WAYS TO ACTIVATE your SOFT POWER Tips for Museums and Cities

What is Soft Power?
“Soft power” is the ability to influence through persuasion, attraction and ‘setting the agenda’ rather than military or economic force.

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POWER DIFFUSION Governance and Human Resources

1.
Inviting More People In

2.
Responsive Operating Hours

3.
Free Admission

4.
The Best Employers in the Creative Economy

5.
Opportunities for Hiring and Advancement

ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES Collections and Documentation

6.
Bridging and Bonding

7.
Collection Development for Social Equity

8.
Tagging So Anyone Can Search and Find

9.
Making Information Accessible

10.
The Social Commons Operations

11.
The Sharing Economy Research and Production

12.
Mobile Knowledge

13.
Collaboration and Exchange

14.
Developing Cultures of Creativity

15.
Supporting Research and Production

16.
Encouraging Contextual Intelligence

17.
Presenting Useful Ideas in Useful Places

18.
Making Space for New Perspectives: Re-framing the Agenda

19.
Participative Stakeholder Communication

20.
Learning for a Lifetime

21.
Engaging With All Forms of Tourism

22.
Presenting Useful Ideas in Useful Places

23.
Making Space for New Perspectives: Re-framing the Agenda

24.
Participative Stakeholder Communication

25.
Public-Private Partnerships

26.
Impact Investment

27.
Crowd-Sourcing And Participatory Forms Of Income Generation

28.
Planning Culturality

29.
From Cultural Hubs and Heritage Districts to Cultural Commons

30.
Rewarding Urban Development

31.
THE SOFT POWER EMBRACE the Role of Cities

32.
How do you activate your soft power?

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The following excerpts are from the 14 essayists in our new book Cities, Museums and Soft Power. Consider them a stotify, a hip hop track, some tapas, a collage of the ideas herein. They are also the beginning of a conversation...looking for your voice. Visit us on facebook (MuseumsSoftPower) to share your thoughts.

— Ngaire Blankenberg

Richard Florida, Preface

Cities, which house more than 50% of the world’s population and account for 80% of GDP, are starting to exercise influence on global issues like migration and sustainability, but could cities more effectively exercise their soft power by embracing museums?

Federica Olivares, Museums in Public Diplomacy

The specific expertise of museums allows them to contribute to place-branding, enhancing or transforming the reputation and perceived image of cities and regions.

Batul Raaj Mehta, Unearthing the Genius Loci of Museums in the Indian Subcontinent

The recording-keeping of the colonial rulers, and their distance from the local culture, led to the genesis of Indian museums... In the past decade however, a few museums have begun embracing identities that respond to their own histories... probably from a need to express one’s distinctiveness in a world that is increasingly homogenized.

An Laishun, Cranking Up the Soft Power Engine of Chinese Museums

The policy of free access to museums implemented in 2008 has enabled hundreds of millions of rural migrant workers and urban low-income people to experience museums. These new visitors account for a major proportion of the 500 million museum visitors annually.

Robert Punkenhofer, Cultural Nomads: Creative People on the Road

What if all the creative nomads—those who made the city the vibrant, diverse and entertaining area that attracted the rich and powerful in the first place—are driven out by the expensive cost of living?

Gegê Leme Joseph, Museums in the Age of Brazilian Soft Power

Given the ineffectiveness of wealthier institutions in reaching disadvantaged communities, and the success of social museums to achieve that same purpose... perhaps Brazilian museum professionals should start thinking outside the box about cross-institutional collaboration...

Lourdes Fernández, Global and Local: Fairs and Biennials, Temporary Urbanism and Pop-Up Museums

There is a need now for new working models and relationships between institutions... Networking proposes the creation of a universal dossier, where all documents are shared...it enables museums to combine their expertise and exert long-lasting influence...

Mohammed Gamal Rashed, Cairo and The Grand Egyptian Museum

During the January 25th Revolution...young Egyptians formed a human shield in front of the museum to protect it from looting. This demonstrated to us the commitment of a new generation of Egyptians to our long heritage and proud history. It is now our turn, as museum professionals, to strengthen this relation.

Javier Jimenez, The Economics of Museums and Cities

Museums are among the most valuable, prestigious and frequented assets of cities... they directly contribute $21 billion to the U.S. economy each year and support 400,000 jobs. This represents more jobs than computer programming or civil engineering generate.

Guido Guerzoni, The Museum Building Boom

...A museum is not a hospital, a university or a court of law. It is a construction type that has taken upon and sometimes overloaded itself with meaning and expectations.

Ngaire Blankenberg, When Soft Powers Collide

"Open" museums, as with open cities, take this expectation seriously and are more successful at exercising soft power. Top-down museums with little local participation or relevance may be successful initially at attracting attention but ultimately will fail.

Hayfa Matar, Museums as Signifiers in the Gulf

It takes courage to examine the vulnerabilities in our region, present them honestly and foster a dialogue with people, using the museum or art gallery as a platform... Museums and cultural institutions, if planned properly, can become the next Majlis: “a multigenerational area for dialogue and learning”.

Gail Dexter Lord and Joy Bailey Bryant, A Tale of Two Civil and Human Rights Cities

If need be, as in Atlanta and Winnipeg, cities will invent new museums and new cultural institutions to shape and convey the stories they need to tell. Sometimes subversive, sometimes supportive of national policies, the soft power of cities and their museums has the potential to change our world in the 21st century.
What People Are Saying...

“With the help of 14 experts from 10 countries, Lord and Blankenberg demonstrate how much museums have to offer our rapidly urbanizing planet. Cities will never be the same…”

— Richard Florida, Director of the Martin Prosperity Institute at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management, Global Research Professor at NYU, co-founder and editor-at-large of The Atlantic’s CityLab, urbanist, and author of international best-seller The Rise of the Creative Class

“In this important and timely book, Gail Dexter Lord and Ngaire Blankenberg have brought together an interesting and innovative array of essays that not only answer the perennial question, why museums matter, but also suggests a blueprint for how museums can exercise more influence and be of greater value to their urban communities. This is a must read for those who care about culture, museums and the evolution of our communities in the 21st century.”


“The authors build a compelling argument as they explore what’s next for cities, museums and soft power, framing the international conversation about the future in fresh and provocative ways. A fascinating book.”

— Jim Richardson, founder, MuseumNext, London

“Cities, Museums and Soft Power provides a fascinating and multifaceted analysis of a theme that is intrinsically linked to UNESCO’s convictions on the influential role of culture and creativity in promoting social inclusion, understanding and economic growth.”

— Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO

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