

Information Center Fact Sheet **Space Allocation**

Space may be the most contested resource in a museum. Since space is a commodity that is relatively expensive to expand or repurpose, space allocation becomes a major decision.

The American Association of Museums conducted a survey in 2004 to gather information about facility and risk management operations in museums. More than 1,200 museums responded. AAM published the results of the survey in 2005 as *Covering Your Assets: Facilities & Risk Management in Museums*. The information presented here is drawn from that publication. Museums may want to consult the publication for additional data about space allocation by discipline and selected governance/parent type.

Museums may find the data useful for comparing their operation to that of their peers. Readers should be mindful, however, that the survey represents actual operations. The data are not intended to represent an ideal or to be prescriptive. Each museum must make decisions about space allocation based on its own mission, goals, and resources.

Note: The median is the data point in the middle of the sample; half of all responses fall at or below this point, half fall above it. The median is not the average. The average is the sum of all the numbers in the sample divided by the number of responses. Because the average may be skewed in some places by some very high or very low numbers, the median is a better way of examining the data.

| Present/Absent | Present in Institution | | | Median Square Feet | N for Median |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Yes | No | No Response | | |
| Exhibitions | 89.4% | 1.7% | 8.9% | 7,334 | 861 |
| Collections storage | 82.8% | 6.7% | 10.5% | 2,000 | 783 |
| Non-collections storage | 76.9% | 7.7% | 15.5% | 1,000 | 703 |
| Offices | 87.7% | 2.6% | 9.8% | 1,200 | 820 |
| Education (classrooms) | 46.4% | 31.7% | 21.9% | 1,500 | 444 |
| Library/research | 64.1% | 19.7% | 16.2% | 597 | 580 |
| Museum store | 72.2% | 13.3% | 14.5% | 500 | 687 |
| Public space/ public functions | 62.3% | 18.4% | 19.3% | 2,500 | 541 |
| Food service | 31.1% | 46.9% | 22.1% | 912 | 296 |
| Auditoriums/theaters | 34.6% | 42.7% | 22.6% | 2,200 | 312 |
| Maintenance | 60.3% | 19.8% | 19.8% | 740 | 543 |
| Conservation/ collections prep | 49.2% | 28.1% | 22.7% | 785 | 448 |

This table shows the median square feet and the median percentage of total interior square feet that participating museums allocated to different functions.

| | Median Percentage | Median Square Feet |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Exhibitions | 37.5% | 7,334 |
| Collections storage | 10.4% | 2,000 |
| Non-collections storage | 4.3% | 1,000 |
| Offices | 6.7% | 1,200 |
| Education (classrooms) | 4.3% | 1,500 |
| Library/research | 2.2% | 597 |
| Museum store | 1.9% | 500 |
| Public space/public function | 8.3% | 2,500 |
| Food service | 1.7% | 912 |
| Auditorium/theaters | 4.0% | 2,200 |
| Maintenance | 2.5% | 740 |
| Conservation/collections prep | 2.3% | 785 |