

3: Recommendations

These recommendations take into account current resource levels for marketing and audience development available to most small to medium-sized museums in Victoria as well as the equally limited resource levels of the museum industry peak bodies representing these museums.

As such they do not claim to be complete solutions to overcoming the obstacles identified in this study. Rather, they are offered as achievable steps forward which, if taken, may gradually improve the capacity of small to medium-sized museums to market their museums more effectively, and in so doing, to generate greater community, business and government support for this segment of the Victorian museums sector.

As almost three quarters (73%) of the organisations responding to the survey for this study were located in regional Victoria, and the majority of these were volunteer-run organisations, there is a special emphasis on recommendations to improve the situation for regional and volunteer-run museums.

3.1 To ensure an effective and co-ordinated industry-wide response to the findings of this study, it is recommended:

- ❖ That a formal strategic alliance be established between the peak bodies representing Victorian museums - Museums Australia (Vic), the Public Galleries Association of Victoria and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria - and that regular meetings between these three bodies be held to jointly set priorities and develop strategies to overcome obstacles to more effective museum marketing and audience development identified in this study
- ❖ That to increase the likelihood of successful outcomes for any joint strategies and to overcome the problem of low staffing levels within these three peak bodies, the first priority of this proposed alliance be a plan of action to identify and secure appropriate government and non-government partners, especially those key organisations that have expressed a willingness to cooperate in the course of this study

3.2 To assist in securing appropriate government and non-government partners for any joint strategies developed by the suggested peak body alliance, it is recommended :

- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) publish the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* final report on the MA Vic website, either in its complete form or an edited version, and promote awareness and discussion of the report findings through the distribution of media releases and email notices to government, the media and arts/museum industry listservs and publications
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) seizes any opportunities arising from this study to make formal presentations on the report findings to those key organisations consulted in the study that have indicated this would be a possibility (i.e. to a meeting of the Heritage Council of Victoria and the monthly meeting of the heads of the regional Ethnic Communities Councils)
- ❖ That the peak bodies become more proactive in seeking ongoing opportunities for inclusion in relevant non-museum conferences and meetings (e.g. local government forums and conferences, education sector conferences, tourism conferences and regional meetings) to promote and represent the interests of small to medium-sized museums in Victoria and to advocate for increased support for these museums

3.3 To increase the capacity of the peak bodies to effectively communicate with, and more effectively represent their membership in order to increase museum marketing & audience development capacities, it is recommended:

- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) develops a new marketing plan separate to its business plan, and that this plan includes strategies and goals for the promotion of small to medium-sized museums in Victoria
- ❖ That the Public Galleries Association of Victoria reviews and revises its existing marketing plan
- ❖ That, in upgrading its present marketing plan, the Royal Historical Society of Victoria includes a stronger advocacy role for the Society
- ❖ That the Royal Historical Society of Victoria considers establishing a marketing subcommittee
- ❖ That the peak bodies jointly review their current level of representation on state and local government decision-making bodies (e.g. Regional & Specialist Museums Advisory Committee (RSMAC), Heritage Collections Advisory Committee, Tourism Victoria and Arts Victoria advisory committees) to ensure adequate representation of the interests of small to medium-sized museums in Victoria on all relevant government decision-making bodies
- ❖ That all three peak bodies send out more frequent media releases celebrating achievements of Victorian small to medium-sized museums or raising issues of concern for these museums
- ❖ That all three peak bodies increase their rate of online publishing of information and resources on museum marketing and audience development, or at the very least establish a "Resources" page on their website that lists arts marketing and audience development publications and links to relevant online resources
- ❖ That when Museums Australia (Vic) develops its online Consultants Register, this is linked to the Heritage Victoria online consultants register
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) reviews and rationalises its use of multiple email lists for member communications to reduce duplication of information broadcast
- ❖ That, to minimise email list member complaints, all listservs be operated as "moderated" lists which subscribers join voluntarily
- ❖ That all three peak bodies increase the frequency of email broadcasts and expand the type of messages broadcast to more effectively exploit the capacity of email listservs to function as a forum for discussion and exchange of information or as a channel for rapid dissemination of industry news and the collection of feedback or expressions of support for peak body initiatives
- ❖ That each of the peak bodies investigate the advantages of using a genuine listserv of the type that Australian Museums Online (AMOL) can offer them
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) uses positive feedback from past participants more effectively to promote greater participation in professional development and training programs and the MAP program

3.4 To improve the media profile of Victorian museums, it is recommended:

- ❖ That the peak bodies jointly assemble a list of articulate media-savvy spokespeople, with good knowledge of Victorian regional museums and galleries and social or local history museums, and that they submit this list to Arts Victoria: Arts Marketing Unit to be added to its Arts Spokespeople list
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) develops and maintains a list of current museum-relevant, mainstream media contacts which is available to its members on request

3.5 To enable and encourage the more effective use of digital technology for museum marketing and audience development, it is recommended:

- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria jointly approach VICNET to explore possibilities for encouraging and enabling small museums without email or websites to acquire both

- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria more actively promote the AMOL Guide to Australian Museums and encourage their member museums to contact AMOL to obtain an entry to this online co-operative initiative
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) develops an information resource, listing free of charge or low cost possibilities for museums to have links established, or entries about their museum included, on arts, education, history or tourism gateway sites and portals (e.g. the *Fairfax Walkabout* site; *Visit Victoria* website, *History Victoria* site and local government websites) and that this information be published on the MA Vic website and distributed at MA Vic training courses
- ❖ That museums which produce a newsletter and have access to email be encouraged to consider distributing an electronic version of their newsletter by email

3.6 To improve the level of marketing & audience development expertise in small and medium-sized Victorian museums and to address skills gaps identified in this study, it is recommended:

- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic), as the principal provider of short course training for Victorian museums personnel, seeks additional funding for the development of new short courses on the following topics which have been identified as skills gaps in this study:
 - Audience research
 - Evaluation of programs and services
 - Production of effective and affordable educational resources and programs
 - Presentation skills for museum tours
 - Volunteer recruitment, management and retention
 - Effective use of email and websites for marketing & audience development
 - Design and maintenance of museum websites, including the importance of “road testing” websites with a sample group of users and tracking and evaluating website usage
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) also acts on the following training partnership opportunities identified through the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* study:
 - Grant writing workshops, in partnership with Philanthropy Australia
 - Cross cultural workshops, in partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria & regional Ethnic Communities Councils
 - Educational outreach programs and the design of curriculum-relevant history resources and kits for primary and secondary history teachers, in partnership with the History Teachers Association of Victoria
- ❖ That these new courses all include strategies to change attitudes to the importance of museum marketing, audience development and reliable and frequent audience research, particularly among volunteer-run organisations
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) also develops a suite of basic “how to” marketing & audience development training units to be offered on a recurrent basis rather than as one-off courses
- ❖ That these basic training units cover essentials like audience research, museum relationships with the media, program evaluation and marketing plans
- ❖ That completion of these basic units by museum personnel earns credit points towards MAP accreditation for their museum
- ❖ That more short courses be offered in regional as well as metropolitan locations
- ❖ That the peak bodies jointly seek funding for the development and delivery of a series of regional forums on marketing & audience development issues to be attended by representatives from regional museums and non-museum organisations (e.g. local tourism associations, local government arts and heritage officers, public library representatives, etc.)

- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic), supported by its peak body partners, approaches Arts Victoria to explore the possibility of a portion of Arts Victoria professional development funds being assigned to Museums Australia (Vic) to administer as a funding pool to cover costs of regional museum personnel travelling to Melbourne to attend training and professional development courses, or to undertake marketing & audience development work experience not available in regional Victoria
- ❖ That any existing or future printed resources or ‘how to’ manuals in arts marketing & audience development are:
 - Used to support short courses and workshops and actively promoted in those workshops
 - Promoted well to museums via peak body websites, member publications and email listservs
 - Published in an online version wherever possible
- ❖ That the museum industry peak bodies each set up a “resources” section on their website which lists recommended arts marketing publications and provides links to online resources in marketing & audience development, especially the Australia Council publications
- ❖ That because this study has revealed such a low level of audience research occurring in regional Victorian museums, even among regional galleries, funding be sought from the Australia Council for a statewide study of existing and potential audiences for Victorian regional museums

3.7 To raise the standard of marketing & audience development practices employed by Victorian museums, it is recommended:

- ❖ That the current Museums Accreditation Program (MAP) standards for Marketing and Visitor Services be revised using the data gathered in this study
- ❖ That the revised standards establish benchmarks to encourage certain marketing and audience research practices that are currently under-utilised
- ❖ That the revised standards acknowledge the present low levels of marketing & audience development resources available to small and medium-sized museums in Victoria so that for volunteer-run museums in particular, it is a case of “best practice possible given existing resources”
- ❖ That, to encourage higher levels of participation in the MAP program for employees/volunteers from organisations registered for MAP, completion of professional development & training courses offered by Museums Australia (Vic) would directly contribute credits towards MAP accreditation for that organisation

3.8 To improve connections with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups in the community and museums, it is recommended:

- ❖ That a link to the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria ethnic communities database be added to the Museums Australia (Vic) website and that the existence of this contact database be promoted through peak body newsletters and email listservs
- ❖ That funding be sought, in partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, for Museums Australia (Vic) to develop and deliver a series of workshops to promote improved relationships between regional museums and CALD groups in their community
- ❖ That these workshops include cross-cultural training to raise awareness of the desirability of increasing participation of CALD groups in regional museum audiences, volunteer programs and advisory groups

3.9 To overcome the shortage of volunteers in many volunteer-run organisations, it is recommended:

- ❖ That funding be sought to develop and deliver regional workshops on volunteer recruitment and management aimed at volunteer-run museums, using the Museums Australia (Qld)/Volunteering Queensland “Willing & able” project as a model
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria lobby Heritage Victoria and Australian Conservation Volunteers to extend the “Hands on Heritage” program to include cultural heritage collections

3.10 To increase appreciation and regard for the history of Victoria and the role of social or local history museums in preserving and interpreting this history, it is recommended:

- ❖ That the Royal Historical Society of Victoria uses its representation on the History Council of Victoria to raise the profile of suburban and regional social or local history museums in Victoria and explore the possibility of establishing a statewide “internship” program through which tertiary students studying history would be attached as interns working on special projects with selected Victorian social or local history museums
- ❖ That Museums Australia (Vic) and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria collaborate on a list of suggested additions for the History Teachers’ Association of Victoria Excursions List
- ❖ That the Royal Historical Society of Victoria contacts Heritage Victoria to seek representation on the Heritage Collections Advisory Committee
- ❖ That the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, with the support of Museums Australia (Vic) and the History Teachers Association of Victoria, lobbies the Department of Infrastructure to introduce a student category in its annual Community History Awards

3.11 To increase the capacity of small to medium-sized museums to exploit the cultural tourism market, it is recommended:

- ❖ That funding be sought for a pilot project “Museums and the Daytripper Market”, focussing on a single Victorian “Jigsaw” region and involving museums, regional tourism bodies, local governments and business in the chosen region, so that museums were marketed in the context of other tourist attractions in the area
- ❖ That the budget for this pilot project be sufficient to pay for the costs of a project coordinator
- ❖ That the peak bodies liaise with Heritage Victoria to ensure that, if any Victorian heritage trails are developed, the possibility of including regional museums as part of these trails is fully considered
- ❖ That the peak bodies contact Tourism Victoria Industry Development section to explore the possibility of increasing directional road signage for regional museums.

13: Findings

13.1 Nature of museums in the survey sample

The majority of the 138 organisations that responded to the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* survey were small to medium-sized museums that:

- were located in regional Victoria (101 out of 138 or 73%)
- had social or local history collections (74 out of 138 or 54%)
- were community/non-profit organisations (83 out of 138 or 60%)

A significant number (26) of the visual arts museums (or art galleries) in Victoria also responded to the survey.

13.2 ADEQUACY OF CURRENT MARKETING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

13.2.1 Level of human resources for marketing & audience development

For small to medium-sized museums in Victoria, the level of paid staff (as opposed to volunteer staff) in a museum appears to be a reliable indicator of its marketing and audience development capacities. This factor has the greatest impact on those museums with no paid staff at all – the volunteer-run museums which made up 57% of the survey sample (78 out of 138 respondents).

In analysing data from the survey, it became clear that organisations with paid staff generally had a greater marketing and audience development capacity than volunteer-run organisations in all the following areas:

- the number of workers/hours available to undertake marketing/audience development
- the level of inhouse marketing/audience development expertise
- the range of marketing/audience development practices employed
- the funds available for marketing and audience development costs
- the importance placed on the need for marketing and audience development, and,
- the importance placed on staff training in marketing and audience development.

Most tellingly, organisations with paid staff even seem to have a greater capacity to recruit and retain volunteer labour than do the volunteer-run organisations. While a typical volunteer-run museum was operated by a group of between 11 and 20 volunteers, organisations with paid staff supported by a volunteer program most typically had between 21 and 50 volunteers. In fact, five of the six organisations reporting they had more than 100 volunteers were organisations with paid staff.

However, not only the volunteer-run museums suffer from shortage of staff for marketing and audience development. Focus group participants working in organisations with paid staff repeatedly cited “not enough staff” or “not enough staff time” as major obstacles to more effective marketing and audience development in their museum.

The 1997 Australia Council study also established that “more staff or more time” (42% of respondents) was the most significant factor influencing increased marketing and audience development activity in arts organisations. (BIZTRAC p.34)

13.2.2 Level of marketing & audience development expertise

Ian McShane noted in his recent study on the training needs of museum personnel in Western Australia:

“In order to do what museums do well they need well-trained and committed staff. Skilled professionals can make the difference between the museum being a vital creative force in the community or languishing for want of imagination and support.”
(McShane, Ian: p.10)

The lack of skilled marketing and audience development professionals (whether they be paid or volunteer staff) in small to medium-sized museums affects their capacity to market their museums effectively.

The great majority of museums (85% of 117 organisations) do not have a marketing unit, although those with such a unit are more likely to be museums with paid staff (17 out of the 21). Arts organisations surveyed in the

1997 Australia Council arts marketing survey were twice as likely to have a marketing unit compared with the museums surveyed in the 2002 Museums Australia (Vic) survey.

Because of the non-existent or low numbers of paid staff in small to medium-sized museums, both paid and volunteer staff must be, by necessity, multi-skilled, so dedicated marketing or audience development positions are uncommon, especially in volunteer-run museums.

It is common for organisations with paid staff to have senior management assigned either sole or shared responsibility for marketing and audience development. In volunteer-run organisations, it is common for marketing and audience development responsibilities to be shared between members of the management committee.

The most problematic aspect of this characteristic of volunteer-run organisations is that more than three quarters (84%) of respondents also reported that their board or committee of management have no qualifications or experience in marketing and audience development. Twice the number of arts organisations in the 1997 Australia Council survey had board members with marketing experience or qualifications compared to the museums responding to the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* survey.

Formal qualifications in marketing and audience development are extremely uncommon among staff in the survey sample. Out of the 91 positions primarily involved with marketing /audience development which were reported, only 4 were filled by people with tertiary qualifications in marketing, tourism or public relations. Arts organisations surveyed for the Australia Council 1997 arts marketing study reported a much higher incidence (half to two thirds) of professional marketing qualifications among marketing staff.

Nor can the museums afford to “buy in” the marketing and audience development expertise they lack. Only 22 out of 138 organisations (16%) reported that they use external marketing agencies or consultants.

The majority of respondents (63%) considered that their museum would benefit from more marketing and audience development skills, although organisations with paid staff were more likely to see the benefit (77%) than volunteer-run organisations (49%).

13.2.3 Level of financial resources for marketing & audience development

Two thirds (66%) of the respondents spend between 0 and 5% of their annual budget on marketing and audience development. This percentage can be read only as an indication of the emphasis organisations place on marketing and audience development, but the fact that half (50%) of all respondents also indicated that they thought the amount they spent was “too little” suggests that the funds available for marketing and audience development in small to medium-sized museums are inadequate. In the Australia Council 1997 arts marketing survey only 28% of respondents felt their marketing budget was “too little”.

Focus group participants reported that lack of funds was the main obstacle to greater use of paid advertising in major newspapers, official visitor guides and the electronic media.

Low survey scores on questions about some other common arts marketing practices quite possibly indicate a lack of funds to pay for these strategies. They include:

- only 1/3 of volunteer-run organisations use direct mailouts for promotional purposes
- only 10% of organisations use independent, external consultants for audience research
- only 1/3 of organisations participate in joint advertising
- only 18% of organisations participate in joint mailouts of promotional materials
- only 17% participate in joint publications with other organisations

13.3 ADEQUACY OF CURRENT MARKETING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES

13.3.1 Marketing plans

Nearly half (47%) of organisations surveyed claim they are “so busy doing things that we have no time for planning”.

This perhaps explains the fact that three quarters of organisations surveyed do not have a written marketing plan. Arts organisations surveyed in the 1997 Australia Council arts marketing study were almost twice as likely to have a marketing plan as the museums in this Victorian survey.

Those with a written plan are more likely to be organisations with paid staff (29 out of the 34 organisations with a written plan). Less than half the visual arts respondents (12 out of 26 or 46%) have a written marketing plan while only 10 out of 74 social or local history museums (13.5%) have such a plan.

Only 39% of those with a plan find it either “very useful” or “useful”. This result tends to raise questions about the adequacy and currency of the written marketing plans which are in place, particularly when combining this information with the rate of recognition reported for *What's my plan: a guide to developing arts marketing plans*, a recent (2000) Australia Council how-to manual on writing marketing plans. (Only 16 out of the 138 respondents recognised this title).

Museums Australia (Vic), the principal provider of short course training for Victorian museums personnel, has not offered a short course in preparing marketing plans in the past three years.

Those without a marketing plan are slightly more optimistic about the usefulness of such plans, with 43% of these organisations rating marketing plans to be “very useful” or “useful”.

13.3.2 Use of common arts marketing practices

The most commonly used marketing practices among survey respondents were:

- preparing media releases (91%)
- producing printed promotional brochures (85%)
- print press advertising (84%)
- producing a newsletter (63%)

As previously mentioned, cost may be a factor contributing to the low response rates in the survey for some traditional arts marketing practices (e.g. direct mailouts, paid advertising in the electronic media, producing printed publications like collection guides or exhibition catalogues).

Although cost may be a factor in restricting frequency of use for more expensive marketing practices, survey respondents do not seem to be using some relatively inexpensive promotional strategies. For example, 39% of survey respondents *never* undertake public speaking for promotional purposes; only a few (30%) use letterbox drops for promotional purposes and only 39% conduct contests or competitions.

13.3.3 Use of digital technology for marketing and audience development

Incidence of websites and email

Less than one third of volunteer-run organisations have their own website compared to 68% of organisations with paid staff, although a further 24% of volunteer-run organisations have a page on another organisation's website.

88 out of 138 respondents (or 64%) have an entry in the Australian Museums Online (AMOL) online guide to Australian museums.

Focus group participants from museums without websites reported that many of them had no idea who to approach about getting a page for their museum on another organisation's website (e.g. their local council's site or a tourism regional gateway site).

A random search of Victorian local government sites revealed that while it is common for local government sites to include information on museums in their region, the highest profile is usually given to the local regional gallery. Social or local history museums in the region are either buried deeper within the site (sometimes listed under “community organisations”) or not listed at all.

57% of respondents provided an email contact for their organisation, although it was obvious that for volunteer-run museums, some of these were private email addresses of committee members, which probably indicates their museum lacks email/Internet access.

Focus group participants without websites or email access reported that the reasons for this were:

- Lack of access to email & websites caused by lack of funds or suitable computer hardware and software
- Limited computer literacy among staff and volunteers, particularly in relation to establishing and maintaining websites and using email

The above problems were most commonly reported by volunteer workers from historical societies and volunteer-run museums.

Use of email and websites for promotional purposes

Museums with a Web presence or email access are not currently using these channels as effectively as they might for promotional purposes.

More than half the survey respondents (57%) never email information for promotional purposes.

Although producing newsletters is quite a common marketing practice for small to medium-sized Victorian museums (61% of social history museum organisations and 73% of visual arts organisations in the survey), no evidence was gathered in focus groups, or through a random check of Victorian museum websites, that suggested museums in this study are offering electronic versions of their newsletter via email.

Although 70% of respondents have some level of Web presence - either their own website or a page on the site of another organization - almost one half (43%) report they *never* add new information to their website. Organisations with paid staff are twice as likely as volunteer-run organisations to add new information frequently.

Last year, Arts Victoria commissioned Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu to undertake a study of the use of digital media by Victorian arts organisations (*Digital media and the Web environment*). This study discovered that:

“most organisations are using the Internet for displaying static and often outdated information.” (Deloitte p.2)

This is indeed the case with museums in the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* study. A random search of Victorian small to medium-sized museum websites revealed that most websites of small to medium-sized museums in Victoria function mainly as “billboards” listing opening hours, contact details and perhaps a few scanned images of collection items or the museum building. They rarely include a calendar of programs and events, online publications, online educational resources or online access to collections. Also, given the above survey result on updating frequency for websites, it is not surprising that when calendars of events are included they are sometimes sadly out of date.

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu cited the following as the main reasons arts web sites are not reaching their intended audiences:

- the web sites are not efficiently addressing the needs of audiences
- the web sites are not easy to find
- the web sites do not contain current relevant and complete information.

(Deloitte p.25)

Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu also reported:

“Content is still king – current and comprehensive information on arts events is what audiences are seeking from arts web sites”
(Deloitte p.3)

This suggests an opportunity for small to medium-sized museums as there is certainly plenty of scope, particularly for social and local history museums, to create interesting content and information resources on their museum websites.

Another finding of the Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu study was that only a few organisations are actively tracking the success of their sites and less than 15% are monitoring traffic to their site. (Deloitte p.18)

There appeared to be little evidence that museums in the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* study are tracking visits to their websites to assess the effectiveness of the content or design of their sites. This includes the AMOL “Art Trails” website. AMOL is able to track the number of visitors to this site but not how long they stay or use the site information.

Participation in co-operative marketing initiatives on the Web – the AMOL “Art Trails” site

The AMOL “Arts Trails” site is a digitally sophisticated virtual tour of Victorian regional galleries, designed to encourage cultural tourism in Victoria. It was set up by the AMOL team at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney. This year it won the Best E-services Solution award at the International Museums and the Web conference in Boston, USA.

Four regional galleries responded to a request made of “Art Trails” participating galleries for feedback on the effectiveness of this co-operative initiative as a promotional device. All indicated that they had no real idea of how

“Art Trails” had impacted on their gallery’s real or virtual visitation levels but all agreed that it was a wonderful initiative that helped raise the profile of Victorian regional galleries.

Horsham Regional Art Gallery reported that their inclusion in “Art Trails” had led to a couple of notable international visitors:

“One a South African student who liked our site and came to Australia to work as a volunteer at Horsham over Christmas, hoping to get into a Melbourne art school. Then we had 2 young British artists who came, stayed in Horsham for a while, participating in our festival.”

Merle Hathaway, Director, Horsham Regional Art Gallery

This is an isolated example, but points to the possibility that there may be international as well as Australian market for this type of promotion and access for regional museums and galleries in Victoria. However, unless the effectiveness of such co-operative marketing initiatives can be more reliably measured, their success cannot really be judged.

13.3.4 Audience research & evaluation of programs

One of the aims of audience development is to provide a satisfactory visitor experience. The most satisfying museum experiences are those which have been tailored to meet visitor needs. For this reason, reliable visitor and audience research and program evaluation is needed to inform museum programs and services that will encourage new visitors and repeat visitors.

Monitoring visitor numbers is the most popular and the most frequently practised method of visitor evaluation employed by all types of organisations in the survey. More formal audience research and evaluation practices are far less common, even among organisations with paid staff and including visual arts organisations.

Almost half the survey respondents (40%) *never* conduct surveys to get audience feedback on program quality. 45% *never* conduct audience research to determine segments within their audience and more than half (56%) *never* develop strategies for the different segments in their audience. So, despite the fact that the great majority of respondents (89%) claim they either frequently or occasionally think of ways to attract new audiences, many appear to be doing little to achieve this, apart from thinking about it.

13.4 ATTITUDES TO MARKETING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

The majority of museums surveyed think marketing is relevant for arts and heritage organisations and that they do need marketing skills to run their museum, although volunteer-run organisations are less likely to see the importance of marketing activities or marketing and audience development skills within their museum.

However, a comparison of results from survey questions about marketing and audience development practices with results from questions testing attitudes to marketing and audience development revealed interesting contradictions between what organisations think they do and what they actually do.

For example:

- Questions on audience research revealed that techniques used were mainly informal, impressionistic and infrequently practised, yet the majority of respondents think they know who their audiences are.
- The great majority of respondents (87%) believe Australians need to be educated to appreciate our heritage and the arts, yet the minority of organisations offer workshops, school holiday programs or outreach programs to foster an appreciation and understanding of arts and heritage.

These results may in part be caused by a lack of staff time to undertake systematic audience research, as was claimed in some focus groups, but probably also points to the existence of an attitude that systematic and regular audience research is less essential for the day to day running of a museum than other more pressing museum management activities.

13.5 EFFECTIVENESS OF VICTORIAN MUSEUM INDUSTRY PEAK BODIES

The museum industry peak bodies having primary professional responsibility for the small to medium-sized museums examined in this study are:

- Museums Australia (Vic) (MA Vic)
- Public Galleries Association of Victoria (PGAV)
- Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV)

The National Trust of Australia (Victoria) is not a professional association and has no direct responsibility for historical societies or the social and local history museums they operate in Victoria.

A significant proportion of the memberships of the above peak bodies responded to the survey.

13.5.1 Adequacy of marketing resources

Like the museums they represent, the three Victorian industry peak bodies, have very low levels of paid staff and a wide range of responsibilities. This means that their marketing capacities are limited, both for their own organisation as well as marketing efforts on behalf of the sector they represent.

Although MA Vic has the most paid staff of the three (5.6), this peak body has primary responsibility for the professional development of Victorian museum personnel and the establishment and implementation of professional standards for the operation of Victorian museums (the Museums Accreditation Program).

Until very recently, none of the peak bodies had any marketing specialists on staff, although RHSV has just employed a part-time Public Relations officer who works a couple of hours a week.

MA Vic and PGAV have no staff positions dedicated to marketing or public relations.

Despite the fact that all three peak bodies recognise the importance of marketing, marketing often takes a back seat when organisational priorities are set because of lack of staff time and numbers.

13.5.2 Adequacy of marketing practices to raise the profile of the peak bodies and their member organisations

MA Vic includes a few marketing strategies and goals in its business plan, but does not have a separate marketing plan. RHSV reports it is currently upgrading its marketing plan now that it has a part time PR officer. PGAV has a marketing plan developed in June 1999 but, as this is now nearly three years old, it is probably time that it was reviewed and revised.

Museums Australia (Vic) and the Public Galleries Association of Victoria recognise that advocacy on behalf of the sector they represent is an important function of each organisation. RHSV has not yet embraced advocacy for its affiliated historical societies to the same degree.

All three industry peak bodies currently have representation on a number of appropriate arts and heritage decision-making bodies.

While this involvement shows the peak bodies recognise the importance of representation on appropriate decision-making bodies, there are some gaps in representation. For example, RHSV is not yet a member of the Heritage Victoria Heritage Collections Advisory Committee and there are no regional museums among the membership of RASMAC. Neither MA Vic nor RHSV are represented on any Arts Victoria advisory committees.

Also, there appears to be little communication between the three peak bodies to ensure adequate representation of the interests of all types of small to medium-sized museums on all appropriate government and community decision-making bodies.

In fact, although the three peak bodies have good informal and occasional relationships with each other, they do not currently have a great range of more formal strategic alliances, either together or with other organisations, to improve the marketing and audience development capacities of small to medium-sized museums.

In the course of this study, a number of key organisations indicated their willingness to collaborate with Museums Australia (Vic) to improve the marketing and audience development capacities of Victorian museums. They were:

- Arts Victoria Arts Marketing Unit
- Australian Museums Online (AMOL)
- Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- Heritage Victoria
- History Teachers Association of Victoria
- Multicultural Arts Victoria
- Philanthropy Australia
- Tourism Victoria
- VICNET

Representatives from some of the above organisations also suggested opportunities for MA Vic to make presentations on the findings of this study or on the interests and roles of small to medium-sized museums, at regular meetings or events arranged by their organisations.

There is a need for the three peak bodies to be more proactive in seeking opportunities at conferences, workshops and regular meetings, for presentations on the programs and concerns of Victorian museums. These opportunities should particularly be pursued with government and non-museum organisations to raise the profile of Victorian museums.

13.5.3 Adequacy of communication methods used for marketing & audience development

Media releases

All three peak bodies prepare and send out media releases but none do so frequently and not many of the releases celebrate the achievements of small to medium-sized museums or raise issues of concern for these museums.

Museums Australia Vic supplies press releases to its members to celebrate certain achievements and this would be a valuable service that the RHSV Public Relations officer could provide for its affiliated historical societies.

None of the peak bodies were aware Arts Victoria has an inhouse Arts Spokespeople contacts list which is used to source relevant arts spokespeople for media stories about the arts.

Websites

All three peak bodies have their own websites but none of the sites include e-commerce capacities and online publishing is minimal.

RHSV is working towards providing online access to its collection via its website and ultimately hopes to assist other Victorian historical societies to digitise their collections and provide online access to them.

MA Vic is working towards an online Directory of Victorian Museums and an online Consultants Register.

The links from the peak body websites, particularly the PGAV site, could perhaps be more comprehensive.

A major aspect of "audience development" for the peak bodies is professional development of their membership to raise the skills base in Victorian museums and to improve the professional standards by which Victorian museums operate, yet none of the peak body websites have a professional resources page.

All three websites could provide more guidance on, and links to, online professional development resources to improve the level of museum skills in general, and marketing and audience development skills in particular (e.g links to the Australia Council online arts marketing and audience development publications and an explanation of the types of resources available on AMOL to accompany a link to the AMOL website.)

Email

All three peak bodies use group emails or listservs of some sort to communicate with their membership, although this is a recent development for RHSV. Some of its affiliated societies however still cannot participate in email communications as these societies have no access to email or the Internet.

MA Vic has three email lists which overlap, both in terms of list membership and messages broadcast to the lists. The most common information posted on all three lists are notices about MA Vic professional development and training courses. Merging these three lists into one would minimise the duplication which has caused some complaints from MA Vic members.

The PGAV list is a closed list used mainly for PGAV business communications. It has had limited success as a channel for communication and discussion among the membership.

To maximise potential for effective email communication between the peak bodies and their constituencies (both members and non-members) and minimise list member aggravation caused by inappropriate or excessive numbers of messages, it is probably advisable that each of the peak bodies:

- investigates the advantages of using a genuine listserv of the type that AMOL can offer them and that they operate the listservs as "moderated" lists which subscribers join voluntarily
- broadens the type of notices broadcast beyond inhouse news

- more effectively exploits the capacity of email listservs to function as a forum for discussion and exchange of information as well as a channel for rapid collection of feedback and expressions of support for peak body initiatives.

13.6 TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

13.6.1 Accreditation and benchmarks in marketing & audience development

While participation in the Museums Accreditation Program (MAP) run by Museums Australia (Vic) would undoubtedly improve the marketing and audience development capacities of small to medium-sized museums, the reality is that the majority of these museums have never even registered for MAP, let alone completed accreditation.

Current MAP standards (or benchmarks) in marketing and visitor services are often quite general. For example, the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* survey has revealed that the level of audience research is less than adequate in small to medium-sized museums in Victoria. Current MAP standards for audience research:

- Demonstrate awareness of current and potential museum audiences
- Maintain record of visitor numbers
- Have procedures in place for visitor feedback (e.g. comments box, visitor book, visitor surveys)

Using the information gathered through the *Marketing Museums 2002* survey, MAP standards could be revised to more effectively encourage specific and more reliable audience research practices which are lacking at present.

Any such revision of standards (or benchmarks) should, however, take into account the reality of current resource levels available to small to medium-sized museums in Victoria and establish a distinction between benchmarks for museums with paid staff and those for volunteer-run museums.

In order to foster the development of stronger links between museums and their communities, the MAP program might also benefit from the inclusion of some of the standards for community involvement contained in the American Association of Museums Public Dimensions Assessment component of their Museums Assessment Program.

13.6.2 Interest in increasing skills in marketing and audience development

Three quarters of respondents thought staff would be interested in learning more about marketing and audience development, including 64% of volunteer-run organisations.

13.6.3 Training delivery preferences

The study revealed the most preferred method for the delivery of training and professional development was definitely through short courses or workshops. 83% of the respondents indicated this form of training was “very” or “fairly” appealing. Focus group participants agreed with the survey results on this preference and added that they felt not enough museum training short courses were available in the regions.

This finding is supported by the results to the same question in the 1997 Australia Council arts marketing study, and also by two other recent Australian studies which considered museum training delivery methods. In Ian McShane’s study on museums training for Museums Australia (WA), he noted:

“there is a strong desire within the industry that face-to-face instruction continue as a principal form of teaching. The volunteer and regional museum sectors ... in particular seek practically-oriented training delivered by skilled presenters within a group context.”
(McShane p.4)

The national Key Needs of Heritage Collections study, undertaken in 2001 for the Cultural Ministers Council, also reported that face-to-face short courses, delivered both in metropolitan and regional areas, was the preferred method of training delivery.

In addition, this study noted that:

“there is also a need for flexible delivery of training via the Internet, video or CD-ROM” because “In part this latter need would ensure reinforcement of learning obtained in short courses and workshops”
(Deakin University, p.95)

Respondents to the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* survey also revealed that three other methods of training delivery had significant levels of appeal for them, though much less appeal than short courses or workshops. In order of preference, these were:

- on-the-job training (68% appeal rating)
- self-paced use of reference materials or a manual (68% appeal rating)
- distance learning courses via the Internet (50% appeal rating).

Formal TAFE and tertiary-level training courses held extremely low appeal for organisations with paid staff, and particularly for volunteer-run organisations. The 1997 Australia Council survey also revealed an extremely low level of interest among arts organisations in TAFE or tertiary training in marketing and audience development.

Ian McShane, in his Western Australian study, discovered that museum volunteers were the least likely group of museum workers to undertake formal accredited museum training, probably because:

“older museum workers, for whom the motivation to add to those skills for purposes of career advancement is, understandably, not high.”
(McShane p.2)

As the great majority of museum volunteers are retirees and the majority of respondents in this study are volunteer-run organisations, McShane’s finding about older volunteers and their lack of interest in TAFE or tertiary marketing studies probably holds true in Victoria.

Focus groups reported a lack of opportunities, particularly for museums in regional Victoria, for professional exchange, discussion and communication on marketing and audience development issues.

13.6.4 Effectiveness of arts marketing & audience development training publications

One of the outcomes of the 1997 Australia Council study into arts marketing and audience development was that the Australia Council subsequently commissioned a number of excellent free publications on arts marketing and audience development, the content of which is relevant to small to medium-sized museums in Victoria. These publications have been distributed in hard copy and are also available online via the Australia Council website.

A question covering the knowledge and use of recent Australian arts marketing and audience development publications was included in the survey for this study to test the effectiveness of this Australia Council strategy. 7 of the 8 publications listed in the question are free Australia Council publications.

Despite the 68% appeal rating in the Museums Australia (Vic) survey results for training that is “self-paced using reference materials or a manual”, it is clear that very few of the survey respondents even recognise any of these freely available “how-to” publications.

Recognition rates for all 7 Australia Council publications were less than 38% and one (*Miles ahead: arts marketing in regional Australia*) was as low as 3%. Usage rates for these publications were consequently extremely low, even among the visual arts museums which are part of the Australia Council’s constituency. (Non-art museums aren’t, which may partly explain their extremely limited recognition rates for the Australia Council publications.)

Providers of museum training who were interviewed in the course of this study lent support to the notion that how-to manuals, even if free and no matter how excellent their content, are of little use if nobody knows about them, but more importantly, if they are not introduced in conjunction with training courses or workshops.

13.6.5 Skills gaps in marketing & audience development skills

Results from this study have revealed the most common marketing and audience development skills gaps among personnel working in small to medium-sized museums in Victoria are:

- Audience research
- Evaluation of programs & services
- Effective use of email and websites for marketing & audience development
- Producing effective and affordable educational resources and programs
- Presentation skills for museum tours (particularly for volunteer tour guides)
- Volunteer recruitment, management and retention (particularly for volunteer-run museums)

Other training opportunities which presented themselves in the course of the study were:

- Grant-writing workshops to be presented in association with Philanthropy Australia
- Cross-cultural training workshops to be presented in partnership with the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria
- Educational resources for history teachers in partnership with the History Teachers' Association of Victoria

An essential consideration in developing training courses or resources on the above skills areas would be the need to include persuasive arguments and concrete examples clearly showing the benefit of improving performance in the above areas in order to change attitudes about the importance of these skills areas.

As is the case with any marketing and audience development benchmarks which might be developed using the results of this study, a one-size-fits-all solution for short courses and workshops for museum personnel in small to medium-sized museums is not appropriate, given the difference established in this study between marketing and audience development skills/resources in museums with paid staff compared to those in volunteer-run museums.

Learning will be more meaningful if marketing and audience development strategies being taught through training programs and resources are pegged at the level of the resources and expertise typical of the museums in which the trainees are working.

13.7 FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

13.7.1 Current low level of government support for many small and medium-sized Victorian museums

For most small to medium-sized museums in Victoria, recurrent state or local government grants for operational funding is uncommon, with the exception of regional galleries.

Only one quarter of survey respondents reported that government grants were their major source of income.

Organisations with paid staff were almost twice as likely as volunteer-run organisations to have government funding as their major source of income (22 compared to 12), and 16 of these 22 organisations with paid staff have visual arts collections. This still leaves 2/3 of organisations with paid staff generating the majority of their operating funds from non-government sources.

This relative absence of significant state or local government funding to volunteer-run organisations, the majority of which are social or local history museums managed by historical societies, limits their marketing and audience development capacities, but more importantly, it reflects the low profile of small non-art museums at state government level and, to a degree, at local government level.

This, in turn, points to a need for these museums to market themselves more effectively to government, both state and local, in order to increase government support for this segment of the museums sector.

It is clear that, in order to get local government support, museums must demonstrate their community relevance and support. Regional galleries may have a better track record at achieving significant local government support because they tend to have more community leaders with clout on their boards or committees of management compared to regional non-art museums.

The obstacles identified in this study to increasing the level of government support for small to medium-sized museums, and for increasing the effectiveness of government in promoting small to medium-sized museums, include:

- Split responsibilities for movable cultural heritage at state government levels so that small museums, especially non-art museums and their collections, become low priority
- Low priority assigned to "heritage" in government departments with an arts focus
- Inadequate representation of the interests of small to medium-sized museums on relevant state and local government decision making bodies
- Failure of museums and galleries to adequately demonstrate their community benefit and relevance to state government and their local government authority

13.7.2 Split responsibilities for heritage collections

Responsibility for the collections held by small to medium-sized museums in Victoria is split between two state government departments – Arts Victoria and Heritage Victoria.

The Museum Victoria committee assigned responsibility for the museums examined in this study is RASMAC – Regional and Specialist Museums Advisory Committee, which operates as a committee of the Board of Museum Victoria.

The effectiveness of RASMAC in raising the profile of small to medium-sized museums in Victoria, or increasing the portion of state or local government funds allocated to these museums, has to date been extremely limited.

The failure of RASMAC as a mechanism to significantly improve the situation for small to medium-sized museums in Victoria seems mainly due to the fact that it operates as a committee within Museum Victoria and as such is dependent on that organisation for its financial and human resources. This lack of autonomy, in terms of resources or a separate budget, constrains the effectiveness of this committee.

While the establishment of the Heritage Victoria, Heritage Collections Advisory Committee is a positive step for heritage collections held by small to medium-sized museums in Victoria, the fact that Heritage Victoria implies in its *Victorian Heritage Strategy 2000-2005* that primary responsibility for regional and specialist heritage collections lies with RASMAC is a concern.

13.7.3 Profile of small and medium-sized museums within Arts Victoria

Arts Victoria is the state government department responsible for Victorian museums, both large and small. It also has responsibility for the full range of artforms and major state arts agencies including the State Library of Victoria, Museum, Victoria and the Public Record Office of Victoria.

Because of this wide range of responsibilities, small to medium-sized museums, particularly non-art museums, can suffer in terms of the main focus and priorities of this government agency.

A good example of this is the Arts Victoria Arts Spokespeople list, an inhouse contacts list which is used to source relevant arts spokespeople for media stories about the arts and also for media familiarisation exercises (“famils”) coordinated by Tourism Victoria.

At present, there are no spokespeople from regional galleries or regional museums included on this list, nor any from a non-indigenous social history background.

Also, none of the peak bodies for Victorian museums - Museums Australia (Vic), Royal Historical Society of Victoria and Public Galleries Association of Victoria - are represented on any Arts Victoria advisory committees.

In general, the study has also revealed a need for:

- greater representation of the interests of suburban and regional museums, particularly non-art museums, on state and local government decision making bodies that affect the arts and heritage sectors
- improved communication between small to medium-sized Victorian museums and state and local government departments responsible for movable cultural heritage.

13.7.5 Attitude of museums towards government

Perhaps in recognition of the present low level of government support for many regional and suburban museums, more than three quarters of survey respondents agreed that arts and heritage organisations need to be more self-sufficient and not just rely on government support.

Even 72% of volunteer-run organisations holds this view and they are the segment of the Victorian museums sector that receives the least amount of recurrent funding from government.

13.8 FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF MEDIA SUPPORT

13.8.1 Low media profile of small to medium-sized Victorian museums

Focus group participants expressed the view that, in general, the media knows little about small to medium-sized Victorian museums and has little interest in the activities of these museums, although some suburban and regional museums reported a supportive relationship with their local newspaper.

It was felt this lack of media interest and knowledge was in part caused by the limited capacity of small museums with small numbers of staff to:

- devote sufficient time to media liaison
- develop systems enabling a quick response to media demands for information or images
- develop expertise in preparing effective media campaigns and communications.

13.8.2 Poorly developed media communication practices

Although it is common for organisations with paid staff (80%) to have a media mailing list or database, less than one third of volunteer-run organisations surveyed have a media mailing list.

Focus group participants reported that out-of-date media contact lists were a significant obstacle to developing better relationships between small or regional museums and the media.

Despite the reported lack of media contact lists in volunteer-run museums, the great majority (91%) of respondents claim they do prepare media releases. Volunteer-run organisations are more likely to never do so (10%) or only occasionally (55%). However, nearly half of all survey respondents (43%) reported they never update these lists, so the effectiveness of any media releases which are distributed is open to question.

13.8.3 Limited capacity of museums to take out paid advertising

Survey respondents and focus group participants agreed that they very rarely took out paid advertising in the electronic media (radio and television) and that even the capacity pay for print press advertising was limited, particularly for volunteer-run organisations.

The degree to which a museum can gain editorial coverage of their programs in the media is, to a degree, linked to their purchasing power as an advertiser. Katherine Danylak, a consultant specialising in audience development with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) segments of the community, commented at the June 2002 "Cultural Inclusivity" museums workshop in Melbourne that this was a particularly significant factor for ensuring editorial coverage in the "ethnic" print press. Focus group participants at the Melbourne Northside meeting, the majority of whom worked in public galleries in Melbourne, were adamant that the reason their museums got such little coverage in the *Age* newspaper was because the big galleries and museums (that is, the state collections) had a much greater capacity to buy advertising with the *Age*.

Because of the financial limitations on the capacity of small to medium-sized museums to pay for media advertising, they need to:

- be more creative and regular in generating media interest in their programs through effective media releases and other forms of communication with the media
- consider joint advertising with other organisations as a way of stretching their limited advertising dollars.

Only one third of survey respondents indicated they currently participate in joint advertising with other organisations.

13.9 FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

13.9.1 Why improved community support is vital

Museums have the potential to build social capital in communities and can contribute to the growth of community cohesion and pride by celebrating and interpreting the history and cultural achievements of their community. This process is by no means a one way street.

The reality is that museums need to be able to demonstrate strong support from their community in order to ensure adequate public resources are allocated to museums, not only to enable improved marketing and audience development capacities, but ultimately, to guarantee the survival and growth of museums.

To put this bluntly, the greater value a community places on its museums, the more leverage museums have with government (both local and state) and corporate or philanthropic sponsors to increase levels of resources allocated to regional and suburban, small to medium-sized Victorian museums.

13.9.2 Poor audience research practices and low levels of community consultation

Raising community participation and support levels for museums is not simply a matter of more, higher quality promotional materials or advertising campaigns. Such promotional materials will have limited effect if they are not informed by specific community needs and preferences, or if the community does not value, or have a relationship with, their local museums.

The survey revealed that all respondents, even organisations with paid staff (including visual arts organisations), could improve their audience research practices in order to:

- ensure more reliable information on their audiences is collected more frequently, and,
- forge stronger consultative links with their communities.

The majority of respondents only use informal techniques to find out about the composition and preferences of their audiences, the most popular being personal observation (70% of the total survey sample). Moreover, research of existing audiences is conducted infrequently by most respondents less than one quarter of respondents (22%) carry out such research more than once a year and 34% admit to never or rarely undertaking such research). Research of potential audiences is even less common as more than half (58%) of respondents never or rarely research the general public.

“Analysing entries in a Visitors’ Book” and “conducting face-to-face interviews with visitors” are also commonly used visitor research techniques (60% and 46% respectively), but it cannot be assumed that the data collected through these means is analysed systematically. It may simply be used to gain an impression of audience composition and preferences. Only 22% of respondents use self-completion questionnaires to research audiences and telephone surveys are hardly in use at all (2% of respondents).

Community consultation for program input and feedback is not common among the museums surveyed. Only 9% of social or local history organisations and 27% of visual arts organisations reported they use community advisory groups for program planning.

For audience research purposes, community consultation is even rarer. Only 7% of respondents conduct community meetings to learn about their audiences and a mere 1% use focus groups to learn about their existing and potential audiences.

In a review of a recent major US study on building community participation in the arts, Michael Moore, director of a large US philanthropic fund, effectively summed up why arts organisations (including museums) need to improve community consultation:

“Organisations that succeed at increasing cultural participation have another deceptively simple quality: the ability to listen. By listening to the people they engage – and would like to engage – organisations can devise targeted, relevant and workable strategies and tactics. Organisations that listen deeply, and with respect, are doing more than conventional planning. They know that engaging people required a frank examination of perceptions and the active exchange of information. By challenging their traditional view of themselves and their communities, they have the potential to revitalize and intensify people’s relationship to the arts.”

(Moore p.9)

13.9.3 Obstacles to increasing museum visitation

Restricted hours of opening

All focus groups and many of the interviewees from key organisations identified restricted or irregular opening hours as the biggest obstacle to increasing visitation to many small museums. It is also the reason many small museums have difficulty accessing the coach tour market. Local tourism associations are also less likely to spend money promoting an attraction if its opening hours are extremely limited or unreliable.

The museums which suffer most from this problem are the volunteer-run social or local history museums.

Lack of directional signage

Although most museums have signage with name and opening hours on their premises, 34% do not have directional street signage pointing visitors to their museum. Focus group participants reported that this is a particular problem for regional museums located in towns off the main highways.

Lack of variety in programming and lack of museum outreach programs

It is reasonably common (60% of respondents) for small to medium-sized museums to offer talks and lectures about their exhibitions, although fewer volunteer-run organisations do so (only 41%). Nearly all visual arts organisations (96%) offer talks and lectures. However, other program strategies to encourage repeat visitation or engage new audiences are far less common, as the following figures demonstrate:

- 46% of visual arts organisations *do not* offer workshops
- only 8% of volunteer-run organisations offer workshops
- 58% of visual arts organisations *do not* offer school holiday programs
- only 8% of volunteer-run organisations offer school holiday programs
- 62% of visual arts organisations *do not* have an outreach program
- only 22% of volunteer-run organisations have an outreach program.

Focus group participants felt that volunteer-run museums in particular suffered because of their reliance on volunteer guides/presenters who often had limited collection knowledge and presentation skills.

In addition, the fact that many small to medium-sized Victorian museums do not have the funds to regularly develop new exhibitions or programs, an obstacle identified in focus group discussions, greatly impacts on their capacity to attract new audiences or encourage repeat visitation.

Lack of strategic alliances or partnerships with non-museum organisations

The question on relationships museums have with non-museum organisations in their community revealed that small to medium-sized museums are not fully exploiting the potential for community partnerships to market their museums and attract new audiences. While most museums have an established relationship with their local council, their Visitor Information Centre and primary schools, less than half reported established relationships with service clubs, the Local Tourism Association, secondary schools or universities and TAFE colleges.

Established relationships with public libraries were also low (only 37% of respondents). Given the fact that most Victorian public libraries now have a local history collection and receive a high number of family history enquiries, it is surprising that almost half (48%) of social or local history museum *do not* have a relationship with their local public library.

The Murray Goulburn Deputy Regional Librarian who attended the Shepparton focus group meeting expressed a great interest in working more with social or local history museums in that region.

Negative perceptions of museums and galleries, particularly among younger people

Focus group participants identified the low value placed on arts and heritage in some regional communities and the low value placed on heritage by young people as significant obstacles to achieving greater community participation and support. Participants felt art galleries suffered from the perception that galleries were “elitist” and museums were seen as “old places full of old stuff”. It was felt that young people, in particular did not think a visit to a museum or a gallery constituted “a good time”.

Decline in community regard for history

The decline in the study of history as a separate discipline has been the case at all levels of education in Victoria in recent years. After nineteen years of operation, the History Institute of Victoria closed down in February this year. Focus group participants frequently cited low regard for history as an obstacle to increasing community participation and support for social or local history museums. In contrast to this decline, there has been strong growth of interest in family history, with family history societies and public libraries reporting a deluge of enquiries in this area.

To encourage greater community interest in history, the Victorian state government has established:

- the History Council of Victoria
- the annual Victorian Community History Awards
- the *Victoria's History* website (<http://www.history.vic.gov.au>)

While these government initiatives are to be commended, their effectiveness in achieving a revival of community interest in Victorian history is open to question and would possibly benefit from a greater involvement of Victorian social or local history museums in these initiatives.

The History Council members are appointed by government and are, by and large, professional historians and academics. There is one council member from a small to medium-sized museum (Diane Gardiner from the Old Melbourne Gaol) and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria also has a representative on Council (Associate Professor Don Garden). There are no Council members from regional or suburban local or social history museums.

In her interview for this study, the Executive Officer of the History Teachers' Association of Victoria (who is also a member of the History Council) commented that:

"In relation to secondary and primary history teaching, the Council's effectiveness is limited because there are not enough practising primary and secondary teachers on it. It is dominated by tertiary academics who very often have no idea of how history is being taught or studied in secondary schools."

The Victorian Community History Awards currently have no separate award for school students. The introduction of a student category might broaden the appeal of these awards and create opportunities for regional social or local history museums to collaborate with their local schools.

The *Victoria's History* website appears to be underpromoted, not as comprehensive as it might be and not always up to date. The "Organisations and Resources" page has a set of links to 34 other websites, including just seven small to medium-sized museums. There is no apparent reason as to why these museums were included and not others.

Difficulty in attracting and retaining volunteers from the community

As mentioned previously, the survey results indicate that organisations with paid staff appear to have a greater capacity to recruit volunteers than volunteer-run organisations. Focus group participants reported that if a museum does not have the time or expertise to train and supervise its volunteers, volunteers will not develop useful museum skills or a sense of pride and ownership in the museum's collection. This will ultimately reduce both the usefulness of the volunteers and the museum's capacity to retain them.

Regional museums reported strong competition for volunteers, particularly in small country towns.

In 2000, the Federation of Australian Historical Societies conducted a survey of its membership and discovered the greatest concern of their member societies was "the recruitment of new, particularly younger members" and that "financial anxieties were not as prominent as the lack, or age, of membership."

(Tyler, p.7-8)

A similar anxiety was frequently reported at all focus group meetings for this study and lack of volunteers has been cited as the main reason behind the restricted opening hours in volunteer-run museums.

Sharron Dickman, who was interviewed for this study and who has worked with many volunteer museum workers all over Australia, believes that the failure of volunteer-run organisations to attract new volunteers can sometimes be the result of the fact that:

"Some societies, festivals, etc. are not truly welcoming to newcomers, even though they say they want more volunteers. This may be due to the fact that many of these societies do not have a good cross-section of their community as volunteers, or members have been working together so long they feel "ownership" of the organisation and don't really want to share it."

Judy Kean, Executive Officer of the Queensland branch of Museums Australia (MAQ), reported on an MAQ volunteer recruitment and management training program, *Willing & Able*, which MAQ and Volunteering Qld developed and delivered in eight Queensland regional centres this year. She explained that:

"The program was aimed at volunteer-run museums in particular. Some of these small museums were first set up using Bicentennial Funds in 1988 or have grown through the efforts of a small and committed group of volunteers, who are often resistant to taking on new volunteers who might want to do things in a new way. The "Willing & Able" workshops allowed participants to work through the consequences of such resistance to change, and of failing to think broadly about how things have changed around them and are impacting on their organisation."

A similar training program might be of value for Victorian volunteer-run museums.

Heritage Victoria, in partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia, has initiated a “Hands on Heritage” program through which volunteers are assigned to work on heritage listed properties in Victoria.

At present, this program is restricted to projects on historic buildings or sites on the Victorian Heritage Register or those which have a heritage overlay on them. However, Ian Wight from Heritage Victoria has indicated that aspects of the program can be applied to collections of heritage artefacts. Extension of this program to encompass volunteer work on regional heritage collections would be of benefit to small to medium-sized museums lacking volunteers and would also help inject a younger group of volunteers into volunteer-run organisations.

Lack of connection with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups in the community

Katherine Danylak, speaking in the recent Museums Australia (Vic) “Cultural Inclusivity” workshop, commented that there is no point spending money on multilingual brochures or websites to market your museum until relationships with culturally diverse groups in the community have been established.

Danylak also reported that the results of the latest Australian census, which were released in June 2002, revealing that one in five Victorians speak a language other than English at home. This figure increases to one in four in metropolitan Melbourne.

Despite this fact, focus group discussions for this study revealed that very few regional or suburban small to medium-sized museums have programs in place to encourage audiences from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups in their communities. Two regional focus groups included representatives from indigenous keeping places but it became clear that there were few established links between these museums and other types of museums in the same region.

When asked why there was this apparent lack of interest in cultivating culturally diverse audiences, participants claimed that museums lacked contacts with these groups in their community and didn't know how to go about establishing contact.

The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria provides website access to a database of ethnic community contacts in Victoria which can be searched by region. The Acting Executive Officer of the Council, Michale Morris, also indicated that the Council would be happy to assist museums with contact information for CALD communities in their region.

With Victorian historical societies, perhaps because of the monocultural (usually Anglo-Celtic) flavour of many of their social or local history collections, there seemed to be a feeling that more recently arrived migrants in their community have no history here and this was why they weren't involved in their local museum. Also, some members of historical societies expressed feelings of affront that new settlers from other cultures showed a lack of interest in the local history of the communities in which they were now living; a local history that historical societies valued and cared for. There appeared to be little appreciation of the need for CALD communities to have their own history and stories represented in their local museums.

In regional Victoria, exposure to non-Anglo cultures is less common than it is in Melbourne. Moreover, most regional social history and local history museums are managed by older volunteers whose view of “history” has been formed by their own life experiences and exposure to an Australian education system and society where history usually meant white English-speaking Australian history or British history. Regional cross-cultural workshops for regional museum workers to build confidence and techniques for approaching CALD groups in their community, might help change this narrow view of local history and establish contacts between museums and culturally diverse groups in local communities. Such regional workshops could be developed in partnership with the seven regional Ethnic Community Councils.

In her 2001 paper on culturally diverse audiences in museums, Cheryle Yin-Lo, Multicultural Audience Development specialist with the Museums and Galleries Foundation of New South Wales, agrees with the above suggestion about cross-cultural training. She counsels museums to avoid tokenism when developing programs for CALD groups in the community and to instead concentrate on developing inclusive, ongoing relationships between museums and CALD groups in their community:

“This is a critical point for cultural institutions and organisations to assist in building up our community and cultural knowledge in the long term and have a more integrated and inclusive approach to our core activities and our individual work. Some training such as cross-cultural awareness may be necessary that provides greater confidence by staff to deal with new situations.”

(Yin-Lo, p..2)

Finally, to quote Michal Morris from the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, who was interviewed for this study:

“People who work in historical societies are passionate about their collections. They need to direct some of that passion to other groups of people living in their community. The benefit of such involvement for people from these communities is the pride that results from the telling of their own stories and the increased opportunities for artistic expression.”

13.10 FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF PARTICIPATION BY THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* survey revealed that while it was reasonably common for museums to have an established relationship with primary schools (57% of respondents), established relationships between museums and secondary schools were less common (only 48%) and were even rarer with universities and TAFE colleges (31%).

Focus group participants felt that many small to medium-sized museums had no access to lists or databases of education contacts. It was also uncommon for these museums to have education officer positions on staff, so time and expertise to develop appropriate educational programs and resources was limited.

The History Teachers Association of Victoria (HTAV) concisely summed up common barriers to increased museum visitation and participation by schools. These were:

- Lack of outreach programs to schools, both to bring museum artefacts and talks into schools, but also to persuade teaching staff of the value of a museum visit
- Increasing cost of transport and museum entrance fees
- Failure to bring history alive or “hands on history” with artefacts or exhibits students can touch, particularly for primary level students
- Failure by museums to train students in museum protocols so students understand the need for museum appropriate behaviour
- Failure to produce curriculum relevant education kits or activities
- Poor quality talks and tours which are not pegged to the students interests or attention spans

The HTAV compiles and distributes a list of suggestions for school excursions which includes some local or social history museums, though many more could be added to this list.

13.11 FACTORS AFFECTING LEVEL OF SUPPORT FROM BUSINESS & PHILANTHROPIC SECTORS

Almost half the survey respondents indicated that they place little emphasis on seeking sponsorship. This is particularly the case with volunteer-run organisations where nearly half (44%) reported they *never* seek new sponsors. Museums in the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* survey were five times as likely *never* to seek new sponsors than the arts organisations surveyed in the 1997 Australia Council study.

Regional focus groups reported on the limited capacity of regional museums to attract corporate sponsorship locally because of the stiff competition from other community organisations approaching the same limited number of local businesses. It was also reported that major corporations or philanthropic trusts seem to have little interest in sponsoring small museums in small country towns.

This impression is supported by the results of the recently published Australian Business Arts Foundation study for the Cultural Ministers Council, *The Strategic Direction in Corporate Sponsorship: Practical Implications for the Arts*.

This study found that:

“many sponsors are investing in fewer, more focussed, longer-term sponsorships ... in order to achieve maximum benefits from sponsorship expenditure”

(Australian Business Arts Foundation, p.5)

Focus groups also reported they needed more skills in preparing funding proposals for corporate sponsorship and philanthropic grants.

In her interview for the *Marketing Victorian Museums 2002* study, Ruth Jones, General Manager of Philanthropy Australia, suggested that poor quality proposals were the main obstacle to success for museums applying for

grants from the philanthropic sector. In summary, the mistakes commonly made in proposals to philanthropic organisations are:

- Applications which are too long
- Applications which do not meet the guidelines of the philanthropic organisation
- Failure by applicants to clearly demonstrate community benefit of their project
- Failure to include adequate information on how the success of the project will be measured because evaluation is crucially important to most philanthropic organisations
- Lack of familiarity with the types of projects Australian philanthropic organisations prefer to fund.

The Australian Business Arts Foundation study echoes the opinions of Philanthropy Australia. It discovered that companies want sponsorships with cultural organisations that:

- have benefits which are measurable
- reflect the values or identity of the company
- deliver benefits to the community and demonstrate there is a “public service” or a “public good”
- add value to a cultural organisation in a way that cannot be achieved by other means.

(ibid, p.5-6)

Given the results of the survey and the stated needs of the philanthropic and business sectors, more frequent and higher quality proposals for business or philanthropic funding for museum projects might result in higher levels of support from these sectors for small to medium-sized museums.

It also seems likely that a proposal from a group of museums in the same region in partnership with other non-museum community organisations in that region might be able to demonstrate community benefit of the proposal more effectively. As Ruth Jones from Philanthropy Australia commented in her interview for this study:

“Regional communities have never been in a better position to access philanthropy. Trusts and foundations in general are well aware of the difficulties rural and regional Australians have faced in recent years.”

13.12 POTENTIAL FOR CO-OPERATIVE MARKETING & AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

The majority (78%) of organisations surveyed believed that pooling resources would be of benefit to arts and heritage organisations and the great majority (89%) expressed an interest in working more with other organisations in their region to better market their museum and increase their audiences.

All participants at focus group meetings also expressed a high level of willingness to work further with Museums Australia and other organisations on museum marketing and audience development strategies.

Many museums are already engaged in co-operative/collaborative marketing activities with other arts and heritage organisations in their region, most commonly displaying brochures from other organisations in their museum and participating in joint events or programs.

Focus group participants reported that the biggest obstacle to participation in co-operative marketing initiatives was lack of staff time to make participation effective. Because of this, it was felt that in order to guarantee the success of co-operative marketing initiatives, there needed to be a paid coordinator for such projects.

Other obstacles to participation included lack of balance in the membership of such initiatives which resulted in the interests of smaller museums being marginalised by project partners from large museums.

There is also a need for some work to be done to build trust and cooperation between museums, particularly as only 57% of survey respondents think arts and heritage organisations trust each other. This lack of trust is even more evident with responses from volunteer-run organisations.

13.13 CAPACITY TO EXPLOIT THE CULTURAL TOURISM MARKET

13.13.1 Importance of the “day tripper” market

More than half (54%) the total respondents in the survey reported that the *majority* of their visitors come from “within Victoria” as opposed to from their “local area” or “local region”. This was the case both for volunteer-run organisations and those with paid staff.

The 2001 National Visitor Survey produced by the Bureau of Tourism Research shows that all twelve regional Victorian tourism areas in the Tourism Victoria “jigsaw” marketing strategy receive the majority of their Australian visitation in the form of day trip visitors, as opposed to overnight visitors or international visitors. (Tourism Victoria: Regional research www.tourismvictoria.com.au/research/docs/regional_research.htm)

This means the greatest potential for regional museums to attract cultural tourism lies in the day tripper market, most of whom would come from within Victoria.

13.13.2 Effectiveness of existing museum cultural tourism strategies

Regional museums in focus groups showed great interest in accessing the cultural tourism market.

In the survey for this study, 2/3 of respondents indicated they already had an established relationship with their local Visitor Information Centre and just less than half (49%) had an established relationship with their Local Tourism Authority.

The co-operative brochure produced by Heritage Network East Gippsland to promote social and local history museums in East Gippsland is a commendable co-operative marketing initiative, particularly since the Network managed to secure corporate sponsorship to pay for nearly all costs of production for the brochure. The award-winning AMOL “Art Trails” virtual tour of Victorian regional galleries had, as one of the aims behind its creation, the engagement of the cultural tourism market. It has proved to be a welcome initiative for raising the profile of Victorian regional galleries. However, the effectiveness of both these co-operative initiatives in promoting cultural tourism is open to question.

Tourism Victoria supplied statistics that indicate use of the Internet for planning tourism itineraries is still in its infancy. More importantly, most day trippers would not even contemplate a full day in a museum or a gallery, let alone a trek through a series of museums or galleries in a particular region. They might visit a gallery or museum on their day out, if they knew about it, but they would probably also be interested in local food and other sorts of tourist sites and natural attractions in the region they are visiting.

The emphasis at Tourism Victoria is firmly on “destination” marketing rather than, for example, developing a Victorian cultural tourism trail across several regions. Tourism Victoria reported that most tourists plan trips to a specific destination and would tie in visits to cultural institutions located at, or on the way to, that destination.

Co-operative marketing initiatives that develop strategies to market regional museums and galleries in the context of other attractions in the region in which they are located are therefore more likely to be effective in exploiting the Victorian day tripper cultural tourism market.

However, in order to initiate, or participate in, such regional marketing initiatives, regional museums must first develop stronger relationships with other non-museum organisations in their communities, particularly with local government, tourism associations and business.

Arts marketing specialist, Dr Sharron Dickman, who has recently been working on the Gippsland cultural tourism strategy, commented in her interview for this study that:

“The most important thing to do first is to start working with your local community. Build local awareness and co-operation. Further down the track, when you have the community involved, then you can develop joint brochures and cultural tourism trails.”

Tourism Victoria also reported that attracting promotion of your organisation to a local festival or event is another way of stretching your marketing dollar further as festivals and events do motivate visitation to regional Victoria.

13.14 Conclusion

A critical factor in determining the effectiveness of a museum’s marketing and audience development capacities is undoubtedly the number of paid staff with marketing and audience development expertise that an organisation can afford.

Despite this reality, the study has identified many areas where marketing and audience development practices and attitudes can be improved without requiring large budgetary increases.

The relationship small to medium-sized museums have with their own local community appears to be an area requiring attention. If small to medium-sized museums can generate greater community participation, both as visitors, members of advisory groups, project partners and volunteers, the capacity of these museums to argue for greater levels of local and state government funding is more likely to increase, as is their capacity to attract support from the business and philanthropic sectors.

The study has also identified a range of opportunities for strategic alliances and partnerships with government and non-museum organisations to address training needs in museum marketing and audience development and to improve the capacity of the museum industry peak bodies to promote and advance the sector they represent.

The survey, focus group meeting and interviews with key organisations all revealed a great willingness to participate in co-operative initiatives that would improve the marketing and audience development capacities of small to medium-sized museums in Victoria. It remains now to find the means to capitalise on this enthusiasm and willingness.