



Perpetual Presence

Improving how Nova Scotia's museums are represented online through the collections website NovaMuse

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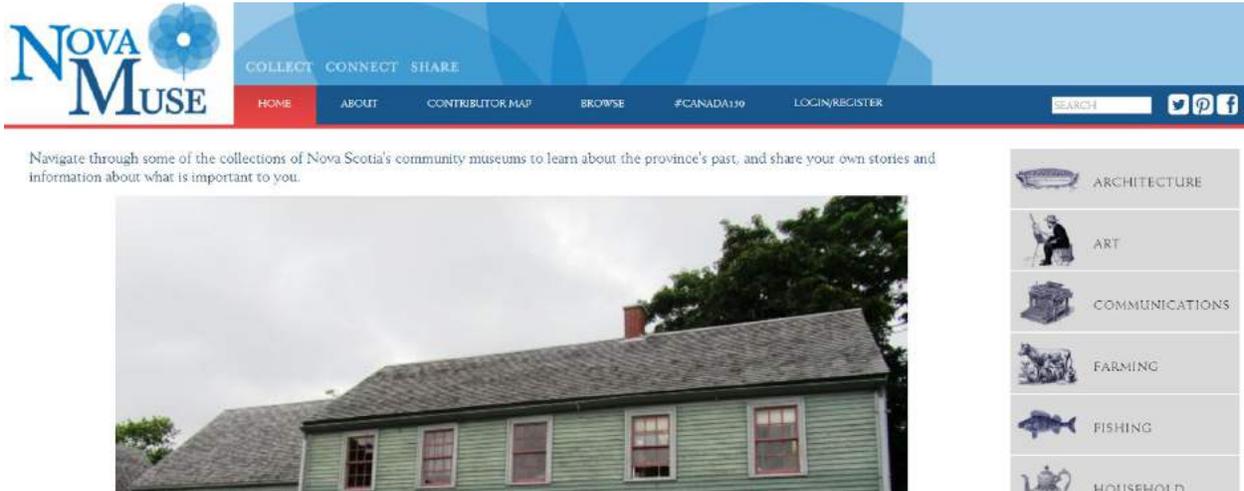
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Introduction

Online museum collections are no longer a novelty, rather, they represent a best practice in the field. Museums big and small worldwide have come to realize that sharing their collections with the public online is one of their many primary functions. In response to this trend, Michael Chapman, Head of Collections Management at The Hunterian, believes that museum databases have surpassed simply organizing collections data, but are now in the business of content management. He states, "[...] there is no real difference between content management and collections management, because with online



delivery, interpretation and creation of data collections have become content.”¹ For fifty museums in Nova Scotia, this content is shared through the website NovaMuse.ca. In a province where many of the heritage institutions are rural and seasonally operated, it is imperative that museums have the ability to share their collections, and have interactions, beyond their physical audiences. While the museum field has largely moved past the debate of whether or not to offer access to digital collections, there is now the question of how to optimize this service for both users and contributors, encouraging an ever expanding and improving resource.



The current NovaMuse homepage

Seen as an industry leader in online collections, NovaMuse is administered by the Association of Nova Scotia Museums (ANSM). The site launched in September of 2012, and in 2013 won the Canadian Museums Association award for Outstanding Achievement in Museum Management. Contribution to the site is available to museums who are members of the Advisory Service offered by ANSM. As these museums vary in size and scope, and sometimes experience limited foot traffic, NovaMuse fills a defined

¹ Malcolm Chapman, "Managing Collections or Managing Content?: The Evolution of Museum Collections Management Systems," in *The International Handbooks of Museum Studies*, edited by Sharon Macdonald and Helen Rees Leahy (Wiley, 2015).



need in the Nova Scotian community by sharing this knowledge with all. NovaMuse provides content to visitors before, during, and after a museum visit, as well as to those who never visit. It offers all of these Nova Scotian museums a continued public presence throughout the year.

As NovaMuse nears its fifth year of operation, it has become evident that the interface requires a refresh to keep up with rapidly changing technologies. As Ben Showers writes, “[traditionally] there has been little understanding of what happens to these digital resources once the project funding or initial creation phase has completed [...]”² To avoid this situation, a Museum Assistance Program grant in the field of Collections Management was secured through the Canadian government to fund updates for NovaMuse in 2017. While addressing the interface and features of the site, the redesign process is also a time to examine how the site is being used. Improvements need to happen in three distinct ways - improve the framework of the site itself, improve the contributors’ content, and improve the use of the site. This report will address these three areas, offering solutions for each.

Assessing NovaMuse

Current Features

Object records that appear on NovaMuse are inputted through CollectiveAccess; an open source, web-based collections management system. Individual museums use CollectiveAccess as their collections database, and this data is compiled into one overall collection which forms the back end of NovaMuse. NovaMuse also has the capability of sourcing data from other collections management systems. Just like how The Cross Collection Discovery service at Yale University pulls from all the school’s

² Ben Showers, “A strategic to the understanding of evaluation and impact,” in *Evaluating and Measuring the Value, Use and Impact of Digital Collections*, Lorna M. Hughes ed. (London: Facet Publishing, 2012), 63.



various collections, NovaMuse users do not need to search separate databases to see content from different institutions.³ Chapman argues that this contextualizes the records, as they are placed within a larger collection with more information than if they stood independently.⁴ Since it pulls from so many different museum collections, NovaMuse can be seen as a central online repository for a portion of Nova Scotia's publically held material history.

All of these records together form the searchable data available to public visitors on NovaMuse. When looking for records, users can choose to search or browse. A variety of filters can be applied to narrow down results, such as culture or contributing institution. If users register for an account, they have the opportunity to create Lightboxes, or personal collections of artifacts. Currently, the Lightbox feature is something that remains between the site and the individual visitor. Registered users can also add comments to artifact records, which are vetted, and appear publically if deemed appropriate, enriching the knowledge available to others.

Feedback

Being an association responsible to a board of directors and its membership, soliciting input from many sources is an important part of NovaMuse's redesign. Primary research was conducted to judge the current feelings about the NovaMuse site. Using Google Forms, a survey was created and distributed through email to personnel from contributing museums - the people who contribute the content to the site.⁵ A total of 45 contributors responded. A second survey designed for NovaMuse site users was distributed through social media.⁶ While aimed at the general public, museum personnel were

³ Chapman, "Managing Collections or Managing Content?"

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See NovaMuse Contributor Survey in Appendix 1.

⁶ See NovaMuse Public Survey in Appendix 2.



also encouraged to respond. There were 75 public survey respondents. Both surveys were anonymous. The results were taken as guiding principles for how to move forward with the NovaMuse redesign. Overall, the public seemed fairly satisfied with NovaMuse as a collections site, but gave many important suggestions for improvement.

In addition to surveys, generalized research was conducted about online collections websites. Members of ANSM's Information Management & Access Committee (IMAC) were asked to review three of the following websites: Europeana, Chicago Collections Consortium, Rijksmuseum, Google Arts & Culture, and NovaMuse. This allowed reviewers to explore different sites and express likes and dislikes about their look, features, and functionality. Clear trends that emerged from the reviews included the desire for large images, a prominent search bar, clear navigation, and customizable viewing options. The results were compiled into a summary of goals for the new site.⁷

Goals of Online Collections Sites

With advanced technological capabilities available today, online museum collections should no longer be simply a database. Three points made by museum and online collections professionals stand out in regards to what NovaMuse should strive to offer its visitors. Stated as a goal in his rubric created for assessing online museum collections, Craig MacDonald believes that an online collections visit should be "[...] entirely different from the physical museum experience," and should allow for "[...] new and insightful perspectives that would not be possible in the physical museum."⁸ Thus, the site must offer its

⁷ See IMAC Website Review Summary Appendix 3.

⁸ Craig MacDonald, "Assessing the user experience (UX) of online museum collections: Perspectives from design and museum professionals," *MW2015: Museums and the Web 2015*, published February 1, 2015, accessed May 11, 2017, <http://mw2015.museumsandtheweb.com/paper/assessing-the-user-experience-ux-of-online-museum-collections-perspectives-from-design-and-museum-professionals/>.



users ways to interact with the collection not otherwise available to them. In “A Case for Digital Collections,” Sheila Brennan argues that meaning is made for museum visitors when they create emotional and personal connections with artifacts.⁹ There must be content on NovaMuse that visitors can personally connect with, and there must also be an outlet for them to express this connection. In *The Participatory Museum*, Nina Simon gives reasons for co-creating content with community as:

1. To give voice and be responsive to the needs and interests of local community members
2. To provide a place for community engagement and dialogue
3. To help participants develop skills that will support their own individual and community goals¹⁰

NovaMuse should act as a facilitator for this kind of content creation - both by museums and by the communities they serve.

Website Upgrades

Changes

In a paper for the 2004 Museums and the Web Conference, Brad Johnson argues, “The first responsibility of a collections interface is to provide the clearest and most direct connection between visitors and objects.”¹¹ To achieve this, NovaMuse requires aesthetic, as well as navigational changes. Having been created five years ago, an updated look is desired to ensure the site does not appear dated, and is inviting to visitors. This includes general visitors, as well as specialized audiences such as educators. In a study about educational websites, seventy pre-service teachers rated colour as the most important visual design factor, followed by navigation, graphics and typography, with navigation being

⁹ Sheila A. Brennan, "A case for digital collections," *Collections: A Journal For Museum And Archives Professionals* no. 4: 381, *Academic OneFile*, EBSCOhost, accessed May 23, 2017: 381.

¹⁰ Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010), 263.

¹¹ Brad Johnson, “Beyond Online Collections,” *Museums and the Web 2004*, accessed July 2, 2017, <http://www.museumsandtheweb.com/mw2004/papers/johnson/johnson.html>.



the overall most important site element.¹² These factors must be considered to allow NovaMuse to fulfil its full potential as an educational resource.

From survey responses, it became clear that much of the content users were looking for on NovaMuse was there, but what was missing was user-friendliness. User Experience (UX) web design is a discipline which looks at design from the perspective of users, and how they feel about their interaction with the site.¹³ Looking at the NovaMuse redesign from the standpoint of the user is important to ensure the best experience for NovaMuse visitors. Ease of navigation was an issue that arose in both surveys and website reviews. The most common comment was in regards to the search bar. A respondent reviewing Europeana said, "I would suggest that novamuse.ca place a larger, more prominent search box front and centre on the home page with a one line of statistics on size of collection as done with this site."¹⁴ When visitors arrive, it is important to show them right away what they can find on the site. A new background image for the homepage was designed to do just this. A grid of twenty artifacts representing different cultures, regions, and activities of Nova Scotia will greet visitors when they land on the site, giving them a sense of what they can find. Other navigational changes will be made including labelling buttons, making different viewing options more straightforward, and putting items in the most logical sequence.

¹²Wing-Shui Ng, "Critical design factors of developing a high-quality educational website: perspectives of pre-service teachers," *Issues in Informing Science & Information Technology* 11 (2014): 106, 111.

¹³ Jacob Gube, "What Is User Experience Design? Overview, Tools and Resources," *Smashing Magazine*, Published October 5, 2010, <https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/10/what-is-user-experience-design-overview-tools-and-resources/>.

¹⁴ IMAC Website Review Results.



Additional Features

Ask the Curator

Following the redesign, NovaMuse will continue to encourage visitors to interact with individual object records. This will continue to happen through comments, where they can share their personal thoughts or experiences with the artifacts or similar objects. In addition, a feature called “Ask the curator” will be added to encourage more direct interaction between museum staff and the public. This feature will function in the same way as comments where registered users can submit a form with their comments. This information will not be displayed publically however, and curators will respond to inquiries directly via email.

myNovaMuse

The Lightbox feature will be modified to include more options, and will appear under a page called myNovaMuse. Registered users can continue to create Lightboxes, for private use. The difference is that they will also have the option to publish their Lightboxes, now called Galleries, to the site for others to see. This will encourage visitors to interact more with each other, as well as providing a space for co-creation of knowledge. Users will also be able to annotate their Gallery selections with comments, such as why they selected it or additional research not shown in the record. As outlined in ANSM’s 2015 NovaMuse User Engagement Plan, “In the future, NovaMuse could offer even greater ability for interaction by enabling users to share entire research papers online or create their own exhibits using NovaMuse’s records and photos.”¹⁵ This new feature will aim to fulfil part of this goal. A question in the NovaMuse Public Survey asked visitors whether they would take advantage of proposed Lightbox

¹⁵ “NovaMuse User Engagement Plan,” *Association of Nova Scotia Museums*, March 2015, 5.



features. Over half of respondents expressed interest in interacting with user created content in some way.¹⁶ This was taken as validation that the feature will be utilized.

As it already does, this Gallery feature will help in visitors making sense of the content by curating their own collections, but now other visitors will be able to benefit from seeing how other users have grouped artifacts. Paul Marty, after researching personal collections capabilities of museum collections sites, says that this is now a common practice in the field.¹⁷ A prominent example of active user galleries is on the Rijkmuseum’s Rijkstudio page. User galleries are mixed in with museum created content for visitors to browse.¹⁸

Now in Rijkstudio

Browse 603,479 works of art and 345,228 Rijkstudios

<p>Caravaggism <small>RIJKS MUSEUM</small></p>	<p>Likes and Loves <small>hgisselmann 3 minutes ago · 4 works</small></p>	<p>Willem van de Velde I <small>RIJKS MUSEUM</small></p>

User galleries shown next to virtual museum exhibits on Rijkstudio

The new Gallery feature of NovaMuse will operate in much the same way. Contributing museums will have a section called Contributor Galleries, where they will be able to create galleries as a virtual exhibition offering.

¹⁶ NovaMuse Public Survey, question 3.
¹⁷ Paul F. Marty, "My lost museum: User expectations and motivations for creating personal digital collections on museum websites," *Library And Information Science Research* 33, 212.
¹⁸ "Rijkstudio," *Risjksmuseum*, <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/rijksstudio>.



The User and Contributor Galleries will fulfil important goals of online collections. Besides transparency, the goal of online collections is to offer something entirely different than the traditional museum experience. Traditional physical exhibits offer mainly the view and voice of the curator, even when taking multiple perspectives into account. Sheila Brennan writes that, “History museums are slowly sharing their collections online, occasionally asking for community contributions, and rarely inviting and presenting multiple interpretations of objects and narratives online.”¹⁹ The goal of the Galleries is to allow the artifacts to be interpreted by a variety of audiences. It will not be one authoritative voice, but the collective voice of the people whose history is being represented. It will inspire a co-creation of knowledge by encouraging more user activity, allowing visitors to interact with the museums and objects, as well as each other. Brennan also says that,

Representing disagreement and differences in interpretation is difficult in the physically constrained space of an exhibition gallery. Digital environments can offer an unconstrained space for objects to project and for users to interpret their multiple meanings, but these environments are rarely designed for online experiences.²⁰

As the NovaMuse redesign is based around the user experience, the hope is that the site will be able to effectively offer the space for these goals to be met.

For Teachers

Identified in a NovaMuse Strategic Plan in 2011, the site was to “Provide teachers and students with easy online access to Nova Scotian material culture.”²¹ From teacher feedback received during a recent collaboration project for Canada’s sesquicentennial, it is clear that educators require more specialized guidance when using the site. YouTube tutorials were created prior to the project, but it is

¹⁹ Brennan, “A Case for Digital Collections,” 382.

²⁰ Ibid., 382.

²¹ Information Management & Access Committee, “Database Systems Analysis Phase II: Public-User Interface Strategic Plan,” *Association of Nova Scotia Museums*, September 2011, 1.



clear that more is necessary. A “For Teachers” page on NovaMuse will seek to fulfill this need. This page will help teachers feel less overwhelmed by giving them a page with resources and instructions designed specifically for them. Resources such as lesson plans and sample projects will be available here, decreasing both the learning curve and effort of using the site as a teaching tool.

While many teachers are actively seeking out new and innovative learning experiences for their students, they do not have much time in their schedules dedicated to navigating these new resources. Teachers are under an immense amount of pressure to meet their curriculum outcomes. This was especially apparent during the Touchstones Canada 150 project, as the timeline coincided with a labour dispute between the Teacher’s Union and Provincial Government, which resulted in a Work to Rule situation. While many teachers expressed interest in the project, many regretfully could not complete it. This scenario is echoed by a study done about the Smithsonian Learning lab. In response to prototypes of the institution’s new learning portal, “One high school teacher succinctly said ‘This is a great resource and I can see its value almost immediately, but I will *never* use it.’ ”²² If using the site presents a hurdle, teachers are dissuaded from pursuing it further. These alternative learning projects need to be quick to learn and adaptive in the classroom for teachers to use them as much or little as they want. They also need to align very obviously with curriculum outcomes. An example of a project created by a teacher in the updated Smithsonian Learning Lab shows an aim for NovaMuse. This teacher had created a gallery of Thanksgiving related artifacts and documents, annotated them, and used that as an aid for a class

²² Darren Milligan, Melissa Wadman and Brian Ausland, "Discovering, creating, and sharing digital museum resources: a methodology for understanding the needs and behaviors of student users," *MW17: MW 2017*, Published February 1, 2017, accessed May 11, 2017. <http://mw17.mwconf.org/paper/discovering-creating-and-sharing-digital-museum-resources-a-methodology-for-understanding-the-needs-and-behaviors-of-student-users/>.



lesson.²³ It is clear that in order to achieve these wonderful outcomes for NovaMuse, detailed instructions and easy, ready to use teaching aids must be available to teachers.

Improving Content

Overcoming Obstacles

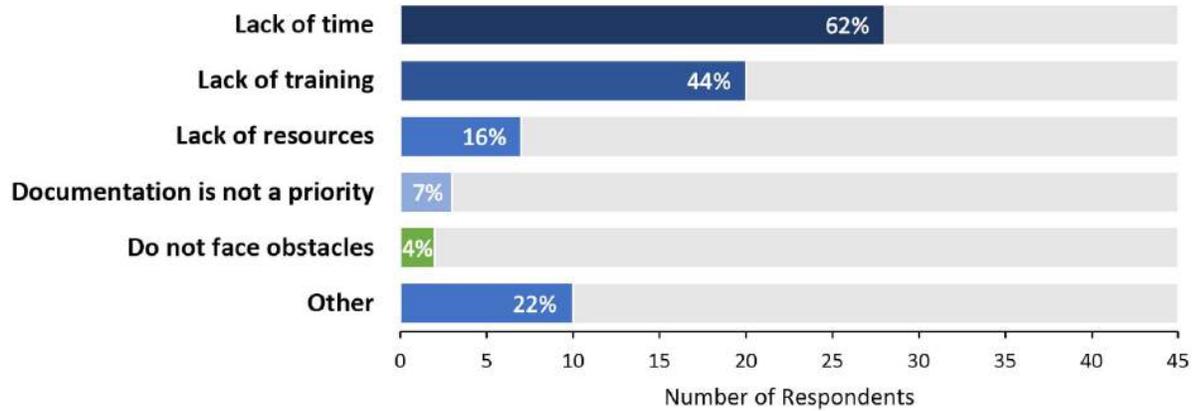
Despite any updates and improvements to NovaMuse, the site can only be as good as its content. This is dependant on the efforts of contributing museums to be constantly adding records and images of high quality. A tip sheet for museums on how to manage their NovaMuse presence was created in order to encourage this work, and provide guidelines.²⁴ Despite guidance, many museums see their collections work as a daunting task. Often times, this includes working through a backlog accumulated prior to present employees joining the museum. As described by Deb Scott in an article written after surveying collections personnel in Canadian museums, there are a wide array of reasons that collections documentation is, in many cases, not sufficient. These include information not being recorded during acquisition, a lack of priority for documentation, and high rates of personnel turnover.²⁵

During the NovaMuse Contributor Survey, respondents were asked to identify obstacles they faced from a list. The responses were as follows:

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ See Managing Your NovaMuse Presence in Appendix 4.

²⁵ Deb Scott, Fleming College, "The Hidden Problem: Closing the Gap in Collections Documentation," 2017.



Survey responses to collections management obstacles

Other responses included documentation not being a priority in the past, and battling a learning curve with the system.²⁶ Given the operational circumstances of many contributing museums, these results come as no surprise. Only twelve of fifty contributing sites are fully open year-round. The remaining sites all have different models on how they operate throughout the winter. Some are completely closed, while others go down to skeletal crews with severely reduced hours, are open by appointment only, or lay off paid staff and rely entirely on volunteers. With these realities, it becomes clear why time is the largest obstacle when it comes to collection work. This seasonal operation also affects workflow, making it hard to resume work where one left off. To help with time management, a Seasonal Calendar was created for the sites to highlight key tasks of collections management work and when they should be completed.²⁷

A lack of training identified as a major obstacle was disappointing to see, considering the many CollectiveAccess training opportunities offered to the museums through ANSM. This statistic is better understood in the context of the staffing structure of these museums. Many museums’ staff are only on

²⁶ See question 3 in Appendix 1 for full answers.

²⁷ See Seasonal Work Calendar in Appendix 5.



short-term contracts, including summer students. Found out through the Museum Evaluation Program, overall turnover rate for the 67 sites that receive Community Museum Assistance Program funding from the Nova Scotia government was 40% in the past five years. While this number is not wholly reflective of all NovaMuse contributor museums, it does give the general trend for the province. With such a high turnover, a high level of knowledge about the collection, past documentation procedures, and database familiarity cannot exist. It is also hard for senior staff to train incoming staff if they themselves do not have a high proficiency with the database. All of this together is a critical factor in lack of consistency and continuity in collections work for these sites. In response to this result, ANSM is working on new training strategies for NovaMuse. A new survey is currently being circulated to collections personnel at contributing museums to figure out what kind of training they feel will be most beneficial. Current training options include a user manual, an ongoing series of YouTube tutorials, site visits, and one-on-one support with sites able to contact ANSM at any time with questions.

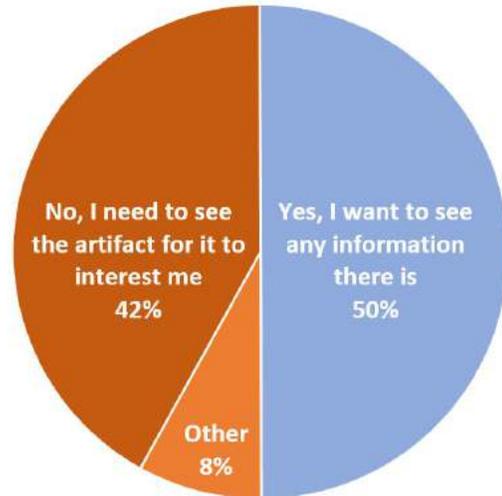
Photographs

As online collections have a physical degree of separation between the visitor and the object, it is evident that images of artifacts are a very important part of the experience. In Craig MacDonald's online collections rubric, the highest level in the visuals category states that sites should have, "images as the dominant visual element. All images are large and high quality. Text is used purposefully but sparingly to enhance the visual content."²⁸ This sentiment was echoed throughout the NovaMuse Public Surveys results, as well as the IMAC Website Reviews. In response to what could improve their experience on NovaMuse, "Photographs -good ones!" was one of many such comments written by

²⁸ MacDonald, "Assessing the user experience (UX) of online museum collections."



users.²⁹ Only half of survey respondents said they intentionally view records without images.³⁰ It is clear the image quality is also important, as 80% of respondents rated image quality as a four or higher on a scale of one to five.³¹ As of July 10, 2017, NovaMuse had a total 261 744 artifact and archival records accessible to the public. 98 278 of these records have images. This gap must be closed, with every record having at least one image. Multiple efforts to improve photography are presently undertaken by ANSM. This includes Digitization Training, photography informational resources, on-site digitization throughout the summer, and the opportunity to borrow ANSM’s portable photography studio.



Survey respondents on artifact images

Subject Matter Experts

After surveying Canadian museums, Deb Scott found that one reason why collections records are lacking is because “Collections information is not always recorded by someone with an in-depth knowledge of the object.”³² This problem can be partly solved retroactively by partnering with Subject Matter Experts. Currently, ANSM partners with experts in various fields to help look over object records, flag errors, and enrich data where possible. Object records are chosen from sites across the province, based on the experts’ defined and declared interest. This allows many museums to benefit from the

²⁹ NovaMuse Public Survey Results, question 6.

³⁰ NovaMuse Public Survey Results, question 7.

³¹ NovaMuse Public Survey Results, question 8.

³² Scott, “The Hidden Problem.”



product of one partnership. It is clear that the public also benefits from this work. When asked what they wished museums shared more of online, one public survey respondent said, “Information pertaining to history of use and object narrative is always most interesting to me. These are already available online, but more records with this data would be excellent.”³³ Hopefully the work of these experts can provide more informative records, even in cases where provenance has been lost. ANSM is actively encouraging museums to partner with experts in their communities to undertake similar projects. This will not only help improve the records and knowledge available to the public on NovaMuse, but also strengthen ties within their communities.

NovaMuse’s commenting feature allows this work to be carried out not only by sought out experts, but also by those using the site. A recent comment on a bayonet alludes to the wealth of knowledge in NovaMuse’s user community:



“This bayonet design was originally used on Pattern 1853 Enfield muskets issued to British soldiers during the Crimean War (Oct. 1853 – Mar. 1856). During the American Civil War of 1861-1865, both sides imported thousands of Enfield muskets and bayonets. After the American Civil War many Enfield muskets were converted to black powder cartridge rifles, including many of those in use in Canada and renamed the Snider – Enfield. The Bayonet used with the original Pattern 1853 musket remained in use with the converted Snider – Enfield rifles.” - *User comment*

This voluntary sharing of knowledge is a true gift to the museum community, and shows the willingness of the public to help preserve and enrich Nova Scotia’s heritage.

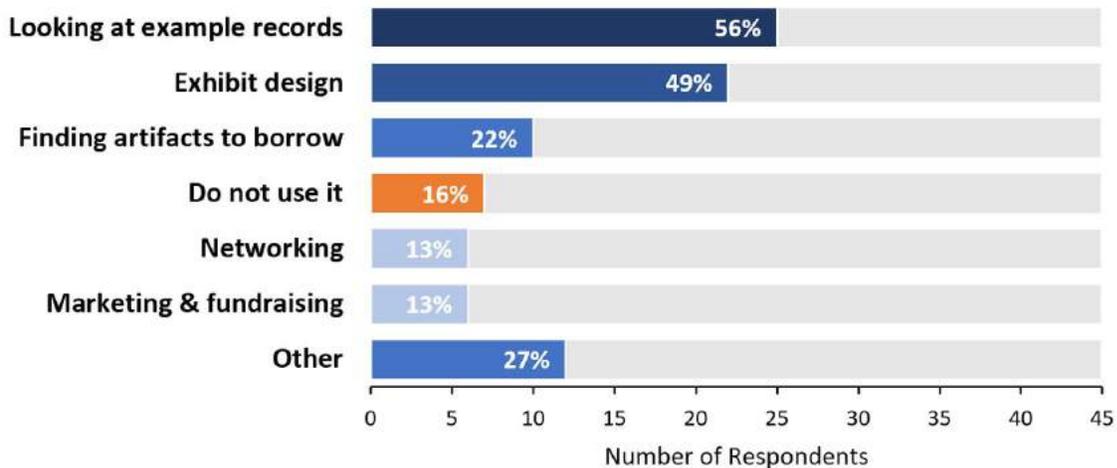
³³ NovaMuse Public Survey Response, question 9.



Improving Usage

Contributor Use

In the 2015 User Engagement Plan for NovaMuse, ANSM identified Nova Scotian museums, schools, and researchers as the main communities with whom to expand interactions.³⁴ The plan identified wanting museums to use the site more to interact with their colleagues, see examples of best documentation practices, and share knowledge. From survey results, it is clear the NovaMuse is under-utilized by its contributors.



How contributors use NovaMuse

With over half of respondents not using NovaMuse to its full potential, and about one in six not using it at all, it is clear that changes need to happen so that contributors see and NovaMuse as their own resource.

Despite a lack of use, there are many NovaMuse success stories. One that stands out in particular is the Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame. They have had great networking success with other

³⁴ "NovaMuse User Engagement Plan," *Association of Nova Scotia Museums*, March 2015, 4 - 5.



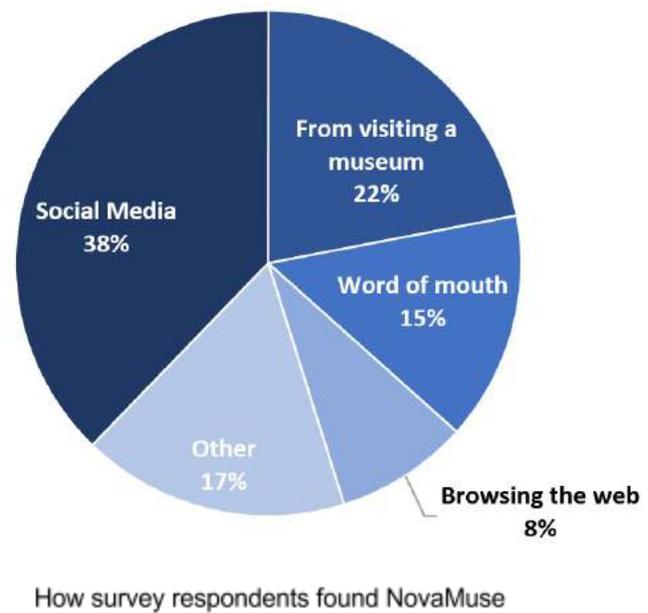
institutions contacting them, simply by having their collection accessible on NovaMuse. Katie Tanner, the Museum and Communications Coordinator, explains,

We receive many requests from other museums to loan items from our collection for those museum’s exhibits. I believe that these requests have increased thanks to NovaMuse. Sometimes I receive an email from another organization that has already browsed our collection on NovaMuse and has selected items that we can consider for an outgoing loan.³⁵

This example shows the power of NovaMuse not just for the general public, but within the museum community as well.

Promotion

In order to generate more traffic and involvement on the NovaMuse site, an increase in promotion is required. According to the NovaMuse Public Survey, less than a quarter of people found out about the site from visiting a Nova Scotia Museum. This draws the conclusion that either museums are not promoting their online collections as much as they should, or their physical visitors are not interested in interacting with their collections following a visit. As a base level, all contributor museums should have a link to NovaMuse on their own websites. They should also be linking to artifact records in social media posts, as well as talking to visitors about NovaMuse. In order to



³⁵ Quote from Katie Tanner, Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, June 2017.



have NovaMuse be successful, the contributors really need to embrace NovaMuse as their own online presence - something that seems to be lacking. The more enthusiasm the contributors show towards NovaMuse, the more likely it is that promotion, and visitorship will increase. With increased activity on NovaMuse, the hope is that more visitors will share information and stories about artifact records, increasing the knowledge about these collections.

Use by visitors

It is well known that only a small portion of any given museum collection is on display at once. The Smithsonian, to use a large example, estimates that a mere 2% of their collections are exhibited at any given time.³⁶ While this number will vary drastically depending on the particular institution, it holds true that in almost every museum there are artifacts which are not on display, some of which are too fragile to ever be exhibited. Although it is often thought that interactions with online museum collections are done from home, there are examples of it being successfully integrated into a physical museum visit. This allows physical visitors to still experience the site's full collections of artifacts, as well as other content. Discussing the role of collections sites in user visits, Malcolm Chapman says that,

Rather than repurposing content created in isolation from the management of the collection specifically for public consumption most museum users come across the collections management system through the obligatory web interface rather than in the gallery itself. This generally can be attributed to the perception of the role of the collections management system as purely a management tool rather than, as Gareth Salway and Mark Pajak at Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives have put it, 'the central repository and management mechanism for all collections-related information for the museum service.'³⁷

³⁶ "Fact Sheets: Smithsonian Collections," *Smithsonian*, Published August 1, 2016, <http://newsdesk.si.edu/factsheets/fact-sheet-smithsonian-collections>.

³⁷ Chapman, "Managing Collections or Managing Content?"



A museum that has successfully integrated collections info into their exhibits is The M Shed in Bristol, through kiosks in their galleries. At these kiosks there are also opportunities for visitors to share their thoughts, making it a truly interactive experience.³⁸ The Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame has embraced the use of computers in their gallery space, and encourage visitors to explore NovaMuse on site. On the use of NovaMuse in their museum, staff member Katie Tanner says that,

As another benefit of NovaMuse, visitors are always pleased to see photos of their loved ones (or related artifacts) visible online, especially if there isn't room to display the photo or artifact in the museum. For that reason we make NovaMuse available on the computer kiosks in our museum, as we often direct visitors to the site.³⁹



Kiosks in the gallery
Image courtesy of Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Quote from Katie Tanner, Nova Scotia Sport Hall of Fame, June 2017.



This is a perfect example of how NovaMuse can be integrated into a physical museum visit. After having exposure to NovaMuse on site, it is probable that those visitors are more likely to use NovaMuse again in the future.

The use of the NovaMuse site by visitors allows personal connections and stories about artifacts to be recorded in collection records. A very informative and touching story of a family connection was shared on the record of a candy manufacturers' container.



“My father, C.M. Benjamin, was the grandson of Claddie Yeaton, and as a boy would go to visit (and help himself to the candy) at the Hantsport, candy factory. Dad said that he particularly like the “humbugs” and that the candy factory did well until the war, when the shortage of sugar caused the factory to close.” - *User comment*

Connecting people with tangible evidence of their family’s history, and having them share that connection, is proof of NovaMuse’s value and potential.

Conclusion

The work on NovaMuse by no means ends with this redesign, but rather is a constant process of improving site content and usage, as well as making further updates when deemed necessary.

Sheila Brennan argues that “In general, history museums are not creating transformative experiences about the past and present through online projects geared to their core audiences. [...] Digitizing and publishing collections begins the process; they are building blocks, not end points.”⁴⁰ The proposed updates to the NovaMuse site will hopefully assist in facilitating these transformative experiences.

⁴⁰ Brennan, “A Case for Digital Collections,” 383.



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Appendices

Appendix 1

NovaMuse Contributor Survey and Results

From a survey circulated to museum personnel



1113 MARGINAL RD HALIFAX NS B3H 4P7 / PH 902-423-4677 1-800-355-6873 / FX 902-422-0881 / WWW.ANSM.NS.CA



About the Survey

This survey was circulated as a Google Form through email to museum personnel whose collections are on NovaMuse. Responses were collected between May 23 and June 9, 2017. In total there were 45 responses. Not all respondents answered every question. Text based answers appear unedited.

Survey and Results

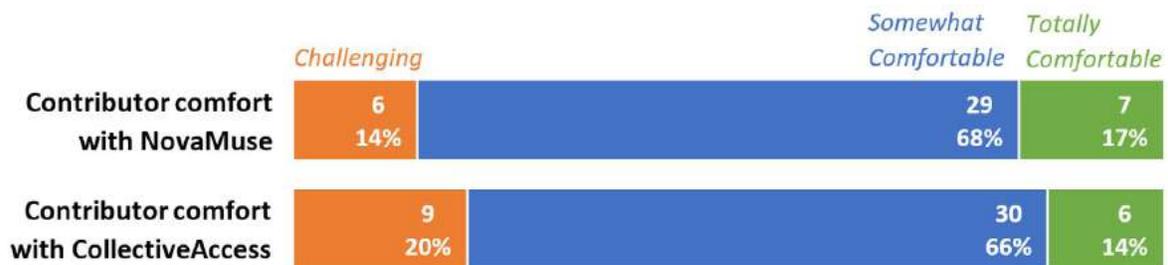
NovaMuse and You

1. What is your comfort level with using CollectiveAccess?

- 1 - I find is a little challenging
- 2
- 3 - I am totally confident with all the advanced features

2. What is your comfort level with using NovaMuse?

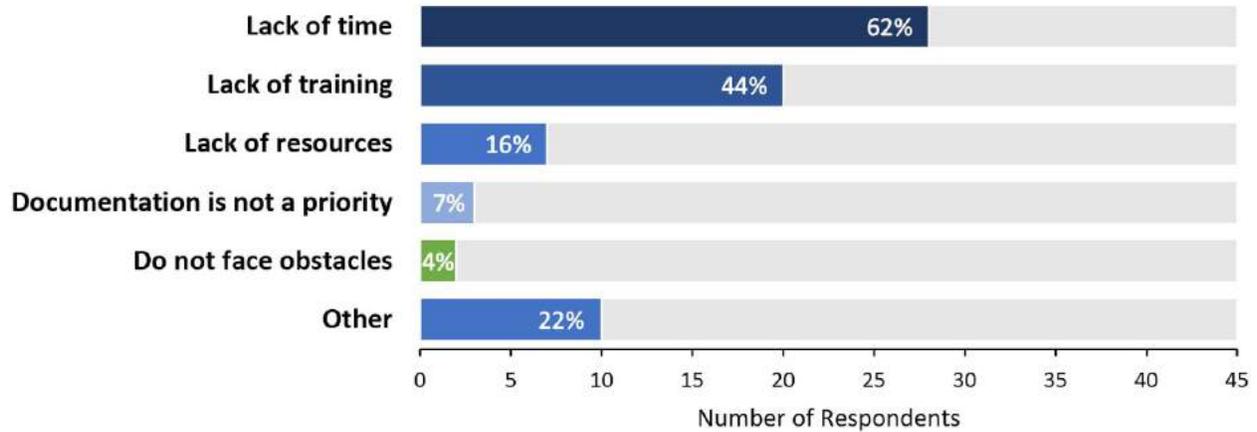
- 1 - I find is a little challenging
- 2
- 3 - I am totally confident with all the advanced features



3. What obstacles do you face when using CollectiveAccess?

Select all that apply.

- Lack of training
- Documentation is not a priority
- Lack of time
- Lack of resources
- I do not face any obstacles
- Other: _____



Other:

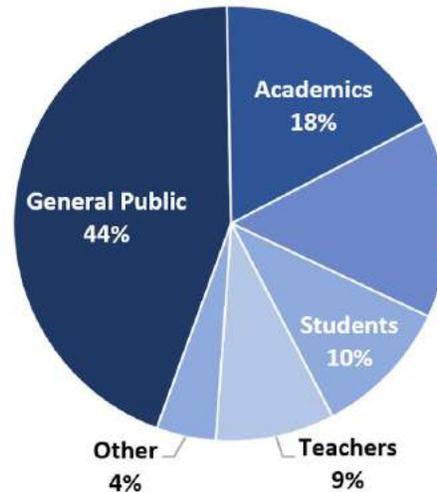
- If I had time to put in in as a lump, I would learn it. As I deal with it sporatically, it is always a learning curve. That says, it is not intuitive friendly to me.
- I have not used CollectiveAccess yet.
- struggle to get it to do what I want it to do
- I find the searching functionality very limiting.
- Reminding sites of the importance of choosing an option from the drop down menu for Geo-referencing, narrowing down dating, and entering clean data
- When I initially started to use Collective Access I found it difficult to maneuver and could not find a user's manual. I have since learned to maneuver the system, and have found a users manual but believe it is out of date.
- documentation seems not to have been a priority in the past
- Documentation hasn't been a priority in the past
- Complicated to navigate
- learning new methods of description

NovaMuse and Your Visitors

4. Who do you know is accessing your museum's collection on NovaMuse?

Select all that apply.

- Teachers
- Students
- General Public
- Genealogical Researchers
- Academics
- Other: _____



Other:

- Other museums
- Society members
- Museum staff

5. What have your visitors told you about NovaMuse? Do any stories stand out?

- Teachers have assigned class projects using the website. Favourite story is of a woman whose handmade New Year's Eve outfit from the 1970s is on NovaMuse. She is thrilled to have her outfit showcased; think it is very exciting.
- They are happy that they can find photos/artifacts there that are not on display.
- I always try to encourage visitors (and society members) to view our collection and others on NovaMuse. We also hand out NovaMuse cards to visitors so that they leave with the information for the website.
- no
- Donors have mentioned looking up their items, other people have mentioned they find it hard to navigate
- No response to this question
- N/A
- Like it so far. Find the search box limiting.
- No stories stand out
- They find the search engine not very intuitive and disappointing that there are not many photos on the database, and the level of detail in artifact descriptions is not consistent in

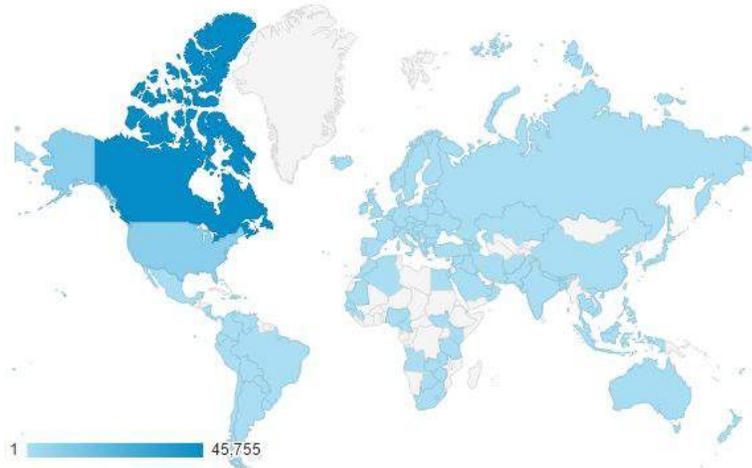


quality. However they do enjoy being able to access multiple museum collections to know what each museum has to offer.

- They like being able to go online and see some of what we have in our collection before they come.
- have not heard of anyl th
- No one has specifically mentioned Nova Muse while visiting.
- Not applicable
- Not aware of any comments
- We have to tell them, they do not know about it.
- Have not had any feedback.
- I'm constantly telling visitors about it... but haven't had any stories from them yet.
- They like see and talking to people in curator from that time frame.
- None that I can recall
- When at Randall House, I overheard a summer student talking to a group about NovaMuse. He did his research in advance about a portrait onsite and incorporated it in his tour. The group were very pleased by this. I would like to see more of this kind of promotion at our sites.
- I haven't heard anything
- no comments
- I have not heard from anyone that used NovaMuse except those involved in the museum .
- There have been no stories
- They do not like it. Not user-friendly at all. Individuals try to avoid it. Only volunteers mention it.
- No visitors have mentioned it.
- No issues
- I have heard very little from anyone of the public about nova muse
- in general they are surprised at the number of artifacts and research material about their past is available, being able to visualize how their ancestors lives were so busy and full.
- No one has mentioned NovaMuse.



6. This is where NovaMuse's online visitors come from. What do you think could improve the experience for them?



- It is crucial to have high quality and accurate information regarding our objects. High quality photographs is essential for visitors to be able to actually SEE our objects. I would argue that we also need to ensure that we use only accessible fonts (increase text sized and no fancy text) and a simple search function (maybe with some advanced options to help narrow their search).
- Have more exposure to other areas, i.e. genealogy societies be advised it is available to their researchers.
- Making the searching functionality more robust and user friendly.
- More object photographs and more detailed records. This might seem silly, but larger font or tabs that are more prominent.
- A way to directly contact our museum (for example a form that lets them email me directly) when they are looking at records on NovaMuse without having to navigate away from NovaMuse.
- More digital images (my problem in not adding not association's)
- Being a bilingual museum, we (and our visitors) would like to be able to use NovaMuse in french.
- I'm not sure. I think it's great.
- The experience could be improved with better descriptions of artifacts and also making clear connections on how the objects and their stories relate either directly back to a community, or if possible how they connect in a broader sense to the rest of the world.
- I think their experiences are good, I just believe the experience for the museum worker to be time consuming and with so many other issues needing immediate response the site tends to get neglected. I do believe it to be a very worth while project, it is just in a small museum with



few staff and volunteers, it is hard to keep it current. I do have great hopes to bring ours up to date this season.

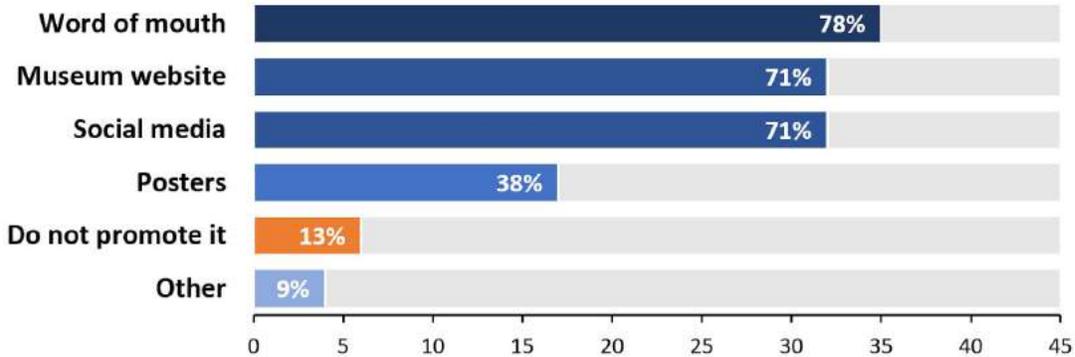
- stories that relate to them
- Use with students
- Better search. Ability to receive a membership update.
- The site should appear more active to entice visitors to explore further.
- We need to update our text and digital files. We also need to review files, as many do not have the file uploaded to NovaMuse.
- More social media advertising on every museum's website as well as in the Nova Scotia Travel Guides online or other advertising media.
- Easier and more searching capabilities
- Get more access to countries without access
- Translation services
- An increase of relevant/specified information.
- Updated layout
- Less lag, especially in picture heavy collections.
- When you search for a museum it would be great if a small picture and basic profile of the museum popped up, and maybe a map to show where it is in NS. Also, if the random selection of artifacts (if it is random) that shows up first could be ones with photos that would make it more engaging.
- going back more generations to where some family originated.

NovaMuse and Your Museum

7. In which ways is your museum promoting your online collection?

Select all that apply.

- Posters
- On your museum's website
- Social media
- Word of mouth
- We do not promote it
- Other: _____

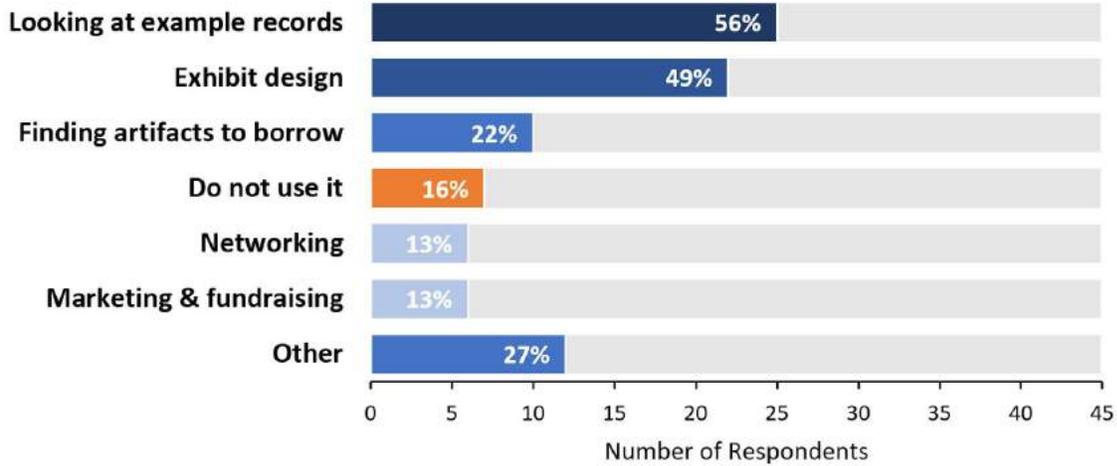


- Other:**
- Newsletters and annual magazine
 - Our collection is not yet ready for NovaMuse. Once it gets to that point it will likely be advertised via our website and social media
 - Cards to give to those interested (business card size)
 - Email replies
 - We have included NovaMuse in our policies and procedures.

8. How does your museum use NovaMuse internally?

Select all that apply.

- Exhibit development
- Networking
- Finding artifacts to borrow from other museums
- Marketing and fundraising
- Looking at examples of good images and records
- We do not use NovaMuse
- Other: _____



Other:

- Checking what we have digitized
- Refer researchers and public looking for copies of images from our collection.
- We currently do not use NovaMuse at this time but would consider it as a potential resource.
- Checking on how our records translate onto NovaMuse - or not. Sometimes ours don't appear.
- Artifact comparison/identification
- To tell others what to look for
- I think that the volunteers are not making use of NovaMuse
- As a collections database
- I am not sure
- To upload our information through CollectiveAccess
- To link specific artifacts that we are highlighting in our social media.
- I rarely use NovaMuse, but I do use CollectiveAccess

Summary

9. Do you have any other comments that you wish to share about CollectiveAccess or NovaMuse?

- Looking forward to the redesign!
- Is there a way to place records into folders that can be easily accessed from the dashboard? For example, recent records that still need more information added. Or a way to save



commonly used catalogue notes and descriptions so that they can be easily inserted into new records? Just looking for more time saving options.

- Since all I get are negative things about NovaMuse, I suspect it is frustrating for a new come-er. Since I work in the back end, I do not see this. I do like on a personal level how you can mega-zoom on pictures!
- Some of our records just don't get up on NovaMuse even though they were entered a long time ago and they are termed accessible . Not sure what the problem is.
- Not a fan of automatic number generator for loans. I prefer a date prefix 2016.01 eg. as opposed to the automatic numbering. I would also love to be able to do more sophisticated searches in both CA and NM. If I am looking for artifacts related to the 85th Battalion, it would be nice to be able to sub search or do a google like search "85th Battalion + cap badge".
- It would be helpful if there was an easy way to create multiple lists of artifacts for different projects and then to save them with notes in Collective Access so you can come back and change them. Also, if there was a way to pinpoint where your search term is in a record that comes up in the results. Finally, it would be great if the default setting didn't delete what you've typed into the search field before you can edit it. It makes it very difficult when trying out different versions of accession numbers to see if an object is in the database. Sometimes you just want to try changing one digit, or delete a space, but you have to retype the whole number each time. Same for trying different name spellings. My suggestions may already be features of the database that I just haven't figured out how to use yet, but if not and it wouldn't be too hard these may be good things to look into. Thanks!
- I am new to NovaMuse, but feel it is already well laid out. I do not have an opinion yet on Collective Access. Thank you!
- Think it is a useful tool and resource as well as it promotes museum's collections.
- I say keep up the great work and thank for allowing us to have this.
- We are excited to see how CollectiveAccess and NovaMuse will be redesigned. We are hoping that both will end up being more accessible to both museum professionals and those in the public or academic sphere who may use it.
- great project, happy you got funding. Looking forward to seeing the changes
- Novamuse is not easy to search, once you are into institution, it is not clear that there are other search levels.
- They are both amazing resources. Without CollectiveAccess we would be at a complete loss collection management-wise. Using NovaMuse links for social media posts has really increased our traffic/likes/follows on Facebook and Twitter.
- Keep up the great work!
- Collective Access is an incredibly useful way to keep track of the collection
- I think the new upgrades will benefit all museums and those using Novamuse.
- It is a wonderful resource.
- User friendliness is a MUST!! More specified info-most is too broad for researchers.
- I'm very proud and excited to be able to direct anyone I meet to this website, proud to show the history we have managed to accumulate in one place for future generations to realize.



Appendix 2

NovaMuse Public Survey and Results

From a survey circulated to NovaMuse users



1113 MARGINAL RD HALIFAX NS B3H 4P7 / PH 902-423-4677 1-800-355-6873 / FX 902-422-0881 / WWW.ANSM.NS.CA



About the Survey

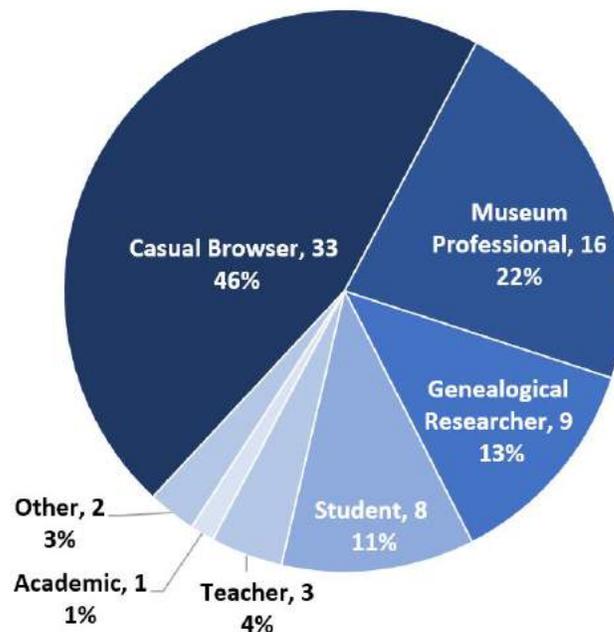
This survey was circulated as a Google Form. It was primarily shared through ANSM's social media. Contributing museums were encouraged to share the survey on their own social media. Responses were collected between May 29 and June 16, 2017. In total there were 75 responses. Not all respondents answered every question. Text based answers appear unedited.

Survey and Results

NovaMuse and You

1. How would you identify yourself?

- Casual Browser
- Student
- Teacher
- Museum Professional
- Academic
- Genealogical Researcher



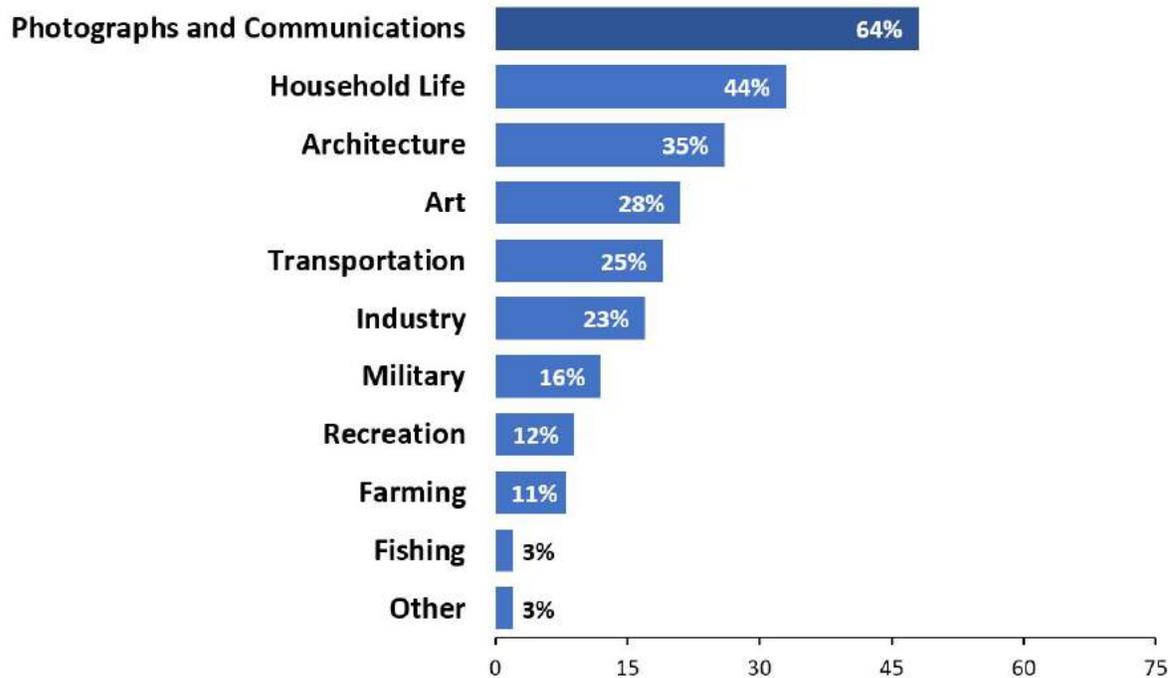


Other:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Museum volunteer • Amateur historian

2. What type of content are you most interested in seeing?

Please select a maximum of 3.

- Architecture
- Art
- Photographs and Communications
- Farming
- Fishing
- Household life
- Military
- Recreation
- Transportation
- None of this content interests me
- Other: _____



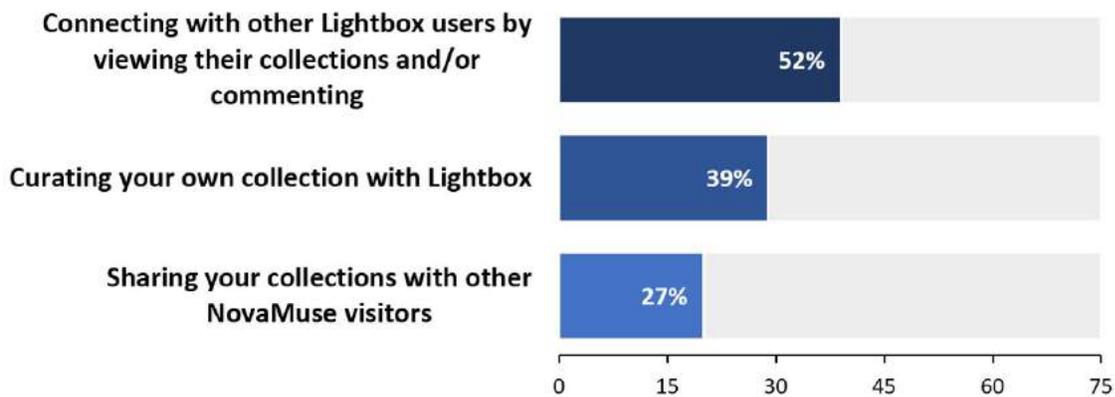


Other:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Family histories/town histories ● Textiles

3. Would you use Lightbox?

After registering for an account on NovaMuse, you can use the Lightbox feature. This lets you curate your own collections of artifacts. Thinking about this feature, would you be interested in (select all that apply):

- Curating your own collections with Lightbox
- Sharing your collections with other NovaMuse visitors
- Connecting with other Lightbox users by viewing their collections and/or commenting

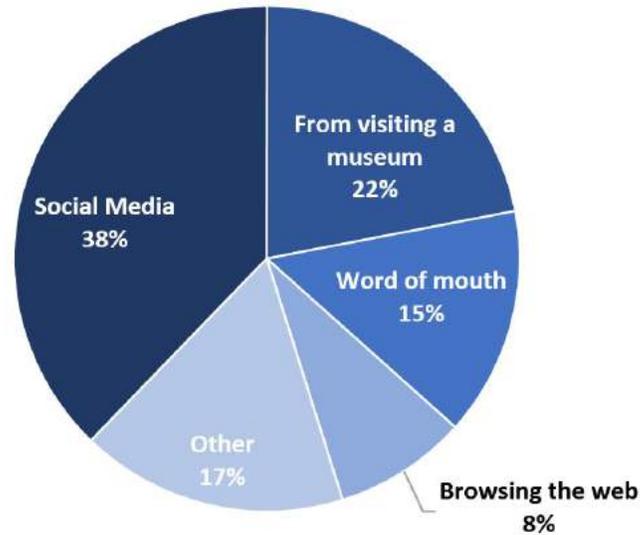


How did you find us?

4. How did you find out about NovaMuse?

Select all that apply.

- From visiting a Nova Scotia Museum
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Browsing the Web
- Other: _____



Other:

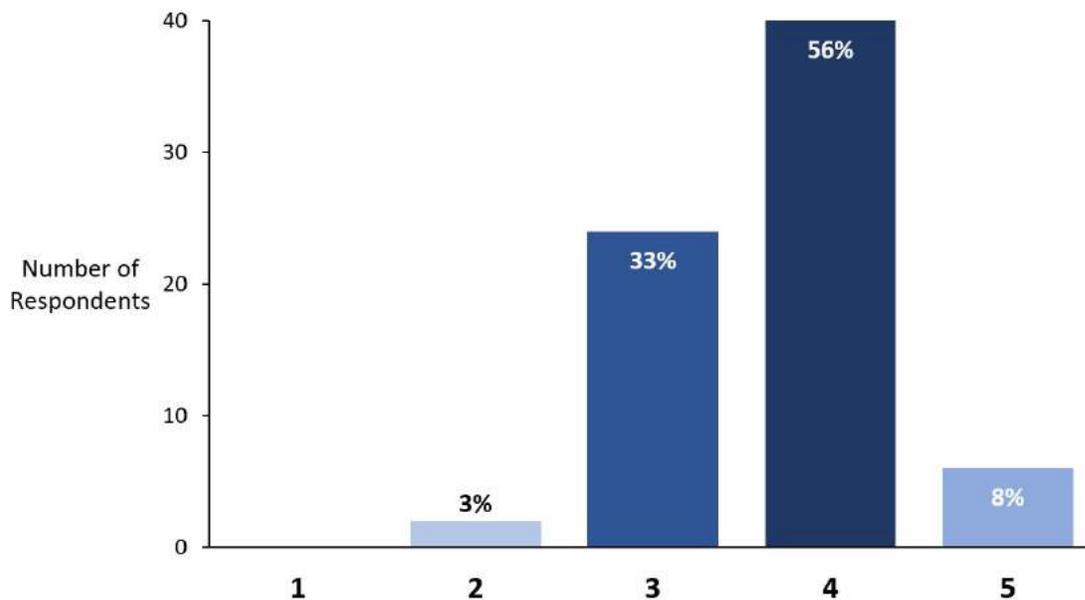
- We are a museum that has its collection on the site.
- I helped build it
- Museum management program
- FLEMING!!!
- Fleming College Museum Management and Curatorship Program
- School
- Emailed info
- Work
- ANSM
- Sandi Stewart
- Working a summer job at my local museum.
- From my local museum
- Connections in the field
- School project



How did we do?

5. How happy were you with your search results?

- 1 - Not very happy
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - Blown away!



6. What could be done to improve your experience?

- I would love to see notes from guest speakers, meeting agendas, photo exhibits. I live in Saskatchewan but most of my research is in Nova Scotia. Would love to be more part of that Museum Community.
- Make it easier to access
- some information was scanty; some records didn't have photos
- Show that which is unusual or unique to each museum; forget your grandmothers' tea cups.
- nothing
- Complete all information on website
- More opportunities to easily share and engage with the content. Remove the "like" button and replace with a Facebook like button, and get rid of the extra layer to share via Pinterest, Twitter, etc. Have a very visible, scrolling list of newly added or updated records to show which museums are actively working. Highlight the Made in NS content; focus more on

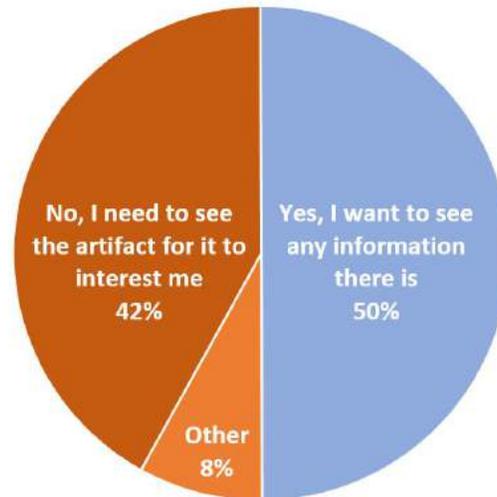


communities and our unique heritage rather than generic info that could apply to other provinces & countries.

- Maybe a random artifact generator to lead visitors on a journey (like Google's 'I'm feeling lucky' feature)
- Photographs -good ones!
- Better photographs
- Clarify there are additional pages
- make website easier to find
- Nothing
- Not sure! I love going home to the East Coast and taking my children with me and showing them museums
- High quality photographs brought to the foreground when conducting searches. The site could benefit from being more interactive and showcasing recent changes (records enriched, comments, etc.)
- Better use of object terms. Better photos. More fields filled in by the museum.
- Just starting don't know.
- Just put a visual to all artifacts , but all in all an awesome idea and teaching tool of the future!
- Visual experience
- More images
- Better pictures
- ?
- More photos
- Streamline the site with instructions or HelpBoxes every step of the way, for those less experienced with computers.
- more photographs to match the titles
- The general public doesn't really get artifact numbers, which makes it a little more confusing to search for specific kinds of items
- not sure what more is available.
- faster!
- Better images, more complete records



7. Do you intentionally view records that do not have images?

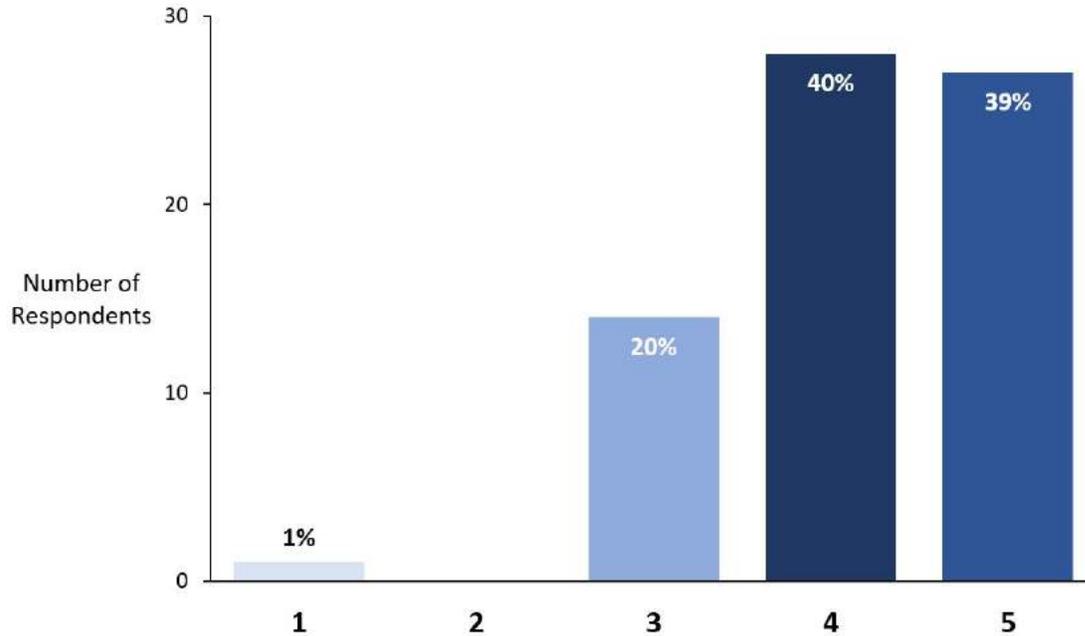


Other:

- I have, but I would not do it again
- Images are important as well as info. Both.
- My first reaction is to find a record with adequate images
- I have not used the site very often, just for this class project
- Images are great, but if I'm looking for specific info on an object, person, or organization I will view records without them
- Yes but the students seem to enjoy the visual presentation

7. How important is image quality to you?

- 1 - It doesn't matter if there are images
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 - I want many, high quality images



8. Is there any information that you wish museums shared more of online?

- More digitizing of records/family histories etc. in searchable databases.
 - digitized documents, especially old newspapers
 - Unique aspects of their collection and how these artifacts fit into the history of NS.
 - not sure
 - military info
 - More images (audio & video too!) and more personal stories! It's so disappointing when I come across a record with almost no info. Why was that object collected by the museum? What makes it important? What is its connection to the community?
 - relating local history to larger narratives to attract wider audiences. And, behind the scenes look at collections/the kinds of work the employees are doing, either via a blog or social media postings.
 - Information from genealogical records and information from the Nova Scotia Heritage Inventory site forms.
-
- Collection size, rare artifacts, and great quality images with tags
 - Textiles
 - A more detailed account of the objects pertinence to its time period if possible.
 - It would be nice if the stories behind an object were shared more often.
 - Donor name
 - Everything! Not sure!
 - It is important that museums share how their artifacts are tied to their communities. Many



records are still missing that personal narrative online that is needed for audience engagement. Some visitors to NovaMuse may not have the opportunity to visit the museums. This means that they will not hear the stories firsthand from the museum staff who share them onsite. This is why it is crucial that this information is shared on NovaMuse. The same goes for manufacturer information.

- Photos. More accurate dates on objects... made before 2009 doesn't tell me anything.
- Information pertaining to history of use and object narrative is always most interesting to me. These are already available online, but more records with this data would be excellent.
- Family lore for early families in different parts of province.
- sport
- Better catalogue of their artifacts
- Maybe more records that are available and photos that are copyrighted but are still available.
- ?
- Personal histories of ownership of objects.
- No
- our museum is doing a good job of offering a variety. Not sure how much more can be done .
- no

8. Any additional comments?

- Love visiting the Museums when I'm in NS but would love to be more involved with them (i.e. associate member) when I'm back at home.
- I was to a museum recently out of Province and the labels were far too low and I had to bend down. I gave up reading the labels which were too wordy anyway, Asking questions of the viewer would be more thought provoking than lengthy descriptive passages. A brochure or a handout or as in Art galleries a laminated information sheet you could pick up and read if you so desired is more helpful. A video or headphones works too ; I guess in short I dislike lengthy descriptive passages for labels. That is too much to read.
- no
- this idea and site displays lots of potential
- Would be nice to see more consistency in quality of images and information.
- good effort connecting your resources with N.S. curriculum, please continue
- Orangedale Train Museum is the best along with everything else on Cape Breton Island
- Make it easier to browse by time period. For example if I only want to see items (across all categories) created in the 1860s.
- Great idea, and obviously the way to go for schools which are in rural areas. Thanks, Nessim Hanna
- Very happy with the site.. It is a quick and easy way to do research online on the particular local subject to Nova Scotia. If all the museums could get more stuff added and I know it will take a while it would be an invaluable piece for amateur historians like myself and the



general public. This site makes me want to catalogue and add my own items from my collection so that others could use it for research purposes.

- ?
- I've noticed many factual and spelling errors
- Wonderful site. Brilliant idea.
- possibly sharing ideas on how to stimulate more local interest. What have others tried?
- great site!
-



Appendix 3

NovaMuse Redesign

Online Collections Goals

May 11, 2017



1113 MARGINAL RD HALIFAX NS B3H 4P7 / PH 902-423-4677 1-800-355-6873 / FX 902-422-0881 / WWW.ANSM.NS.CA



This wish list was compiled of desires for NovaMuse updates after analyzing reviews done about other museums' online collections sites by ANSM's Information Access & Management Committee.

Participants each reviewed two of the following:

- o Europeana
- o Chicago Collections Consortium
- o Rijkmuseum
- o Google Arts & Culture
- o NovaMuse

Look and Feel

- o Clean and not cluttered
- o Not a greyscale colour theme
- o Lots of large images
- o A very prominent search bar
- o Large and clear menu headings

Features

- o Easy to personalize search result views (grid, list, timeline)
- o Easy to add or remove filters on searches
- o Ability to refine searches from the start
- o Themed browsing
- o Compatibility on mobile devices
- o Easy and intuitive navigation including "back" buttons built into site
- o Different ways of user engagement interaction

Content

- o Contributing museums prominently showcased, making it very clear where the artifacts come from
- o A prominent "About" page
- o Rotating "teaser" artifacts on the homepage
- o Information about copyright and permissions of use
- o "Help" page
- o Lots of links (including to institutions' webpages)
- o Text associated with images so users know what the object is



Select Comments About NovaMuse from Website Reviews

"I like the layout of the homepage. It's clean and clear. I love that it has the rotating feature item/member. Minor detail, but I am **not a fan of the use of gray scale** in the theme buttons down the right side. You could go with red or blue to stick with the color scheme possibly. It would also be **nice if the search bar was more prominent.**"

"**Timeline feature** is great now that museums are narrowing down dating, it should be **more obvious.**"

"I have been on the site many times and this is the first time I noticed the background, contributors, FAQ, etc. options down the right side. I was going to say we need to add these in but perhaps there is a way to make them **more prominent links. Even if it is just bigger font.**"

"The **Made in NS** project could be **better publicized** on the site."

"The scrollable **list of new releases** with an option to click on View Story [as seen in the Chicago Collections] could be a useful feature for novamuse.ca. What it does is makes it appear that there is ongoing, **more current information available rather than just static artifact databases.**"

"If it doesn't already do this, it would be great if **items tagged under 'Relationships'** in CollectiveAccess **appear** in the 'Similar Items' thumbnails."

"I would suggest that novamuse.ca place a **larger, more prominent search box front and centre** on the home page with a one line of statistics on size of collection as done with this site."

"**Larger images needed.**"

"When NovaMuse is upgraded, I think it's important to budget **for testing on different devices (iPhone, iPad, Android, etc.)**. I know NovaMuse is a little rocky on the mobile devices. When **working with the high school students**, they all have cell phones and often use those to do quick research since we have a limited number of laptops/desktops on site. If we are reaching out to younger people, I think **usability across devices should be a priority.**"

"The **search bar should be more prominent** with perhaps 'Search Our Collections' instead of just 'Search.'"

"Should we **link MuseFund on NovaMuse?**"



Appendix 4

Managing Your NovaMuse Presence

A tip sheet for museums

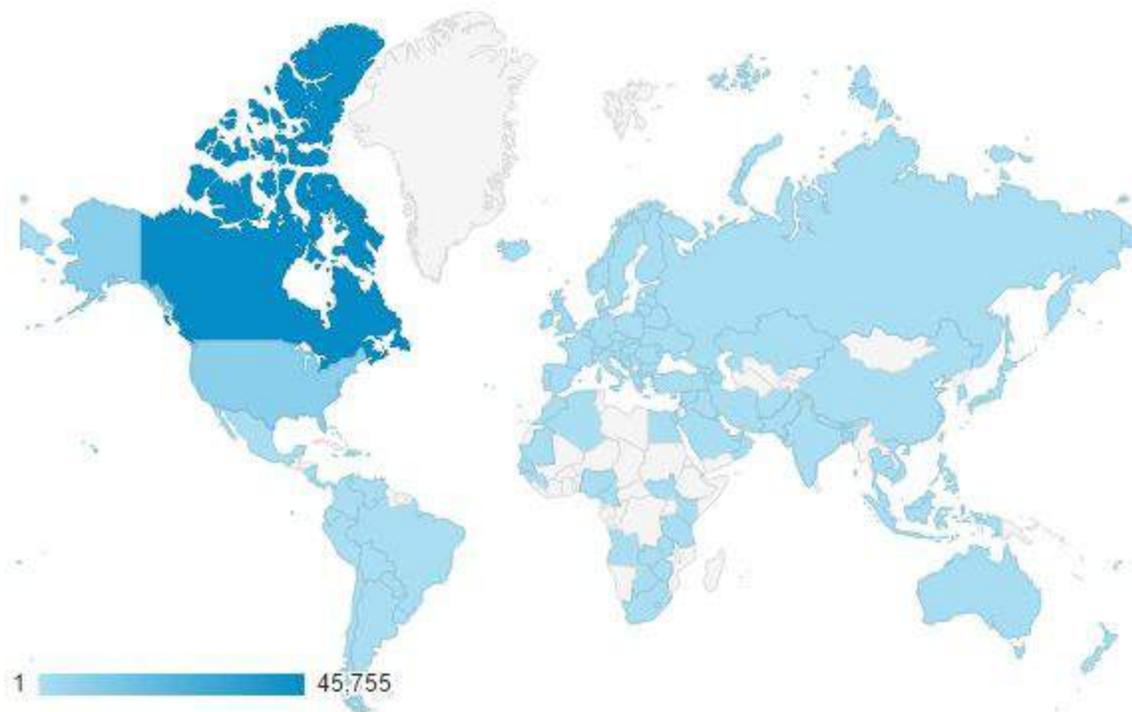


1113 MARGINAL RD HALIFAX NS B3H 4P7 / PH 902-423-4677 1-800-355-6873 / FX 902-422-0881 / WWW.ANSM.NS.CA



Introduction

NovaMuse has the capability of providing content to visitors before, during, and after a museum visit, as well as to those who never visit. Visitor access to collections on NovaMuse is not constrained by museum opening hours, seasonal schedules, or ability to visit the physical site. This includes visitors from around the globe.



Where NovaMuse.ca visitors are located

As of May 2017

Sourced from Google Analytics

ANSM's *Statement of Excellence* in regards to Collections Management stipulates that museums "[...] enable access to collection and related documentation in-house and online."⁴¹ In today's digital world, if you do not exist online to many people you do not exist at all. **This tip sheet will help you to maximize your online presence, and increase visitor interaction with your museum's collection.**

⁴¹ Association of Nova Scotia Museums, *Museums Evaluation: Site Evaluation*, 13.



Improve your records

- **Start small**
This work does not happen overnight. When identifying collections records to tackle, it is helpful to look at something you are already working on. For example, if you are doing an exhibit on teacups, take the time to inventory and digitize your teacup collection, as well as enrich the artifact records.
- **Upload good images**
Professional images infinitely improve artifact records. Use our [“Artefact Photography Tips.”](#) Take front and back, as well as detail shots. Only half of survey respondents said they would click on an artifact record if it did not have an image, and almost everyone rated image quality as important to their experience.⁴²



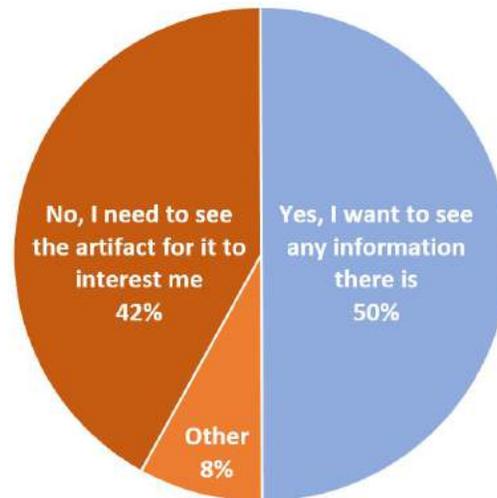
An image to aspire to
[DesBrisay Museum, 78.76; 682](#)

⁴² NovaMuse Public User Survey, June 2017.



NovaMuse visitors on viewing records without images

When asked if they would intentionally view a record without an image



From NovaMuse Public Survey
2017

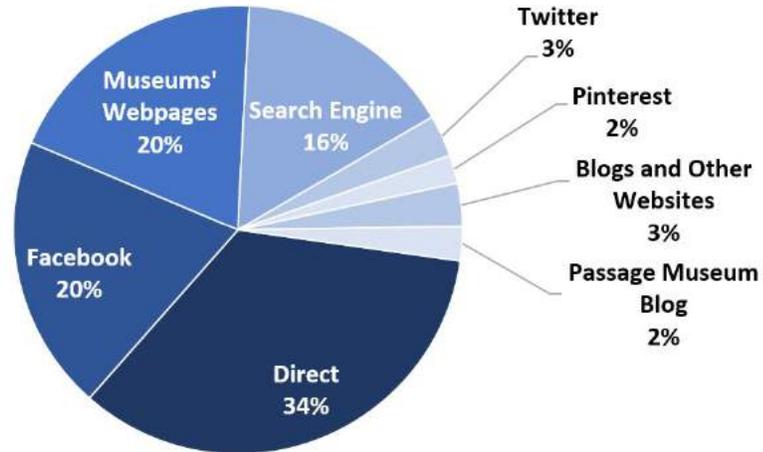
- **Talk to local subject matter experts (SME's)**
Harness the knowledge of local experts to help identify objects and enrich artifact records. Use our tip sheet on working with SME's to get familiar with the process. This will engage knowledgeable community members, and give them a venue to share their knowledge with the general public. Visitors have been asking for stories about your artifacts. This is your chance to learn and share them!
- **Train your cataloguers**
In the world of artifact cataloguing, consistency is your friend. Ensure that cataloguers are given resources, and are confident using CollectiveAccess.

Remember: the  is always there to help you in case you forget what goes in a field. This information is constantly updated to provide current information.

Promote NovaMuse

- **Include a prominent link to NovaMuse on your website**
20% of NovaMuse web traffic is directed to the site from museums' webpages.⁴³ By including a link in a prominent place such as the home page, more visitors to your site will view your online collection. NovaMuse will also grow in popularity, which benefits everyone.
- How visitors arrive at NovaMuse**

⁴³ April 2017 Visitor Statistics, Google Analytics.



Stats for April 2017
Sourced from Google Analytics

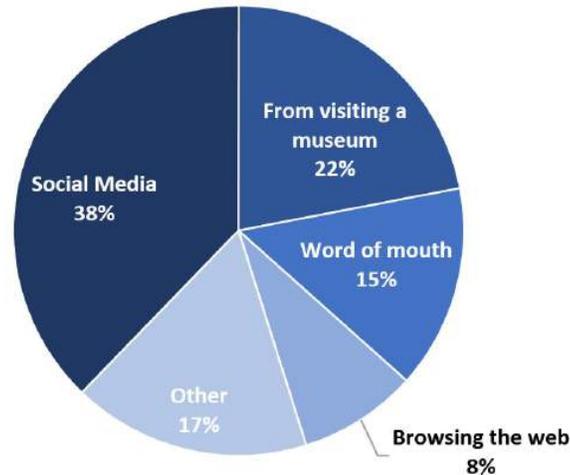
- **Advertise NovaMuse on your social media accounts**
20% of all NovaMuse visitors are directed to the site from facebook.⁴⁴ 38% of survey respondents found out about NovaMuse from social media.⁴⁵ Boost this number by reminding people of the awesome things they can find! If you are talking about a specific artifact, be sure to include its NovaMuse link in your post. Use artifacts that speak to local events and museum exhibits. Use popular museum hashtags such as #WhoAmI, and #onthistday to promote your collection.
- **Tell your visitors about NovaMuse**
Let your physical visitors know that they can access your collection from home. Ways of doing this include talking to people about NovaMuse, putting up posters up at your site, and handing out promotional materials as visitors leave. Use our templates for NovaMuse posters and business cards.

⁴⁴ April 2017 Visitor Statistics, Google Analytics.

⁴⁵ NovaMuse Public User Survey, June 2017.



How visitors found out about NovaMuse



From NovaMuse Public Survey
2017

- **In newsletters or other materials circulated to your members and the public**
If you are already talking about something in the collection, this is a great time to remind people to go check it out!

Use NovaMuse Internally

- **Look at other records for inspiration**
Use the records available to you to inspire better records of your own, be it how to photograph something, or write a better description.
- **Exhibition Development**
Exploring your own collection in NovaMuse can spark exhibit ideas. Browsing by theme can bring up artifacts you had not previously considered.
- **Finding artifacts to borrow from other museums**
Need an artifact to compliment your next exhibit? Use NovaMuse to see what your fellow Nova Scotia museums have in their collections. Instead of sending out an inquiry on the listserv, you can see for yourself what there is in your desired subject area or time period. Contacting your colleagues to borrow an artifact is so much easier when you already know the artifact you want, its accession number, and its story.
- **Networking**
Becoming familiar with other museums' collections can be a great networking opportunity. If you see an artifact of interest, or want to know how someone took such a great photograph, ask your colleagues at that institution.
- **Marketing and fundraising**



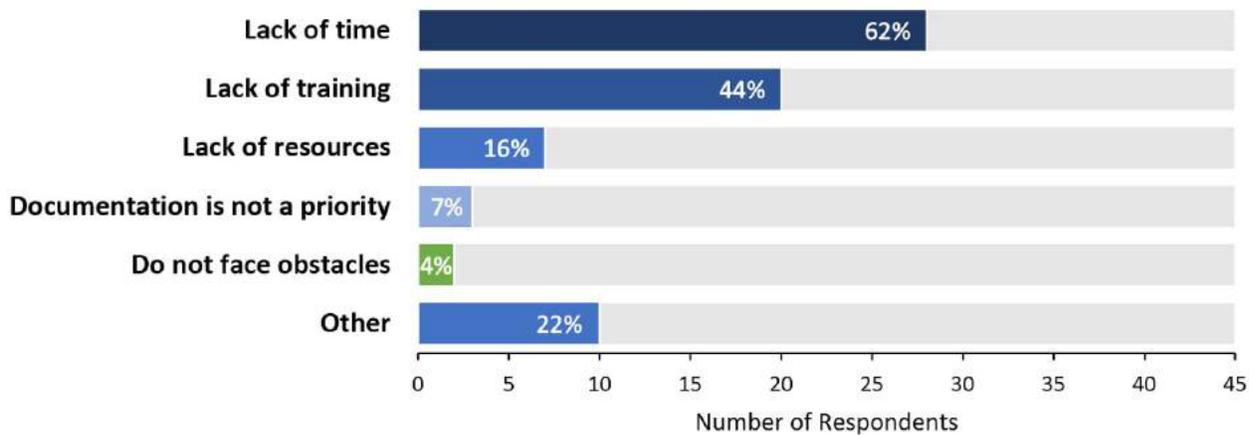
NovaMuse is an amazing marketing tool for your collection. Use your published collection to drum up interest in artifacts or subjects.

- **Artifact identification and comparison**
Not sure what something you are cataloguing is? Search NovaMuse to find similar items from other museums. You can also use comparison of your artifacts to similar ones on NovaMuse as a form of artifact research, to see if you can find out more about them.

Overcoming Obstacles

Almost everyone faces obstacles, and that is okay. As seen below, a lack of time dedicated to cataloguing and collections work is the leader across the province. Here are some strategies to overcome the things standing in your way.

Obstacles Identified by NovaMuse Contributors



From NovaMuse Contributor Survey 2017

- **Time**
Following a gameplan will let you focus on priority areas first. Make sure to document where you left off so that you can jump right in the next time. Try dedicating a certain amount of time on a particular day of the week to collections work. No matter how short, any bit helps. You can also take advantage of various programs to pre-schedule social media posts.
- **Training**
Consult the resources at your disposal including YouTube tutorials. Contact ANSM for further training opportunities.
- **Resources**
Maintain clear and relevant policies and procedure for collections management. Make an institutional pact to improve your collections documentation. Build records improvement work into other special projects.



- **Priorities**
While the laundry list of things to do always seems to get in the way, how your collections are presented online is crucially important to the image and function of your institution. Make this clear to everyone involved with the museum.
- **Do not be afraid to ask for help**
Whether it is that you cannot figure out how to do something in CollectiveAccess, or your records are not appearing on NovaMuse, do not hesitate to contact ANSM. There is often a simple solution.

Why Does it Matter?

- **Showing donors, and potential donors you care**
People who are donating objects, time, or resources to your collection want to know that you are making the best use of them. By having professional object records and photos, you are proving that your institution is worth their investment. As said by one expert, “No donor will pay you money before they pay you attention. There is no denying that awareness is the absolute first step in all fundraising activity.”⁴⁶
- **Your duty as a museum**
As a museum you are accountable to the public, and owe it to them to show what you have.
- **Education**
NovaMuse gives students of all levels a different way of interacting with historical content, inspiring a love of history.
- **Easy marketing**
It is something you are doing already, and it increases interest in your museum.
- **Accessibility**
Although physical access to museums is becoming easier for people of various abilities, there are some people who cannot visit your museum at all. Your NovaMuse collection lets you reach out to all these people.
- **Because the public wants to see it!**
During the Touchstones Canada 150 campaign, 25 000 votes were cast in 60 days for people's' favourite artifacts.

⁴⁶ Amy Stark in Kara Edie, “Start Spreading the News: Marketing and Communication,” *Small Museum Toolkit: 4 Reaching and Responding to the Audience*, Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko and Stacy Klingler ed. (Plymouth, UK: AltaMira Press, 2012), 1.



Appendix 5

Collections Management Seasonal Work Calendar

- Write or revise summer staff's job descriptions
- Apply for SKILL and YCW summer student grants using identified collections projects (Dec - Jan)
- Address your artifact cataloguing backlog. Either catch up on work or make a clear plan to do so
- Connect with subject matter experts to help with your collections project
- Create a work plan with clear goals
- Follow up on the past summer's collection project

- Set up student level CollectiveAccess accounts for incoming summer staff
- Create HR files for incoming employees
- Train summer staff on collections care and handling before giving access to the collection
- Train summer staff on CollectiveAccess
- Check your NovaMuse presence



- Identify collections projects for the upcoming year, keeping in mind progress made from the summer
- Do a good clean after the summer season. Especially true for seasonal sites closing for the winter
- Check your NovaMuse presence

- Tackle collections project
- Share successes through social media
- Review and document your progress and strategies at the end of the season. Make notes of things to follow up on throughout the year
- Exit interviews with summer staff
- Close student level CollectiveAccess accounts once staff leave

Tip: When identifying collections projects, it is helpful to look at something you are already working on. For example, if you are doing an exhibit on teacups, take the time to inventory and digitize your teacup collection, as well as enrich the artifact records.

- Year-round To-do's:**
- General housekeeping and building maintenance
 - Promoting NovaMuse and your collections on social media
 - Follow up with collections staff/volunteers
 - Acquisitions Committee and Collections Committee meetings
 - Professional Development opportunities for museum personnel
 - Environmental sustainability efforts
 - Communicate with non-collections personnel in your museum about the work you are doing
 - Think about ways to utilize your collection for the benefit of your visitors and community