



*Dispatches from the Future of Museums* is a free, weekly e-newsletter from the American Alliance of Museums' Center for the Future of Museums. Each edition shares a few recent news stories illuminating trends and events shaping society, technology, economics, the environment, and policy today. Fuel your museum's strategic foresight by thinking about the implications of these "signals," and the kinds of future they might create.

This **special edition** highlights some recent stories related to trends and events affecting museums and communities in Tennessee.

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**Humanities Tennessee** would like to thank Elizabeth Merritt for this special edition which is a helpful resource for all Tennessee organizations, and especially for those who plan to attend one of the Strategic Foresight Workshops in Memphis, Nashville, or Knoxville in August 2024. Please visit HT's website to register by Monday, July 15, 2024. Space is limited.

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## Trends

### [Unemployment in Tennessee Drops to a New Record Low in May](#)

Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development, 6-20-24

Tennessee marked a milestone in May when the statewide unemployment rate dropped to a historic low level and set a record, according to the Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD). The rate decreased by 0.1 of a percentage point between April and May to 3% and made history by besting any jobless number since the Federal Government began tracking the statistic in 1976. The state's unemployment

rate dipped to the previous all-time low of 3.1% in April 2024 after first reaching that record level one year earlier. The rate held steady at 3.1% for three consecutive months in 2023. The record-setting low unemployment was coupled with continued job growth across the state.

Go deeper: According to AAM's annual [National Snapshot of US Museums](#), as of spring 2023, 60 percent of museums were having trouble filling open positions, primarily among front-line roles. How might record low unemployment affect the ability of your organization to recruit and retain frontline staff? How might you compete in a tight labor market?

### **[Banned Together: How Book Censorship Is Affecting Tennessee](#)**

Nashville Scene, April 25, 2024

Tennessee is at the national forefront of book challenges and book bannings. Many book challenges are driven by claims that educators and librarians are trying to "indoctrinate" children by providing access to texts that depict violence, sexual themes or difficult truths about history. Librarians in Tennessee have been threatened and compared to pedophiles, facing claims from far-right activists that they distribute obscene materials in libraries. Censorship and book challenges have been encouraged in recent years by several Tennessee lawmakers. The effect echoes that of a similar law, passed in 2021, that prevents schools from teaching certain concepts related to race and sex, [making] some educators hesitant about teaching some elements of American history. One Tipton County school, for example, stopped taking field trips to Memphis' National Civil Rights Museum after the law passed.

Go deeper: how might censorship and book challenges affect what teachers, and parents, need or expect from school visits and museum programs? Might it fuel greater demand for content not being covered in the classroom, or have a chilling effect on what museums themselves can present?

### **Projections**

#### **[Climate change has made '100-year storms' four times more likely in Nashville](#)**

WPLN News, Nashville, July 20, 2023

In Nashville, the probability for "100-year" storms, or storms with a 1% chance of happening in a given year, are four times higher than federal projections, according to a new study by First Street Foundation. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration calculates precipitation risks for communities by estimating the expected intensity, duration and frequency of rainfall events. For Nashville, NOAA has estimated

that 3.2 inches of rain could fall in one hour during a 100-year storm event. The new study revises that estimate to 3.7 inches, or a 15% increase per hour. In 2021, nearly 21 inches of rain fell in the small town of McEwen and contributed to deadly flooding downstream in Waverly. This Tennessee storm set the national record for the heaviest 24-hour downpour in a non-coastal state. A 1,000-year rainfall event is defined as a storm that has a 0.1% chance of happening in a given year. For a single day timeframe, the McEwen rain was nearly double what would be expected in a 1,000-year event.

Go deeper: study the [climate change risk ratings for Tennessee](#) and use the new [Climate Resilience Resources for Culture Heritage](#) to explore your communities climate risks in more depth, and create a resilience strategy for your organization.

## **Tools for the Future**

### **[See How Tennessee Tourism Turned Concertgoers' Brain Waves Into Travel Recs](#)**

BizBash, 5-30-2024

The Tennessee Department of Tourist Development recently tried to strike a chord with concertgoers by offering a unique immersive experience that combined tunes and tech. "Sound Advice," [is] a custom sensory experience [that] leverages electroencephalogram (EEG) technology to measure consumers' subconscious affinity toward Tennessee destinations based on their respective sounds. Concertgoers stepped inside one of two booths at select tour stops, where they heard authentic sounds and songs from across Tennessee. For example: the melodies of Graceland and the Grand Ole Opry; the roar of a waterfall and whirl of a roller coaster from Dollywood; and the buzzes of zip-lining near Knoxville. Using a research-grade EEG headband, the fans' brain activity was measured to determine which sounds resonated most with them. The concept is similar to an [activation from 2021](#) which measured attendees' reactions to a sculpture using an electroencephalogram.

Go deeper: Several museums have deployed sound as an element of design, from commissioning musical works interpreting the building ([MSCTY x V&A Dundee](#)), hosting immersive sound installations ([Peabody Essex Museum](#), Bernie Krause's Great Animal Orchestra) or hosting musicians in residence ([Brooklyn Museum](#), composer Niles Luther). What is the "soundscape" of your site, and how might it be tweaked to enhance the visitor experience?

## Research

### [Linking Mental Health and Education to Give Tennessee Kids a Healthier Future](#)

The74, 6-17-24

Tennessee faces [a] wakeup call: the youth mental health crisis. Worsened by the pandemic and exacerbated by social media, this demands urgent attention. The latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found more than 4 in 10 (42%) high school students reported feeling persistently sad or hopeless and nearly one-third (29%) experienced poor mental health. More than 1 in 5 students (22%) seriously considered suicide in 2021. Recently the nonpartisan, nonprofit organization Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) and NashvilleHealth held a symposium to begin the hard work of addressing the student mental health crisis.

Go deeper: download a free copy of CFM's [\*TrendsWatch: Museums as Community Infrastructure\*](#), which includes an exploration of how museums are contributing to the network of support needed to foster mental wellbeing.

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