

# Museum Education Roundtable December 2010 – January 2011 Publications Survey Report Summary

In the fall of 2010, members of the Publications Committee of the Board of the Museum Education Roundtable (MER) developed a survey to better understand which publications museum educators (and colleagues in related fields) use and value; to ascertain how the *Journal of Museum Education* (JME) is used by museum educators; to gauge the level of interest in a new JME Anthology; and to hear from our colleagues about future topics and authors. In order to gather feedback from a wide pool of museum education professionals, the survey was disseminated via an e-mail to MER members, a variety of professional listservs, e-mail lists and Facebook pages. The survey ran from December 2010 to January 18, 2011. Four hundred and forty-three responses (n=443) were collected during this time.

Board members analyzed responses and are using results to inspire discussion and planning for possible changes to the format of the JME. Guided by the results of this survey, research of other practitioner-based publications, discussion with colleagues and our Strategic Framework 2010 – 2014, the Board hopes to continue to serve MER members and the museum education field by strengthening the JME, reaching larger audiences and offering high quality scholarship in print and online.

Below is a snapshot of the results from this survey. If you would like a copy of the entire report, or if you have questions or comments about the survey, please e-mail [membership@museumeducation.info](mailto:membership@museumeducation.info).

## **Who responded to the survey?**

The largest segment of those who responded work in senior museum education management positions. The next largest segment works in middle management followed by those who are employed at education coordinator/museum educator levels. Respondents overwhelmingly work at art museums/galleries and history museums (33.3%, n=147/441 and 25.9%, n=114/441 respectively); these two institutional types employ 60 percent of respondents. Universities (11.8%, n=52/441), living history/historic sites (8.6%, n=38/441), and science centers (6.1%, n=27/441) round out the top five institutional types that employ those who responded to this survey.<sup>1</sup> More than 50 percent of those who responded (54.4%, n=240/441) were not current members of MER.

## **What publications do you draw from?**

While respondents mentioned publications that were sometimes specifically aimed at their institutional type, results showed four front-runners that emerged from the pack: *Museum*, *Journal of Museum Education*, *Museum 2.0* blog and *Curator*.

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<sup>1</sup> Natural history museums just missed the top 5 spot by one respondent (5.9%, n=26/441).

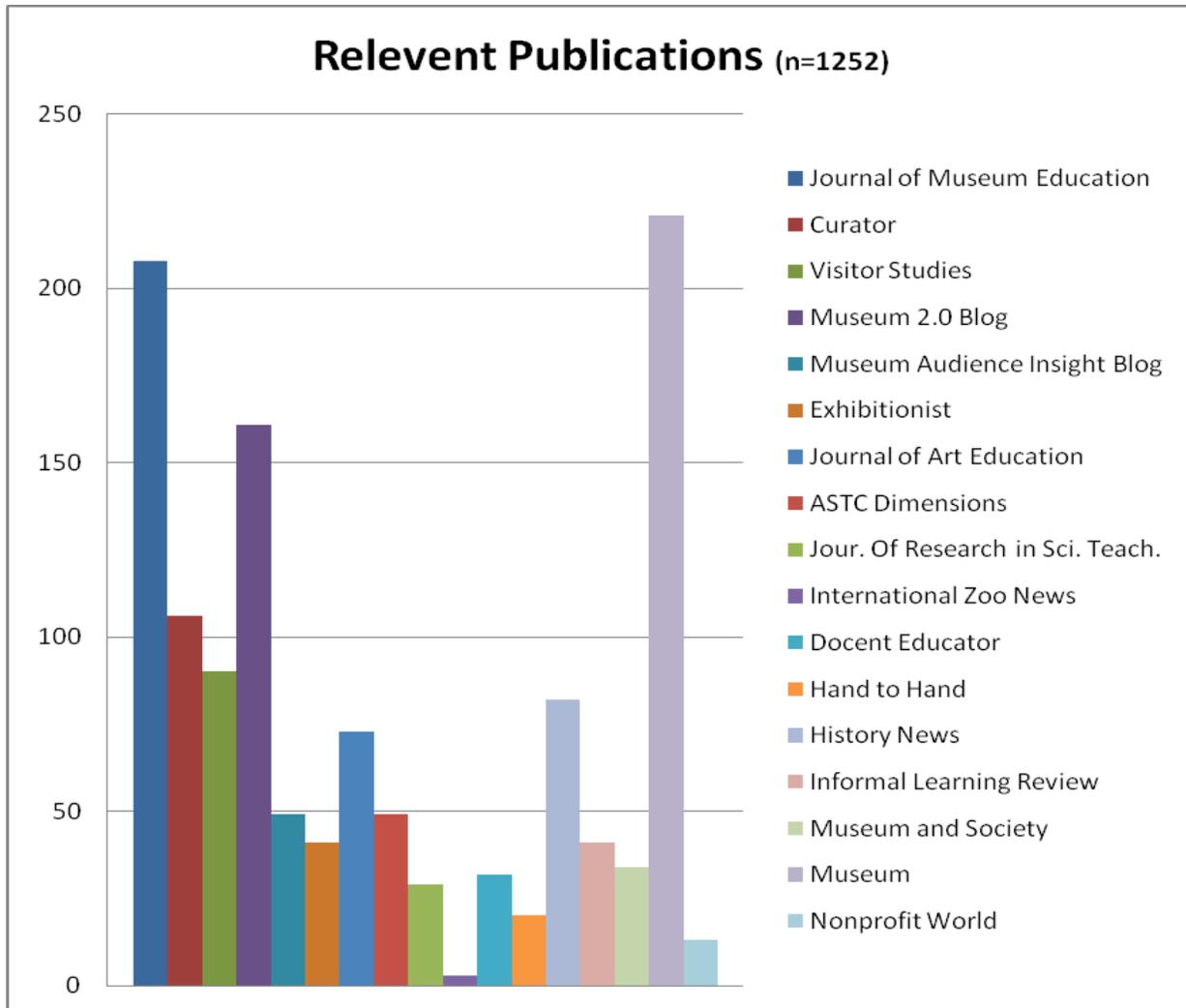


Chart 1: Which publications do you draw from in your line of work? (Choose all that apply.)

#### What publications are most useful and why?

Participants rated the *Journal of Museum Education* (n=94) and *Museum* (n=74) as well as the blogs *Museum 2.0* (n=84) and *Museum Audience Insight* as the most useful. About half of all respondents looked to journals to provide new ideas and ways of thinking (23.3%, n=226/971) and practical ideas and best practices (22.2%, n=216/971). With regard to format, over one-third of respondents prefer a journal that is available both online and in print (37.6%, n=130/346).

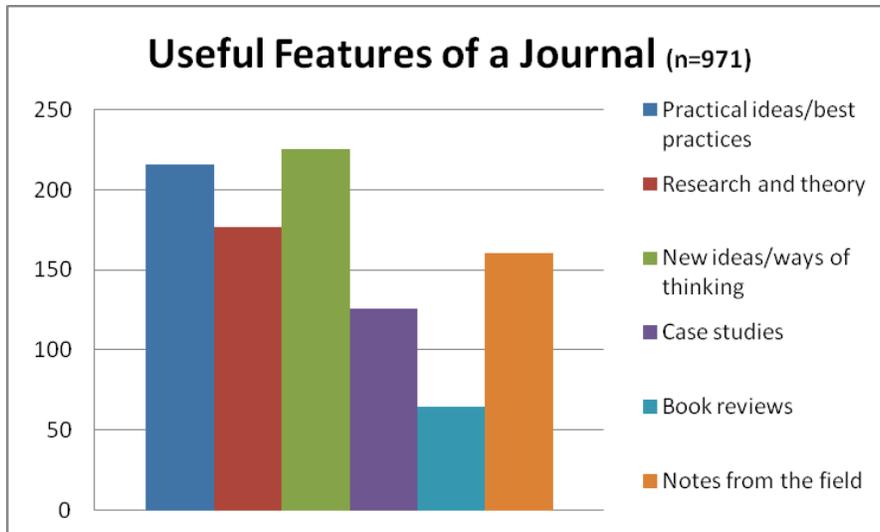


Chart 2: Why? (Choose all that apply.)

### What Do You Want To Read/See?

Respondents want to see personal accounts/perspectives from practitioners (19.2%, n=218/1134) and insights from practitioners in other fields of study (14.4%, n=163/1134). It also appears that they want both long, in-depth articles (15.3%, n=173/1134) and shorter articles that offer a glimpse into a topic (12.2%, n=138/1134). Findings indicate that respondents might enjoy the variety of these two formats.

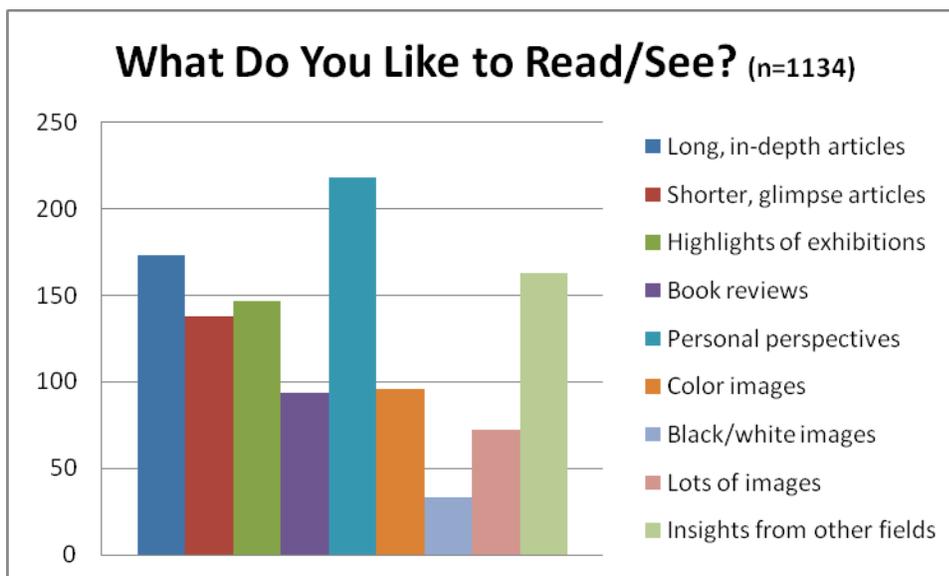


Chart 3: When reading a peer-reviewed journal, do you prefer...?(Choose all that apply.)

### What field of scholarship do you turn to for professional growth?

The greatest number of respondents (30.4%, n=300/986) use scholarship produced by and for museum educators. Close to 20 percent of those who took the survey look to the fields of informal education (22.9%, n=226/986) and visitor studies (19.8%, n=195/986).

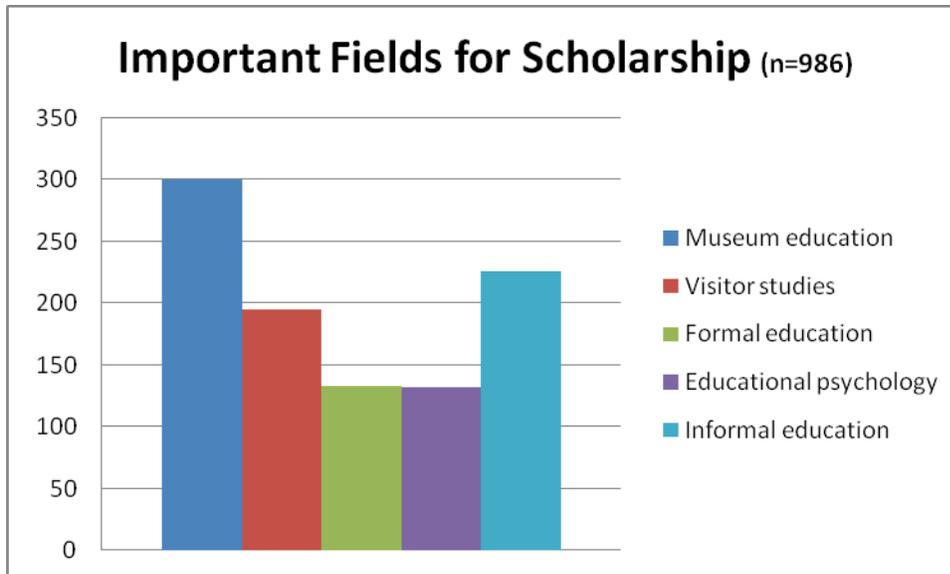


Chart 4: Which fields do you look to for scholarship? (Choose all that apply.)

#### Why do you use the Journal of Museum Education?

People use the JME for two primary reasons: “To improve my knowledge and understanding of the field” (27.1%, n=108/649) and “To stay current with trends in the field” (26.5%, n=176/649). The majority of respondents (56.3%, n=152/270) peruse/read only articles of interest. Only a small percentage (12.2%, n=33/270) read the JME cover to cover.

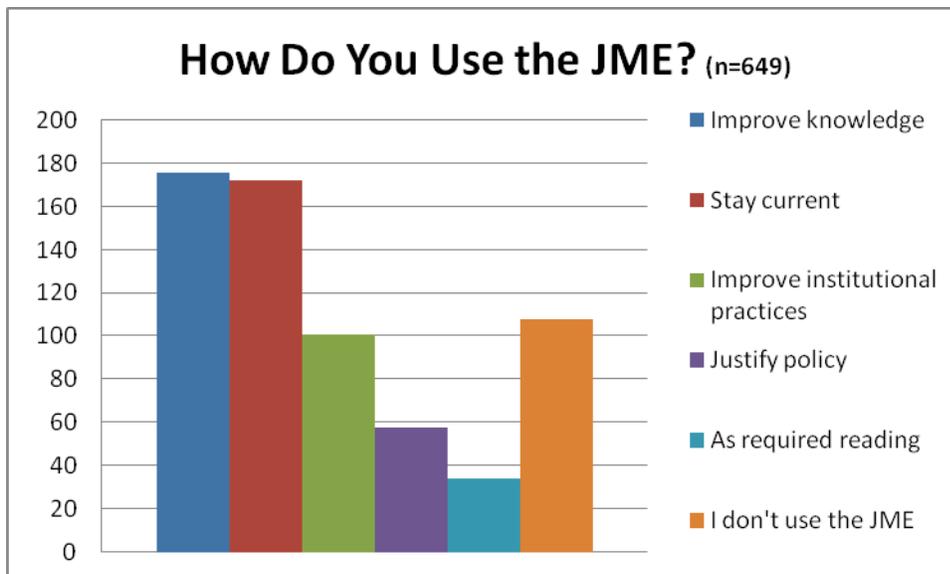


Chart 5: How do you use the Journal of Museum Education (JME)? (Choose all that apply.)

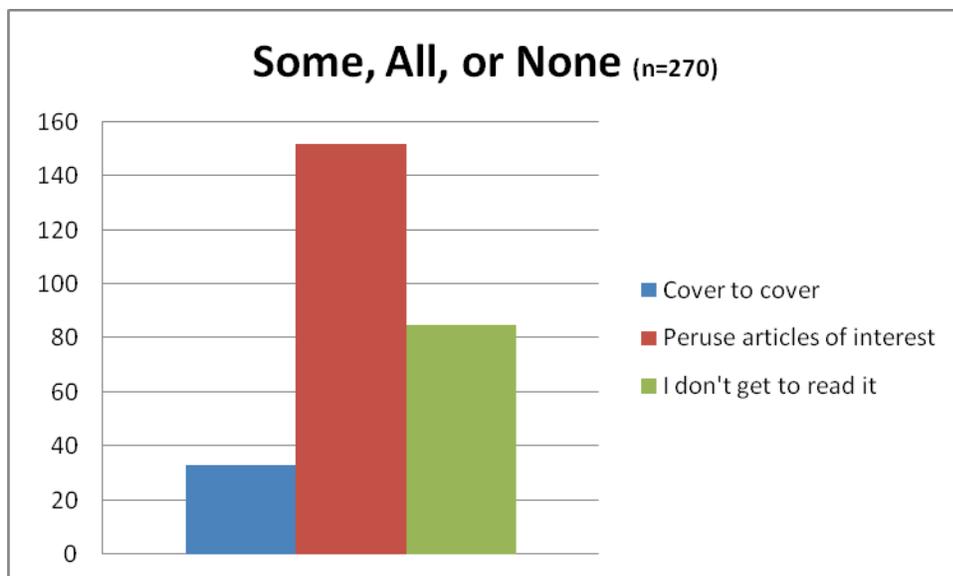


Chart 6: Do you typically read all of the articles in each issue of the JME?

### Do you use past issues? Would you be interested in another anthology?

Most respondents indicated that they used past issues of the JME for reference, research or reading assignments, or when they need data to support an idea or proposal. Just over half of respondents (52.4%, n=89/170) had used a JME Anthology in the past as a research tool or as reading for their students. Fifty percent (50%, n=145/290) of respondents would be interested in a third JME Anthology. Fifty percent are uncertain about the need for a third anthology or say that they would not purchase one.

### Do you have any suggestions for future topics?

One hundred and seventy-eight people proposed a future topic for the JME and 75 respondents offered a suggestion(s) about future authors. Several people offered to write about museum education projects they currently are involved in; others suggested leaders in the field and related fields as well as professors.

### Action steps based on survey results

- Use the information we have gathered to better understand our readers' interests and what they are looking for, striving to design content for educators of all levels as well as those working in diverse settings.
- Mine the suggestions of respondents with regard to future topics and possible authors for the Journal of Museum Education.
- Make sure that there are clear and easy instructions on the MER website to help readers understand that they can access past and current issues electronically on the Left Coast Press website as a member benefit. Respondents ranked having a journal in "both online and print" format as most popular.
- Consider experimenting with a format that is less thematic and features current work across the field. The JME might offer articles, write-ups or reviews that touch upon a few different subjects introducing a variety that might allow people a greater opportunity to find something that interests them in each issue.
- Revisit the effort to publish another anthology, given that there is no clear consensus among respondents.