

The Chrysler Museum of Art



THE CHRYSLER MUSEUM OF ART: A LONGER LOOK

We remain true to our mission of being a catalyst, bringing art and people together to enrich and transform lives.
– From the Chrysler Museum of Art’s “Vision for 2015”

Last year’s State of the Region report examined the Chrysler Museum of Art and we noted that the museum has gained a reputation as “a repository of acclaimed masterworks in all genres and periods that has become an educational and aesthetic hub on the Atlantic Coast.” At the same time, however, we noted that “the Chrysler and its director, William Hennessey, have been vexed by declining state support, tight budgets and deteriorating economic conditions.” Further, this has occurred at a time when the very role of art museums has been changing in the United States. In this chapter, we examine many of the Chrysler’s innovative responses to these new and very challenging circumstances.

Visitor Satisfaction and Attendance

The Chrysler Museum of Art’s 2006-09 strategic plan states that the institution’s “primary measure of success is the enthusiasm with which visitors recommend the Museum to others.” Indeed, since 2007 the Chrysler has regularly surveyed its visitors on this specific consideration.¹ **Asked the likelihood (on a scale of 1 to 10) that they would recommend the museum to others, most visitors respond affirmatively. Since introducing the survey, the Chrysler has consistently demonstrated desirable Net Promoter Scores ranging from 87 percent to 93 percent. The museum’s score for the first eight months of the 2009-10 fiscal year was 90.54 percent (see Table 1).**

Visitor answers to the survey question “What did you enjoy most?” varied widely, suggesting a broad level of satisfaction with the museum’s offerings. According to

the director of visitor services, Colleen Higginbotham, survey respondents often single out the museum’s special exhibitions, as well as its collections of glass and European paintings.

These survey data, collected on a random basis by museum staffers, are buttressed by overall attendance figures. As Table 2 reveals, the number of visitors to the Chrysler has grown 56 percent since 2007. **Moreover, the museum’s success in attracting 183,690 visitors in 2009 stands out favorably when compared to national statistics. The most recent National Endowment for the Arts Survey of Public Participation in the Arts indicates that attendance at art museums and galleries decreased from 27 percent of all adult Americans in 2002, to 23 percent in 2008.**² Intriguingly, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that the subsequent economic recession may be reversing this downward trend. The Art Newspaper and The New York Times reported strong attendance at some of the country’s best-known art institutions in 2009, possibly due to “the relative bargain of a museum ticket” compared to

¹ This strategy for assessing customer satisfaction was introduced by Frederick F. Reichheld in a well-known Harvard Business Review article from December 2003, “The One Number You Need to Grow.”

² National Endowment for the Arts, 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (November 2009), available at: <http://arts.endow.gov/research/2008-SPPA.pdf>

other forms of entertainment.³ Increased attendance at the Chrysler in the past year may reflect these developments.

TABLE 1		
"NET PROMOTER" DATA, SEPTEMBER 2009 - FEBRUARY 2010		
On a scale of 1 to 10, how likely is it that you would recommend the Chrysler to a friend? ³		
(1 = Would not recommend; 10 = Would definitely recommend)		
Score	# of Responses	% of Responses
1*	1	0.13%
2*	0	0.00%
3*	1	0.13%
4*	1	0.13%
5*	1	0.13%
6*	4	0.51%
7**	16	2.05%
8**	42	5.37%
9***	33	4.22%
10***	683	87.34%
(Net Promoter Score = Promoters - Detractors)	782	90.54%
Source: Chrysler Museum of Art		
* 1.02% (Answers 1-6 = Detractors)		
** (Answers 7-8 = Passively Neutral, not counted)		
*** 91.56% (Answers 9-10 = Promoters)		

³ Andrew Goldstein, "Museum attendance rises as the economy tumbles," The Art Newspaper (Dec. 9, 2009), at: <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Museum-attendance-rises-as-the-economy-tumbles/19840>. See also Damien Cave, "In Recession, Americans Doing More, Buying Less," The New York Times (Jan. 2, 2010), at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/03/business/economy/03experience.html>.

TABLE 2					
ATTENDANCE BY MONTH, JANUARY 2006 - FEBRUARY 2010					
	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
January	12,056	21,468	9,799	10,028	9,028
February	9,554	16,324	12,377	11,534	12,148
March		9,701	11,931	11,408	10,151
April		15,409	12,240	11,541	14,498
May		16,170	11,082	11,343	14,213
June		11,973	8,787	9,757	8,665
July		15,253	10,124	7,382	8,081
August		9,203	9,562	7,391	7,306
September		14,492	8,949	7,720	9,185
October		22,567	14,659	10,513	11,822
November		15,855	14,008	10,106	14,169
December		15,275	14,300	9,130	11,269
Yearly Totals		183,690	137,818	117,853	130,535
Percent increase in attendance		Special Exhibitions			
2006-07	-9.72%	10/14/09 - 1/3/10	To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum		
2007-08	16.94%	4/8/09 - 7/19/09	Art of Glass 2		
2008-09	33.28%	11/12/08 - 2/1/09	American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell		
2006-09	40.72%	5/15/08 - 8/17/08	Rembrandt's Etchings: The Embrace of Darkness and Light		
		3/11/07 - 6/10/07	From Goya to Sorolla: Masterpieces from the Hispanic Society of America		
		10/20/06 - 1/7/07	A Century of Great Photography from The Virginian-Pilot		
Source: William Hennessey					

The Price of Admission

An important (if not the only) reason for the uptick in visitors at the Chrysler is the museum’s new policy of free general admission. Since September 2009, the Chrysler has ceased to charge visitors to view the museum’s permanent collection – thereby expanding its eight-year-old tradition of free admission on Wednesdays to the entire week.

At first glance, the new policy may seem well intentioned but counter-intuitive, given the hard times that have befallen arts organizations in Hampton Roads and all over the country. By contrast, numerous organizations have recently raised ticket prices in order to stay afloat. Even so, the average art museum covers only 5 percent of its operating budget through admission income, according to the American Association of Museums. For the Chrysler, this percentage was even lower – only 1.7 percent, or \$118,589, of its 2008-09 budget derived from admissions. **The Chrysler’s most important source of revenue was the city of Norfolk, which covered 42.8 percent of the museum’s budget in 2008-09 (see Table 3).**

With such financial considerations in mind, well-known institutions like the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Cincinnati Art Museum have taken a calculated gamble and forsaken admission fees altogether. These institutions believe that the opportunity to attract a larger and more diverse audience, particularly low-income and first-time visitors, is well worth the small loss of revenue from admissions.

Will this gamble pay off for the Chrysler? The museum’s leadership is optimistic. As Hennessey explains, “Institutions like the Chrysler, which serve a predominantly local audience ... tend to be far less admission driven” than institutions that are heavily frequented by tourists and other one-time visitors (such as the Museum of Modern Art in New York City). He also observed, “The minor role which admissions income played in our overall financial picture made the decision to go free much easier.” Further emboldening the Chrysler’s decision: gifts totaling \$70,000, from several charitable sources, were directed specifically toward supporting the first year of free admission.

Operating Income	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Government	41.5%	41.1%	42.8%	
Contributions, Memberships & Grants	26.7%	25.2%	30.4%	
Earned Income	12.3%	10.7%	8.7%	
Released Restricted Funds	9.9%	10.8%	8.4%	
Investment Income	9.6%	12.2%	9.6%	
Total Operating Support and Revenue	\$6,857,335	\$7,012,019	\$6,976,455	\$6,365,106
Operating Expense	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Collections & Exhibitions	30.0%	33.8%	37.7%	
Facilities & Security	29.1%	27.7%	24.6%	
Development & Marketing	16.1%	13.6%	11.2%	
Other	11.0%	9.2%	10.1%	
General & Administrative	9.0%	8.6%	7.6%	
Education and Interpretation	4.8%	7.1%	8.7%	
Total Operating Expenses	\$6,854,753	\$7,009,390	\$6,974,503	\$6,350,482

Sources: Chrysler Museum of Art annual reports and FY 2009-10 Operating Budget

It remains to be seen, however, if the free admission policy will substantially enhance the museum’s appeal among a broader cross-section of the Hampton Roads community. (See the “Who Visits the Chrysler Museum of Art?” sidebar.) The Chrysler’s survey data from the first eight months of the 2009-10 fiscal year (see Table 4) indicate small increases in African American visitors, as well as visitors with a high school education or less, and visitors with household incomes below \$60,000. The proportion of first-time museum visitors, however, remained constant (just over 46 percent) before and after the introduction of free admission.

To be sure, the data in Table 4 derive from a small sample of Chrysler patrons over a short period of time; the full consequences of the new admission policy are not yet apparent. What does seem clear, however, is that free admission alone is not a magic recipe for bringing residents of Hampton Roads (or any other community) through the doors of their local museum. **The keys to a thriving and well-attended art museum include not only affordability, but also a record of high-quality exhibitions and public programs, as well as the active cultivation of a loyal membership base. The Chrysler has done quite well here.**



Who Visits the Chrysler Museum of Art?

The people of Hampton Roads are the Chrysler Museum's most important audience. According to Director William Hennessey, the museum's investigations have consistently shown that 83 percent to 87 percent of its visitors live within a 50-mile radius. As set out in a recent vision statement, the Chrysler's staff and board of trustees intend to "continue to focus our efforts on serving the people of southeastern Virginia," as well as to expand the size and diversity of the museum's audience "to mirror the demographics of Hampton Roads" by the year 2015.

The Chrysler's audience is not yet a perfect reflection of the entire regional population, but it is not far off. **Art museum visitors throughout the country tend to be whiter, more affluent and better educated than the population as a whole. The same trends are apparent among respondents of the Chrysler Museum's visitor survey. However, African American visitors appear to be less underrepresented at the Chrysler than at other U.S. art museums.** African Americans comprise 31 percent of the Hampton Roads population, while 23 percent of visitors surveyed at the Chrysler in 2009-10 identified themselves as African American. By contrast, African Americans comprise 12.1 percent of the U.S. population, but represent only 5.9 percent of all U.S. art museum visitors, according to the National Endowment for the Arts.

TABLE 4

DEMOGRAPHICS OF VISITORS

	Hampton Roads Population (2008)**	Chrysler Museum Visitors (2009-10)	Chrysler Museum Visitors (2008-09)	Change	U.S. Population (2008)**	Demographic Distribution of U.S. Art Museum Visitors (2008)*
Race/Ethnicity						
African American	31.0%	22.99%	18.72%	4.27%	12.1%	5.9%
American Indian	0.3%	1.17%	0.00%	1.17%	0.7%	N/A
Asian/Indian	3.1%	4.69%	3.83%	0.86%	4.4%	N/A
Caucasian	58.9%	69.40%	73.62%	-4.22%	65.4%	78.9%
Hispanic/Latino	4.3%	1.76%	2.13%	-0.37%	15.4%	8.6%
Other	2.3%	0.00%	1.70%	-1.70%	2.0%	6.6%
Education						
Elementary school	2.9%	0.14%	0.00%	0.14%	6.4%	0.8%
Some high school	8.1%	3.57%	2.29%	1.28%	8.7%	4.0%
High school	26.9%	17.99%	7.29%	10.70%	28.5%	12.8%
Some college	26.0%	19.78%	31.14%	-11.36%	21.3%	28.5%
College graduate	25.7%	28.85%	29.86%	-1.01%	25.0%	32.8%
Graduate/professional degree	10.4%	29.67%	29.43%	0.24%	10.2%	21.1%
Household Income						
Under \$20,000	14.6%	3.03%	1.74%	1.29%	17.8%	6.5%
\$20,000 - \$39,999	19.0%	7.49%	3.47%	4.02%	20.7%	13.7%
\$40,000 - \$59,000	18.7%	10.87%	5.79%	5.08%	17.6%	8.0% (\$40-50K)
\$60,000 - \$79,000	\$60-75K 11.5%	8.56%	10.42%	-1.86%	10.5%	20.6% (\$50-75K)
Sources: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2008 American Community Survey (1-year estimates), at: http://factfinder.census.gov , and the National Endowment for the Arts, 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, at: http://arts.endow.gov/research/2008-SPPA.pdf						
* Note that the race and income categories for U.S. art museum visitors used by the NEA differ slightly from those used by the Chrysler Museum						
** Note that the income categories used by the American Community Survey differ slightly from those used by the Chrysler Museum						

TABLE 4

DEMOGRAPHICS OF VISITORS

Household Income							
\$80,000 - \$99,999	\$75-100K 14.6%	9.09%	6.95%	2.14%	12.4%	18.0% (\$75-100K)	
\$100,000 +	21.6%	15.51%	13.32%	2.19%	21.0%	33.2%	
NA / Student	N/A	25.31%	27.80%	-2.49%	N/A	N/A	
Retired	N/A	20.14%	30.50%	-10.36%	N/A	N/A	
Is this your first visit to the Chrysler Museum?							
Yes			46.67%	46.51%	0.16%		
No			53.23%	53.49%	-0.26%		
Approximately how much time did you spend in the museum today?							
In hours			1.85	2.13	-28.00%		
Sources: Chrysler Museum of Art, 2008 American Community Survey (1-year estimates), at: http://factfinder.census.gov , and the National Endowment for the Arts, 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, at: http://arts.endow.gov/research/2008-SPPA.pdf							
* Note that the race and income categories for U.S. art museum visitors used by the NEA differ slightly from those used by the Chrysler Museum							
** Note that the income categories used by the American Community Survey differ slightly from those used by the Chrysler Museum							

Membership and Special Exhibitions

"Museums that do not charge a general admission fee usually have much smaller membership programs," asserted a 2007 article in the journal *Museum News*.⁴ These are words of caution for the Chrysler, which depends upon its members for a critical backbone of community and financial support. Membership accounted for 11.8 percent, or \$800,000, of the Chrysler's budget in 2008-09. In return, members enjoyed perks such as museum shop discounts, subscriptions to *The Chrysler Magazine*, invitations to members-only events and free admission. Thus, a substantial risk of ceasing to charge for general admission is eliminating one of the museum's most attractive incentives for membership.

Happily, the Chrysler seems to have averted this risk. At the end of February 2010, the museum boasted 4,089 active memberships, a 12 percent increase over the previous year (see Table 5). The overwhelming majority of new members joined at the household level of \$75 per year (\$65 for seniors, active-duty military and teachers). The most significant recent decline has come in corporate memberships at the \$500 and \$1,000 levels, presumably the result of a difficult economy. However, the museum's most dedicated supporters (\$3,000-plus per year) remained roughly constant. **Year-to-date membership revenue at the end of February 2010 totaled \$662,650 (8 percent more than the previous year), placing the museum on track to fulfill or exceed its \$860,000 membership goal for 2009-10.**

The data in Table 5 speak well of the Chrysler's support across the breadth of Hampton Roads. Both large donors and "average" residents of the Hampton Roads community are represented. The gratifying increase in household memberships perhaps is a positive charitable response to the new policy of free general admission. Another factor may be the museum's special exhibitions, which continue to carry a modest admission charge for all nonmembers. Free admission to the museum's special exhibitions and their accompanying programs continues to provide a strong incentive for membership.

⁴ Gypsy McFeller, "The Cost of 'Free': Admission Fees at American Art Museums," *Museum News* (January/February 2007), available at: http://www.aam-us.org/pubs/mn/MN_JF07_cost-free.cfm

TABLE 5

CHRYSLER MUSEUM MEMBERSHIP

	Total Memberships as of 2/28/09	Total Memberships as of 2/28/10	Existing Members Renewal Rate	New Memberships as of 2/28/10
Individual Memberships				
MPS Benefactor (\$10,000)	8	8	71%	1
MPS Patron (\$5,000)	47	50	98%	0
MPS Sponsor (\$3,000)	112	105	86%	2
Director's Circle (\$1,000)	68	62	84%	1
Patron (\$500)	62	56	85%	0
Friend (\$250)	176	161	80%	3
Associate (\$150)	277	282	80%	14
Household (\$75/\$65*)	1,683	2,123	45%	475
Individual (\$55/\$45*)	1,148	1,139	57%	178
Student (\$25)	33	77	5%	27
Corporate Memberships				
BEC (\$5,000)	22	20	82%	2
Benefactor (\$2500)	2	2	10%	0
Director's Circle (\$1,000)	12	3	0%	0
Patron (\$500)	8	1	0%	0
Totals	3,658	4,089		703
Source: Chrysler Museum of Art * Discounted memberships are for seniors age 65 or older, teachers and active-duty military.				

Between Oct. 14, 2009, and Jan. 3, 2010, the Chrysler hosted "To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum," its first-ever special exhibition of ancient Egyptian art. Egyptian relics are a popular attraction for museumgoers everywhere. Table 6 records that "To Live Forever" was one of the best-visited special exhibitions in the Chrysler's recent history, exceeded only by "American Chronicles: The Art of Norman Rockwell" in average daily attendance. Special events associated with the exhibition included showings of Egypt-themed movies, an overnight "Sleep with the Mummies" activity for families with children ages 6-12, and a dance and preview weekend for members only. **On display for only 53 days, "To Live Forever" helped to bring in more membership and admissions revenue (\$30,494 and \$48,800, respectively) than did other special exhibitions of longer duration.** Museum shop sales during the Egyptian exhibition (\$107,148) were also robust.

A successful special exhibition brings "glamour and novelty" to a familiar museum, Hennessey noted in the January/February 2010 issue of *The Chrysler Magazine*. "Experience has shown us that it is borrowed treasures that most effectively capture the public's imagination and draw them through our doors."

Special exhibitions clearly attract new visitors (and their dollars), but the associated costs of these exhibitions can be considerable. The budgeted cost of "To Live Forever" was \$325,000, a figure that does not include the substantial hours spent by Chrysler staff on installation, interpretation, marketing and the like. **According to Hennessey, the division of resources between special exhibitions and an institution's permanent collection is "one of the most perennially vexing balancing acts facing museums today." Thus, the Chrysler seeks to balance high-profile, though costly, loan exhibitions like "To Live Forever" with shows of local interest that can be organized by the museum itself, such as a planned "Hampton Roads Collects" exhibition that will borrow from private collections throughout the region.** "Women of the Chrysler: A 400-Year Celebration of the Arts," presented between March 24 and July 18, 2010, was an innovative presentation of works by women artists drawn entirely from the museum's permanent collection.



TABLE 6

SPECIAL EXHIBITION COMPARISON

	To Live Forever	Art of Glass 2	Norman Rockwell	Rembrandt's Etchings	Goya to Sorolla	Virginian-Pilot Photos
Attendance						
Paid admissions	9,414	6,457	8,532	4,271	4,295	4,291
Members	3,322	2,844	2,865	1,536	1,483	1,768
Wednesday - day	N/A	6,718	6,622	5,425	4,426	3,313
Wednesday - night	N/A	3,214	2,151	3,225	2,798	2,176
Other free admissions	2,506	8,990	10,400	4,423	3,942	3,354
General admissions	6,677	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Business entry	3,290	3,666	2,857	2,692	3,580	2,831
Tours	8,297	3,672	7,096	1,644	4,628	6,049
Special events	8,337	13,799	6,794	5,811	8,505	9,310
Historic houses	666	1,053	1,217	1,901	1,294	995
Exhibition totals	42,509	50,413	48,534	30,928	34,951	34,087
Days open	53	75	57	68	65	70
Average daily attendance (excluding special events and historic houses)	506	474	711	341	387	340
Front of House Revenue						
Admissions	\$48,800	\$36,900	\$48,663	\$24,792	\$18,154	\$23,277
Donation box	\$3,532	\$13,860	\$13,334	\$11,637	\$7,813	\$5,510
Museum shop sales	\$107,148	\$114,579	\$95,155	\$64,951	\$62,787	\$63,470
Membership	\$30,494	\$17,670	\$10,306	\$10,163	\$10,860	\$8,053
Exhibition totals	\$189,974	\$183,009	\$167,458	\$111,543	\$99,614	\$100,310
Source: Chrysler Museum of Art						

Education and Public Programs

A review of Table 3 indicates that “Education and Interpretation” represents a small but growing portion of the Chrysler’s operating expenses. Between 2006-07 and 2008-09, the proportion of the museum’s budget devoted to education rose from 4.8 percent to 8.7 percent, proportionally the largest increase in any category throughout this two-year time span. The museum’s Department of Education and Public Programs oversees a diverse array of activities, including the operation of the Jean Outland Chrysler Library, tours for students and teachers (more than 19,000 in 2008-09); development of an e-museum that will provide online access to the 35,000 objects in the Chrysler’s collection; gallery talks, lectures, concerts and children’s activities; and even programs such as “Yoga for Art Lovers” and “The Fine Art of Wine.”

The breadth of these public programs, including a few that are only tangentially related to the Chrysler’s collections and exhibitions, reveal much about the changing role of museums in American society. In decades past, art museums often resembled a treasure house or temple. The architecture of the Chrysler Museum itself, constructed in the 1930s as the Norfolk Museum of Arts and Sciences, was directly inspired by palaces of the Italian Renaissance. Nineteenth- and early 20th-century museums preserved works of art so that they could be appreciated in an appropriately reverential setting. The function of museums as “protectors of culture” carries on today, but their institutional atmosphere is typically more casual, interactive and socially inclusive than in the past. Even the definition of “art” has expanded – as demonstrated, for example, by the Chrysler’s hosting of special exhibitions on Ferrari automobiles (2003) and news photography from *The Virginian-Pilot* (2006). Public and private funding sources expect museums to promote diversity and engage in community outreach.

For these reasons, **a successful museum of the 21st century must do much more than display works of art. Hennessey says that he likes “the idea that museums can be forums – places where the entire community gathers to celebrate shared events and**

values, to exchange and explore ideas, for social interaction, perhaps for a meal or some shopping.” As the mission of the Chrysler has expanded and evolved, so too has its Department of Education and Public Programs (and its Department of Visitor Services, founded in 2007). The allocation of a museum’s finite resources among its various branches represents another delicate balancing act for a museum director, particularly in lean economic times. For every enthusiast of the Yoga for Art Lovers class or the “Women of the Chrysler” interactive website (<http://www.womenofthechrysler.org>), there is apt to be someone else who considers these initiatives a distraction from core museum responsibilities such as acquisitions and conservation. Indeed, the Chrysler Museum currently employs only two full-time curators, though the creation of a new position in photography and contemporary art is planned through the establishment of a future endowment.



Plans for the Future

A new curatorship is just a small part of the Chrysler's designs for the future. **In March 2010, the board of trustees approved a new plan for the renovation and expansion of the museum's main building, as well as for the conversion of the former Wachovia Bank building (located nearby at the corner of Grace and Duke streets) into a glassmaking studio. The overall project cost is estimated at \$18 million, \$2 million of which has already been received in the form of a challenge grant from a private donor. An upcoming capital campaign will seek to raise the remaining funds necessary for construction, as well as increase the museum's endowment for operation funds.**

A prime motivation for the main building's renovation is to create 8,000 square feet of new gallery space, thereby allowing more works in the permanent collection to be placed on display. Plans call for 2,500 new square feet of the new space to be dedicated to the glass collection, expanding the current display space by one-third. Additional improvements will enhance the building's accessibility for visitors and staff. The museum's restaurant and catering facilities will move to a more central location; guests with wheelchairs (or with strollers) will no longer be asked to enter the building through a side door. The expansion will take the form of two wings flanking the main entry; both new wings are designed to integrate smoothly with the Chrysler's existing architecture. "The resulting building," promises a recent development plan, "will look to the passerby almost identical to the current structure."

The second component of the Chrysler's expansion project is the construction of a glass studio (or "hot shop") that will allow museum visitors to experience the glassmaking process live. Of the four U.S. museums most recognized for their collections of historical and contemporary glass (including the Corning Museum of Glass in New York, the Toledo Museum of Art and the Museum of Glass in Tacoma, Wash.), only the Chrysler does not operate its own glassmaking furnace. A hot shop would add an appealing new attraction for visitors, and also allow the Chrysler "to partner with local schools like Tidewater Community

College (where a small glassblowing program has already been established) and the Governor's School for the Arts," according to the museum. With a high-quality studio, the Chrysler could invite accomplished glassblowers to hold demonstrations in conjunction with special exhibitions (like the recent "Art of Glass 2"), or even to serve as artists in residence for a longer duration.

Final Thoughts

The advantages of the Chrysler Museum of Art's planned renovation and expansion are many – including the enhancement of its nationally recognized specialty in art glass, as well as the opportunity to improve the main building's design for visitors and staff alike. **As the museum's leadership is certainly aware, however, raising \$16 million in the current economic climate is a formidable challenge. Like other arts organizations in Hampton Roads, the Chrysler has faced some unpleasant fiscal realities in recent months. The museum's budgeted operating revenue for the 2009-10 fiscal year was \$6,365,106 – 6.5 percent less than the previous year. This downward trend may continue, as the Chrysler's funding through the city of Norfolk and the Virginia Commission for the Arts is expected to decline in 2010-11.** For the foreseeable future, the museum's budget is likely to remain lean, despite positive increases in membership and visitor traffic.

With shrinking resources at its disposal, the Chrysler Museum must perform more services and appeal to a broader audience than in generations past. This calls not only for financial discipline, but also for creative and flexible management. In our view, the Chrysler has risen admirably to the challenge. The year 2009 was called an "*annus horribilis*" for U.S. art museums.⁵ **In response to the sudden decline of their endowments and gifts from private donors, well-known institutions canceled exhibitions, imposed pay furloughs or turned to other drastic measures in order to make ends meet. By contrast, the Chrysler introduced a new**

⁵ Javier Pes and Helen Stoilas, *The Art Newspaper* (Jan. 28, 2010), at: <http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Recovery-after-annus-horribilis/20186>

policy of free general admission, increased its visitor numbers, hosted well-received special exhibitions and moved forward with an ambitious proposal for renovation and expansion. These are no small accomplishments in a year marked by the sharpest economic contraction since the Great Depression.

Residents of Hampton Roads can be proud of their region's flagship institution for the visual arts.

