



POSITION GUIDE

ORGANIZATION:	<u>Detroit Historical Society</u>
POSITION:	Chief Curator
LOCATION:	Detroit, Michigan
REPORTS TO:	Executive Director

BACKGROUND AND OPPORTUNITY

MISSION

The Detroit Historical Society educates and inspires our community and visitors by preserving and portraying our region's shared history through dynamic exhibits and experiences.

VISION

To create a shared sense of community and pride by celebrating the history and unique culture of our region.

CORE VALUES

The Society's staff members and board of trustees also have adopted the following core values, and members of the public should expect that we are striving to realize these values in all of our exhibitions, programs and communications:

Accountability: We will serve as effective stewards of our assets and relationships, acting in a manner in which everyone is held responsible for their actions.

Authenticity: We will demonstrate the highest level of integrity and scholarship in all of our words and actions, recognizing the need to maintain an unimpeachable credibility amongst our key stakeholders.

Customer Focus: We will be guided by an understanding of the customer's needs and expectations in all of our actions.

Engagement: We will involve all of our stakeholders in the creation of an environment that is challenging, creative, and rewarding.

Relevancy: We will strive to ensure that our efforts always resonate with, and are meaningful to, our community and stakeholders.

Respect: We will foster an atmosphere that acknowledges and values the contributions and ideas of all individuals.

BACKGROUND

Established in 1921, the Detroit Historical Society's mission is to educate and inspire the community and visitors by preserving and portraying the region's shared history through dynamic exhibits and experiences. The Society is responsible for the overall management and operations of the [Detroit Historical Museum](#), an 80,000 square foot facility located in Midtown; [Dossin Great Lakes Museum](#), a unique maritime museum located on Belle Isle; and the [Collections Resource Center](#), an expansive storage facility which houses an extensive collection of more than 200,000 artifacts.

Today, the Museum welcomes more than 100,000 visitors annually, including more than 15,000 schoolchildren. Visitors enjoy exhibits showcasing more than 300 years of the region's history – from the time when the French first came to Detroit through the city's rise to become the Motor City and Motown.

In 1945, the Society transferred ownership of the Museum and the collections to the City of Detroit, and the Society focused on fundraising and marketing activities for the Detroit Historical Museum and, later, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum. In 2006, the Society reached a new agreement with the City of Detroit to once again become the day-to-day manager of the Detroit Historical Museum, the Dossin Great Lakes Museum and the Collection.

The Society's Board of Trustees and staff have reinforced their commitment to ensuring excellence in all of the organization's activities. In September 2006, the Detroit Historical Museum celebrated its Grand Re-Opening after a Society-led 10-week makeover that saw the installation of six new exhibits and many needed facility improvements. In March 2007, the Society completed a similar makeover at the Dossin Great Lakes Museum, which reopened to record attendance.

In 2009, the Society launched a private five year \$21 million comprehensive campaign to finance major enhancements of the Detroit Historical Museum and improvements at the Dossin Great Lakes Museums as well as significant investments in the Society's programming, professional staff, outreach, collections and on-line presence. Separately and additionally, the City of Detroit, the owner of the facilities, has approved \$17.2 million in capital funds to support investment and expansion of the museums. The date when these funds would become available is undetermined.

The Society has developed an exciting plan for the museums that is affordable, relevant and high-impact and supported by a sustainable operating model. The plans, developed with Detroit-based SDG Design, Inc., include four new exhibit galleries, and major upgrades and technological enhancements throughout both facilities. Other projected components of the plan include increased use of interactive technology and other learning-based attractions, enhancements to the museums' web site, the addition of curatorial, educational and development staff, operational funding support and additional growth in the Society's endowment.

THE OPPORTUNITY

THE POSITION:

Reporting to Executive Director and C.E.O., Robert Bury, the Chief Curator will be responsible for the articulation and implementation of a strategy for the Society's curatorial and educational initiatives. The Chief Curator will be expected to work closely with senior leadership to provide strategic and tactical direction to the entire organization, particularly with respect to the educational and interpretive initiatives that the organization undertakes. The Chief Curator will also be expected to represent the Society in the greater Detroit community and the national museum community, extending the Society's brand as the region's leading local history organization.

Major Responsibilities:

- Establish short-range and long-range educational and interpretive priorities for the organization and develop annual plans to achieve those goals.
- Oversee the programs and exhibitions calendar for the organization, including the management of budgets, exhibition schedules and program timelines.
- Lead the Curatorial, Programs, Education, Collections and Exhibits teams in a collaborative and team-oriented manner, ensuring that staff, contractors and volunteers are fully engaged and working towards the organization's goals.
- Serve as a key member of the Society's senior leadership team and as a major contributor on the project team focused on the proposed museums' enhancement and renovation project.
- Serve as a key member of the Society's senior leadership team and interact with the Board of Directors and the Society's History Advisory Council.

THE PROFILE:

We seek an accomplished and creative individual with a passion for, and exceptional record as a transformational and translational expert in an urban historical venue. The successful candidate will have appropriate experience with collections, and related exhibit and educational programs, and will understand how to successfully manage the balance between preservation priorities and a commitment to the visitor experience and the community audience. The successful candidate will anticipate and plan for the extraordinary opportunities that await the Society in uplifting innovative collections-based exhibits, stories, and educational programs with corresponding plans for optimal visitor experiences and community audience engagement.

The ideal candidate must have a work style that reflects positively the values and vision of the Detroit Historical Society and must have strong interpersonal skills and the ability to positively interact with individuals at all levels of the organization, as well as with guests, donors, volunteers, governmental leaders, community representatives, and other constituents. The successful candidate will possess superb communication skills (written and oral) and diplomacy, and is adaptable to environments that have some level of ambiguity and complexity. He or she will have an interest and desire to become part of an big "small-town" urban environment (Detroit is the eleventh most populous city in the United States) and will be active in community life as this "dynamic, diverse city with an intriguing history" continues its revitalization.

This individual is intellectually curious and has an outgoing nature and inspires these qualities in others. The demonstrated ability to create and manage in a dynamic organization with an evolving culture is imperative. This includes the direction of multi-discipline project teams, work delegation, and developing individual staff into highly effective employees through coaching, mentoring, and modeling. This person should be able to manage a budget with an understanding of the bottom line requirements of the Society. The successful candidate will also be able to develop a variety of internal and external networks that synergize the creative and educational processes for the Society and will enhance their own position beyond traditional in-house museum/curatorial functions by creating innovative community based outreach and collaborative activities while creating new inventive ways to utilize the web in this quest. This individual aspires to key leadership opportunities. We also seek an individual that is committed to diversity and inclusion, management and business best practices and aspires to continuing professional development and growth in their own career.

The ideal candidate will have at least seven to ten (*7 to 10*) years of progressively responsible experience in museum management, including exhibit coordination, project management, and team leadership. Knowledge of museum technology applications, current best practices and principles with respect to museum registration methods and collections standards, and concepts of planning and producing exhibitions is required. At a minimum, a master's degree in history or museum studies is required, a Ph.D. is preferred. An interest, connection or commitment to Detroit and southeast Michigan is a plus. For candidate nominations, or resume submission please contact Kittleman & Associates at dhs-cc@kittleman.net.