



# DENVER MUSEUM OF NATURE & SCIENCE



2007 Enactor Program Evaluation:

A summary of quantitative and qualitative results

Kathleen Tinworth. Manager of Visitor Research and Program Evaluation. Denver Museum of Nature and Science. 2008.

***The Denver Museum of Nature and Science—who will you meet? What a hook!***

-DMNS enactor

***It gives you more memory. That's something you're going to remember when you leave here. You're going to go, "Remember when we first walked in and there was that lady passenger from first class?"***

-Adult female visitor

***I think it enriched the whole experience.***

-Adult male visitor

***Let's make it human.***

-DMNS enactor



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## Executive Summary

This study was designed to assess qualitative and quantitative impacts that the enactor program has on visitor experience at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS), using two temporary exhibitions (*Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World* and *Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition*) as examples. Of interest was capturing the unique visitor experience that enactors provide by combining visitor engagement, education and interaction. In turn, this affords opportunities to better consider enactor and/or theater-based programming for other areas of the Museum (temporary and permanent) in the future.

Six main goals/hypotheses of the enactor program were studied, as they help to define the unique experience provided by enactors:

- 1) The enactor program gets visitors' attention and supplies a framework for engaging in powerful and unique ways.
- 2) Interaction with enactors provides opportunities for visitors to make connections with people from the past in a way that is both personal and meaningful.
- 3) Interaction with enactors brings context to exhibit areas and objects through personal narratives, interactive stories and/or object use.
- 4) Interaction with enactors enriches the visitors' understanding of the themes, concepts and content of exhibits.
- 5) Interaction with enactors enables opportunities for visitors to engage in two modes of discussion-- with historical context and/or infused with modern sensibilities.
- 6) Interactions with enactors are open-ended, allowing visitors to choose their level of involvement and direct the content of the conversation, creating a personal and relevant experience.

The study protocol included two populations: visitors and enactors. Three separate methodologies were utilized to assess the visitor experience as it relates to the enactor program—surveys, focus groups, and observation (including a timing study)—while four methodologies were used to assess the enactor experience, as they have an insider's view not easily attained through other sources—observation, interviews, a focus group, and anecdotal



***This study was designed to assess qualitative and quantitative impacts that the enactor program has on visitor experience at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS), using two temporary exhibitions (Franklin and Titanic) as examples.***

reporting/logs. The study was interested in examining the enactors' read of visitors and how the program changed and adapted accordingly, as this could be of use to both current and future programming. For similar reasons, a comparison of the views and perceptions of the enactors to that of the visitors was conducted, looking for areas of overlap as well as departure.

Five-hundred and six (506) adult visitors to *Titanic* completed an anonymous questionnaire upon exiting the exhibition (an *exit survey*). Eleven of these visitors also took part in a focus group with their family and/or group. Many interesting outcomes were obtained through the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Key findings are noted below.

- For many of the analyses, visitors with different levels of interaction were compared and contrasted: those who interacted personally with enactors (direct), those who observed an interaction (indirect), and those with no enactor interaction. In some cases, these categories were combined into two groups: those with some interaction (direct or indirect) and those with no interaction. This level of analysis revealed a significant difference on the factor of "Connected to the objects and artifacts of Titanic," with those visitors who had either direct or indirect interaction with an enactor ranking their level of connection following the exhibition significantly higher<sup>1</sup> on average (mean: 3.57) than those with no interaction (mean: 3.45).
- While not significant from a statistical point of view, higher average scores were obtained from the group with direct interaction with enactors on factors such as "Informed/knowledgeable about women's suffrage/ women's rights" and "Informed/knowledgeable about economic, social and class issues." This corresponds with both the focus group and interviews with enactors and the observational data in this study, pointing to those elements as topics often covered in conversations with visitors.

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<sup>1</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t=-2.255$ ,  $df= 486$ ,  $\text{sign. (2-tailed)}=.025$ .

***The study was interested in examining the enactors' read of visitors and how the program changed and adapted accordingly, as this could be of use to both current and future programming.***



- The majority of visitors surveyed (70%, n=245/351) felt that using actors<sup>2</sup> in the Museum was a *great idea*. Almost all visitors (98%) either responded that they felt using actors in the Museum was either a “great idea” or a “good idea”, with less than one percent responding that it was a “bad idea”.
- Those who interacted directly with an enactor were significantly more likely<sup>3</sup> than those with indirect interaction or those with no interaction to rate using actors in the Museum as a “great idea”. Those who observed enactors, yet did not have the personalized interaction, also were significantly more likely to indicate that using actors in the Museum is a “great idea” when compared to visitors with no interaction.

This may support the qualitative data provided by enactors in their group and individual interviews, as well as the observational data gathered by shadowing the enactors, that both those who have a one-on-one, personalized experience with an enactor as well as those who watch but do not directly interact find the experience impactful and worthwhile.

- Of the visitors who did not speak with an enactor, the majority indicated that they observed someone else speaking to an enactor (42%, n= 103/246). Just over a third (33%, n=82/246) who didn’t speak with an enactor indicated that they did not see or notice the enactors in the exhibition. It was infrequent for visitors who did not interact with an enactor to list “It’s not something I would do/Not interested” or “It seemed embarrassing/weird” as the reason for not interacting with an enactor (5% and 2%, respectively).

These findings may provide insight into the motivations of those who do not directly interact with enactors. They may also support the anecdotal and qualitative impressions of the enactors, who feel that even those who do not choose to interact

<sup>2</sup> The terms “actor” and “enactor” are both used within the report. “Actor” was used with visitors exclusively, as preliminary research with DMNS visitors indicated the word “enactor” was unknown to them; however, the Museum uses “enactor” internally.

<sup>3</sup> Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA):  $f=13.972$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $sign. =.000$ .



***... both those who have a one-on-one, personalized experience with an enactor as well as those who watch but do not directly interact find the experience impactful and worthwhile.***



directly may still benefit from the presence of the enactors in the Museum. Finally, these findings indicate that it is rare that visitors are intimidated by or not interested in the enactors, but rather there are varying reasons for and levels of interacting including simply not seeing the enactors<sup>4</sup>.

- The direct interaction group was significantly more likely<sup>5</sup> to have visited DMNS before.

These variations in visitor demographics between interaction groups may support the idea that repeat visitors are more likely to engage with enactors and such secondary hypotheses warrant further examination in future studies of the enactor program.

- It was significantly more common<sup>6</sup> for those in the direct and indirect interaction groups to have seen actors before, either at DMNS or in another museum.

This may be indicative of a priming affect, in that past interactions better prepare the visitor for the experience they may have with an enactor in the present exhibition.

- Equal variances in both groups assumed, time spent by those in the exhibition who spoke with an enactor was significantly greater<sup>7</sup> than that spent by those who did not speak with an enactor, indicating a statistically increased likelihood of a visitor spending longer in the exhibition if he or she had enactor interaction.

This result may have several implications, including that which has been noted by the enactors themselves—those who have a personal interaction with an enactor may

***...time spent by those who spoke with an enactor is a significantly greater amount of time than that spent by those who did not speak with an enactor...***



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<sup>4</sup> Titanic schedule: Sun-Thurs 9AM-5PM; Fri/Sat 9AM-9PM. Titanic *enactor* schedule: Mon-Thurs: 1 enactor, 10AM-4PM; Fri/Sat: 3 enactors, 9:30AM-3:30PM, 10AM-4PM, 2:30PM-8:30PM; Sun: 2 enactors, 10AM-4PM, 11AM-5PM. Also, as the random sample from the enactor study indicates, approximately 60% of all visitors *did* see/notice an enactor in the exhibition.

<sup>5</sup> Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA):  $f=4.337$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $sign. =.014$ .

<sup>6</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t=-2.768$ ,  $df= 493$ ,  $sign. (2-tailed)=.006$ .

<sup>7</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t=3.278$ ,  $df= 98$ ,  $sign. (2-tailed)=.001$ .

connect at a deeper level with the themes, concepts and content of the exhibition, perhaps due to the enriched powerful, personal and unique opportunities intrinsic to the experience. This may lead to greater time spent inside the exhibition (*dwelltime*).<sup>8</sup>

- In terms of visitor comments and observations within the focus groups, outcomes were particularly notable in that they mirrored the intentions and goals identified by the program coordinators (in their departmental plan) and the enactors (as made apparent in the enactor interviews and focus group). There was great overlap and consistency between these distinct populations.
- Twenty-seven (82%) of those who responded to the *online survey* either spoke to or observed an enactor, which is a 21% higher than the overall percentage of exit survey-takers who interacted with an enactor. Similarly, 79% (26 individuals) of those who completed the online survey had told friends and family about the enactors since their visit. Seventy percent of the online survey respondents felt that using enactors in the Museum was a “great idea”, followed by another 27% believing it was a “good idea”. No respondent indicated that they felt it was a “bad idea”.

The above highlighted outcomes demonstrate that the *Titanic* exhibition as a case study provides resounding support for the original 6 main goals/hypotheses of the enactor program, outlined at the beginning of the study to help define the unique experience believed to be provided by enactors.

*Franklin*, though it did not undergo a specific evaluation, can be informative in contrast to *Titanic*. *Franklin* provided an opportunity to go outside of the exhibition and into diverse areas of the Museum to reach audiences and visitors. This allowed not only for a broader audience (especially in terms of age range), but also allowed for the opportunity for *visitors* to function

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<sup>8</sup> The reverse hypothesis was examined, i.e. Were those who spent longer in the exhibition more likely to speak with an enactor? The results were not statistically significant, indicating that it is the interaction which leads to greater time spent in the exhibition, rather than greater time in the exhibition leading to interaction with an enactor.

***...the Titanic exhibition as a case study provides resounding support for the original 6 main goals/hypotheses of the enactor program...***





as teachers and educators to characters from another time (the enactors). The *Titanic* case study highlighted the views of many visitors that enactment could be used anywhere in the Museum as a vehicle for entertainment, education and interaction. *Franklin* was an example of this in practice.

The program coordinators, enactors and DMNS visitors alike have a variety of ideas about where the enactor program can and should go in the future, many which have been presented in the executive summary above. The study shows that the program is successful in meeting its objective and goals. The enactor program is also highly regarded both by visitors and those who work within the program. The proceeding summary also illustrates that future support and expansion of the enactor program would be supported not only by those within the program, but also appreciated by DMNS' adult, child and family audiences. The full report provides commentary on programmatic "next steps," particularly in terms program awareness, program resources and program expansion.

### Thanks

Thanks to the program coordinators within the DMNS enactor program, especially Jennifer Moss-Logan, and the enactors, the staff and volunteers working in and around the *Titanic* exhibition, and the research assistants: Ashante Butcher, Dina Chaiffetz, Melody Combs, Lynn DiLorenzo, Chris Estock, Ruth Franceschi, Sarah Franceschi, Kirsten Lawrence-Carrizo, Tammy Rudolph, Stephanie Skiles, Autumn Souza, Lisa Steed, Jaime Travis, Detria Walker and Tamara Williams. For assistance in writing and editing, thanks to Joe Verrengia. Finally, thanks to all the visitors at DMNS for sharing their insight, opinions and ideas. Finally, thanks to the precedent set by DMNS' demonstration program (since 1992) and actor program (since 2003).



***...future support and expansion of the enactor program would be well-received not only by those within the program, but also appreciated by DMNS' adult, child and family audiences.***

## Introduction: Arriving at Enactment

The enactor program at The Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS) began in 2007 with the arrival of a temporary exhibition on Benjamin Franklin (*Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World*) and continued throughout the run of *Titanic: the Artifact Exhibition* (also temporary, 2007-2008). Program coordinators (including program supervisor, Jennifer Moss-Logan, along with Rebecca Smith and Liz Cook, all in the DMNS in the Visitor Programs Department) recognized the potential value an enactor program could add to the visitor experience, and began conceptualizing a way to bring enacting to DMNS.

Such strong impressions by visitors, as well as the varying mediums employed and stylistic choices made by enactors and enactor programs, are characteristic of such programs both nationally and internationally. There is a growing body of literature<sup>9</sup> on enactment in informal learning venues; however, most focus on historical sites. There are very few museums (e.g. The Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa) that utilize enactors on a regular basis as a form of interpretation. Of the few that do, DMNS has developed a unique and progressive approach to utilizing enactors in new way.

Enactor program coordinators had to make decisions on how to best utilize enactors in *Franklin* and *Titanic* to address the overarching goal of the enactor program-- to utilize dramatic interaction to supply a framework for the visitor to engage in powerful and unique ways. This technique is designed to bring history and ideas to life in a way which enhances the visitor experience. In both exhibitions, the choice was made not to have the enactors portray famous or easily identified individuals (for example, portraying Franklin himself). The program was striving for an interaction which put the visitors on an equal footing with the characters, allowing for conversation and a greater chance of personal relevance for the visitor. Additionally, the level of knowledge needed for recognizable, "famous" historical figures

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<sup>9</sup> E.g., Roth, Stacy F. (1998), *Past into Present*, University of North Carolina Press; Bridal, Tessa (2004), *Exploring Museum Theatre*, Rowman Altamira Publishers.

*I think we're redefining this whole idea of what a living history person is. You go into Williamsburg, and you've got the whole environment to support you.... Here, the living historian, the enactor, is creating by knowing something of the past so it's almost redefining what the use is for this. I don't need an entire town to support me as a person who can bring history to life. I just need my own knowledge, my own skill, and then this is... I think we're defining an entirely new thing.*

*-DMNS Enactor*

would be great to assure that the enactors would not be “caught out” and break the realism of their character portrayal. Composite characters were created for *Franklin*, referred to as “Franklin’s Neighbors” – his daughter’s friend (“Mrs. Bolter”), a business associate (“Mr. Post”), and a subscriber to the library which Franklin helped to begin (“Mr. Morris”). In *Titanic*, the choice was made to portray actual passengers and crew members, though not those as well known as Captain Smith and Margaret “Molly” Brown. The choices were many, as the ship carried over 2000 onboard.

After deciding on the program’s goals and methods, enactors were sought out. Rather than hiring for specific roles, actors with experience in historical interpretation and improvisation were sought out. In this way, scope, range and personality of each enactor could be prioritized when casting, allowing increased connection to the characters and characters’ values which improved the success of the portrayals.

Costuming and prop acquisition were the next steps in the development of the program. Costume fidelity is something the enactors and program coordinators value as key in this style of enactment, citing that the enactor in his or her costume IS the object and visitors are fascinated by what they wear. Visitors appear to value the authenticity, which may increase comfort levels and add value to the interaction. Props are often either actual antiques from the period portrayed, or replicas. Props provide a tangible, sharable link between enactors and the visiting public, enabling hands-on interaction as well as functioning as a conversation piece. It is also believed that costumes and props play a vital part in helping the enactor embrace their role, providing the feeling that he or she is truly living in the time of the individual portrayed.

With costuming and props comes maintenance and cleaning. In *Titanic*, two enactors chose to use times where a costume was being cleaned to portray an entirely different passenger. This provided the program coordinators and other enactors with insight into the different ways that the visitors treat different ‘passengers’ they meet.

*I built my character in Franklin around a prop. I figured out, I’ll have a piece of paper; I’ll be a papermaker, and then I built Mr. Post around the fact that he made paper. And I carried that paper and I made my whole character about that paper, and then could bring in that whole history of papermaking and then bring in the history of what they wrote on the paper, how Franklin was a printer and how important his ability to read was... and just all of this stuff was all built around my prop.*

*-DMNS Enactor*

Books, videos, books on tape (used to help with accents), websites, expert lectures provided for the volunteers, and enactors' interaction with one another all were sources of training. In addition, once "live" in an exhibition, visitors' questions prompt additional research and hone an enactor's knowledge. Additionally, enactor program coordinators met with the enactors to discuss the facilitation side of their work. Topics included: how to go beyond direct questions asked to read what the visitor really wants to know, how to work with questions that may require a character break, how to overcome the disconnect of facilitating objects in display cases, age-appropriate interactions, body posturing, and guiding visitors into their role (since this interaction does not have a precedent for many visitors).

The enactor program has been a work in progress, developing as it grows. For example, during the *Franklin* exhibition, enactors quickly learned that visitors would embrace the opportunity to be the "teachers". Rather than avoiding modern references, enactors learned to incorporate them into conversation. In this way, computer kiosks, elevators, ipods, and jeans became tools for creating relevance and a starting point for comparing modern life to that of 300 years ago. This was not an anticipated outcome but became an important development.

As another example, the enactors began to meet with each other and the program coordinators during the *Titanic* exhibition. The meetings were used not only to work out logistics such as scheduling, but also to discuss techniques and ideas and to support one another.

An additional example of the flexibility and adaptability of the program was the decision to try new techniques and devices within the run of an exhibition. Ideas were brainstormed in the early stages of the exhibition and implemented over time. In this way, ongoing learning was reflected, workload spread out throughout the run of the exhibition, and programming kept fresh and new— all of which can be important in a long run, such as *Titanic*. In *Titanic*, this process began with developing vignettes within the first couple of months. By the four-month mark, the enactors and program coordinators developed and implemented an additional programming piece—the lifeboat. Instead of enactors interacting in a lively way with visitors



in the front-end of the exhibition, as passengers onboard the ship before the tragedy, they experimented with portraying the same passengers in a more somber setting after hitting the iceberg. The enactors were provided with a rough blanket and a life vest and, after some significant research, began experimenting with this enactment in the latter half of the exhibition, where there is a lifeboat projection on the floor and a memory board of lives saved and lost. In this way, the enactors and program coordinators were able to adapt and insert a new dynamic for the visitors and a new challenge for the enactors.

Prior to this study being conducted, there was already preparation underway for program coordinators and enactors to continue utilizing the enactor program in future temporary exhibitions as well as to take the program into other areas of the Museum (including permanent halls and galleries). This study provides support for these already-established objectives and can serve to guide and inform future programming.

#### The Study

This study was designed to assess both the qualitative and quantitative impacts that the enactor program has on the visitor experience at DMNS, using two temporary exhibitions (*Franklin* and *Titanic*) as examples. Of interest was capturing the unique visitor experience that enactors provide by combining visitor engagement, education and interaction. In turn, this affords opportunities to better consider enactor and/or theater-based programming for other areas of the Museum (temporary and permanent) in the future.

Six main goals/hypotheses of the enactor program were studied, as they help to define the unique experience provided by enactors. Each is outlined below, along with samples of the original questions that each inspired during the design phase of the study.

- 1) The enactor program gets visitors' attention and supplies a framework for engaging in powerful and unique ways.**  
Do enactors capture the visitors' attention and, if so, how? What about the enactor program is the "hook" that draws visitors in? Does interacting with an enactor provide

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the visitor with a framework or point of entry to explore an exhibition or object in a powerful and unique way?

**2) Interaction with enactors provides opportunities for visitors to make connections with people from the past in a way that is both personal and meaningful.**

When visitors interact with enactors, are they better able to personalize and make relevant their Museum experience through connecting with the past? How is meaning created for visitors by way of the enactor program?

**3) Interaction with enactors brings context to exhibit areas and objects through personal narratives, interactive stories and/or object use.**

As enactors are living, breathing “objects”, are they then able to infuse context and further relevancy through first-person storytelling, narratives and interactions with objects from the time/place they are portraying? Does this add an additional layer of depth that would not be achieved through traditional museum displays, such as signage or objects in cases?

**4) Interaction with enactors enriches the visitors’ understanding of the themes, concepts and content of exhibits.**

Is it demonstrated that speaking with or observing an enactor can add to the depth of thematic understanding, or the concepts and content within an exhibition? Does having a conversation about such themes or concepts enrich the level of processing or integration the visitors has with the information?

**5) Interaction with enactors enables opportunities for visitors to engage in two modes of discussion-- with historical context and/or infused with modern sensibilities.**

Can visitors connect with the past while also making associations to the present time, grasping the changes that have occurred and the contexts as they have shifted? Can both the present and the past be integrated by interacting with enactors in a way that brings connections and relevancy to the visitors’ personal experiences?

*You go to the museum, it’s about stuff and objects and things—and even though you try to humanize with everyone’s little story, [having an enactor] helps emphasize the fact that that’s what you’re trying to do.*

*-Adult male visitor*

*[The enactor] made the thing for me. She really did. We’re really glad we got her.*

*-Adult female visitor*



**6) Interactions with enactors are open-ended, allowing visitors to choose their level of involvement and direct the content of the conversation, creating a personal and relevant experience.**

Do visitors take the conversations with the enactors where they would like them to go, directing the content to their own experiences and interests and therefore creating a personal and relevant experience? Do enactors provide varying levels of involvement to visitors, so that the experience is tailored to a visitor's comfort level and interests?

The temporary *Titanic* exhibition provided a rich environment in which to test and examine the above goals. In addition, attention was given to what was learned from and by the enactor programming within the *Franklin* temporary exhibition. Though no formal study was conducted during *Franklin*, anecdotal evidence was collected by program coordinators and enactors. Also, visitors to *Titanic* were asked to recall the *Franklin* exhibition if they had visited during its time at DMNS. As such, the study examines and relates two very different exhibitions, both showcasing the dynamism of the enactor program.

Emphasis of this study was not on typical learning outcomes, but rather on how visitors perceive and value the above features of the enactor programming. Parallel to this was the goal of better understanding how the enactors read visitors and how the program changed and adapted accordingly, assessing similarities and differences between enactors' and visitors' perceptions.

This study is relevant to all visitors, but does not specifically address school groups. The primary groups of visitors surveyed and interviewed were adult visitors and family groups.

**Scope**

Multiple methods were used to assess a sample of visitors attending the *Titanic* exhibition during the fall of 2007. Work was designed, managed, supervised and conducted internally by Kathleen Tinworth, DMNS Manager of Visitor Research and Program Evaluation. Ms. Tinworth

*It helped me to be there, to be in 1912.*

*-Adult female visitor*



recruited research assistants to assist in data collection and data entry. All assistants working on the project were pre-screened, selected, and trained on the study's methodology by Ms. Tinworth. Research protocols were reviewed and approved by DMNS program coordinators and, where relevant, the DMNS in-house attorney.

### **Methodology**

Ms. Tinworth and her team of research assistants conducted all work per Federal guidelines for protection of human research participants and prioritized ethical concerns during the development and implementation of this study. During all periods of data collection, signage was posted within the exhibition indicating to visitors that research was being conducted and that participation was voluntary. Methodology was carefully reviewed, including consultation with the in-house lawyer at DMNS on the development of consent and assent forms. No aspect of this study is believed in any way to be harmful to visitors or to infringe upon their rights. This study may be beneficial by adding to the field of visitor studies as well as informing future Museum programming and practice.

Two populations were included in this study: visitors and enactors.

#### *Visitors*

Three separate methodologies were utilized to assess the visitor experience as it relates to the enactor program: surveys, focus groups, and observation (including a timing study).

A standardized exhibit exit survey (see Appendix 1) sampled the audience with a series of questions that provided for quantitative analyses. These questions were based heavily on the six main goals or hypotheses cited earlier, as well as additional topics identified by the enactor coordinators such as: the role of props and costuming, visitor orientation, and comparisons and contrasts to *Franklin* enacting (if they visited the Museum during both exhibitions). Snap Surveys was used to design and conduct the exit survey and online survey

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follow-up (using ClassApps: SelectSurvey ASP, see Appendix 4) was implemented approximately one month after a Museum visit to investigate longitudinal outcomes.

A total of 506 exit surveys were collected on-site. Sampling criteria selected the first adult (individual appearing 18+) in a group exiting the exhibition. Those appearing under 18 years old were not provided with the exit survey for reasons of consent. As part of the survey, the following subgroups were assessed for comparison: 1) visitors who encountered an enactor and interacted with one (direct), 2) visitors who encountered an enactor and observed an interaction (indirect), and 3) visitors who did not encounter or interact with an enactor. Of those who encountered and interacted with enactors, a sub-set was asked to participate in a focus group.

Additionally, 33 follow-up online surveys were completed by visitors and returned to DMNS. This sample was derived from those who provided their email address on the exit surveys and voluntarily agreed to participate in the follow-up.

A total of 11 focus groups were conducted with visitors. The participants were selected only if they encountered and interacted with an enactor, using predetermined criteria to ensure that a variety of visitor demographics were sampled. As such, it is important to acknowledge that the planned focus groups were not a random sample. Individuals selected were offered the opportunity to include his or her family/group in the interview/focus group if they wished, and in all cases the individuals chosen did so. Participants consisted of both adults and children with a parent or guardian present. All focus groups followed standard protocol, with the purpose of the study explained to participants, as well as being informed of their right to refuse at any time. All participants received information in writing about the study, as well as consent and assent forms to review and sign before the focus groups began. All groups were recorded, with consent and assent obtained before recording began. All participants were provided with refreshments during the interview, as well as complimentary IMAX and/or Museum admission passes as a thank you for participating. Most focus groups lasted approximately 20 minutes. The focus groups supplement the exit surveys with qualitative



*It's like a living artifact. There's artifacts in a case... you're separate from them. But we're the living artifacts, if you will, making the connection to the history... and then the humanity of it all.*

*-DMNS enactor*

questions about the six goals/hypotheses. (See Appendix 2 for focus group questions, as well as all consent and assent forms.)

Separate from those given surveys and participating in focus groups, a target goal of 100 visitors were observed within the *Titanic* exhibition. Of these, approximately half had some interaction with an enactor and half did not. The main goal of the visitor observation methodology was to time the visitors within the exhibition, assessing whether or not those who interacted with enactors spent more time in the exhibition.

#### *Enactors*

Four separate methodologies were used to assess the enactor experience as it relates to the program, as they have an insider's view not easily attained through other sources: observation, interviews, a focus group, and anecdotal reporting/logs. In addition to their inside knowledge, the study was interested in comparing the views and perceptions of the enactors to that of the visitors, looking for areas of overlap as well as departure.

Each enactor was observed for a period of at least two hours, with the observer focusing on the qualitative aspects of the enactors' interactions with visitors, including: topics spoken about, object interactions, and assessing whether or not interactions are visitor-led or enactor-led. This aspect of the study also provided the opportunity for enactors to showcase their characters, vignettes, and other specific elements of their role which they wanted the study to capture. Additionally, similarities and differences between enactors were highlighted, illuminating their personal styles and the characters they portray and giving a broader view of the enactor program and its effects on visitors.

Each enactor was interviewed one-on-one with a series of questions that provided data for qualitative analyses. These questions were based heavily on the six main goals or hypotheses mentioned earlier, as well as additional topics identified by the *Titanic* program coordinators,

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such as: the role of props and costuming, visitors' orientation, and comparisons and contrasts to *Franklin* enacting (if enactors were a part of both programs).

In addition to the individual interviews, the enactors were interviewed in a focus group setting to further enrich the qualitative perspective.

Each enactor was asked to record anecdotes and stories of their experience in the *Titanic* exhibition. While subjective, these provide a rich context and human element to the study. Additionally, such anecdotal data was also compiled in the *Franklin* enactor program, enabling comparisons between the two exhibitions. (See Appendix 3 for excerpts from enactor logs/records kept during *Franklin*.)

#### **Time Frame**

Final planning, methodology, pre-testing and data collection instruments were completed by mid-October 2007 and data collection occurred through October and November 2007. Data was collected on both weekdays and weekends to ensure a wide range of visitors was included. All project work was completed by late November 2007.

#### What the Enactors Tell Us

The five enactors who worked either in the *Franklin* exhibition, the *Titanic* exhibition, or both were interviewed both together and separately to provide insight into the enactor program, its function, its value and its future. (See Appendix 3 for a list of enactor focus group and individual interview questions.)

The enactors believe that the program's ability to allow guests to travel back in time and visit important moments in history is its "hook," providing a vehicle to observe similarities and differences between their own time and of the one they are re-living. Visitors have the ability to take historical information and artifacts (such as in a book or an object in a case) and make it real and personal through human interaction. This makes the exhibition fresh and new with

***Final planning, methodology, pre-testing and data collection instruments were completed by mid-October 2007 and data collection occurred through October and November 2007.***



each experience, creating moments which the enactors feel guests will remember after visiting the Museum.

When asked about differences between the enacting in *Franklin* and *Titanic*, the enactors noted that *Titanic's* story and place in history are better known by visitors than that of the *Franklin* exhibition. Similarly, *Titanic* deals with a single moment in history and the life stories of multiple individuals, whereas *Franklin* showcased many topics and focused on one man's life. Additionally, unlike *Franklin*, the *Titanic* exhibition was designed to recreate life onboard, with replicas of hallways, rooms and cafes. This enabled the enactors to function easily as passengers on deck, in state rooms, and boarding the ship.

In addition to these global differences, there were some specific differences related to decisions made by the enactors and the program coordinators that set the two exhibitions apart. In *Titanic*, enactors provide visitors with a window into life in 1912. They stay in that time and in the exhibition itself, faithful to their knowledge as it would have been in that era. In *Franklin*, by contrast, the enactors were transported through time to modern-day DMNS. They moved throughout the Museum, enabling them to function not only as educators to the visitors about the time they came from but also as "students" to the visitors about the strange new world they found themselves in. These two very different interpretive mediums presented opportunities for a variety of interactions with visitors.

The enactors felt that costuming and props helped them develop a sense of freedom and power to truly become the person that they were representing, as well as functioned as a truly imperative way to reach their audience. Each enactor had examples of how costumes and props opened up conversations and discussions with visitors. Additionally, enactors observed that when an object or tool was also given to the visitor in a way that helps provide them with an identity for the exhibition (e.g., the boarding passes in *Titanic*), an additional element of personalization was given to the individual and helped place the visitor into the story, keeping them involved and empowered.

*The hook in Franklin was that they could teach us. They were really empowered. We empowered the visitor and all of a sudden they got to do what we do. What we do in Titanic they got to do for us in Franklin. We not only allowed, but encouraged, them to do that.*

*-DMNS enactor*



Beyond costumes and props, the enactors emphasized the amount of time and effort that went into choosing, learning about, and developing their characters. All of the enactors highlighted that research was important throughout the length of portraying a character, rather than just at the beginning. In addition to knowing the basics and background of the individual being portrayed, the enactors dedicated time and energy to learning about the places and times in which their characters were set. This, according to the enactors, provided another layer of authenticity when interacting with visitors and also served as a way to connect with visitors on a much wider range of topics and themes.

There was an intuitive sense amongst the enactors that the visitors were taking away personal and relevant experiences that would remain embedded in their memories. Each enactor had many anecdotes and stories of visitors, adults and children alike affected by this form of interpretation. The overall impact was something that was undisputable to the enactors; they felt and saw it every day. That being said, they viewed the research and evaluation process as a method to either validate or invalidate whether their sense of the program's accomplishments was true.

The enactors felt that the program could be used throughout the Museum to enhance many exhibitions, including permanent spaces, by featuring individuals from many time periods and places throughout history and covering a wide breadth of subjects. They indicated that, with its unique ability to reach guests of all ages and demographics and its appeal as truly interactive, personalized learning, the enactment program could be the thing that sets DMNS apart from other museums, making it "one of a kind."

When asked about why they continue to come to work, day after day, the enactors had no difficulty answering that it was the effect they knew, intuitively and from the experience itself, they had on the visitors. Each enactor could recount countless anecdotes of times when they had an interaction with a visitor where they made a lasting impression; they realized the power of personalizing the visitors' experiences in this unique way.



***There is an intuitive sense amongst the enactors that the visitors are taking away personal and relevant experiences that will remain embedded in their memories.***

The enactors felt that the program could grow and become stronger. They were highly complementary of the support they received from the program coordinators and the Museum as a whole, and felt that a continuation of this support would allow the program to evolve to its true potential. The enactors felt the program would benefit from allowing more freedom to experiment, a bigger budget (allowing for more enactors, training, costumes/props), and making the program a feature of the Museum—something well-known by visitors, creating the expectation that they could run into anyone from history on any given day at DMNS.<sup>10</sup>

As DMNS is not a history museum, but a museum of nature and science, prototyping using historical enactment as a tool to engage visitors in the Museum’s nature and science content—either to highlight one of core competencies (E.g., a time period represented by a wildlife dioramas) or the history of DMNS itself— is planned.

#### Case Study: Titanic

*Titanic: The Artifact Exhibition* came to DMNS on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007 and ended its run on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008. The exhibition tells the story of the great luxury liner, chronicling its journey from construction in a Belfast shipyard to its tragic maiden voyage. The exhibition is structured to create an atmosphere so each visitor experiences it as if he or she was a Titanic passenger. This includes a replica boarding pass of an actual passenger upon entrance, 300-plus authentic artifacts, information on the ship’s design and construction, and full-size re-creations of some of the ship’s interior spaces.

*Titanic* provided an ideal setting for the work of the DMNS enactors to engage visitors in first-person interpretation. The enactors regularly played the roles of two first class passengers, Mr. George Rosenshine/Thorne and Mrs. Edith Bowerman, second class passenger Mrs. Lutie Parrish, and crewmember/first class stewardess, Mary Sloan. One or two enactors were on-

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<sup>10</sup> The program coordinators also see room for growth, however believe that the implementation of the enactor program thus far has been appropriate and in line with comparable programs in the Museum. The balance of enactors, budget and scope has all been a part of a mindful attempt to strategically roll out a new program.

***The enactors feel that the program could be used throughout the Museum to enhance many exhibitions, including permanent spaces, by featuring individuals from many time periods and places throughout history and covering a wide breadth of subjects.***

site every day, and spent most of their time in the exhibition itself and in the queuing area just outside of the exhibition. Their focus was both conversations with visitors and also short vignettes performed in the First Class Cabin and Veranda Café sets.

### **Enactor Observations**

As part of the study, each enactor working in *Titanic* was shadowed for a period of at least two hours. The objective of this aspect of the study was a focus on the qualitative aspects of the enactors' interactions with visitors. Enactors knew they were being observed, and as such had an opportunity to demonstrate qualities in their interactions which they wanted to highlight in the study. Observations were made as to who led the conversations and which topics were addressed. Additionally, this method highlighted the similarities and differences between enactors, their personal styles and the characters they portray, giving a broader view of the enactor program and its effects on visitors. Each enactor in *Titanic* portrays a different character and uses his or her skills as an artist to work within the exhibition and the enactor program to enhance the visitor experience. This report focuses on the stylistic elements of the enactors, particularly on their commonalities and strengths. It is not designed to examine or evaluate qualitative differences between the enactors.

All enactors observed in *Titanic* utilized a common "opening line," most often asking a visitor about which class they were travelling on the Titanic. For example, the enactor portraying Mary Sloan might start with "Which class are ya travellin'?" (in an Irish brogue) while Mr. Rosenshine may ask, "Are you travelling first class?" in his New York accent. This device, while capturing the visitors' attention, also seemed to function as a method to encourage visitors to interact not only with the enactor but also with the information provided to them on their boarding pass. Each boarding pass indicated which class a passenger was travelling, and for many Museum visitors the enactors' opening lines appeared to serve as a gateway to connect with the person on their boarding pass.

***Titanic provided an ideal setting for the work of the DMNS enactors to engage visitors in first-person interpretation.***



The boarding passes were further utilized by the enactors, and it became clear that they had studied in depth many of the backgrounds and stories of passengers travelling onboard—especially those of the first class. Mr. Rosenshine, for example, encountered a visitor and introduced himself to her. Upon hearing the name on her boarding pass, Mr. Rosenshine proclaimed, “Oh, the actress. Of course-- the actress. Well, let me tell you, I don’t think the motion picture business is going to take off. If I were you, I’d stick to the stage. Who wants to sit in a dark room and stare at a screen? The moving picture and the automobile! In a few years, I think we’ll find they’re a thing of the past!” It was noted that many visitors who were a part of or overheard these interactions were surprised and impressed with the depth and level of the enactors’ knowledge. One visitor commented, “Oh isn’t it wonderful that he can remember all that? I hadn’t even read that yet!”

All enactors within the *Titanic* exhibition utilized their costumes and props to engage with visitors. This was particularly seen to be effective with younger visitors. For example, the enactor portraying Mrs. Lutie Parrish (2<sup>nd</sup> class) asked a young visitor, “Do you know what kind of feathers I have here in my hat? Should Lutie tell you?” Not only did this serve as a means of engaging the young visitor, but it also opened up a path to a conversation about wealth and class (e.g., first class passengers can afford all ostrich feathers, whereas second class has to accentuate with peacock feathers). Mary Sloan, the stewardess, often carried a box of crayons from the turn of the century, enabling conversations with young guests about how the names of colors have changed.

A similar technique was employed by the enactors throughout the exhibition, utilizing objects in cases, recreations of spaces on the ship, and photographs on the walls. The enactor portraying Mrs. Edith Bowerman pointed to the large photograph of the Titanic gymnasium on the wall and asked passengers if they had been there. “Of course, you can only use the gymnasium if you are a first class passenger. I don’t think I shall be using it, though they do have some peculiar things, or so I’ve heard. Have you heard of an electric camel?” The enactor playing Mary Sloan discovered a visitor’s boarding pass identity and, pointing to a photo on the wall, remarked, “Oh yes, look here. What a lovely portrait of you.” Again, enactors

*Have they studied all these people [on the boarding passes]? That’s amazing!*

*-Adult female visitor*

*I connected with the person on the boarding pass as I was entering in when I noticed we were the same age, but going through the exhibit and speaking with the actress and her just kind of putting me on that boat—I don’t know, it sent goose bumps.*

*-Adult female visitor*

appeared to use whatever was at hand or available within the exhibition as an entry point to engaging a visitor in conversation.

Beyond providing visitors to the exhibition interesting facts about the ship itself, the enactors were observed to engage Museum visitors in dialogue about the atmosphere and climate of the times. For example, issues of class and gender discrimination were often topics of conversation between the enactors and visitors. Mrs. Rice (a 3<sup>rd</sup> class passenger portrayed by an enactor for a short time while a costume was being cleaned) commented to a visitor, “You travellin’ third class today? Well if you’re travellin’ steerage you might want to be careful of those jewels in your ears. We’re not in first class, you know.” The two enactor-portrayed first class passengers, Mr. Rosenshine and Mrs. Bowerman, would often engage each other in debate about women’s suffrage, enquiring of visitors nearby as to their opinions on the topic. Mrs. Bowerman, during one such discourse, asked a male visitor, “Well don’t you feel women should have a say in the house in which you keep them in?” Mr. Rosenshine, in a similar conversation, might comment, “Women have men to vote for them. It’s important to keep the status quo.” One visitor was observed to join in, saying, “Women are the backbone of this society.” It was observed that these opportunities for participation and engagement resulted in conversations addressing themes beyond what was displayed in the exhibition cases or signage.

Enactors also utilized knowledge about current events in 1912, creating a deeper layer to their characters and lending an air of authenticity to the interactions they had with Museum visitors. For example, Mr. Rosenshine might speak about baseball, or Coney Island roller coasters, or ice cream—topical themes that were emergent and important in 1912. Responding to a visitor who asked Mr. Rosenshine if he was a New York Yankees fan, Mr. Rosenshine replied, “Yankees? No such thing. But there’s the Highlanders. Bunch of bums! They never win!”

When observing who instigated the conversation, the enactor or the visitor, there appeared to be a mix. It appeared to be more common for a visitor to approach an enactor and engage

***Beyond providing visitors to the exhibition interesting facts about the ship itself, the enactors were observed to engage Museum visitors in dialogue about the atmosphere and climate of the times.***



him or her in conversation if the visitor had already watched that enactor interacting with someone else. It appeared that the enactors led the conversations more frequently than the visitors, but that there was shared dialogue.

During the observation period, visitors were overheard to make several relevant and interesting comments about the enactors, providing the study with a sample of first impressions and perspectives about the enactors. One such visitor asked to others in his group, "I wonder if he travels with the exhibition or if he lives here?" Another commented, "Let's wait for the next group [of visitors entering the exhibition]; I missed her schpiel." Comments such as these may indicate a misunderstanding amongst Museum visitors about the role and function of the enactors in the exhibition and of the enactor program more globally. Other comments included: "That was cute; I wish I could've taken a picture" and "It's like talking to someone who's on the ship." One visitor approached a member of the research team and commented directly, "Isn't it amazing how captivated the kids are by her? It's like taking a step back in time. She's the best part of the whole exhibit."

### **Exit Surveys**

Five-hundred and six (506) adult visitors to *Titanic* completed an anonymous questionnaire (see Appendix 1) upon exiting the exhibition. For 495 of these visitors, this was the only method of the study which they took part in. Eleven of these visitors also took part in a focus group with their family and/or group. For the quantitative results of the exit survey, only those visitors who completed the survey but did not participate in a focus group (n=495) are included, so as to avoid potential bias by those who completed questionnaires while in an enactor-specific focus group with a researcher present. The results of the small sample of exit surveys completed by those within focus groups (n=11) will be addressed in the focus group section.

The exit surveys utilized a random sampling technique. Adult visitors were selected using the following criteria: the first adult visitor (those appearing 18+ years old to the research

*Isn't it amazing how captivated the kids are by her? It's like taking a step back in time. She's the best part of the whole exhibit.*

*-Adult male visitor*

***Five-hundred and six (506) adult visitors to Titanic completed an anonymous questionnaire upon exiting the exhibition. Eleven of these visitors also took part in a focus group with their family and/or group.***



assistant) exiting the exhibition in any group or on his/her own was approached and asked if they would be willing to complete an anonymous survey about their experience in *Titanic*. Only one adult per group was asked to complete a survey (to avoid group completion and bias), and no youth (under age 18) were knowingly asked to complete the surveys due to issues of survey design (designed for adult populations) as well as issues of consent/assent.

As with other methods in the study, the exit survey utilized the six original hypotheses about the enactor program as the basis and rationale for its questions (see pp. 10-12).

Many of the hypotheses address interaction with enactors. As such, it was important to investigate differences between those visitors who interacted with enactors during their *Titanic* visit and those who did not. Table 1 below shows the number and percentage of those who directly interacted with an enactor during their visit to the exhibition versus those who observed an interaction (indirect interaction) or had no interaction.

Table 1.

Frequencies and Percentages of Visitors, by Interaction (n=495)

Interaction Level	Number of Visitors	Percent of Total Visitors
Direct Interaction	200	40.4%
Indirect Interaction	101	20.4%
No interaction	194	39.2%

Table 1 (above) indicates that **just over 40% of visitors surveyed did interact directly with one or more of the enactors in the exhibition**. Approximately **20% observed an enactor without interacting directly (indirect)**, leaving **just under 40% of the sample having had no interaction with an enactor** during their visit. With typically one enactor in the exhibition at a time, a 60%

*She played her role very, very well. After a while I was beginning to think she was real.*

*-Adult female visitor*



visitor interaction rate may appear to be high. It was observed by researchers throughout the study, however, that many visitors would wait until the enactors finished conversations with other visitors so that they could have a “turn” with the enactors; the enactors’ confirm that they have seen this in practice. As will be detailed later in the report, ***the majority of the +/40% who had no interaction with an enactor cited that it was due to not seeing an enactor in the exhibition.***

The exit survey begins (see Appendix 1) with a three-part question about ***how powerful, unique, and personal/meaningful the exhibition felt to the visitor.*** Using a four-point rating scale (where 1: not at all, and 4: very), visitors scored the exhibition’s powerfulness at 3.7 on average (mean score, n=494), indicating a high level. In terms of the uniqueness of the exhibition, again an average (mean) score of 3.7 was obtained (n=492). The exhibition ranked slightly lower on how personal and/or meaningful it was as self-reported by visitors, with an average (mean) score of 3.4 (n=483). ***Visitors scored the exhibition high in all three areas.*** When examining the different levels of interaction—direct, indirect or no interaction—there are no statistically significant differences<sup>11</sup> between the three groups on this question. The mean scores were higher, however, on each of the three factors for those visitors with direct interaction with an enactor compared to those with no interaction (see Table 2 below). What is less clear is the role of the visitor who observes an enactor but does not have direct interaction (indirect).

***Using a four-point rating scale (where 1: not at all, and 4: very), visitors scored the exhibition’s powerfulness at 3.7 on average (mean score, n=494), indicating a high level. In terms of the uniqueness of the exhibition, again an average (mean) score of 3.7 was obtained (n=492).***

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<sup>11</sup> Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) as the method of analysis.

Table 2.

Comparative Means by Interaction Level on Question 1 Factors:

“Please answer the following about how *Titanic* felt to you”

Interaction Level	Factor (scale of 1-4 where 1 is low)		
	How powerful was the exhibition?	How unique?	How personal/ meaningful?
Direct Interaction	3.72	3.70	3.49
Indirect Interaction	3.78	3.76	3.35
No interaction	3.64	3.67	3.41

To address the effects of interacting with an enactor further, visitors were separated into two (rather than three) distinct categories -- those who interacted with an enactor in some way (either directly or indirectly) and those who had no interaction. This distinction demonstrated statistically significant differences between groups. While there is no significant difference between the “interactive” and “non-interactive” groups on the factors of how uniqueness and how personal and/or meaningful the exhibit felt, **the powerfulness of the exhibition to those who had some interaction with an enactor was significantly higher than those who had no interaction**<sup>12</sup>. As interaction lends itself to the perceived powerfulness of the exhibition, creating more opportunities for visitors to interact (e.g. by adding more enactors) may be an avenue to pursue with the enactor program in the future. This is especially pertinent as many visitors cite the reason for not interacting as simply not seeing an

<sup>12</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t = -2.101$ ,  $df = 492$ ,  $sign. (2-tailed) = .036$ .

***... the powerfulness of the exhibition to those who had some interaction with an enactor was significantly higher than those who had no interaction.***

enactor in the exhibition. Heightening visibility and availability may lead to increased interaction as, as a result, increased perceptions of powerfulness within an exhibition.

An important caveat to address when examining such groups for differences is that many factors influence the visitor experience, rather than solely the enactors. Each visitor brings associations, experiences and memories to an exhibition, influencing their cognitive and emotional connection to what they see and observe. Particularly due to the many dynamic and emotive elements within the *Titanic* exhibition itself, it should be acknowledged that aspects such as powerfulness, uniqueness and personal/meaningfulness may be attributed to a variety of influences. That being said, statistical significance indicates a clear departure from variances which would be assumed in a sample, indicating that the experience of interacting with an enactor (be it personally or through observation) has influence on how powerful the exhibition is perceived to be by visitors.

Question 2 on the exit survey ***asked visitors whether or not they feel more or less informed, connected, aware, etc. on a variety of different elements after visiting the exhibition as compared to before their visit.*** Like question 1, the average (mean) scores for these elements (on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 is low) were high overall (ranging from 2.93 for how informed/knowledgeable the visitor felt about women's suffrage/ women's rights, to 3.52 for how connected the visitor felt to the objects and artifacts of *Titanic*). Table 3 (below) shows average (mean) scores on each of the factors in question 2 by interaction level (those who interacted directly, indirectly, and those who had no interaction).

*I enjoyed it just because they were dressed in period attire and the conversation was obviously meant to be from that period of time. It was interesting to talk about my character [on boarding pass]. We got to learn a little bit more.*

*-Adult female visitor*

Table 3.

Comparative Means by Interaction Level on Question 2 Factors:

“After visiting *Titanic* today, I feel \_\_\_\_ than I did before I went through the exhibition”

Factor (scale of 1-4 where 1 is low)	Interaction Level		
	Direct Interaction	Indirect Interaction	No interaction
Informed/knowledgeable about the <i>Titanic disaster overall</i>	3.51	3.49	3.42
Connected with the <i>person on my boarding pass</i> (or other passengers and crew of the <i>Titanic</i> )	3.27	3.32	3.11
Aware of <i>what life was like in 1912</i> as compared to now	3.35	3.39	3.32
Clear about the <i>recovery process and science</i> related to <i>Titanic</i>	3.48	3.52	3.41
Informed/knowledgeable about <i>economic, social and class issues</i>	3.41	3.28	3.37
Informed/knowledgeable about women's <i>suffrage/women's rights</i>	2.95	2.91	2.91
Connected to the <i>objects and artifacts of Titanic</i>	3.57	3.59	3.45

*It made me feel like a second class passenger, so I kind of looked at everything from that perspective. The running water, the menus, the china... the positioning on the boat.*

*-Adult female visitor*

*It got my attention.*

*-Young female visitor*

Similar to question 1, **question 2 shows higher mean scores on all factors for those who had direct interaction with an enactor versus those who had no interaction** (the first and third columns). Again, the mean scores of those visitors with indirect interaction are less clearly interpreted. When examining the three levels of interaction, a statistically significant difference between groups<sup>13</sup> was found on the factor of “Connected with the person on my boarding pass (or other passengers and crew of the Titanic)”; visitors who observed an enactor (indirect interaction) ranked this factor higher (mean: 3.32) than those who either interacted directly with the enactor (mean: 3.27) and those who had no enactor interaction (mean: 3.11).

There are various secondary hypotheses which could be considered to address why those who observed enactors ranked their level of connection to the person on their boarding pass (or other passengers and crew) higher than those visitors in the other two interaction categories. It is possible that the indirect interaction group observed more than one interaction with enactors, therefore increasing the saliency of their connections to their own boarding pass. It is also possible that this group, in addition to being observant of enactors, is more inclined to personalize and internalize their exhibition experience for a variety of reasons (for example, due to an introspective nature). These secondary hypotheses are beyond the scope of the current study, but may be of interest if and when the enactor program is revisited in future studies and research. As the enactors noted in their focus group and individual interviews, enacting is able to affect those on the periphery as well as those directly involved. The next step in better understanding how enactment influences the visitor experience may be to more closely examine the three groups or levels of interaction, clarifying the differences between those who choose to engage with enactors on a personal level versus those who prefer to observe as a third party.

As in question one, the three groups based on level of interaction were redistributed into two groups for further analysis: 1. those who had some interaction with an enactor (either direct

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<sup>13</sup> Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA):  $f=3.584$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $sign. =.029$ .

*I think it enriched the whole experience.*

*-Adult male visitor*

*(In answer to what she learned from the enactor...)*

*That there was different rooms and meals and everyone wasn't treated the same. Some people got stuff that was like in the first class they had diamonds on their doorknobs and in the third class they had regular doorknobs. And so I learned that the more money paid the more pretty the scenery is for you.*

*Young female visitor*



or indirect) and, 2. those who had none. This level of analysis revealed a further significant difference on the factor of “Connected to the objects and artifacts of Titanic”, with those visitors who had some form of interaction with an enactor ranking their level of connection following the exhibition significantly higher<sup>14</sup> on average (mean: 3.57) than those with no interaction (mean: 3.45).

Again, with all factors in question two receiving relatively high rankings, statistically significant differences are sparse. While not significant from a statistical angle, it is relevant to note the higher average scores for the group with direct interaction with enactors on factors such as “Informed/knowledgeable about women's suffrage/ women's rights” and “Informed/knowledgeable about economic, social and class issues.” Both the focus group and interviews with the enactors, as well as the observational data, in this study point to those elements as topics often covered in conversations with visitors. Knowing that these themes are highlighted through interaction (and particularly direct interaction) with enactors may support the trends towards higher average ranking on these elements.

When asked what they felt they would remember or tell people about *Titanic*, the most common visitor response was “artifacts, objects and/or belongings” (15.4%), followed by “passenger information and stories” (14.2%) and “boarding passes” (10.1%). The enactors received 6 mentions (n=395; 1.5%) as that which visitors felt they would remember most.

Visitors were asked why they felt the enactors were part of the exhibition and given multiple choices (with the option of choosing as many as apply) as well as the option to write in their answer. Just under 80% of those visitors who answered the question (n=316) cited that enactors were part of the exhibition to “to make the exhibition feel more ‘real’/like you're on the ship.” Additionally, 73%<sup>15</sup> of visitors felt that enactors were part of the exhibition “to talk to visitors about history-- what life was like on the Titanic, in 1912, etc.” Approximately 63% of

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<sup>14</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t=-2.255$ ,  $df=486$ ,  $sign. (2-tailed)=.025$ .

<sup>15</sup> Percentages exceed 100% when totaled as visitors were able to select more than one answer.

*I think it made it easier to accept that these were real people in this situation. Even though there are pictures on the wall, those are just pictures—not people.*

*-Adult female visitor*

visitors felt that the enactors were there “to give visitors information about the exhibition (the objects, artifacts, ship, etc.),” while 53% said the function was “to entertain Museum visitors.” Very few visitors (14%) felt that the enactors were there to surprise or shock visitors, and less than a quarter of the visitors who answered (24%) felt that the enactors were there to help visitors find their way through the exhibition (wayfinding).

***The majority of visitors (70%, n=245/351) felt that using actors<sup>16</sup> in the Museum was a great idea. Almost all visitors (98%) either responded that they felt using actors in the Museum was either a “great idea” or a “good idea,” with less than one percent responding that it was a “bad idea.”*** Utilizing the three levels of interactions with enactors again for comparative analysis, there is a significant difference between how groups feel about actors being used in the Museum based on their level of interaction with enactors in *Titanic*. ***Those who interacted directly with an enactor were significantly more likely<sup>17</sup> than those who either indirectly interacted with an enactor or had no interaction with an enactor to rate using actors in the Museum as a “great idea.”*** Those who interacted indirectly with enactors, yet did not have the personalized interaction, were also significantly more likely to indicate that using actors in the Museum is a great idea when compared to visitors with no interaction. This may support the qualitative data provided by enactors in their group and individual interviews, as well as the observational data gathered by shadowing the enactors, that both those who have a one-on-one, personalized experience with an enactor as well as those who watch but do not directly interact find the experience impactful and worthwhile.

Of those visitors who spoke to an enactor during their visit to *Titanic*, 79% (n=157/198)<sup>18</sup> were approached by the enactors, with 21% (n=41/198) approaching the enactor themselves. A

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<sup>16</sup> The terms “actor” and “enactor” are both used within the report. “Actor” was used with visitors exclusively, as preliminary research with DMNS visitors indicated the word “enactor” was unknown to them; however, the Museum uses “enactor” internally.

<sup>17</sup> Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA):  $f=13.972$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $sign. =.000$ .

<sup>18</sup> Ns do not match those in Table 1 as not every visitor answered each/all survey questions.



*I was shocked when she came up to us. I was shocked because she came out of the blue. But it made us have the experience of how they dressed and how their personalities were. It made me feel like she was really from first class. It was cool.*

*-Adult female visitor*

wide variety of topics were discussed with the enactors, including life on the ship, the passengers on the visitors' boarding passes, rooms and amenities onboard, the dining halls and food options, and issues of class and gender (e.g. women's suffrage). Of the visitors who did not speak with an enactor, the majority indicated that they observed someone else speaking to an enactor (42%, n= 103/246). Just over a third (33%, n=82/246) who didn't speak with an enactor indicated that they did not see or notice the enactors in the exhibition<sup>19</sup>, whereas 19% (n=46/246) cited that they did not speak to an enactor because they were focused on the exhibition. It was infrequent for visitors to list "It's not something I would do/Not interested" or "It seemed embarrassing/ weird" as the reason for not interacting with an enactor (5% and 2%, respectively). Also, it was uncommon for visitors to list "I didn't know I should/could talk to the actor(s)" as the reason for not interacting (3%). These findings may provide insight into the motivations of those who do not directly interact with enactors. They may also support the anecdotal and qualitative impressions of the enactors, who feel that even those who do not choose to interact directly may still benefit from the presence of the enactors in the Museum. Finally, ***these findings indicate that it is rare that visitors are intimidated by or not interested in the enactors, but rather there are varying reasons for and levels of interacting including simply not seeing the enactors.***

Finally, demographics were collected from the sample of visitors who completed exit surveys, providing a clearer picture of those who interacted with the enactors as compared to those who did not. All three interaction levels had similar compositions in terms of whether or not the visitors had been to the Museum before, however the personal interaction group was significantly more likely<sup>20</sup> to have visited DMNS before (see Chart 1). These variations in visitor demographics between interaction groups may support the idea that repeat visitors are more

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<sup>19</sup> Titanic schedule: Sun-Thurs 9AM-5PM; Fri/Sat 9AM-9PM. Titanic enactor schedule: Mon-Thurs: 1 enactor, 10AM-4PM; Fri/Sat: 3 enactors, 9:30AM-3:30PM, 10AM-4PM, 2:30PM-8:30PM; Sun: 2 enactors, 10AM-4PM, 11AM-5PM. Also, as the random sample from the enactor study indicates, approximately 60% of all visitors *did* see/notice an enactor in the exhibition.

<sup>20</sup> Using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA):  $f=4.337$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $sign. =.014$ .

***...it is rare that visitors are intimidated by or not interested in the enactors, but rather there are varying reasons for and levels of interacting including simply not seeing the enactors.***

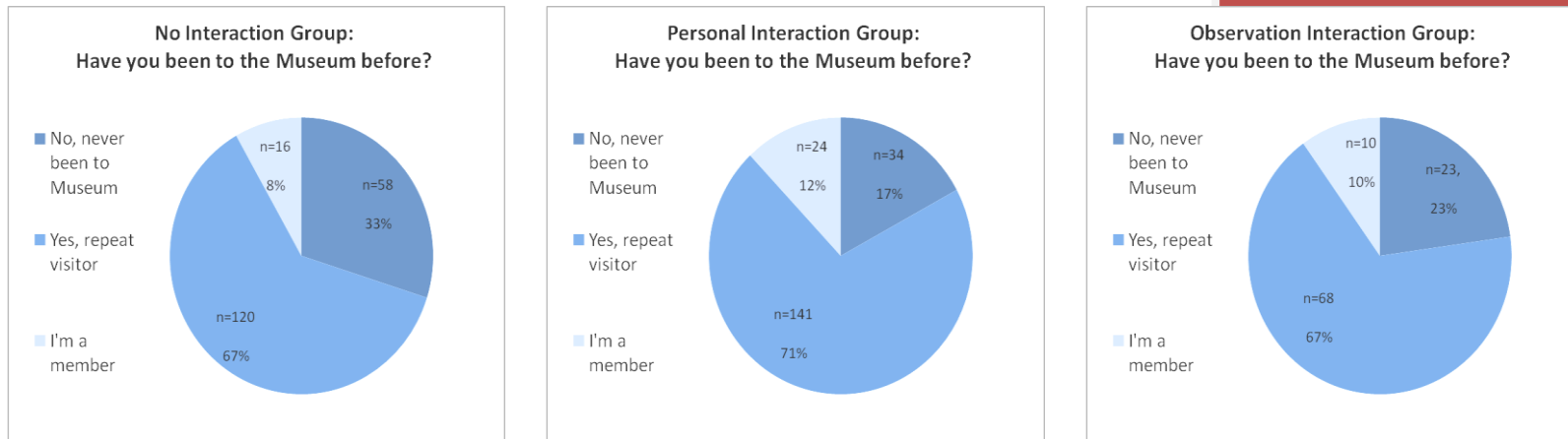
*I had not read about my person [on the boarding pass] before that. I didn't even know who she was until that point. As the conversation went on I think I tried to get more into that character because of his interactions and telling me about her. Now I'll go home and find out more about her. I will.*

-Adult female visitor

likely to engage with enactors. Such secondary hypotheses warrant further examination in future studies of the enactor program. For each group, there was a large range of when the visitor was last at the Museum, varying from within the last week to several years ago.

Chart 1.

Repeat Visitation by Interaction Level



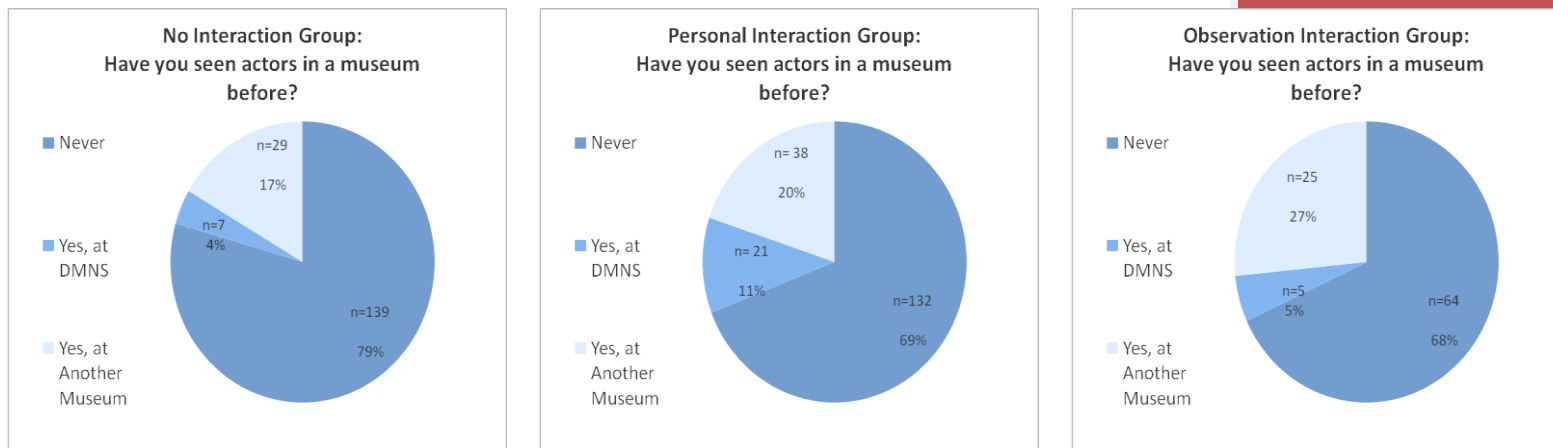
Similarly, the three levels of interaction were examined to evaluate differences in whether or not visitors had seen actors used in museums before their visit to the *Titanic* exhibition. It was significantly more common<sup>21</sup> for those in the direct and indirect interaction groups to have seen actors before, either at DMNS or in another museum (see Chart 2). This may be indicative of a priming affect, in that past interactions prepare the visitor for the experience they may have with an enactor in the present exhibition. In their individual and group interviews, the enactors highlighted their hopes to increase advertising and more heavily promote the enactor program, to ensure that visitors are aware of its existence as well as its purpose when they arrive at the

<sup>21</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t = -2.768$ ,  $df = 493$ ,  $sign. (2-tailed) = .006$ .

Museum. Raising the awareness of visitors may lead to a more even distribution between groups and again is worth examination in future research. That being said, the enactors were advertised considerably in DMNS membership publications, exhibition signage, and other mediums during the *Titanic* run.

Chart 2.

Previous Exposure to Actors in a Museum by Interaction Level

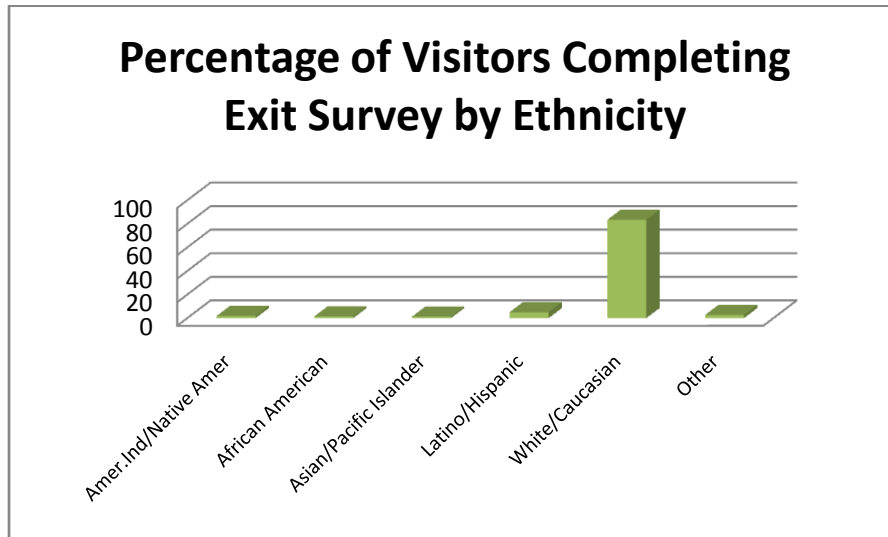


There were no significant differences<sup>22</sup> in gender, age or ethnicity between the three levels of interaction. Thirty-two percent of those who completed exit surveys were male, with the majority (68%) of respondents being women. Sixty-nine percent of respondents were between the ages of 35 and 64, with approximately 8% under 25 and about 9% over 65. Chart 3 (below) shows the breakdown of visitors completing the exit survey by ethnicity.

<sup>22</sup> Using one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) as the method of analysis.

Chart 3.

Visitors Completing the Exit Survey by Ethnicity



The vast majority of respondents identified themselves as White/Caucasian (87.3%, n=413/473). Though all ethnicity categories listed (including “other”) were present in the sample, only White/Caucasian and Latino/Hispanic visitors (n=25/473, 5.3%) represented more than 2% of the sample.

Group sizes ranged from visitors on their own (5%) to groups of over 100 (1%). The majority of groups (93%) were comprised of 8 people or less in them. Many adults visited without children or teenagers (68%), whereas those adults with youth in their groups typically had between one and three children or teens in their group (97%). It should be noted that this study did not target school groups, who were common visitors to the *Titanic* exhibition. Adult chaperones are responsible for the children in their parties, and as such the researchers did not feel it appropriate to take the responsible adults away from their groups. There were some

*I think it makes it come to life, makes it real. It's a very good idea and a wonderful touch.*

*-Adult female visitor*

instances where student group chaperones identified themselves as having the time and ability to complete an exit survey, and in these case the individual was included.

### Timing

A random sample of 100 adult visitors (at the exhibition on their own or as part of a group) were observed and timed entering and exiting the *Titanic* exhibition. Each individual was approached and told that research was being conducted on how long visitors spend in the exhibition. They were then asked to take a card with their entry time recorded on it and hand it back to a researcher upon exiting the exhibition. Upon exiting the exhibition, the time cards were collected and researchers asked each visitor whether or not they spoke to “a costumed actor” while in the exhibition. Forty-six percent (n=46/100) did not speak to an enactor and 54% (54/100) did. The overall average (mean) time spent in the exhibition was 66.36 minutes, or just over an hour, with times ranging between 19 to 162 minutes (over 2 ½ hours). For those who did not speak with an enactor, the average (mean) time spent in the exhibition was 58.07 minutes, compared to 73.43 average (mean) for those who did speak with an enactor.

***Visitors who spoke to an enactor spent, on average, 15.36 minutes longer in the exhibition.***

Equal variances in both groups assumed, the time spent by those who spoke with an enactor is a significantly greater amount of time<sup>23</sup> than that spent by those who did not speak with an enactor, indicating a ***statistically increased likelihood of a visitor spending longer in the exhibition if he or she had enactor interaction.*** This result may have several implications, including that which has been noted by the enactors themselves—those who have a personal interaction with an enactor may connect at a deeper level with the themes, concepts and content of the exhibition, perhaps due to the enriched powerful, personal and unique opportunities intrinsic to the experience. This may lead to greater time spent inside the exhibition (*dwelttime*).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Using a t-test, equal variances assumed:  $t=3.278$ ,  $df= 98$ ,  $sign. (2-tailed)=.001$ .

<sup>24</sup> The reverse hypothesis was examined, i.e. Were those who spent longer in the exhibition

*When she knew who I was [on the boarding pass], she was able to relate to me as though I was that passenger. It just brings it to life.*

*-Adult female visitor*





## What the Visitors Tell Us

Included in the enactor study during the *Titanic* exhibition was the opportunity to obtain qualitative perspective and data from 11 focus groups with visitors and their families or groups. (See Appendix 2 for visitor focus group questions.) The groups ranged from two to four visitor participants, all of whom were given an overview of the research, consent and/or assent forms regarding use of the data and permission forms to be audio recorded (see Appendix 2). Refreshments and complimentary admission passes to IMAX and/or the Museum were provided regardless of completion of the focus group.

Visitors were selected by the research team, based on observation of the individual having a substantial conversation<sup>25</sup> with an enactor during their exhibition visit, and as such should not be viewed as a random sample. These visitors were approached and told about the nature of the study, the focus group intent, standard length (20-30 minutes), and the refreshments and complimentary admission passes offered as a thank you. The rate of refusal by those asked to participate in a focus group was very low (approximately 15 individuals were asked for the 11 focus groups); those who did refuse typically did so because of prior commitments (e.g. IMAX about to start). Attempts were made by the research staff to find individuals from a variety of demographics to best represent those who came to DMNS and attended the *Titanic* exhibition (again, this group should not be viewed as a random sample). The demographics of the focus group participants generally match that of the exit survey group on age, gender and ethnicity. Unlike the exit surveys, the visitor focus groups included youth (8 children and 1 teenager). Groups larger than 6 were not approached due to the researchers' wish to contain the length and scope of the focus groups.

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more likely to speak with an enactor? The results were not statistically significant, indicating that it is the interaction which leads to greater time spent in the exhibition, rather than greater time in the exhibition leading to interaction with an enactor.

<sup>25</sup> "Substantial" was subjectively assessed as a conversation more than a few minutes in length.

*She made it a lot more personal. It was like you were right on the ship with her.*

*-Adult female visitor*



Unlike the exit surveys which were designed for and administered only to adults, the focus groups provided the unique opportunity to hear from younger visitors who interacted with the enactors.

Overall, the 32 focus group participants were impressed by, appreciative of, and enriched by the enactors and their experiences with them. There was an overarching theme of being “happily surprised” by the enactors and what they offered. Many visitors were particularly impressed with the amount and level of knowledge the enactors appeared to possess, delighted and amazed that the enactors recognized the names on their boarding passes, knew their class, backgrounds and professions, and were able to engage with them on such a specific and personal level. Visitors were also impressed with the professionalism of the enactors and the authenticity of the characters, willingly suspending their knowledge that these were actors in a museum and willing to interact with them as if they were passengers on the great ocean liner itself. The observations of the visitors within the focus groups were particularly notable in that they mirrored the intentions and goals identified by the enactors and program coordinators, as well as the 2008 departmental plan.

When asked what about the enactors first attracted the visitors’ attention, many cited the costumes as the initial draw. While seeing someone in period costume in a museum exhibition can be unexpected and—for some—surprising, the illusion of being onboard Titanic was immediately reinforced for visitors. The costumes were cited as being both detailed and authentic, which was an impressive touch for many visitors. The accents used by the actors were also readily perceived and noticed by visitors. Again, the authenticity of the accents was noted and added again to the suspension of disbelief, putting visitors onboard Titanic alongside the enactors. The props too were appreciated by visitors, not only in their authenticity but in their role in the enactors’ storytelling and explanations about the time period (1912). Visitors’ observations and comments again ran parallel to the cited intentions and goals of the program.



***When asked what about the enactors first attracted the visitors’ attention, many cited the costumes as the initial draw.***

Most visitors indicated that they were approached by the enactor and that the enactor led the conversation; however, visitors felt there was interplay between visitor and enactor. Visitors had a variety of ideas about why enactors are part of the exhibition, including: to enhance learning about the exhibition and the time period, to help recreate the sensation on being onboard the ship and to make it feel “real,” to entertain and make visitors feel welcome, to engage visitors and make the Museum more interactive, to personalize and humanize the experience, to emphasize differences between the classes, and to bring the exhibition “to life.”

When asked what their conversations with the enactors entailed, many visitors mentioned that class and gender (e.g. women’s rights) were topics of conversation, as well as more general conversation about who the visitor was on their boarding pass and what life was like onboard. Visitors indicated that the conversations they had with enactors were both meaningful and memorable, providing them with information they would not have obtained elsewhere in the exhibition. This again is in line with the goals and objectives of the enactor program, as well as matching the enactors’ descriptions of their interactions with visitors.

Finally, when asked about if enactors could or should be used in other parts of the Museum, visitors expressed mixed feelings. Some immediately indicated that enactors could be used anywhere in the Museum, helping to add a human and personal element and to provide the opportunity for interaction at multiple levels. Common examples given of where the enactors would work well included the Egypt hall, the Native American Indian hall (*Crane Hall*), and the dinosaur exhibition (*Prehistoric Journey*). Some visitors, on the other hand, felt that enactors would not be appropriate and advantageous for every space within the Museum and encouraged discretion.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> E.g.: “You wouldn’t necessarily be in the right frame of mind. If someone had approached us while we were having lunch... we just wouldn’t have been as ready for it. You’re just not quite as focused.”; “If they had actors in Body Worlds that’d be a little freaky.”

***Visitors indicated that the conversations they had with enactors were both meaningful and memorable, providing them with information they would not have obtained elsewhere in the exhibition.***

## Follow-Up Survey

Approximately one month following data collection for the study, emails were sent to those who voluntarily provided their email addresses on the exit surveys (including those in the visitor focus groups), requesting their response to a brief, online survey. (See Appendix 4 for the online survey.) Email requests were sent to 149 visitors. The response rate was low, with 22% responding (33 visitors). Though the response rate was lower than that desired and does not provide a sample large enough for rigorous quantitative analyses, valuable results can be ascertained from the qualitative questions in particular.

It is worth noting that 4 (12%) of the 33 respondents cited the enactors as what sticks out in their memory from their visit to *Titanic*. Twenty-seven (82%) of those who responded to the online survey either spoke to or observed an enactor, which is a 21% higher than the overall percentage of exit survey-takers who interacted with an enactor. Similarly, 79% (26 individuals) of those who completed the online survey had told friends and family about the enactors since their visit. A secondary hypothesis stemming from these results and warranting further investigation is whether or not those who interact with an enactor on their Museum visit are more likely to respond to a follow-up questionnaire (such as the online survey), perhaps indicative of greater investment in the exhibition (e.g. “buy in”) or, further, if they are more likely to have salient memories of their experience over time than those who did not interact with the enactors.

Memories of the enactors, a month after visitors’ interactions, include:

- “I remember speaking to a maid about what it was like for her on the boat, helping second class passenger (like me!!). I remember she was very good in her character. I saw her talking with the kids and I was very impressed on how well she kept their attention.”
- “She recognized me as one of the third class passengers and challenged my presence in the 1st class dining area. She made it very clear that my class of people were not

***82% of those who responded to the online survey either spoke to or observed an enactor. Similarly, 79% of those who completed the online survey had told friends and family about the enactors since their visit.***

allowed here and that I would be watched closely and any bad behavior reported immediately to the ship's steward."

- "I was 3rd class, so he wasn't really interested in my character. He knew a lot about my husband's first class character though."
- "I would have enjoyed speaking with an actor but the middle-school-age students were very loud and out of control making it impossible to even hear them talk."
- "She introduced herself and extolled the amenities of the ship. She also engaged my husband in a discussion on women's right to vote. She was very welcoming and fun to talk with."
- "My husband had most of the conversation but I talked some. They talked about how nice the first class accommodations were and that it was worth the price of the ticket and how beautiful the weather was for April. It was the man who was traveling under his mistress's name that we spoke to. As we were leaving the exhibit and I had already turned in the questionnaire we also saw a woman speaking to another visitor but they were on the walkway outside the exhibit."
- "I spoke to the man at the entrance. We didn't interact very much but I was trying to overhear what he said to the people ahead of me. I love learning the history about Titanic and its passengers and he told me my boarding pass name was that of the Macy's founders. I loved that."
- "The wonderful accent (she informed us that she was from Ireland) and her absolute professionalism. She explained what her position on the ship would have been and where she was when the alarm was sounded, and how she was put into a life boat."
- "We discussed the attire we were wearing and the actor explained that it was very unsuitable for first class passage. Also discussed suffrage movement."



*(When asked about enactors being used elsewhere in the Museum...)*

*...like an Egyptian exhibit... if they could have some of the dialect, like she did. I mean, I felt like I was talking to a young woman from Ireland that was on this ship; I really did. To see the costumes in a case versus on a person is very different.*

*-Adult female visitor*

Seventy percent of the online survey respondents felt that using enactors in the Museum was a “*great idea*”, followed by another 27% believing it was a “*good idea*”. No respondent indicated that they felt it was a bad idea.

Seven (21%) respondents indicated that they had attended the *Franklin* exhibition earlier in the year, but none recalled seeing an enactor in that exhibition.

Many of the online survey respondents had ideas about new, different, interesting or engaging ways to use enactors at the Museum, including:

- “It would have been interesting to watch a portrayal of actors in the sleeping quarters exhibit (or other arranged areas)--talking amongst themselves, having dinner, etc.)”
- “Every time I visit Denver I go to the Museum and always love it. I think having actors is a great idea. It's a big add-on to learn more about the exhibit.”
- “Even though I did not interact with the actors, from what I observed they are being used effectively.”
- “You could use them throughout the Museum, not just for special exhibits”
- “As a big geology nut... how about paleontologists, prospectors, or mineralogists in the Hall of Gems and Paleontology exhibits.”
- “If you don't already have child actors, I think it would be a great way to engage youngsters.”
- “I imagine there are many great stories about how the dioramas were developed, including the collecting of specimens in far-flung places. If emphasis were placed on how the collecting was done carefully, modestly, and for the good of knowledge for future generations, I think it would be fun to hear about chasing moose in Alaska, etc. A first-person account might be a great way to educate about the environment of the diorama as well as entertain.”

***... visitors who responded to the online survey appreciated and captured the many facets, dynamics and potential uses of DMNS enactors. It is notable how similar the ideas above are to those of the enactors themselves, emphasizing that both staff and visitors alike see similar applications and a future for the program.***

- “In the Mummy exhibit, the dinosaur exhibit.”
- “You could have docents in costume (or actors as docents) sharing info in that way. I personally love hearing about the lives of individuals who had actually lived in a particular time. Volunteers might also especially love representing people they had admired.”
- “Interaction with actors is a great idea. It provides a realistic perspective and easy to relate to what people living at that time were experiencing. Makes the experience very memorable.”

Similar to those who responded through the exit surveys and visitor focus groups, and including the enactors themselves, visitors who responded to the online survey appreciated and captured the many facets, dynamics and potential uses of DMNS enactors. It is notable how similar the ideas above are to those of the enactors themselves, emphasizing that both staff and visitors alike see similar applications and a future for the program.

### **Visitor Blogs**

In addition to the internet providing the study with a vehicle by which to learn about the longitudinal effects of the enactors and to hear further from DMNS visitors, it also provided an unexpected source of information for the study. Two internet blogs (an abbreviation for “web logs”) were discovered while program coordinators were researching their roles and exploring character development online. One blog recounts the experiences of a high school student who visited the exhibition and interacted with Mr. George Rosenshine/Thorne. In addition to writing about her experience in the exhibition and the tragedy of the events, the student recounts her conversation with the enactor verbatim in her blog and states, “I lived. But still, if you think about it, it's just terrifyingly sad.... I did find solace and amusement in the little

***In addition to the internet providing the study with a vehicle by which to learn about the longitudinal effects of the enactors and to hear further from DMNS visitors, it also provided an unexpected source of information for the study—blogs.***



character people who wandered through the boat areas, dressed in turn-of-the-century clothes, who interacted with you.”<sup>27</sup>

Another visitor, a mother of three, also recounted her and her children’s interactions with Mr. George Rosenshine/Thorne following their visit to DMNS. She writes:

...our favorite thing was meeting a man in period costume who talked all about his life. He was a 1st class Ostrich Feather importer from NYC, travelling with his wife. He assured [my son] that even though he was in 3rd class, he was treated better than most 2nd class passengers on other ships. He also told [my son] that after he came out of quarantine [sic] from Ellis Island, that he needed to go out to Coney Island (“Find a train, but not just any train! This one goes underground! An *underground* train, can you believe it?!!!” he said). “Then,” he added, “you’re going to want some ice cream. And you’re never going to believe this, but they sell ice cream that you can walk around with! They take a scoop of vanilla, and then take a waffle that looks...well, kinda like a cone...and they put the scoop IN the cone!!! And you eat it while walking! Imagine that!” By this time, [my son] was really into it. “But what you have to make sure you do, is go on their new ride. It’s a big, tall hill...made out of wood! And by tall, I mean, it’s gotta be 60 feet high! And you get into a car, and they pull you to the top of the hill. And at the very top....*THEY LET YOU GO!!!* And you go screaming down the hill...and back up another one! It’s the most amazing thing you’ll ever do!” It was so funny to hear him describe things that we take for granted!

As we walked out, we ran back into the Ostrich Importer from New York City. “How’d you all make out? Alright?” [My daughter] and I were quiet, not wanting to be glad we made it because we were still so sad for [my son]. He piped up and softly said, “I died. My brother and I died. But my wife made it!”

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<sup>27</sup> The website addresses of the blogs are not cited in order to protect the identities of the Museum visitors.

*I lived. But still, if you think about it, it's just terrifyingly sad.... I did find solace and amusement in the little character people who wandered through the boat areas, dressed in turn-of-the-century clothes, who interacted with you.*

*-Excerpt from the internet blog of a high school student/visitor*

NYC guy said, “My sweetie made it, too. I put her on the lifeboat and watched her lowered down. But hey! I bet you and I”, at this point he put his arm around [my son], “I bet you and I sat back on the deck, smoked a few cigars, and waved to our sweeties together.” Then he smiled and walked away.

While anecdotal, these two accounts are further evidence of the longitudinal impact that the enactor program has on visitors.

### **What We Found—Reexamining Goals and Hypotheses**

The *Titanic* exhibition as a case study provides resounding support for the original 6 main goals/hypotheses of the enactor program, outlined at the beginning of the study to help define the unique experience believed to be provided by enactors.

The first goal/hypothesis, “the enactor program gets visitors’ attention and supplies a framework for engaging in powerful and unique ways,” received support not only in the qualitative reports provided by the enactors themselves, but also in the quantitative and qualitative data collected from visitors in the exit surveys, focus groups and follow-up online survey methods. Not only are the enactors “a hook” for attracting visitors’ attention, but they open up opportunities for engagement that are personal, unique, meaningful and powerful in scope. The exhibition and/or objects within can be explored from a perspective and frame of reference not otherwise provided in the Museum when an enactor interacts with a visitor.

There was also support for the second hypothesis, that “interaction with enactors provides opportunities for visitors to make connections with people from the past in a way that is both personal and meaningful.” Many visitors, in the exit surveys, the focus groups and through the online surveys, indicated that connections made with the enactors made them feel a real connection to the time and place of the exhibition, putting them “onboard the Titanic.” This added to the humanizing of the exhibition, making it far more personal and relevant. Beyond this, the interaction appears to create memorable and lasting impressions for visitors,

*I can't think of any venue that I have been to in my entire lifetime that puts together fact with storytelling with music with factual facts with theater, combining all of these historical things in a character. I've never been to another museum, I've never been to an art gallery, I've never been to any other venue that's... not a library, anything... where people come to life historically like they do in this venue. I think it's just awesome. It's just great.*

*-DMNS enactor*

providing a connection that lasts beyond the length of the Museum visit, as demonstrated in the longitudinal follow-up surveys online.

“Interaction with enactors brings context to exhibit areas and objects through personal narratives, interactive stories and/or object use” was the third goal or hypothesis outlined at the beginning of the study. Many visitors, particularly in the focus groups, identified the use of objects and props by the enactors, as well as artifacts and images throughout the exhibition, as vehicles used by the enactors to tell story and convey themes. There were also observations by visitors that interactive stories and narratives, such as those between enactors (e.g. debates on women’s suffrage) highlighted important issues of the times and brought light to what was important in that era (e.g. class and gender). This goes beyond what the exhibition does on its own, creating a human context through personal interaction.

The fourth identified goal was that “interaction with enactors enriches the visitors’ understanding of the themes, concepts and content of exhibits.” Visitors noted that the information and knowledge gained from their interactions with the enactors was something they would not have found elsewhere in the exhibition, enriching and deepening their understanding of the subject matter and themes. Additionally, visitors indicated (particularly in the focus groups) that having a conversation about themes or concepts enriched their level of understanding and integration of the information.

“Interaction with enactors enables opportunities for visitors to engage in two modes of discussion-- with historical context and/or infused with modern sensibilities” was the fifth outlined hypothesis. Visitors demonstrated throughout the study that they were able to connect with the past while also making associations to the present time, grasping the changes that have occurred and the contexts as they have shifted. The enactors were able to address both the present and the past by interacting with visitors in ways that allow for connections and relevancy to the visitors’ personal experiences.

*Coca-Cola; football; roller coasters; ice cream cones.... I can bring them little tidbits of information and history about what’s going on—not only on the Titanic, but outside and in the era.*

*-DMNS enactor*

*It was exciting at the end to know that she survived and it was exciting to know that I survived as a 3<sup>rd</sup> class passenger so that was kind of neat for me. At the end... I get kind of emotional about stuff... Well, I think part of it was because she was so good in what she did you almost felt personally invested in her and you wanted her to survive. And so when she did, I went back in the exhibit to try and find her and I wanted to hug her and say, ‘You made it and so did I!’*

*-Adult female visitor*

Finally, the sixth goal or hypothesis was that “interactions with enactors are open-ended, allowing visitors to choose their level of involvement and direct the content of the conversation, creating a personal and relevant experience.” Visitors demonstrated the variety of levels of involvement simply in the diversity of the exit survey sample, with many not interacting with an enactor or observing an interaction rather than engaging personally. Not only is the level of involvement a personal choice to be made by the visitor, but the conversations themselves are tailored to the individual, with visitors informing and influencing the path and direction of the conversations. Regardless of what level of interaction a visitor chooses to engage in, there is strong evidence that any interaction enhances the visitor experience.

#### Franklin, By Contrast

Though the *Franklin* exhibition’s use of enactors was not studied as *Titanic* was, many features which made it a unique and compelling example of the enacting program were illustrated in this study, particularly through the individual and group interviews with the enactors. Additionally, enactors kept logs of their experiences throughout the run of the temporary exhibition which help to illuminate core elements. (See Appendix 5 for excerpts from the enactors’ *Franklin* logs.)

The enactor program was tailored specifically for both exhibitions and, as such, looked very different in *Franklin* and *Titanic* from both the perspectives of the enactors and the visitors. One key difference was that while in *Titanic* the enactors portrayed actual passengers from the voyage, in *Franklin* the enactors were composite, historically-informed semi-fictional characters. Another key difference was that while in *Titanic* the enactors stayed largely in the exhibition hall itself and maintained their roles as passengers in 1912, *Franklin* enactors utilized many areas of the Museum and portrayed characters that were transported to the year 2007—seeing DMNS and interacting with “the future” for the first time.

***Franklin provided an opportunity to leave the walls of the exhibition space and go out into diverse areas of DMNS to reach audiences and visitors.***

*He led it, but we were very free to add to it. He listened to what we had to say and he incorporated that in what he was presenting. I was very impressed with the guy.*

*-Adult female visitor*

The *Titanic* case study focused on in this report highlighted the views of many visitors that enactment could be used anywhere in the Museum as a vehicle for entertainment, education and interaction. *Franklin* is an example of this in practice. One goal of the enactor program in *Franklin* was to draw visitors in and make them more aware of the exhibition. As such, *Franklin* provided an opportunity to leave the walls of the exhibition and go out into diverse areas of DMNS to reach audiences and visitors. This expansion into many parts of the Museum encouraged not only a broader audience (especially in terms of age range), but also allowed the opportunity for Museum visitors to function as teachers and educators to characters from another time (the enactors). Through explaining objects such as cell phones and escalators, visitors speaking with *Franklin's* enactors had a unique opportunity to personally engage in the exhibition, as well as to highlight the differences between Benjamin Franklin's time and the present.

There were over 16,500 recorded interactions<sup>28</sup> between enactors and visitors during *Franklin*, and an additional 3,220 visitors experienced the enactors "visiting" 88 shows throughout the Museum's halls and exhibitions. Transported from another time and place, the enactors' characters observed and participated in visitor programming shows, including:

- Heart dissections, lung dissections, and a show entitled "Are You Seeing or Believing?" in the health sciences hall (*Hall of Life*);
- "Astronaut on the Surface" show, Starry Night Pro program, and storytelling in the space sciences exhibition (*Space Odyssey*); and
- "Storm Shooter" show and storytelling and games in the children's interactive educational area (*Discovery Zone*).

While the enactor program in *Franklin* moved beyond the exhibition walls and explored multiple approaches to visitor-enactor interactions, the program in *Titanic* provided an enhancement to an exhibition already designed as an immersive visitor experience. The chart

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<sup>28</sup> *Titanic* had over 200,000 recorded interactions. The number stated is not the number of visitors, as some visitors saw more than one enactor; it is the number of visitor-enactor interactions.

***Through explaining objects such as cell phones and escalators, visitors speaking with Franklin's enactors had a unique opportunity to personally engage in the exhibition, as well as to highlight the differences between Benjamin Franklin's time and the present.***

below (Chart 4) illustrates key differences in the enactor program as it was utilized in both exhibitions.

Chart 4. Key Differences Between *Titanic* and *Franklin* Enactor Programs

	<b><i>Franklin</i> exhibition</b>	<b><i>Titanic</i> exhibition</b>
<b>Characters portrayed</b>	Portrayed composite characters (“Ben’s neighbors”) created to maximize effective visitor interactions	Portrayed actual passengers, reflecting exhibition byline: “Real Stories, Real Objects”; fellow passengers alongside the visitors (who had “boarding passes”)
<b>Primary area(s) utilized in DMNS</b>	Primarily outside of the exhibition, in the “neutral” Museum areas and took part as “visitors” to the Museum in the shows throughout various halls and exhibitions (see bullets above)	Primarily in the exhibition, taking advantage of areas associated with the passengers they portrayed. Also worked in lifeboat area of the exhibition. During busy times, enactors also worked in the queues outside of the exhibit.
<b>Characters’ time in history</b>	From Franklin’s time, but “transported” to 2007. When conversing with visitors, expressed fascination with modern technology, clothing, ideals, and daily life. Able to compare and contrast their experience and understanding of 300 years ago with those they were observing in 2007.	Rooted in 1912, prior to the tragedy. Spoke to the visitors as fellow passengers, discussing matters related to the ship, voyage, politics, philosophy, and daily life. Occasionally alluded to future (both personal plans and worldview), and discussed life in early 1900s relevant to visitors of today, but without directly acknowledging 2007. When in the lifeboat area, took more elusive approach to time; still fixed to time around sinking of the ship.



<b>Visitor reactions</b>	Visitors enjoyed “teaching” enactors about modern times—enhanced relevance and opportunity to consider issues related to then versus now.	Helped visitors imagine they were onboard; “brought the ship to life;” helped visitors emotionally connect and enhanced context regarding the objects and the event.
<b>Primary role of enactors (re: exhibition plan)</b>	Helped increase awareness of the exhibition; promoted it as appealing exhibition to visit (exhibit was free with admission).	Added value to the exhibition itself for visitors already ticketed to enter (exhibit had admission fee an addition to Museum admission fee).

Though some visitors involved in the *Titanic* study did visit *Franklin*, very few recalled enactors as a component of the exhibition. This may be due to several factors, including the fewer number of enactors utilized in *Franklin*<sup>29</sup>, the presence of enactors primarily external to the exhibition, or the time that has elapsed since the exhibition. For future exhibitions and projects utilizing enactors, it may be of use to collect, at minimum, a baseline level of data (such as exit surveys) so that the results can be compared and contrasted to the current study. This will allow a more holistic view of the enactor program, as well as highlight key differences that exist between renditions of the enactors’ interactions with visitors (often dependent on the exhibition or project).

Next Steps

Prior to this study, the Visitor Programs (VP) Department of DMNS planned and budgeted the extension of the enactor program into 2008: “This year in conjunction with *Franklin*, historical enactors took part in baseline exhibit shows and conversed with visitors in the atrium. This was exciting for visitors, revitalizing to the VP staff, and created a strong link to the temporary exhibit. *Titanic* enactors are similarly captivating to visitors. Based on these successes, and

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<sup>29</sup> The schedule for *Franklin* was Sunday-Thursday: one enactor, 10am-4 pm, Friday and Saturday: two enactors, 10am-4pm, 10am-4pm.

*Suddenly then it becomes this human experience that anyone could have, at any age.*

*-DMNS enactor*

***Prior to this study, the Visitor Programs (VP) Department of DMNS planned and budgeted the extension of the enactor program into 2008.***



what we learn in the evaluation, we plan to extend enactment to our permanent galleries and prototype different approaches. Possible examples include enhancing our mineral hall during the Gold exhibition, or Prehistoric Journey during the Dinosaur exhibition, and programming in the diorama halls and Discovery Zone.”<sup>30</sup>

The program began in *Franklin*, which provided the opportunity to pilot the program and experiment with unique ways to interact throughout the Museum with visitors. It continued through *Titanic*, adding further expansions and accentuating visitors’ personal connections to the exhibition. The enactors and DMNS visitors alike have a variety of ideas about where the enactor program can and should go in the future, many which have been presented throughout the enactor program study above. Examining the results of this study, the program is successful in meeting its objective and goals. The program is also highly regarded both by visitors and by those who work within the program. Additionally, the program is a priority within the Museum and well-supported. The proceeding analyses indicate that future support and expansion of the enactor program would be well-received not only by those within the program, but also appreciated by DMNS’ adult, child and family audiences.

Part of the work of visitor studies and museum research and evaluation is to be a visitor advocate -- providing visitors with a voice and a platform. The enactor study and the proceeding summary have focused on providing both a voice and credence to the visitors to DMNS, highlighting their observations, views and opinions of one of the newer programs in place to provide an interactive and rewarding Museum experience. This study accentuates that visitors to DMNS not only value the enactor program as it currently exists, but want to see it expand and receive further support. The areas below address the three most common issues of program development brought to light by the enactors and the visitors in the study.

***The enactor study and the proceeding summary have focused on providing both a voice and credence to the visitors to DMNS, highlighting their observations, views and opinions of one of the newer programs in place to provide an interactive and rewarding Museum experience.***

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<sup>30</sup> Excerpted from the 2008 Visitor Programs Department Plan/Situation Analysis.

## Program Awareness

Many visitors to DMNS and, in the study above, to the *Titanic* exhibition came without any prior knowledge of the enactors or their role within the Museum. While there is no evidence that this detracted from the experience visitors had with enactors, there is evidence that having prior knowledge may have accentuated the visitor experience. Many visitors were surprised by the presence of the enactors, and were unsure of their role and whether or not they should or could interact with them. Once the interaction was underway, visitors generally felt comfortable and at ease with the conversation. Those visitors who had encountered enactors either at DMNS or at other museums or informal learning venues were more likely to interact with the enactors and to understand their role. The enactors themselves have many creative ideas about how to increase awareness about and visibility of the program, including reference to enactors on the Museum brochure/map, signage, and a designated place within the Museum to meet the enactors, take photographs and ask questions. Due to the uniqueness of this program, perceived by both the enactors and visitors alike, there is a desire to highlight the program in a way which gives credit to the unusual form of interpretation successfully being implemented in this progressive and effective way. The enactor program in *Titanic* was showcased in the Museum's membership magazine, as well as through signage in the exhibition. These mediums may have helped to emphasize the program. Further promotion of the program through additional avenues may give visitors increased contact with something they indicate that they value and are requesting more of.

## Program Resources

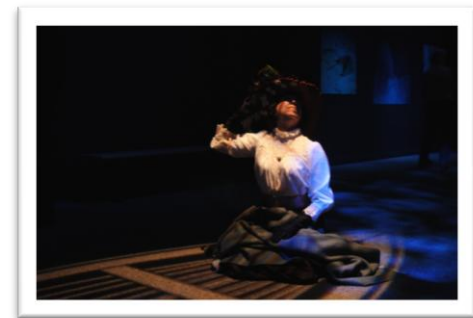
Budget and scope for the enactment program in both *Franklin* and *Titanic* were proposed and approved as part of a holistic plan for each exhibition. In *Franklin*, two-thirds of the entire Visitor Programs budget for the exhibition was dedicated to the enactor program<sup>31</sup>. In *Titanic*, the budget amount for the enactor program was increased to accommodate an additional

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<sup>31</sup> The budget also included training 300 volunteers and creating 5 artifact/activity carts.

*I think we have a really strong program. Letting it evolve, letting it go out, and maybe not just be glued to a specific exhibit-- that might really help it grow. The Denver Museum of Nature and Science could be known for its interaction, its enactor program. It could be what separates it from other places.*

*-DMNS enactor*



enactor, and to run the program for twice as long<sup>32</sup>. Enhancements to temporary exhibits, such as carts, activities, and the enactor program, are designed to balance two factors: 1. complementing the exhibit in a way that maximally enhances the visitor experience without overwhelming or detracting from the exhibits; and 2. encompassing a scope and budget that is reasonable to develop and to support. As an enhancement to temporary exhibitions and visitor programs within DMNS, the enactor program has received substantial support and funding.

In both *Franklin* and *Titanic*, program coordinators felt that 3-4 enactors was ideal; enactors were present every day for the majority of the Museum's open hours (including evening hours in *Titanic* and with double the presence on the busiest days), and management remained practical. The program coordinators also felt that an enactor team of this size was also ideally balanced for other key reasons—encouraging the enactors' individualism, strong ownership, and autonomous flexibility in character development. A larger group of enactors may have required more uniformity and limits in order to be manageable. A smaller group may have restricted idea exchange and shift overlap, crucial in problem-solving ways to best interact with visitors.

As a start-up program still in its developmental stages, resource allocation has been purposeful and cautious. Also, there is a need to recognize limits within program expansion. With the outcomes of the study now confirming not only the program's success in meeting its goals but also its popularity with and interest from DMNS visitors, however, program resources may need to be revisited.

The enactors have indicated that they believe further resources allocated to the program—specifically to hire additional enactors and to more comprehensively support costuming and props—would help to push the enactor program to its full potential. Enactors too have expressed difficulty in knowing that when they leave their shifts there may be visitors who will not have the opportunity to interact with an enactor and have the enhanced experience.

Visitors have indicated that on previous visits, both to *Titanic* and to *Franklin*, they have not seen enactors. In cases where enactors were seen on previous visits, visitors cite that the

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<sup>32</sup> The *Titanic* temporary exhibition was at DMNS for 6 months, compared to 3 months for *Franklin*.

***Enhancements to temporary exhibits, such as carts, activities, and the enactor program, are designed to balance two factors: 1. complementing the exhibit in a way that maximally enhances the visitor experience without overwhelming or detracting from the exhibits; and 2. encompassing a scope and budget that is reasonable to develop and to support.***

enactors were otherwise occupied by other visitors (particularly children), so they did not feel that they could engage with them themselves. Additionally, visitors have suggested the addition of more enactors—including children—and have listed many ways to expand the program into many areas of the Museum, including permanent exhibitions and education programs.

### **Program Expansion**

As stated above, the Visitor Programs Department of DMNS has both supported the initiation of the enactor program and has remained committed to its extension and expansion. Through this study, visitors have added their support for expansion, with almost all visitors feeling that having actors in the Museum is a *good or great idea*. The data shows that the experience is memorable, promotes the integration of thematic and conceptual learning, enhances the personalization and relevance of an exhibition, and provides a powerful, unique and personally customizable experience. Enactors and visitors alike have provided many creative and varied suggestions as to how the program might be expanded, including utilizing enactors to enrich the Museum’s permanent spaces and halls. These suggestions and ideas are in line with the VP Department’s 2008 plan, which cites plans to prototype enactors in permanent galleries (as well as possibly continuing the program in temporary exhibitions) this calendar year<sup>33</sup>.

Next steps might include a thorough review of the suggestions put forward by the enactors, program coordinators and visitors alike to come up with a list of target enhancements and expansion plans for the next 3 to 5 years. Additionally, it would be prudent to continue to assess ongoing enactor program initiatives and efforts in light of what has been illuminated in

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<sup>33</sup> E.g.: “Based on these successes, and what we learn in the evaluation, we plan to extend enactment to our permanent galleries and prototype different approaches. Possible examples include enhancing our mineral hall during the Gold exhibition, or Prehistoric Journey during the Dinosaur exhibition, and programming in the diorama halls and Discovery Zone.” (Excerpted from the 2008 Visitor Programs Department Plan/Situation Analysis.)

***Enactors and visitors alike have provided many creative and varied suggestions as to how the program might be expanded, including utilizing enactors to enrich the Museum’s permanent spaces and halls. These suggestions and ideas are in line with the VP Department’s 2008 plan, which cites plans to prototype enactors in permanent galleries (as well as possibly continuing the program in temporary exhibitions) this calendar year.***

the study outlined above. Again, as a relatively new program still in its early developmental stages, progressive learning is anticipated alongside continuous review and revision. Future expansion may consider, as and when appropriate, a targeted development and marketing campaign to support such initiatives, supplemented by additional research and evaluation into how visitors, staff, volunteers and the community could best support the program, financially and otherwise. Visitors invested in a program and its success will not only be repeat visitors, but will be stewards and ambassadors for the program, helping to ensure its longevity and ongoing success.

### Thanks

Thanks to the program coordinators within the DMNS enactor program, especially Jennifer Moss-Logan, and the enactors, the staff and volunteers working in and around the *Titanic* exhibition, and the research assistants: Ashante Butcher, Dina Chaiffetz, Melody Combs, Lynn DiLorenzo, Chris Estock, Ruth Franceschi, Sarah Franceschi, Kirsten Lawrence-Carrizo, Tammy Rudolph, Stephanie Skiles, Autumn Souza, Lisa Steed, Jaime Travis, Detria Walker and Tamara Williams. For assistance in writing and editing, thanks to Joe Verrengia. Finally, thanks to all the visitors at DMNS for sharing their insight, opinions and ideas. Finally, thanks to the precedent set by DMNS' demonstration program (since 1992) and actor program (since 2003).

*The visitors have really taught me to be patient and to let them dictate where it's going to go.*

*-DMNS enactor*



**Appendix 1: Visitor Exit Survey/Questionnaire**

**Titanic Visitor Questionnaire**

*Thank you for your time. Your thoughts and opinions will help the Museum to improve experiences for visitors.*

**Q1** Please answer the following about how Titanic felt to you:

	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Not very</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>	<i>Very</i>
How <b>powerful</b> was the exhibition?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How <b>unique</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How <b>personal and/or meaningful</b> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q2** After visiting Titanic today, I feel ... **than I did before I went through the exhibition.**

	<i>Much less</i>	<i>A little less</i>	<i>A little more</i>	<i>Much more</i>
... informed/knowledgeable about the <b>Titanic disaster overall</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... connected with the <b>person on my boarding pass</b> (or other passengers and crew of the Titanic)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... aware of <b>what life was like in 1912</b> as compared to now	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... clear about the <b>recovery process and science</b> related to Titanic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... informed/knowledgeable about <b>economic, social and class issues</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... informed/knowledgeable about women's <b>suffrage/ women's rights</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... connected to the <b>objects and artifacts of Titanic</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Q3** What **ONE** thing about the Titanic exhibition do you think you'll remember the most or tell people about?

*You may have noticed or spoke to **costumed actors**, dressed as Titanic passengers and crew, in the exhibition.... If you **DID** notice the actors, please answer questions 4 through 9 below.*

***IF YOU DID NOT NOTICE THE ACTORS, please skip down to QUESTION 9. Thank you!***

**Q4** I think that actors are part of the exhibition (check as many as you feel apply):

- To entertain Museum visitors.....
- To surprise/shock visitors .....
- To help visitors find their way through the exhibition
- To give visitors information about the exhibition (the objects, artifacts, ship, etc.).....
- To talk to visitors about history-- what life was like on the Titanic, in 1912, etc. ....
- To make the exhibition feel more "real"/like you're on the ship.....
- Other .....

If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q5** I think using actors in the Museum is... *A great idea*  *A good idea*  *Not the best idea*  *A bad idea*

**PLEASE TURN OVER TO COMPLETE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Q6 Did you speak to any of the actors? Yes.....  No...(Please skip to question 9)

Q7 If yes, who began the conversation? I approached the actor.....  The actor approached me .....

Q8 The actor and I spoke about:

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Q9 If you did **NOT** speak to an actor during your visit today, why not? (check as many as you feel apply)

I didn't see/notice the actor(s) .....  It seemed embarrassing/ weird .....

I watched someone else speak with actor(s) .....  I was focused on the exhibition; there to see Titanic

I didn't know I should/could talk to the actor(s).....  I was in a hurry.....

It's not something I would do/Not interested .....  Other.....

If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for taking the time to tell us about your visit to Titanic today. Please let us know a little about yourself.**

Q10 Have you been to this museum before? Yes  No  I'm a Member   
If yes, when was the last time? \_\_\_\_\_

Q11 Have you ever seen actors used here or at any other museum before? Here  Other Museum  Never   
If yes, **Where? And what did you think?** \_\_\_\_\_

Q12 Are you male or female? Male .....  Female.....

Q13 What is your age? Under 25 .....  35 to 44 .....  55 to 64 .....  75 or older .....   
25 to 34 .....  45 to 54 .....  65 to 74 .....

Q14 What is your ethnic origin? (Optional)

American Indian/Alaskan  Asian/Pacific Islander.....  White/Caucasian.....

Native/ Native American .....  Latino/Hispanic.....  Other.....

African American/ Black.....   
If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

Q15 How many people were in your group today, including yourself? \_\_\_\_\_

Q16 How many of these were children or teens? Children: \_\_\_\_\_ Teens: \_\_\_\_\_

Q17 **We are interested in what you remember from your Museum visit a month from now. If you are ok with being contacted in the future, please provide us with your email address:**

**Thank you for your time.  
Please return this questionnaire to the research staff on your way out.**



## **Appendix 2: Visitor Focus Group Questions**

### **Enactor Study Visitor Focus Groups**

#### **Protocol:**

Bring individual/family to space.

Offer restroom, refreshments.

Read through study description and explain recording.

Go through consent and assent forms. Get signatures.

Give one adult per group the standard exit survey.

Go through instructions (Identify self before speaking, i.e. cards)

Start digital recorder. State interviewer name, date and time of interview.

#### **Interview questions:**

1. What did you think when you first noticed the costumed actor(s) in the Titanic exhibition?

a. Follow ups:

Where were you when you saw the actor(s)?

What about the actor(s) got your attention?

What did you think of the costumes they wore? Props they carried?

2. Why do you think that actors are part of the exhibition?

3. Who started the conversation—you, or the actor?

a. Follow ups:

What did you talk about?

Was it interesting or meaningful to you?

Who led the conversation?

4. Is there anything you understand better about the exhibition or about Titanic because of your conversation with the actor(s)?
5. Did talking with the actor(s) make you feel more connected to the passenger on your boarding pass or any of the objects in the exhibition? (Can you give an example?)
6. Did you talk about the past (Titanic times) or about the present (now)?
7. Were you “yourself” in the conversation, or did you pretend you were a passenger or someone else?
8. Do you feel other parts of the Museum/exhibitions would benefit from having actors in them? (Can you give an example?)
9. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about your experience with the actor(s)?
10. Did you come to the Franklin exhibition earlier this year?      \_\_Y    \_\_N  
(If yes) Did you see any actors in that exhibition?    \_\_Y    \_\_N    (Please tell me about it)

**Closing:**

Stop recording.

Thank participants for their time and acknowledge their help and contribution.

Remind about email follow-up and see if it’s okay to do so.

Give admission pass to all participants.

Show them how to exit.

### **Appendix 3: Enactor Focus Group/Interview Questions**

#### **Enactor Focus Group Questions**

1. What about the enactor program makes it different or unique as a form of Museum interpretation? What is that “hook” about it that nothing else can replicate or accomplish?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the enacting in Franklin and Titanic?
3. What one anecdote or story do you tell people the most when they ask you about your work as an enactor? Why is it a good example of the work you do?
4. How do you learn from each others’ experiences and work as a team?
5. What other ways do you think the enacting program could be used throughout the Museum?
6. What role does your costume or do your props play in your interactions with visitors?
7. What is the hardest thing about enacting?
8. What could make the enactment program stronger?

#### **Enactor Interview Questions**

1. What about the enactor program makes it different or unique as a form of Museum interpretation? What is that “hook” about it that nothing else can replicate or accomplish?
2. Did you work in both Franklin and Titanic? If yes, what are the similarities and differences in the enacting?
3. What one anecdote or story do you tell people the most when they ask you about your work as an enactor? Why is it a good example of the work you do?
4. What keeps you coming back every day? What do you like most about enacting?
5. What other ways do you think the enacting program could be used throughout the Museum?
6. What character research do you do? How does it pay off or work in your interactions with visitors?
7. What role does your costume or do your props play in your interactions with visitors?
8. What is the hardest thing about enacting?
9. What could make the enactment program stronger?
10. What have you learned from visitors that has made you do things differently?

**Appendix 4: Visitor Online Follow-Up Survey**

**DMNS Titanic Visitor Follow-Up**

1. What sticks out most in your memory about your visit to Titanic at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science?

2. Please answer the following about how Titanic felt to you:

	Not at all	Not very	Somewhat	Very
How powerful was the exhibition?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How unique?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
How personal and/or meaningful?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Did you speak to any of the costumed actors (portraying passengers from Titanic) during your visit?

- Yes, I spoke to an actor/actors
- I did not speak to an actor, but I observed someone else speaking to one
- No, I did not see or watch an actor/actors

4. Have you told any of your friends or family about the costumed actors in Titanic?

5. If you DID speak with an actor, please let us know what you remember speaking about.

6. Using actors in the Museum is...  
Select at least 1 response and no more than 1 response.

- A great idea
- A good idea
- Not the best idea
- A bad idea

7. We used actors in the recent Ben Franklin exhibition too. Did you see that exhibition?

-- None --

8. If you DID come to the Ben Franklin exhibition and can remember anything about the actors, please comment below.

9. Please let us know any ideas you have about new, different, interesting or engaging ways we might be able to use actors at the Museum.

Done

Cancel

## **Appendix 5: Franklin Enactor Log Excerpts**

### **Enactor A:**

3-3: I've had some wonderful interactions with visitors in the Franklin exhibit. Some visitors are tired of walking and will sit on the benches – this is a great time to engage them in conversation. I spoke with a woman who was legally blind and she was very happy to speak with someone who was knowledgeable about the exhibit. When visitors sit in the fan chairs I found I could sit next to them and they welcomed the company.

3-6: Kids love to show you things and teach you about their modern world. I had a group of middle schoolers who wanted to spend their last 30 minutes in the museum with me instead of looking at something else. We talked about women's rights, clothing, politics, dance, games, they taught me handshakes, asked me what Ben Franklin would have thought about all kinds of things.

3-13: I had my first return visitor – I was speaking with a gentleman about the Gulf Stream and he came back perhaps an hour after our discussion to elaborate. He must have been thinking about it during the day and wanted to come back to tell me his new ideas. Also today, I spoke with two gentlemen from India, one of whom gave me a rupee coin. I am very interested in Indian culture, and so when he asked for my email, I just couldn't resist stepping out of character for a brief moment to oblige him. I will let you know if and when he contacts me.

3-20: I love "Ben & Now"! Today was my third time reading it for a group in the DZ<sup>34</sup>, and every time it has gone really well. Pre-K through maybe 2<sup>nd</sup> grade is an ideal target for this story. I omit certain things depending on the group and I will write up some ideas I've been playing with. I also spent some time with kids making squirrel puppets, and they really enjoyed that, too.

3-28: One very young gentleman escorted me from the DZ up to the Egyptian mummies. He was very excited to teach me something. After we visited that area, I escorted him and his family to the Franklin exhibit. After taking my leave of them, I gathered a big crowd in the exhibit! (So large, in fact, security asked me to move.) It was quite by accident, people just started gathering as I was talking about currency and politics. It was awesome! Probably 30 people stayed listening and conversing with me for more than 20 minutes.

3-31: Returning visitors! I had a family return to the museum today with out-of-town guests – we had all enjoyed conversing the week prior, and now with a larger group we continued our discussion about politics and personal stories about Mr. Franklin. It was great to know that they remembered me and liked the exhibit enough to bring their company with them.

4-13: It is so busy today! I've been causing congestion in the exhibit! Finally, I found some nooks where I could gather a group but still be enough out of the way. I co-facilitated the Striking a Balance cart today, which was very rewarding. I also love to hover around the choose your own adventure game and show the visitors the money that they would actually be using for such a journey.

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<sup>34</sup> DZ: *Discovery Zone*

## **Enactor B:**

**Week 1** – On the first couple of days it was interesting to see how the visitors reacted to me. The younger students at first are leary of interacting, but as I stay in character their hesitance wanes. On Saturday I talked with two young native American girls who at first seemed reluctant but after two or three minutes they started to get into the whole thing. They began to instruct me in matters of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They talked to me for at least 15 minutes. After that I left and began to walk around the museum an hour or so. The two young women found me and gave me a turtle made from native American beads. They pinned it on me and told me that they would remember me, and that I should remember them.

**Week 2** – It is getting easier for me to engage people in conversation, and it doesn't seem to matter the age. On Thursday I talked to an older couple for about 10 or 15 minutes about paper making. I noticed that the two of them had lost all disbelief in the fact that I was from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. On Saturday I talked to a young girl around 3 or 4 years old. At first she would not stray from her father's arms, but after a minute or two I got her to shake my hand and tell me her name. She made her father bring her by two or three more times that day, and when she and her dad were leaving the museum for the day, they stopped me and the little girl said; "You are my favorite in my heart." That was cool.

**Week 5** – I was talking to a family outside of the Franklin exhibit explaining all I knew about Mr. Franklin, and over my shoulder I noticed a man observing us. After I finished my story and the family left, another family walked by and commented on my costume. The man who had been observing then explained "it's not just a costume, but an actual historical educator." He then told me "whatever they're paying you, it's not enough."

**Week 7** – What I notice most about the week day crowd is that the middle school students are eager to teach me the greeting of the day and after I allow them to do this they allow me to teach them about my time and my paper making. What I have found that does not work is trying to lecture this age range they are not looking to be taught anything by me until we have made a bond that they feel they started and have control of. The story time in the DZ. Is working very well, as well as the interaction with the space crew from Mars...

**WEEK 8** – The weekdays seem to fly by the students are very fun to interact with However, the adult night on Thursday was a blast and even a hint as to what the Titanic event might be like. I say this cause I found myself talking to the visitors in line as they waited to get food It was a easy time to talk and take questions about not only Ben But myself as well.

## **Enactor C:**

Two weeks into the exhibit and much to report – I'll organize this information by category and see how that works –

Props – the raw carded and uncarded wool, raw flax, letters sealed with wax, and loose tea in bags comprise my basket at this time and those are plenty to start conversations. These were chosen to support my telling about the "domestic sphere" in which women were engaged and it works great and leads to all manner of other conversations if folks are so inclined. Though I initially had a much longer list of props to consider, these are completely sufficient at this time.



Shows – participating in the science shows has not been my long suit thus far, the main stumbling block being that I miss them by being otherwise engaged with visitors. Learning where the building clocks are located as begun to keep me on track with time, AND I will endeavor to improve my participation. More on show ideas later –

Most popular place to be – the bridges and outside the exhibit are very good places to be as folks are moving from one exhibit to another, it is always interesting to direct folks to the busybody and lightning rod models and leads to other conversations. I have been going into the Franklin exhibit lately and have found a number of opportunities to interact – folks sitting on the benches are often interested in something besides reading and walking.

Costume – gets so much attention and many photo ops have taken place. Amongst adult women it is a great conversation sustainer and leads to interesting perspectives on the role of women in society.

Anecdotes – in no particular order:

A young miss and her friend about 6-7 stopped to learn about what was in my basket and her impatient father, semi-interested mother hovered and fidgeted with the building map. Her father said “Come on we have to get going to the other areas” and she looked at him and said “But Dad, this is really good stuff. You just don’t understand female things.”

Three female teachers late 30s early 40s stopped to chat and I inquired among other things “why are woman not wearing dresses in these days” and this began a terrific discussion about women’s place in society through the years, and when I inquired as to what has come of women having the vote, has anything changed, the entire group looked amongst themselves and one finally said “That’s a good question.” It really felt like for all the banter and “they know that I know that they know that I’m not really from then”, they still genuinely reflected on what the question implied and how one would answer it. We ended on a very upbeat note, with them asking for a photo (they even stopped someone to take the pic so they could all be in it) and me reminding them that should they be interested in returning to proper dress, they might consult this likeness to remember what I was wearing.

My personal favorite so far – in the exhibit itself, a 40ish man and his 70s+ father were sitting on a bench, and I inquired after their well being and sat to converse, and they totally got involved, to the point that, upon seeing my chatelaine, the younger man pulled out his key chain with keys, pocket knife, all in one type tool, and began explaining all the pieces to me. It was the most genuine exchange and for some very real moments reality was indeed suspended.

This is something we have talked about that occurs. As visitors engage with me, they take the role of enlightener and try, either alone with family members helping, to explain all the things I do not understand to me – the more I am able to sincerely and respectfully inquire, the more they sincerely and respectfully persist and it is so connecting – Whether it is a child/student or adult, there have been moments that defy describing. That is SO cool.

Storytelling continues to evolve in the DZ, with the addition of a goblet to show how Ben got the idea for the armonica and the principles behind it – if there are two people available, then two goblets with differing tones can be used – this interests the children and the adults. Mr. Post and Mrs. Bolter working together is most interesting, as they can organize a volunteer fire department and pass (an imaginary) bucket along to put out a fire – they are actually looking for a small bucket to add to the

storytelling, and one must surely be available. They had quite a brigade on Saturday last, with roughly 30 children and adults at the telling –

Also, in the DZ, a child took it upon herself to teach Mr. Post and Mrs. Bolter to dance the Hokey Pokey a few weeks ago – Mr. Post insisted he did not know how to dance, but in the true nature of his friend, Mr. Franklin, he was curious, acquiesced and had a good time in spite of himself, and the child who was teaching was thrilled.

Mrs. Bolter had a request – a mother and child in the DZ requested Mrs. B and I was found in the exhibit and came down to tell a story, and afterward the mother shared that her child, a shy 6 year old, had seen Mrs. B a week or so prior and later saw a show with women dressed in historic clothing and she said to her mother, “I want to go back and see the lady at the museum.” They actually are members, and said they would be back regularly to take in the unexpected.

Mrs. Bolter’s last day was May 18<sup>th</sup>. Alas, she has departed, but not before leaving her final thoughts.

One day the exhibit was filled with high school students, of all ethnic backgrounds, and many took time to converse. One group of black girls particularly spent several minutes, asking about roles of women and how slaves and servants fit into people’s lives and were treated. A few young men also hung around for the conversation, and they were genuinely engaged.

The last telling of *Now and Ben* in DZ was particularly poignant. The listeners were very young, but mightily enthusiastic, piping up with answers and comments along the way. They were fascinated with the goblet sound, and at the end wanted to try it. Their tiny hands could barely make contact with the rim, let alone their tiny fingers. Each tried, and, mind you, Mrs. Bolter is sitting on the floor by now. Finally I took one child in front of me and wrapped my arms around her from the back so I could guide her finger around the rim, and indeed a slight vibration was made and a high pitched whine came forth – her parents and grandparents were there and all exclaimed and there was rejoicing amongst the company, and Mrs. Bolter suggested that there might be an orchestra of sorts at the dinner hour! All the children were beaming for this success.

The staff and volunteers have been so supportive, and as Mrs. Bolter got to know them and converse each week, and they referred guests to us to ask questions – everyone integrated us into their activities. The presence of the enactors brought a dynamic experience for the visitors - a little exhibit with artifacts, a little interaction with the carts, a little conversing with Ben’s neighbor, a little talking with the exhibit volunteers – the sense that there was always something interesting around the corner.

This work was rewarding at every turn because, as Ben would have appreciated, here was opportunity to discover in each interaction some new way to connect with individuals, no matter what the age. From quieting a crying baby and conversing with a frazzled mother about how this has not changed in 300 years, to patiently having a 40ish man earnestly explain to me how his small all-in-one tool on a keychain worked (inspired by my having a chatelaine), I did not have to search for opportunities to contribute to a better world – they were everywhere!

Thanks to DMNS for trusting the enactors and this process – it has been a fantastic journey!