

Director 2.0?: Assessing the Leadership Success of Nina Simon

Nina Simon is as close as the museum field gets to a celebrity. Most museum professionals know, and likely have opinions, on Simon. Maybe they subscribe to her blog, *Museum 2.0*, have read her book, *The Participatory Museum*, or follow her on Twitter (Simon has 16,300+ followers as of April 2014). Simon writes about the future of museums, arguing that cultural institutions should attempt to undergo changes similar to the online transformation that led to the participatory Web 2.0. Simon writes about taking visitor input seriously, involving the public in content-generation and exhibit design, and creating vibrant community gathering spaces. Not everyone loves Simon's ideas, with critics accusing her of not respecting tradition and the history of museums as institutions. Amid all the hype, it can be easy to forget that Simon is not just a museum theorist, but also a director. Simon has been Executive Director at the Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History (MAH) since May of 2011. In assessing Simon and her ideas, it is important to ask: are they working? Is Simon succeeding in putting her ideas into practice? This paper attempts to make sense of both the praise and criticism directed at Simon, and to make an assessment of her success as director, based on standards of non-profit management and museum operations.

Before assessing Simon's success and public reactions to her, it helps to get an understanding of where she comes from. Simon's Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering, with a Minor in Mathematics, from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts marks her as a relative outsider in the arts and humanities-heavy museum world. After graduating, Simon directly applied her engineering degree in a position at NASA, before deciding this was too insular a job. Simon moved on to curate for a tech museum, and following that, spent time as an "Experience Development Specialist" at the International Spy Museum, and as an independent

museum consultant. During her time in the museum field, Simon advanced her career through writing, beginning her blog, *Museum 2.0*, in 2006, and publishing her book, *The Participatory Museum*, in 2010.¹

Since becoming a museum director, Simon has earned increasing acclaim from the museum community. In the 2013 book on history museum leaders, *Leadership Matters*, authors Anne Ackerson and Joan Baldwin interview Simon, citing her as an example of a “Visionary Leader.” Their profile includes the story of how Simon got the job as MAH Executive Director. When Simon was still a consultant, MAH sent her a strategic plan, or as she calls it, a “strategic pamphlet.” Simon was inspired by the flexibility of the plan, and above all its vision statement, “to become a thriving, central gathering place where local residents and visitors have the opportunity to experience art, history, ideas and culture.”² Ackerson and Baldwin fill in the details, saying of Simon, “Seeing the intersection (and synergy) between her beliefs and the museum’s, she knew she wanted to be more than a consultant. So she asked the museum to hire her. For her interview she wrote a three-year plan based on the pamphlet. She got the job.”³ This story serves as an example of Simon’s passion and energy. Simon wanted, and was willing to put in a substantial amount of work to get, the MAH directorship, showing that, at least to some extent, Simon and the organization are well-matched.

Overall, Ackerson and Baldwin’s profile of Simon is highly complimentary, even when discussing areas in which Simon may still need improvement: “Simon doesn’t deny its tough being the boss. Although there is now a surplus in the bank, and she’s found that she enjoys fund-raising, there are a variety of management issues, including delegating authority, that she’s

¹ “Nina Simon,” *Exhibit Files*, Association of Science and Technology Centers.
http://www.exhibitfiles.org/nina_simon.

² *Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History*, <http://www.santacruzmah.org>.

³ Ackerson, Anne and Joan Baldwin, *Leadership Matters*, Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2014, 159.

still getting comfortable with.”⁴ Acknowledging that Simon is still relatively new to leadership, Ackerson and Baldwin hint that they may still have things to learn. At the same time, they couch this criticism in a discussion of Simon’s strengths of balancing budgets and working hard to learn the basics. Based on their profile, it can be assumed Ackerson and Baldwin approve of Simon and believe in her leadership ability. Ackerson and Baldwin are not the only ones to describe Simon as a visionary. In 2010, before her directorship, *Smithsonian Magazine* interviewed Simon for a brief profile calling her a “museum visionary.”⁵ Simon and her ideas have a large and influential fan base in the museum world.

For all her fans, Simon also has a number of vocal critics in the arts and culture community. A fall 2013 debate between arts writers, which Simon herself joined in, illustrates this aspect of Simon’s public reception. The exchange began with an August 10th *New York Times* article, “High Culture Goes Hands-On,” by respected arts journalist Judith Helen Dobrzynski. Dobrzynski does not reference Simon specifically, but explains her belief that, in an increasingly busy and technologically-dominated world, museums should embrace their roles as havens away from modern life. Dobrzynski says of efforts to generate participation, “Some of these initiatives are necessary, even good. But in the process of adapting, our cultural treasuries are multitasking too much, becoming more alike, and shedding the very characteristics that made them so special - especially art museums.”⁶ A well-reasoned and balanced piece, Dobrzynski simply implies that it is a good idea to put on the brakes and think through all implications before embarking on projects that significantly transform museums.

⁴ Ackerson & Baldwin, 159.

⁵ Hendry, Erica R, “Nina Simon, Museum Visionary,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 2010, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/40th-anniversary/nina-simon-museum-visionary-642778/?no-ist>.

⁶ Dobryznski, Judith, “High Culture Goes Hands-On,” *New York Times*, 10 Aug, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/11/opinion/sunday/high-culture-goes-hands-on.html?_r=0.

Picking up on Dobrzynski's article, the Santa Cruz-based culture blogger Bruce Bratton used it as support for his criticism of MAH in a post titled, "MAH's Newest Meaning...Mostly Attendance and Happenings." Bratton accuses MAH of becoming a "second community center," and condemned its movement away from a traditional high-culture museum experience. After stating the MAH mission, "to ignite shared experiences and unexpected connections," Bratton asks, "What does that mean?? Where's History, where's Art, where's Tradition, most important where's any statement about inspiration and education???"⁷ Bratton's impassioned questions show he cared about MAH as it was in the past. Bratton calls out those in charge, blaming Simon for chasing away board members with her radical participatory initiatives: "MAH Board members have been quitting over this, professional historians, curators and staff members have either left or are completely devastated by the community circus that Nina Simon has created in the two and a half years she's been executive director."⁸ Less measured and more emotional than Dobrzynski, Bratton expresses his concerns over the direction in which his local museum is headed.

Keeping up the conversation, Dobrzynski picked up Bratton's post to write about on her personal blog, *Real Clear Arts*. Away from the vetted pages of the *New York Times*, Dobrzynski makes it clear that she strongly disapproves of shifts away from a traditional museum model. In a post titled "Trouble In Paradise: Santa Cruz's Museum Loses Its Way," Dobrzynski quotes a good deal from Bratton, and ends with a show of support: "I urge others, in other cities, to speak up now before it is too late."⁹ In an act that shows how connected she and her institution are to

⁷ Bratton, Bruce, "MAH's Newest Meaning...Mostly Attendance and Happenings," *Bratton Online* (blog), Sept. 2013, <http://brattononline.com/september-18-24-2013/>.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Dobryznski, Judith, "Trouble In Paradise: Santa Cruz's Museum Loses Its Way," *Real Clear Arts* (blog), 22 Sept. 2013, <http://www.artsjournal.com/realcleararts/2013/09/trouble-in-paradise-santa-cruzs-museum-loses-its-way.html>.

the online museum and art community, Simon joined the conversation in the comments section, saying, “I did not respond to Bruce’s column, but given your stature as an arts journalist, I feel the need to set the record straight here.”¹⁰ Simon then defended her institution, setting the record straight as to the board involvement in the changing mission and board turnover occurring naturally as the result of museum bylaws. As internet comments tend to do, things quickly got messy and personal. Simon interjected one more time to clear up a few more factual items, but tactfully let others debate the gritty details of the value of participatory experiences.

People’s discomfort with MAH’s changes is understandable in light of the traditional role of museums. In the past, museums have been largely focused on their collections over their audiences. This is even evident in legal definitions of museums. Marie Malaro’s *Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections* explains that the U.S. Museum Services Act defines a museum as “a public or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes, which utilizing a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on a regular basis.”¹¹ Though education and public benefit are prominent in this definition, so too are the care and centrality of objects. Even well-respected museum handbooks like Malaro’s casually throw in statements such as, “(Note that the focus is on collection-related matters, which make up the core work of a museum.),”¹² that assert the importance of the collections, when talking about the duties of trustees. With so many years of precedent focusing on collections as the core function of museums, it can be difficult to judge what makes a museum in a changing cultural landscape. And uncertainty can easily breed fear and distrust.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Malaro, Marie and Ildiko Pogány DeAngelis, *A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections*, Ed. 3, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2012, 3.

¹² Malaro, 15.

Ackerson and Baldwin address critics who do not like the changes Simon is putting in place, saying, “Change or even the idea of change breeds insecurity that staff and volunteers experience inside and outside the organization, where many were comfortable with the museum as they knew it. In an effort to raise the comfort level, Simon makes it very clear that she’s in it for the long haul.”¹³ Recognizing that the changes she is putting in place are jarring, Simon has indicated her willingness to stick with the organization, continuing to be a strong leader while changes become incorporated into the institutional culture.

Though Simon is the public face of, and innovator behind, the experimental initiatives of MAH, the Board of Trustees has the ultimate responsibility for the changes going on in the museum. Malaro explains the legal set-up of museums, saying, “In its pure form, a trust relationship imposes a very high degree of responsibility on the trustee. The trustee is charged with affirmative duties to protect, preserve, and increase the trust assets.”¹⁴ Legally, trustees must fulfill the fiduciary duties of care, loyalty, and obedience. The duty of obedience, which charges trustees with ensuring an organization remains within the bounds of its mission, is particularly relevant in the debate over the changes at MAH. Malaro explains, “...a museum must stay in the boundaries drawn by its charter. Also, although a museum board has discretion in deciding how its mission is to be accomplished, careful adherence to the duty of obedience means selecting goals carefully.”¹⁵ It is up to the trustees of MAH to determine the organization’s mission and goals, and to make necessary changes if they feel the museum is not fulfilling its intended role. The choice of Simon, a proven innovator, as director indicates that trustees felt making exploratory and participatory changes was in MAH’s best interests.

¹³ Ackerson and Baldwin, 159.

¹⁴ Malaro, 6.

¹⁵ Malaro, 20.

If Simon herself can be accused of anything, perhaps it could be of putting her own career above her institution. Simon is a much bigger celebrity than the museum she runs. It was mentioned above that Simon has over 16,300 Twitter followers, however the Santa Cruz Museum has only 785. In fairness, the Museum has 3,029 followers on Facebook, which is more than either Simon’s individual or *Museum 2.0* Facebook pages have. Simon still blogs, though looking at number of posts by year, it becomes clear that the time Simon spends blogging has dropped from her high of 166 posts in 2008. In 2013, Simon posted only 51 times, including a number of posts written by guests.¹⁶ Appearances indicate that Simon has let her public persona and writings take a backseat so that she can focus on her management role at MAH. Simon could also be accused of unfairly using MAH as an experiment, gambling with the museum’s future in the attempt to test her own innovative ideas and theories. But if Simon’s experiments lead to successes for the museum, perhaps this is not an issue, but a strength.

In terms of assessing museum success, numbers, though not the whole picture, are hard to argue. Simon became director of MAH in May 2011. In the first year of her directorship, attendance rose roughly 120%, from 17,349 to 37,361, an astronomical and almost unheard of increase in the field.¹⁷ In terms of financials, MAH is unrated on Charity Navigator. This is likely just because the organization is one of many that the site has yet to rate. The MAH 990s, however, are available through the nonprofit rating site. Looking at the information from historic 990s alongside with the still unaudited financials from the 2013 MAH Annual Report, the following financial data becomes apparent:

Net	Expenses	Revenue	Fiscal Year
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¹⁶ Simon, Nina, *Museum 2.0* (blog), <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com>.

¹⁷ Perry, Georgia, “Innovator Drives Museum’s Success,” *SantaCruz.com*, March 19, 2013, http://www.santacruz.com/news/2013/03/19/innovator_drives_museums_success.

\$530,000 ¹⁸	\$890,677	\$1,422,046	2013
\$633,268	\$936, 597	\$1,569,865	2012
(\$182,531)	\$904,390	\$721,859	2011
(\$121,889) ¹⁹	\$1,007, 409	\$885,520	2010

MAH was hurting financially when Simon arrived. Things started to turn around after Simon became director. Between 2011 and 2012, both “Contributions and Grants” and “Program Service Revenue” more than doubled, and almost tripled.²⁰ As a museum world celebrity, Simon’s name likely brought in a number of donors, excited by the prospect of assisting to bring about invigorating changes with implications for the entire museum field. The decline in revenue during the second year of Simon’s directorship suggests that perhaps the initial increase in revenue may not last. Simon is still a relatively new director, only future financials can tell if the organization’s renewed fundraising energy is sustainable.

The information contained in annual reports often represents another good indicator of a museum’s success. MAH has annual reports available online beginning with the 2009-2010 year. Most of the reports are in a traditional pdf format, but the most recent was created in Prezi, the dynamic presentation platform that competes with PowerPoint. MAH claims this format makes for an “interactive” experience of the report, but the choice feels a little bit like change for the sake of change. Though a pdf is available for traditional audiences, it is just screenshots from the Prezi site.²¹ Choosing a Prezi format for an annual report takes something intended to be

¹⁸ *Santacruzmah.org*.

¹⁹ “The Museum of Art & History at the McPherson Center,” *Charity Navigator*, <http://www.charitynavigator.org/index.cfm?bay=search.profile&ein=942718861#.U2DEX-ZdVps>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Santacruzmah.org*.

straightforward, and accessible and makes it visually stimulating and complex. Changes like this add fuel to the arguments of those who argue that Simon is pushing MAH forward into the technological, participatory future too quickly, without thinking enough about reasons or implications. The format of the 2013 MAH Annual Report distracts from the successes detailed within.

Beyond numbers and formal reports, the best qualitative assessment of museum success is in whether or not it is fulfilling its mission. The MAH mission statement, mentioned in part above, reads in full: “**Our mission is to ignite shared experiences and unexpected connections.** We accomplish this mission when we bring people together around art and history through dynamic exhibitions, events, partnerships, and programs” (emphasis theirs).²² Perhaps the only way to judge MAH’s success in meeting this mission is through visitor reactions. What better place to look for honest visitor reactions to a museum hoping to model participatory web culture than online review platforms? On popular sites with rating functions, MAH scores in the following ways:

Yelp, 4/5 stars, 13 reviews²³

Tripadvisor, 4.5/5 stars, 23 reviews²⁴

Facebook 4.4/5 stars, 167 reviews²⁵

These are all relatively high ratings, and comments show that even critics are not overwhelmingly negative about the museum. One TripAdvisor reviewer from November 2013 gave the organization three stars and noted, “Local history is interesting. Does a lot of activities and tries hard to be more. But actual amount of art and exhibits is very limited. More a locals

²² Ibid.

²³ “Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History,” *Yelp*, <http://www.yelp.com/biz/santa-cruz-museum-of-art-and-history-santa-cruz>.

²⁴ “Museum of Art & History,” *TripAdvisor*, http://www.tripadvisor.com/Attraction_Review-g33048-d144888-Reviews-Museum_of_Art_History-Santa_Cruz_California.html.

²⁵ “Santa Cruz Museum of Art & History,” *Facebook*, <https://www.facebook.com/santacruzmah>.

place. Good summer camps for kids [sic].”²⁶ Though this poster is not thrilled by the museum’s small, local feel, this shows the museum is fulfilling its vision statement, which focuses on local community-orientation. One Facebook user, who gave the museum five stars commented, “You may have been to the MAH in the past, but a lot is happening under the new leadership of Nina Simon [sic] If you haven’t been to the Museum of Art and History lately, especially during one of their events, do so immediately.”²⁷ Though this reviewer might be more in tune with the arts scene than the average visitor, his knowledge of Simon and approval of her programs seems positive. Visitor responses, as reflected by internet rating systems, support the idea that MAH is meeting its mission.

Overall, it seems reviews are more enthusiastically positive after Simon’s installment as director. To some extent it feels like the organization began with Simon’s leadership. Indeed, it is difficult to find an institutional history of MAH before Simon. The museum website frustratingly shoots down the prospect of an organizational history in its “About” section, saying, “There’s a lot we could tell you ‘about’ our organization. But the most important thing is that we are about *you*- our community.”²⁸ As with the format of the annual report, this is an example of visitor-focus going too far. Some visitors and donors may want an accessible and clear institutional history. It takes some serious virtual digging to discover that the museum formed in 1996 as a merger between the Art Museum of Santa Cruz County and the History Museum of Santa Cruz County, and that Simon’s successor Paul Figueroa resigned in September of 2010 for personal reasons.²⁹ Before Simon’s tenure, it seems that MAH was the typical small local museum. It did okay in the area, but was not known much outside the immediate geography. Simon’s

²⁶ *TripAdvisor*.

²⁷ *Facebook*.

²⁸ *Santacruzmah.org*.

²⁹ Brown, J.M, “Museum Leader Steps Down: Paul Figueroa directed art and history center for seven years.” *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 9 Sept. 2010, http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/rss/ci_16039283?source=rss.

directorship has put MAH on the map; even those who have never been to Santa Cruz are interested in the museum.

Though Simon's leadership can be assessed partly through the success of MAH, a full picture necessitates looking at her individual leadership ability. Numerous books on management, both museum-specific and broader, attempt to qualify what makes a good leader. In her 2004 book, *Leading with Passion: Change Management in the 21st Century*, Sherene Suchy claims that passion is the key to good leadership. Suchy discusses how passion helps bring meaning and motivation to a leadership role, but also points out that passion can have negative consequences. Passion implies emotions and feelings, and strong emotions and feelings can lead to problems including decreased reliance on reason and limited willingness to compromise. Suchy argues that successful leaders know how to manage their own passion, explaining, "Leading with passion means allowing feelings to guide change in an emotionally responsible way."³⁰ With a proven passion for the museum world, evidenced by her avid blogging and involvement in the virtual museum community, a tougher question to answer is whether Simon is leading in an emotionally responsible way. In large part, answering this question requires conversations with Simon's staff, which is unfortunately outside the scope of this paper.

Though speaking specifically of New York State, Joan Baldwin, who profiled Simon for *Leadership Matters*, wrote another piece about good museum management and its future. A white paper about the future of New York museum leadership in the face of baby boomer retirement, Baldwin had current leaders in the museum field weigh in on what they believe makes successful directors:

³⁰ Suchy, Sherene, *Leading with Passion: Change Management in the 21st Century Museum*, Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2004, 3.

“Participants in all three discussions felt the role of the director has changed markedly...they also described today’s director as a quarterback, an orchestra conductor and a very special animal. ‘Leadership is a subtle process like a special kind of cooking,’ one participant quipped. ‘Directors have to be willing to jump in at anytime,’ another responded. ‘Directors must always ask, ‘What’s next’’ said another.”³¹

In these descriptions, modern leadership comes across as requiring a complicated and diverse skill set. Above all, it sounds like it requires energy and adaptability. With her active online presence and background in hard sciences, Simon seems to have these traits. Simon certainly excels at asking “What’s next?”. Her skill in this area is also what makes her controversial.

How might Simon evaluate her success as a museum leader? One particularly relevant blog entry from February 5, 2014 titled, “Arts Assessment: Let’s Stop ‘Proving’ and Start Improving,” details Simon’s two main problems with the evaluative focus increasingly imposed upon museum culture: “1. It puts most of our assessment capacity into research for someone else on someone else’s terms...” and, “2. It prevents us from focusing on research that could transform our own work. Instead, we use research to try and convince someone else to change their work.”³² As an experimental leader, Simon and her museum are under constant scrutiny. It is no wonder she gets fed up with constant calls for evidence of success. Despite Simon’s frustration with evaluation, it remains a necessary tool for museum and leader improvement. There must be alternate modes of evaluation that are useful, without intruding on a museum’s ability to carry about its business.

In *The Participatory Museum*, Simon includes a chapter, “Managing and Sustaining Participation,” in which she outlines what might be considered her guidelines for good museum management. In the chapter, Simon discusses her belief that the creation of a lasting participatory

³¹ Baldwin, Joan, *Who’s Next?: Questioning the Future of Museum Leadership in New York State*, Troy, New York: Museum Association of New York, April 200, <http://manyonline.org/sites/default/files/pages/%3Cem%3EEdit%20Basic%20page%3C/em%3E%20Who%E2%80%99s%20Next%3F%20Questioning%20the%20Future%20of%20Museum%20Leadership%20in%20New%20York%20State/MANY-WhosNext.pdf>, 12.

³² *Museum 2.0*.

organization requires a shift in the entire museum culture: “Building institutions that are more participatory involves educating, supporting, and responding to staff questions and concerns. It also requires a different approach to staffing, budgeting, and operating projects.”³³ Simon acknowledges that participatory organizations must not only have ideas, but must also see to the practical matters that make the implementation of those ideas possible. Simon continues by challenging museum directors to begin participatory culture within their own staffs: “The best place to start introducing participatory techniques in a cultural institution is internally with staff members and volunteers...Like visitors, employees need scaffolding and encouragement to try new things.”³⁴ Simon would likely consider herself a successful leader if her staff and visitors all feel equally involved in participatory processes and culture.

In her chapter on managing participatory organizations, Simon tells a story about a participatory project she began while working at The Tech Museum that reveals what may be one of her biggest weaknesses as a leader: “While my energy and enthusiasm as a community leader held the group together, when I left the museum, the community dwindled...I don’t tell this story with pride.”³⁵ As a leader, Simon is such a unique and energetic personality, that the organization cannot remain the same when her time as director ends. Currently, Simon and MAH are synonymous; Simon must attempt to detach her identity from that of the museum so that the museum can one day survive on its own. Baldwin and Ackerson cite “delegating authority” as one area where Simon still needs to grow. If Simon cannot allow for others in the organization to take responsibility and public roles, no matter how successful her time at MAH is, it will be for naught in the end.

³³ Simon, Nina. *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

To be a truly successful museum leader, Simon must coordinate with the board to develop a good succession plan. Suchy emphasizes the importance of well-thought-out succession planning in *Leading With Passion*, explaining that directors must commit “to *pull up* at least six potential leaders behind them so that succession planning evolves naturally. Succession planning becomes a leadership responsibility that combines mentoring, insightful on-the-job training and targeted professional development.”³⁶ Effective succession plans should involve an ongoing process that begins on a director’s first day, so that the organization is always prepared for sudden change. Joan Baldwin also details the importance of good succession planning in her white paper on New York Museum leadership. Baldwin cites a 2004-05 museum salary and benefits survey that showed only 9% of New York museums had succession plans in place. Baldwin explains, “...succession planning marries a museum’s mission and strategic plan with its organizational chart and job descriptions, along with a clear sense of what would be lost if someone left.”³⁷ Though Simon is young, and claims that she plans to stay at MAH for the foreseeable future, new opportunities and challenges are constantly changing peoples’ circumstances. To be a truly successful leader, Simon must work succession planning into her daily routine to ensure MAH can succeed beyond her tenure. Since Simon herself brought this subject up, she knows it is an area in which she must improve.

Ultimately, Simon might define her own success based on her progress in answering one key question: “How can cultural institutions reconnect with the public and demonstrate their value and relevance in contemporary life?”³⁸ Simon’s training in the sciences comes out in the way that she starts with a question and experiments to find an answer. Simon is looking to be a

³⁶ Suchy, 188.

³⁷ Baldwin, 13.

³⁸ *Participatory Museum*.

good director and to help MAH thrive, but above all, Simon is hoping to test revolutionary ideas about museums and cultural organizations in hopes of revolutionizing and improving upon the way the whole sector operates. This may sound like MAH is just a testing ground for Simon's theories. However, Simon's work so far, and comments about plans to stay, prove that she cares about the organization that has given her the opportunity to experiment and prove herself. In return, Simon has truly helped MAH, getting it back in the black and putting it on the map as the home base from which the future of museums is growing.

Attempts to assess Nina Simon's success as a leader get at the heart of the complexity of what makes a healthy museum. The museum, the board, and the director represent interlocking parts, with overlapping areas of influence and responsibility. One of these three cannot be deemed successful without consideration of the other two. The board knew they wanted changes; Simon has been experimenting and innovating since before MAH hired her. In choosing Simon, MAH must have realized they were embarking on an experiment of their own. Criticisms leveled at Simon as director are somewhat disappointing. They are not accurate assessments of her leadership abilities, but indictments of a general school of thought about museums. No one has yet been able to provide substantial and convincing criticism of Simon's time as Executive Director. Most issues with Simon's leadership, including hesitance to delegate and changes made too quickly, are small and common throughout museums, and even throughout organizations generally. Simon has proved herself as a capable leader of meaningful change, but is still relatively new to her position. The success or failure of Simon and MAH in coming years will have a significant impact on the future of museums. Museums are watching to discover if Simon's participatory and future-focused changes are successful and sustainable, or simply examples of change and experimentation for the sake of change and experimentation.

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