



Creating Connection

Using Digital Technology to Transform How We Connect
People and Collections

Anne Taylor Brittingham, Director, Office of Educational Technology
Smithsonian Institution

United States + Italy

Cultural Diplomacy in Action



**The Phillips Collection is
America's first museum of
modern art.**

**Opened in 1921 in Dupont
Circle neighborhood of
Washington, DC.**

What is the Smithsonian?



- 21 Museums, 21 Libraries, 8 Research Centers, and the National Zoo
- Founded 1846 at bequest of James Smithson
- An establishment dedicated to "the increase and diffusion of knowledge"



Our Work & Expertise

Smithsonian works in more than 140 countries, across disciplines, in all corners of the world. Our key areas of expertise include: advisory services, our collections, long-term research, our power to convene, professional training, and cutting-edge technology.

[PARTNER WITH US →](#)

Our projects foster international collaboration, whether helping to save endangered species, improving museum design, or rescuing and restoring priceless art. Click to explore the themes below.



SCIENCE & CONSERVATION



CULTURE & THE ARTS



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

“We create educational resources and programs that ignite curiosity and wonder in people of all ages. Through our museums, research centers, workshops, virtual classrooms and educational labs, we offer opportunities to engage students, teachers, and educational leaders worldwide.”

The Phillips Collection + Italy

Summer 2020





Julia Keane, March 27

“Early into the pandemic, I found myself laying on the floor a lot. Seeing the world upside down with more blood rushing to my head made me feel present, a feeling I craved when spiraling into overwhelming anxiety. This photograph represents me allowing myself to be fully vulnerable in 2020.”

Photographs were a part of The Phillips Collection's *Community in Focus* project, 2020



Anna Lovering, May 11

“A Gift: The chalk was a gift given to my daughter in the middle of the pandemic beginnings. It was such a simple gesture from one human to another to create a nostalgic memory of being able to play in the park. The photograph shows a dystopic view of the sentiment of a gift while she is wearing a mask outside and is fully gloved.”

Cultural Capacity Building and Dialogue

**“U.S. Embassies and Consulates
have a convening power to bring
institutions and people together.”**

Karen Schinnerer, Cultural Attaché, Rome, US Department of
State

Program Participants



GAM Turin:

- Angela Benotto, Head of External & International Affairs
- Antonella Angeloro, Education Department
- Elisabetta Rabajoli, Exhibition Manager
- Federica Sesia
- Laura Carioni, Education Department

MADRE Naples:

- Anna Cuomo, Project Representative
- Kathryn Weir, Artistic Director

Museums of the City of Rome:

- Daniela Vasta, Director, Education Programs
- Maria Vittoria Marini Clarelli, Superintendent
- Nicoletta Cardano, Director of Education Programs
- Sergio Guarino, Director

Palazzo Strozzi Florence:

- Alessio Bertini, Education Department

The Phillips Collection:

- Anne Taylor Brittingham, Deputy Director for Education and Responsive Learning Spaces
 - Erica Harper, Head of PK12 Initiatives
 - Hilary Katz, Manager of Teacher Initiatives
 - Donna Jonte, Manager of Art & Wellness and Family Programs
-

What Were The Common Problems We Were Facing?

How Could We Support Each Other?

While Museums Were Closed Across Italy and the US

We Asked Ourselves

How do we reach audiences?

How do we use technology to reach new audiences?

How do we remain relevant?

How are we taking care of ourselves and each other?



Where is your museum currently with education + community programs?

- Using digital programs to reach new audiences.
- Trying to connect with local audiences.
- Using contemporary artists to connect with community.

Entrance, MADRE Museum, Naples, Italy



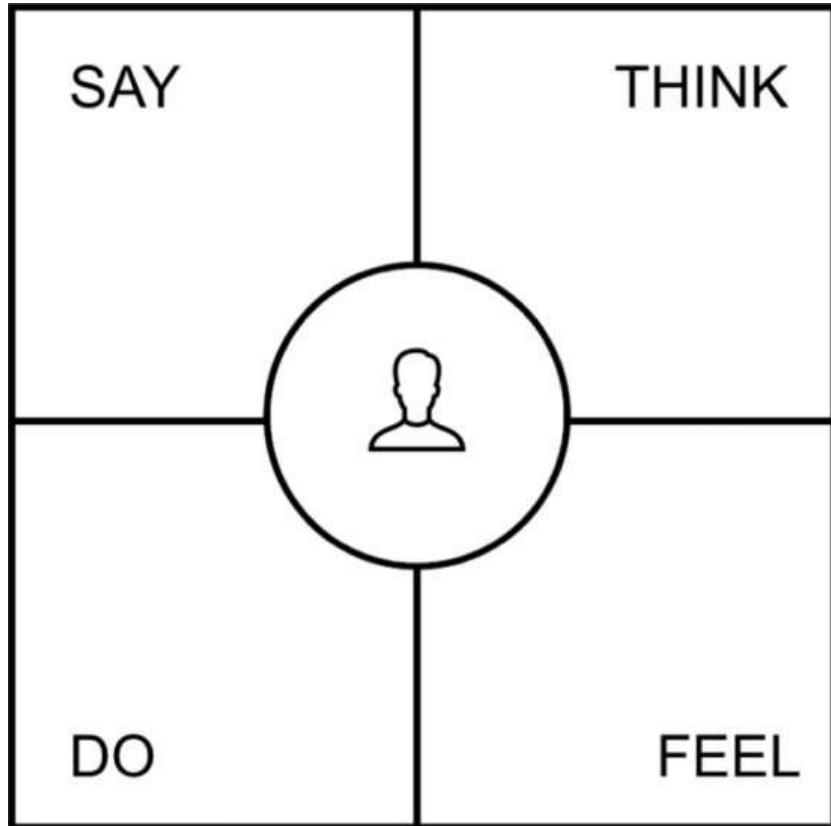
Where We Want To Get To:

- Maximize the power of storytelling.
- Think about audiences in a more personal and specific way.
- Create strategy to generate repeat visitors.
- Collaborate better (within our institutions and with other institutions).

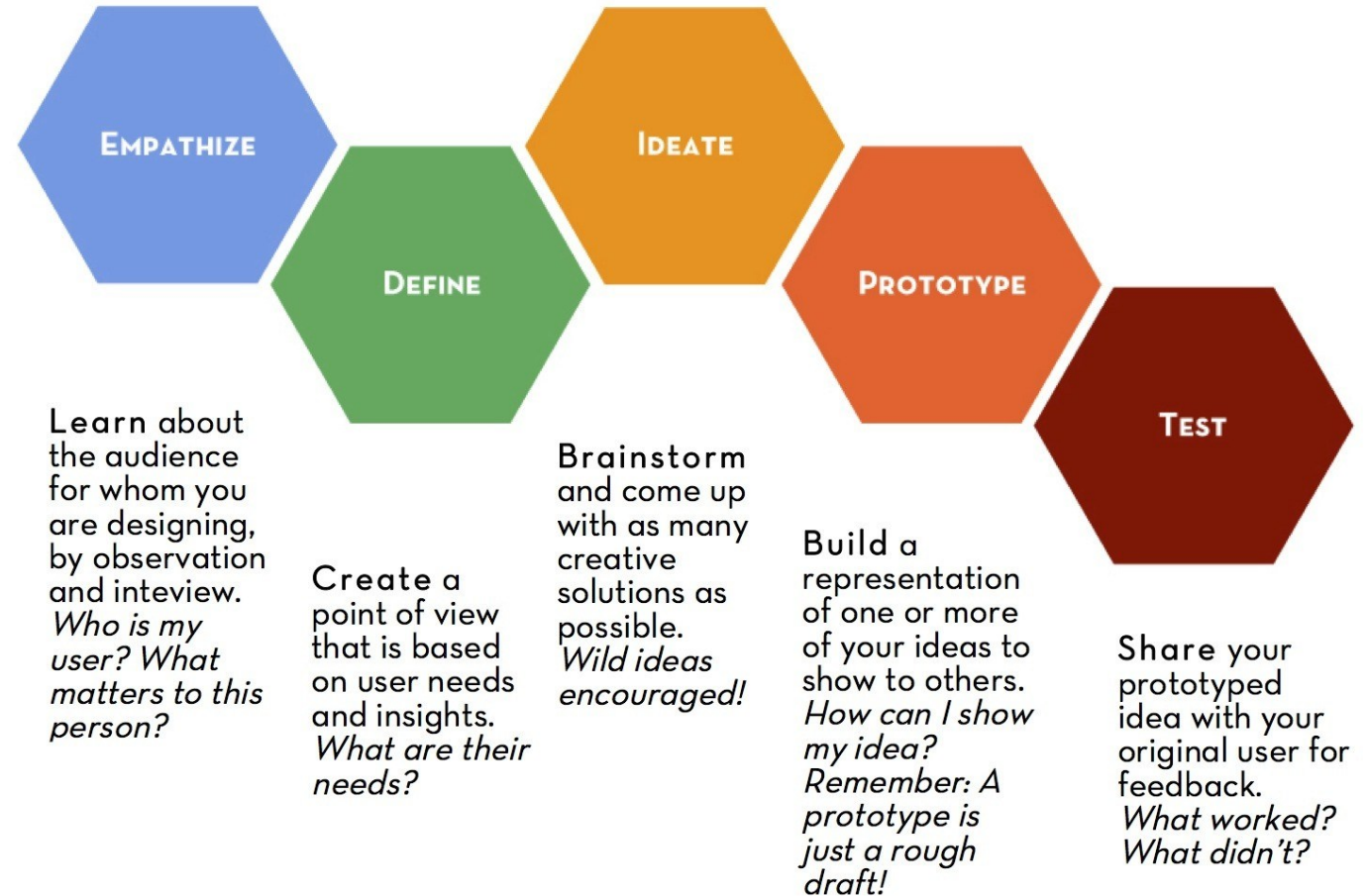
Connecting with Audiences

How Do We Lead With Empathy?

Empathy Map



We are all DESIGNERS!



Brainstorm!

Come up with 3-5 radical ways to meet the audience's need/solve your problem.

Think outside the box!

Talk about your ideas with your breakout group.



Shifting Perspectives and Seeing Differently

How Does Art Help Us See
Differently?



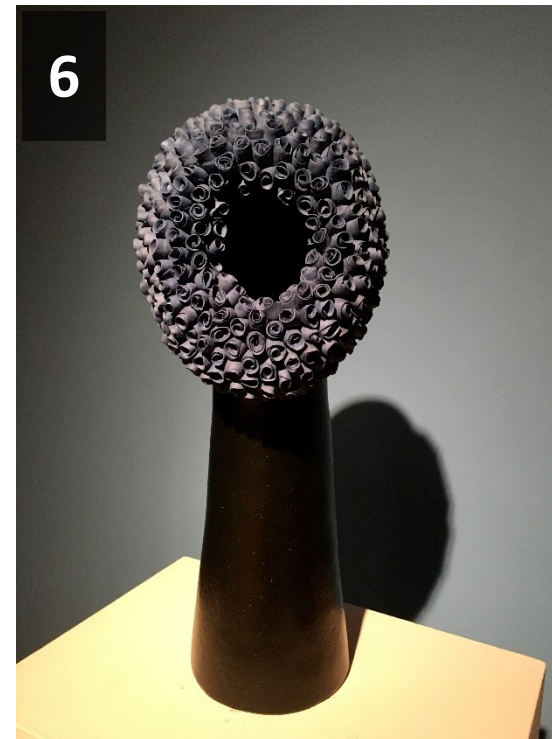
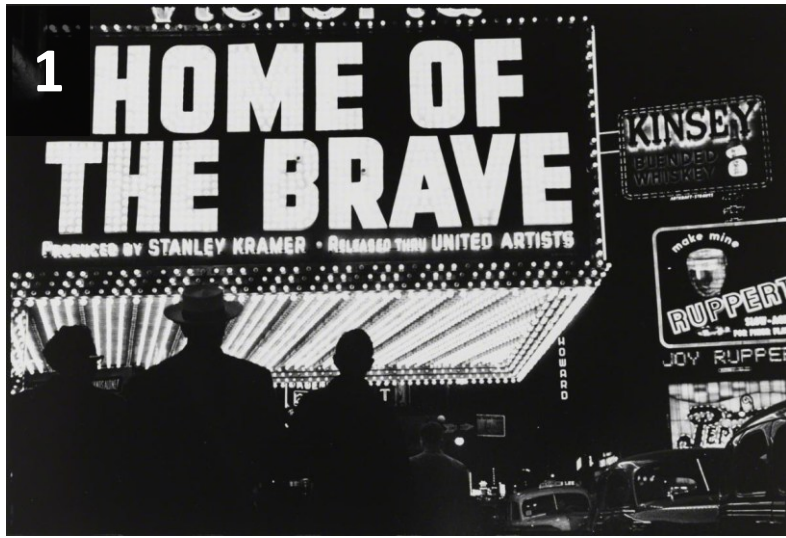
Pierre-August Renoir, *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, 1880-81; acquired 1923



Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series*, Panel 45, *The Migrants Arrived in Pittsburgh, One of the Great Industrial Centers of the North*, 1940-41; acquired 1942

Starting the Conversation

How Can Art Open Up
Conversations?



Connecting People

How Can Museums Bring Us
Together?





What We Carry With Us



Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series*, Panel 3, *From Every Southern Town Migrants Left by the Hundreds to Travel North*, 1940-41; acquired 1942



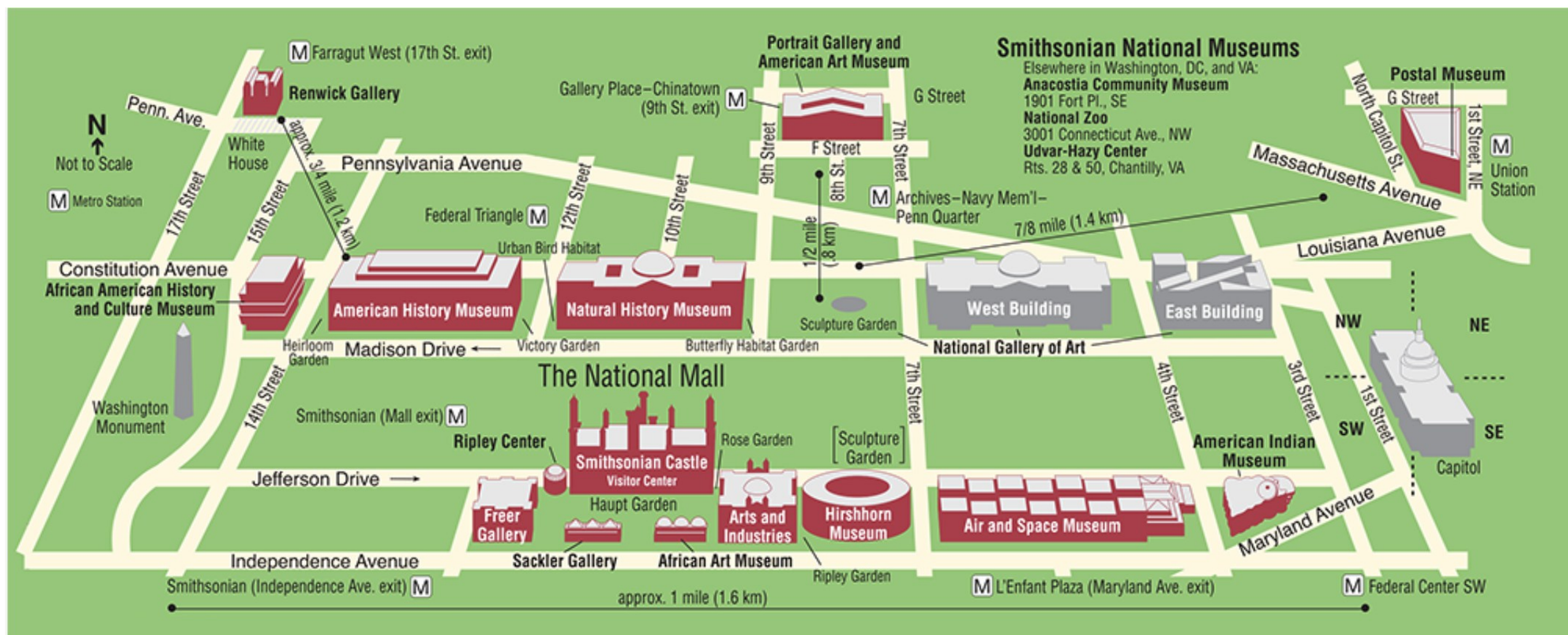
Workshop in partnership with Dedalus, a Naples non-profit that supports immigrants in the city.

Staying Relevant

How Do We Democratize Museums?









17.7 million visits in 2023

Collections Holdings

157.3M

Objects and Specimens
Fiscal Year 2023

152.5K

Archival Cubic Feet
Fiscal Year 2023

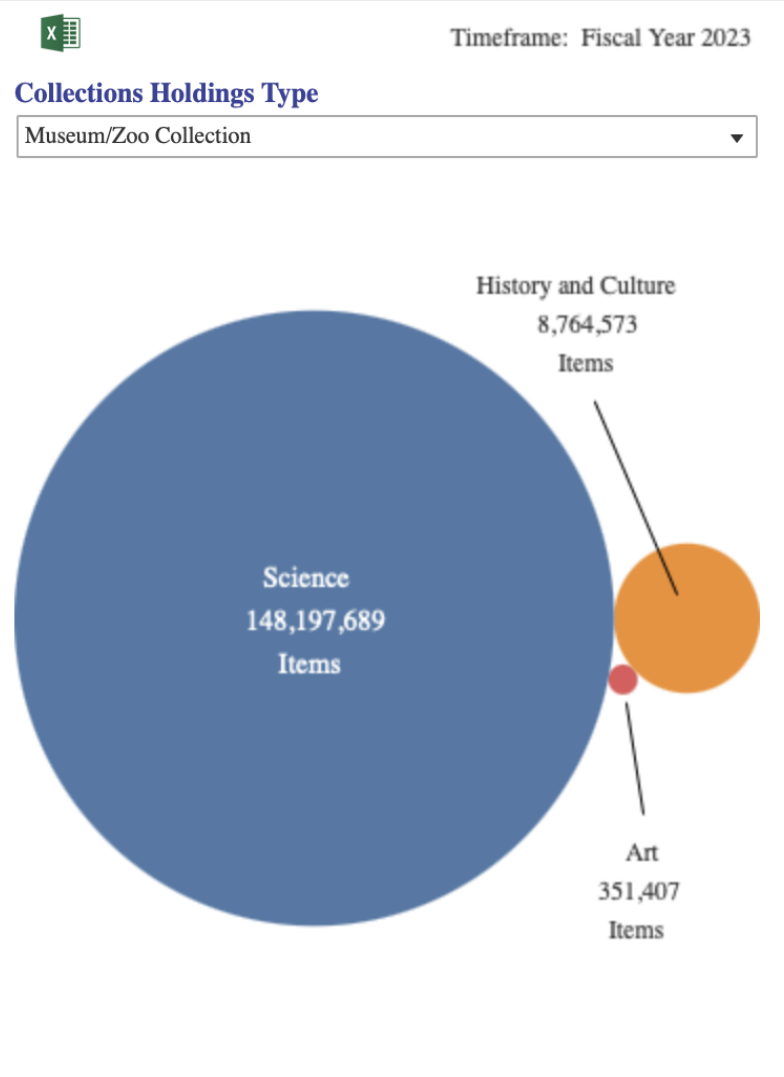
2.3M

Library Volumes
Fiscal Year 2023



Smithsonian collections present an astonishing record of American and international artistic, historical, cultural, and scientific achievement. Representing a diverse range of materials and disciplines, the collections include works of art, historical artifacts, natural and physical science specimens, living animals and plants, images, archives, libraries, audio and visual media, and digital assets. In terms of sheer numbers,

Smithsonian collections have a scope and depth that no other institution in the world can match. Visit our [collections page](#) for more information.



Collections Digitization

Fiscal Year 2023

37.0M

Objects and Specimens
with Digital Record

117.0K

Archival Cubic Feet
with Digital Record

1.6M

Library Volumes
with Digital Record

7.7M

Objects and Specimens
with Digital Image

31.0K

Archival Cubic Feet
with Digital Image

60.6K

Library Volumes
with Digital Image

Open Access

5.1M

Open Access Media Assets
as of November 1, 2024

36%

Collections Records with Open Access
Media Assets
as of November 1, 2024

41.4M

Open Access Media Asset Views
in Q4 Fiscal Year 2024

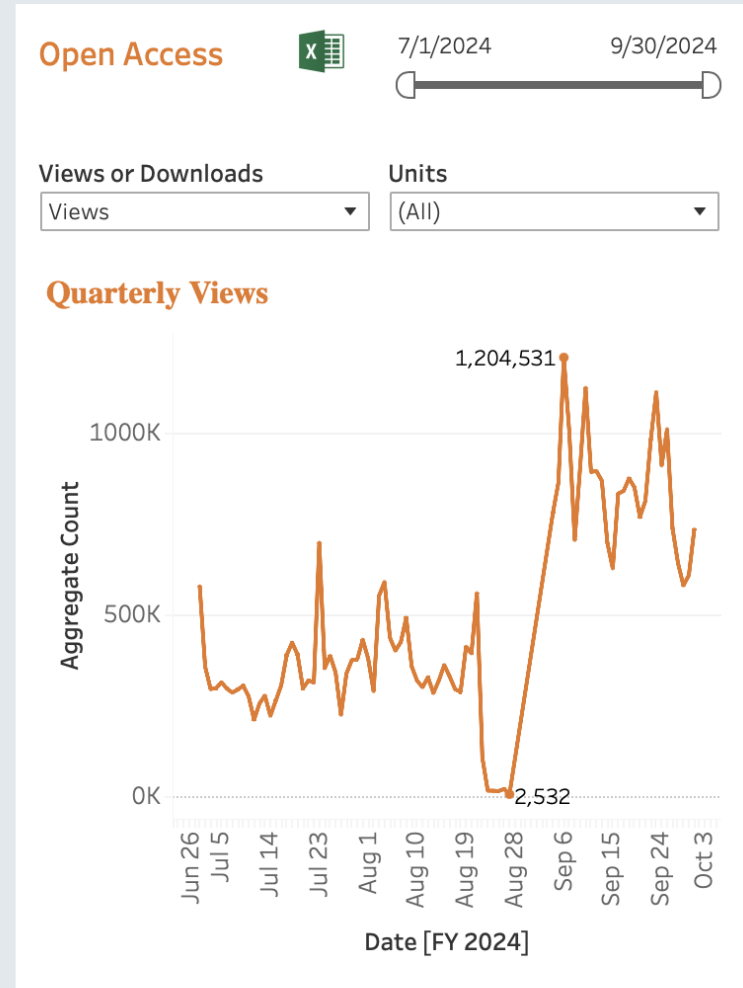
1.2M

Open Access Media Asset Downloads
in Q4 Fiscal Year 2024



Smithsonian Open Access allows anyone to download, share, and reuse over four million digital media assets (two- and three-dimensional images) from the Smithsonian's collections. These assets may be used for any purpose, without concern about copyright infringement. They include images from across the Smithsonian's 21 museums, nine research centers, libraries, archives, gardens, and National Zoo. For more information,

visit the [Open Access FAQ](#) page.



How Do We Connect People with the Smithsonian?

Our Strategic Plan has five focus areas that center on Our Shared Future as a global community.



Digital

Ensure every home and classroom has access to the Smithsonian's digital content.



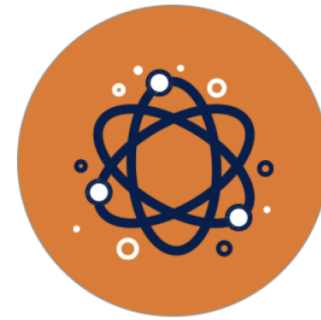
Nimble

Work together to build a nimble and effective Smithsonian.



Trusted Source

Be a trusted source that explores and grapples with what it means to be an American.



Science

Harness Smithsonian expertise to elevate science in the global discourse.



Education

Build and enrich a national culture of learning by engaging with educational systems nationwide.



Welcome to the Office of Educational Technology

Mission: The Office of Educational Technology (OET) connects educators and educational communities to the Smithsonian's ecosystem of digital educational resources—placing the Smithsonian at everyone's fingertips.



Smithsonian Learning Lab

Connecting Smithsonian Objects & Expertise to Classrooms Across America since 2016

The screenshot shows the Smithsonian Learning Lab website. At the top left is the Smithsonian Learning Lab logo. A search bar is located at the top center with the text "Search the Smithsonian Learning Lab". On the top right, there are navigation links for "About", "Get Started", "Webinars", "Login", and "Sign Up". On the left side, there are four main navigation categories: "Discover" (with a telescope icon), "Create" (with a paper airplane icon), "Share" (with a globe icon), and "Learn" (with an icon of three people). The main content area features a large, colorful mosaic background. Overlaid on this is a dark box with the text "Welcome to the Smithsonian Learning Lab!" and a sub-headline "Teach effectively by creating your own interactive learning experiences-or adopt exemplars made by teachers and Smithsonian experts." Below this, there is a section titled "Promoting Parent-Child Interactions with Talk with Me Toolkits" with a "Watch" button and a "Discover More Webinars" button. At the bottom right, there are three circular icons: a list icon, a refresh icon, and a settings icon. A URL bar at the bottom left shows "https://learninlab.si.edu/#sl-discover".

Smithsonian Learning Lab

Search the Smithsonian Learning Lab

About Get Started Webinars Login Sign Up

Discover
Create
Share
Learn

Welcome to the Smithsonian Learning Lab!

Teach effectively by creating your own interactive learning experiences-or adopt exemplars made by teachers and Smithsonian experts.

Promoting Parent-Child Interactions with Talk with Me Toolkits

In this free webinar, join the Goodling Institute for Research in Family Literacy at Penn State to explore the Smithsonian's Talk with Me Toolkits (TMTs). You'll leave with toolkits of activities that encourage thinking, vocabulary, and language development in young children. This session will be helpful for librarians, family literacy instructors, teachers, and parents who might use the TMTs at home, school, libraries, community programs, and other settings.

Watch Discover More Webinars

https://learninlab.si.edu/#sl-discover



Discover



Create



Share



Learn



What will you find in the Smithsonian Learning Lab?

Try your first search for resources or collections.



Resources
Millions of Smithsonian digital images, recordings, texts, and videos in history, art and culture, and the sciences



Collections
Thousands of examples of resources organized and structured for teaching and learning by educators and subject experts

Who uses the Learning Lab?

In short... it's **people like you**. We created the Learning Lab so anyone can quickly discover and adapt authoritative subject-relevant resources.



Educators
[Learn more →](#)



Curriculum Developers
[Learn more →](#)



Librarians/Media Specialists
[Learn more →](#)



Museum Educators



Learners



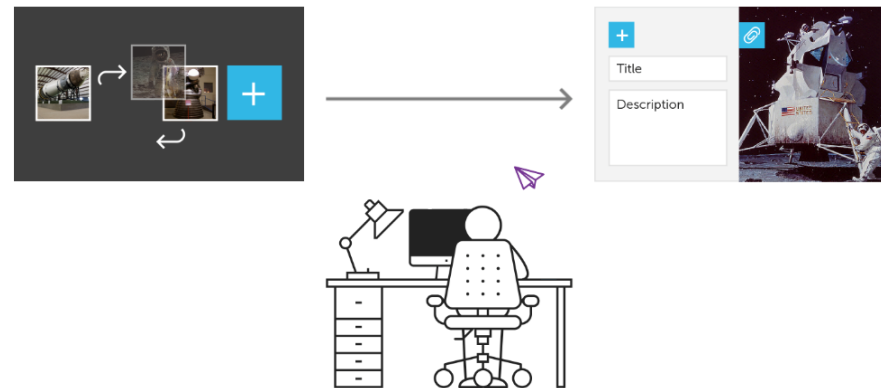
Parents



Create

Create collections of resources to engage learners, or freely adapt ones already made by Learning Lab users like you.

Find a published collection to adapt.



Use Learning Lab tools to customize and enhance your collections.



Copy a Collection

Adapt exemplars to personalize them for your learners.



Upload

Upload aids and resources you already use and value.



Annotations and Hotspots

Make a collection student-friendly, with information, focus, and interactivity.



Quizzes and Assignments

Build in guidance and supports for students.



Discover



Create



Share



Learn

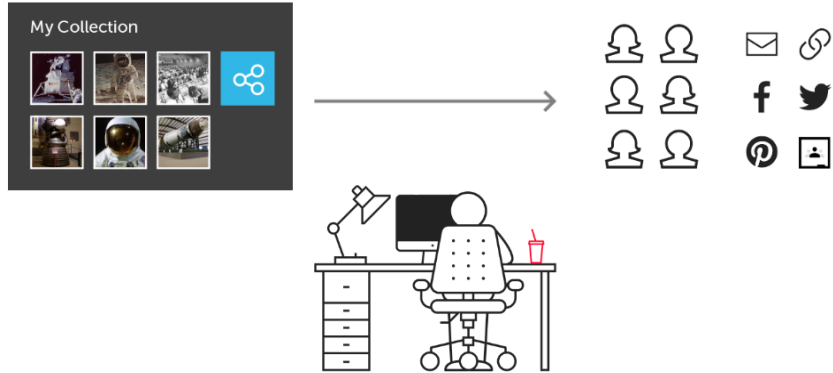
Share



Share

Share what you discover and create with the Smithsonian learning community and beyond.

Find collections other users have published.



Spread the word. Easily share the things you care about the other users, your colleagues, students, and friends.



Publish Your Collections

Share what you have made with the Smithsonian learning community.



Embed

Grab simple code to share any resource or collection.



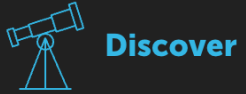
Share Online

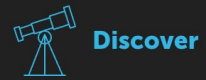
Email It, Tweet It, pass it around. Share what you discover and create with your world.



Assign

Develop a roster of your students and assign your collections to them. Track their responses and progress.





Learn

Grow your skills and stay connected with the Learning Lab Community

News and Teaching Tips

[View all →](#)



02/05/24
What's New in the Smithsonian Learning Lab for Winter 2024?



12/08/23
Hands-on Making Activities



11/16/23
Smithsonian Learning Lab Update: November 16, 2023

Newsletter

BRIGHT IDEAS

This issue
[What's New in the Smithsonian Learning Lab for Winter 2024?](#)

Subscribe to our Bright Ideas newsletter

To learn more about the Smithsonian Learning Lab and to read about strategies, approaches, new features, and more, subscribe to the Bright Ideas newsletter. We'll be sending out a new issue every few weeks.

[Subscribe](#)



The Problem Statement

The educational landscape has shifted dramatically since the launch of Smithsonian's Learning Lab platform in 2016.

How can the Institution ensure that every classroom in the nation has access to (and wants to use) Smithsonian's digital content?

Current Challenges of Site

- Navigation
 - Not intuitive
 - Site is slow
- Ease of use
 - Too much training needed
- Content
 - Challenging to locate content and apply to classroom within 10 minutes

The screenshot shows the Smithsonian Learning Lab interface. At the top left is the Smithsonian Learning Lab logo. A search bar contains the text 'democracy'. To the right of the search bar is a 'Login' button and a menu icon. Below the search bar is a 'Refine Search >' link. There are two filter buttons: 'Resources (1,476)' and 'Learning Lab Collections (129)'. The main content area displays the text 'Found 1,476 Resources containing: democracy'. Below this text is a 'Sort By Relevance (Best Match)' dropdown menu. The search results are presented in a grid of 12 resource cards. Each card features a thumbnail image, a title, and a source name. The cards include: 'Democracy' (National Museum of A...), 'Democracy Speaks' (Smithsonian American...), '"Got Democracy"' (National Museum of A...), 'Visualizing Democracy' (Smithsonian Center fo...), 'Democracy Heals!' (National Museum of A...), 'Democracy Heals' (National Museum of A...), 'Arsenal of Democracy', 'Safe for Democracy', 'Granaries of Democra...', '1832 Democracy 1864', 'Ignorance Kills Demo...', and 'Bee Hive Democracy ...'. Each card has a share icon, a heart icon, and a plus icon in the top right corner. On the right side of the grid, there are three circular navigation icons: a list icon, a refresh icon, and a settings icon.

The Opportunity

Smithsonian Learning Lab 2.0 can provide ready-to-use, high-quality materials that help teachers easily incorporate Smithsonian resources into any classroom.

- **Accessible:** Learning Lab 2.0 is in every classroom across America.
- **Useful:** Provides support to teachers and learners every day.
- **Practical:** Solves real-life teaching challenges.
- **Relevant:** Developed in partnership with teachers to be in alignment with what they need and want.

Teachers are practiced at using digital tools and online content.

What if Learning Lab 2.0 is a resource they use every day?

Digital Education Resources

- Increase student engagement
- Accessible and flexible
- Personalized learning
- Foster collaboration
- Real-world application
- Data analysis and feedback

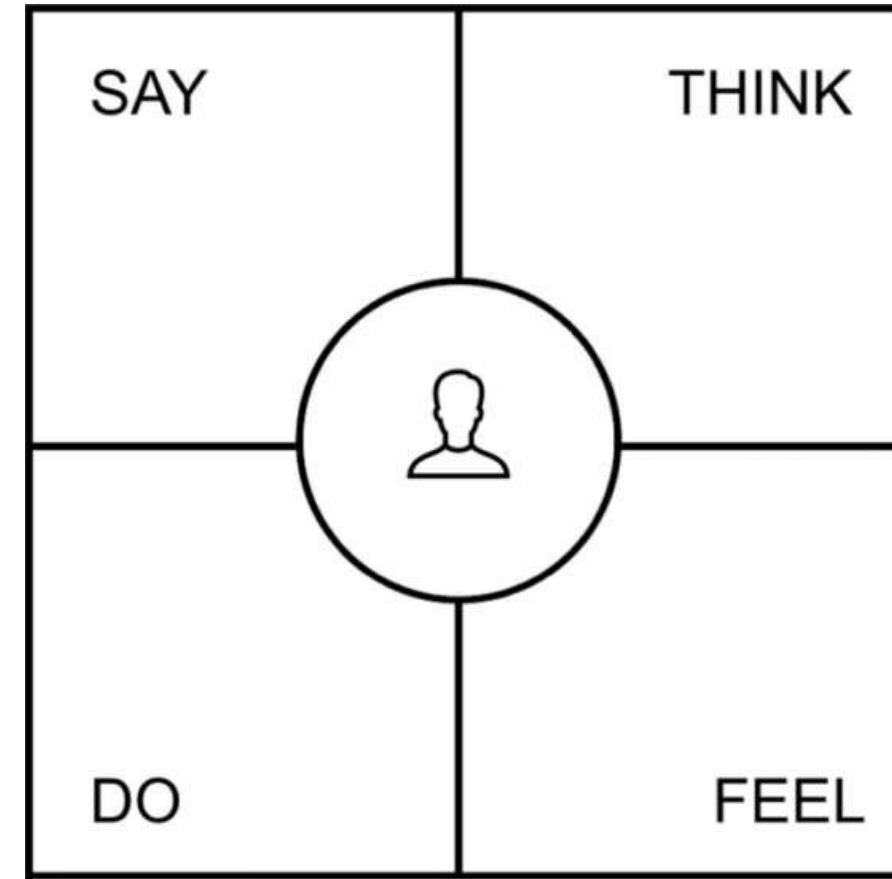
Create a more **accessible, interactive, and imaginative** learning experience.

“The Who” – PK12 Teachers

Using Empathy in Audience and Content Development

Start with the user: seek to understand their needs first, then develop resources

- Burned Out
- Low levels of job satisfaction
- Educators have different needs and states have vastly different agendas and requirements
- Already going online to find instructional content to supplement core curriculum



In Conclusion

How Can We Best Leverage
Partnerships?



THANK YOU!



brittinghama@si.edu



Smithsonian