



from the president

Doug Simpson
President

Dear Colleagues,

This year NAME celebrates its 30th anniversary. I've taken this as an opportunity to contact some former NAME leaders* to learn a little about the organization's founding and history. It began at the 1978 AAM Annual Meeting where there were only two sessions on exhibitions. A chair of one of those sessions, Larry Klein from the Field Museum, suggested forming a Standing Professional Committee on exhibition design. Sign-up cards were passed out and a core group was formed. During the 1981 AAM Conference in Indianapolis, the National Association for Museum Exhibition was officially organized. Its objectives were:

- To promote excellence in the creation and installation of museum exhibitions
- To provide a means of communicating among museum exhibition professionals
- To organize workshops and seminars on design and all other aspects of museum exhibitions

NAME membership grew, and its motivated members produced much appreciated workshops and conference sessions. By 1985, NAME was accepted by AAM as a Standing Professional Committee.

So NAME has been linked to AAM from its very beginning. The AAM conference was the site of its inception. NAME was formed as an independent organization, but its intention and ambition was to become an AAM SPC while retaining its independence. The relationship between these two entities during the course of their joint evolution has had its share of controversy and disagreement, often around issues of autonomy.

A major organizational shift occurred in 1996 when AAM took over responsibility for SPC membership and financial operations. NAME would no longer maintain its own bank account. NAME members would now be required to belong to AAM (at significant cost). NAME debated becoming independent from AAM, but in the end assented to this reorganization.

The role of museum professionals working in the for-profit sector (like me) was another contentious issue. AAM barred their chairing of sessions at the Annual Meetings and their participation as SPC officers (in part due to IRS rules that limited who could "direct" the work of a non-profit). But with evolving IRS rules and the recognition of independent professionals' contributions, AAM removed these barriers in 2007.

To learn more about NAME's history or to contribute your own remembrance, go to <http://name-aam.org/about/who-we-are/history>.

Currently, we're going through another shift. It is designed to serve our members better, building on the strengths of both the SPCs and AAM. Stay tuned!

* For their assistance in writing this letter, my thanks to: Darcie Fohrman (Founding Member/Board Member, 1981-1987); Louise DeMars (Founding Member/3rd President, 1987-1991); Jim Walther (6th President, 1994-1996); Whitney Watson (8th President, 1998-2000); and Phyllis Rabineau (10th President, 2004-2008).
