

CAJM IDEA LAB
Connecting Collections and Communities
May 21, 2015 - 10:00am to 4:00pm
National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia

CAJM is convening a one-day Idea Lab (mini-conference) to address the discrepancy between Jewish museum collections and Jewish communities and communal agendas. A number of spots to this small program are available to those members interested in strategic change and community engagement. To request an invitation, please contact Avi Decter: cajmchair@gmail.com

At present, an estimated 40 Jewish museums in North America hold collections of objects, photographs, and archival materials that document and represent aspects of Jewish history, culture, and identity. This CAJM Idea Lab challenges us to inquire why such a rich and important heritage tends to meet with confusion or ambivalence--and what might be done to better connect collections and communities across North America.

Participants in the one-day think tank will include Marsha Semmel, former acting director of the Institute for Museum and Library Services; Bill Adair, program director of the Pew Center for Arts and Humanities; Juliana Ochs Dweck, curator of interpretation at the Princeton Art Museum; Daniel Rahimi, executive director of galleries at the Penn Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, and Ariella Goldfein, planning executive at UJA/Federation.

The event will be organized around the following topics:

SESSION 1: The Challenge of Change Is there a growing disconnect between the worlds of Jewish museum collections and collecting and that of Jewish communal priorities, activity, and innovation? What has changed—how, where, why? How is this disconnect impacting Jewish museum collecting and collections?

SESSION 2: Adapting to Change What is needed to better align Jewish museum collections and communal priorities? What are the new (and untested, unimagined) strategies that will draw upon the vibrancy of communities and bring out the power of collections? What characterizes next practice for Jewish museum collecting?

SESSION 3: Strategies and Models What kinds of (broad) strategies can help Jewish museums to connect their collections more effectively to their communities of service? What models can we draw on from the museum field generally?

SESSION 4: Implications for the Field What are the long-term and strategic implications for Jewish museum collecting and collections, both in the field and for CAJM as an organization?

CAJM will disseminate summaries of the Idea Lab deliberations as 'framing papers' to the field. This program will be followed by a second Idea Lab in fall 2015 designed to promote collaborations and partnerships among Jewish museums, communal agencies, foundations, and patrons.