


Current Practices in Distance Learning In Museums



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The Study

A survey was conducted with museums offering online programs before and after COVID-19 to identify how museums reach offsite visitors.

Participants

Pre-COVID:

58% Science centers, zoos or aquariums. 57% private non-profit, 60% urban.

96% education departments with 63% having 1-2 staff engaged in online learning

56% had education degrees and 49% had science degrees. **60% only received on the job training.**

Post-COVID:

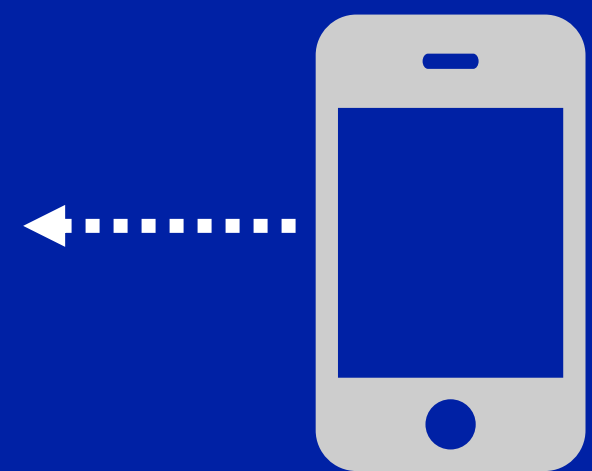
52% Science centers, zoos or aquariums. 62% private non-profit, 55% urban.

83% education departments, with 69% having six or fewer staff running the programs. 24% said their programs were now being run by **education and marketing** departments. 68% had education degrees and 53% had science.

Prior to COVID-19 museums primarily offered offered school-based programs via teleconferencing software and after they primarily offered offered programs to the general public via social media platforms.



Many of the barriers identified: cost, staffing, time, resources, and institutional buy-in can be offset by **strategic partnerships** and increased **professional development opportunities**.



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Types of programs offered		
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID
	Percent	Percent
School programs	91.1	36.0
Teacher professional development	28.9	11.2
Massive open online courses	0.0	4.5
Lectures	6.7	40.4
Conferences	22.2	24.7
Other	24.4	59.6

Types of technology used		
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID
	Percent	Percent
Teleconferencing software	86.7	53.9
Proprietary technology	6.7	0.0
Asynchronous services	2.2	0.0
Learning management software	2.2	2.2
Social media	0.0	73.0
Museum website	0.0	22.5
Email	0.0	5.6

Targeted audience		
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID
	Percent	Percent
Pre-kindergarten	20.0	57.3
Kindergarten to fifth grade	77.8	80.9
Middle school	77.8	49.4
High school	51.1	33.7
Universities	13.3	14.6
Teachers	28.9	31.5
Public	24.4	74.2

How topics are determined		
	Pre-COVID	Post-COVID
	Percent	Percent
State or national standards	51.1	31.5
Museum specific	48.9	48.3
Requested	22.2	5.6
Existing programs	8.9	38.2
Museum mission	6.7	10.1
Available topic experts	6.7	10.1
Other	0.0	6.7

Barriers:

Museums without programs cited lack of staff capacity, a preference for in-person learning, lack of resources, and institutional restrictions

Recommendations:

Creativity
Flexibility
Collaboration
Partnerships

Post-COVID Questions:

Should museums charge for online programs?
If so, how much?
How can museums retain high quality learning when transitioning online?