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**The 1941 Junior League Docent Training Course Conducted by the
Metropolitan Museum of Art: An Examination of Museum Education
Beliefs and Convictions towards Volunteer Educators**

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Dedication

To my loved ones, whose encouragement is beyond compare.

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Abstract

The 1941 Junior League Docent Training Course Conducted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art: An Examination of Museum Education Beliefs and Convictions towards Volunteer Educators

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2011

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This thesis explored the 1941 docent-training course for members of the Junior League held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The research focused on understanding what place this philanthropic organization held in the American art museum at that time. This course at the Metropolitan Museum of Art was formed as an attempt to teach Junior League members to become trainers of docents and volunteers in their own communities. Additionally, I looked into the background of the museum staff members Francis Henry Taylor and Roberta Murray Fansler Alford Capers and the Junior League member Helen T. Findlay.

Utilizing historical research methods, four arguments were formed regarding why this docent-training course occurred; (a) the new leadership and structure in the museum facilitating those training, (b) the collaborative work of Helen T. Findlay and Francis Henry Taylor and their passion towards art education for all audiences, (c) the Junior League's continued commitment to community involvement, and (d) the fundamental need women had for involvement outside the home. The research concludes with a reflection toward the difficulties and hardships that accompany conducting historical research into the women of art education including non-traditional forms of historical documentation.

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Chapter 1: *Introduction to the Study*

On September 29, 1941, the education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City commenced a nine-month docent-training course for a small number of Junior League members. This course was formed as an attempt to, “equip a carefully chosen group in the leadership and training of volunteers in their own communities” (Public Lecture Program, 1941, p. 182). Researching the events and trends influencing art museum education as well as the convictions and beliefs of the education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I have formed a four-pronged argument about why this docent-training course was developed and implemented, but not repeated by the museum in later years. In conducting this research, I have explored aspects of the program that comprised the docent-training curriculum, including the,

survey of the history of art in relation to the Museum collections, general museum methods with special emphasis on interpreting art to the public, the use of museum collections by school classes, and actual docent experience with New York school children. (Public Lecture Program, 1941, p. 182)

I have also assessed the success of this training course. The final part of this research is focused on the precedent set in this docent-training course and what museums benefited directly from this innovative program offered by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

What convictions about art education and docent programming did the education staff from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the participants from the Junior League

possess when they met for the docent-training course in September 1941? How did this seminar reflect the beliefs museum education staff held towards volunteer docents and the relationship between Junior League members and museum educators at this time?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Investigating and answering this Central Research Question contributes to our understanding of how this seminar reflected the beliefs museum education staffs held toward volunteer docents in 1941, and what connection emerged between Junior League members and museum educators at this time. My research plays a part in the extension of the field's limited historic understanding of docents, docent training, and education outreach undertaken by museums in the United States in the early 1940s. This research is intended to assist museum educators in appreciating the longstanding relationship that has occurred between art museum education departments and volunteer docents, particularly in relation to the Junior League.

The Junior League still struggles against its image in popular culture, where it is portrayed and viewed as a “clique of former debutantes putting out cookbooks,” rather than a more conscientious group of professional women who start shelters for drug-addicted mothers and volunteers in the 25th Police Precinct in East Harlem” (Bumiller, 1999, p. B2). The Junior League's upper crust roots have been an issue since its inception in 1901, with people perceiving the Junior League as too closely connected to social registry of their communities. It is with my research that I am advancing the notion that the Junior League has more to offer society than what is often publicly perceived.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

My research has worked to answer why the Junior League, a philanthropic organization often associated with privileged, leisured women, has a place in the museum. My grandmother was involved in the Junior League of Dallas and was highly active with volunteer efforts at the Dallas Museum of Art. My mother was a committed member of the Junior League of Dallas who dedicated countless hours to the organization. I have intentions of one day joining this philanthropic association and have begun the process of becoming a provisional member. I feel that this will be a way to continue my dedication to volunteerism in my community. I knew firsthand about the good the Junior League does for its communities, and want to offer this organization a sense of legitimization in a world that frequently looks askance at this group and their activities.

Volunteers are vital to any art museum's education programming and have at times comprised over two thirds of the total art museum education efforts (Newsom & Silver, 1978). According to a recent report published in *Philanthropy News Digest*, the estimated value of a volunteer hour reached \$20.85 in 2009. In addition, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service, 61.8 million Americans, or 26.4 percent of the adult population, volunteered eight billion hours worth an estimated \$162 billion (Value of Volunteer, 2010).

According to the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics 2010 study of volunteers, 29.3 percent of the female population performed some sort of volunteer activity from

September 2009 to September 2010, and of that pool of women volunteers, only 4.2 engaged in artistic activities (*Volunteering in the United States*, 2011, p. 3). Continuing to learn more about what motivates people to volunteer in museum, how volunteers have been utilized in the museum, and the organizations that have traditionally offered volunteer services to the museum, the more I am able to relate with adult volunteers, and also wonder about their motivations.

Museum educators often rely on volunteers and docents to administer programs in the galleries. As a future museum educator in Texas, I will interact and work with volunteers, even those from the Junior League. More than 65 years ago, in 1943, the Junior League of Houston supported art education at the Houston Museum of Fine Arts by beginning the docent program and establishing gallery tours for children. Working in cooperation with Houston public schools, members of the Junior League's Arts Committee conducted museum tours for elementary school students. In addition to working on children's programming, the Junior League of Houston also donated money to the museum to endow a chair for adult education (Junior League, 1946). This is not a story that is unique to museums in Texas. Currently, the Junior League of Dallas provides fifty volunteers and \$5,000 in funding to the Dallas Museum of Art ("Current Community Programs," 2010). The Junior League of San Antonio is in a community partnership with the McNay Museum of Art ("JLSA community partners," n.d.). In order to offer the finest volunteer opportunities and provide the museum with the most prepared volunteers, I need a comprehensive knowledge of the trends and philosophies upon which this relationship is built.

As museums recognize the importance of the volunteer, more extensive research is being conducted into how volunteers are utilized in the museum (Goodland & McIvo, 1998; Newsom & Silver, 1978). Volunteers have been present in the art museum for over a hundred years and remain a vital part of any education department (*The Docent Handbook*, 2001; Franklin & Mayer, 1974). In my work with museums, I have had to work firsthand with volunteers at my different programming events. I would not be able to run a successful family or adult program without the help of volunteers.

It is known that, “volunteers are more than simply unpaid staff” (Goodlad & McIvo, 1998, p. 19). Inquiry is being made into how the volunteer functions in the museum and how volunteers inherently support the museum’s mission statement (Cutler, 2009). Goodlad and McIvo (1998) have conducted extensive research into how a museum must appreciate the volunteer and how the volunteer needs direction and management in order to add fully to the museum’s function:

These two functions of museums – education and entertainment – are of particular relevance for this study of museum volunteers for two reasons: first, the case studies indicate that, for the volunteers, education and entertainment are the dominant benefits, and second, because the volunteers’ role is to offer to facilitate the visitor’s learning, enjoyment, and entertainment. (p. 13)

My research brings validation for continuing the utilization of Junior League members in museum volunteer roles. I have learned from the past how museums worked with Junior League volunteers, and this understanding will facilitate me in developing volunteer programs for today and the future.

RESEARCH METHOD

Through this research, I have attempted to build a case about why the Metropolitan Museum of Art hosted a docent-training course for candidates from the Junior League in the fall of 1941. As an act of reconstructing data and information to form an argument, I used historical research methods to create a representation of how this seminar between Junior League candidates and the education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art reflected the beliefs museum education staff held towards volunteer docents and the precedent set for the continuing relationship between Junior League members and museum educators. Recognizing the large gap in the history of art museum volunteerism, the utilization of historical research methodology was the most appropriate model for my thesis. I analyzed and interpreted various forms of written and visual data from the past as a means to discover patterns leading to this seeming unlikely partnership in the 1940s.

One of the most pertinent issues of my historical research was the validity and authenticity of primary and secondary sources. Relying on information drawn from past documents, most of my data was gathered from publications dated between 1939 and 1947. Focusing on this eight-year span enabled me to look at the events immediately leading up to the 1941 seminar, as well as the events occurring within five years afterward. Utilizing the many sources about this time that are available, I have created an argument to help better understand the reasons why the Junior League and art museums

had a collaborative relationship in the 1940s, and offer insight into why they carry on such a partnership today.

Focusing on the publications *Museum News*, *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, *Art Education*, as well as *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Annual Report of the Trustees*, I found firsthand data and evidence from that period. Surprisingly, despite being an international organization with over 160,000 current members, there were a limited number of books and publications concentrated on the history of the Junior League. The two books I was able to find were *The Volunteer Powerhouse* by Janet Gordon and Diane Riesche, and *The Junior League: 100 Years of Volunteer Service* by Nancy Beth Jackson. Both books relied heavily on the cooperation of the Junior League international headquarters, and any information gained from these books must be weighed heavily and, if possible, corroborated with other sources; otherwise, the interpretive validity of my research could be called into question.

I utilized the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, specifically the Office of the Secretary records that is comprised of correspondence and files created by the Secretary and General Counsel, Trustees, and several past Directors of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. These materials related to all aspects of museum operations and administration and included a small batch of correspondence, memos, and forms connected to the 1941 docent-training course for Junior League members.

In addition to the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I contacted the International headquarters of the Junior League Association, Inc. and the seven different chapters of the Junior League from which the eight participants in this 1941 docent-

training course were selected. These include the cities of St. Louis, Missouri; New Haven, Connecticut; Montclair, New Jersey; Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Omaha, Nebraska; Columbus, Ohio; and Seattle, Washington. Contacting the historians and archivists from each chapter Junior League was difficult. Some of these chapters held information about the women who were involved with the docent-training program. The archival information I was able to glean provided excellent primary sources for research and furnished firsthand accounts of participants from both the education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Junior League.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Junior League – Started in 1901, the Junior League is an organization of young women between the ages of 18 and 40 committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women, and improving communities through the leadership of trained volunteers. Its purpose is exclusively educational and charitable.
- The Metropolitan Museum of Art – Founded on April 13, 1870, the Metropolitan Museum of Art's charter states the mission of the museum "to be located in the City of New York, for the purpose of establishing and maintaining in said city a Museum and library of art, of encouraging and developing the study of the fine arts, and the application of arts to manufacture and practical life, of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and, to that end, of furnishing popular instruction" (*Collections Database*, n.d.).

- Museum Educator – A member of a museum’s education staff whose purpose at the museum is to develop, manage, and implement education programs in the museum and the museum’s community.
- Docent – A volunteer who undergoes a period of training to gain knowledge and familiarity with a museum’s collection, and then conducts tours for visitors through an art museum providing commentary, conversation, and interpretation.
- Philanthropy – The voluntary action for the public good and includes both voluntary giving and voluntary service.
- Volunteer – A person, who works on behalf of others or a particular cause without payment for her time and services, often intended to promote good or improve human quality of life.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Time parameters established for this study limited the focus of my research to the years from 1939 to 1947. 1939 seemed an appropriate place for me to initiate this investigation. That year, Richard F. Bach was appointed Dean of the newly reorganized Department of Education and Extension at the museum. This restructuring of museum personnel was one of the hypothetical causes I considered while developing my argument about why the Metropolitan Museum of Art choose to conduct the docent-training course. I found a natural stopping point for my search to be five years after the planned conclusion of the course on May 15, 1942. These five years enabled me the opportunity to find any publications dealing with the events occurring immediately following the

museum education training and to research possible connections between these Junior League participants and the communities they represented.

Another parameter employed in this study was my decision to concentrate my efforts more on the side of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's education staff, rather than the communities that sent representatives of the Junior League to the docent-training course. Gathering information from eight other institutions, though potentially worthwhile, would not guarantee any support for my specific research question. I did, however, research the eight women who partook in the training course in an effort to discover what drove each of these women to dedicate a year of personal participation to this educational endeavor.

CONCLUSION

My research has strived to uncover a lost piece of history concerning the relationship between the education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and members of the Junior League. Looking at the research material brought together, I have compiled and formed a substantial and positioned argument about why the Metropolitan Museum of Art decided to devote time and energy to the development and execution of the docent-training course. This research addressed an historical issue that has not received research attention, and in doing so attempted to answer the question why the Junior League became involved with museum education programs 70 years ago.

Chapter 2: *Review of Pertinent Literature*

In my quest to uncover the most pertinent and constructive documents pertaining to the 1941 Junior League docent-training course, I read a variety of journals, books, and other related pamphlets, papers, and documents. The following is an overview exploration of information I gathered in this investigative process.

ARTICLES RELATED TO THE DOCENT-TRAINING COURSE OF 1941

Appearing in the September 1941 *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* was the public announcement regarding the organization of a “docent training course for a small number of Junior League members selected from applicants throughout the country” (Public Lecture Program, 1941, p. 182). Though less than three hundred words, this piece of writing offered significant information about the intentions of the Education Staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and what would be included in the coursework.

The article stated,

The purpose of the course is to equip a carefully chosen group in the leadership and training of volunteers in their own communities. The program of study will include a survey of the history of art in relation to the museum collections, general museum methods with special emphasis on interpreting art to the public, the use of museum collections by school classes, and actual docent experience with New York school children. (p. 182)

Also included in the article was a list of the eight Junior League participants and the city they represented. These eight women were Patricia Egan of St. Louis, Missouri; Eleanor English of New Haven, Connecticut; Dorothy Ross Grant of Montclair, New Jersey;

Helen Howigan of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania; Elizabeth C. Ramsey of Omaha, Nebraska; Virginia Schueller of Columbus, Ohio; Lucy Todd of Seattle, Washington; and Anne de Bonneville Young of Omaha, Nebraska. These women applied to this program “designed to help further work with the public in other museums” (p. 182), in hopes they would learn the tools and methods to develop docent and volunteer programs for art museums in their respective communities.

This declaration in the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* acted as a press release, and the information offered appeared a month later in the October 1, 1941 issue of *Museum News*. In the article, “Docent Training Course at Metropolitan Museum,” the same facts and figures, almost verbatim, were published for a broader audience. Instead of just members and staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, publication in the American Association of Museums journal broadcasts this training course to a wide audience of museum directors, staff, and educators. An even more expansive audience was reached in the January 1942 article in the *Adult Education Journal*.

Making a broader impact in the field of adult education, this article in the *Adult Education Journal* was an indication of the trickle down of information occurring at the time. As a journal dedicated to the belief that through lifelong learning positive social change will occur, this announcement about the docent training course reached those outside the Metropolitan Museum, and museums in general. This publication offered validation to the training course by taking it out of the museum niche and into the broader world of adult and continuing education. Though these articles were the only three

uncovered dealing specifically with the Junior League docent-training course, I was able to find research dealing with the trends, measures, and principle characters leading up to the development of this docent-training seminar.

CRITICISM OF BOOKS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE JUNIOR LEAGUE

There were a limited number of books dealing with the general history of the Junior League. *The Volunteer Powerhouse*, by Janet Gordon and Diane Riesche (1983) offered an historical overview of the volunteer work conducted by the Junior League. There is no mention of the 1941 docent-training course offered by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, although Gordon and Riesche present rich information about the founding characters, the original principles of the Junior League, and the first instances of Junior League involvement with art museums.

Recognizing that the “outmoded conceptions of white-gloved ladies engaging in genteel charity between bridge games still peek through the public impression of the contemporary Junior League” (p. 10), Gordon and Riesche (1983) attempt to switch focus from the trivial high society to the benefits and community involvement of the Junior League. Given the limited number of sources and research previously conducted concerning the Junior League and individual city chapters, Gordon and Riesche rely heavily on the cooperation of the Junior League and its archives. In addition to support and assistance from the Junior League, Gordon and Riesche were able to find support for their position through outside sources, thus adding to the veracity of their research.

It is important to appreciate the difference in objectivity between *The Volunteer Powerhouse* and the second book I used to gain knowledge concerning the history of the Junior League. Nancy Beth Jackson (2001) wrote *The Junior League: 100 Years of Volunteer Service* to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the forming of the Junior League. Chronicling the involvement of Junior League members in many forms of philanthropic work, *The Junior League: 100 Years of Volunteer Service* offered a timeline of the activities in which various Junior League chapters were involved. One consideration I made when using this particular secondary source was that the Association of Junior Leagues International Press published this document. There appeared to be a significant amount of bias regarding the presentation of data in this book. Any information garnered from this book was considered within the context of this document, and it was very useful for it to be corroborated through the work of other writers.

ARTICLES AND PUBLICATIONS CONCERNING MUSEUM EDUCATION BEFORE THE DOCENT-TRAINING COURSE

In 1940, Helen T. Findlay, Secretary of the Arts Department for the Junior League of America, contributed an investigative article “Volunteers in Museums” to the journal *Museum News*. This research was also presented at the American Association of Museums Annual Meeting in Detroit on May 24, 1940 in the session “Training Volunteers.” In her article, Findlay described the many types of volunteer jobs available at museums, including successful docent work with schools (p. 11). Findlay admits her research “deal[s] only with the services of Junior League volunteers,” but “furnish[es]

interesting indications of what seem to be the most successful niches for museum volunteers and of the conditions under which volunteer service has been most effective” (p. 11).

This case study presented two different volunteer opportunities, one success and one failure. Taken from her experience at the Nelson Gallery in Kansas City, Missouri, Findlay provided a guideline of elements necessary for developing and administering a thriving volunteer program. Components of such programs should include volunteers knowing what would be expected of them, how much time will be demanded, and that the volunteer service will be of a real value to the museum (p. 12). These are elements still needed for the foundation of a successful volunteer program. This presentation of the components needed to develop a consequential volunteer program is still found in museum education books published in recent years. In *The Museum Educator's Manual*, it states, “Matching a volunteer’s skills and interests with a specific assignment that utilizes those skills and interests will result in a successful placement” (Cutler, 2009, p. 20). Findlay (1940) also discussed trends in staff relationships with volunteers as well as the responsibilities of a volunteer’s contribution to the museum. These are issues and challenges encountered by many of today’s museum educators.

The *Metropolitan Museum of Art Annual Report of the Trustees* in 1941 and 1942 offered great insight into the theories of education from the heads of the museum and the departmental directors. In 1941 an announcement was made of the July 1st restructuring of the Department of Education and Extension, combining components of the Department of Educational Work, the Department of Industrial Relations, Extension Division of the

Library, and several orphan activities (Taylor, Jayne, & Harrison, 1942, p. 29). This was an important addition to the accumulation of data and facts studied as I looked for factors leading to the docent-training seminar. *The Annual Report of the Trustees* also contained information on the precedent set for education staff taking interest in the teaching of teachers (Taylor, Jayne, & Harrison, 1942, 1943), which is another important addition to my research. *The Annual Report of the Trustees* offered a look at the inner workings of the museum. It remained entirely optimistic, even with the events of World War II taking effect. This document was sent out to the major donors and powerfully recognized board members of the museum. From this it appears the museum desired to put on a good façade so not to worry those who had already invested a great deal of time and money in the museum's various programs.

BOOKS ABOUT THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF DOCENTS

When researching events leading to the docent-training course of 1941, I wanted to grasp the history of docents and docent programs in the United States. In Grinder and McCoy's book, *The Good Guide* (1985), an entire chapter is devoted to the role of the docent as a museum educator. A brief history of American museums flowed into a discussion of Benjamin Ives Gilman, Secretary of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts from 1893 – 1925, and his decision to begin to utilize volunteer docents (Grinder & McCoy, 1985, p. 12). This chapter compared Gilman's approach of museum education to that of John Cotton Dana, director of the Newark Museum from 1909 to 1929. These two men were contemporaries, yet they possessed different viewpoints regarding the purpose of a

museum. Gilman considered the museum's purpose to be, "primarily an institution of culture only secondarily a seat of learning" (Gilman, 1918, p. xi), where the visitor's morals should be uplifted and tastes refined (Grinder & McCoy, 1985, p. 12). Dana, on the other hand, deemed the museum's objective was to, "educate – bring information and ideas to the people" (Grinder & McCoy, 1985, p. 12). These two opinions both dealt with museum education for the public. It was Gilman who, in 1907, refined the European system of using docents as educators and brought it to the American museum field (Grinder & McCoy, 1985; *The History of Instruction at the Museum*, 1909; *The Docent Handbook*, 2001; McCoy, 1989).

Grinder and McCoy (1985) presented a broad overview of how, along with these two theories of museum's purpose, the changing society of the Industrial Revolution influenced the shifting museum policy of the time. Included in the chapter was the acknowledgment that, "museum staffs were largely male in nineteenth-century America; most of them had independent resources and were well educated. As museums grew in numbers after the turn of the century, administrators began to recognize that trained personnel were needed" (Grinder & McCoy, 1985, p. 13). Finally, Grinder and McCoy (1985) concluded that by 1939, "it had been recognized that education was an important function" (p. 14) of museums. This claim is supported with a quote from Frederick E. Keppel in the 1939 *Carnegie Foundation Report*, where he writes "the shift in emphasis from the custodial function of the American Museum to its emphasis for educational and other services is now nearly everywhere an accomplished fact" (as cited in Silver, 1982, p. 16).

In contrast to this summary of the factors influencing Benjamin Ives Gilman's idea to use volunteer docents as museum educators, Sue McCoy's (1989) chapter, "Docents in Art Museum Education," investigated the role the earliest museum docents performed as museum educators. Defining the term docent as "a person who is a knowledgeable guide, especially one who conducts visitors through a museum and delivers commentary on the exhibit" (p. 138), museums created a separation between a museum educator who teaches and a docent who offers commentary.

McCoy (1989) also tackled the issues of gender and volunteerism in the American museum when she stated,

The availability of a volunteer force evolved during the early 20th century in America, when most educated women were not employed and were aware of the growing social consciousness in urban areas. Women of all ages began to seek volunteer roles in many public areas, adding to their own education as they did so. (p. 137)

This idea of women being educated and in search of a means to participate in philanthropic areas of the community aligns with the mission statement of the Junior League of America, which states the Junior League is "an organization of women committed to promoting voluntarism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through the effective action and leadership of trained volunteers" (*About AJLI: Our Mission*, n.d.).

The goal for the Junior League for the Promotion of the Settlement Movements was to take the privileged women of Upper East Side Manhattan out of their comfort zone and venture into the Lower East Side's College Settlement House on Rivington Street. A shift from the ideological thought of donating only money to the poor, the

Junior League members would donate their time and skills to create a better community. Harriman hoped for the Junior League to be part of the progressive era that included the “high idealism and personal commitment of women” (Gordon & Riesche, 1983, p. 23).

BOOKS CONCERNING WOMEN’S PHILANTHROPY BEFORE WORLD WAR II

Though not much has been written specifically about the philanthropic contributions of the Junior League, research does exist concerning the work of women volunteers both from individuals and other organizations and clubs. In *Women’s Culture*, Kathleen D. McCarthy (1991) has written about how women’s philanthropy “provided the primary means through which the majority of middle- and upper-class women fashioned their public roles” (p. xii). In the early 1940s, the social class of members with the Junior League was upper-class women with a college education. Volunteerism was a socially acceptable arena for these women to utilize their time, knowledge, and energy. In the art museum, these women contributed their skills in the role of volunteer educator. McCarthy does argue against “the most enduring American notions are that women are the nation’s cultural custodians, and always have been” (p. xi), saying this image obscures the real relationship between women, culture, and the arts. This forced me to be vigilant not to stereotype the women who participated in the 1941 docent-training course, but to recognize the different attitudes and values these women likely possessed.

Another theory McCarthy presented was the importance of research into non-politicized women’s organizations, of which the Junior League is categorized. More research exists on topics such as abolitionist, suffrage, and women’s rights, but McCarthy

explains “cultural initiatives were less susceptible to the disruptive influences of cyclical reform enthusiasm or to having their program terminated because their goals had been enacted into law” (p. xii). The purpose of the Junior League revolves around “developing the potential of women and improving communities” (*About AJLI: Our Mission*, n.d.). This is not a goal with a finish line; rather it is an ongoing process. The Junior League, like many non-politicized women’s organization, was thinking about the long term, and with the big picture in mind.

The idea of considering the larger perspective is the center point of Katherine Acey’s (2005) chapter, “Backbone and Bite: The Place of Volunteerism in Women’s Giving.” She wrote, “for centuries, women have organized themselves in the service of their families and communities. In the United States alone, women have founded institutions, started movements, and provided leadership within social causes for more than 250 years” (p. 76). As a general look at the reasons women joined philanthropic organizations, Acey explained that women turned to these clubs as a means to act both as an individual and as part of a group. By choosing which cause to work for the women were able to determine where their energy went. Acting in a social setting and being a part of the larger group dynamic offered the women an opportunity to contribute to their communities. She claimed, “by fusing these two principles, nonprofit organizations reinforce both, establishing an arena of action through which individuals can take the initiative not simply to promote their own well-being but to advance the well being of others” (p. 75). This idea of group and individual participation and empowerment was an

important addition to my research and enforced different theories about why women volunteer.

EARLY WRITINGS OF FRANCIS HENRY TAYLOR

Early in his career, Francis Henry Taylor wrote numerous articles and books on the role of education in the museum. In an article for *The Atlantic Monthly* titled “Art and Obligation” (1940), Taylor wrote about the museum in a changing world faced with the impending World War. As the great museums of Europe made efforts to protect art from the attack of war, Taylor knew the responsibility about to be given to American museums, declaring,

We cannot see far into the future. But we know that a new and terrible obligation is ours. The sacred fire of the humanities has been placed in our hands. We must not merely keep it alight but we must rekindle it that it may burn more brightly than ever before within the safe and solid confines of this hemisphere. (p. 124)

With this new power and responsibility, Taylor (1940) decided that, “the museum is no longer, then, the rich man’s folly...it is the great free public institution to which the humblest citizen may turn for spiritual regeneration” (p. 126).

Much of what Taylor offered in this interview, he included five years later in his book, *Babel's Tower: The Dilemma of the Modern Museum*. In addition to the basic premise of the changing role of the museum, Taylor (1945) stated, “An art museum is usually thought of as a gallery for the display of masterpieces,” and Taylor asked the reader to “think of it rather as a visual reference collection of cultural history” (p. 26). A change in how museums had been approached and steered by directors, this was a bold statement from the new director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In his

reestablishment of the role of the museum in society, Taylor situated the purpose of education in the forefront of his museum, asserting, “every activity of an art gallery is essentially educational” (p. 36). This was to be the new direction of the entire staff, from curator, to administrator, to educator. Though he did not write or speak of the specific roles volunteers would play in this shift in direction and stance, it is important to my research to have a strong knowledge of the changing trends that occurred in museums, especially the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

HISTORICAL METHODOLOGY AND ARCHIVAL RESEARCH ARTICLES AND BOOKS

When entering an historical investigation, it is beneficial to explore how history is researched and written. An introduction to the fundamentals of history, Robert C. Williams’ book, *The Historian’s Toolbox* acted as a guide for my research by including discussions of evidence, narrative, and judgment. The first part of the book explained how concepts of history have evolved and changed throughout time. The second half of the book directs the reader through the “toolbox,” as it explained the different types of sources one comes across in the research process, most importantly periodicals, chronologies, and personal correspondence. Williams also discussed issues of interpretation, ethics of research, and what individual historians are charged to do. These considerations were all important for me to consider through the steps of my research process.

While *The Historian’s Toolbox* offered insight into the specifics of the process of historical research, John Lewis Gaddis’ *The Landscape of History* was a broad look at

how history is constructed and written. Gaddis (2002) warned historians, “the past . . . is something we can never have. For by the time we’ve become aware of what has happened it’s already inaccessible to us: we cannot relive, retrieve, or rerun it” (p. 3). This is an important realization because as much as I wanted to recreate and coexist with the events of the docent-training course of 1941, the most I have done is represent them. But the act of representation is not weak. Gaddis charges, “that very act of representation . . . makes you feel large, because you yourself are in charge of the representation; it’s you who must make complexity comprehensible, first to yourself, then to others” (p. 7).

Though I was limited in my research to the materials and data available, as I developed my narrative I looked at the past from the vantage point of the present. Historians bring to their writing selectivity, simultaneity, and scale (pp. 22 – 25) meaning I, too, brought these biases. Gaddis (2002) has asserted,

Historians have no choice but to engage in these manipulations of time, space, and scale – these departures from literal representations – because a truly literal representation of any entity could only be the entity itself, and that would be impractical. (p. 26)

These different forms of manipulation and interpretations were with me at every step of writing my thesis, and it was important for me to recognize that this was the natural process of historical writing.

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH ARTICLES AND BOOKS

An important part of my research was the archival materials at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Office of the Secretary. Having never performed archival research, I

needed a broad introduction to this process. In *Beyond the Archives*, Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan (2008) compiled personal accounts of current historians involved in archival research. Each chapter presented a different author who shared their research and how they interacted with archives. David Gold's chapter, "The Accidental Archivist," described the archival process like,

Putting together a jigsaw puzzle, except that you don't have a picture on the box for reference, there's more than one puzzle in the box, the picture keeps changing depending on how you fit the pieces together, and the pieces themselves change shape when your back is turned. (p. 15)

Though this may not be the most encouraging analogy, it does make the work of archival research more dynamic and interesting.

Kirsch and Rohan also presented fellow historians Anne Ruggles Gere, Susan Miller, Jane Donawerth, and Lisa Zimmerelli, who conduct research on historical women whose stories and issues have been ignored or overlooked. It was comforting to know I was not alone in my research of women's histories. But the most important bit of information I took from Kirsch was the idea of serendipity. Kirsch stated, "it also helps to have serendipity on one's side, but that of course, is not something one can arrange purposefully, although I am convinced one can be open to the possibility" (p. 20). This fantastic statement helped me to realize I had to be open to new possibilities and new avenues I found on my journey into archival research.

Analyzing and interpreting the various forms of written and visual data I uncovered in my research was a means to establish the patterns and trends behind the phenomenon of the docent-training course offered by the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Ettinger and Maitland-Gholson (1990), published, “Text Analysis as a Guide for Research in Art Education,” an article that contended, “in order for progress to continue in the development of research methods that support the analysis of complex data, a multilayered framework of overlapping and connecting orientations to the question of reality needs to be built and explored” (p. 86). Most of my research explored historical documents, and this article gave me insight into making the most of the information available. It also affirmed how my work will contribute to the advancement of the public’s knowledge of art education history.

Presenting a table of the five different orientations to text analysis; literal, classic content, semantic, structural, and hermeneutic, I found myself aligned with the “classic content” orientation, which “treats manifest content systematically, objectively, quantitatively” (p. 89). Overlapping with classic content analysis, I saw myself also aligned with the “semantic” orientation because I was a “model maker of internal textual connections” (p. 90). Hidden in my research materials were messages that I tried to find and “text analysis provides ways to consider the symbolic meaning of messages” (p. 87). Using Ettinger and Maitland-Gholson’s text analysis framework and making a clear distinction between my analysis and interpretation, I was able to create structural parameters for my research. These parameters enabled me to remain focused throughout the research process.

CONCLUSION

The years focused on for my research (1939 – 1947) were a time of transition in culture, society, and museums. Shifts occurred away from the old guard of museum directors, trustees, educators, and staff. In 1939 Francis Henry Taylor wrote, “The American museum is...not an abandoned European palace, a solution for storing and classifying the accumulated national wealth of the past, but an American phenomenon, developed by the people, for the people, and of the people” (pp. 789 – 790). Taylor goes on to state, “We have reached a critical period in American museums . . . the public is no longer impressed with the museums and is frankly bored with their inability to serve it” (p. 790). These sentiments set the stage for change in art museum education and the burgeoning practice of using volunteers as a means to reach a greater number of visitors from all walks of life. Throughout my research, I discovered books, articles, and documents, which explained the change in women’s attitudes towards work outside of the home and changes in the perception of philanthropy.

Each of these components I met while conducting my research adds strength to the arguments I make concerning the attitudes and events leading up to and following the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s 1941 docent training course for Junior League members. The literature gathered regarding attitudes towards art museum education, docents, and the Junior League, have enabled me to compose a distinct historical argument, which is presented and supported throughout the following chapters.

Chapter 3: *Methodology and Development of Argument*

IN THE BEGINNING

The beginning of this investigation into the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1941 docent training course for Junior League members lies equally in my passion for history and my personal connection with the Junior League. Challenged by a professor to validate the presence of Junior League volunteers in the art museum, I conducted an initial investigation to better understand why this specific group of women involved itself with art museum education.

Through my initial investigation, four reasons became clear why the Junior League began and continues its involvement in museum education programming. The first was the Junior League does not have one exclusive charity organization it works with; rather it engages with a variety of organizations within the community that surrounds each chapter. Second, the Junior League works only as a supplementary and complimentary force with community and civic facilities already in existence, and does not build or establish its own independent facilities. Third, the Junior League requires its members to have direct contact with the general public. Lastly, the Junior League encourages active community participation. All these factors are encompassed in the art museum. During the initial investigation for this research, I came across one mention of the 1941 docent-training course for Junior League members at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. From this single reference, a decision was made to devote the entirety of my thesis research to the discovery of why this program happened, and why it occurred only once.

Entering into this investigation, I shifted my focus from undertaking a broad look at the Junior League's involvement in the museum, to investigate the specific event of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's docent training course for Junior League members that occurred in 1941. From here, I set out to examine the attitudes towards art education and volunteer docents at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, as they existed in the 1940s. I also inspected and scrutinized the motivations of the Junior League members who chose to travel to New York and participate in this seminar.

Dealing with an event from the past, I chose to utilize an historical investigation in order to carry out my study. To conduct historical research, I consulted a range of materials, including but not limited to the following: books, journal articles, internal museum documents, and correspondence. Primary source materials were favored so that I could find the most direct and reliable information available about the opinions and outlooks toward educational practices at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

OBSTACLES AND HURDLES

Historical research is often considered a straightforward process. Yet, in my case I met two distinct obstacles. The first impediment to my research was found in the utilization of archives at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The second obstruction was finding reliable information from the Junior League. Having never conducted archival research, I looked to other historians such as David Gold (2008) and Gesa E. Kirsch (2008) who both have used archival materials in their investigations. With these guides for my research, I contacted James Moske, the Managing Archivist of the Office of the

Senior Vice President, Secretary and General Counsel of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Inquiring if the archives held any information regarding the 1941 docent training course for Junior League members, Mr. Moske replied that the archive possessed a small batch of correspondence, memos, and forms related to this event and I was welcome to consult them for my thesis research.

The documents from the archives that contributed to my research included letters from Helen T. Findlay and Francis Henry Taylor, discussing the approval and initiation of the docent-training course. There was also the formal proposal for the docent-training course that listed the various goals, expectations, and parameters of the course. A blank application form and a completed application form were included in the packet of information about the training course. The final document from the archives was the intended curriculum of the course as written by Roberta M. Fansler, the women who would teach the course.

The second hurdle in my research was contacting the Junior League International headquarters and the different Junior League chapters from which the eight women in the course came. Phone calls and emails were delivered to Junior League headquarters in New York, but I did not receive a reply to my inquiry for information. Without help from the national headquarters, I was unable to collect data or secure information about the attitude the Junior League, as an organization, held towards the docent-training course of 1941.

This lack of information about the Junior League's involvement in the docent training course was coupled with my knowledge that each chapter of the Junior League

acts as an independent organization with individual outlooks on service in the community. I had hoped that through contact with the seven chapters of the Junior League, I would be able to gather information about the lives of the women who participated in the course. I placed phone calls to the seven chapters and left a voicemail with each. Of those seven chapters, five returned a call. Though none of the women I spoke with at their various chapters had any information themselves, they promised to find the person who would have the information. In addition to phone calls, I also sent emails to each of the chapters in hopes that a written inquiry would be passed to the historian or archivist of the chapters.

Unfortunately, most of the Junior League chapters do not have a designated historian or someone involved with their archives, if an archive even exists. The historian from the Junior League of Omaha was unable to find any information regarding Elizabeth C. Ramsay and Anne de Bonneville Young, two members who attended the docent-training course. Despite a continued dialogue with the office manager of the Montclair, New Jersey chapter, no information was found about Dorothy Ross Grant. The president of the New Haven, Connecticut Junior League informed me that they had no one in charge of their archives and would not be able to give me any information about Eleanor English.

This lack of documentation and accessible record keeping makes it difficult for historians to conduct research into the events that helped form the Junior League. It also leads to the lack of validity the Junior League has struggled with for much of its

existence. Not finding the information I needed from the Junior League itself, I decided to shift my efforts to a broader base of newspapers from these various communities.

My attempt at finding local newspapers from the different communities was also met with frustration and difficulty. Most women returned to their hometowns after the start of World War II. The headlines and articles that dominated these papers dealt almost exclusively with the war efforts. In addition to the focus put on World War II, I met another hurdle in finding information about the women documented in their local newspapers. Because of social standards of the 1940s many of the women I researched for this study would later, I have speculated, change their last names once they were married. Records of these changes in surname are not documented and often the only announcement of this shift comes in the form of a wedding announcement.

I did have success with independent search engines and traditional research methods, which was the only way I was able to secure any information concerning the lives of these eight women. I discovered that Anne de Bonneville Young of Omaha, Nebraska attended Bryn Mawr College and majored in art history, and Patricia Egan of St. Louis, Missouri attended Vassar College. Eleanor English of New Haven, Connecticut already had worked as an associate at the Yale University Art Gallery. These valuable finds gave me some background information and I was able to conclude that at least some of these women already had a passion for art and museums by the time they attended the Metropolitan Museum of Art's docent-training program. However, this information was limited and did not contribute much to my actual thesis research, other than giving me a context in which to place three of the eight women. It was at this point

that, after having exhausted all apparent paths to finding information on these eight women, I made the decision to move away from the Junior League and refocus my investigation on the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

INVESTIGATION OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOURCES

In Jean C. Rush's 1985 *Studies in Art Education* article, the author stated, "Historians collect surviving materials, determine their authenticity, extract credible data, and organize them into a meaningful narrative" (p. 67). It was at this point in my study where I had to determine the credibility and authenticity of the primary and secondary sources I had gathered. Primary sources consist of documents from the participants and figures that had a relationship with the event being researched and the records created in the same time in history as the event (Korsenik, 1985; Stankiewicz, 1997). Secondary sources are those documents and records about the event after it has taken place, and are often a reflection of the events or a memory of them. Secondary sources are generally considered less reliable than primary sources and must be treated as a removed interpretation, less as fact (Korsenik, 1985; Stankiewicz, 1997).

As I looked to research the attitudes and expectations of the educational staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I examined journals and documents from 1939 to 1947. One of the most pertinent issues of historical research is the validity and authenticity of the primary and secondary sources used in my research. Journals I turned to included the American Association of Museums publication, *Museum News*, and *The American Magazine of Art*, a periodical published by the American Federation of Arts. Utilizing

these publications, I was able to find reliable data and reputable information from the time period being examined. I analyzed and interpreted facts, data, and information in order to create an argument that has helped me better understand the reasons art museums initiated volunteer docent programs.

CONSTRUCTING ARGUMENTS

Bolin (in press) explains, “Beyond a presentation of facts from the past, well crafted and articulated argument is necessary in the creation of spirited and meaningful history” (n.p.). Historical research is not simply a display of data and facts, but rather an interactive process involving investigating a question and presenting an argument. Bolin goes on to state, “Writing history that is based on argument does not mean the historian has free license to skew or misrepresent evidence from the past” but rather, “The historian must develop and support an argument that reflects reasonably, and to the best of his or her ability, an accurate and meaningful representation of the past” (n.p.). It is then my intent that this research and argument will open the door for a dialogue about Junior League docents and their training at the 1941 Metropolitan Museum of Art. It was only after I had found, sorted, surveyed, and organized the data and research material that I was able to develop an argument regarding how this seminar reflected the beliefs museum education staff held towards volunteer docents, which set precedent for the relationship between Junior League members and museum educators at that time.

THEORETICAL LENS OF RESEARCH

In addition to the sources uncovered, to properly form an argument, I must have established a theoretical lens through which I examine my research. For this study, I have identified three different theoretical lenses. These include ideas drawn from feminist theory, philanthropic theory, and leisure theory.

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is defined as the extension of feminism into theoretical, or philosophical discourse. Aiming to understand the nature of gender inequality, it examines women's social roles, lived experience, and feminist politics in a variety of fields (Brabeck & Brown, 1997). While generally providing a critique of social relations, much feminist theory also focuses on analyzing gender inequality and the promotion of women's rights, interests, and issues. Themes explored in feminism include art history, contemporary art, aesthetics, discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, oppression, and patriarchy (Chodorow, 1989; Gilligan, 1977; Lerman, 1990).

Within feminist theory is the understanding of three distinct waves of feminism. The first wave was oriented around the station of middle or upper class white women, and involved suffrage and political equality. The term, "first-wave" was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused on both fighting social and cultural inequalities and furthering the fight against political inequalities (Freedman, 2003). First-wave

feminism is considered to have ended in 1919 with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution that granted women the right to vote.

The second wave of feminism encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. If first-wave feminism focused upon absolute rights, such as suffrage, second-wave feminism was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as the end to discrimination (Freedman, 2003). Second-wave feminism attempted to further combat social and cultural inequalities.

Third-wave feminist theory, the model I used in my research, is considered both a continuation and a response to the perceived failures of the second wave of feminist theory (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2005). It includes elements of queer theory and anti-racism. The third wave is less reactive, and focuses on developing and recognizing the different achievements of women in America. The third wave incorporates a greater number of women who may not have previously identified with the dynamics and goals that were established at the start of the feminist movement. The third wave is about choice. Women have the opportunity to be successful and are not restricted by gender.

In *Manifesta: Young Women, Feminism, and the Future* (2000), Jennifer Baumgartner and Amy Richards present thirteen points to the current feminist agenda. Two points in particular helped to drive my research; the first being, “to acknowledge that, although feminists may have disparate values, we share the same goal of equality, and of supporting one another in our efforts to gain the power to make our own choices” (p. 426). Though my research and argument may differ from other researchers, my

feminist research is valid and is to be regarded as feminist research. The second was, “to tap into and raise awareness of our revolutionary history, . . . to have access to our intellectual feminist legacy and women’s history . . . and to have women’s history taught to men as well as women as part of all curricula” (p. 425). Not commonly taught as a part of the history of education, the research I conducted is an important part of feminist history and the history of women in art education. The research must be presented for all those interested in the many historical facets of art education, docents, volunteerism, and women’s roles in museums.

Philanthropic Theory

Philanthropy is, “a social institution that takes on meaning in the context of a cultural emphasis on individualism and private initiative” (Ostrower, 1995, p. 8). In the book, *Understanding Philanthropy*, authors Robert L. Payton and Michael P. Moody (2008) define philanthropy as, “voluntary action for the public good” (p. 27). It is important to recognize that philanthropy is not charity, the practice of simply giving money. Rather philanthropy includes three parts: voluntary giving of money or goods; voluntary service of time and talents; and voluntary association, which is organized activity without which most voluntary giving and service would be ineffective or even impossible (Payton & Moody, 2008, p. 6).

Payton and Moody present five roles for philanthropy in contemporary society. These include, service, advocacy, cultural, civic, and vanguard. Three of these five roles for philanthropy can be seen in why women from the Junior League would have wanted

to participate in the docent training course: service, culture, and civic engagement. The service role of philanthropy grants women the opportunity to provide services and meet the needs of their communities' art museums. The cultural role provides a means for expressing and preserving the aspects of culture these women found important, mainly the arts. And finally, the civic role was a way for these women to help build communities and promote civic engagement by sharing the knowledge they collected from the docent-training course in New York, and was able to share this information with like-minded women in their hometowns.

Women's foundations and nonprofit organizations "give institutional expression to two seemingly contradictory principles . . . the principles of individualism . . . and the principle for solidarity" (Acey, 2005, p. 75). Women are afforded the freedom to give time and energy to the causes and concerns to which they are personally invested. At the same time, women are able to be part of a community working towards a common goal. Acey (2005) asserts that, "by fusing these two principles, nonprofit organizations reinforce both, establishing an arena of action through which individuals can take the initiative not simply to promote their own well being but to advance the well being of others" (p. 75). Philanthropy is a valuable aspect of the lives of many Americans. "Voluntary service is an important dimension of American life, important to those who offer it and to those they serve, and important to society as a whole" (Payton & Moody, 2008, p. 42).

Leisure Theory

Aspects of volunteerism and feminism are also found in leisure theory, the third theoretical model utilized in my research. Though not as easily defined as feminist theory and philanthropic theory, the ideas underlining leisure are no less significant:

Leisure is activity . . . apart from the obligations of work, family, and society...to which the individual turns at will, for relaxation, diversion, or broadening his knowledge and his spontaneous social participation, the free exercise of capacity. (Dumazedier, 1967, pp. 16 – 17)

Leisure theory consists of a variety of minor social theories including, balance theory, spillover theory, and identity theory.

Balance theory is the decision to choose recreation and experiences that lend balance to one's life. The balance can be physical, physiological, or social. A person who lives alone may seek social interaction in recreation; a person who does demanding intellectual work may choose physical activity to sustain balance. Many women in the 1940s used volunteerism as a way to find balance between their private and personal lives, especially when many of these women were bound by social rules of the day to stay at home and act as wife and mother.

Spillover theory is the decision to choose leisure outlets that are familiar and provide less risk and more chances for success. It seems most of the women who applied to the docent training course already had backgrounds in art and art history, so naturally they felt comfortable in the art museum setting. Electing to continue their education and research into art and art history was a safe option for these women.

Identity theory is concerned with the development of an identity. It is an effort to fulfill the ego and contribute to a feeling of individual contributions to the self. Working outside of the home after marriage was not a common occurrence for women of higher social classes. But, volunteerism through the Junior League had been an acceptable activity for these women since 1901. The act of volunteering afforded women a means to fulfill the self not possible through housework and social events.

The Connection of Theories

For centuries, women have organized themselves in the service of their families and communities. In the United States alone, women have founded institutions, started movements, and provided leadership for social causes for more than 250 years. Before it was widely accepted for women to work outside the home, many honed their organizational skills in associations they created. (Acey, 2005, p. 76)

The three theories presented here – feminist theory, philanthropic theory, and leisure theory – overlay and connect in my research.

Unlike men, who enjoyed a host of options in their pursuit of meaningful careers, women have historically turned to nonprofit institutions and reform associations as a way to contribute to and influence their communities (McCarthy, 1990). Women view volunteering as an opportunity to do something they consider worthwhile and valuable to both their self and to their community.

Volunteerism is, by definition, leisure. The women who chose to participate in the docent-training course organized by the Metropolitan Museum of Art did so as a means to broaden their knowledge of art, art history, and art museums. Volunteerism gave women an opportunity to be contributing members of a society outside of their home. It

also made available the occasion for women to participate in a social environment with other women possessing similar goals and interests, thus also fulfilling the self and the community.

Chapter 4: *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Docent Training Course for Junior League Members*

In 1940, two events occurred that laid the foundation for the docent-training course for Junior League members. The first was the appointment of Francis Henry Taylor as Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The second was Helen T. Findlay's presentation of her paper "Training Volunteers," at the American Association of Museums Annual meeting in Detroit. These two figures would join forces a year later in June 1941 to present the proposal to the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Board of Trustees for a docent training course for Junior League members. But the story of how the docent-training course came to occur begins years earlier.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded in 1870 by a group of New York City businessmen and financiers in an effort to create a museum to bring art and art education to the American audience. The original organizing committee of the museum agreed the purpose for its creation was to afford "to our whole people free and ample means for innocent and refined enjoyment, and also supplying the best facilities for practical instruction and for cultivation of pure taste in all matters connected to the art" (Taylor, 1939, p. 790). The Metropolitan Museum of Arts' paintings collection was started in 1870, when three private European collections, 174 paintings in all, came to the museum. In 1880, the Metropolitan moved to its current site in Central Park.

The charter for the Metropolitan Museum of Art reads that the museum was formed,

For the purpose of establishing and maintaining in said city a museum and library of art, of encouraging and developing the study of fine arts, and the application of arts to manufacture and practical life, of advancing the general knowledge of kindred subjects, and to that end, of furnishing popular instruction and recreation. (as cited in Fansler, 1944, p. 126)

From its inception, the Metropolitan Museum of Art grew and developed its education department. The Education Department was established in 1907 after Henry Watson Kent was appointed to supervise this new museum instruction initiative ("Museum Instruction," 1910). In 1908, Lucy O. Perkins was hired as the first museum instructor, dedicated as such by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Over the years this department of formal museum instruction continued to grow.

But education, whether formal or informal, was and always has been an important element of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. From Free Days established in 1875, to partnerships with New York City public schools in 1905, and courses offered to high school teachers on the collection in 1912, to Story Hours conducted by Anna Curtis Chandler in 1927, the Metropolitan Museum worked to include more children's and public programming into its calendar of events (Mazer , 1987). And with any expansion in programming comes a need for an increase in the number of staff. Museum instructors had been employed at the Metropolitan Museum of Art since 1908, but it was not until the Junior League docent-training course of 1941 that the museum considered utilizing volunteers in educational roles (Greenway, 1939; Raymond, 1939).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE JUNIOR LEAGUE

19-year-old New York City socialite, Mary Harriman, founded the Junior League in 1901. Attending a lecture on the work of Jane Addams in social reform and the settlement movement, Harriman learned the goal for this progressive and reformist settlement movement was to enable the rich and poor of a community to live together more closely. Harriman soon gathered eighty New York City debutantes and founded an organization titled the Junior League for the Promotion of the Settlement Movements.

The initial mission of the Junior League for the Promotion of the Settlement Movements was to take the privileged women of Upper East Side Manhattan out of their comfort zone and venture into the Lower East Side's College Settlement House on Rivington Street. Assuming a shift from the ideological thought of donating only money to the poor, the women of the Junior League would now donate their time and skills to create what they believed to be a better community. Harriman hoped the Junior League for the Promotion of the Settlement Movements would be part of the progressive era that included the "high idealism and personal commitment of women" (Gordon, 1983, p. 23).

Realizing their lack of experience in dealing with the issues facing people in the settlement house, the Junior League invited experts in social work to hold lectures and instruct members on what to do in these community centers. Substantially different from what male charity and social workers were conducting, these women volunteers offered something new and exciting to a community in need.

Sociologist Dorothy G. Becker states,

Men social workers saw themselves literally as caretakers of the poor, spoke to the poor, interpreted their needs and developed programs they felt that they should have; while women thought of a new social order in which the money power would be subordinated to human need, and fought for social work, education and research. (Gordon, 1983, p. 24)

These women of the Junior League were reinventing their role in philanthropy and reinterpreting what it meant to be involved with their community and were helping to create a sense of ownership to their neighborhoods.

EARLY CONNECTIONS OF JUNIOR LEAGUE AND THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

In New York City, the settlement movement began to lose popularity in the early 1930s. The Lower East Side's College Settlement House on Rivington Street, where the Junior League volunteers concentrated their efforts and energy, closed in 1930. This closing occurred because programs offered at the settlement house began to be taken over by both municipal and state government agencies (Barbuto, 1999). The Junior League needed to find a new community center where its members could dedicate both time and money while engaging and interacting with the poor of their city.

Even during these early stages of the Great Depression, the women knew they had a responsibility to their communities. The Junior League was comprised of educated women with college degrees who had the time and inclination to "pursue additional knowledge, particularly in the arts and literature" (Gordon & Riesche, 1983, p. 27). The question posed to the chapters of the Junior League was where would the women volunteer?

Herbert E. Winlock, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art proposed an answer. In 1933, he organized a symposium to address the possibility of museum and Junior League affiliations. He asked the members of the Junior League to join with the museums of their communities to initiate new collaboration programs. Winlock asked,

What are people going to do with their leisure time? ... We must help educate the public to make the best use of its free hours, to express their character in an abundant life, which is largely defined by the things we do that we do not have to do. (Gordon & Riesche, 1983, p. 36)

In 1934, a year after this meeting, one of the first collaboration between the Junior League and an art museum occurred. The Pittsburg Museum of Art received funds from the Junior League of Pittsburg Arts and Interests Committee that provided volunteer services from the Pittsburg Junior League members and created three different art programs for the year. These three programs were, “Old Master Drawings,” “Giotto’s Frescos and Italian Culture,” and “Flowers in Art” (Arts and Interests, Pittsburg, 1934).

In 1936, the Museums at McGill University worked with the Junior League of Montreal to train members who wished to volunteer in the university’s museums. The members attended five weekly lectures that included topics such as museum management, museum collections, museum building architecture, and collection arrangement. After completing the lecture series, Junior League members were able to contribute to the increase in accessibility to the museum’s collection and archives (Judah, 1936).

Though the Metropolitan Museum of Art hosted one of the first museum and Junior League collaborative meetings, it would be years before its education staff began

any real programming initiatives between Junior League members and the museum. It would take a change in leadership to bring these women to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and it would take a change in attitude towards volunteers as well.

RESHUFFLE OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

In September 1941, the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* announced a reshuffling and restructuring of the Department of Education. Hoping to “meet the present needs of the general public, as well as offering specialized services to the expert,” the department would now be titled the Department of Education and Museum Extension (p. 180). The announcement stated, “The Museum is neither an art school nor a college. It has no power conferred on it by the state to grant degrees, and consequently it should no longer compete by offering course for credit on the college level” (p. 180). It continued, “Our objective is, therefore, to adapt our program more closely to the interest of the general adult public” (p. 180).

This pronouncement concerning the new attitude and mission of education in the museum accompanied the Board of Trustees consolidation of education and extension into one single department. Thus, “on July 1 the Department of Educational Work, the Department of Industrial Relations, the Extension Division of the Library, and several orphan activities were combined, and the Department of Education and Extension was created” (Taylor, Jayne, & Harrison, 1942, p. 29). From the Department of Industrial Relations, Richard F. Bach was appointed Dean of Education and Museum Extension. Roberta M. Fansler, instructor at the Metropolitan since 1927, would assume the role of

Assistant Dean and would be in charge of the co-ordination of the teaching curriculum with the general program of curatorial activity and research. This restructuring would come at the same time as the appointment of new museum director, Francis Henry Taylor.

FRANCIS HENRY TAYLOR

Born in 1903, Francis Henry Taylor started his museum career as a curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In 1931 he became director of the Worcester Art Museum in Worcester, Massachusetts. After spending nine years at the Worcester Art Museum, Taylor was elected Director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art on January 8, 1940, at a meeting of the Board of Trustees. Taylor joined the Metropolitan Museum in New York City as its director on May 15, 1940. He would be the fifth director of the museum, proceeded by Luigi Palma di Cesnola, Caspar Purdon Clarke, Edward Robinson, and Herbert Eustis Winlock ("The New Director," 1940; "The New Director," 1941, pp. 26-27).

Outspoken and candid concerning his view on the role of the museum, Taylor (1939) deemed that "we have placed art, for which there is a ravenous appetite in this country, both literally and figuratively, on pedestals beyond the reach of the man in the street" (p. 790). While the Director of the Worcester Art Museum, Taylor successfully carried out "extensive programs of exhibitions, lectures, and other forms of educational services," exemplifying his "understanding of the importance of the museum as an inspiration force in the community" ("The New Director," 1941, p. 27; W.V.N., 1940, p.

25). Here he also conducted experimental educational programming and established a close partnership with the between the museum and the arts department of the public schools of Worcester (W.V.N., 1940, p. 25).

Believing firmly in the increased accessibility of the art museum to the general public, Taylor spent much of his career questioning and pushing against the elitist ideology that the museum was a place for the educated and wealthy, and not a place for the layman. He declared, “We have reached a critical period in American museums” and challenged every member of the museum staff to shift focus from attendance numbers and money from memberships to education and offering the visitor the most authentic and dynamic experience (1939, p. 790). This was his mindset and personal drive to move power from the curator to educator. Taylor (1945) believed that, “every activity of an art gallery [is] essentially educational” (p. 36).

For a museum to be democratic, it must focus on in-reach and outreach. Taylor sought outreach by accepting a position on the Council of the American Association of Museums and as Chairman of the National Council for Art Week (“Back Matter,” 1940, p. 21; “Nomination to the Council,” 1940, p. 234). The American Association of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906. It has helped to develop standards and best practices, gather and share knowledge, and provide advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum field. In this organization Taylor sat on, the governing council dedicated itself to ensuring that museums remain a vital part of the American landscape, connecting people with the greatest achievements of the human experience, past, present and future (*About AAM*, 2010). Franklin D. Roosevelt, as a way to

encourage the sales and exhibitions of artwork by living American artists, initiated national Art Week. Additionally, this event was established to expand the responsibility of keeping the arts alive in the United States, putting this into the hands of the American people (Taylor, 1940, p. 4). It was as Chairman of the National Council for Art Week that Taylor would meet Helen T. Findlay, Art Chairman from the Association of the Junior Leagues of America in New York City (“Back Matter,” 1940, pp. 21-23).

HELEN T. FINDLAY

Helen T. Findlay was born on March 26, 1910 in Kansas City, Missouri and received her college degree from Vassar College. The granddaughter of Wally Findlay, an art gallery owner in Kansas City, Helen grew up in a world of art and would later work in the prints department of this gallery (Findlay, 1936, p. 12), and as the corporate secretary and member of its board (Distinguished Women, 1982). In 1934, as acting president of the Junior League in Kansas City, Findlay volunteered her members as docents at the Nelson-Atkins Museum¹ of Art in Kansas City, Missouri (“Junior League Art Praised,” 1939, p. 51). She created this program as a means to continue her belief in the importance of community involvement of the arts. Findlay believed “art and beauty are important, integral elements of daily life,” and she made sincere efforts to support community social and cultural programs (Distinguished Women, 1982).

After this valuable experience, Findlay became the Secretary of the Arts Department for the Association of Junior Leagues of America. Findlay used her time in

¹ Formally the Nelson Gallery

this powerful and influential position to continue conducting research concerning volunteers in the museum. For seven years, Helen T. Findlay worked in the art museum and observed how Junior League volunteers were being utilized at the Nelson-Atkins Museum. This time observing in the museum convinced her that “there are far greater potentialities in volunteer assistance than have yet been tapped” (Findlay, 1940, p. 11). Findlay dealt only with the services of volunteers from the Junior League, and it was her collected data that was used in her *Museum News* article “Volunteers in the Museum” and her presentation at the AAM Annual Meeting of 1941.

The crux of Findlay’s argument in her paper is that “volunteer service can develop informed lay interpreters of the museum program” (1940, p. 12). The effectiveness of these volunteer partnerships “depends on how seriously the intentions of the volunteer are considered and how earnestly the professional and volunteer work together” (1940, p. 12). It is from this data that she likely formulated her proposal for a Junior League training program at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

ROBERTA M. FANSLER

Roberta M. Fansler² began working at the Metropolitan Museum of Art as a museum instructor in 1927 (Taylor, 1941, p. 179). When then museum president Henry W. Kent hired Fansler, she was a recent graduate of Bryn Mawr College and considered herself a “latter day follower of William Morris and of Ruskin” (Sherman & Holcomb,

² Roberta M. Fansler’s full name is Roberta Murray Fansler Alford Capers due to the addition of married names. For this paper, she will be referenced as Fansler as the majority of her writings cited in this paper are under Fansler.

1981, pp. 55-56). She concentrated her early efforts in the museum on giving lectures and tours to those visitors who hailed from the working class and women, two groups that had not traditionally been welcomed into the museum. Through lectures, tours, and programs, Fansler desired to create a more democratic institution and open the museum doors to all citizens of the city. One of her first initiatives was to start Saturday afternoon lectures for men and women who worked during the week. The course was intended to,

Meet the needs of men and women who are unable to come to the museum on week-days, and who wish to make serious study of museum material for the light it can throw on the culture and history of the human race. (Museum Broadens Art Lecture Scope, 1931, p. N5)

One of Fansler's early theories and beliefs in museum education was the importance of teaching the teacher. In 1932 Fansler claimed, "A small staff of museum instructors cannot hope to supply teaching service to an entire city school system" (As cited in Silver, 1978, p. 246). Though this is not the same as training docents, this theory aligns with the transmission of knowledge and teaching others to teach. To Fansler, those who have been trained in touring techniques should give the tours in an art museum, and they should not be administered by the already overworked staff members. Though docent programs had been in existence since 1903 at the St. Louis Art Museum (Franklin & Mayer, 1974, p. 3) and 1907 at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Silver, 1978, p. 246), the utilization of docents as tour guides would not become common practice until after World War II.

In 1941 Fansler was appointed Assistant Dean of the Department of Education and Museum Extension. Her responsibilities in this position included "the co-ordination

of the teaching curriculum with the general program of curatorial activity and research” Rhode Island (Taylor, 1941, p. 179). She hoped to bring collections into closer contact with the people of New York City and to educate them to understand the different qualities and forms of art. After her appointment to Assistant Dean, Fansler commenced a weekend program of lectures by guest speakers. In efforts to support the “primary function of the Museum’s program of adult education,” Fansler wanted to bring excitement to a lecture by positioning it as a forum with an opportunity for questions after a lecture (1941, p. 237).

A PROPOSAL AND A PROPOSITION

At the time of the docent-training course, The Junior League was conducting volunteer programs in eighty-six museums and nineteen community art centers across the United States. According to figures presented in Helen T. Findlay’s “Volunteers in Museums” (1940) these programs reached 207,669 people, and of these individuals, 54,517 participated in docent lead tours or gallery activities (p. 11).

On June 9, 1941 Francis Henry Taylor and Helen T. Findlay held a meeting with the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Board of Trustees to propose a docent-training course designed specifically for members of the Junior League. With the approval of the Board of Trustees, Taylor wrote to Findlay that she would work out the details of the program with Horace H. F. Jayne, the Vice Director of the museum. In reply to Taylor’s good news, Findlay wrote, “I am sure that news of this program at the Metropolitan will have

both a reassuring and stimulating effect of great value” (Findlay, 1941, p. 1). Three and a half months later the docent-training course would commence.

THE DOCENT TRAINING COURSE

Intended Curriculum

On September 4, 1941, Roberta M. Fansler, Assistant Dean of the Department of Education and Museum Extension, submitted for approval the Plan of Study for the Junior League Docents in Training (Fansler, 1941). The course, as intended, would start on September 29, 1941 and end on June 4, 1942. It would be held five days a week, from 10 am to 5 pm. During the first week of the course, students would take a general examination in art history, “not intended to scare them but as a necessary guide for . . . laying out a plan of study” (p. 1). Beginning with a personal meeting with Roberta M. Fansler, the first two months of the program were intended to concentrate on a comprehensive study of the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. During this time the students would also observe general tours and gallery talks.

Seminars discussing the various museum techniques in handling children and adults in the galleries and methods of presenting materials would be held twice a week for the Junior League docents in training. Representatives from other departments of the museum would give presentations at these seminars to explain their roles in the museum and how they, and each specific department, contribute to the workings of the museum.

Each Junior League student would be responsible for a half a day, once a week, to help with the children visiting the newly opened Junior Museum. They would also assist

in meeting and helping the public in the handling of photographs and materials in the museum's study rooms. Finally, once students acquired a strong acquaintance with the collection, the students would be trained in the photograph slide department.

The first two months of this course would be a "trial period, which the student of the Museum may decide to terminate the cooperative relationship" (p. 1). Students would be offered a complimentary membership to the museum and have access to their own coat rack. They would not, however, have assigned desks in the study rooms.

Application and Applicants

With the curriculum established and the support of the museum staff and administrations, eight women elected to attend this course. The women were Anne de Bonneville Young of Omaha, Nebraska; Patricia Egan of St. Louis, Missouri; Eleanor English of New Haven, Connecticut; Virginia Schueller of Columbus, Ohio; Lucy Todd of Seattle, Washington; Elizabeth C. Ramsay of Omaha, Nebraska; Dorothy Ross Grant of Montclair, New Jersey; and Helen Howigan of Wilkes-Barre, New Jersey. Each of these women submitted a completed application that asked for basic information such as name and age. It also called for a description of each applicant's educational background and previous museum experience (Application blank, 1941, p.1).

With the limited amount of information available about these Junior League participants, it is difficult to tell a great deal about their lives and professional activities of these eight women. Anne de Bonneville attended Bryn Mawr College and majored in history. Patricia Egan was a student at Vassar College and studied art history before she

applied for the docent-training program. Eleanor English had worked as the Volunteer Assistant at the Lyman Allyn Museum in New London, Connecticut. Beyond this information, little is known about these eight women who were accepted applicants to the Junior League docent-training program.

A CHANGE IN THE COURSE OF EVENTS

In September 1941, the Junior League docent-training course commenced. But less than three months after the course began, on December 7, 1941, the Imperial Japanese Navy initiated a surprise attack on the United States naval base, Pearl Harbor. The next day the United States declared war on Japan, resulting in The United State's entry into World War II. On December 8, 1941, the Metropolitan Museum of Art cancelled all education programs and all school tours of the museum (Taylor, Jayne, & Harrison, 1942). I can speculate that this cancellation included the Junior League docent-training course. It is also likely these women would have wanted to return to their hometowns and shift their efforts to helping local war efforts in their communities.

It is here that any record of the Junior League docent training course ends. After this date, there is no mention or reference made to this course, leading me to again believe the course was not repeated and, instead all efforts in the museum made a shift from educational programming to an emphasis on assisting in the war effort. In the *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum*, Roberta Fansler (1942) wrote that the conditions of the United States entering World War II “forced us to suspend temporarily the very successful experiment we made this year in the training” of museum guides (p. 125).

Fansler did not declare specifically which museum guide training this refers to, but it is very likely this reference is made towards the Junior League docent-training course.

With World War II shifting the priorities of museums and the arts community Taylor (1942) comments,

Our main task at the present time is to do as good a job as the museums and galleries of England have been doing since they put their finest things away in September 1939. We are determined to keep the Museum open and to continue to serve the public come what may. (p. 8)

Fansler adds, “In wartime our educational program is more than ever important. It is a debatable point, no doubt, to what extent the work of an educational department in a great museum should approximate that of a community center” (Fansler, 1942, p. 125). Though the leaders of the Metropolitan saw the necessity for the museum’s presence in New York City, they did not see it necessary for the Junior League docents to be part of the picture.

Chapter 5: *Why the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Junior League May Have Partnered in Offering a Docent Training Course in 1941*

In May 1939, Elizabeth Raymond wrote a letter to the Metropolitan Museum of Art inquiring about possible volunteer positions and opportunities for the coming summer. She had just graduated from the University of Kansas with a degree in history and was searching for a summer volunteer position at a museum, in order to learn more about employment possibilities. The response letter stated that the museum “found it necessary to make a rule here that we do not take volunteer workers” (Greenway, 1939, p. 1). It would be two years later that the Board of Trustees of the Metropolitan Museum would approve the proposal to bring Junior League members into the museum to be trained to be volunteer docents and docent trainers.

When reviewing the timeline of events leading to the culmination of the Junior League docent-training course of 1941 held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, one must take these facts a step further and determine *why* this particular event happened at this specific time in history. During the research process certain patterns became apparent. I propose four reasoned arguments to answer the question posed regarding the purpose or purposes for conducting the seminar. These four positions include, (a) the new leadership and structure in the museum facilitated this training, (b) the collaborative work of Helen T. Findlay and Francis Henry Taylor and their passion towards art education for all audiences, (c) the Junior League’s continued commitment to community involvement, and (d) the fundamental need women had for involvement outside the home. It is my

belief that there was not a single reason the docent-training workshop occurred. It does not appear any of these four reasons was more prominent than others. I argue the combination of all four of these rationales made it possible for the Junior League docent-training course to happen. This chapter explores in more detail these four factors that contributed to the carrying out of the Junior League docent-training course in 1941.

NEW LEADERSHIP AND STRUCTURE IN THE MUSEUM

A reshuffling of staff at the Metropolitan Museum of Art began in 1938 when Herbert Winlock suffered a stroke and appointed William Ivins, then current print curator, as acting director. Winlock would resign from the museum in 1939 after being appointed director emeritus. Ivins served as director for the nine months the Metropolitan's Board of Trustees searched for a new museum director. During this time, the Metropolitan Museum of Art remained stagnant and without active leadership. The early 1940s were a time of shifting power in the museum. The Board of Trustees moved from old and longstanding families who had sat on the board for years, occupying seats for decades, to become a board that consisted of younger and more progressive members such as Henry Morgan, Nelson Rockefeller, and Marshall Field. These were the men who called for the institution to be "run on more progressive lines" (*New Yorker*, March 30, 1940).

In 1940, and after three other men had turned down the offer, Francis Henry Taylor accepted the appointment to become the fifth director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Taylor had been director of the Worcester Museum of Art in

Massachusetts, and he believed a “museum should be a liberal arts university for the common man, not a treasury, a safety deposit box for archaeological treasures, or a three-ring circus” (as cited in Gross, 2010, p. 180). Taylor appointed Horace H. F. Jayne to be Vice Director in September of 1941, after the sudden death of the previous Vice Director at the museum.

This movement in the upper echelon of the museum staff accompanied a complete shift in the Education Department. Upon the resignation of Huger Elliot, Dean of Education, Taylor called for the consolidation of the curatorial study rooms, Library, teaching materials, and the Department of Education into one single administrative Department of Education and Museum Extension (Taylor, 1941, p.179). Richard F. Bach, previous Director of Industrial Relations, was appointed Dean of the new department. Roberta Fansler, an instructor at the museum since 1927, was appointed Assistant Dean and took charge of the coordination of the teaching curriculum, including the Junior League docent-training course.

Taylor hoped this shift would help to re-assert the direction of the educational mission of the museum to “meet the present needs of the general public, as well as offering specialized services to the expert” (Taylor, 1941, p. 180). The new objective of the museum would be to adapt

program[s] more closely to the interest of the general adult public on the one hand and on the other, by establishing conference rooms for every field of study like those now functioning for prints and textiles, to give both to the general public and to students opportunities for specialized information and direct handling of works of art in a way not possible in the college classroom. (Taylor, 1941, p. 180)

This would increase the number of services offered by the museum and extend the museum's reach beyond the walls of the building and into the community of New York City. An increase in programming and outreach calls for an increase of staff, or volunteers, to meet the new needs that were presented.

HELEN T. FINDLAY AND FRANCIS HENRY TAYLOR

Another motivation for the implementation of the docent-training course for Junior League members was the combined determination and passion of Helen T. Findlay and Francis Henry Taylor. Before the docent-training course began, Findlay had been conducting extensive research for seven years into how museums could best use volunteers from the Junior League. She published her findings in the 1940 issue of *Museum News* as well as presented her research at the American Association of Museums Annual Meeting in May 1940. During the early 1940s Findlay also began to gain more notoriety both within the Junior League and the world of museum administration.

In 1939, Findlay left Kansas City, Missouri for New York City to take a position on the Arts and Interests Committee of the Junior League. In making this transition, Findlay was no longer looking to accomplish a difference only in her local community. She desired to establish an impact in communities across the country. She also wanted to teach others how they might affect museum education within their local communities. What better place to initiate an impact than through the affluent and accomplished Metropolitan Museum of Art?

In 1940, Francis Henry Taylor was new to New York City. He had left behind the Worcester Museum of Art, and entered this new museum believing “the museum had a real cultural, educational, and recreational role to play, a role more dramatic and important than most of his contemporaries believed possible” (as cited in Redmond, 1958, p. 145). Taylor was not one who played by the established rules of cultural elitism and privilege the Metropolitan Museum of Art had adhered to since its inception. Taylor wished to create a museum designed for the people, one that brought audiences into the museum as well as went out into the communities.

Essentially, Findlay and Taylor were looking for the same outcome: they both desired to bring art to the masses. To make this happen, these two champions of art museum education envisioned the need to work together. Luckily, Francis Henry Taylor and Helen T. Findlay ran in similar circles within the art and museum community.

Francis Henry Taylor was Chairman of the National Council for Art Week, and Helen T. Findlay sat on the council as a representative of the state of New York. National Art Week was proposed by President Roosevelt to “stimulate sales and exhibitions of the work of living American artists and craftsmen throughout the nation” (Taylor, 1940, p. 4). It would be a time to consolidate forces and put aside any personal beliefs for the purpose of furthering American art.

In 1940, Taylor was nominated to sit on the Council of the American Association of Museums. He would be sworn in at the Annual Meeting in Detroit in May 1940. This was the same conference where Helen T. Findlay presented her research into the utilization and treatment of Junior League volunteers in her session “Training

Volunteers.” She was one of the few presenters at the conference that did not represent a specific museum, but rather is cited as the secretary, Arts Department, Association of the Junior Leagues of America. From here, Francis Henry Taylor was the guest at the Junior League’s Arts and Interest Committee, meeting on April 9, 1941.

It is not certain, but seems reasonable to believe that Francis Henry Taylor and Helen T. Findlay began to collaborate and work together in the formation of the Junior League docent-training course for the good portion of one year after attending the Annual Meeting together. Although not extensive, there is correspondence from Taylor to Findlay and Findlay to Taylor. The correspondence found in this research, was a letter from Taylor congratulating Findlay on the Board’s acceptance of her proposal for the Junior League docent training course, and Findlay’s excited reply.

JUNIOR LEAGUE’S COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH MUSEUMS

From its inception in 1901, the Junior League has encouraged its members to seek volunteer opportunities that create a deep impact within their respective communities. The women of the Junior League were to leave their homes and work directly with the public, especially the lower classes. But, as Gertrude Himmelfarb (1997) writes “Philanthropy was inspired by the dual motive: to serve others and to fulfill a moral need” (p. 52).

In an article published in *Museum News*, Mrs. Paul S. Wingert,³ Education Consultant for the Association of the Junior Leagues of America, stated the purpose of the Junior League. According to Wingert (1949), the intent of this organization has been, “to foster interest among its members in the social, economic, educational, cultural and civic conditions of their own communities, and to make efficient the volunteer service” (p. 8). Giving women the means in which they could volunteer outside of the home, the Junior League gave women the chance to fulfill any personal desire to be a contributing member of their community. Activities within the Junior League were a socially acceptable way for conventional women to be active outside the home (Kaminer, 1984, p. 42). Additionally, Karen J. Blair (1980) explains that women’s clubs, such as the Junior League, “provided a meeting place for women, allowing them to know each other, to develop pride in their strengths, to grow sensitive to sexism, and to become aware of the possibilities for abolishing inequities” (p. 118). The 1940s have been recognized as a time of women beginning to contemplate if life had more to offer than traditional domestic roles.

During the first quarter of the twentieth century, “education represented perhaps the greatest gain for women” (Simon & Danziger, 1991, p. 43). In the decade before the docent-training course at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, women comprised 35% of college enrollment in the United States (Jacobs, 1996). This is in comparison to women comprising less than 20% of the United States work force in 1940 (Anderson, 1982). And

³ Traditionally, the name of a member of the Junior League was always written in the formal format, “Mrs. John Doe.” No record was available to find the first name of Mrs. Paul S. Wingert. For the sake of this paper, I will use the citation, Wingert, P.S., but it should be noted this is the wife, not the husband.

this percentage was even smaller for married women. As women in the 1940s became more educated, there emerged a need for women to use this knowledge. Even with this increase in women earning college degrees, professional opportunities for women graduates were severely limited.

In their struggle to build a well-rounded self-image, women needed a way to counter-balance the domestic side that had been encouraged since birth. Volunteerism was often the only socially acceptable vehicle available for women to find a fit between values and interests gained in college and those of the charitable organizations with the women supported (Sublett, 1993, p. 52). Volunteering gave women “public lives, ended their domestic isolation, and gave rise to organizations of women dedicated to institutional reform in education, health care, and criminal justice, as well as the cultural and ‘moral’ enrichment of society” (Kaminer, 1984, p. 22).

The Junior League and the docent training programs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art offered the participating women an opportunity to use their knowledge in a positive way. Here, two contradictory principles were expressed:

The principle of individualism – the notion that people should have the freedom to act on matters that concern them-and the principle of solidarity – the notion that people have responsibility not only to themselves but also to their fellow human beings and to the communities of which they are part. (Salamon, 1999, p. 11)

By fusing these two principles, the docent-training course for Junior League members created an environment for individuals to both promote the well being of its members and the well being of those the women are serving. As author Wendy Karminer admitted,

For many educated women, volunteerism was the only work which they could exercise their considerable talents. Whether they were president of the League of

Women Voters or the Junior League . . . they were building and then running extensive organizations. To look at them patronizingly, then or now, just shows . . . ignorance. (as cited in Green, 2011, p. ST4)

The eight women who ventured to New York City to learn how to train docents from the educational leaders of the Metropolitan Museum of Art made a decision to leave their environment of comfort in an effort to expand their own worlds. The knowledge learned during the docent-training course would be used to help expand art education programs in the women's respective communities. By teaching the women in their communities, these Junior League members would also be expanding the lives of the women they would work with in the future to become docents in their own cities.

THE PERFECT COMBINATION OF FACTORS

These four factors, when combined, created the structural base needed for the Junior League docent-training course to occur at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941. Concerning the museum, the new leadership and restructuring of the Department of Education and Extension, and the collaborative passion of Helen T. Findlay and Francis Henry Francis Taylor created the environment needed to host the docent-training seminar. Regarding the Junior League and its members, the continued commitment they made toward their local communities, and the need of women in the 1940s to be involved in social and community activities outside of the home, created the pool of candidates for the training course. It is this mixture of museum personnel and Junior League members together that brought about the docent-training course of 1941.

None of these four positions acted alone in bringing about the Metropolitan Museum of Art's docent-training course. I believe it is very likely Helen T. Findlay's vision to put Junior League members into the art museum and her research and documentation of this program that led the cause. Had she not taken her work out of the museum, the Junior League docent-training course would not have been conceived. Findlay took the initiative to publish her findings from the Junior League docent program in Kansas City. She contacted the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She went with Francis Henry Taylor to the board of trustees of the museum to propose the course. She is the primary reason the course happened.

REVIEW OF THE STUDY

The historical research gathered here provides a context of the founding of the Junior League, the restructuring of the education staff at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the attitudes of art museum educators in the 1940s and the social constraints and expectations of upper class women in the 1940s. Each chapter collectively works to provide a more complete picture of the docent-training course for Junior League members sponsored by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The intent of this seminar was to train these women to go back to their hometowns and teach more Junior League members how to be gallery educators. This study was designed to provide an overview of the many factors leading to the establishing of the program.

I used a historical research methodology to uncover information and sources focused on docents, volunteers, art educators, and trends in museum education programs

during the years before and after this class was conducted. I was not able to find specific information on education as it applied to the viewpoint of the women who participated, but I feel that choosing to devote a year to an unpaid program, far away from home, demonstrates the dedication and commitment to art and art education held by each of these eight women. The research I did uncover centered on the staff of the Metropolitan Museum and offered support to my arguments concerning why this course happened when it did.

FURTHER RESEARCH

My research focused on a specific event in the history of volunteer docents and their relationship with art museums and with education staffs. Beyond this specific event, there are several avenues that could be explored to form a more complete historical portrait of docenting. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was not the only museum in the United States beginning to utilize volunteer educators in the galleries. Looking further into how museums across the country began, and continued, to work with docents would help educators today better understand the relationship that is still vital to many museum education departments.

Another possible direction to explore could be how docents continue to contribute to the educational programming of a museum, specifically those who are from the Junior League. Docent programs founded by the Junior League still exist. A look at how these programs have evolved and how they continue to be important components of museums would be an interesting study.

This explores only a limited number of players in the historical landscape of art museum education. Who else exists? There are contributors who, through the years, have been lost either due to lack of documentation or because they were actively doing and, instead not writing about their activities. To create an accurate historical overview of docents in the museum, more research and expand the parameters of investigation must be undertaken.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The Metropolitan Museum of Art began the docent-training course for eight Junior League members on September 29, 1941. Formed to educate volunteers in the field of art museum instruction, these women were to return to their communities to train other Junior League members to be docents in local art museums. The knowledge gained in this 9-month class would go beyond the walls of the Metropolitan Museum and spread through the museums of the United States. From Seattle, Washington to Newark, New Jersey, these eight women represented the strength and determination of many women in the 1940s to bring their talents to their communities.

The training course was an opportunity for women to extend their lives beyond the traditional role of wife and mother. Researching the events and trends that influenced art museum education in the 1940s, the attitudes held by the museum staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the convictions of the Junior League and its members, assisted me in forming four arguments that, when combined, propose why the docent training course occurred. Though some of the women did not return to their home cities,

and there is little evidence supporting the argument that this course was a success, I believe it was a beneficial accomplishment, at least as a beginning, in that it gave these eight women a chance to begin a program of study that was intended to prepare and champion the work of Junior League women to give back to their communities.

This research has uncovered a lost piece of history involving the relationship between the leading education staff of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and members of the Junior League. It is important in helping us to recognize the contributions of previously unknown participants in the history of art museum education. This research has addressed an historical issue that has not been researched, and in doing so has attempted to answer the question why and how the Junior League became involved with art museum education more than 70 years ago.

Chapter 6: *Reflections on Researching Women*

In the process of researching the 1941 docent-training course for Junior League members held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, I encountered the problem of researching women in history. In the 1982 monograph *Women Art Educators*, Enid Zimmerman and Mary Ann Stankiewicz state, “Although research about women has been conducted in psychology and education, it has just begun to make an impact on the field of art education” (p. 1). That was almost 30 years ago, but the problem remains relevant today.

Throughout history, women have played an unheralded role, equal with their male counterparts. Women were not idle while men accomplished the great feats of history. Despite this presence, it is the history of women that has been marginalized and placed upon the second tier (Boddie, 1998; Perrot, 1992; Ulrich, 2007; Zimmerman, 1981). This imbalance in historical recognition is no different in the history of art education. Many noted players we recognize in the history of art museum education were men, such as Victor D’Amico and John Cotton Dana.

These men have been given nearly exclusive credit and praise for leading the way and revolutionizing art museum education. Victor D’Amico would not have succeeded at the Museum of Modern Art had not it been founded by three women, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, Lillie P. Bliss, and Mary Quinn Sullivan, all determined to bring modern and contemporary art to New York City (Hunter, 1984). John Cotton Dana’s “New Museum”

would not have been as successful had it not been for the support provided by his colleagues Louise Connolly, Beatrice Winsor, and Katherine Coffrey (Connolly, 1928). Francis Henry Taylor joins this group of men who have been given sole recognition for the work of a collaborative team, overshadowing vital work of Roberta Fansler and outside contributor Helen T. Findlay.

Women played major roles in the foundation of museum art education courses that are familiar to us today. The contributions of women, and the social constraints and obstacles they have had to overcome, are important parts of the history of art education. In my journey to seek out the stories of the history of the 1941 Junior League docent-training course of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, however, I was confronted with struggles historians concerned with research men do not face.

STRUGGLES WITH SOURCES

Often seen as the frivolous antics of wealthy women in white gloves, the Junior League has frequently been the subject of ridicule and has not been taken seriously (Gordon & Riesche, 1983). As a result, not much is written about the beneficial works performed by the Junior League and its members. Other than a few general articles celebrating the centennial anniversary of the organization, or announcements relegated to society pages in local newspapers, information about the Junior League is limited, often biased, and centered on upper societal affairs. Rarely has information been published about the countless contributions the organization has made to communities throughout the years.

Additionally, I was researching the pasts of women whose contributions have historically gone unrecognized and unnoted. Deborah Franklin, former Director of Education at the University of Texas Art Museum, has stated that volunteers and docents are “museum lepers” often “relegated to the bottom of the pecking order (as cited in Newson & Silver, 1978, p. 246). It is through the work of the National Docent Symposium, are these volunteers beginning to find recognition and appreciation of their hard work. This lack of acknowledgement and documentation of the work of docents is compounded with the limited sources available about the Junior League. Not only was my research looking at the “lepers of the museum” it was also concerned with an organization often seen as group of silly, privileged women.

STRUGGLES WITH NON-TRADITIONAL FORMS OF DOCUMENTATION

Not only did I work with a limited amount of data about the Junior League, but also the data itself was atypical in its form of documentation and archiving. Due to nonstandard trends women’s history can take, historians have typically not recognized this information as historical, accountable data. Be it photo albums, scrapbooks, diaries, or even oral traditions like gossip, women have a history. In 1983, Diana Korzinik wrote of the importance of these nontraditional forms of documentation:

For centuries, product labels, receipts, invitations, bills, certificates have come into our homes, shops, offices and classrooms. Most have ended up in the trash bin. Some have been saved in attics and basements. Ephemera is the name given to pieces of paper that serve an immediate purpose and then become merely ephemeral, finished and useless. When ephemera can be found, they have a great deal to teach us. (p. 18)

As noted, women's history is not limited to conventional means such as books and scholarly journals, but includes items of ephemera. Such ephemera are the "evidence of what people actually did. Ephemera provides clues to daily life that have largely been ignored as data for history" (Korzenik, 1983, p. 18).

Women comprised a strong percentage of staff members of museums even as early as the 1940s, yet the majority of writings from museum representatives were composed by men (Taylor, Jayne, & Harrison, 1942). While the male leaders of the museum field produced much of the published scholarly writing, women have kept a faint trail for historians to follow. As historian Robert J. Saunders (1964) notes in his reflections on researching a character in art education history, Mrs. Minot, "the historian searching into the past must disrupt the haphazard selectivity of time and discover those items which should not be forgotten" (p. 1). When researching women, historians must look closer to inspect a range and trail of evidence.

My archival research showed that Roberta Fansler developed and implemented the curriculum for the docent-training course at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. However, she did not write or publish her experiences or findings (Fansler, 1941, pp. 1-2). I discovered Fansler's contributions to the Junior League docent-training course only through archival research, not public notices or publications. As a result, Fansler has not been given the credit she so rightly deserves for her commitment to educational programming at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. An obstacle that today's museum educators, including myself, face is that art educators must make a better effort to document what they are implementing in today's museums. Without these writings, be it

published or internal records, future historians will not have the data necessary to look back at and research the important actions and events happening today.

Additionally, the published information about the history of women is often relegated to either the Women's Studies section of the library or special editions of journals. Should this history not be included in the general history of art education? If historical research is an interactive process involving the investigation of a question and a presentation of an argument, should not all arguments be made in the same forum regardless of the subject's gender?

STRUGGLES WITH NAMES

Another issue I faced in my research centered on maiden names, and the tradition of women taking the surname of their husband at marriage. This tradition dates back hundred of years and is still practiced today. In 1922, Emily Post wrote *Etiquette in Society, in Business, in Politics and at Home*, a guide to social manners and propriety. She explains that "Mrs." was used by a woman when married, in conjunction with her husband's first and last names, e.g. "Mrs. John Smith." This would be the same for a widow. "Mrs." was rarely used before a woman's first name, maiden name, or before a hyphenated surname. For example, when writing the name for the wife of John Smith, "Mrs. Jane Maiden," (wife of John Smith), "Mrs. Jane Smith" or "Mrs. Jane Maiden-Smith" were considered incorrect forms of writing a woman's name by etiquette experts, especially in the early 20th century.

Until recently, the name of a married member of the Junior League was written in a formal format. Following societal traditions, it was “Mrs. John Doe” without note of her first name, which was how my grandmother was named in the Junior League member directory from the 1950s. In the 1990s, the notation transitioned to “Mrs. John Doe (Jane),” as seen during my mother’s membership in the Junior League. And now, as I begin the process of joining the Junior League, members’ names are written as “Mrs. Jane Doe.” This practice of name change and replacement has made it difficult to trace the history of women participants in the docent-training seminar and also the woman who directed the course at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

One of the reasons I was able to track the life of Helen T. Findlay was because she never married. By keeping her last name consistent, I was more easily able to follow her complete life history. The participants in the 1941 Junior League docent-training course were young women, most likely unmarried and using maiden names. I was able to track the trail of Anne de Bonneville Young⁴ because she also never changed her name and she continued to publish her work in art museum education. The remainder of women in the docent-training course either slipped away with time or changed their name after marriage, thus constricting the path of where information can be found and cutting off the scent of research possibilities. Perhaps with greater time and resources I could have found more information about these women. I contacted the various Junior League chapters but they had nothing to offer. I looked for wedding announcements for the

⁴ Anne de Bonneville Young did start to go by “Bonnie” in casual circles and that is the name used in her obituary. (“Anne DeB. Young” 1981, p. D31)

women, but this brought no information as, historically, it is not the full name of the bride announced, but rather that of her father, e.g., “Mr. and Mrs. John Doe wish to announce the marriage of their daughter, Jane to...” Perhaps with more time and resources I could have discovered the fate and contributions of these women, but it is due to these difficulties that researching women will continue to be an arduous process.

This challenge went beyond the participants in the docent-training course and included published research. No record was available to help find the first name of Mrs. Paul S. Wingert. For the sake of my research, and without specific guidance by the APA stylebook, I used the citation, Wingert, P.S. in my reference to her. Thus, I had to make a footnote explaining the citation was in reference to the wife, who wrote the article, and not the husband. Other than a footnote, our field has no standard way of recognizing and giving credit to the proper person in such instances. Misappropriation of names and the perpetuation of incorrect first names only cause continued confusion. If I had not included a footnote regarding this woman’s name, the traditional form of citation would have given credit to the husband, not the wife. Unfortunately, if my work is cited in future research, and the author does not also note this circumstance, the true source of the quote will likely be lost and misinformation introduced into the historical record.

Another “name” issue I faced is evidenced by the case of Roberta Fansler, Assistant Dean of Education at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during the 1941 docent-training course. Technically, Roberta’s full name was Roberta Murray Fansler Alford Capers due to the addition of married names. For the sake of my research, however, I cited her as Roberta Fansler because that was the name she went by during the period I

researched, and this information corresponded with the citation used in my references. It was only through my continued dedication to find the full identity of Roberta that I uncovered the transitional history of her full name. With each marriage, Roberta would drop the previous last name and adopt the new one. Without a connecting thread, the links between her work in the 1920s at the Metropolitan Museum of Art were not easily associated to her interim directorship at the Rhode Island School of Design in the 1950s (Woodward, 1985). It was only after additional research of chronicling her names that I was able to confirm Roberta Fansler Roberta Alpers, and Roberta Capers were one in the same.

This is a situation women continue to face today. Personally, I struggle with the notion that the research I conduct early in my career may not be linked to my later work, if I chose to change my last name after marriage. There is no standard set for such name shifts, nor should there be. Each woman must navigate this decision on her own. Yet, we must devise a way to make it easier for the contributing women of the field of art education to receive recognition for their full lifetime of research, even after a name change is made. We must also develop a standard way to give credit and recognition to those women in the past who decided to sign their work with “Mrs.” in conjunction with her husband’s first and last names.

FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Moving forward, I propose the field of art education history should change the way it’s research is conducted. Historians are challenged with the following three tasks.

1. **Recognize that no museum educator works alone.** John Donne (1624/2010) wrote, “No man is an island,” (p. 12) and the same goes for museum educators. As researchers continue to fill the gaps in the history of art education, we must make certain we do so with respect and appreciation to the contributions made by women. By going deeper and past the surface of the obvious and famous names, we should recognize those who have worked countless hours in the shadows helping to make museum education the dynamic and authentic experience it is today.
2. **Develop a system to properly credit women who signed their work with their husband’s name.** The *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2010) has no standard procedure for citing writers who signed their work with their husbands surname and last name, thus historians must independently agree upon a way to properly cite these works. A woman should not lose the credit for her writing of thoughts, ideas, and theories because the social climate at the time in which she wrote deemed it proper to use her husband’s name and not her own. Credit should be given where credit is due.
3. **Appreciate ephemeral and non-traditional forms of documentation.** In my archival research the most interesting pieces were not the formal letters from Helen T. Findlay and Francis Henry Taylor, or the blank application for the Junior League docent-training course. Rather, what became most worthwhile and fascinating were the personal thank you notes for teas and meetings found

within the archives of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Showing the personalities and devotions these women held to the training seminar, the hand written notes preserved in the archives revealed much about the women. While these pieces of correspondence might mean little to another historian, to me, these were vital pieces of evidence in my historical search.

CONCLUSION

“Researchers’ work is making choices. We pursue, gather data, and then become the ultimate arbiter. We are the authority, deciding what goes in and what stays out. Writers' choices reveal private preoccupations, and biases seep through everywhere” (Korzenik, 1990, p. 49). However, researchers will have no choice and cannot be the arbiters if there is no documentation to sift through and to sort. What we can do today is work to make sure future historians do not face the problems I encountered.

Performing historical research into the work of women in art education is not a new struggle for art education historians. We cannot change how the past was documented, but we can continue to search for different forms of data and materials that can help us more accurately understand and interpret pieces of the past. We must assure that those who should be recognized for their commitment and contribution to the field are given the credit they deserve. I am proud that my research into the 1941 Junior League docent-training course at the Metropolitan Museum of Art will contribute to the dialogue of the history of art education. I look forward to continuing the conversation and

hope that my research will encourage more historians to look into the many important yet often unrecognized women of art education.

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