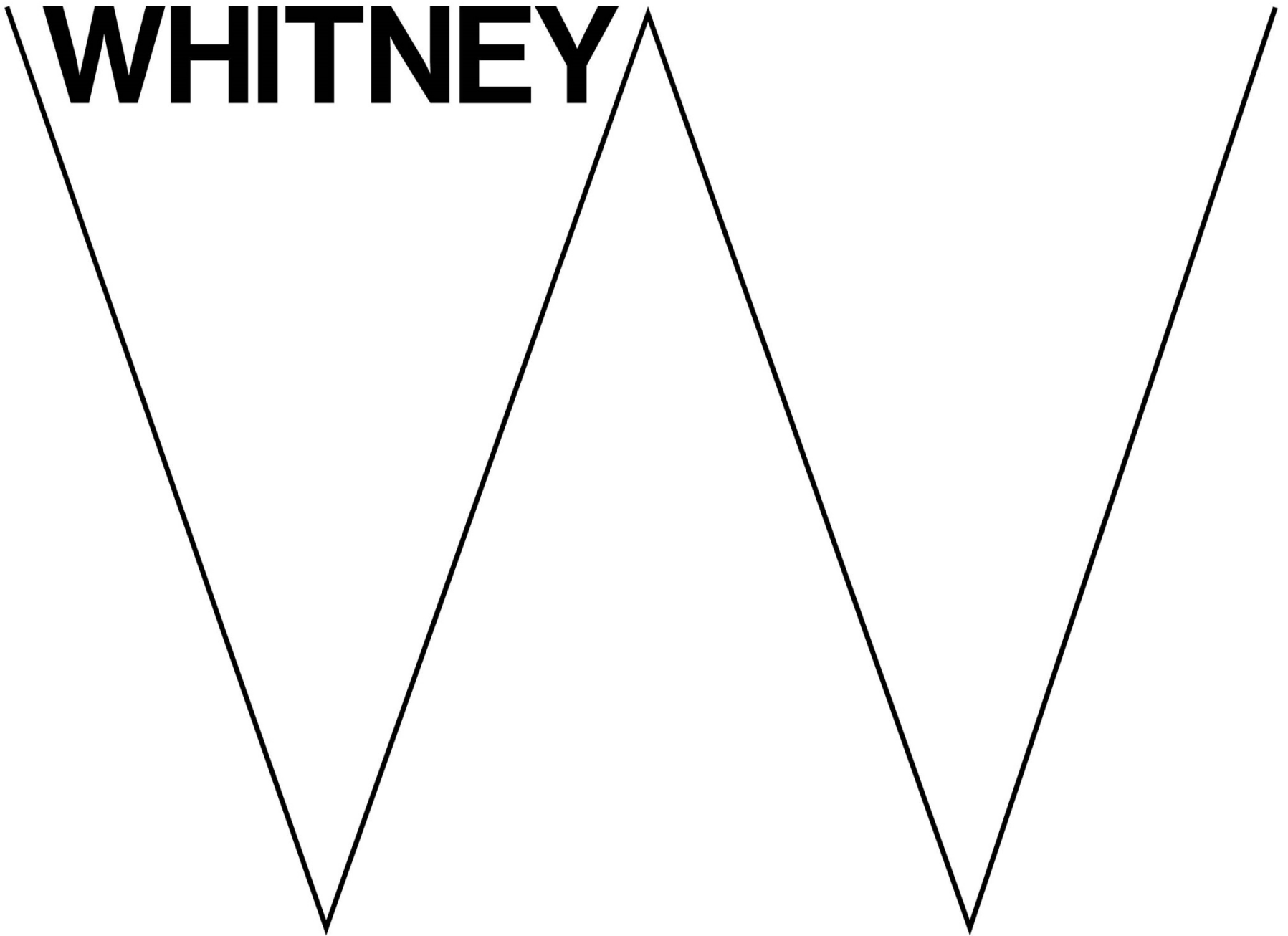


**WHITNEY**



# The Changing Face of Membership

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May 6, 2014

The last several years have yielded several major “disruptions” to the traditional museum membership model.

At the heart of these shifts seems to be the question—what does belonging mean?

In 2010, the Whitney launched an innovative new membership program called Curate Your Own Membership—responding to the changing economy and a shift in consumer expectations towards ever greater personalization.

CYO reflects the Whitney's **founding values of risk-taking and innovation**; and places the art at the center of the experience.

# The big idea

The research for Curate Your Own centered around the hypothesis that a membership program would be “stickier” if it centered around attitudinal dimensions (values, beliefs, wants, and needs) rather than around demographics.

To test this we undertook a yearlong research phase consisting of:

- Surveys of thousands of our members
- 8 focus groups
- 2 blue sky sessions with internal staff & creative professionals

# The Findings – The research confirmed our hypothesis

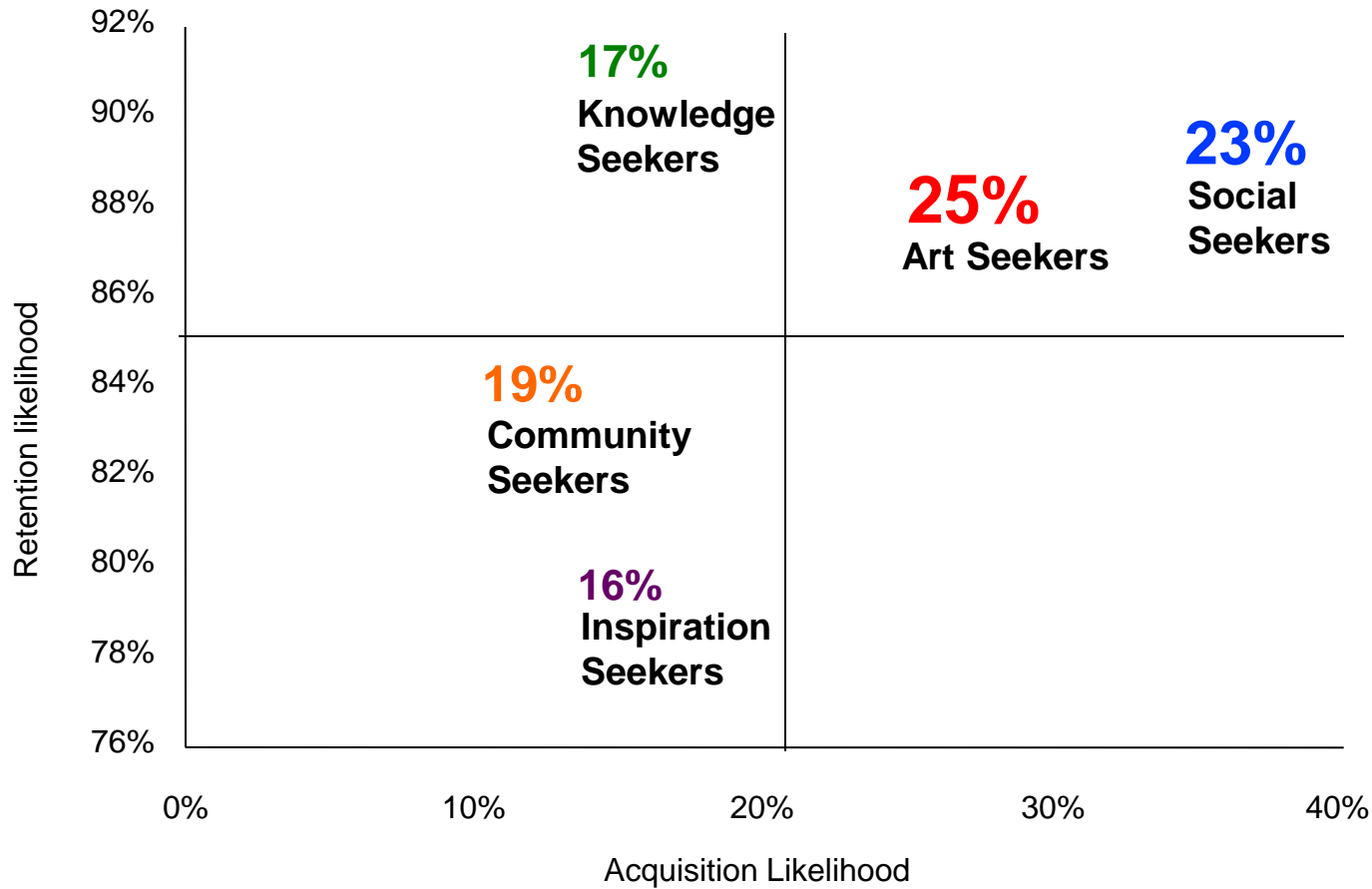
5 Attitudinal Archetypes emerged: Art Seekers, Social Seekers, Knowledge Seekers, Community Seekers, and Inspiration Seekers.

1 Demographic popped: Families.

The other demographic groups were distributed relatively evenly across the archetypes. (E.g. a Social Seeker could be 20 or 70)

# Likelihood To Join and Renew

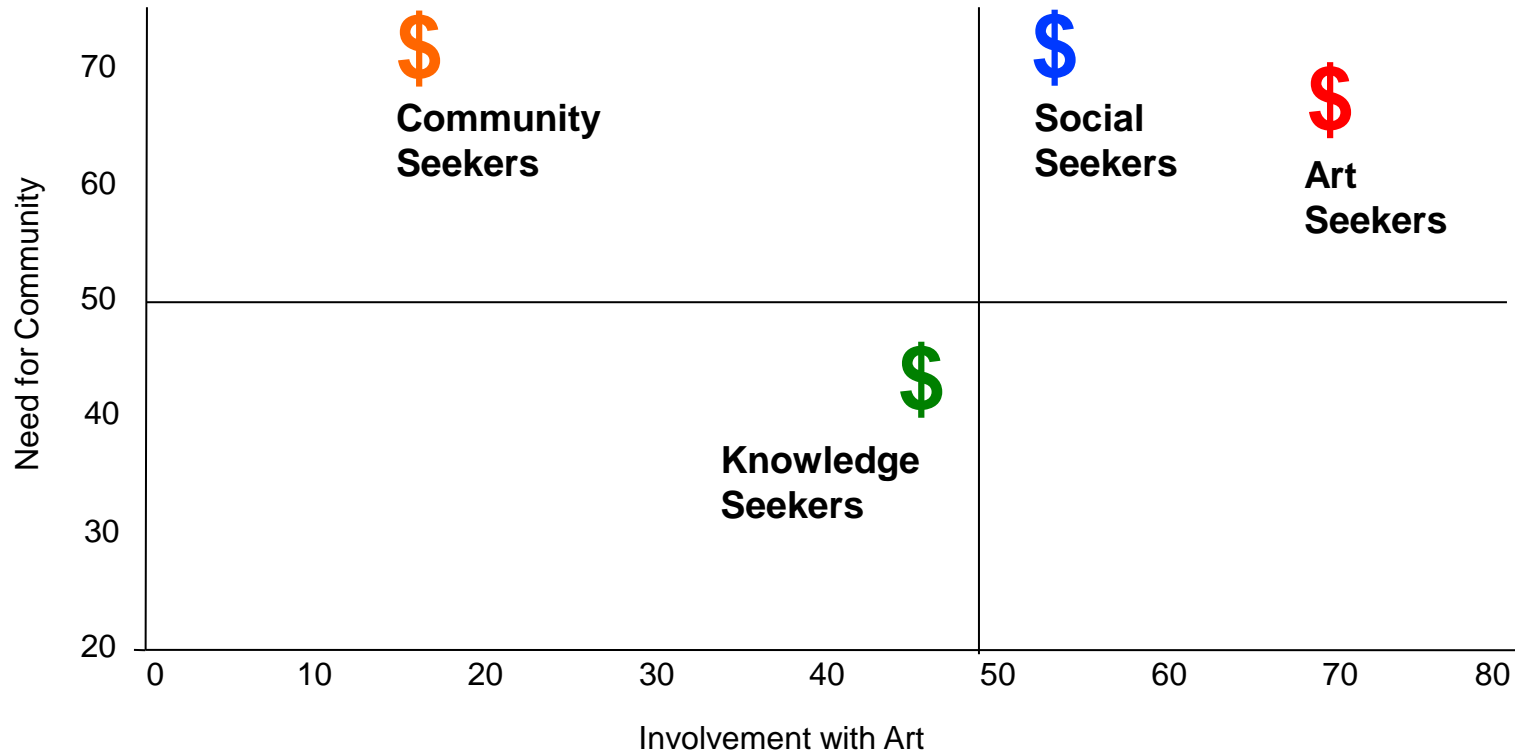
subset of value definition



Knowledge Seekers increase in attractiveness and Community Seekers decrease

## Value of Segments

most important for membership revenue



When taking value into consideration, Knowledge Seekers become more attractive  
The remaining segments maintain their positions

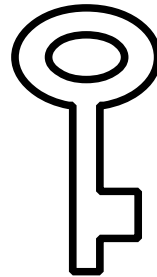
Value based on likelihood to join, renew, refer, length of membership, and % members in the past (lapsed)



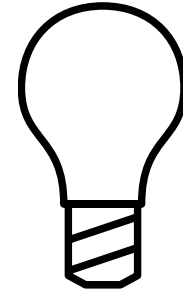
# The Program: **Curate** **Your** **Own** **Membership**



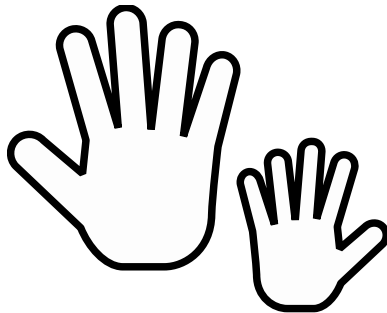
**Social**



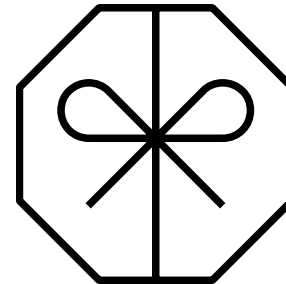
**Insider**



**Learning**



**Family**



**Philanthropy**

# The results: A stronger foundation

Curate Your Own is one strategy in an arsenal of tools to create a stronger foundation for our membership program. Through increased focus on data capture and analytics we are able to monitor the health of the program.

**Retention**—as strong across the boards as Classic; controlling for seasonal factors we find rates as much as 5% higher for mission driven Series (Learning & Insider) with high engagement rates.

**Upgrades**—CYO makes targeted and data-driven asks possible. Presently, nearly 15% of our Upper Level Members (\$250+) were once in the CYO program.

**AVG gift**—overall AVG gift of the membership program has increased substantially since 2010 from \$170 to ~\$200. CYO is a contributing factor.

**Benefits Utilization**—utilization has increased dramatically since the launch of CYO, with overall uptake nearly 50% higher.

# Things to consider

**Research**—Changes to the membership model should reflect the values of your members and your organization.

**Internal Support**—CYO was a highly collaborative effort with colleagues across the Museum. In particular, the Development Records team was an essential partner in mapping/envisioning the program within existing systems.

**Staffing**—CYO requires additional event programming and staffing. The team was restructured slightly (without growing) to focus additional resources on customer service and benefits fulfillment. Leverage, more fully, frontline sales staff for events.

**Messaging (both to new and existing members)**—strategy varied for existing and new members. Existing members were given ample time to migrate through traditional renewal structures.

# Things to consider: Scalability

With the opening of our new building in 2015, scalability is a key consideration:

## CYO

- CYO is a green membership program, making communications far more efficient & affordable
- Programs are designed to allow for multiple back-to-back sessions to accommodate as many members as possible without draining staff resources.

## Membership, in general

- Considering other possible green program elements
- Exploring existing processes on data management, including lockbox and other gift processing tools
- Conducting peer review to ensure appropriate staffing and processes for increased volume leading up to and beyond opening
- Leveraging analytics and increasing data capture to drive strategic initiatives

# Conclusion

With the opening of our new building on the horizon in spring 2015, Curate Your Own was an important strategic initiative—differentiating the Whitney’s program in a crowded marketplace, and providing added value to our members.

Most recently, we’ve launched our Founding Membership program, which leverages the CYO structure to provide an entry level opportunity to engage with unique offerings around to our new building.

CYO is one initiative among many designed to allow members to engage with the Whitney in the way that is most meaningful to them and to place art at the center of the experience.