

Docent Program Guidelines

The Docent Program is part of the Department of Museum Guide Programs (MGP) within the Minneapolis Institute of Arts' Division of Learning & Innovation. The Docents of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA Docents) are dedicated to providing quality tour experiences in support of the MIA and MGP mission statements:

“The Minneapolis Institute of Arts enriches the community by collecting, preserving, and making accessible outstanding works of art from the world’s diverse cultures.”

“The Department of Museum Guide Programs provides volunteer-facilitated learning experiences that inspire visitors to discover personal meanings in art and confidently explore museums on their own.”

MIA Docents also support the museum’s vision: “Inspiring wonder through the power of art.”

Categories of Membership

Junior Docent

A Docent who is in the Docent training program. (As an alternative to the regular training program, someone who has been a docent in an art museum comparable to the MIA may complete an individual training program with the permission of the Senior Educator, Docent Program, hereafter referred to as the Senior Educator, and approval of the Docent Executive Committee.)

Senior Docent

Active: A Docent who has successfully completed the training program and is meeting a full touring commitment of 40 tours per year.

Sustaining: A Docent who has successfully completed eight years or received 320 tour credits as a Senior Docent and has requested, in writing, to the Senior Educator, a reduced touring commitment of 20 tours per year.

Leave of Absence: A Senior Docent who has made a written request to the Senior Educator and Tour Coordinators not to tour for three consecutive months or more, excepting the summer months. A Docent may not remain on leave for more than a year unless he/she provides satisfactory evidence to the Senior Educator of a continuing ability to meet the commitment and responsibilities of a Senior Docent.

Honorary Docent

A Docent who has successfully completed three years as a Senior Docent and has chosen to stop touring but remains associated with the MIA Docents. An eligible Senior Docent will be accorded Honorary status by giving written notification to the Senior Educator.

Admission

Eligibility

Any person who has a sincere interest in art, an interest in teaching, and a commitment to further the support and influence of the MIA and its collection throughout the community may apply for admission to the Docent training program.

Procedure

Applicants are admitted to the Docent training program based upon written applications and individual interviews. At least two members of a Docent Interview Committee selected by the Senior Educator, will review applications, be present at interviews, and make recommendations to the Senior Educator for final approval.

Commitment and Responsibilities

All Docents must maintain, throughout training and service, a standard of excellence equivalent to the quality of the MIA's collection and reputation. Docents will behave in an appropriate and respectful manner towards one another, other museum guides, volunteers, museum visitors and staff members. This includes not only direct interaction, but also communication via telephone, texting, e-mail, social media, or other electronic means. In a case where the Senior Educator determines that disciplinary action is deemed necessary, see the Volunteer Progressive Discipline Policy, which outlines this process.

Anyone selected for Docent membership must join both the MIA and the Friends of the Institute and must maintain these memberships for the duration of his/her membership in the MIA Docents.

Junior Docents

Junior Docents must faithfully attend and satisfy the requirements, as determined by the Senior Educator, of a two-year training program as well as additional continuing education requirements in the third year, indicated in the Letter of Agreement.

Senior Docents

Upon completion of the Docent training program, a Senior Docent must maintain Active status for a minimum of three years.

Active Docents are required to give a minimum of 40 tours per year. Sustaining Docents are required to give a minimum of 20 tours per year. For record-keeping purposes, the year begins on July 1. With special approval of the Senior Educator, at his/her sole discretion, Docents may substitute research or other volunteer work for part or all of the touring requirement.

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Senior Docents are required to guide tours of at least one special exhibition each year. These tours are included in the minimum requirement above. Docents must be present at all pertinent Continuing Education sessions for any special exhibition they are to tour, except with special permission from the Senior Educator.

Senior Docents are expected to attend Continuing Education sessions whenever possible, and must attend a minimum of six Continuing Education sessions each year, including special exhibition training. On occasion, docents may be required to attend a particular session.

Docents who cannot attend a required session must make it up by viewing or listening to a recording of the session.

Privileges

Docents are currently entitled to the following:

1. Use of the Museum Guide Resource Center.
2. Use of MIA research facilities and programs.
3. When possible, complimentary catalogues of special exhibitions to which a Docent has been assigned to guide tours.
4. A 20% discount on all purchases at the Museum Shop.
5. Borrowing privileges at the MCAD library.
6. Complimentary tickets to Affinity Group Lectures with your docent badge.
7. 10% discount at D'Amicos Café & Restaurant.

These privileges may be adjusted, withdrawn, or added to by relevant MIA staff.

Tour Procedures

Each Docent must designate to the Tour Coordinators one or more days each week as a regular tour day on which the Docent will be available for assigned tours. The Tour Coordinators will notify Docents of their assigned tours at least two weeks in advance. Docents must advise the Tour Coordinators in writing at least four weeks in advance of times when they will be unable to give tours. If a Docent is unable to give a tour and has not provided four weeks' notice, it is the Docent's responsibility to arrange for a substitute. The substitute needs to notify the Lead Docent, if any, and the Tour Coordinators of the substitution as soon as possible.

A "Lead Docent" is designated for each tour. He/she is responsible for checking with the tour contact to determine any specific goals or requests. The Lead Docent must communicate this information, along with proposed tour routes, to all other Docents on the tour at least one week in advance.

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Docents are to wear their security name badges when giving tours and at all times when they are acting as Docents in the museum.

If a scheduled tour group is more than 30 minutes late or if no one shows up for a public tour within 15 minutes, an assigned Docent has the option of not giving the tour and still receiving credit. If a tour is cancelled within one week of its scheduled date, all assigned Docents will receive credit as if they had given the tour.

Docents may be asked to show evidence of their qualifications (e.g., through “checkout” tours for the Senior Educator or other MGP staff member) before they are assigned tours of particular subject areas.

All tours, even those initiated by the Docent, must be scheduled through a Tour Coordinator. For special exhibition tours, please refer to the Group Tour Reservation Procedure for Docents.

Docents are required to be in the MIA at least 20 minutes before tour time. Two “no shows” or repetitive tardiness may be grounds for dismissal from the program.

Docent Executive Committee

The principal governing organization of the MIA Docents is the Docent Executive Committee (DEC). The DEC consists of the following voting members, who are elected for one-year terms by the Senior Docents:

Chair: calls and runs all meetings of the DEC, serves as liaison between the MIA Docents and the MIA, is an active member of the Friends’ Board, attends staff meetings of the MIA Learning & Innovation Division, and presides over the Docent General Meetings. In consultation with DEC members, the Chair fills any vacancy on the DEC in the event that a DEC member is unable to complete a term of office.

Chair-Elect: assumes the responsibilities of the Chair when the Chair is absent and will succeed to the position of Chair the following year, maintains the Docent bulletin boards in the Museum Guide Resource Center, and coordinates Continuing Education study groups.

Treasurer: maintains accounts, prepares financial reports, and disburses funds for the Docents. Distributes reports to members of the DEC, posts them on the MGP volunteers website, and makes a printed copy available to the general membership.

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Secretary: takes minutes of all meetings, distributes them to members of the DEC, posts them on the MGP volunteers website, and makes a printed copy available to the general membership.

Social Chair: plans and oversees all social functions sponsored by the Docents. In the event that Co-Chairs are chosen for this position, each Co-Chair will have a full vote on matters before the DEC.

Communications Chair: coordinates communication of time-sensitive information to the Docent membership. On behalf of the MIA Docents, sends flowers for illness or death of a docent, or death of a spouse or partner or child. Sends a card for illness or death of other family members. **Sends a card to docents changing to honorary status.**

Newsletter Editor: solicits articles for and publishes an electronic newsletter of interest to the Docent membership, which is available on paper as needed.

The DEC also includes the following non-voting members who serve as ex officio representatives: Honorary Docent representative, Junior Docent representative (chosen by Junior Docents after the first three months of training), and Senior Educator, Docent Program.

The DEC functions as the liaison between the Senior Educator and Docent membership and will offer whatever assistance it can to ensure the smooth operation of the Docent program.

The Senior Educator will consult with the DEC before granting leaves of absence of more than one year or dismissing a Senior Docent from the program. **The final decision for disciplinary action rests with the MIA.**

The DEC usually meets once a month during the school year, in conjunction with Continuing Education sessions. The DEC may also call General Meetings of the Docent membership, if necessary for a stated purpose, with two weeks' notice.

Election Procedures

A Nominating Committee of five Docents will be formed each year. The immediate past DEC chair, if available, will serve as chair. The DEC recommends two members, and two are elected by the Senior Docents at a General Meeting, usually in February. If the past DEC Chair is not available, the DEC will appoint a third member, and the Nominating Committee then elects its own chair.

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The Nominating Committee chooses a slate of candidates from the list of touring Senior Docents. This slate will be presented to all Senior Docents one month prior to election. Additional nominees may be submitted in writing to the Nominating Committee up to one week before the election.

The DEC shall be elected by majority vote of all Senior Docents voting at the final General Meeting of the year, usually in May.

Guidelines Changes

Proposed changes to the Docent Program Guidelines must be submitted in writing to the DEC and must be approved by the Senior Educator and a majority vote of the DEC. The changes must then be approved by a majority vote of the Senior Docents present at a General Meeting. The Senior Docents must be given at least two weeks' notice of any proposed change to the Guidelines before they are asked to vote.

Approved May 16, 2013