

Madeleine Kenney

Abstract: National Museums in France and the U.S. after the 2008 Economic Crisis

April 2015

France and the United States have long traditions of federally-funded national museums. As government and public entities, these museums rely in large part on government support to operate. How, then, do these national museums fare in the face of serious recession, such as the Great Recession of 2008? Using government publications and publicly available information about the operations of these museums, museum trends from 2007 -2013 (the years before, during, and after the Great Recession) were analyzed in order to discover how these non-profit, government-supported organizations were able to weather the most serious financial downturn since the Great Depression. Because of previous efforts to become less reliant on government support and to diversify funding sources, the Smithsonian Institution of the United States and the Musée d'Orsay, Centre Georges Pompidou, and Louvre of France were able to continue to operate nearly as before, with no interruption of service. Both sets of national museums diversified their funding sources by creating endowments, negotiating for corporate donors and sponsorships, creating on site business ventures (gift shops, rents, publications) and by attempting to diversify and attract new audiences as well.