



Mary A. van Balgooy

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Museum leader, public historian, and nonprofit executive with over 25 years of experience leading cultural organizations, professional associations, and historic sites. Proven record of working with boards, committees, and external partners to implement strategic priorities, strengthen membership engagement, and guide organizational growth.

EXPERIENCE

Engaging Places, LLC, Rockville, Maryland.

Vice President & Consultant | 2011–Present

Provide executive-level consulting to museums, historic sites, government agencies, and cultural institutions nationwide.

- Advise boards and leadership teams on strategy, governance, and financial sustainability, translating mission and vision into measurable organizational outcomes.
- Lead strategic planning, interpretive planning, and evaluation initiatives that strengthen visitor experience and institutional performance.
- Facilitate multi-stakeholder processes with boards, staff, and community partners to build alignment, capacity, and actionable plans.
- Develop frameworks and tools for decision-making and assessment, drawing on field standards and research to guide institutional practice.
- Author and present scholarship on women’s history, architectural history, and nonprofit management at museum conferences and professional forums.
- Manage multiple client engagements concurrently as an independent consultant.

Society of Woman Geographers, Washington, D.C.

Executive Director | 2014–2022

First Executive Director of an international membership organization with chapters across the United States and Europe.

Major accomplishments:

- Partnered with the Board and committees to establish mission and vision statements, revise bylaws, and strengthen governance infrastructure, including board materials, reporting processes, and a formal board manual.

A DESIGN AND STRATEGY FIRM THAT CONNECTS PEOPLE TO HISTORIC PLACES

Engaging Places LLC, 313 Twinbrook Parkway, Rockville, MD 20851-1567

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- Led the Board in adopting organizational policies and defining short- and long-term strategic priorities, including the development of a strategic plan and annual workplans for staff and board.
- Served as operational liaison to the Board and committees by coordinating agendas, briefing materials, and meeting follow-up; supported committee workplans, nominations processes, and information flow to ensure alignment, transparency, and follow-through.
- Managed a \$6 million endowment and \$400,000 annual operating and fellowship budget; modernized financial governance by centralizing accounts, formalizing fund policies, integrating legacy funds, and transitioning externally managed assets under organizational control, ensuring clear oversight and long-term stewardship.
- Directed financial operations in partnership with external contractors and commissioned an independent financial review to strengthen accountability, reporting, and board decision-making.
- Strengthened member engagement through national and international programming, including conferences, meetings, webinars, and partnerships with institutions such as the Library of Congress and government agencies.
- Led organizational communications and branding strategy, including a full website and social media redesign; expanded member programming through in-person and virtual events and social mixers, supported by coordinated digital outreach (quarterly newsletters, webinars, and online content).

Peerless Rockville Historic Preservation, Ltd., Rockville, Maryland.

Executive Director | 2008–2013

Led governance, operations, and strategic growth of a community-based preservation organization.

Major accomplishments:

- Directed the transition from founder-led operations to an independent, sustainable organization, establishing governance structures, strategic priorities, and long-term capacity.
- Supported Board and committee operations by coordinating meeting materials, facilitating information flow, and providing timely reporting to support governance, fundraising, and program decisions.
- Managed a \$200,000 annual budget and strengthened financial oversight through formal review processes, improved reporting systems, and successful grant and donor development, providing the board with clear financial analysis to support decision-making.
- Fostered partnerships with local and state stakeholders while overseeing historic sites and public programming to expand organizational visibility and community engagement.



RELATED EXPERIENCE

Belmont-Paul Women’s Equality National Monument (Formerly known as the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum), Washington, D.C.

Museum Consultant | 2002–2011

Major accomplishments include leading the development of a 10-year master architectural plan and securing major federal funding, including a \$1 million grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Supreme Court of the United States, Washington, D.C.

Collections Manager | 2002–2008

Major accomplishments include collaborating with the Smithsonian American Art Museum on judicial displays, developing both a collections policy and disaster response plan, and facilitating the development of a mission statement for the Office of the Curator.

Riverside County Regional Park and Open-Space District, Riverside, California.

Historic Preservation Officer | 2001

Major accomplishments include developing a comprehensive 10-year strategic plan for a historic site, coordinating input from elected officials, staff, community stakeholders, and outside museum professionals to guide long-term preservation and use.

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden, Claremont, California.

Manager of Community Education Programs | 1999–2001

Major accomplishments include planning and executing a three-day international symposium bringing together academic professionals, graduate students, donors, and the public, coordinating both on-site and off-site programming.

The Peter F. Drucker Archives, Claremont, California.

Associate Archivist | 1999

Major accomplishments include developing institutional guidelines for the acquisition and accessioning of Peter F. Drucker’s professional papers and publications, establishing a framework for long-term archival stewardship.

Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, City of Industry, California.

Public Programs Manager (final title) | 1991–1998

Major accomplishments include developing and implementing a comprehensive marketing plan and expanding public programming, increasing special event attendance by 30 percent, and



leading the revision of the award-winning “A Journey Through Time” fourth-grade curriculum, strengthening its alignment with state standards and museum-based learning.

PUBLICATIONS

Published a wide range of articles, biographies, guides, manuals, and reviews on women’s history, architectural history, and nonprofit management.

Representative samples:

- “Unwrapping the History of Christmas: The Women Who Redefined a Holiday,” in *Interpreting Christmas at Museums and Historic Sites* (2024).
- “Interpreting Women’s Lives at Historic House Museums” in *Reimagining Historic House Museums* (2019).
- “Before LA: Cliff May’s Beginnings in San Diego,” *Journal of San Diego History* (2011).
- “Designer of the Dream: Cliff May and the California Ranch House,” *Southern California Quarterly* (2004) – Doyce B. Nunis, Jr. Award.
- “Putting Women in Their Place,” *Preservation Forum Journal* (2004).

PRESENTATIONS

Speaker, panelist, and moderator for a broad range of museum-related topics including collections management, education, interpretation, and preservation for regional and national professional organizations such as the American Association for State and Local History, American Alliance of Museums, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Organization of American Historians, and Virginia Association of Museums.

Recent highlights:

- Interview, National Public Radio Marketplace, “How Ranch-Style Homes Helped Build the American Dream” (2024).
- Presenter, “A Woman Built This: Place-Based Evidence of Female Crisis Management,” Organization of American Historians (2023).
- Panelist, “Navigating Challenges in Historic House Museums,” Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums (2019).
- Panelist, “Different Approaches to Interpreting LGBTQ, Race, and Women’s Issues at Historic Sites,” American Association for State and Local History (2019).

PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE

- President, Twinbrook Citizens Association (2022–Present).



- Secretary, Zonta Club of Washington, D.C. (2023–Present).
- Treasurer, Friends of (Maryland Delegate) Julie Palakovich Carr (2019–2023).
- Collections Management Peer Reviewer, Museum Assessment Program, American Alliance of Museums (2005–2014).

EDUCATION

Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, California. M.A., History. 2001.

University of California, Irvine, Irvine, California. B.A., History. 1989.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

American Alliance of Museums, American Association for State and Local History, International Council of Museums, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, National Collaborative for Women’s History Sites, and Organization of American Historians.