

Creating a Greater Connection: Volunteer Training in Seattle-area Museums

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## **Abstract**

Creating a Greater Connection: Volunteer Training in Seattle-area Museums

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This thesis will seek to determine why museums and similar institutions in the Seattle, Washington area train volunteers. Many, if not most museums utilize volunteers in some way and in order to function effectively in their positions, these volunteers require some sort of training. Formalized volunteer training programs are a sign of the growing professionalization of the museum field. The rationale of this research is to determine the purpose given by volunteer managers for training museum volunteers.

Due to the lack of similar studies, this research undertook to sample as many of the Seattle area museum volunteer managers as possible. A facilitated discussion was held with 15 staff members from Seattle area museums and similar institutions. These staff members are responsible for volunteer training at their institutions. The responses generated from this discussion were then analyzed for the overarching themes that emerged.

By exploring why museums are training volunteers, and what training practices are being used and how those practices affect achievement of desired training outcomes, this research attempts to give a baseline understanding of practice in the field of museum volunteer management. This research shows that Seattle area museums use a variety of training practices to achieve several positive outcomes. Most notably, this study demonstrates that Seattle area

museum volunteer managers use training to increase volunteer engagement in their institutions' missions.

## **Table of Contents**

Chapter One: Introduction & Problem Statement.....	1
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature .....	3
Chapter Three: Methods .....	12
Chapter Four: Results and Discussion .....	16
Chapter Five: Conclusions & Recommendations .....	30
Bibliography .....	32
Appendices.....	34
Appendix A: Facilitated Discussion Instrument .....	34
Appendix B: Facilitated Discussion Protocol .....	36
Appendix C: Consent Form .....	40
Appendix D: Participant Institution Information .....	42

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## Chapter One: Introduction & Problem Statement

This research study seeks to explore the purpose of training museum volunteers in the Seattle, Washington area. Formalized volunteer training programs are a sign of the growing professionalization of the museum field. The purpose of this research is to lay the groundwork to begin to quantify anecdotal evidence of the rationale behind training museum volunteers that has thus far served as theory in the field.

Volunteering is generally defined as performing unpaid work for an organization.<sup>1</sup> Volunteers provide numerous services for a variety of nonprofit organizations, including museums.<sup>2</sup> Training these volunteers is important because it increases the skills and knowledge of volunteers, but it also increases their commitment to an organization and its mission.<sup>3</sup> Training also increases volunteer retention, which is beneficial to both volunteers and organizations.<sup>4</sup> As of now, volunteer training is practiced in many nonprofit organizations, but has not been largely adopted at many.<sup>5</sup>

Museum volunteers are typically trained by attending orientation, comprehensive training, and task-specific training.<sup>6</sup> Experts from both the general nonprofit sector and the museum field agree that these trainings should include the institution's mission, vision, and values, institutional policies and procedures, roles and responsibilities, and in-depth skill and

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<sup>1</sup> Musick, Mark A., and John Wilson. *Volunteers: A Social Profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Connors, Tracy D., ed. *The Volunteer Management Handbook: Leadership Strategies for Success, Second Edition*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012, xx.

<sup>3</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 45.

<sup>4</sup> "Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2012." Corporation for National and Community Service. [www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/FactSheetFinal.pdf](http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/FactSheetFinal.pdf). (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Hager, Mark A. and Jeffrey L. Brudney, "Management Capacity and Retention of Volunteers," *Challenges in Volunteer Management*, ed. Matthew Liao-Troth (Charlotte: IAP – Information Age Publishing, Inc. 2008), 13.

<sup>6</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 60.

knowledge training.<sup>7</sup> Another important benefit of training is that it can increase volunteer engagement with an institution's mission.<sup>8</sup> These benefits can be imparted in a variety of ways including lecture-style classes, internet-based learning environments, handouts, computer software presentations, hands-on activities, demonstration, and role-playing, among others.<sup>9</sup>

Museum volunteers and their institutions experience positive outcomes when volunteer training takes place. Relationship building is a prime benefit of training.<sup>10</sup> Training can also benefit both volunteers and museums by ensuring that volunteers are fully engaged with an institution and representing it well within the community.<sup>11</sup> Information about the measurement of these outcomes seems largely, at the present time, to be anecdotal.

Using a facilitated discussion method, information was gathered from museum professionals about how their institutions in the Seattle, Washington area currently train volunteers. The goal of this research is to provide a baseline for future research of training rationales in the museum volunteer management field, as these rationales have not been fully explained or studied. Ultimately, further qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to develop the theory in this field beyond the current anecdotal stage.

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<sup>7</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 45.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Hood, Mary Kay, "Training Volunteers," *The Volunteer Management Handbook: Leadership Strategies for Success, Second Edition*, ed. Tracy D. Connors (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 237.

<sup>10</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 59.

## Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

### *Volunteering – nonprofit organizations*

Volunteering can be defined as working for some type of organization and not receiving pay.<sup>12</sup> According to the Corporation for National and Community Service,

Its importance has been recognized throughout the history of our country as one of the threads that has held together the fabric of this nation and has strengthened the character of its citizens. Today, millions of Americans—on college campuses, through religious congregations, at schools, and in social service organizations—are participating in a wide range of volunteer activities, from teaching and mentoring children from disadvantaged circumstances, to helping older Americans live independently, to helping their fellow Americans recover from hurricanes and other disasters. Not only is volunteering one way for individuals to help their neighbors and enhance their communities, it also provides opportunities for youth to develop valuable skills, older Americans to remain healthy by being active and connected to their community, and adults to share their professional and work expertise.<sup>13</sup>

Currently, volunteering is experiencing a time of unprecedented growth. In the period between 1989 and 2006, “...the adult volunteering rate increased by more than 32 percent”.<sup>14</sup> In 2011, 64.3 million Americans volunteered for a formal organization, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service.<sup>15</sup> It is clear that volunteers are motivated to provide service to an organization, but those motives can be difficult to define.<sup>16</sup>

Volunteers provide a variety of services to various organizations. In *The Volunteer Management Handbook*, it is noted that “the great majority of the nation’s NPOs depend on volunteers to provide an enormous range of services that are essential to the organizations in

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<sup>12</sup> Musick, Mark A., and John Wilson. *Volunteers: A Social Profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 13.

<sup>13</sup> Grimm Jr., Robert, Nathan Dietz, John Foster-Bey, David Reingold, and Rebecca Nesbit. *Volunteer Growth in America: A review of trends since 1974*. Washington, D.C.: Corporation for National and Community Service, 2006.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> “Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2012.” Corporation for National and Community Service.” (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Musick, Mark A., and John Wilson. *Volunteers: A Social Profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 407.

fulfilling their public service missions”.<sup>17</sup> According to *Volunteers: A Social Profile*, these tasks can include fundraising, serving as a committee or board member, organizing events, and helping with clerical tasks.<sup>18</sup> John Musick, author of *Volunteers: A Social Profile*, further states that “the organization of volunteer work has helped institutionalize the volunteer role in modern societies...” and that volunteer management as a field can be directly related to this.<sup>19</sup> Specifically in regards to individual volunteers, Musick argues that their role is institutionalized when “...expectations attached to the role are standardized and incumbents are socialized into accepting them” and when it can be ensured “...that people perform it for the right reasons”.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, not receiving adequate volunteer training is one reason why volunteers stop their service.<sup>21</sup> Musick states that “...volunteers are more likely to quit if they get inadequate support from paid staff in the form of training, answers to questions...”.<sup>22</sup> According to Jeffrey Brudney and Mark Hager in *Challenges in Volunteer Management*, only 25% of charities surveyed have adopted the management practice of volunteer training to a large degree. Seventy-four percent of respondents have adopted this practice to some degree. Brudney and Hager go on to state that if these organizations want to retain volunteers, they should devote resources to adequate volunteer training.<sup>23</sup>

Training is essential for all types of volunteers. According to Jeffrey Brudney in *The Volunteer Management Handbook*, new volunteers “...cannot be expected to possess great

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<sup>17</sup> Connors, Tracy D., ed. *The Volunteer Management Handbook: Leadership Strategies for Success, Second Edition*. Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012, xx.

<sup>18</sup> Musick, Mark A., and John Wilson. *Volunteers: A Social Profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 407.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 420.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 422.

<sup>21</sup> "Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2012." Corporation for National and Community Service.

[www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/FactSheetFinal.pdf](http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/FactSheetFinal.pdf). (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Musick, Mark A., and John Wilson. *Volunteers: A Social Profile*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008, 432.

<sup>23</sup> Hager, Mark A. and Jeffrey L. Brudney, "Management Capacity and Retention of Volunteers," *Challenges in Volunteer Management*, ed. Matthew Liao-Troth (Charlotte: IAP – Information Age Publishing, Inc. 2008), 13.

knowledge about the agency initially: They require an orientation”.<sup>24</sup> Brudney further explains that volunteers should become familiar with “...the overall mission and specific objectives of the agency; its traditions, philosophy, and clientele; operating rules and procedures; the rationale, policies, and standards governing volunteer involvement; and the roles and interface of paid and nonpaid staff members”.<sup>25</sup> In *The Volunteer Management Handbook*, Mary Kay Hood differentiates between orientation and training: “Orientation includes a broad overview and introduction to the organization, its culture and norms, and basic rules and regulations along with behavioral expectations. Training, on the other hand, provides methods for the volunteer to be successful in their specific position, tasks, or opportunities”.<sup>26</sup> Hood states that there are a variety of types of learners and learning styles to suit them and that training works best when training practices are varied to suit the different learning styles and types of the volunteers being trained.<sup>27</sup> Further, Hood explains that training practices used should include demonstrations, role-playing, and concrete examples of what volunteers will be doing in their positions.<sup>28</sup>

#### *Volunteering – museums and similar institutions*

The American Alliance of Museums estimates that between one and three million Americans are museum volunteers.<sup>29</sup> These volunteers contribute more than one million service hours to American museums each week.<sup>30</sup> This value can also be computed monetarily. The Independent Sector reports that volunteer time was estimated to be worth \$21.79 per hour in

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<sup>24</sup> Brudney, Jeffrey L., “Preparing the Organization for Volunteers,” *The Volunteer Management Handbook: Leadership Strategies for Success, Second Edition*, ed. Tracy D. Connors (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 76.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Hood, Mary Kay, “Training Volunteers,” *The Volunteer Management Handbook: Leadership Strategies for Success, Second Edition*, ed. Tracy D. Connors (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 237.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 242.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 246.

<sup>29</sup> *2009 Museum Financial Information*, ed. Elizabeth Merritt and Philip M. Katz (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2009), 32.

<sup>30</sup> "Facts," American Alliance of Museums. <http://aam-us.org/about-museums> (accessed March 7, 2013).

2011.<sup>31</sup> This combines for a total monetary museum volunteer value of over one trillion dollars each year.

Volunteers assist at a variety of museums. The American Alliance of Museums estimates that 95% of museums utilize volunteers in some way.<sup>32</sup> The American Alliance of Museums found active volunteers in all categories of museums, including art museums, children's museums, historic houses, historical societies, living collections, natural history/anthropology museums, and science centers.<sup>33</sup>

Volunteers add value to organizations by accomplishing a variety of tasks. According to the American Association for Museum Volunteers, "There are no museum jobs that cannot be done by a volunteer".<sup>34</sup> In *Volunteer Program Administration*, Joan Kuyper quantifies this, stating that volunteers typically perform one or more functions from five areas: public programs, visitor services, behind-the-scenes activities, fundraising and special events, and community relations".<sup>35</sup> The American Alliance of Museums affirms these assertions.<sup>36</sup>

Museums train volunteers for a variety of reasons. In *Transforming Museum Volunteering*, Ellen Hirzy states that volunteers should receive training so they are informed of institutional policies and procedures, to strengthen their service commitment, to increase their appreciation of the museum and comfort level with volunteer tasks, and to build relationships.<sup>37</sup>

Kuyper states similar ideas, including that volunteers should be trained so they understand

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<sup>31</sup> "Value of Volunteer Time | Independent Sector," Independent Sector. [http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer\\_time](http://www.independentsector.org/volunteer_time). (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>33</sup> *2009 Museum Financial Information*, ed. Elizabeth Merritt and Philip M. Katz (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2009), 35.

<sup>34</sup> "Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs | American Association for Museum Volunteers." American Association for Museum Volunteers. <http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>. (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>35</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 2.

<sup>36</sup> *2009 Museum Financial Information*, ed. Elizabeth Merritt and Philip M. Katz (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2009), 32.

<sup>37</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 45.

policies and procedures, learn skills and knowledge for specific tasks, to strengthen their commitment to the institution, to improve communication skills, and to increase their volunteer position satisfaction.<sup>38</sup>

Volunteer training commences soon after a volunteer begins service with an institution. According to Joan Kuyper, “Museums generally provide four types of training for volunteers: orientation to the museum and the volunteer program, general training regarding volunteer responsibilities, specialized training to carry out volunteer jobs and advanced training opportunities, including management training for leadership volunteers or continuing education in areas of specialization”.<sup>39</sup> Ellen Hirzy agrees with these types of training and adds that they can be offered in any combination to suit the needs of volunteers and the organization.<sup>40</sup>

According to *Volunteer Program Management*, orientation should include information about the history, mission, and vision of the organization, an overview of the organization’s service orientation, audience, and programs, the volunteers’ role in the organization, and a tour of the facility.<sup>41</sup> The American Association for Museum Volunteers has a similar assertion and adds that orientation should also include “. . .introduction to staff and site-specific policies and procedures. . .”.<sup>42</sup> Hirzy also concludes that these are necessary components of a museum volunteer orientation.<sup>43</sup>

After volunteers have received a thorough orientation, general volunteer training begins. Kuyper states that “This training provides an in-depth introduction to the museum’s mission of

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<sup>38</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 47.

<sup>41</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 64.

<sup>42</sup> "Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs | American Association for Museum Volunteers." American Association for Museum Volunteers. <http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>. (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>43</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 50.

public service and educates volunteers about their roles and responsibilities". Topics should include:

Comprehensive discussion of the museum's public service functions in such areas as exhibitions, interpretive programs, research, collections care and management, community relations, school programs, and visitor services; volunteer opportunities in each of these areas; role of volunteers in relation to paid staff; mission, policies, and procedures of the volunteer program; procedures for individual and program evaluation; opportunities for advancement to higher competency levels and more challenging jobs and for retreat to less active jobs if needed.<sup>44</sup>

Hirzy refers to this type of training as task training and states that it should improve volunteers in four areas: attitudes, relationships, expectations, and knowledge and skills.<sup>45</sup>

Specific techniques are recommended for volunteer training. Hirzy suggests peer training, mentoring programs, varying the style and media of training sessions, use of internet-based training, handouts, videos, demonstrations, and role-playing. She also recommends using a variety of training practices, to ensure all volunteers are able to relate.<sup>46</sup> Kuyper agrees with the use of these techniques and adds that interactive training and the introduction of outside experts can be beneficial. Kuyper also states that training should highlight professionalism.<sup>47</sup>

There are a variety of reasons that volunteer training is important. According to Hirzy, volunteer training "...signals the museum's conscious investment in its volunteers".<sup>48</sup> Hirzy also claims that training helps build a relationship between volunteers and the organization and

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<sup>44</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 65.

<sup>45</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 46.

<sup>46</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 47.

<sup>47</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 65.

<sup>48</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 46.

between different volunteers.<sup>49</sup> Hirzy also states that training will help volunteers “...do a good job and make a meaningful contribution”.<sup>50</sup> Kuyper states that “every volunteer must understand the relationship of his or her work to the public service the institution provides” and that training is the way to do this.<sup>51</sup>

### *Industry standards and best practices*

In the absence of substantive study, literature, and industry-wide standards for volunteer management, organizations connected to the museum industry have begun to compile information on provisional standards and best practices. According to the American Alliance of Museums website, “National standards and best practices are voluntary benchmarks against which museums measure their own performance”.<sup>52</sup> The American Association for Museum Volunteers proposed Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs in November 2011.<sup>53</sup> These suggested guidelines include ensuring volunteer access to both orientation and training. Training can be formal or informal and can be led by volunteer managers, other museum staff or volunteers, or outside experts. These trainings should include “...all necessary content, skills and knowledge to successfully complete tasks” and appropriate customer service and safety skills.<sup>54</sup> Volunteers should also be allowed to participate in supplementary training, which

...can include seminars or new materials on changing exhibit content, new museum protocol, emergency response training,

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<sup>49</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 45.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 45.

<sup>51</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 59.

<sup>52</sup> "Museum Standards and Best Practices." American Alliance of Museums. <http://www.aam-us.org/resources/ethics-standards-and-best-practices/standards>. (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>53</sup> "Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs | American Association for Museum Volunteers." American Association for Museum Volunteers. <http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>. (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

working with people with disabilities or special needs, etc.. Some optional training may serve as enrichment opportunities for all volunteers. Volunteers should be welcome at seminars and lectures offered for paid staff.<sup>55</sup>

### *Summary*

According to literature about both nonprofit and museum volunteers, training is important because it increases the skills and knowledge of volunteers, but it also increases their commitment to an organization and its mission.<sup>56</sup> These sources also state that training increases volunteer retention, which is beneficial to both volunteers and organizations.<sup>57</sup>

Literature specifically about museum volunteers states that both volunteers and their institutions experience positive outcomes when volunteer training takes place.<sup>58</sup> Relationship building is a prime benefit of training.<sup>59</sup> Training can also benefit both volunteers and museums by ensuring that volunteers are fully engaged with an institution and representing it well within the community.<sup>60</sup> Information about the measurement of these outcomes seems largely, at the present time, to be anecdotal, as no evidence for positive outcomes is cited.

As much of the literature shows, what currently exists as theory in the museum volunteer management field is largely discussion of which practices have worked for individual volunteer managers and institutions and not what has been proven to work in the field at large. By describing the purpose of training volunteers in a qualitative manner, the objective of this

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<sup>55</sup> "Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs | American Association for Museum Volunteers." American Association for Museum Volunteers. <http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>. (accessed March 9, 2013).

<sup>56</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 45.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 59.

<sup>60</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 46.

research is to begin to provide evidenced-based information about a topic which, to date, has been largely anecdotally described.

## Chapter Three: Methods

### Research Goal and Question

This research study explored the purpose of training museum volunteers in the Seattle, Washington area. This study sought answers to four research issues:

- why Seattle area institutions train volunteers;
- what training practices are used at Seattle area institutions;
- which training practices Seattle area institutions are currently using to achieve desired training outcomes;
- which practices Seattle area institutions would change to help achieve desired training outcomes.

### Methods

The method used for this research was a focus group, which is referred to as a facilitated discussion throughout this study. This is because the terminology of focus group was thought to be distracting to participants and would discourage participation. According to Krueger “Focus group interviews typically have five characteristics or features...(1) people, who (2) possess certain characteristics, (3) provide qualitative data (4) in a focused discussion (5) to help understand the topic of interest”.<sup>61</sup> This method was chosen because it yields qualitative, descriptive data. Also, as there is little qualitative data available in this area, having participants discuss this topic seemed the best way to generate this data.

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<sup>61</sup> Krueger, Richard A., and Mary Anne Casey. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, Fourth Edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009, 6.

## Sample

Focus group participants were sampled from the population of Seattle area museum professionals who manage and train volunteers directly, regardless of job title or position. According to Krueger, “Participants are selected because they have certain characteristics in common that relate to the topic of the focus group”.<sup>62</sup> Participants were drawn from a variety of types and sizes of museums, all of which had an institution-wide volunteer program in place with one or more staff member responsible for managing the program. This pool of professionals was drawn from the Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers group. More than 20 local museums are represented in this group, which meets periodically to discuss issues and trends in the museum volunteer management field. Chelsea Rodriguez, Volunteer Specialist at Pacific Science Center and member of the author’s Thesis Advisory Committee, is a member of this group and served as liaison between the group and the author of this study.

A total of 15 museum professionals participated in the focus group, representing 10 different museums in the Seattle area including Center for Wooden Boats, EMP Museum, Museum of Flight, Museum of History and Industry, Nordic Heritage Museum, Pacific Science Center, Renton History Museum, Seattle Aquarium, Seattle Art Museum, Woodland Park Zoo. These museums represent a variety of sizes and types of museums, including history, science, art, air and space, and zoos. The volunteer resources from which these museums draw vary widely.

Participants were asked to self-report information about the volunteer program at their institution, including number of current volunteers and types of duties performed by volunteers. This information can be found in Appendix D, page 42.

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<sup>62</sup> Krueger, Richard A., and Mary Anne Casey. *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research, Fourth Edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009, 2.

## **Data Collection**

Staff from the 22 member institutions of the Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers group were invited to the facilitated discussion via email sent by Chelsea Rodriguez. Participants were offered lunch and a copy of the research findings upon completion. A total of 15 volunteer managers from 10 institutions responded and agreed to participate. As the invitation was extended to any staff who manage or train volunteers directly, 4 museums had more than one participant. The facilitated discussion was held February 8, 2013 from 12 – 1:30 PM in Pacific Science Center’s Board Room.

The facilitated discussion was audio recorded using a Sony Digital Voice Recorder and an Acer laptop computer as a backup. Chelsea Rodriguez and the author of this study took notes during the facilitated discussion. Written responses were also gathered from participants during the discussion. The group was moderated by the author of this study. Questions were asked of the group as a whole (see Appendix B, page 36, for the facilitated discussion protocol) and interspersed with individual participants answering questions on a paper questionnaire (see Appendix A, page 34, for the instrument). The facilitated discussion lasted for approximately 75 minutes. Participants were sent a follow-up email on February 11, 2013 thanking them for participating in the discussion and inviting them to contact the author if they had any further questions.

Participants were provided with a consent form, which can be found in Appendix C, page 40. This consent form described the study’s purpose and explained that participants were free to opt out of the study at any time. Comments made by participants are only identified by the name of their institution, and not by participants’ names. The audio recording was destroyed upon completion of this study.

## **Data Analysis**

All data recording, transcribing, coding, and analysis was completed by the author of this study. The file from the voice recorder was transcribed. Using the transcription, the data were coded using an emergent approach. The first step was sorting the data from the transcription into the instrument question to which it corresponded. Quotations were sorted in their entirety. Once all data had been separated by instrument question, the responses were distilled into their main ideas. Then, comments with similar implications were grouped together. This data was further sorted into distinct themes that arose from the discussion about each instrument question. Each instrument question had between 2 and 7 main themes that were identified. These themes provided the facilitated discussion participants' answers to the research questions.

## Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

This study investigated four research questions. These questions were designed to determine why Seattle area museums train volunteers, which training practices are used, the desired outcomes of the training, and what training practices increase and decrease the likelihood of institutions achieving these outcomes. This section describes findings from the focus group as they relate to these four research questions.

### Results

#### *Why Seattle area institutions train volunteers*

The first research question asked why museums and similar institutions train volunteers. Participants gave responses such as: “We have more work than we can afford with staff,” “I really want the volunteers to have a sense of our mission, our core values, and our service orientation,” and “One of the reasons we train volunteers is because we really consider ourselves an adult education program”.<sup>63</sup> The responses to this first research issue can be grouped into a few overarching themes. These themes are that these institutions have volunteer training programs so that volunteers: gain skill and comfort with interacting with the public, have a better understanding of the institution’s mission and values, gain individual benefits, provide benefit to the institution, and learn specific skills and knowledge.

There were several examples of institutions using volunteer training to enhance volunteers’ skill and comfort with public interaction. EMP Museum utilizes volunteer training to

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<sup>63</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center “Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training,” February 8, 2013.

show volunteers how to “...focus on the visitors and to interact with them...”.<sup>64</sup> Participants from Pacific Science Center explained that they use volunteer training to enhance volunteers’ communication tools, such as “...asking good questions that provoke interaction, hooking people in, using props to have those interactions”.<sup>65</sup> Other participants spoke of using training to help volunteers give a sense of confidence in their skills while also allowing volunteers to feel they had permission to interact with visitors.<sup>66</sup>

In regards to the first research issue, another theme found in the participants’ responses was that of using training to give volunteers a better awareness of the institution’s mission and values. Several participants mentioned using volunteer training as a mechanism to enhance volunteers’ understanding of the institution’s mission. Others spoke of using training time to explain to volunteers what the institution’s vision for its future is. Specifically, Pacific Science Center uses training to give volunteers “...a sense of our mission, our core values, and our service orientation”.<sup>67</sup>

When responding to why their institutions train volunteers, participants indicated that training is used to benefit volunteers individually. An example of this is the Seattle Art Museum, which views its volunteer training program as an adult education program and encourages participation so that even if a person does not end up being a volunteer, they have at least gained knowledge about Seattle Art Museum. Other participants view their volunteer training program as a way to get their institution’s mission out into the community and that by educating an individual, they are also educating that person’s entire community. Volunteer training is also used to create a volunteer’s sense of ownership of an institution. The Center for Wooden Boats

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<sup>64</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center “Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training,” February 8, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

wants its volunteers to feel more independent and confident in their duties after completing training. This institution also utilizes volunteer training to encourage established volunteers to gain the confidence to help train and mentor new volunteers.<sup>68</sup>

Another theme indicated by the participants' responses was that volunteer training benefits their institutions. For example, one participant noted that training enables volunteers to help with tasks staff do not always have time for. The Museum of History and Industry's volunteer manager stated that training is also useful for ensuring consistency of the information volunteers are disseminating to the public. Finally, training is used to create a deeper level of engagement and care for an institution within its volunteers.<sup>69</sup>

The final overarching theme explaining why these institutions train volunteers is to teach them specific skills and knowledge. Woodland Park Zoo recently began using training to give volunteers information about field conservation. Other institutions use volunteer training to give information about important topics such as lost child procedures and visitor and staff safety information. Several participants' institutions include training on the institutions' customer service standards and procedures.<sup>70</sup>

#### *What training practices are used at Seattle area institutions*

The second research question investigated the training practices used at these institutions. Participants answered this question by providing brief explanations of the various training practices used at their institutions. These practices can be divided into and explained in a few

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<sup>68</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

categories. These categories include use of technology, social aspects, practical aspects, and on-the-job instruction.

Participants spoke of a variety of uses of technology in training volunteers. Seattle Aquarium has an entire aspect of its volunteer training program dedicated to e-learning. This type of training involves the use of videos, readings, and tests that volunteers can access online. Another use of online technology is a Wiki, or an internet-based website which volunteers and staff can use to learn about various topics and also add or change information as necessary. Several institutions use Microsoft PowerPoint software to provide training information to all trainees in the room at one time and to allow for discussion.<sup>71</sup>

The social aspect of volunteer training was mentioned by participants as a training practice. Institutions use peer training, where established volunteers help train new volunteers, and mentoring, where established volunteers help train new volunteers and also form longer-term relationships with these volunteers and continue to assist throughout the new volunteer's time at the institution. Other participants use group discussions during volunteer training. The Museum of Flight utilizes stories and storytelling in its volunteer training. Alternatively, Seattle Aquarium's training contains a self-paced aspect, which allows for individualized instead of socialized learning.<sup>72</sup>

Volunteer training at these institutions also involves the practical aspects of a volunteer's position. Pacific Science Center takes time during volunteer training to orient new volunteers to the facilities.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

Another theme that emerged during the discussion about training practices was use of on-the-job training for volunteers. This is in contrast to classroom or lecture-style training. Participants stated that their institutions use observation, demonstrations, and activities during volunteer training. The Center for Wooden Boats' volunteer manager described that institution's volunteer training as "hands-on". Pacific Science Center uses what they call "check-outs," where volunteers are required to give an interpretive program for their supervisors before they are allowed to do so out on the museum floor. However, prior to a check-out, Science Interpretation Program volunteers also encouraged to give practice tours for other volunteers and staff.<sup>74</sup>

*Which training practices Seattle area institutions are currently using to achieve desired training outcomes*

The third research question asked if the training practices used help these institutions achieve their desired training outcomes. Responses indicated that training does help volunteers to achieve training outcomes, but first they described those outcomes. The outcomes produced can be grouped into the themes of: benefit to the individual volunteer, benefit to the institution, and the acquisition of skills and knowledge.

Some of the outcomes produced by volunteer training at these institutions can be classified as being a benefit to the individual volunteer. Volunteer managers want volunteer training to create a sense of community within the institution and its staff and volunteers. Training is also used to build a greater personal connection between the volunteer and the institution. Both The Center for Wooden Boats and Seattle Aquarium want these volunteers to

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<sup>74</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

gain a greater sense of confidence in themselves and their skills through training. Another participant noted that training creates a better sense of the role the volunteer will play for the institution. Lastly, these institutions utilize training to give volunteers a broader knowledge base.<sup>75</sup>

The training outcomes achieved also include those that give benefit to the institution. Participants spoke of using training to increase the consistency of information being given to the public by volunteers. Volunteer training can also generate enthusiasm about an institution. Several institutions have established volunteers participate in training new volunteers; this ability to utilize volunteer assistance during training is of benefit to the institution.<sup>76</sup>

Outcomes desired by these institutions also include ensuring volunteers learn specific skills and knowledge. The Museum of History and Industry wants volunteers who give educational tours to understand the institution's procedures for giving these programs and have some basic understanding of educational theory. Other participants spoke of volunteers gaining verbal communication skills after attending training. Several institutions want volunteers to gain specific institutional knowledge through training.<sup>77</sup>

The third research question also investigated how these institutions know that their desired training outcomes are being achieved. The trends discovered in this question are that the institutions know their desired outcomes are being achieved because the institution derives benefits, the individual volunteer derives benefits, and through simple observation.

The participants know their desired volunteer training outcomes are being achieved because their institutions are gaining benefits. Specifically, several volunteer managers spoke of

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<sup>75</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

a reduction in volunteer turnover after training. The Museum of Flight has experienced higher volunteer retention after those volunteers attend a pre-training interview. Also, Seattle Aquarium noticed fewer volunteers dropping out of training after instituting an interview prior to training.<sup>78</sup>

Additionally, the volunteer managers know their desired training outcomes are being met because the volunteers themselves are gaining benefits. According to the participants, volunteers show an increase in self-confidence after having been through training.<sup>79</sup>

Although these training programs are not generally formally evaluated, the volunteer managers have made some informal observations, which indicate that their desired outcomes are being achieved. The Renton History Museum's volunteer manager notes that training is benefiting the volunteers when they make noticeably fewer mistakes. Seattle Aquarium and Woodland Park Zoo have both undertaken formal evaluation of their volunteer training program to determine if the programs are achieving desired outcomes, but the results of these studies are not yet available. A few institutions ensure that volunteers satisfactorily perform their duties for staff members before being allowed to perform those duties for the public. For example, The Center for Wooden Boats ensures that boat crews are prepared to sail by having crew members go through a "check-out" process with a staff member. Other institutions observe and evaluate volunteers before they are allowed interact with the public.<sup>80</sup>

The third research question also investigated what these institutions are doing to ensure that volunteer training programs achieve desired results. There were numerous overarching themes that were described in response to this question, including: getting to know volunteers better, including social aspects in training, having volunteers mentor others, ensuring volunteer

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<sup>78</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

and staff interaction, giving volunteers more autonomy, ensuring adequate time and space for training, and other administrative aspects.

One theme numerous participants spoke about was that getting to know volunteers on a personal level increased the achievement of desired training outcomes. Three different volunteer managers noticed that enforcing mandatory participation in a pre-training interview and spending that time asking the volunteers about themselves during that interview increased the likelihood that volunteers were active participants in training. The Museum of History and Industry uses this to find out what volunteers want out of their service to the museum and tries to cater their experience, including training, to those desires. Other institutions allow volunteers to select a position in the front or back of the house, depending on their personality, and then participate in training for that position. Finally, the Museum of Flight allows volunteers to attend staff meetings and find out what is going on in the rest of the museum and then gives volunteers opportunities to participate in activities of interest to them.<sup>81</sup>

Participants indicated that giving volunteers time to socialize with each other increased achievement of desired outcomes. Several institutions give volunteers time and space, such as a common lunch area, in which to do so. Pacific Science Center's Science Interpretation Program has "classes" of new volunteers who train together and have time for socializing. These volunteers progress through the Science Interpretation Program together, as well, continuing the social aspect. Other institutions allow volunteers to collaborate on projects as a group. Specifically during training, several institutions build social time into the training program itself.

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<sup>81</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

And if possible, most institutions train volunteers in groups. This is done for a variety of reasons, but socializing between volunteers is often a result.<sup>82</sup>

Another theme evident from participants' responses is that having some type of mentoring or peer shadowing helps volunteers achieve desired training outcomes. Several institutions allow new volunteers to watch or shadow established volunteers. Some have new volunteers work with these established volunteers. Woodland Park Zoo has added required mentoring sessions for some volunteers and the volunteer managers noticed less turnover and increased connection to the institution after this addition.<sup>83</sup>

Additionally, these volunteer managers indicated that encouraging interaction between volunteers and staff has increased achievement of desired training outcomes. Participants spoke of connecting volunteers with staff in the department in which volunteers would serve. One institution wants to improve relations between staff and volunteers. But many participants indicated that having staff participate in volunteer training helps volunteers immensely. Institutions allow volunteers to be trained by the staff who will be supervising them. Several institutions encourage staff from various museum departments to participate in volunteer training to give volunteers a sense of what happens in every area of the museum.<sup>84</sup>

One participant explained that giving volunteers a greater sense of autonomy has helped the institution increase outcome achievement. For many of the Center for Wooden Boats' volunteer positions, the Center gives volunteers a basic structure and then allows them to decide which roles and responsibilities they would like to undertake. In some cases, volunteers are also

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<sup>82</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

allowed to autonomously make the decision to take on greater responsibilities and even assist in the training of new volunteers.<sup>85</sup>

Participants indicated that ensuring a time and place for volunteer training seemed to increase achievement of desired outcomes. Specifically, this theme spoke to continued education training. Some institutions try to make training a “special event” and invite volunteers to tour a new exhibit with the curator and designers. Other institutions provide refreshments during trainings. The Renton History Museum has occasionally invited outside experts speak to volunteers during special sessions.<sup>86</sup>

Lastly, there were administrative aspects of volunteer training that seemed to increase achievement of desired outcomes. Participants noted that enforcing mandatory attendance at training helped volunteers. Other institutions use interviews and more training requirements to increase the likelihood of attaining training outcomes. One volunteer manager stated that rejecting unsuitable prospective volunteers, either before, during, or after training, is also effective.<sup>87</sup>

*Which practices Seattle area institutions would change to help achieve desired training outcomes*

The fourth research question asked which practices these institutions would change to help them achieve desired training outcomes. The results can be grouped into the following themes, that these institutions: would like more integration of the volunteer program into the institution as a whole, want to change the length of volunteer training, want to change the type of

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<sup>85</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center “Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training,” February 8, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

training practices in use, want to give volunteers more specific knowledge, would like to give volunteers more opportunities within their program, and want to make changes to the volunteer training program in general.

One theme that emerged when participants were asked what they would change about their institutions' training programs was that they would like the volunteer program to be more integrated into the museum as a whole. A few volunteer managers would like to have staff from different departments at the museum participate in volunteer training, in both new volunteer training and continuing education. Other participants noted that having more staff involvement in the volunteer training program would generally lead to increased staff engagement in the volunteer program.<sup>88</sup>

Another theme that emerged from participants' responses was that they would change the length of their volunteer training. Some institutions have volunteer training programs with long time requirements, as much as 6 months. A few of these volunteer managers indicated that they would like to shorten the length of time volunteers spend training, but still ensure that volunteers receive the same information and achieve the same training outcomes. Other institutions have shorter duration volunteer training. Some of these volunteer managers stated that they would like to lengthen the amount of time volunteers spend in training. This extra time would be used to further strengthen volunteers' knowledge bases and give volunteers more face-to-face time with each other and staff.<sup>89</sup>

Several participants indicated that they would like to change the types of training practices used at their institutions. A number of participants stated that they would like their volunteer training programs to have more of a blended approach. A blended approach would

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<sup>88</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

involve a variety of training practices including e-learning, hands-on training, and on-the-job training.<sup>90</sup>

Another theme that emerged was that of giving volunteers the opportunity to increase their knowledge base. For example, Woodland Park Zoo would like to increase all volunteers' knowledge in one specific area, conservation.<sup>91</sup>

Several participants noted that they would like volunteers to have more opportunities within their programs. One participant stated that giving volunteers a wider variety of opportunities within the institution could help keep volunteers from getting bored. EMP Museum would like to give volunteers the opportunity to get cross-trained on a variety of different volunteer positions to give both the volunteer and EMP Museum's volunteer program more flexibility in placing volunteers in positions. Another institution is working to increase the breadth and scope of their program to not only increase opportunities for existing volunteers, but also reach more prospective volunteers.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, participants indicated that making a variety of changes to the volunteer program would help their institutions achieve desired training outcomes. A participant from Pacific Science Center would like that institution's volunteer training program to include more ongoing training and learning opportunities for both new and established volunteers. Several participants noted that they would like to personalize training for each volunteer. The volunteer manager from the Nordic Heritage Museum would like to leverage the large knowledge base of established volunteers into a mentoring program for new volunteers, or at least have established volunteers participate in new volunteer training to help ensure longevity of this information. A

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<sup>90</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

few participants stated that they would like to have mandatory interviews with prospective volunteers. Another institution has a goal of creating a clear hierarchy of how volunteers can advance and specialize within the volunteer program.<sup>93</sup>

## **Discussion**

Institutions in the Seattle area train volunteers for a variety of reasons, including skill and knowledge development, to increase volunteer engagement with an institution's mission, and to provide benefits to both the individual volunteer and the institution as a whole. These findings are consistent with reasons given in literature for volunteer training, which indicate numerous rationales for volunteer training, among them increased engagement with an institution.<sup>94</sup>

The institutions studied here train volunteers in a variety of ways. Training practices include mentoring and peer training, demonstrations and hands-on activities, technology use, and evaluations to ensure volunteers have properly learned and retained information. These findings confirm the field's literature and also conform to industry standards and best practices, which indicate that a variety of training practices is necessary for thorough volunteer training.<sup>95</sup>

Seattle area institutions named numerous positive outcomes that volunteers achieve through training. These outcomes included volunteers learning specific skills and knowledge, having increased confidence, feeling more engaged with an institution, and being more enthusiastic about their volunteer role. These findings are in line with literature in the museum

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<sup>93</sup> Puget Sound Museum Volunteer Managers, interview by Niki Ohlandt, Pacific Science Center "Facilitated Discussion of Volunteer Training," February 8, 2013.

<sup>94</sup> Kuyper, Joan, Ellen Hirzy, and Kathleen Huftalen. *Volunteer Program Administration: A Handbook for Museums and Other Cultural Institutions*. New York: American Council for the Arts, 1993, 60.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid, 65.

volunteer field, which states that volunteer training should result in positive outcomes in a variety of areas.<sup>96</sup>

Finally, Seattle area institutions utilize different training practices and expect and achieve different outcomes. Despite this difference in practice and results, all institutions questioned are striving for achievement of the field's standards and best practices. The standards and best practices are especially revelatory in regard to this result, as they are purposefully broad and include a variety of practices to be used and outcomes to be expected, with the assumption that institutions will use and interpret the standards differently.<sup>97</sup>

### **Key Limitations**

Several key limitations and opportunities for further research emerged from this study. The first limitation is that the study sample size was small and consisted mostly of volunteer managers from larger museums in the urban Seattle area. Another limitation is that the data gathered for this study is entirely anecdotal and consists of the observations and opinions of the volunteer managers themselves. Although some formal evaluation of the effectiveness of volunteer training programs of the participating institutions has been performed, no results were yet available. Further, this study took place in an urban area with a professionalized museum field. Results may not be replicable in other areas. Finally, only one facilitated discussion was held. Multiple discussions, possibly including more and different participants could have led to different results.

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<sup>96</sup> Hirzy, Ellen. *Transforming Museum Volunteering: A Practical Guide for Engaging 21st-Century Volunteers*. (Bloomington: AuthorHouse, 2007), 46.

<sup>97</sup> "Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs | American Association for Museum Volunteers." American Association for Museum Volunteers. <http://www.aamv.org/resources/standards-and-best-practices/>. (accessed March 9, 2013).

## **Chapter Five: Conclusions & Recommendations**

### **Conclusions**

Overall, participants felt that while training volunteers for skill and knowledge retention was important, creating greater volunteer understanding and engagement with an institution's mission was the most important aspect of training. This finding is in line with the field's rationale for volunteer training. This training rationale relates to many of the themes found in other research issues. Not only is deeper engagement in a museum's mission valuable to the museum, but it is also beneficial to each individual volunteer. This deeper level of engagement encompasses the museums' need for enthusiastic, confident, long-term volunteers, who use the knowledge they gained in training to present the museums' best face to the community. This deeper level of engagement encompasses using a variety of training practices so that as many volunteers as possible are learning how they learn best. This deeper level of engagement encompasses getting to know volunteers personally and satisfying their social needs and desire for more knowledge.

These institutions train volunteers for a variety of reasons, all of which offer benefits to individual volunteers, the institutions, or both. The institutions use an assortment of different training practices, through which they intend to obtain outcomes such as increased volunteer knowledge and skill and a greater engagement between volunteers and these institutions' missions. These institutions seem to be training volunteers using proper practices and with outcomes in mind that benefit all parties involved. Institutions are formally and informally evaluating their volunteer training programs with an eye to discontinuing practices that do not contribute to achievement of desired outcomes.

## **Recommendations**

To ensure engagement and long-term success of volunteers, it is recommended that museums and similar institutions establish a formal volunteer training program.

More formal evaluation is needed of volunteer programs to ensure that desired goals and outcomes are being set and achieved.

More studies of this type are recommended to determine if the anecdotal evidence found in this study will hold up under further scrutiny.

More in-depth study of volunteer training is desirable to determine ways to implement suggested improvements, especially in museums with fewer staff and less institutionalized volunteer management.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Facilitated Discussion Instrument

Instrument: Facilitated Discussion

1) (Discussion)

Why do your institutions train volunteers?

Follow up: What are you hoping your volunteers gain through training?

Are there specific skills or knowledge you are hoping your volunteers gain through training?

What skills or knowledge are you hoping your volunteers gain through training?

2) (Discussion and Questionnaire)

I'm interested in the different ways you train. Look at this list (on a white board) and tell me what's missing.

internet-based          on-the-job          lecture          study group

self-paced          timeline-driven

individually          in a group

Do the methods listed here accurately describe how your institutions train volunteers as a whole?

On the sheet of paper in front of you, please write down the specific ways that your institution trains volunteers, from the list we just made on the white board.

3) (Discussion)

What are the outcomes these types of training produce in your volunteers?

Follow up: What are the goals you hope to achieve through your training program?

Instrument: Facilitated Discussion

4) (Discussion)

How do you know that your training program is producing the desired outcomes in your volunteers?

Follow up: Are your volunteers learning what you want them to learn?  
Are you measuring this? How do you measure this?

5) (Discussion)

What aspects of your program increase the chance that you'll get your desired outcomes?

Follow up: What aspects of your training program work especially well?

Probe: Why do these work so well?

6) (Discussion)

If you could change one thing about your training program, what would that be?

Follow up: What aspects of your volunteer training do not work very well?

7) (Discussion)

In a perfect world, what would volunteer training at your institution look like?

## **Appendix B: Facilitated Discussion Protocol**

**Niki Ohlandt's Thesis Research  
Volunteer Coordinator Facilitated Discussion  
Pacific Science Center  
February 8, 2013**

### **Purpose**

This facilitated discussion investigated the current trends in training museum volunteers in the Seattle area by asking four research questions. The questions are:

- why these institutions train volunteers
- what training practices are used at these institutions
- which training practices are institutions currently using to achieve desired training outcomes
- which practices would institutions change to help achieve desired training outcomes

One facilitated discussion was held on Friday, February 8, 2013 in the Board Room at the Pacific Science Center. This protocol outlines the procedures that were used during this discussion.

### **Participants**

Participants included volunteer managers and other staff who train volunteers from Seattle Art Museum, Pacific Science Center, Seattle Aquarium, Center for Wooden Boats, Renton History Museum, Nordic Heritage Museum, Woodland Park Zoo, EMP, Museum of History and Industry, and Museum of Flight.

## **Materials**

Pacific Science Center to provide:

- staff member, Volunteer Specialist, to host and answer logistical questions
- board room for use with seating for approximately 15
- lunch and drinks
- computer and software for display use during discussion
- name tents or tags for participants

Niki Ohlandt to provide:

- laptop and supplemental recording equipment
- consent forms
- questionnaire forms for participants
- pencils

## **Introductory Script**

Good afternoon and thank you all for coming today. My name is Niki Ohlandt and I am a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year Museology graduate student at the University of Washington. The purpose of our gathering today is to discuss the current trends in training museum volunteers in the Seattle area. I am interested in getting your feedback about why people volunteer at your institutions, how you train these volunteers, and the positive and negative aspects of the training models used at your institutions. I am more interested in training for specific volunteer roles than general orientation training, so please keep that in mind.

You all work with and/or train volunteers in some manner at your institutions and so I am interested in what you think about how that happens at your institutions. There are a wide variety of types and sizes of institutions represented here today and there are no right or wrong answers. Please feel free to share what your institution does, even if it is different from others in the room.

Before we get started, let me share a few ground rules. First, please remember we are audio recording this discussion, so speak up and only one person should speak at a time. Second, we

have only until 1:30 and I want to hear as many viewpoints as possible, so if we are straying off-topic or only hearing from a few people, I may interrupt you and move us onto our next question. Please don't take it personally; I want to make sure to get as many viewpoints as possible in the short time we have, so you can all get back to work. And third, we are on a first name basis today, but your comments today will not be attached to your name in my thesis. You will only be identified by your institution.

Our session will last a total of 90 minutes and we will end at 1:30. We will not take a formal break, but please feel free to quietly stand up and stretch, get more food, or use the restroom, if you like. Restrooms are located out this door, take a left, go outside, and to your right.

Let's get started.

1) (Discussion)

Why do your institutions train volunteers?

Follow up: What are you hoping your volunteers gain through training?

Are there specific skills or knowledge you are hoping your volunteers gain through training?

What skills or knowledge are you hoping your volunteers gain through training?

2) (Discussion and Questionnaire)

I'm interested in the different ways you train. Look at this list (on a white board) and tell me what's missing.

internet-based          on-the-job          lecture          study group

self-paced          timeline-driven

individually          in a group

Do the methods listed here accurately describe how your institutions train volunteers as a whole?

On the sheet of paper in front of you, please write down the specific ways that your institution trains volunteers, from the list we just made on the white board.

3) (Discussion)

What are the outcomes these types of training produce in your volunteers?

Follow up: What are the goals you hope to achieve through your training program?

Probe: How would you describe the outcomes?

4) (Discussion)

How do you know that your training program is producing the desired outcomes in your volunteers?

Follow up: Are your volunteers learning what you want them to learn?

Are you measuring this? How do you measure this?

5) (Discussion)

What aspects of your program increase the chance that you'll get your desired outcomes?

Follow up: What aspects of your training program work especially well?

Probe: Why do these work so well?

What about these aspects, specifically, works so well?

6) (Discussion)

If you could change one thing about your training program, what would that be?

Follow up: What aspects of your volunteer training do not work very well?

What change would benefit the program most?

7) (Discussion)

In a perfect world, what would volunteer training at your institution look like?

Probe: Would the outcomes be the same?

What specific components would you change?

Why would you change those specific components?

## **Appendix C: Consent Form**

### **University of Washington Consent Form Niki Ohlandt's Thesis Research Volunteer Coordinator Facilitated Discussion**

Researchers: Niki Ohlandt, Museology Department  
Wilson O'Donnell, Thesis Committee Chair, Museology Department  
Chelsea Rodriguez, Thesis Committee Member, Pacific Science Center  
Jessica Luke, Thesis Committee Member, Museology Department

#### **Researcher's Statement**

We are asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether to be in the study or not. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what we would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When we have answered all your questions, you can decide if you want to be in the study or not. This process is called "informed consent." We will give you a copy of this form for your records.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is designed to find out what volunteer managers at local organizations such as zoos, aquariums, and museums do to train volunteers at their institutions. Participants will be asked questions about training methods used and their opinions about how well these methods work at their institutions. This study will be conducted as a facilitated discussion with the researcher acting as facilitator.

#### **Study Procedures**

The time commitment for each participant is approximately 90 minutes, not including travel time. The facilitated discussion will take place on Friday, February 8 from 12 – 1:30 pm at the Pacific Science Center. This will be the only participation required.

Participants will be asked to discuss their organization's methods of training volunteers and their opinions about these methods. Participants will be asked to brainstorm, as a group, various training methods.

Participants may refuse to answer any question posed to them, whether verbally or written, with no ill effects.

#### **Risks, Stress, or Discomfort**

The risks of this study are minimal. Participants will be asked about institutional policies and procedures and the perceived effectiveness of these. The discussion will be audio recorded for use in the researcher's thesis. This recording will be transcribed and may be viewed or listened to by the researcher's thesis committee advisors.

**Benefits of the Study**

The participants will receive lunch and a copy of the researcher’s thesis upon completion for their participation in this study.

**Confidentiality of Research Information**

The data gathered for this study will be confidential. Your name will be linked to your participation, but will be kept private. The researcher and thesis committee advisors will have access to this data.

Government or university staff sometimes review studies such as this one to make sure they are being done safely and legally. If a review of this study takes place, your records may be examined. The reviewers will protect your privacy. The study records will not be used to put you at legal risk of harm.

**Other Information**

You may refuse to participate and you are free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

---

Niki Ohlandt

Signature

Date

**Subject’s Statement**

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have questions later about the research, I can ask one of the researchers listed above. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

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Printed name of participant

Signature of subject

Date

Copies to:    Researcher  
                  Subject

## Appendix D: Participant Institution Information

Participant Institution	Approximate Number of Volunteers	Sample Volunteer Duties
Center for Wooden Boats <i>www.cwb.org</i>	1800 total, 900 active status, 300 actually active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• public sail skippers and crew</li> <li>• work in the boat shop</li> <li>• work with boat rentals</li> <li>• greeting visitors</li> <li>• special events</li> <li>• youth programs</li> </ul>
EMP Museum <i>www.empmuseum.org</i>	109	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gallery tours</li> <li>• info desk</li> <li>• assist in the Rec Room</li> <li>• assist in the Sound Lab</li> <li>• education</li> </ul>
Museum of Flight <i>www.museumofflight.org</i>	550	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• docents</li> <li>• tour guides</li> <li>• gallery ambassadors</li> <li>• aircraft restoration</li> <li>• office support</li> <li>• staff the membership desk</li> <li>• assist in collections and archives</li> </ul>
Museum of History and Industry <i>www.mohai.org</i>	300	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assist collections department and library</li> <li>• assist advancement department</li> <li>• assist with data entry tasks</li> <li>• ambassadors</li> <li>• educators</li> <li>• docents</li> <li>• visitor services</li> <li>• public programs</li> <li>• special events</li> </ul>
Nordic Heritage Museum <i>www.nordicmuseum.org</i>	350	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• docents</li> <li>• assist development, collections, and administration departments</li> <li>• provide visitor services</li> <li>• special events</li> <li>• maintenance</li> <li>• serve on the Teen Council</li> </ul>

<p>Pacific Science Center <i>www.pacificsciencecenter.org</i></p>	<p>250 active, up to 900 on-call, single-event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpreters</li> <li>• ushers for laser shows</li> <li>• administrative</li> <li>• accounting</li> <li>• horticulture</li> <li>• summer camps</li> <li>• one-time events</li> <li>• off-site events</li> </ul>
<p>Renton History Museum <i>rentonwa.gov/rentonhistorymuseum</i></p>	<p>40 - 50</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greeters at the front desk</li> <li>• docents</li> </ul>
<p>Seattle Aquarium <i>www.seattleaquarium.org</i></p>	<p>500 - 700</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interpretation</li> <li>• animal care</li> <li>• scuba diving</li> </ul>
<p>Seattle Art Museum <i>www.seattleartmuseum.org</i></p>	<p>525</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• docents</li> <li>• art studio assistants</li> <li>• ambassadors</li> <li>• greeters</li> <li>• info desk attendants</li> <li>• coat check attendants</li> <li>• behind the scenes in the library</li> <li>• administrative tasks</li> </ul>
<p>Woodland Park Zoo <i>www.zoo.org</i></p>	<p>750, 350 one-time service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ambassadors</li> <li>• docents</li> <li>• assist with various animal units</li> <li>• horticulture</li> <li>• special events</li> <li>• members of teen volunteer program, ZooCorps</li> </ul>