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A Musing Places



by Cynthia Scanlon
photo by Mark R. Zemnick

Sheila Grinell, executive director of the
Arizona Science Center

It's no secret the newly renovated Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona Science Center and currently-under-renovation Heard Museum are popular with tourists and locals alike. What you may not know are some of the behind-the-scenes facts and little-known but extremely important things that go into keeping the buildings open and functioning on a daily basis. Strong leadership, coordination of work duties and a team effort all go into making these landmarks not only wonders to the eye but marvels of facility management efficiency.

Almost everyone is familiar with the uniquely-shaped green walls that glint in the bright sunlight and wrap up the exterior of the Phoenix Art Museum like a gift box. The museum's newly completed \$25 million renovation and expansion is finally finished, doubling the size of its facilities to more than 160,000 square feet.

With that kind of expansion, the museum has had the Herculean-like task of daily coordinating and deploying a staff of 75 people, including everyone from security guards, curatorial and educational staff, to library personnel, administrators and fund-raisers into one seamless operation.

“Management must fashion an environment that will instill and reinforce the behaviors and attitudes that people must exhibit in order for the processes to work.”

—Michael Hammer, Author of *Beyond Reengineering*.

*Office Space Planning *Interior Design



“All of our employees were in the museum before the construction and now a good percentage of them are in a separate administration building,” says Woody Spivey, assistant director in charge of operations and administration for the Phoenix Art Museum. “That created some communication and accessibility problems and we want to make sure the people in the administration building interface with the museum itself.”

Now, the museum holds weekly and monthly staff meetings for employees to gain “a more holistic viewpoint” of how the museum operates, says Spivey. The new facilities include a larger museum store, the Whiteman Lecture Hall, an art reference and slide library, three classrooms for studio art classes and the Cummings Great Hall that seats 400.

The \$16.2 million expansion, including a \$13.7 million construction project and a \$2.5 million endowment, will bring the Heard Museum to 130,000 square feet.

The average attendance at the Phoenix Art Museum is 200,000 a year, 20 percent of which comes from out of state. An additional 40,000 are served each year through the museum’s outreach programs. According to Spivey, these attendance records are a 25 percent increase over pre-construction days.

Seven new storage areas have been created for the growing collection as well. State-of-the-art security systems have been installed to protect the more than 13,000 works which make up the museum’s collection. This collection emphasizes American Art; European Art of the 14th-19th Centuries; Asian Art; Western American Art; 20th Century Art; Spanish Colonial Art; Latin American Art; 18th-20th Century fashion design; and the Thorne Miniature Rooms.

“We were only able to display 1 to 2 percent of those 13,000 items at any time,” says Spivey, adding all that has changed now with the new gallery space.

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Woody Spivey, left, assistant director in charge of operations and administration for the Phoenix Art Museum

Martin Sullivan, below, director of the Heard Museum

More works can now be brought out for the public to view. "Before, we couldn't really serve what the community wanted."

And while the museum's art treasures will still need to be stored, the facility now has a completely computerized system for tracking each piece. "The information about where (a piece) came from, its value and where it's located, is computerized," says Spivey. "The people that install the exhibits and the curators all have access to that information through the computer network."

The Phoenix Art Museum stayed open during the three major phases of construction, requiring their 13,000 objects to be moved twice. "And we had to keep the records of their location accurate the whole time," says Spivey.

Have You Heard?

The Heard Museum, which has been visited by such dignitaries as Margaret Thatcher and the chief justices of all 50 states, is hoping for the same smooth execution when they complete their "educational expansion," which will add 50,000 square feet of space to the internationally recognized museum. Construction is expected to be completed by January 1999, with the museum remaining open during the entire construction process.

The \$16.2 million expansion, including a \$13.7 million construction project and a \$2.5 million endowment, will bring the Heard Museum to 130,000 square feet. This will nearly double the public spaces including three additional galleries,



an expanded museum shop and bookstore, a 400-seat multi-purpose auditorium and an education pavilion with classrooms.

"We are sorely cramped in the public spaces as well as where we keep our collections and library," says Martin Sullivan, director of the Heard Museum. "At the moment, we have only one small classroom and it's part of a corridor that runs from the public areas to the non-public areas. That will be replaced by a suite of three classrooms that can be accessed independently from the museum galleries, so there can be intensive workshops for school groups."

The Heard's auditorium, according to Sullivan, has become too small for future presentations and events. It will be replaced by a 400-seat auditorium. When the seats are taken away, it will convert into a sit-down dinner area for

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500 people.

A staff of 70 full-time employees, ranging from security guards to cashiers to people who disseminate information to the public and keep a close eye on building operations is cross-trained to give the museum even more employee power. The Heard also has a veritable army of volunteers to keep the building open and running efficiently. "If we converted our volunteers to full-time employees, this would make up an additional 25 to 30 full-time staff," says Sullivan, adding attendance at the facility has climbed to 250,000 a year, with educational programming reaching another 100,000 people.

As you might imagine, coordinating some of the building functions has been a challenge. Currently, the Heard Museum has more than 20 separate air conditioning systems that have been added during the museum's previous

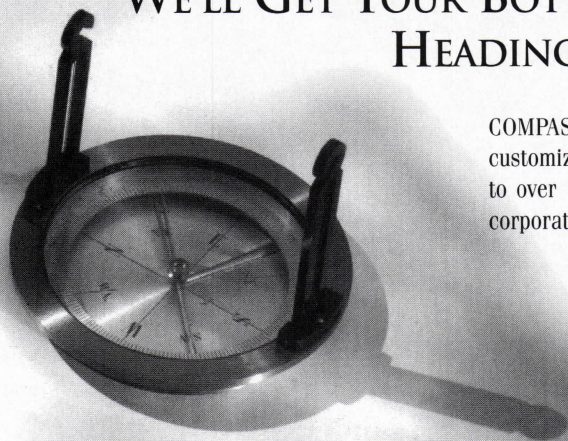
The Arizona Science Center has five exhibit galleries, a giant-screen theater, a planetarium, four classrooms, a food court, a science store and numerous offices.

three expansions. The expansion also will provide a true loading dock and fire suppression for both the existing building and the new addition. And, the basement level of the Heard Museum will also expand, adding a new collections storage facility.

"All of the art and culture collections are stored on sight in storage rooms in the basement," says Sullivan. "Staff members cannot be in storage areas without a record of their presence."

The museum is also adding galleries that will significantly increase the total percentage of art work out on display. To protect these irreplaceable works of art, fire detection and suppression equipment will also be enhanced. Light, temperature and humidity controls are in place and well maintained.

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Weird Science

Unlike the Phoenix Art Museum and Heard Museum, the new Arizona Science Center is not really a museum. "Our exhibits are maintained," says Sheila Grinell, executive director of the Arizona Science Center. "We only have one small collection that is curated."

The Arizona Science Center has five exhibit galleries, a giant-screen theater, a planetarium, four classrooms, a food court, a science store, and numerous offices and workshops. More than 14,000 cubic yards of concrete were used to complete construction and more than 1.2 million feet of wire and cable run throughout the building.

Eighty-two full-time and 30 part-time workers keep the building open and operational. In addition, the Science Center has a cadre of high school students to perform demonstrations and explain exhibits to visitors. At any given time, according to Grinell, 10 of these students are walking the floor, which means the center must have a pool of 80 teenagers to choose from.

"Teenagers are fresh, young and non-threatening to families and young children can relate to them," says Grinell. "A lot of adults walking around might be knowledgeable, but not quite as engaging. And it teaches the teenagers about science, how to get along with other people and how to hold a job."

Average attendance at the center is currently 2,000 visitors a day. To see that everything runs consistently, all employees are charged with overseeing building operations and reporting any broken exhibits or problems within the structure. "Everyone who is on the floor watches and reports on an exhibit that is not functioning properly," says Grinell. "The exhibits maintenance people get the reports and do rounds by walking the floor. Our floor staff communicates by walkie talkie, so they can call for maintenance help any time."

Like the Phoenix Art Museum and the Heard, Grinell says the Valley has enthusiastically embraced the new Science Center. Before construction, the Center had 600 memberships. Today, they boast 10,000. "We are delighted with the response from the community," says Grinell. "We've made a strong effort to go for quality and it's delightful to see the community recognizing that."

AB

Cynthia Scanlon is a Tempe free-lance writer.

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