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Tafelmusik performing *The Four Seasons* program at the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum



# Ten Steps to Successful Reinvention

By: Amy Kaufman, Managing Director, U.S., Lord Cultural Resources

Do cultural organizations need reinvention? The term indicates a range of possibilities from a simple update to a profound visionary transformation, to a detailed plan to bring an organization back from what one museum director recently referred to as "the graveyard spiral."

"Reinvention" can be a desperate act or a healthy development – it's generally healthy when the organization undertakes a thorough self-assessment and sets goals before making changes. Why reinvent? For whom? What needs to be changed – exhibits, brand, building, organizational structure, financial model? All of the above?

The successful rollout of decisions and priorities involves soul-searching and detailed planning. Whether your organization is evolving to stay relevant or reinventing for survival, here are ten rules of thumb to help:

1. Ensure that Board leadership is engaged with mission, vision and financial realities. Museums that have closed or had near death experiences all had Boards lacking commitment.
2. Engage your audience through interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and universal content. The key is to provide audiences multiple ways to accessing information and personal connections to content.
3. Build partnerships that deliver. Partnerships must be meaningful, clearly defined and beneficial to each party. The goal is to effectively share resources like marketing vehicles, staff, funding and audience.
4. Identify the role that new technology will play in transformation. There are implications for almost every area of the institution, from digital asset management to external affairs. LaPlaca Cohen's "Culture Track 2007" study revealed that 58% of frequent attendees now use email to help decide what to attend, 74% use the Internet to prepare for their visit, and more than 50% of visitors are purchasing tickets online.
5. Embrace today's event-driven culture. Festivals, biennials and open houses are successful at driving people to overcome tendencies to delay visits, especially among the younger population.
6. Provide opportunities for lifelong learning and impact. Museums by their very nature are additive, and have the ability to act on new ideas and knowledge. Strong education programming is key to contributing to civil society and the creative economy.
7. Diversify funding. Institutions should never be overly reliant on one stream, but rather strike a realistic balance of earned income, contributions, government grants and investment income.
8. Listen to your visitors with a new ear. As Arthur Cohen (Chief Executive Officer / Strategy Director) said at the "Culture Track" launch: "When potential visitors say something is 'boring,' they really mean, 'It makes me feel stupid,' and the comment 'It's too expensive' means 'I don't see the value.'"
9. Promote a brand identity that is simple and clear. Word of mouth is the single most important factor in motivating people to participate in cultural programming. This is especially true among younger people. How do you think they describe your institution when they talk to each other?

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In honour of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Singapore Armed Forces, **the Army Museum of Singapore (ARMS)** was opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on September 27, 2007. Lord Cultural Resources began work with the Master Plan in 2005, then undertook the exhibition development. The Museum focuses on the rich heritage and development of the Army, showcasing galleries from the birth of the Army, training, special ops and the future, inspiring hope and pride in the people of Singapore.

**Le Laboratoire** opened in Paris on October 19, 2007. Le Laboratoire is an experimental art and design lab where artists conceive, develop and exhibit innovative art and design projects in collaboration with scientists around the world. Experiments include contemporary art, industrial design and humanitarian engagement projects. After the success of Le Laboratoire in Paris, founder and director David Edwards intends to develop the concept in several places around the world. Lordculture will continue to work with Le Laboratoire on its new international ventures.



Le Laboratoire, Paris

Louisville's **Museum Plaza** broke ground on October 25, 2007. This development is designed to showcase contemporary art, curb urban sprawl by drawing residents to downtown, and strengthen Louisville's West Main Street Historic District. When complete in 2010, it will encompass some 1.5 million sq.ft. of multi-purpose space, including a cutting edge Arts Center.

## Music in China's Museums

Traditionally, museums in China have not been places for live performance. However, as an imaginative "opening out" policy on the part of the nation's museums to connect with their public, the collaboration between Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra and Beijing's Museum of Natural History inspired articles and photos in the capital city's *The First* newspaper on October 24, 2007.

At the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum, the musicians performed Tafelmusik's acclaimed *The Four Seasons* program, narrated by pipa soloist and Beijing-born Wen Zhao. Tafelmusik's programming made connections between the worlds of science and music, and echoed the efforts of the Chinese museum

community to connect with new communities.

In the 18th century, music styles were being performed around the world at the same time as baroque music was being created and performed in Europe. Mychael Danna's creation, *Winter*, was performed while the audiences were invited to "re-imagine" a virtual music world where travel, improved communication and a higher degree of respect for the arts of other cultures allowed a sharing of rich and distinctive musical traditions.

18th century music from Baroque Europe, China and India displayed the rich traditions of the Asian and European newcomers to Canada who, in the spirit of great



Tafelmusik musicians and dinosaurs in concert at the Beijing Museum of Natural History

migrations of the past, came together to create a new and vibrant cultural landscape.

The performances also offered a portrait of 21st Century Canada where Inuit throat singers Sylvia Cloutier and Sarah Beaulne represented the country's most ancient tradition of music making. Sylvia and Sarah introduced Chinese audiences to their world of the far north, and had the audience enthusiastically throat-singing themselves! ●

## When is a Museum "World-Class"?

By: Kristen Hawkeswood, Consultant, Lord Cultural Resources

Museums are among the institutional success stories of the past 25 years – enjoying greater popularity, increasing media attention and significant support from public and private funders. Statistics show that most of this excitement is focused on a relative few of the world's museums – museums frequently referred to as "world-class."

It is perhaps not surprising therefore that cities, governments and museum management are considering how to transform their leading institutions into "world-class" institutions.

Singapore's Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts (MICA), asked Lord Cultural Resources to address the question: "How are world-class museums enhancing the museum experience to draw in the crowds and how are they branding themselves to differentiate their products and services from their competitors both within and without the industry?"

Lord Cultural Resources conducted a major study on this topic which included in-depth interviews with top management in nine of the world's leading museums.

Key findings include:

- Strong collections allow museums to form borrowing relationships with other distinguished institutions, creating new exhibitions and advancing scholarship
- Government tax credits and other incentives facilitate the building of great collections through tax incentives and acquisition budgets
- Many premier institutions have created initiatives to ensure participation of visitors from diverse backgrounds
- Museums are moving towards public/private partnerships to better engage the participation of private donors and sponsors

- Leading museums actively take part in international cultural exchanges, which they view as a core activity

Can "world-class" museums be created or were they simply born 100 years ago as a product of the rapid wealth creation of colonialism? For some measures, like collections, it will be challenging for museums to re-invent themselves as major global players. For standards like education and programming, performance management, and leadership, it is well within the realm of possibility. Having the courage to embark on this road is probably the most important characteristic of a new generation of "world-class" museums.

*We thank MICA in Singapore for giving us permission to report on the results of this study.* ●

Is the term "world-class museum" meaningful, or an irrelevant distraction? Can museums be re-invented? Write to [info@lord.ca](mailto:info@lord.ca) to tell us what you think.

# China Translates Management Book

By: Juliet French, Client Relations and Marketing, Lord Cultural Resources

Nearly every city in China is experiencing a dynamic growth in museum development. Shanghai, for example, has 106 museums and expects to have 150 by the year 2017.

With such a boom in this sector, the People's Republic of China has translated, published and distributed *The Manual of Museum Management* by Gail and Barry Lord to museum professionals across the country. Co-author Gail Dexter Lord attended the launch of the Chinese-language Manual in October 2007, enthusiastically networking and lecturing to local museum professionals

on effective, proactive management to ensure sustainable modernized museums that are thoroughly prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

In China many new museum projects are not adequately planned in advance. The focus is first on architecture and then exhibition design, instead of their simultaneous development.

Among the museums Lord Cultural Resources has worked with in the People's Republic of China



Gail Dexter Lord signing books at the Beijing Book Launch

are: The National Art Museum of China, the Chongqing Science Museum, the New China Museum of Science and Technology and the Beijing Association of Science and Technology. ●

# A Beacon for Sustainable Design in New York City

By: Scott Stefan, Marketing Director, Queens Botanical Gardens

Last September, Mayor Michael Bloomberg officially opened New York City's most environmentally advanced building: Queens Botanical Garden's Visitor & Administration Center. This revolutionary new building not only replaced an outdated administration building, it propelled Queens Botanical Garden into the front ranks of public gardens devoted to sustainable environmental stewardship.

The \$12 million, 15,830 sq.ft. Visitor & Administration Center was designed by Joan Krevlin of BKSK Architects to achieve a LEED® platinum rating, the highest possible certification from the authoritative U.S. Green Building Council.

The Visitor & Administration Center has photovoltaic solar panels that provide approximately 17% of its energy; a planted green roof that's fully accessible to the public; a geothermal system that uses water from an aquifer 300 feet below to heat and cool the building; a cleansing biotope that

cleans rainwater for reuse in the garden, including a fountain and watercourse that adds beauty to the project; compost toilets for the Garden's staff; and a graywater recycling system that naturally cleans water from the building's sinks, shower and dishwasher for reuse in public toilets. The latter two innovations help the Center use 82% less water than a conventional building of the same size.

"In our planning, we asked ourselves how a mid-sized garden like ours, founded on the venerable European model of collections, could best adapt to meet the interests of what is now one of the most culturally varied communities in the world," said Susan Lacerte, the Garden's Executive Director. "The Visitor & Administration Center was the answer."



© Jeff Goldberg/Esto

The Visitor & Administration Center is a pilot project of New York City's Department of Design and Construction's High Performance Building program and the winner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection and the United States Environmental Protection Agency's first Green Building Design Award in 2004. ●

*Lord Cultural Resources is proud to have worked with the Queens Botanical Garden in 2003 to produce a plan for institutional growth.*

The **Dr. & Mrs. Hung Hin Shiu Museum of Chinese Medicine** opened at the Hong Kong Baptist University on December 14, 2007. Reflecting the holistic approach of Chinese medicine through its history and development in Hong Kong and China, this museum also looks towards the future, highlighting current research at the University. This was a design-build exhibit project for Lord Cultural Resources, with exhibition design by Adrian von Ulrich.



Chinese Medicine in Hong Kong gallery at the Dr. & Mrs. Hung Hin Shiu Museum of Chinese Medicine

Lord Cultural Resources will be participating in the **Building Museums Conference** from February 28 to March 1, 2008. Amy Kaufman, Managing Director U.S., will be moderating a panel entitled "Mixing It Up: Incorporating Social Spaces into your Museum." Joy Bailey, Senior Consultant, will be moderating and Catharine Tanner, Executive Vice President, will be a panel member for "Getting in the Ground: Planning the National Museum of African-American History and Culture."

On March 30, 2008 the **International Quilt Study Center and Museum** opens at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Robert A.M. Stern Architects of New York designed the Center with advice on the program for the facility from Lord Cultural Resources. The Center will be home to an important collection of quilts and provide research facilities into this popular art form.



Model of the International Quilt Study Center and Museum  
Photo © Jock Pottle for Robert A.M. Stern Architects

# Santa Clara Convent Museum in Cordoba

By: Maria Fernandez Sabau, Consultant, Lordcultura

The Spanish city of Cordoba has an extensive heritage due to its strategic position on the River Guadalquivir that has permanently attracted peoples to enrich the wealth and splendour of the city.

The Santa Clara Convent, next to the Mosque-Cathedral, represents a great example of the city's permanent reinvention and building reuse. Its Roman mosaics are remnants of the building's domestic use when Cordoba was a capital of one of the Roman provinces. While the city occupied an important place in the Byzantine Empire and Visigoth period, the building was converted into a basilica. Cordoba recovered its status as a capital during the

Caliphate of Cordoba and the building was then transformed into a mosque. Its minaret, still in place now as a bell tower, is a memory of those times. During the medieval period, it was turned into a Romanesque and then a Gothic church, and in the Baroque period, the convent was added.

Finally, over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries it was used as a barracks and as a school.

After many years of neglect, Fundacion Caja Madrid and the



Santa Clara Convent, Cordoba

Town Hall, with support from Lordcultura, are planning an ultimate reinvention: Santa Clara will become a museum that will honour and interpret its evolution and uses. ●

## Update – Museum Maestros

By: Mark King, Cinefocus Canada

Television producer/director John Bessai and the CineFocus Canada crew followed Gail and Barry Lord in February and March of 2007 to film some of their innovative cultural projects, including the Museum of the African Diaspora in San Francisco, the planned American Revolution Center in Valley Forge, and World Trade Center Memorial in New York.

The documentary has some great behind-the-scenes material including a visit to Westfield Heritage Village

in Rockton, Ontario, the birthplace of Lord Cultural Resources, where Gail and Barry lived and started the company more than 25 years ago.

The one-hour documentary is part of a special week of documentaries airing on Bravo! Canada's national arts channel. Tune in to see Gail and Barry in action, as they plan and prepare museums for the 21st century.

View the trailer at [www.cinefocus.com/lords](http://www.cinefocus.com/lords). ●



Filming Gail and Barry on location at Miami's Haulover Beach

Watch the premiere of *Museum Maestros* on Wednesday, March 5, 2008 on Bravo! at 8pm EST.

## Moving in from the Margins

Ethnically-focused museums proliferated in the latter half of the 20th century as culturally diverse visitors noticed that they were not "seeing themselves" on museum walls, among staff, or in the collections of mainstream museums. *Moving in from the Margins* will address ways that the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African

American History and Culture (Executive Director David Terry, Ph.D.), and the New Center for Arts and Culture (Francine Achbar, Acting Director), along with Association of African American Museums President and Director of the Hampton University Museum, Vernon Courtney, are ensuring that their institutions remain relevant in an

environment where cultural diversity is now a mainstream effort.

At the 2008 American Association of Museums Conference in Denver, Lord Cultural Resources Senior Consultant Joy Bailey will moderate a session entitled *Moving in From the Margins: Ethnic Museums Remaining Relevant in the 21st Century*. ●

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10. Never compromise on quality. This is a planning cornerstone for every organization. In the past ten years, the focus was on quality

of space and facilities. Today there is a move to re-invent the programs inside those beautiful spaces and to adapt the buildings to meet "green standards."

This article is based on the panel "Reinvent or Die" delivered with Jack Rouse at the IAAPA Convention on November 12, 2007. To access LaPlaca Cohen's Culture Track 2007, visit [www.laplacacohen.com](http://www.laplacacohen.com). ●

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