Virtual Tour Tips and Tricks
Docent Tips compiled by Ginny Wheeler

A special thanks to Lynn Dunlap, Jim Allen, Emily Shapiro, and Kay Miller for sharing their meticulous notes to help us docents with our virtual tours.

Planning Tips:

1. Write out your introduction, comments, conclusion, and transitions just as you would say them if you were giving a tour in person. Put them in front of you to read or to jog your memory as you present your tour.
2. Include time at the beginning of your tour to create a conversational tone with an open-ended question about the topic or book. This will set the tone for the rest of your tour.
3. Developing a theme is more essential than ever. Use an introductory slide with a heading and a brief description of your theme. Consider repeating your theme heading to introduce each new object slide to reinforce your theme. (See Ginny Wheeler's tour "Island of Sea Women Book Tour" for an example.)
4. Transitions can be used with greater certainty and effectiveness; after all, you won't have to worry about another docent using your next object. Transitions also fill in lag time between slides. Start your transition just as you hit the arrow button to move to the next slide. By the time you finish, the next slide should be up and ready to go.
5. Using props has never been easier. Everyone has a front row seat to your props. If you capture a picture from your computer, capture the website source at the same time so that you don't have to go back and hunt it down later when you put your slides together. All you need for your source is the website: i.e. "Wikipedia.org."
6. Take advantage of the benefits of virtual tours.
    *   Emily Shapiro found it easier to examine artworks in greater detail using Google slide technology to focus in closely on certain details and to look at different parts of the artwork simultaneously.
    *   You have a greater ability to compare different art works and artists to one another by showing two (or more) artworks on a single slide and by "borrowing" artworks from all over the world.
    *   You can return to an earlier art object on your tour by duplicating it on a later slide to make deeper connections and foster additional conversation in the context of the later artworks on your tour.
7. Take advantage of art from other museums. Lynn Dunlap used an image of an object from another museum and then included an image of a Mia object by the same artist along with the gallery number to encourage visitors to visit Mia to look for similarities.
8. Call on your docent network for help.
    *   Walk through your first tour with an experienced Zoom docent or your cohost.
    *   Give a practice tour with a few docents or friends.
    *   Ask a fellow docent to follow your first tour to give you feedback.
9. Consider including an at-home activity idea. (See Terry Edam's tour "A View from My Window" for ideas on how to incorporate activities into your tour.)
10. Consider a still picture as a backdrop. Fran Megarry uses a picture of Mia. What a perfect way to begin: "Welcome to Mia."

Google Slide Tips:

1. Before you begin to work with the Google slides template provided for you, create the text for each slide. Organize your photographs with the required Mia label or website source. This will save time as you create your slides.

2. Every Mia object needs to be identified one time: artist, title, year, materials, and accession number. You may want to identify the art object after first discussing it. Simply duplicate your slide and add the identification to the subsequent slide.
3. Every prop needs an attribution, for example, "Wikipedia.org."
4. Use a text slide for the introduction and conclusion.
5. Keep slides simple. Use only one question/comment/quote per object slide.
6. If you have two or more questions for the same object, duplicate the slide and then replace the first question with your next question. This will keep the image from jumping around when you move from slide to slide.
7. When using a close-up, consider including an image of the art object on the same slide with the close-up.
8. Sculptures and other three-dimensional objects can be enhanced by incorporating multiple views. 3D models of some Mia objects, like the *Doryphoros*, can be found on Sketchfab.

Touring Tips:

1. Practice using Zoom in the presentation mode ahead of time to become comfortable with every aspect of presenting a live tour. Be familiar with all the buttons.
2. Limit your tour to two cohosts to avoid technical problems. Decide before hand who will manage the slides, the waiting room, the chats, the raised hands, and so forth.
3. Silence your home before you begin. Dogs, leaf blowers, and cell phones can be distracting.
4. Be patient with silence. Wait time is critical as there is a lag time between speaking and hearing with Zoom. Count to 3!
5. If there are no responses to your initial question, have back-up, open-ended questions ready, like "Any comments or questions?"
6. If you are using a computer, use your mouse as a pointer. You may also use your arrow keys to move from slide to slide.
7. For group responses, try using chat. Have your cohost read the chats and then you can choose one to open the discussion.
8. For school groups, use group responses like "Thumbs up." You might also build in a time for the students to move about by posing like an object.
9. On school tours, use the classroom management techniques for student responses the teacher has been using to engage the students. One teacher assigned students to speak on a rotation basis, another used chat, another used the raised hand button. Students are already familiar with and comfortable with their own teacher's Zoom management, so use it.
10. Since you can see participants' names on the screen, call them by name. This will personalize the tour. To do this, you will need to leave at least one Zoom box open on your presentation slide.
11. The size of an object is not apparent unless you explicitly point it out. Find easy comparisons, such as "as small as an acorn."
12. Describe what can't be seen on a computer screen: size, texture, gallery, details.
13. Virtual tours inhibit natural interaction among the tour participants. To foster interaction, acknowledge their comments to show active listening. "Thank you for sharing." "Yes." "I like your word 'exhilarating'." Then follow up with another question for the group. These kinds of responses will deepen connections among the participants and at the same time encourage comments from others.
14. Time management is challenging because your slides are already prepared. Emily Shapiro found that participants were more willing to respond later in the tour, so consider allowing more time for discussion at the end of your tour. One of the advantages of virtual tours, of course, is that we don't have to build in time to walk through the galleries.
15. Have a copy of your slides with their page numbers in front of you because once you are in presentation mode, the slides are identified by page numbers. Ginny Wheeler found it helpful to see an image of the slide in her notes and keep some of the Hollywood Squares

on her screen so that she could see the participants who were talking. This way, if the squares covered some of the text, she had a copy right in front of her.

16. Unexpected technical glitches may happen during one of your tours. Have a "plan B" on hand just in case. Perhaps it is a pdf file of your tour or instructions for what to do if you are disconnected.

17. At the end of your tour, ask your participants if they have any further comments or questions or even suggestions. "Do you have any last thoughts that you'd like to share before we adjourn?"

18. Jim Allen summed up his advice to anyone giving virtual tours for the first time the best: relax, keep smiling, try not to go too fast, and enjoy yourself.