

**BOOMERS PRESENTATION**  
**Boomers and 13ers: When Museum Talents Converge**  
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Why don't you understand me? I'm a boomer. Depending on the expert you consult, boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 or 1943 – 1963. Or, maybe I'm a Traditionalist/Boomer Cusper (born between 1940 and 1945).

My comments are based on When Generations Collide, by Lynne Lancaster and David Stillman, Connecting Generations, by Claire Raines, and Generations, the History of America's Future, by William Strauss and Neil Howe, numerous newspaper articles, the web, discussions with a variety of boomers including boomer museum directors.

The boomer parents have been called traditionalists, veterans, World War IIers. Our parents are known for their loyalty – to country, to employer, to each other. These folks saved for a rainy day. They were God-fearing, hardworking, and patriotic. While Dad worked, Mom stayed at home. More than 50% of men served in the military and they learned top down command and control. They continued using top-down, need-to-know management styles as they worked for and ultimately ran organizations, institutions and the government.

Dr. Spock urged our parents to throw away the feeding schedule and let us dictate our own schedules. Among Boomer preschoolers who had working mothers, 4 in 5 were cared for in their own homes, usually by relatives. In school, we were the first generation to be graded on our report cards for “works well with others” and “shares materials with classmates.” Team activities have become a way of life for us. Our parents had the radio and newspapers. We had television!

People who influenced boomers include Martin Luther King Jr., the Kingston Trio, Richard Nixon, John F. Kennedy, Rosa Parks, Deep Throat, McEnroe and Connors, Gloria Steinem, Barbra Streisand, John Belushi, Janice Joplin, Captain Kangaroo and Captain Kirk, to name a few. Boomers know and remember Vietnam, Watergate, Chappaquiddick, Kent State, sit-ins, love-ins, Laugh-In, and Woodstock. We are the Pepsi, sixties, Yuppie and Post-Yuppie generation.

Boomers are optimistic. Our parents did everything they could to make our lives better than theirs had been. Further, we grew up in the boom, post war economy. Boomers are idealistic and we worked to fix what was wrong with America. We pushed for change in civil rights, women's rights, and reproductive rights.

We are competitive – there were 80 million of us. Lucky you, there are only 46 million 13ers. We are the “me” generation – in part, because we have been able to indulge ourselves. We focus on ourselves, who we are, and our achievements at work and now our grandchildren. Perhaps because we are the “me” generation, we've had high divorce rates. In addition to single parenting, there are a lot of boomer working moms. And we have some guilt that many of our children were “latch-key” kids.

We still want to excel in our careers and be recognized for what we have achieved. We started out in the work world thinking we would be loyal to our employer. But as time went on, we found that lifetime employment didn't mean it was going to be with one company. We are not job-hoppers. We have a very strong, dedicated work ethic. You should recognize it because we come to work early and work late. Workaholism is our badge of honor. And aren't Saturdays and Sundays made for working? For women, we became more than teachers and nurses and we forged careers in many industries. We kept raising the glass ceiling. Some of us have risen above it.

Our work environments have been quite formal, although they have relaxed – perhaps because the 13ers have pushed for it. For the most part, boomers worked out decent relations with the traditionalists as we've shared power in running organizations. So, I wonder why we haven't done this with you or you haven't done it with us.

Our traditionalist parents wanted to retire and planned for their retirement. They felt they deserved it. As you may be learning, many boomers have little thought of retiring at 65 – some because they can't afford to; others because they enjoy working. And many boomers hope to work on a part-time basis after they retire.

Boomers are taking on an aspect of the 13ers. We are finding that we need and want flexibility at work. Some of this is being brought about because we are providing elder care and support to our parents. Some is being brought about because we also want to pursue pastimes, including spending time with grandchildren. Some is being brought about because we don't have the same energy level as we once had. Whatever the reason, flexibility is becoming more desirable to us.

Boomers and 13ers: When Museum Talents Converge. **Converge**, in the Random House dictionary, means to tend to meet in a point or line; incline toward each other, as lines that are not parallel; to tend to a common result, conclusion. **Collide** means to strike one another with a forceful impact; to clash, conflict. As mentioned earlier, boomers and 13ers are converging with regard to having flexible time although they use the flexible time in different ways. In order to move up, many boomers collided with the traditionalists before them. The boomers did this in their museums and they did this in the management of AAM and other museum associations. They expected the 13ers to follow in their footsteps. Therefore they anticipated the 13ers would collide with them. Remember, there were 80 million of us and so we were very competitive. There are only 46 million of you. Soon, there will be many more jobs than there are you.

As museums become more democratized, and as the web plays a bigger role in access to culture, the 13ers knowledge, skills and life/work balance become especially valuable to museums. So the boomers and 13ers will need to work closely together on this. Being relevant to new and younger audiences is best served by the converging of the boomers and 13ers.

I recently facilitated a listening session at AAM for Emerging Professionals. Many attendees were 13ers, some were boomers. They suggested that their bosses (Directors, curators, etc.) invite them

to be on panels, invite them to co-author articles, invite them to shadow them at important meetings, to give them exposure to important donors and patrons, etc. They talked about not being able to attend AAM for cost reasons. Yes, directors and curators can do a better job of inclusion. And it seems to me that 13ers can do a better job of initiating their own professional engagement.

Thank you.