

BOWERS DOCENTS

TOURING CYCLE

Bowers Docents engage visitors of all ages in the universal messages of the world's diverse cultures.



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Introduction to Bowers Docents Touring Cycle - June 2019

The two-year journey toward integrating the Docent Guild within Bowers Museum's Education Department began in spring 2017 with the results of a docent survey conducted by the Guild. Recommendations included improving communications within the Guild and with museum staff and building a more collaborative relationship with the Education Department.

At the Docent Guild Board Meeting in August 2018, Emily Mahon, Senior Director of Education, presented the "Life Cycle of a Tour." Its purpose was to be an online resource that would coordinate all areas of touring and serve both Bowers Education staff and the Docent Guild. To ensure completion of the planned work, the Docent Guild Chair, Anne Llewellyn, created a subgroup of the Board called the PIE Group (Planning, Implementation, and Evaluation) that met monthly with Emily. In addition to the Chair who was also the Weekend Day Captain Chair, members included Sherry Wright, Vice Chair; Rhonda Nalisnik, Education Chair; Jean Drum and Rita Slayton, Standards Chairs; and Mary Green, Weekday Day Captain Chair. Group members functioned as creators, writers, and editors. They engaged other docents in their development work: Board members, Day Captains and teams, and Board committees.

When Emily announced in April 2019 that she was moving to another state, Anne proposed a re-imagining of the Life Cycle so the Guild could implement the work docents had completed. Two of the original Life Cycle's functioning areas, Booking and Marketing, were eliminated because they were the concern of the Education Department. The new Bowers Docents Touring Cycle focused on the areas that are the major responsibility of the Docent Guild: Content, Training, Touring, and Evaluation. Together, these functional areas provide a solid structure and essential foundation for effective touring.

As part of this work, the Docent Guild's Education Committee created Touring Frameworks for each of the museum's seven permanent galleries. To ensure consistency, fulfill the museum's mission, and present the curatorial intent of exhibits, docents will use the Frameworks to write their tours. In addition, the Standards Committee developed a new Standards Evaluation form to provide feedback to docents on how they may continue to build their touring skills. To help connect the Bowers Docents Touring Cycle to all docents, the Guild Board announced a contest to define a docent. The resulting definition is: *"Bowers Docents engage visitors of all ages in the universal messages of the world's diverse cultures."*

An operational guide with definitions, processes, and resources, the Bowers Docents Touring Cycle supports an overall positive experience for visitors to Bowers Museum. The document reflects the Docent Guild's progressive understanding of the value of audience engagement as well as best practices in tour development and implementation.

Continuing to develop the Bowers Docents Touring Cycle will keep the Guild moving forward. All docents are invited to collaborate in this process – stepping up as leaders, becoming part of our learning community, using the resources that have been built, and contributing new ideas.

Content

- ✓ Definition of Content (*Education on website*)
- ✓ Definitions from Docent Touring Framework
 - ✓ Touring Objectives, Talking Points, and Fun Facts
- ✓ Docent Touring Frameworks
 - ✓ Permanent Galleries/Exhibits (*website*)
 - ✓ Temporary Galleries/Exhibits (*website*)
- ✓ Gallery Maps and Lists of Objects (*website*)
- ✓ Sample Tours (*website*)
- ✓ PowerPoints, PDFs, videos (*website*)

Definition of Content

Content applies to all material related to an exhibit's curatorial intent, artifacts, background, and supplemental information that is museum approved. Docents will use approved content as the basis for tour development. (Content = Education on Docent Guild Website)

Content may be created by any of the following sources but must be approved by Bowers Museum prior to distribution to Bowers Docents by the Docent Guild.

- Bowers Museum Programs and Collections Department
- Featured or visiting exhibition curators and/or organizers.
- Docent Guild Education Committee in collaboration with and final approval provided by the Bowers Museum

Content materials included in Docent Touring Frameworks:

- Title of the Exhibition, Exhibition Dates, Description, Curatorial Credits, Catalogue, Exhibition Related Events and Pubic Programs
- Touring Objectives, Talking Points, and Fun Facts
- Exhibition Object List / Labels / Wall Copy
- Exhibition Sections (if applicable) and Suggested Objects
- Exhibition Bibliography* and/or Resource Guide

*Articles, books, journals, and other reference material listed in the exhibition bibliography must be easily accessible for all docents whether via Internet links to purchase and/or read online or as a hard copy in the Docent Library.

Training

- ✓ Definition of Training
- ✓ Provisional Training (In development)
- ✓ Practical Training: Workshops, seminars, demonstrations and presentations
- ✓ Contextual Training: Education materials (See: Education/Current Exhibits and Education/Resources)
- ✓ Mentoring (In development)

Definition of Training

Bowers Museum approved training provides content frameworks and skill building opportunities to develop and deliver well-crafted tours. Tours provide visitors with a positive, culturally relevant, educational and/or informational experience in service to the museum's mission to "enrich lives through the world's finest arts and cultures."

Training is ongoing throughout a docent's tenure and is provided in four formats at Bowers Museum. These four formats overlap with one another.

1. **Provisional:** A one-time initial training course for incoming docents.
2. **Contextual:** Continuing presentations and demonstrations in the form of lectures, content materials, webinars, and sample tours that provide curatorial and/or museum and industry-driven insights into permanent and/or featured exhibitions for the purpose of developing a level of mastery of content knowledge for tour development and facilitation.
3. **Practical:** Continuing workshops, seminars, demonstrations and presentations provide docents with opportunities to develop their tour facilitation skills and techniques. The purpose is to maintain best practices in museum/gallery education and to provide visitors with engaging and relevant facilitated experiences with the museums' collections and visiting exhibitions.
4. **Mentoring:** The mentor component of the Docent Guild will provide support and guidance to docents who wish to enhance their touring practices. A mentor may be recommended based on evaluation. The mentor may assist the docent in preparing a plan that will build skills and knowledge in areas of need.

Touring

- ✓ Definition of Touring
- ✓ Docent Calendar (*website*)
- ✓ Team Schedules (*website*)
- ✓ School Tours Protocol (*website*)
- ✓ Bowers Museum School Tours Package
- ✓ Adult Tours Booking and Scheduling (*website*)
- ✓ Types of Tours (*website*)
- ✓ Sign-In Sheets (Weekday and Weekend) (*website*)
- ✓ Day Captain Documents (*website*)
 - ✓ Team Assignment Grid (Weekday and Weekend)
 - ✓ Best Practices of Day Captains
 - ✓ The Day Captain System
 - ✓ Interactive Learning Stations/Carts
 - ✓ Special Needs Tours
 - ✓ Using Headphones on Your Tours

Definition of Touring

Whether scheduled or impromptu, a tour has purpose, provides a pathway through an exhibit, and expands the knowledge base of visitors. Visitors will see connections among the artifacts and in relation to today's world. Tour leaders use interactive techniques and conversation to engage visitors and create a welcoming environment while respecting the cultural diversity of visitors and their varied ages and abilities.

Evaluation

- ✓ Definition of Evaluation
- ✓ Bowers Museum Docent Standards Evaluation
- ✓ Docent Touring Glossary (for purposes of evaluation)
- ✓ Obligations of an Active Docent
- ✓ Docent Guild Code of Behavior

Definition of Evaluation

The purpose of Evaluation is to affirm that docents are using the Touring Frameworks approved by Bowers Museum, that their tours respect the curatorial intent of each gallery, and that their interactions with visitors reflect the mission and values of Bowers Museum and its Program and Collections Department. Each Standards Evaluation may include at least one representative from the Docent Guild and one representative from Bowers Museum.

Evaluation measures focus on three key touring elements: Content, Touring Techniques and Structure, and Visitor Engagement. The process includes: (1) a pre-observation meeting with the docent and evaluators, during which the docent may request feedback on specific touring elements; (2) tour observation in a museum gallery/exhibit; and (3) a post-observation meeting that provides feedback requested by the docent in addition to the evaluators' assessments. The evaluation discussion and ratings in the rubric will help to identify strengths as well as potential areas of need.