

**FA's COMPENDIUM TO UNDERSTANDING THE IMPORTANCE OF
THE 1917 AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY-PRODUCED
"GUIDE TO THE NATURE TREASURES OF NEW YORK CITY"**

Organized by American Museum of Natural History [AMNH] President Henry Fairfield Osborne, the PREFACE in the 1917 treatise* entitled, "[*New York now offers more Free Public Education in Natural Sciences than any other city*](#)" | [GUIDE TO THE NATURE TREASURES OF NEW YORK CITY \ American Museum of Natural History : New York Aquarium : New York Zoological Park and Botanical Garden : Brooklyn Museum, Botanic Garden and Children's Museum](#)", serves as a model of accountability, as it states that its purpose was to:

"render accessible under one cover **an account of the public scientific institutions** of New York City which are **built and supported by public funds in cooperation with the benefaction and direction of individual citizens**. This **union of municipal and private endeavor** [public-private partnership] **in the cause of Public Education is unique.**"

*This 1917 "Guide" reports on only seven [7] "scientific" institutions.

In some ways, Osborne's "Guide" serves as a **first survey** of the success of [Free Public Education in Nature and Art Combined in Original Central Park and Museum Plans, 1857-1871 of Andrew H. Green, Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux,](#) published by the [Municipal Art Society, March 30, 1931](#), which envisioned for New Yorkers an open and free park education campus [PEC] as the first project of a novel public-private partnership [PPP]. In **highlighting the "Guide's" role**, Osborne **put forward a model of accountability** which was,

"to be brief enough to permit easy reading and at the same time sufficiently detailed and descriptive to give an adequate idea of the collections these institutions contain and **their importance as educational factors**".

In effect, AMNH President Osborne **sets the standard for**, and **predicts the need for**, the level of accountability New Yorkers deserve from institutions qualifying for City funding. In 2021, **FA urges our new Mayor** to [1] *actualize the facts and recommendations* contained on FA's website, [2] *to publish a 100-years-plus in-the-making sequel* to Osborne's invaluable 1917 tome and [3] *to provide a pathway* for routine accounting.**

**Stewards of the 17 PPP/PEC institutions should not be permitted to provide financial statements, IRS Form 990's and/or annual reports to comply with the 1917 "Guide" standard. Financial statements require analysis, while the 1917 "Guide" is written for "easy reading" and to succinctly set out important financial information to justify New Yorkers' leaders' investments in the PPP/PEC institutions.

Accordingly, **FA recommends that the information provided in the 1917 "Guide" be continued and expanded (see [1] to [8] below) so that each PPP/PEC institution discloses the necessary information** for a New York taxpayer and/or voter to assess the cost of the subsidies to these PPP/PEC institutions and hold elected leaders and legislators accountable for spending our tax dollars in support of the PPP/PEC institutions.

1. Evidence of a description of the governance between the “private” [institution] and the “public” [New York taxpayers through the offices and agencies of New York City] by virtue of the spirit of the PPP.
2. Evidence of the terms of New Yorkers’ right to open and free access to each PPP/PEC institution as generally set forth in state and local laws and included in the writing of conforming agreements and licenses, as examples.
3. Evidence of the facts of each PEC institution’s incorporating [or legally amended] purpose and confirmation that this purpose continues in New Yorkers’ favor in accordance with the understanding of the PPP.
4. Evidence of the amount annually budgeted out of New York taxpayer funds to subsidize the operating expenses of the PEC institutions is in accordance with the PPP.
5. Evidence of the cumulative amount [before depreciation] New York City authorizes from its Capital Expenditure Budget to be allocated to the PEC institutions for capital expansions, renovations, upgrades, as examples, and in accordance with the understanding of the PPP.
6. Evidence of the value of New Yorkers’ annual rent forgiveness provided to the PEC institutions and in accordance with the understanding of the PPP.
7. Evidence of incorporating a program (a) to officially demonstrate appreciation to the taxpayers of New York – not only City leaders, and (b) to provide for the annual publication of a form of “seal of approval” to be placed on the websites and physical signage of each PPP/PEC institution and the City’s oversight agencies, to publicly demonstrate compliance with the understanding of the PPP.
8. Evidence of the amount of dollars held through investments, endowment, and other categories of institutional non-collection assets in effect amassed because of New Yorkers’ rent forgiveness as part of the PPP.

Below, FA first highlights AMNH as the author of the 1917 “Guide” and most in compliant with the [8] “evidences”. After, the other six institutions are dissected.

The American Museum of Natural History [AMNH]

1. Compliant when adding portions of 3.
 2. Non-compliant.
 3. Compliant.
 4. Compliant.
 5. Compliant.
 6. Non-compliant.
 7. Non-compliant with (a) or (b).
 8. Non-compliant.
- The AMNH is **compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:
 1. [a] “The **Museum is under the control of a self-perpetuating Board of Trustees**, which includes the Mayor, the Comptroller, and the President of the Department of Parks, ex officio.”
[b] “This Board has the entire direction of all the activities of the Museum, as well as the guardianship of the collections and exhibits.” [p. 2 #18]

[c] "All the collections in the exhibition halls and in the study rooms are the gifts of the Trustees, Members and other friends and supporters of the institution."

[d] "The funds which enable the Trustees to purchase specimens, to carry on exploration in various part of the world, to carry on explorations in various parts of the world, to prepare and publish scientific papers and to enlarge the library are raised by contributions from the Trustees, Members and other friends. These contributions are divided into three lases: (1) the Endowment Fund, (2) the Membership Fund, (3) voluntary subscriptions. ... "[p. 2 #18]

[e] "**The Museum building is erected by the City of New York.**" [p 4 #20]

3. [a] "The American Museum of Natural History was founded and **incorporated in 1869 for the purpose** of establishing a Museum and Library of Natural history ... and to that end of furnishing popular instruction." [p 2 #18]

[b] "**In addition to** the exhibits which the Museum displays, **it maintains a Department of Public Education which cooperates with the Board of Education of the City** in a most comprehensive manner, by **supplying to the schools** lantern slides and loan collections of nature study material and by **giving lectures on** Geography, History and Natural Science at the Museum and in the schools."

[c] "**Cooperation with the public libraries and provision for the blind** are features of the Museum's work which are receiving special attention and are of more than passing . interest. Without doubt there are no children who appreciate a visit to the Museum and an opportunity to handle the specimens more than do the blind children from the public schools and the immediate vicinity. ***This policy is making the Museum a growing educational force in the community.***" [p. 132 #148]

4. "[The AMNH] is **one of the largest municipal structures in the city** and has a cost approximately **\$5,318,820.**"

5. [a] "... The City makes an annual appropriation, known as **the Maintenance Fund**, which is devote to the heating, lighting, repairing a supervising of the building, the care of the collections, the construction of cases and other maintenance work.

[b] This fund in 1915 amounted to **\$200,000**. The Trustees also contribute to the Maintenance Fund annually in the amount varying from \$50,000 to \$1000,000, inasmuch as the municipal appropriation is inadequate thoroughly to maintain the building." [p 4 #20]

Note: Wherever dollar values are provided, when adjusting for inflation in New York, the value of \$1.00 in 1917 is \$25.26 2021. [see [Inflation prices in New York, 1917-2021](#)]

- The AMNH is **non-compliant** with the 1917 "Guide" as follows:

2. [a] **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as stated in New York State and/or local laws or contracts, even as it describes its admission policy as follows: "... The museum is open free every day in the year: on week days from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., on Sundays from 1 to 5 P.M." [pp. 1-2 ##17-18] "... The Reading Room of the Library is open free daily, with the exception of Sundays and holidays, from 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., to all who may wish to consult the books." [p. 131 #147]

- With all the "evidence" requirements of 6., 7. and 8.

The New York Aquarium [NYA]

1. Compliant.
 2. Non-compliant.
 3. Non-compliant.
 4. Non-compliant.
 5. Non-compliant.
 6. Non-compliant.
 7. Non-compliant with (a) or (b).
 8. Non-compliant.
- The NYA is **compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:
 1. [a] “The New York Aquarium is the largest in the world, both as regards size of building and number and variety of specimens. ... From 1855 to 1891, the building was used as an immigration station, and **in 1896 it was opened as an aquarium by the Department of Public Parks of New York City.**”
[b] “**In 1902 its management was transferred to the New York Zoological Society**, a private scientific association which has complete control of the institution and is responsible for its status as a museum.”
[c] “**The annual maintenance fund of the Aquarium is provided by the City of New York.**”
[d] “The exhibits are provided by the New York Zoological Society.” [pp. 133-135 ## 150-151]
 - The NYA is **non-compliant** with the “Guide” as follows:
 2. **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as provided for in New York State and/or local laws or contracts even as it describes its free admission policy as follows: “The Aquarium is open free every day in the year: 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., from April to October, and 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. from November to March.” [p. 135 #151]
 - With all the “evidence” requirements of 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., and 8.

The New York Zoological Park [the Bronx Zoo | BZ]

1. Compliant.
 2. Non-compliant.
 3. Non-compliant.
 4. Non-compliant.
 5. Non-compliant.
 6. Non-compliant.
 7. Non-compliant with (a) or (b).
 8. Non-compliant.
- The BZ is **complaint** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:
 1. [a] “The **New York Zoological Park was conceived and planned by the New York Zoological Society**, a scientific body incorporated in 1895, under a special charter

granted by the Legislature of the State of New York and has as **its avowed objects** the making of **a public zoological park**, the protection of American native animals and the promotion of zoology. ... Control of the Park grounds was granted to this Society by the City of New York in 1898 and work on the permanent buildings was at once begun. ..." [p. 147 #163]

[b] **"The City of New York has erected the majority of the buildings, provided funds for the construction of walks, roads, sewers, drainage, water supply and other improvements, and also has furnished an annual maintenance fund for general upkeep."**

[c] **"The Society's funds are obtained by private subscription and from the dues and fees of its members [no admission fees]; and, by arrangement with the City of New York, the Restaurant and other revenue-producing institutions within the Park are controlled by the Zoological Society and the profits expended for the increase of the animal collections.** [p. 148 #164]

- The BZ is **non-compliant** with the 1917 "Guides" as follows:

[2] **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as provided for in New York State and/or local laws or contracts even as it describes its free admission policy as follows: "The Park is open free every day of the week except Mondays and Thursdays. On these days, except when they fall upon holidays, an admission fee of twenty-five cents is charged for each adult and fifteen cents for each child, except to members of the Society or to those holding tickets therefrom." [p. 149 #165]

- With all the "evidence" requirements of 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., and 8.

The New York Botanical Garden [NYBG]

1. Compliant.
2. Non-compliant.
3. Non-compliant.
4. Non-compliant.
5. Non-compliant.
6. Non-compliant.
7. Non-compliant with (a) or (b).
8. Non-compliant.

- NYBG is **compliant** with the 1917 "Guide" as follows:

1. While NYBG **does not** disclose the role New York City plays in the design, funding and construction of buildings or the dedication of park land, NYBG does state that it was established by 1891 Act of the Legislature of the State of New York as amended in 1894 and sites it was established "for the **purpose of establishing and maintaining a Botanical Garden and Museum and Arboretum therein ... for the entertainment, recreation and instruction of the people**" and speaks to New York City's role in governance when stating that "[p]ursuant to its Charter from the State of New York, the Garden is controlled by a corporation, from which managers are elected, and these, together with city officials and ex-officio scientific representatives of Columbia University and the President of the Torrey Botanical Club, constitute the Board of

Managers. Except for the maintenance of the driveways, which is referred to the Park Department, the control of the institution by this Board of Managers is exclusive.” [p. 177 #193]

- NYBG is **non-compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:

[2] **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as provided for in New York State and/or local laws or contracts even as it describes its free admission policy as follows: “The grounds and buildings are open free to the public every day in the year. Visitors are not allowed within the Garden after eleven o’clock at night nor before six o’clock in the morning except upon driveways and paths designated for their use between those hours.” [p. 191 #207]

- With all the “evidence” requirements of 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., and 8.

The Brooklyn Museum | Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences [BM/BIOAS]

- BM/BIOAS is **compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:

1. [a] While BM **does not** disclose the role New York City plays in the design, funding and construction of buildings or the dedication of park land, BM does state “... the present Brooklyn Museum, which was organized in 1890 and is **maintained as a public institution** under the auspices and direction of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.”

[b] “The latter is a scientific and educational institution originally incorporated in 1824 as the Brooklyn Apprentice Library Association; it was rechartered as the Brooklyn Institute in 1843, having among its avowed purposes the establishment and maintenance of Museums and Libraries of Art and Science.”

[c] “The Institute is maintained by fees of its Members, private subscriptions, **and in part by appropriation from the City.**”

[d] “The collections are provided by the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, which raises an annual fund for this purpose, supplemented by special bequests and subscriptions. [p. 193 #209]

- BM/BIOAS is **non-compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:

2. **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as provided for in New York State and/or local laws or contracts even as it describes its free admission policy as follows: “The Museum is open free on all holidays and every day in the week except Monday and Tuesdays, when a charge of twenty-five cents for adults and ten cents for children under sixteen is made. Teachers with their classes are admitted free at all times, including pay days.” [p. 195 #211]

- With all the “evidence” requirements of 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., and 8.

The Brooklyn Botanic Garden | Brooklyn Botanic Garden Corporation [BBG/BBGC]

1. Compliant.
2. Non-compliant.

3. Non-compliant.
 4. Non-compliant.
 5. Non-compliant.
 6. Non-compliant.
 7. Non-compliant with (a) or (b).
 8. Non-compliant.
- BBG/BBGC is **compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:
 1. [a] “The Brooklyn Botanic Garden was established in 1910 as a Department of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences. Its object is the advancement and diffusion of a knowledge and love of plants.” [p. 257 #273]
 [b] “The Brooklyn Botanic Garden is supported in part by municipal appropriations and in part by private funds, including income from endowment, membership dues and special contributions. **Its articulation with the City is through the Department of Parks.**”
 [c] “**The City owns the land devoted to Garden purposes, builds, lights and heats the buildings and keeps them in repair and includes in its annual tax budget an appropriation for maintenance.** A portion of the cost of the present buildings was met from private funds.” [p. 258 #274]
 [d] “By the terms of a written agreement, dated [August 17, 1914](#), between the City of New York and the Brooklyn Institute, touching the Botanic Garden, **all plants must be purchased by private funds.**”
 [e] “In addition to this, **it is the practice of the Garden to purchase** all books for the Library, all specimens for the Herbarium, all lantern slides, and other necessities, and to pay certain salaries, with private funds”. [p. 278 #274]
 - BM/BIOAS is **non-compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:
 2. **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as provided for in New York State and/or local laws or contracts even as it describes its free admission policy as follows:
 - [a] “The Garden is open free to the public daily from 8 A.M. until dark; on Sundays and holidays it opens at 10 A.M.” [p. 257 #273]
 - [b] “A docent will meet parties by appointment and conduct them through the Garden. This service is free to members of the Botanic Garden and to teachers with classes; to others a nominal charge of twenty-five cents an hour for parties of fewer than three, and ten cents a person an hour for parties of three or more.” [p. 258 #274]
 - [c] “... THE CONSERVATORIES. The Conservatories contain a selection of tropical and subtropical plants, with unusual emphasis upon those of economic importance. The Conservatories are open free to the public daily, from April 1 to September 30, 10 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., from October 1 to March 31, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. The Library, open free to the public daily for reference” [p. 263 #279]
 - a. With all the “evidence” requirements of 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., and 8.

The Brooklyn Children’s Museum [BCM]

1. Compliant.
2. Non-compliant.
3. Non-compliant.

4. Non-compliant.
5. Non-compliant.
6. Non-compliant.
7. Non-compliant with (a) or (b).
8. Non-compliant.

- BCM is **compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:

1. [a] “The Children’s Museum was established as a branch museum of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1899. Its object is to interest children in nature and to offer encouragement and practical assistance to young people engaged in nature study. [b] The Museum occupies a well-preserved mansion, **owned by the City and leased by the Brooklyn Institute for an indefinite period.** [c] Although managed and controlled by the Trustees of the Brooklyn Institute, the **Museum is supported in part by the optional annual grants from the City of New York** and in part by contributions of friends.” [p. 266 #282]

- BCM is **non-compliant** with the 1917 “Guide” as follows:

2. **Does not** provide the provisions of free admission as provided for in New York State and/or local laws or contracts even as it describes its free admission policy as follows “To this end it exhibits ... maintains a Nature Reference Library ...; conducts free courses of illustrated lectures; lends natural history specimens to schools; supplies continuous docent service,” [p. 265 #281] ... is open free every day in the year: on week days from 9 A.M. to 5:30 P.M., on Sundays from 2 to 5:30 P.M. ... [p. 266/67 #282-83]
 - a. With all the “evidence” requirements of 3., 4., 5., 6., 7., and 8.