Cultural institutions like museums, libraries and archives are and have been experiencing low numbers in usage and visitation among minority populations. The number of minorities taking advantage of services provided by these institutions has become significantly important due to recent growth in minority populations. This new growth rate has surpassed that of the Non-Hispanic Caucasian population, the traditional audience base for cultural institutions. Efforts made in the past couple of decades to encourage minorities to pursue careers in museums, libraries and archives have not been as productive as hoped. One solution to this issue may be found in new technologies that have emerged in the new millennium. If cultural institutions were to take advantage of some of the marketing techniques using social media, this may just give them the tools they need to attract and encourage higher participation from America’s minority population.

Headings:

Minorities

Cultural Institutions

Social Media

Diversity
USING SOCIAL MEDIA IN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS TO ENCOURAGE HIGHER USAGE NUMBERS AMONG AMERICA’S MINORITY POPULATION

by

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# Table of Contents

- **Introduction** .................................................................................................................. 2
  - Figure 1 Cell Phone and Smartphone Ownership .......................................................... 3

- **Purpose** .......................................................................................................................... 4

- **Literature Review** .......................................................................................................... 4
  - A Pattern in the U.S. Census ......................................................................................... 6
  - Figure 2 ‘Demographic of visitors to art museums in 2008’ ........................................ 6
  - Figure 3 ‘Percentage of U.S adult visiting to art museums’ ........................................ 6
  - Staffing Issues ................................................................................................................. 7
  - Social Media .................................................................................................................. 10

- **Research Questions** ....................................................................................................... 14

- **Methods** ......................................................................................................................... 14
  - 1. Website Statistics ....................................................................................................... 16
  - 2. Survey ......................................................................................................................... 16
    - 2.1 Survey Sample ......................................................................................................... 16
    - 2.2 Survey Design ......................................................................................................... 17

- **Results** .......................................................................................................................... 17
  - Website Statistics Results and Discussion .................................................................. 17
  - Survey Results and Discussion .................................................................................... 21
  - Figure 4 ‘The ethnic group I most Identify with’ ....................................................... 22
  - Figure 5 ‘The last time I visited a Museum website was’ ........................................... 22
  - Figure 6 ‘The last time I visited a Museum was’ ......................................................... 23
  - Figure 7 ‘Encouraged me to re-visit Ackland website’ .............................................. 25
  - Figure 8 ‘Encouraged me to visit Ackland Museum’ ................................................. 27

- **Conclusion** ..................................................................................................................... 29

- **Bibliography** .................................................................................................................. 33

- **Appendix A - Electronic Survey** ................................................................................... 35
  - **Appendix B - Electronic Survey Results from Caucasian Students** ..................... 37
INTRODUCTION

The traditional user or visitor to America’s cultural institutions are middle aged to elderly, moderately educated, Non–Hispanic Caucasians. Historically, cultural institutions such as libraries, museums and archives have struggled in increasing the participation and user loyalty among America’s ethnically diverse populations. This issue has become increasingly critical in the past couple of decades as America’s demographics have changed and their audience numbers have decreased. It is predicted that by 2050 that there will be a minority majority; meaning the Non–Hispanic Caucasian population will only account for 50% or less of the country’s total population. If the traditional user remains the same, then libraries, museums and archives will continue to under serve the population of the United States. This creates an atmosphere in which they will have to constantly prove their importance to continue to receive funding.

As these institutions recognize the importance in the population shift, many have actively created programs and initiatives that target ethnically diverse

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people in an effort to reach out and encourage them to become more active users and visitors to archives, museums and libraries. Along with these usage initiatives a number of programs have also been created to entice minorities to pursue careers in cultural institutions, with the idea that more representation would help bring more visitation. Although a considerable amount of thought, effort, time, and money has gone into these programs, progress is extremely slow. Many of these programs have been unable to bring in new minority users needed to ensure that cultural institutions are not serving the American population. Recent developments in technology may be the key to reaching minorities and help produce immediate results that can be immediately realized. The introduction of smart phones has eliminated the digital divide in the United

![Figure 1](image-url)

**Cell Phone and Smartphone Ownership**

| % of American adults within each group who own a cell phone and the % who own a smartphone |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| All adults (n=2,252)              | 91%             | 56%            |
| a. Men (n=1,029)                  | 93%             | 59%            |
| b. Women (n=1,223)                | 88%             | 53%            |
| Race/ethnicity                   |                 |                |
| a. White, Non-Hispanic (n=1,571) | 90%             | 53%            |
| b. Black, Non-Hispanic (n=252)    | 93%             | 64%            |
| c. Hispanic (n=245)               | 88%             | 60%            |
| Age                              |                 |                |
| a. 18-29 (n=404)                  | 97%             | 80%            |
| b. 30-49 (n=577)                  | 95%             | 67%            |
| c. 50-64 (n=641)                  | 89%             | 45%            |
| d. 65+ (n=570)                    | 70%             | 18%            |
| Education attainment             |                 |                |
| a. No high school diploma (n=136) | 83%             | 30%            |
| b. High school grad (n=631)       | 88%             | 46%            |
| c. Some College (n=888)           | 92%             | 60%            |
| d. College + (n=834)              | 95%             | 70%            |
| Household income                  |                 |                |
| a. Less than $30,000/yr (n=580)   | 86%             | 43%            |
| b. $30,000-$45,099 (n=374)        | 90%             | 52%            |
| c. $50,000-$74,999 (n=298)        | 96%             | 61%            |
| d. $75,000+ (n=582)               | 98%             | 72%            |
| Urbanity                          |                 |                |
| a. Urban (n=763)                  | 92%             | 59%            |
| b. Suburban (n=1,037)             | 91%             | 59%            |
| c. Rural (n=450)                  | 85%             | 40%            |

Source: Pew Internet Spring Tracking Survey, April 17 – May 19, 2013. N=2,252 adults ages 18+. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish and on landline and cell phones. Margin of error is ±3 percentage points for results based on all adults.

Notes: Columns marked with a superscript letter (') or another letter indicate a statistically significant difference between that row and the row designated by that superscript letter. Statistical significance is determined inside the specific section covering each demographic trait.
States. This means that many Americans have access to the internet in some way or another. Studies have proved that America’s minorities are first to adopt new technologies and use them more frequently compared to their white counterparts. For profit businesses, like Pepsi and American Airlines, have successfully developed new marketing strategies that incorporate these emerging technologies like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as a form of outreach to minorities whom they were unable to reach using non-digital methods.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate that if cultural institutions use social media to enhance their websites and catalog pages, they will have a new method to reach America’s minorities where minorities feel comfortable. Through social media efforts, cultural institutions can encourage underserved populations to use their services. These efforts demonstrate the institution’s commitment and interest to every individual, no matter no matter a person’s color. This will earn trust and encourage greater online use and on-site visitations by more minorities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

“Ultimately, cultural institutions are special places: touchstones of the past, keepers of our collective memories, sites that enrich and places that inspire. Yet

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without fully embracing the challenges of diversity, these institutions cannot be the glue that helps to bind a city or a nation together. Without fully embracing diversity, they cannot be the safe places that help us to conceptualize our world and to visualize the possible.” Lonnie Bunch President of Chicago Historical Society

Most of America’s libraries and museums were created to serve the public. Cultural institutions support their communities by providing them with materials and experiences that will satisfy their informational needs and provide opportunities for self-improvement. Many American archives are also public or run by the state; they too have a responsibility to collect and preserve materials that are important to their user base. In order for America’s libraries, museums, and archives to best serve the public and their surrounding communities they must have an intimate understanding of the needs in every sector of the population.

Historically, most cultural institutions have been extremely capable in serving the Non-Hispanic Caucasian communities of the United States. Until recently this was acceptable because it meant that archives, libraries and museums were serving the largest sector of the U.S. population. However, in the past three decades the numbers in Non-Hispanic Caucasian communities have steadily decreased while sectors of the minority population have increased. Due to this phenomenon cultural institutions in America are serving less and less of the U.S. population. Alarmed by this trend, many libraries, museums, archives and their associations have begun taking action to find ways to encourage the growing minority population use of their services. Maureen Sullivan’s, the

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American Library Association (ALA) President states; “To continue to serve the nation’s increasingly diverse communities, our libraries and the profession must reflect this diversity… We also must do the research necessary to discover effective ways to increase the numbers. This is a matter of urgency for all of us.”

A Pattern in the U.S. Census

Since the 1980’s each new U.S. census has shown significant growth in the minority populations in the United States, particularly the Hispanic/Latino. From 1980 to 2008 the Hispanic population increased from 6.4% to 15.1%. It has been predicted that by 2050 this sector of the minority population will double in numbers causing them to make up 30% of the total U.S. population. The

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Hispanic population growth may cause the U.S. to experience their first "minority majority." The term “minority majority” brings together disparate groups of people in the United States who now constitute a minority of the population, who frequently share an outsider status, but are already in the process of becoming a collective majority.8

This prediction has created complications for cultural institutions that already struggle to increase their user base among the current minority population. In 2008, a study conducted by the American Association of Museums on the future of museums noted that the decline in visitors has been experienced among all museums, which seems to coincide with the rise of the minority population in the thirty years (see Figure 2 and 3) Libraries and archives have introduced programs, incentives, activities, and materials to try to accommodate the needs of the population. Despite their efforts, many believe the cultural institutions will continue to struggle due to lack of diversity in staffing. While library, museum, and archive staff members used to be dominated by Caucasian men, Caucasian women make up most of the staff. Today, the numbers of minorities working in cultural institutions is disproportionate to the number of minorities in the population. Minorities in director roles are almost non-existent.

**Staffing Issues**

It has been well documented that Non- Hispanic Caucasians are over represented among staff in libraries, museums, and archives. America’s

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workplace does not reflect the demographic change, particularly in upper level management positions. Though blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians represent roughly 30 percent of the population, they fill only 3% of senior management positions at American corporations and nonprofits.9

In 2009, 95.8% of museum directors were Caucasian during a time where Non- Hispanic Caucasians made up 71% of the United States’ population.10 A 2011 collection of library employee statistics, conducted by the Department of Professional Employee, found that minorities made up only 16.1% of librarians in 2010, with 9.2% Black, 5.2% Hispanic, and 1.7% Asian/Pacific Islanders. The same study noted that 6.1% of library directors were minorities and 6.3% were employed as associate directors, 5.3% as assistant directors and only 9.4% as branch librarians.11

United States archives’ have had similar struggles in recruiting minorities to join their ranks. Despite many programs to encourage African Americans to pursue careers as archivists, the number in the field has only increased from 1.8% in 1982 to 2.8% in 2004.12 Statistics published in 2012’s “National Archive Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan” stated that while 30.8% of the national archives workforce was made up of minorities in 2011, only 17.8% of those were

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found working in supervisory roles and only 9% of archive executives were people of color.  

There are many arguments as to why the employment numbers among minorities in cultural institutions are so low such as ‘Most minorities are under qualified for these positions,’ and ‘These groups are just not interested and are simply not applying for jobs in libraries, archives and museums, therefore they are not pursuing the education necessary to acquire a high level position in a cultural institution.’ However, this could actually be due to the fact that, “minorities are on the outskirts of the dominant culture. On the periphery, they are always in reference to and measured by dominant norms and standards. In the U.S. this means that white culture is presented as the ideal, the standard, innately superior.” Many minorities don’t see themselves or their culture represented or valued in most cultural institutions therefore they do not see themselves working in there either.

Cultural institutions are “historically grounded in cultural barriers making museums [libraries and archives] feel intimidating and exclusionary.” Just wanting more minorities working in the field does not mean they will have important decision making positions. Harvard Business school professor, David Thomas, explains; “People of color who start at the same time as an equivalent white person have less of a chance of being at the top echelon in 20 years, in

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whatever field you’re talking about.”16 “Diversity is much more than a programme, it has to be lived daily… Apart from ethical and legal arguments, diverse approaches have shown to be of economic and social value.”17 Establishing a diverse staff, particularly in management positions, affords more opportunities for museums to become better translators and interpreters for their audiences.

Cultural institutions are working hard to change their image in reaching out to the minority population, however, change is slow and recruitment of minorities to work in these institutions may not be enough. Many institutions have started looking for other means to reach out to those underserved communities. New technology has been created within the last decade that just may provide the perfect avenue for cultural museums for minorities and win their loyalty without having to wait for staffing changes.

Social Media

Friendster and MySpace were some of the first Social Networking Sites (SNS) to appear on the internet early in 2003. In the ten years since, SNS are responsible for creating a new participatory culture, which now “represent[s] a weakening of institutionalized boundaries of authority. They [SNS] blur the traditional lines between producer and consumer, artist and audience, as culture and meaning are constantly (re)produced through instant communication...

Observers have deemed this shift revolutionary because “everyone” (or

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“anyone”) can become a media powerhouse, news reporter, rapper, editor, and activist.” In this age of new interaction and participation companies have begun to take advantage of the services SNS offers to target a wider more diverse audience, which they may not have reached using other traditional methods.

Prior to the new millennium in the United States, there was a real concern that many in the American population, particularly in the minority demographic, were falling behind because they lacked access to the internet. Internet access inequality was known as the digital divide. However, during the Bush Administration this term was replaced with ‘digital inclusion,’ thanks in part to mobile devices which now create personal, 24/7 access points to the internet for its owner. By 2011, it was reported that 9 out of 10 Americans had internet access and 1 out of every 3 people had their own smartphone, with higher rates of ownership among America’s minority population. African Americans and English speaking Latinos are more likely to use those phones to text, visit SNS, use internet, record and watch videos, use texts to make donations to charities, play games, and listen to music.

Those who monitor how the internet is used have discovered that minority populations are more likely to adopt SNS earlier and have stronger numbers in usage. “Minority adults [also] outpace whites in their use of social media,” the Pew Internet watch group noted in 2010. “Among internet users, nine in ten black

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and English-speaking Latinos use social networking sites significantly higher than the six in ten whites who do so.”\textsuperscript{21} Not all SNS are created equal among the diverse population of the United States. Many argued in the past that web users were more likely not to have an online identity that reflects their offline skin color, ethnicity, and or economic situation. This has been illustrated in a cartoon that appeared in the New Yorker proclaiming, “On the internet nobody knows you’re a dog!”\textsuperscript{22} However, SNS and SNS users have accepted a sort of ‘self-segregation’ on the internet, where “like the schoolyard, online environments are often organized by identity and social categories.”\textsuperscript{23} Individuals are more likely to choose a SNS that offers more advantages to the social division with which they most closely identify. “The internet mirrors and magnifies everyday life, making visible many of the issues we hoped would disappear, including race and class-based social division in American society.”\textsuperscript{24}

Social media networks help give minorities a voice in ways which they never had before. SNS have proved themselves to be a force not only in commercial business but in every aspect of American life. Young African American males who took to YouTube to make videos supporting Barack Obama as president helped get him elected and allowed black youth to become more active in politics than ever before. Commenting on blacks using social media sites, Wayne Sutton, a social media consultant, states that SNS like twitter create

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
“a level playing field in getting [black Americans’] voices heard. With the history of our culture, we now have an equal channel like anyone else.”

For profit companies, like Coca Cola and Nike, through marketing research have noticed that many SNS have self-segregated social media communities. These companies have begun to experiment with ways in which they can take advantage of SNS in order to better relate with ethnic groups; other than having just a standard one fits all Facebook page or Twitter account. Pepsi’s We Inspire Facebook page was created specifically for African American women and has little to no posts about Pepsi and their products; but rather is a forum to share and discuss stories and themes that inspire African American women to succeed. In addition to having a web page for their African American travelers, American Airlines also creates webisodes (using YouTube) with famous blacks hosts, like Laz Alonso, giving tours of locations like Rio Janeiro and the Hamptons. These YouTube tours highlight different locations to be explored that black people are more likely to relate to and enjoy. However, these places are those that are not traditionally considered by blacks. The videos are a way to prove that the “black experience” can be enjoyed just about anywhere and encourages them to use American Airlines to go on these new adventures.

Learning from their for profit counterparts, cultural institutions can also reach out to ethnic communities through social media. Just like all companies they just need to understand which SNS are best to use when targeting a particular audience, as well as the best way to communicate with them through

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social media sites. Researching online social behaviors as well as trial and error may prove to be the best method in learning how to use social media to the museum’s advantage. But when it comes to America’s ethnic population, showing any effort in them and their culture is greatly appreciated.

**Research Questions**

This study attempts to identify whether a relationship exists between the use of social media and the increase in patronage from minorities in their communities. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

RQ1: Do minority groups respond positively to the use of social media by cultural institutions?

RQ2: Which type of social media content created by cultural institutions appeals to minorities?

RQ3: Does the addition of social media content increase the number of hits to a cultural institution’s website?

RQ4: Does the addition of social media content increase the number of visitations to the institution by minorities?

**Methods**

In order to address the research questions, web materials were created. This material was created while the author, as a Kress Fellow worked with the Ackland Museum, which is located on the campus of University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The Kress fellowship program promotes collaboration between three disciplines museum studies, library science and education with the goal of
creating materials and programs that encourage use from non-traditional museum users. For this cycle of the program it was decided to use a work from the museum’s collection that may be difficult for those not trained in early French art to understand.

_The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket_ is an illustration drawn on blue paper by one of France’s most famous animal painter, Jean Baptiste Oudry. This drawing, which is one of over 100 drawings, was created to be included as an illustration for the works of the famous French poet Jean de La Fontaine. This extensive series of poems, by La Fontaine, follow in the traditions of Aesop's Fables and were meant as instruction and guidance for the challenges of life. _The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket_ is one of the lesser known of the fables from the collection but is also unique in its content for being a story about two subjects of the same species. Since the early 1980’s this work has made its home in the Ackland Museum. Due to the fragility of its material _The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket_ cannot be displayed in the gallery as a part of a show for reasons of preservation. The participants of the Kress program all agreed that this work even with all its challenges would the perfect subject for this experiment as well as provide the public access to this work they would not otherwise have.

For this study, _The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket_ catalog web page was enhanced with social media to help non-traditional users understand the work and build trust in the institution. The study was conducted in two different steps; the first one was based on pure website and social media statistics while
the second method collected more opinionated information from a survey which was sent to undergraduate students.

1. Website Statistics

For the first part of the study, Google Analytics was used to track how many hits or views the new enhanced website receives as compared to the original catalog site without social media inserts. Data was collected from individual statistics collectors from those social media sites used in the study. (ie. YouTube). These embedded collectors track items such as the number of views to the website video, and data collected from the tracking system would show if using social media increases traffic to the website. (RQ3)

2. Survey

An electronic e-mail survey was created to help measure the success of the project and to assist in providing answers for the remainder of the research questions.

2.1 Survey Sample

The University of North Carolina has a diverse undergraduate population. For example, the freshmen class for 2013 had a slight increase in minority enrollment from the year before; at 33%. This survey was sent to undergraduate students at The University of Chapel Hill using the information

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26Preliminary Profile: 2013 UNC First-Year Class, Retrieved October 6 2013, from http://uncnews.unc.edu/content/view/6168/68/
listserv, in hopes that around 200 surveys from students that represent minority groups would return a completed questionnaire. The 200 surveys collected would amount to about ten percent of the undergraduate minority population.

2.2 Survey Design

The survey consists of six questions with multiple choice answers that are graded so that positive responses have more points associated with them than negative responses. Included in the survey are two open-ended questions which allow for further explanation of participant answers. This type of questioning allowed for the gathering of additional data in order to identify best practices in using social media to attract minority groups.

Results

The main objective of this study was to identify if minorities would respond positively if cultural institutions like libraries, museums and archives used social media to enhance their websites. (RQ1) The secondary purpose of this study was to create a way in which to measure if this addition of social media to webpages of cultural institutions would not only increase traffic to their web pages but encourage non-traditional users to visit the physical institution. (RQ3 and RQ4) The following are the results to the elements of the study.

Website Statistics Results and Discussion

The results of this study were to be captured using only one technique to calculate success of the enhanced webpage. This method required comparing
the number of views the enhanced web page received during an observation period to the number of hits to the original web page found in the online catalog. In addition to tracking the pages on the Ackland website, success of the project was also to be measured by monitoring activity on the social media inserts being used in the experiment. Both the new enhanced web page and the accompanying social media uploads were made public on the same day, September 5th of 2013. However, after over a month of careful monitoring, it was discovered that both web pages and social media inserts were not receiving enough activity to demonstrate a measurable difference.

The Ackland Museum is a wonderful resource, located on the campus of University of North Carolina that both students and members of the surrounding community are free to enjoy. Along with its priceless pieces of artwork, talented and devoted staff, access to a large and diverse student body, the Ackland Museum is host to many educational opportunities that create the ideal environment to test a project with similar goals. However, some factors arose during the experimentation period became major influences that created the need for another way to measure the success of this project rather than just monitoring website activity.

This Museum has a considerable amount of competition from other local museums. Unfortunately, the Ackland Museum does not receive the numbers in traffic from visitors that it deserves. To help with this problem, the Ackland Museum is extremely proactive and offers many programs which work with university students, alumni, Pre K - High school aged students and community
members in order to encourage more participation and traffic to the museum. However, this may explain some of the reasoning behind low visitation numbers to the website.

Using the Ackland Museum’s WordPress account a socially enhanced version of the Oudry catalog page was created which was to be used as the main material for experiment, however, once this page was made public in September it was not granted access to appear as a secured web page hosted as part of the original Ackland website. This resulted in an unforeseen complication wherein the number of visitors to the site was less than projected.

Other deterrents were identified while troubleshooting the cause of insufficient views to the enhanced website. The placement of the enhanced web page within ackland.org makes it unsearchable to those who do not have prior knowledge of the experiment or interest in the Kress program at the museum. This refers to the fact that when visitors search in the collection for Jean-Baptiste Oudry or for The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket, only the original catalog page is included in the search results. This makes it difficult to accurately measure the number of views between the two web pages if one is harder to find.

A visitor to ackland.org would find the enhanced web page by searching under the education tab, which can be accessed from Ackland’s homepage. Once the user has been directed to the educational page, they must click the special project’s link. Next, they would need to click on the Kress Fellowship for the Applied Research hyperlink, where the visitor would be taken to another page which has a link to the enhanced website. Placement of the enhanced website
forgoes convenience for organization. This design forces users to search harder in order to find the enhanced web page, of which they must have prior knowledge. Then users are asked to transition from secure web pages to unsecure pages that trigger alerts.

Although this decision by the museum staff to place the enhanced web page under special projects in the education section is understandable; this design makes it difficult for potential Oudry, dog art lovers, or other interested parties to find the enhanced web page through normal search methods. The most ideal placement for the enhanced web page is to include it in the regular catalog and make it searchable through the original Oudry page. This would have provided the best measurement for comparing use between the two sites.

After a month of observations using the Google Analytics tool, there were no recorded new views to the webpage created for the experiment. Also, new views were counted on any of the social media inserts that were included in the enhanced Oudry catalog webpage. In turn the YouTube video which was created for this project only received 13 views during the month after it had been uploaded. Perhaps those views were made by members of the staff at the Ackland Museum, showing their performance in the video to their friends; these views created no new traffic to the Ackland website.

The YouTube video, with the help of the included metadata, is searchable to users through identifying different themes which are highlighted in the video and illustrated in the artwork itself. The video was designed to whet the appetites of non-traditional museum visitors by reaching out to them through their interests,
hooking them through video content, and then encouraging users to visit the Ackland website to experience more. This technique would not only increase traffic to the website, but may prove to be a method to create a fan base among non-traditional users. Due to the low number of hits that were initially received by the social media inserts, like the YouTube video, no activity translated over the Ackland website. Thus another method for measurement was created with the hopes of directing willing participates to the websites and collecting their responses to the experiment.

**Survey Results and Discussion**

In the beginning of October, an electronic survey was created in order to capture feedback regarding the use of social media by cultural institutions. On October 25th, the survey was sent out to the undergraduate class at the University of North Carolina which currently consists of over 29,000 students. The listserv, run through the University, was unable to narrow the undergraduate students by their ethnic backgrounds for purposes of this survey. In order to reach all undergraduates that identify themselves with an ethnic group other than white or Caucasian, the survey was sent to the entirety of the undergraduate class, consisting of over 29,000 students from all backgrounds in the form of a mass email through the listserv. By November 1st, almost 500 surveys were completed and returned; however, the majority of participants identified themselves as Caucasian. (381 responses) During the same time frame, 111 surveys were collected from individuals who identified themselves with ethnic groups other than Caucasian. These 111 surveys were used to measure the
possible value of adding social media to a cultural institution’s website. (Results from the other 381 surveys will be included in an appendix following the conclusion.)

Using Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.unc.edu) Surveying Software, the results of completed surveys were filtered using answers received from question 9 of the electronic survey. Question 9 asked participants to complete the following statement ‘The ethnic group that I most identify with is.’ Figure 4 shows the 111 participants broken down by their answer to question number 9.

![Figure 4: Question 8 'The ethnic group I most identify with is...'](

The first two survey questions were included in order to determine each participant’s history in making use of cultural institutions and cultural institution’s websites through their responses. In this study, survey takers were asked about their museum going habits because museums are the highlighted type of cultural institution in this experiment. Most of the minority students (56%) who responded to this question stated that they had visited a website belonging to a museum sometime within the last six months. This result with the greatest percentage of
minorities visiting a website, all within the last six months, was surprising due to prior research stating that minorities are not as likely as Caucasians to visit museums and other cultural institutions. However, upon further reflection, it became clear that asking a minority group who also participate in higher education might produce unexpected answers. Any student may be more inclined to take advantage of services offered by cultural institutions. The very nature of the question itself may also have influenced individuals to answer that they have visited a website of a museum when they actually have not.

Results were similar for question 2; ‘the last time I visited a museum was,’ with 56% stating they have visited a museum within the last six months. It is interesting to note that this group of participants is slightly more likely to visit a museum website when compared to visiting the physical institution. This proves that use of social media on a cultural institution’s website would reach a greater portion of the minority student population rather than programs or other.
resources used on site.

In the next part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to take a look at the original *The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket* catalog page as well as the new enhanced web page which included the use of social media. Survey takers were asked to spend time navigating within each of the pages, compare and offer feedback concerning their experience. Question 4 asked those taking the survey if they felt that the new web page using social media would encourage them to return to use the Ackland’s website in the future. Among the remaining 111 completed surveys, most (54%) of the participants indicated that because of their interaction with the enhanced web page they would return to use the Ackland’s web page. The next highest percentage of participants stated that they felt the enhancements did nothing to persuade or discourage them to make further use of the Ackland website. (27%)
In an attempt to collect additional feedback about participant’s agreement or disagreement with the statement in question 4, users were given the chance to briefly explain their response to the previous question. A wide range of answers were received with the majority reflecting positive and sometimes grateful reactions to the integration of social media on the enhanced web page. The following are examples of explanations and opinions collected.

- “I'm not well educated in the Arts, so videos explaining the history or context of a piece is appreciated. However, I suggest having much shorter videos.”
- “The changes seem to apply for pages that visitors are already willing to access... the changes didn't do anything to attract me to a site I wouldn't have visited normally”
- “The enhancement page will be a source of informational resource for future reference, therefore I would visit the web page more often”
- “I'm not really interested in museums.”
● “I prefer to not read details, but having a video to watch makes it easier to get the details.”
● “Information is livelier and give me the feeling that someone really take care of developing the content of the website, not just some outdated information.”

In the process of reading their answers, many valid points were made. Some offered suggestions on how to improve the experiment, while others offered words of encouragement and elation for what they had just experienced. Still some expressed their boredom and dissatisfaction with the project and even the work of art being used in the project. Of the written answers that were collected, many suggestions were received that the YouTube video should be shorter. One suggested that a good length would be two minutes or less. Another suggestion was that the Ackland should consider posting items on the Vine, another social media network. Many seemed pleased with the attempt to use social media, while others expressed that the changes to the web page made them want to return to Ackland’s website. Others stated that they liked the effort but they didn’t feel that it impacted them in anyway. It is interesting that while many liked the addition of social media, others commented on the virtual tour, which was created to introduce additional works found in the Ackland’s collection that are similar to The Dog Who Carried the Dinner Basket. The tour uses no social media but provides users with an experience not commonly found on a museum’s website. While the suggestions and comments were extremely helpful,
they proved that most of the participants responded positively to efforts made to the enhanced web page.

The next question in the survey asked whether the enhancements made to the web page persuades users to visit the physical institution anytime in the future. 42% of the participant group expressed that they felt the new website has made them want to visit the Ackland. However, 34% revealed that they felt indifferent when it came to visiting the museum based on efforts made on their website. Note the increase in those that expressed little interest in revisiting the Ackland’s website from the previous questions. Along with the increase of those that neither agreed nor disagreed, there was a slight raise in those (21%) who felt that the website didn’t influence their decision to visit the museum (20% in question 4).

![Figure 8: Question 6 'After experiencing the enhanced web page I feel more inclined to visit the Ackland Museum in person.'](image)

Similar to question 4, participants were again given the option to express their reasoning behind their answers. The following are just a few examples:
• “If I could see more videos about the works the Ackland has, I could learn about them remotely. Later, I might visit to see the art I learned about in person.”

• “Having the woman talking about the painting makes me think I will find equally engaging workers at the museum to answer any questions.”

• “I do appreciate the extra information, so if there is [a] gallery I am interested in, the extra information and videos would increase my likelihood of visiting.”

• “It didn't discourage me from visiting, but it didn't really encourage me to attend. Maybe if I explored more of the site and it was interactive and showed me art I found interesting, I might be more inclined to visiting in person.”

• “If a museum has taken the time to design a nice, user-friendly website, I assume that those same qualities will be carried over [in] the museum itself.”

• “If you want people to visit your museum because it's fun and interesting, make the website like that.”

Those who responded to the second round of open-ended questions had even more positive reactions to the website. This time more of written responders stated that they are more likely to visit the Ackland now and appreciate the efforts made by the museum. There was a slight decrease in those who chose to write something in this section. It is assumed that those who stated that they did not feel encouraged to revisit the website felt the same about being encouraged to
visit the museum for the same reason. This caused many to feel that they did not feel the need to rewrite their answer explaining why there were fewer responses for this question.

In this second group of written responses by minority participants no suggestions were made regarding additions to the website that would influence their decision to visit the museum. However, one person requested not to be asked to look at a web page that was insecure and did not look at the webpage in fear of damage to their computer, which re-enforces some of the reason why people may not have been visiting the enhanced web page.

**Conclusion**

Libraries, archives, museums and other types of cultural institutions in the United States are extremely valuable resources to the people of this country, no matter the age, race, color, creed, or skills with technology. These institutions help us remember our past, realize today’s trends, and make us hopeful for the future and the innovations that our children and the next generations will enjoy. Cultural institutions have done well in their efforts to integrate new and emerging technologies into their way of doing business. However, they have all struggled to keep pace with the changing American population. With fewer Americans using the priceless resources cultural institutions have to offer, not only will the public miss out on life changing experiences but cultural institutions may cease to be relevant in the eyes of their potential users; thereby, threatening their very existence.
Trust is an essential part of every major transaction. Trusting those who are outside minority groups is a thing that is not easily earned. Many minorities are inclined to trust those who look like them. Often minorities feel that someone who looks like them is more likely to share similar experiences, have similar opinions, same beliefs, or just a better understanding of the needs of those they are trying to help. There is a phenomenon known as the F.U.B.U effect in African American communities. It means that African Americans are more likely to participate when they make articles, items, or events for them (or more accurately For Us By Us.) Similar sentiments have been proven among other minority communities when museums host events that showcase Hispanic artists, but get little patronage from the local Hispanic population. Surprisingly, even when someone from their community is being showcased at a cultural institution, this does not guarantee more visitors from the minority population. This may be due to the fact that these events are still hosted or put together by someone outside their community.

With the majority of the staff of cultural institutions being Caucasian, representation is becoming disproportionate to the actual demographics of the United States. This means that an overwhelming majority of Americans are not seeing themselves (their cultural, ideas, beliefs, values) represented among the staff in cultural institutions. Despite many efforts to recruit and hire more staff of diverse backgrounds, the process has been extremely slow and programs created to address this situations have yielded little. Striving for diversity is what
many institutions continue to do because it will help ensure this information
treasure continues to remain important to all aspects of American society.

While social media may be used as a temporary solution for this issue in
cultural institutions, it may be the most appropriate method for the moment.
Those who study and follow trends in technology have proven that social media
is an extremely powerful and influential tool in mostly minority communities. In
the past decade, minorities have used social media as a method to not only
connect to the world but have their voices heard in such a way that they cannot
be ignored. Through these social media platforms minorities have helped win
elections and exposed ugly truths that otherwise might never have been known.
They have used it to rally and protest causes close to them and their
communities. This new technological medium can be used by cultural institutions
to create a bridge to reach out to minority communities across the US.

The results of this study show that a group of self-identified minorities,
who are undergraduates at a prodigious university, considered the efforts made
by the Ackland in this experiment as a positive improvement to their website. In
addition, many stated that as a result of what they experienced they felt
influenced to use the museum’s website and even visit the museum in the future.
This generation expects companies and cultural institutions to keep up and follow
trends in technology the way that they [students] do and this may explain why a
number of participants indicated that these enhancements did not influence them
in anyway. To many the efforts in this study may have been seen as behind the
times. Or as stated by some of the participants, there are just subjects or
concepts that do not interest everyone; and no matter how it is presented, it will not influence the matter.

The survey showed that many from the test group had positive reactions to the experiment, signifying that social media is the latest tool which can be used by cultural institutions to reach out to minorities, listen to their needs, then meet those requests and build trust. Hopefully these efforts will have such an impact that more individuals from diverse backgrounds will want to pursue careers in this area.
Bibliography


Preliminary Profile: 2013 UNC First-Year Class, Retrieved October 6 2013, from http://uncnews.unc.edu/content/view/6168/68/


Appendix A - Electronic Survey

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you withdraw from participating at any time, you will not be penalized.

The procedure involves filling out an online survey that will take approximately 15 minutes. Your responses will be confidential and we do not collect identifying information such as your name, email address or IP address.

We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Tarienne Mitchell at tjmitche@email.unc.edu.

Q1 ELECTRONIC CONSENT: Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that: you have read the above information, you voluntarily agree to participate, you are at least 18 years of age

- Agree
- Disagree

This is a survey to measure the impact of using social media on a museum’s website in order to reach a wider audience. This survey should take approximately 15 to complete, after about 10 minutes of comparing the two different web pages (one of which includes a 9 minute YouTube video).

Q2 The last time I visited a museum website was...

- Less than 6 months ago
- 6 months to less than a year
- 1 year ago
- Less than 5 ago
- 5 or more years ago
- Never

Q3 The last time I visited a museum of any type, outside of an academic requirement, was...
Compare the website enhancements to a page found in the Ackland's on-line catalog. Click on the first link, which will open a new browser window. Once you have finished viewing that page, return to this page and click on the second link. Once you have viewed the second page, including the video, return to this page and answer the questions below.

Q4  I feel that the enhancements to Oudry page have encouraged me to visit the Ackland's website more.

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q5  Please explain why or why not in a sentence or two.

Q6  After experiencing the enhanced web page I feel more inclined to visit the Ackland Museum in person more than before.

   Strongly Disagree Disagree Neither Agree nor Disagree Agree Strongly Agree

Q7  Please explain why or why not in a sentence or two.

Q8  The ethnic group I most identify with is

   Native American/ First Nation
   Black/ African American
   Latino/ Hispanic
   Caucasian/ Non- Hispanic
   Asian/ Asian American
   Pacific Islander
   One or more race
   Other

Q9  If other you may specify here.
Appendix B - Electronic Survey Results from Caucasian (non-Latino) Students

Q2  The last time I visited a museum website was...

Q3  The last time I visited a museum of any type, outside of an academic requirement, was...

Q4  I feel that the enhancements to Oudry page have encouraged me to visit the Ackland's website more.
Q6 After experiencing the enhanced web page I feel more inclined to visit the Ackland Museum in person more than before.