

VIRTUAL CONTENT

WHEN THE PANDEMIC STARTED, many museums suddenly pivoted to providing virtual content. Now that we are several months into this pandemic, we checked in with our Pandemic Panelists to see how well that content was working for them.

Much of what they shared reinforced the themes from just a few months ago, as seen in "Museums and the Pandemic: Data Story #2." But we asked a couple of new questions, too.



When it comes to engaging with virtual content, two big barriers continue to prevent adult engagement with virtual content:



BARRIER #1: EXCESSIVE SCREEN TIME

"I spend so much time on a computer for work, I prefer real life experiences for my non-work time ... many friends and neighbors I speak with feel similarly after we've lived for months with Zoom."

BARRIER #2: CONTENT OVERLOAD

"... given the amount of newsletters, reminders, programs, etc., that I receive as emails ... I get overwhelmed and I just erase; it's just too much."

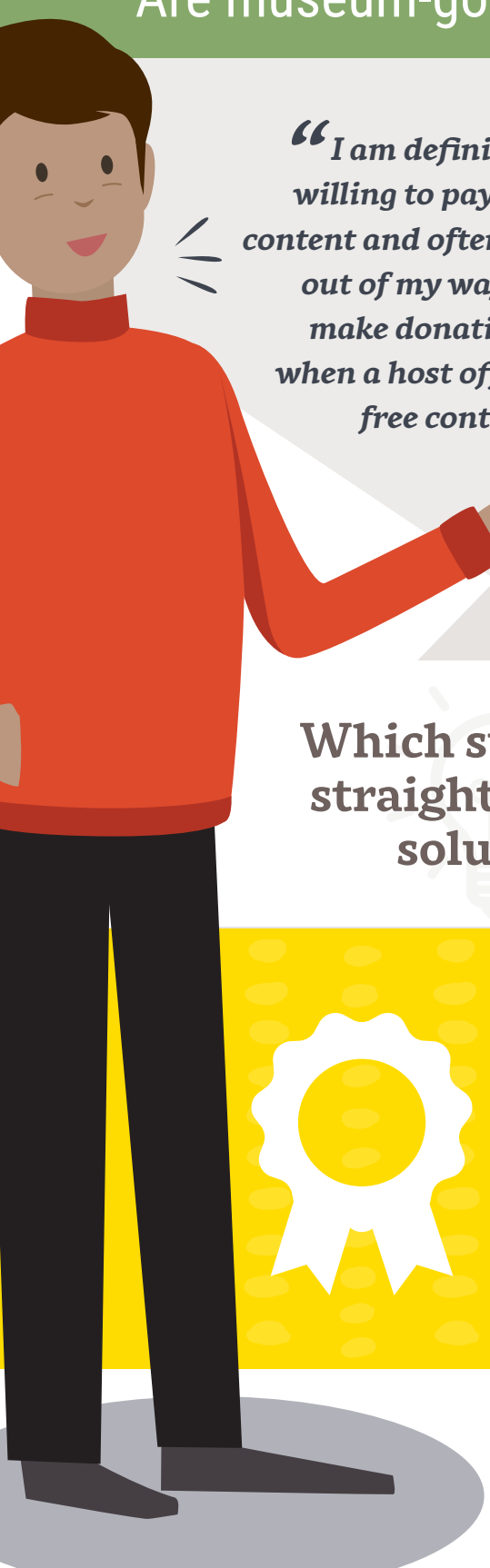


GIVEN BOTH THESE BARRIERS, IT MAY BE WORTH CONSIDERING:

- 1 Ways museums can use virtual communications to drive real-world experiences
- 2 A simple, centralized website for matching virtual visitors with museum content

Creating virtual content takes resources. Are museum-goers willing to pay?

For most, yes!



"I am definitely willing to pay for content and often go out of my way to make donations when a host offers free content."

But many suggested virtual content should be a membership perk.



"I am a member of the museum, I expect most programs to be free for me to access."

"Members shouldn't have to pay extra."

Which suggests a straightforward solution:

"Include the subscription in membership and be done with it."



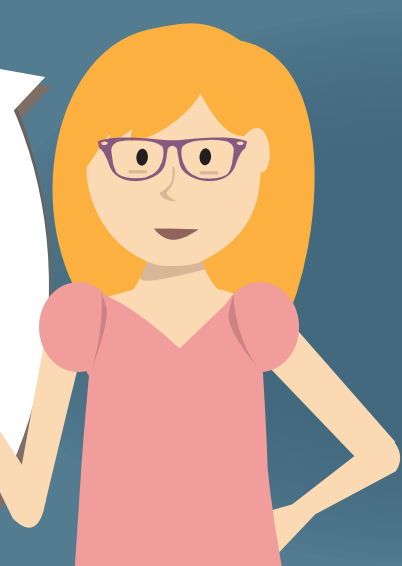
BUT REMEMBER, IF YOU BUILD A PAYWALL, THE QUALITY HAS TO BE THERE. AFTER ALL, YOUR COMPETITION IS A LOT OF FREE CONTENT.



Finally, should museums be making an investment in virtual content in the first place? **Is it worth it?**

The consensus was a resounding **YES.**

"I think it is wonderful that museums are engaging the public and especially putting out educational videos geared for school-aged children. I am hoping this will continue as many children will not be physically going back to school in the fall, and it is such a valuable resource for them."



"Virtual content has been everything for me since mid-March. I am so grateful for it, and would encourage expansion of it ... A wider audience is a good thing."

Virtual content, for those who are participating, is serving its role of education and connection. When done well, it is also helping make the case that, in this time, museums really do matter.



"This virtual programming allows me to continue feeling connected to museums and to art and history more broadly, and I believe this is very important for mental health during this pandemic. I think museums are providing an essential service with their digital programming ..."

Museums and the Pandemic Data Stories are created by Wilkening Consulting on behalf of the American Alliance of Museums. Sources include:
 • 2020 Online Panel of Museum-Goers (ongoing)
 • 2020 Broader Population Sampling
 • 2020 Annual Survey of Museum-Goers

*Data Stories share research about both museum-goers (who visit multiple museums each year) and the broader population (including casual and non-visitors to museums).

The entire series of Museums and the Pandemic Data Stories can be found at wilkeningconsulting.com/data-stories.

