



Albright-Knox
Art Gallery

The Docent Handbook

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I. Docent Program

A docent is a professional volunteer of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's Education Department, who is responsible for engaging visitors of all ages with works in the Gallery's Collection and special exhibitions. Docents lead a variety of tours, including school tours, public tours, and adult group tours and are the face of the museum for thousands of visitors each year.

A digital version of this Handbook, along with other information pertinent to docents, may be found at www.albrightknox.org/docent



II. Requirements, Responsibilities, and Procedures

Joining the Docent Program

As the program needs to expand our corps of docents the Albright-Knox will recruit for a new class. Applicants to the program will need to complete an application and interview. Applicants selected to be docent candidates are required to complete the docent training course offered by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's Education and Community Engagement Department. Each candidate must successfully deliver a test tour to graduate. Upon successful completion, new docents receive all privileges and assume the below responsibilities.

Active Docents

Availability

Docents are required to inform the School and Docent Programs Coordinator of their availability on a monthly basis. Dates on which you will be unavailable must be provided by the 20th of the month previous.

If you will be unavailable for an extended period of time (for example, due to travel, family obligations, etc.), you must notify the School and Docent Programs Coordinator by email as far in advance as possible.

Commitment

Each docent is required to make a two-year commitment to the museum once the training program has been completed. Weekday docents are expected to do one tour per week; weekend docents are expected to conduct one tour per month.

Communication

Communication from the museum is done electronically. You are required to have consistent email access and are expected to check your inbox on a regular basis.

Membership

Membership in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery is a requirement for museum volunteers. By joining, you will become a part of a community of supporters actively engaged with a vibrant and energetic cultural gathering place and one of the world's most dynamic collections of modern and contemporary art.

Non-active Docents

Leave of Absence

A docent who has completed the training program and been on active touring duty for at least one year may request a leave of absence. All requests must be directed to the School and Docent Programs Coordinator by email. Leaves are granted for up to six months. A request to extend a leave can be made no less than two weeks prior to the end of a six month leave period.

After a leave of absence of longer than two years docents will need to complete the next full docent training course before reinstatement can occur.

To transition to active after a Leave of Absence:

- Listen to the current trainings on the docent website
- Follow 2-3 tours, (Please check-in with the School and Docent Programs Coordinator prior to following the tour)
- Meet with the School and Docent Programs Coordinator (or any ECE Department staff member) to discuss current programming and any procedural changes since the docent went on leave

Docent Emeritus Status

Upon retiring from the docent program, you may opt to join the docent emeritus program. In order to join, you must complete the following:

- Serve for five years as an active docent
- Remain a member of the museum
- Request this status in writing

This program entitles members to be a part of the continuing education program. Emeritus docents may join onsite trainings and the docent outings. They will receive invitations to docent receptions and events and are welcome to use the docent lounge during museum hours.

III. Types of Tours and their Topics

Docents are required to know all tour types and their themes. You must also be prepared to give tours of any section of the museum, including the special exhibitions, to visitors of all ages. For all tours, please check-in with the School and Docent Programs Coordinator 10 minutes before the start time.

Art'scool

We offer a K-12 school tour program called Art'scool, which is generously funded through BlueCross BlueShield of WNY. All the school tours are free for the students and their chaperones, and a subsidy is provided for transportation.

Tour AK

This program offers guided tours to adult, college, and pre-K groups.

Collection Highlights

The Albright-Knox has more than 7,000 works in its Collection. Tour a selection of highlights from the Collection and learn a little bit about the museum's 150-year tradition of collecting, conserving, and exhibiting the art of its time.

Special Exhibition

Tour one of the museum's free to enter [current special exhibitions](#) with your group.

Collection and Special Exhibition Combination

Tour a selection of highlights from the Collection and the [special exhibitions currently on view](#) with your group.

Public Tours

Public tours are offered on a regular basis and begin at the Admissions Desk. People frequently drift in and out of these tours; do not let this bother you. *If you are unable to give an assigned public tour and cannot find a substitute, please inform the Admissions Desk staff at 270.8292.* Please make every effort to speak with a Guest Services Representative.

Special Exhibition Tours

The museum may schedule special school and public tours for paid exhibitions.

IV. Tour Procedures

Scheduling

- Docent assignments are listed on the monthly tour schedule, which provides the following information: tour type, grade level, topic, the designated entrance, additional notes, and the expected number of visitors. It is your responsibility to read the schedule carefully for tour assignments.
- Occasionally, a group will cancel or not arrive. If we have advance notice, especially in the case of bad weather, we will make every effort to contact docents assigned to that group. Watching the local news may be helpful if you know the district with which your school is affiliated.
- If you are unable to give an assigned tour, you are responsible for contacting other docents to try to secure a replacement and informing the School and Docent Programs Coordinator of the change or the inability to find a substitute.

Before the tour

- Please meet your assigned group either at the Education Department entrance (school groups) or the Main entrance (adult groups and groups with wheelchairs). The entrance is indicated on the monthly tour schedule. In order to allow time to coordinate the tour, ***always arrive at the appropriate departure location at least 10 minutes prior to the appointed tour time.***
- If the tour begins at the Education entrance, the School and Docent Programs Coordinator will greet and orientate the group and coordinate the tour departures. Groups are generally limited to 12 students per docent. For K-12 students on guided tours, the museum requires at least one adult chaperone to accompany each docent.
- If the tour begins at the Main entrance, the Guest Services Administrative Coordinator will greet the group and coordinate entrance into the museum. Please check in with them before the tour start time.

During the tour

- Start your tour by introducing yourself and the museum, talk briefly about the tour topic, and try to find out something about your group (where they are from, what they are learning in art class, etc.)
- As part of your introduction, **repeat the rules of conduct** to the group:

- It is very important that we do not touch any of the works of art or the walls of the museum. This keeps them safe, and you safe as well.
 - Please view the art at a safe distance—at least three feet away.
 - It is important to walk slowly and carefully as no running or pushing is allowed.
 - Use your inside voice!
 - Photography, in existing light without a flash, of works from the Collection is permitted, unless you are informed that it is not allowed.
 - Food, drinks (including bottled water), chewing gum, and e-cigarettes are not permitted in the museum.
 - All parcels, purses, or bags larger than 11 x 15 x 5 inches in size, all backpacks, baby carriers, umbrellas, briefcases, video cameras, flashes, and tripods are prohibited. These must be left in the provided carts before the tours begin.
 - Please remain with your assigned group at all times.
- Actively engage teachers and adult chaperones to assist you with school groups.
 - Always engage your audience and offer opportunities for them to share their observations and thoughts.
 - At times, the museum will be particularly crowded we suggest to not to stay in any one area for too long. It is also important to keep your voice at a normal volume so as not to distract other groups.
 - Always maintain a safe distance from works of art and refrain from pointing too closely.
 - Think about your transitions. A successful transition provides continuity because it builds from one area to the next.
 - Keep your group in the center of the hallway when moving from place to place to avoid accidental contact with a work of art. *Do not move too quickly* from one area to another; it is easy for members at the back of the group to fall behind.
 - You should never touch a child or adult on your tour. If you are having a student with behavioral issues on your group enlist the teacher to work with the student to curb the behavior.

Concluding the tour:

- At the end of the tour, recap the theme and the discoveries from your time with the group. Often one asks a question for the visitors to think

about before they exit. "What was your favorite work of art? If you could take one work with you to put on display at your school (in your home), which one would you choose?" etc.

- Encourage the group to return to the museum. Feel free to tell your visitors about the free admission on M&T First Fridays, or any upcoming events.
- Please escort your group to the Main or Education Department entrance/exit. If they are staying on their own, please remind them of the rules of conduct before leaving them in the museum space. If it is a school group, the School and Docent Programs Coordinator will inform the group in advance of the following:
 - The chaperones must stay with their assigned group for the remainder of the visit.
 - Shop AK welcomes students on tours, however there are certain requirements that must be met: Only twelve students, accompanied by at least one adult, are permitted in the Shop at one time. This means there must be enough adults with the group to supervise *both* the children in the Shop *and* those waiting in the corridor. Docents are not required to provide this supervision and, when appropriate, will explain the policy to the teacher and refer him or her to Shop AK staff at the end of the tour.

After the tour

At the end of your tour, pause for a reflection. Writing down your observations can be very helpful in this process. Reflect by asking yourself the following questions:

Did I:

Set the stage for an effective tour?

- Arrived in time to receive pre-tour instructions and worked with my fellow docents to determine where to begin my tour.
- Got acquainted with my group.
- Made sure my group followed the museum's policies.

Provide information in an interesting way?

- Offered a theme, major concepts and summary.
- Employed appropriate vocabulary
- Asked challenging and open ended- questions.
- Was factually well prepared, adding new information regularly.

Use successful touring techniques?

- Appeared confident and friendly

- Displayed enthusiasm about my subject
- Made eye contact
- Waited until everyone was listening before I began
- Made plans for smooth transitions
- Followed the museum's policies and rules of conduct
- Ended my tour on time.
- Encourage my visitors to repeat their visit.
- Thanked my group for their interest and participation.

Security in the Galleries

For the safety of the Collection, it is important that docents keep their groups calm and be alert to potentially dangerous situations. A tour can be terminated if the group cannot adjust to the museum's policies (see Security section).

Visitors with Disabilities

The museum is committed to welcoming visitors of all abilities, making sure that everyone has access to the same experience is a collective responsibility. Please be aware that we have either elevator or lift access to portions of the building that require the use of stairs. You will need the assistance of a guard to operate the wheelchair lifts. Please be considerate of various forms of mobility and wait until everyone is physically with your group before you continue with your tour.

If you notice any accessibility challenges with a group or have any questions, please make the Director of Education and Community Engagement aware.

Cameras

No flash photography is permitted in the Gallery at any time.

Taking photographs of works in the Albright-Knox Art Gallery's Collection is allowed *without a flash*. Videotaping without the use of lights is also permitted.

Taking photographs of or videotaping works not owned by the Gallery, such as those included in special exhibitions or on loan, is prohibited. At times, we gain permission from the artist or the owners of the works. If this is the case, this will be communicated to the docent group when a work first goes on display. When in doubt, do not allow photography.

V. Continuing Education Trainings

Onsite Trainings

The museum organizes continuing education trainings for the docent corps throughout the year. A schedule of trainings for the academic year (September through May) will be shared with the docent corps each year in August. The schedule will indicate which trainings are required. All required trainings will be offered at two different times, one scheduled for an afternoon and one during the evening.

School Tour Topics Trainings

The museum periodically updates or adds to the school tour topics in response to feedback from area educators. These trainings are designed to focus on the changes to the topics.

Special Exhibition Trainings

Docents are expected to be able to conduct tours of the non-ticketed special exhibitions, and therefore must attend trainings for each new show. These are conducted by the curator, artist, or Director of Education and Community Engagement and audio files of the trainings are provided on the docent website. For selected exhibitions, additional trainings may be added for ticketed exhibitions. All trainings for ticketed exhibitions must be attended before a docent can be scheduled to tour the show.

Tour Techniques Trainings

The museum will also schedule trainings that will focus on engagement strategies, touring techniques, and tour management.

Open Practice Sessions

The Director of Education and Community Engagement hosts monthly open practice sessions within the gallery space. These are optional trainings and offer docents the opportunity to practice tour technique and strategies.

In addition to what is learned in trainings, docents are expected to have up-to-date knowledge of all museum programs and services (hours of operation, restaurant hours, special exhibitions, etc.), available through the Albright-Knox website and supplemental information provided by the Education Department.

Docent Observations

Periodically, members of the Education and Community Engagement staff will conduct observations and evaluations of docent-led tours. These will be informal observations during the 2016-17 academic year. Beginning in the 2017-18 academic year these observations will also include a

completed evaluation form and post-tour discussion. Verbal and/or written feedback is then provided to the docent regarding the tour.

Additional Educational Activities

Docent Day Trip Committee

There is an informal docent day trip committee, which you are welcome to join. This committee plans outings and events for docents to attend on a voluntary basis.

VI. General Information

Nametags

You will receive an ID tag and a lanyard which must be worn in the museum when conducting docent business.

Docent Lounge

There is a locked cabinet in the docent lounge for personal belongings. Bulletin and white boards provide important information and should be checked on a regular basis. Special exhibition and Collection catalogues are available for consultation, along with printed copies of schedules, informational letters, and audio scripts. When available, please add your volunteer hours into the shared file on the computer (coming soon!).

Entering the Museum

When on docenting business, please enter and exit through the Albright-Knox Education Department entrance. You will be expected to sign in and out at the security desk.

Parking

When entering the museum's parking lot, please take a ticket as instructed and bring it inside with you. Docents are entitled to free parking whenever they are on museum business. Tickets are validated at the security desk at the Education Department entrance.

Shop AK

Docents are entitled to a 25% discount on one copy of current special exhibition catalogues and Albright-Knox Art Gallery Collection catalogues. All other merchandise is sold at a 10% volunteer discount, including sale items.

AK Café

Docents receive a 10% discount in the restaurant. Please identify yourself to staff before placing your order.

Security

The safety of the Collection must be an on-going concern for all staff and volunteers. **Strict adherence to all tour procedures and security policies is required at all times.**

- For school tours, it is helpful to explain the security personnel's responsibilities prior to the tour. In this way, students will better understand their concern when people do not follow the museum's rules. Security personnel will help to control groups when necessary. Unruly individuals will be escorted to the nearest exit under the supervision of a guard and a responsible adult from the group.

- Certain items are not allowed. Please watch for the following and have them stored in the proper place.
 - Umbrellas may be left in the umbrella racks at the entrances.
 - Food and drink are not permitted in the museum. If a group arrives with lunches, they must be left on the bus. The Albright-Knox does not have luncheon facilities for school groups at this time.
 - Large bags, briefcases, etc. must be left on the bus.
- Report ALL accidents and injuries to the nearest security person, who will determine what action is necessary and obtain information to complete an Accident Report Form. Once a security guard has been contacted, the guard will work with Education Department staff to contact the teacher and stay with the student. When possible, continue your tour leaving the security staff to help the student. Always be concerned, courteous, and helpful, but do not administer first aid or accept responsibility on your own or the museum's behalf.
- If you have a problem on a tour (i.e. behavior, no chaperone, someone needs a teacher, etc.), contact your nearest security guard who will contact the Education Department staff to assist you.
- *If an alarm sounds, never assume it is false or a test unless told so directly by Security personnel.* In case of an emergency evacuation of the building, docents should be aware of all emergency exits and escort their group to the nearest one. Listed below are all exits available from each major location in the museum.
- Lower Galleries
 - Elmwood Avenue entrance
 - Emergency Exit in southeast corner of the lower galleries (behind free-standing wall)
- Second Floor
 - Delaware Park entrance
 - Down the stairs to the Elmwood Avenue entrance
- Education Department
 - Education Department entrance (Elmwood side)
 - Emergency Exit located next to the Mail Room
- Clifton Hall Link
 - Emergency Exit in southeast corner of Lower Galleries (behind free-standing wall)
 - Emergency Exit in the middle of the Link near the water fountain and Rest Rooms

- Emergency Exit on the landing of the stairs from the Link to the Great Hall
- Clifton Hall
 - Emergency Exit on the landing of the stairs from the Link to the Great Hall

VII. Department and Staff Contacts

Education and Community Engagement Department

Education staff are happy to work with docents as a part of the Education and Community Engagement team. We encourage you to share your ideas and observations about the program, the museum, and tours. Docents' main point of contact in the department is the School and Docent Programs Coordinator, but will have regular interaction with all members of the department.

Lindsay A. Kranz
School and Docent Programs Coordinator
716.270.8276
lkranz@albrightknox.org

Jennifer Foley, Ph.D.
Director of Education and Community Engagement
716.270.8282
jfoley@albrightknox.org

Teri Fallesen
Accessibility and Community Programs Coordinator
716.270.8249
tfallesen@albrightknox.org

Stephanie Keating
Adult Programs Coordinator
716.270.8201
skeating@albrightknox.org

Intergenerational Programs Coordinator (Position currently open)

Guest Services Department

Docents will often work with the guest services department, particularly in relation to tour logistics.

Admission Desk: 716.270.8292

Megan Woloszyn
Guest Services Administrative Coordinator
716.270.8292
mwoloszyn@albrightknox.org

Christine Goerss-Barton
Guest Services Manager
716.270.8296
Cgoerss-barton@albrightknox.org