



Preventing the Invisibility of Small Museums in this AI World

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Hi, I am Courtney OCallaghan - Director of Product at Museable. My talk is **Preventing the Invisibility of Small Museums in this AI World.**

This talk is a little different than the others you've seen as the information I am about to share is likely a bit basic for this audience. So why am I here? First to remind you that not every Library, Archive, or Museum knows this basic information and second to ask you all who do work with affiliates, or volunteer your time, or generally love and visit these places to share this information.

~~Ask Google what museum is open today~~

“My family is in town, where will 3 adults and a toddler be happy for an hour?”



There was a time when finding a place to go OR answering an academic query meant reading a book.

In 1998, we began to answer our questions via the search engine.

In 2006, Googling was added as a verb in the dictionary.

And until 2 years ago, search meant skimming the first 10-20 results for what we thought looked like the best answer to our question.

| What should I do today?

64% of people ask AI for suggestions on local activities and attractions

| I need a lesson plan

77% of faculty use AI to assist teaching such as preparing course materials, outlining modules, and structuring lectures

| Explain it to me

54% of high school students and 57% of college students use AI tools on a weekly basis

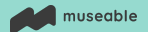


Now, a google search leads to a summary of the top choices as decided by AI. It will not automatically include a robust list of 10-20 options but instead will choose a select few from sources it considers the most liked and most trusted.

A Pew study found that users were twice as likely to leave a search page without clicking on anything if there was an AI summary or overview.

In other words, large swaths of the population have changed the way they look for information in this world and those who are not chosen by AI will begin to disappear.

is AI using you as a source?



Is AI using you as a source? And if not, do you understand what it takes to become a trusted AND visible source?

I am not talking about the places in this room whose names are part of our cultural vocabulary. I am talking about that hyper-local heritage museum that might have the best selection of amish family quilts or tools used by the town's women in the dust bowl or first-hand accounts from a local family's sons coming home from war.

I AM VISIBLE



So let's start by talking about how to be visible.

Sharing your Information

- All images have useful alt text
- Strict Heading hierarchy
- Essential information easy to find
- No inaccessible pdfs or images of text
- Files have real names
- Descriptive links



Being visible to AI requires a lot of the same basic website tweaks that a small organization could and should do to be more accessible. Sometimes the very boring best practices are called best practices for a reason.

- Images should have descriptive alt text.
- Headings should be logical and follow a strict hierarchy.
- Essential information should live on your site in a web page, not an iframe or inaccessible pdf.
- Images and files should have real names.
- Links should actively describe where they are going or what they are doing (and not say click here)

I AM TRUSTED



Next, you need to be trusted. Being trusted has to do with the information you share and who you are as an entity.

Sharing Knowledge

- Vital Information (name, hours, address)
- Institutional Authority & Attribution
- “Skim, Swim, Dive” content - short, medium, long articles on topics
- Implement proper schema markup
- Share what you do well



- Add your hours and events and FAQs to your site.
- List your staff and their credentials.
- Publish scholarly articles of varying lengths. Reference these staff and their credentials in these articles and anything else they write for you.
- Use schema markup. There is specific schema for businesses, and museums.
- Brag about what you have and why you are amazing, use objects and images and details.

I KNOW PEOPLE !



Last, look like you belong. Like most of us, AI is more likely to recommend something or someone that others' also talk about.

Other People Find me Relevant

- Make sure your exact business name, address, and phone number are written identically on your website, your Google Business Profile, Apple Maps, and local tourism boards.
- Make sure you are listed in review sites, directories, industry publications, and forums
- Make sure you have a basic, accurate Wikipedia entry that links directly back to your official website.



- Make sure your information is correct in google and apple and wikipedia.
- Mentioned by the city or Chamber of Commerce? Sure!
- City or state museum association listings? Yes!
- AND If your vital information changes, update it on these sites!



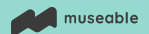
Finally, you out there! Help a LAM out. When you visit a one of these places, you can check apple and google and recommend changes to businesses that are missing vital information. You can make or update a wikipedia page. You can add images of the outside or inside of the location. You can be creative.



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Let's do what we can to make sure our smaller sibling organizations continue to have a seat at the online table.

The QR code leads to the short website checklist for AI visibility and trust.
<https://museable.com/ai4lam2026/>

Thank you!