

Docent Evaluation

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I. Challenges:

- The discussion was limited to peer evaluation.
- It was agreed that all museums need evaluation by peers on an informal level.
- It was generally agreed that peer review should be a positive, growing experience.
- It is important to have a process that is non-threatening.
- The peer evaluation must come from the docents.
- How do you sell it to the docents? It takes time. There is a difference
- The goal is to improve, not to get rid of docents.
- Distinguish between *critique* and *criticism*.
- Help docents realize that peer review is democratic, i.e., all docents will be reviewed.

II. Types of Programs:

- Some institutions working in school programs have teachers do the evaluation of docents.
- In one institution the peer evaluation is conducted by one committee with two docents evaluating each docent for style, communication and content. If the docent fails that review, the three discuss it. It can be an intimidating format for some, but good for those who are tough. An extremely long form is used.
- Docents being reviewed fill out own reflections after the tour, i.e., begin with self evaluation.
- Conducting sessions on topics arising from the evaluation where the docent may need extra help. Are there common areas for many of the docents?
- The review team can consist of one person who gives the same tour and one who does not. This latter individual represents the public.
- One reviewer is senior and one is a junior docent.
- One institution gives two chances to satisfactorily give a tour. After that a staff member steps in. If the docent needs to be removed, it is the staff's responsibility to do so.

III. Consensus:

- We need peer review.
- It needs to be non-threatening.
- Should start with self-evaluation and build on that.
- Mentoring can help when a docent needs assistance.
- Get agreement for peer evaluation from all the docents.
- We want examples of evaluation sheets from the NDS.

- It is important to keep up with what docents are doing. What one person does reflects on all docents in the institution.
- It is sometimes necessary to ease out a docent.
- Go on one another's tours to see who is good.
- Peer review should be a positive, growing process.
- Informal evaluation should come first.
- Perhaps the NDS could be a clearing house for ideas on the subject.

The group agreed on the need for docent-peer evaluation. Some of the institutions already had programs in place while others did not. A request that came from the group was that institutions which do have programs in place provide their evaluation forms to the NDS which can then put the forms on line for other institutions to view. I think that this is a very good idea. The Art Gallery of Ontario has been using a form for the adult docents and we would be prepared to share it. Janice Barnard for the Met felt their institution would share. I think it is something the NDS should pursue.