, are nothing like that. Hearts and minds are a long way from pounds and ounces. The impact of a museum on its visitors tends generally to be cumulative over time. Sometimes that impact may build up gradually; sometimes, like a time bomb, it may go undetected for a while, then detonate years later. More often than not, that impact may be subtle rather than obvious, blurred rather than distinct, indirect rather than direct. And also, more often than not, that impact may be deeply intertwined with the impact made by a range of such other community organizations as schools, libraries, and public broadcasting.

The most apt analogy might be to a liberal arts college. No more than you could determine what a student's liberal arts education might contribute to society on graduation day—it may, in fact, take the better part of a lifetime for that contribution to become evident—can you readily determine the ultimate impact of a museum visit through an exit interview or a mail-in questionnaire. Religious organizations provide another useful analogy. The beneficial influence of a particular minister or rabbi can rarely be traced to one sermon or one counseling session.

Most often it's cumulative. Because there's no easy answer to the often-sarcastically posed question "How many souls were actually saved per pew-hour preached?" does not mean that religious organizations may not regularly impact their communities in the most powerful of ways.

In some instances—again like the liberal arts education—the ultimate impact of a museum visit may be too remote in time or too intangible in its initial effect to be ascertained by any immediate means. In such a case, one alternative might be to use instead some proxy or more tangible surrogate measure. The Chicago-based researcher Beverly Serrell, for example, closely monitors the body language of visitors as they go through an exhibition to understand how their attentiveness is being deployed. She theorizes that attentiveness is the first prerequisite to any learning experience, whether in a museum or otherwise. Other researchers concentrate on retention and memorability. Through follow-up telephone calls at periodic intervals following a museum visit, they try to determine how much of an exhibition's content a visitor can still recall.

For a museum's board of trustees even to begin to address the second of these new responsibilities—to monitor and assure the museum's institutional performance—it's imperative that it be furnished with timely and accurate assessments of the museum's actual impact on its target audiences. In both individual museums and across the field as a whole, there is a critical need today to develop not just a few but a whole arsenal—a vast arsenal, even—of richer and more persuasive ways by which museums can document and/or demonstrate the myriad and beneficial outcomes that they are able to achieve. While some of these assessments may certainly be quantitative, a great many may also have to be anecdotal or qualitative. Critical above all, however, is that these assessment techniques be smartened up to fit the real complexity of what museums actually do, and not the converse. It would be a calamity beyond telling—the equivalent of the "teaching to the test" phenomenon that hangs so threateningly over our public schools—if museums, in their haste to introduce better means of evaluation, were to dumb down the work they do in order to squeeze that work into the straightjacket of whatever assessment tools just happen to be currently available.

What can museum trustees meanwhile do to help move these developments along? The most effective thing, perhaps, would be to make sure that the annual budgets of their organizations include—and on a regular basis—adequate funds for institutional capacity-building in general and for increasing the organization's assessment capabilities in particular. That may involve training, it may involve consultants, it may even require that some funds be put aside each year for pure research. Too often, penny-wise, pound-foolish annual spending plans provide adequately to produce programs while cutting back—as some sort of a frill—on any expense for the assessment of those programs. To go back to pounds and ounces for a moment, think of just how foolish it might be to undertake an arduous diet and then, in a fit of parsimony, not to buy a scale by which to assess your progress. It would be no less foolish for those who govern a museum simply to take it for granted—perhaps as a matter of faith—that the museum's programs are, in fact, achieving their intended purposes. Recall what Ronald Reagan used to say with regard to arms control: trust, but verify. In museums, assessment is the means by which we verify.

Turning, then, to the third and last of these three new trustee responsibilities, the duty to maintain the museum's institutional competitiveness, some of you may wonder: What's so new about this? Haven't museums always been more or less competitive? In the past, certainly, museums have frequently competed head-to-head with one another for contributions—both contributions of dollars and contributions of collections. Museums compete for staff and also for volunteers. Art museums frequently compete with one another to secure a particularly desirable traveling exhibition. And museums certainly compete against movie houses, one another or even bowling alleys for the leisure time of their visitors. The competition to be considered here, though, is of another kind altogether.

Think back to our earlier discussion of the distinction between outputs and outcomes. Outputs, you'll recall, are internal—they're the goods and services that an enterprise produces. In the case of museums, those include exhibitions, publications and a range of public programs. Outcomes, by contrast, are external—they're the impact that those outputs may have on individuals and communities. When outputs were still the museum's primary concern, then its principal competition was the kind just described. It competed with other museums with a similar range of outputs. With the shift in focus to outcomes, however, we have an entirely new situation. With its focus now on purpose, on impact, on making a difference, a museum may unexpectedly find itself in competition with a totally different range of other organizations—even with for-profit organizations—that may be in pursuit of a similar purpose. The question may then be which organization, regardless of type, is better able to accomplish that purpose or, if they are equally able, then which organizations can do it more efficiently.

Think of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. As Irene Hirano, the Museum's founding director describes it, the Museum came into existence in the mid-1980s because of a growing recognition within the Japanese American community that its history had somehow become invisible. Little trace of that history could be found in textbooks, in other educational materials, or in the mass media. Particularly urgent was the need to document and pass along to a younger generation the story of how 120,000 Japanese Americans had been forcibly incarcerated during World War II. There was, Hirano says, no core collection with which to start the museum, no single contributor prepared to pay for it. All there was, she says, was "a group of people with an intense motivation to ensure that their history and culture was documented."

Establishing a museum, however, was only one of a number of competing ways in which the Japanese American community might have ensured that its history and culture would be documented. They could instead have created a library, or founded an archive. They might have started a publishing program. They could have endowed a department of Japanese American historical studies within a local college or university. They could have developed a television series. They could have made a film. The point is this: that the people who started the Japanese American National Museum didn't start it because they wanted a museum. They started a museum because there was a job they wanted done and—at that moment, anyway—a museum seemed to them both the most effective and the most efficient instrument by which to get that job done.

Come back to our touchstone, the Armenian Genocide Museum. Let's imagine ourselves some ten or fifteen years down the road. Let's further imagine that, by every assessment, the Museum has been consistently successful in educating the public about the tragedy of 1915-1916 and about the diaspora that followed. Let's finally imagine, though, that a study commissioned by several of its most important patrons has convincingly suggested that those program objectives could be equally well met through an interactive website at considerably less expense than what the Museum now costs to run. Additional impetus for transforming the Museum into a website might come from the fact that the downtown Washington real estate the Museum occupies has tripled in value since its purchase and that the proceeds from its sale could virtually endow the proposed website in perpetuity.

This, then, is what the duty to maintain the museum's institutional competitiveness entails: It is the responsibility of the board—acting as a group—to minimize whatever risk such a scenario may pose, to develop defensive strategies adequate to protect the museum against such a threat. Could the museum's offerings, for example, be enriched in order to offer stronger competition to the proposed website in terms of program content? Could the museum introduce greater efficiencies in order to be more competitive in terms of operating costs? Is downtown Washington the only possible site for the Museum? Might the Museum be made more competitive by selling off its underlying real estate and either operating for some interim period under a leaseback or seeking another location?

In earlier times, those were not issues with which a museum's board of trustees had to wrestle. Boards could concentrate their attention within the organizations they had been chosen to govern. With the transformation of the museum into a purpose-driven institution, though—an organization intended to do a job—boards no longer have that luxury. A museum's board today must regularly scan the horizon to make sure that there are no other organizations out there that are not only doing what its own organization does but are also doing it as well or better and/or in a more cost-effective way.

Those, then, are the three new and additional responsibilities that I think museum boards must be prepared to assume: the duty to define the museum's institutional focus, the duty to monitor and assure the museum's institutional performance, and the duty to maintain the museum's institutional competitiveness. Which then brings us back to the beginning, back to those challenging questions about WORTH and COST with which we started.

For brevity's sake, let me now distill those down into this single question: WHO GETS TO SAY IF YOUR MUSEUM IS ACTUALLY WORTH WHAT IT COSTS? The immediate answer, of course, is that a lot of people get to say. Not only do a lot of people get to say but what each of those people gets to say—and here, finally, we come to Marketing 101—may depend upon his or her own individual needs and upon whether and to what degree your museum is able to satisfy those needs. Foremost among these people are that same trio of stakeholders whom we encountered before: the patrons, the participants, and the public.

As we saw earlier, the patrons vote with their checkbooks. If patrons find that their contributions are being used effectively and efficiently for their intended purposes, they can be expected to remain patrons. If not, they may never argue or complain. They may just quietly fade away. Participants—the board, staff and volunteers inside the museum—vote with their labor. Some—board members, volunteers, curators, educators—may be motivated by a passion for the museum's subject matter or a belief in its goals. Others—the chief financial officer, the head of security, the building engineers—may find the museum a pleasant setting in which to exercise their professional skills. Few, though, will be motivated by paychecks. Museums, generally, are not the place to make a lot of money. Whatever the motivation, though, unless those participants find their working situations to be satisfactory, they're just as likely to move on elsewhere. And the public, of course, votes with its feet. If the museum's exhibitions and other programs fail to provide members of the public with sufficient value to justify the payment of its entrance fees and the investment of their time—not only the time they spend at the museum but also all the time, money, and effort they spend in getting there and back—they too will just quietly fade away.

To be more specific, let's return one last time to our touchstone: the Armenian Genocide Museum. WHO WILL SAY WHETHER IT'S WORTH WHAT IT COSTS? And the answer to that, I think, must ultimately depend upon what things of value—what satisfactions of their various needs—the Genocide Museum will be able to provide to the various stakeholders upon whom it, in turn, must rely for its support and operation. Will its patrons find that the Museum's programs are both consistent with their aims and that they make the desired impact? Will participants find their association with the museum—whether as board, staff, or volunteers—to be rewarding? Will the public—ranging all the way from those within the Armenian community who may come to the museum as virtually a pilgrimage to those non-Armenians whose attendance may be prompted by little more than casual curiosity—find their visits to the museum to be satisfying, to be stimulating?

Nor does that exhaust the list of potential stakeholders with whom the Genocide Museum will have to deal. Will its neighbors in downtown Washington find it to be a good neighbor? Will local government find it to be a good citizen? Will the media find it to be a timely and reliable source of information? Will local colleges and universities—even the local public school system—find it to be a willing and responsible collaborator? What each of these instances represents is a potential exchange of values. The Museum will need ongoing support and cooperation. Each of its numerous stakeholders has, in turn, his, her, or its own particular and unique needs to be satisfied. If the Genocide Museum and its stakeholders can strike the necessary series of bargains to satisfy each other's needs, then the museum should prove to be worthy of what it costs and can be expected to flourish. If they can't, though—if those stakeholders should ultimately determine that the value the Museum returns to them isn't a fair exchange for what it costs to maintain—that too may become all too readily apparent, and the Museum may well fail.

The really tough and final follow-up question, though, is this: WHOSE JOB *IS* IT TO SEE TO IT THAT THE MUSEUM REALLY IS WORTH WHAT IT COSTS? And the answer to that must clearly be: the board of trustees. This is precisely where those new responsibilities that we've discussed this morning come into play. If the Armenian Genocide Museum is to succeed—if the stakeholders on whom it must necessarily depend are to find it to be worth what it costs—then its board must do a number of things. It must maintain the sharp institutional focus with which the Museum has been established or, if circumstances should some day dictate a different focus, make that change cleanly and clearly. It must assure, once the Museum begins to operate, that its programs are both consistent with that focus and that they are succeeding in achieving the Museum's desired outcomes. It must be constantly alert to see to it that the Museum remains competitive. And it must, of course, also discharge—with prudence and loyalty—all those other fiduciary responsibilities with which boards have long been charged.

Two last thoughts with which to close. First, museums—young as they still are—are perhaps the most flexible form of social organization that our society has yet developed. The range of creative possibilities open to a museum's board of trustees is tremendous. Museums can provide aesthetic and other affective experiences. As places of learning, they can impart knowledge, stimulate inquiry and help to develop skills. As sites for celebration—or sometimes for consolation—they can strengthen family and communal ties. Museums can provide critically needed recreation, they can offer a safe place to share with others. Museums can kindle individual ambition. They can offer new and fresh perspectives, influence attitudes, help to shape behavior, convey values from one generation to another, generate respect—and more.

Second, a museum might usefully be thought about as a great cargo vessel. What twenty-first century museum trusteeship is most emphatically not about is the conduct of that vessel's day-to-day business: scraping off its barnacles, fussing over chipped paint, or steering clear of nearby rocks and shoals. There's already a crew on board admirably trained to do those things and, in all likelihood, to do them far more skillfully than any board member. No, what today's trusteeship is most emphatically about is something far more fundamental: it's about sifting through all of the political, economic, social, and strategic considerations that may be relevant to determine toward which destinations that great vessel should best be steered; it's about calculating what particular cargoes that vessel might most productively carry; it's about vigilantly scanning the horizon to identify and take into early account any potential change in circumstance.

Does such a vision of museum trusteeship carry with it a heavy responsibility? Beyond any question. But what that vision of museum trusteeship offers as well—and this also, to return to Jane Austen's happy phrase, is "a truth universally acknowledged"—is a magnificent and unparalleled opportunity to play the central role in determining in just what way or ways a museum can best, most effectively and most efficiently realize its enormous potential—the central role in shaping how it can best, most effectively and most efficiently be of service to its community. It's a job—but to take full advantage of the remarkable opportunities that it offers can potentially make it among the richest and most rewarding jobs that our system of civil society has to offer. To further narrow that challenging question with which we began: IS YOUR

MUSEUM WORTH WHAT IT COSTS? It certainly can be. But that's up to you and your fellow trustees. You're the ones, finally, who make the difference.