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# **Building Stories – the Art of the Project Manager in Exhibition Development:**

## **An Analysis of *Death and Diversity* at Wellington Museum**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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In

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines the role of both project management and the project manager in museum exhibition development at one museum. Specifically it investigates the necessity of such practice and the various inherent factors that lead to exhibition development success. It argues that project management is not only vital to this success but that such success is dependent on the unique skill and ability of the project manager. Ultimately this thesis advocates for a special breed of project manager suited to the museum environment.

Owing to limited museum-based research in this field, it is unclear how effective project management is in developing museum exhibitions and subsequently, understanding the effectiveness of the project manager's contributions to this process. This research provides a much-needed qualitative study that not only examines the role, but also provides insight into the mindset of one such professional. In addition to introducing museum project management, an in-depth case study focusing on the Wellington Museum (former Museum of Wellington City & Sea) investigates the intricacies associated with this practice. In particular it centres on the *Death and Diversity* exhibition staged in 2011, where the Museum initiated an inaugural project manager role and then retained it for a large-scale capital development planned for completion in 2020.

Utilising qualitative research methods this thesis builds three sections: a context chapter, one case study, and an ethnographic study. Open-ended, in-depth interviewing of both the Museum's project manager and the director give valuable insight into the practice and perceptions about the role. An observational study examines project manager behaviour and interaction during project meetings. The analysis highlights the complexities of contemporary exhibition development. In an increasingly evolving and resource-limited world of equally increasing scrutiny, this advocates for a profession tailor-made for such complexity in the unique museum environment.



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Lastly, I wish to acknowledge all those undertaking exhibition development in museum environments, whether a project manager or not. It is your vision, professionalism, dedication and creativity, which ensure a wealth of stories are constructed and shared, and communities represented and catered for.

## READER'S NOTE

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As a means to better explain the process of project management and the relationship to museums, I've drawn an analogy between the museum environment and a coastal hill. This geological metaphor is drawn from my prior under-graduate study in the discipline and encompasses the primary topics in this thesis: project management; museums; and exhibitions. In this way I aim to guide the reader through the often-complex nature of these topics using an environmental feature commonly known. The hill represents the layers of a museum and an exhibition, but also the steps of project management, thus facets of the hillside can be adequately compared to facets of these topics. This provided for a characterisation of a project manager as a weathering agent – the water component that filters throughout all these environments.

At the time of writing this thesis, the Wellington Museum changed its name from Museum of Wellington City & Sea. The prior name is prevalent in sources researched and also appears in many quotes. Where appropriate, I have accommodated this name change throughout the thesis, however Museum of Wellington City & Sea still appears in some instances within the text.

When referring to the **Museum**, I am referring to Wellington Museum. When referring to **The Trust**, I am referring to the Wellington Museum Trust.

Lastly, all images within this thesis have been granted permission from their respected sources. Notably, most of these images have been acquired from Museums Wellington. Permission is credited beside each image.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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MW	Museums Wellington
NSTP	National Services Te Paerangi
OEA	Office of Ethnic Affairs
Sol	Statement of Intent
WCC	Wellington City Council
WHB	Wellington Harbour Board
WMT	Wellington Museums Trust



## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### *The vista ahead*

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Picture an old weathered coastal hill featuring, among other things, a cliff face exposing a multitude of rock layers blended with compositions of varying colour, shape, and texture. What variations of meaning can be extrapolated from this vision? To some onlookers, it is a process of scientific phenomena offering insight into past environments. To others, it is a naturally built masterpiece of architecture and design, or a hidden treasure-trove. Some may see it as a symbol of environmental degradation, while others may see art and relate it to the world or to themselves, or regard it more philosophically.

To me, drawing on an analogy derived from my undergraduate studies in geology, it is an exhibition – well, the hill is: the cliff face is but a view within to the many components, layers, and meanings one might make. Seeing this as an exhibition, we see the final result, the ‘hill’. The cliff face exposes a systematic development from a small beginning at the lowest level to the uppermost present-day, fractured with a variety of elements from diverse forces, and reworked constantly as layers form one atop another fashioning the existing landscape.

You could say this exhibition, has developed like a project. The hill (project outcome) has formed by a complex systematic process (project management) comprising interconnecting layers (project steps) controlled by geological time (project schedule) in the face of weathering agents (project influencers). The now exposed cliff face is the final step of that process - a look deep inside (project evaluation and analysis).

Slicing through the museum environment, we can observe inner workings and components with the same lens. The museum is layered – sometimes

interconnected and metamorphosed – by floors, departments, roles, functions, and practices with the concept of showcasing ‘stories’ a key mandate driver throughout. The difference between museum and hill however, is a separate phenomena that flows freely about all the museum layers – the exhibition project manager, tasked with bringing others’ vision to fruition. Comparing this role to the weathering agent<sup>1</sup> of water, we can see how the project manager infiltrates the museum environment similar to water’s interaction with the hillside. This analogy forms the central thread throughout this study.

Many definitions of a project manager exist, but Schermerhorn (2011) simply defines the profession as ‘people who coordinate complex projects with task deadlines while working with many people of different expertise, both within and outside the organisation’ (p.16). The author attributes this methodology for projects across all organisations. But this simplicity does not reflect all projects: each project is different. Do project managers operating in museum environments follow the methodology that Schermerhorn, Kaufman (2011), Taylor (2012), Jones, (2011), and Young (2008) prescribe across all institutions? This study is an exploration of that practice during museum exhibition development, and in particular, the role and influence of the project manager in exhibition success.

The desire to attribute project principles throughout the museum environment – a sector often functioning with less than desirable resources – is well known. With museums increasingly assigning tighter management and operational control, project management methodology is being seen more and more in the sector. However, despite many museums undertaking project work, not all can, or choose to engage with project managers for exhibition development. For those that do, there is anticipation that the role brings with it a set of skills that will lead to desired project outcomes. But what makes and drives a project manager, and how do they interact with others - team members, consultants,

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<sup>1</sup> *Weathering*, defined by Skinner and Porter (1992) is ‘the chemical alteration and mechanical breakdown of rock materials during exposure to air, moisture, and organic matter’ (p.557). *Agents* of weathering include water, ice, acids, salt, plants, animals, and changes in temperature’.

and clients – to achieve project results? Museums can be complex organisations comprising individuals with varied personalities, roles and agendas. Through my own professional experience, corporate and creative minds do not always mix, and so there lies the challenge.

Despite the increasing presence of project managers in the New Zealand museum sector, little research has been conducted into this practice and in particular into the mind and skill-set of the project manager. It is unclear how effective project management is in developing exhibitions and there is little evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the project manager.

### **Rationale for this study**

The research arose from my increasing interest in this field. I have developed an interest in the museum environment and in particular, exhibition development. I also have an interest in project work. I wished to see how effectively these co-exist in the museum 'hillside'. I was further interested in the social interactions project managers have with others – it is often written that an essential factor is efficient use of human resource, but how are these relationships forged and maintained?

My career to date involves many varied experiences both within and outside the museum sector, some involving project management aspects. Without training however, I am unfamiliar with best practice. By conducting a close examination of project management practice, and in particular identifying attributes and behaviours of the role that lead to successful development, I aim to increase my existing knowledge and skill-set in this discipline. I am further interested to know if a project management qualification and/or specialist training is essential in pursuing this role further.

Despite abundant material on the project management landscape internationally, there is a lack of resource focused on our own hills – New Zealand museums and in particular, exhibition development. This may be a

reflection on the young nature of the profession in New Zealand and perhaps especially so within the museum sector. Most research focuses on project management theory and process and touches only lightly on the role and the attributes necessary in a successful museum project manager. This study will contribute to knowledge on how a project manager operates during museum exhibition development (building stories both physically and metaphorically), and in particular how one project manager creates and maintains positive and efficient working environments.

By conducting research that comprises a variety of methods, I aim to develop a qualitative study that not only examines the project manager's role in exhibition development, but that also provides insight into the mindset of such a role. The inductive nature of the research will allow for an organic and reflexive process, where layers can form and direction is guided by the research as it unfolds.

### **Aims of this research**

This thesis examines the practice, role and desirable attributes of a project manager within a museum, and aims to address four primary questions:

1. How has project management developed within the museum sector and how is project management perceived in contemporary practice?
2. What tools do project managers utilise to realise exhibition completion?
3. How much does the thinking and skill-set of the project manager influence exhibition success?
4. How do project managers interact with others in their working environments and what mechanisms do they enact to ensure efficient teamwork?

To address these questions, the study will utilise a variety of qualitative methods to build three sections: context chapter, a case study, and an ethnographic study.

### **Structure of the thesis**

The first section of the thesis frames the wider context of project management in Chapter Two and the history of Wellington Museum in Chapter Three. I begin by surveying the literature on project management in order to examine the development of project management practices within Wellington Museum.

The second section, Chapter Four, comprises a case study on the *Death and Diversity* exhibition staged at the Wellington Museum (formerly Museum of Wellington City & Sea) in 2011. It will closely examine the development of this project and in particular, the role of the Museum's project manager in achieving exhibition completion. I aim to view what happened over the course of the development through the project manager's eyes in order to gain insight into the project manager's professional growth.

Of particular interest was the introduction of the project manager during the exhibition's two-year development and not from the outset. In addition, the project manager had no prior project management training. The steps and thinking leading up to this employment will provide useful insight into the skills desired as well as perceptions of the role.

The third section, Chapter Five, is an ethnographic study on the same project manager. This will explore the role further by examining her professional experience prior to and since *Death and Diversity*. Currently the role focuses on a much-larger multi-year development of the Wellington Museum – a project (or series of projects) involving capital works and visitor experience developments over the coming years.

This section details the qualities beneficial to a project manager and examines the attributes that assist project success. Included here is participant observation of the exhibition team during several meetings of which the project manager was a central figure. I note activity and interactions between the project manager and the team during this process and in such an environment. I discuss further whether this museum environment requires specific attributes in a project manager.

Lastly, Chapter Six and Chapter Seven provide a summary and discussion, and conclusion respectively. I will provide discussion points on contemporary and future practice, and conclude by addressing the core questions threaded throughout this study.

## **Research methods**

This study utilises a variety of qualitative research methods to document, describe and analyse the role of a project manager. Methods include a case study, interviewing, observation, and document research. These are presented here, each detailing reason for inclusion, value to this study, and method of treatment.

### Case study

A case study uses 'in-depth investigation of one or more examples of a current social phenomenon, utilising a variety of sources of data' (Keddie, in Jupp, 2006, p.21-22). The value of case studies include: real-life practical examples; flexibility; and can be descriptive, exploratory or explanatory. Conducting a qualitative case study is extremely valuable as it provides the ability to study the case in depth. 'Case studies are often concerned with pinning down the specific mechanisms and pathways between causes and effects' (Blatter, in Given 2008, p.68-72).

A case study was selected as a method for this thesis owing to the value in studying a real-life example with a real-life practitioner, particularly so considering the lack of resource in this field. The concentration on one case was to provide a greater in-depth analysis. It combines descriptive – full portrayal of the case – and explanatory – an account of what caused a particular phenomenon observed – techniques. The challenge, as with all case studies, is the risk of cases not being sufficiently representative to permit generalization to other situations or provide for comparative analysis within the case study (Blatter, in Given 2008, p.68-72). This is more challenging with just a single case studied. The depth and rigour of the analysis will be the crucial issue here.

Selection criteria included a case that held my intrinsic interest and that enabled ease of access owing to my close association to the institution and participants. The rapport existing in already established relationships enabled an easier transition of information. Further, the selected case was appealing as it involved an institution familiar with undertaking projects, and one that has operated both with and without a project manager through its organisational history.

The greatest weakness to this study is that the case is retrospective. There is potential for inaccuracies from accounts based on participant memory and thus these accounts can influence data collection. Conversely, being able to examine the case study in its entirety enables a more complete in-depth analysis. A further potential weakness is in conducting research as an insider and the unintentional bias that may result. Although I have considered this carefully, the decision to focus on one case study elevates the risk of bias. I address this further on page 22.

## Interviews

Another qualitative research method chosen for this thesis involved a series of face-to-face interviews. Interviewing is of value as it enables the 'interviewer to follow up and probe responses, motives and feelings, and their potential added value is that the recording of nonverbal communications [...] can enrich the qualitative aspects of the data' (Davies, in Jupp, 2006, p.158-159).

Five open-ended, in-depth interviews were conducted featuring key personnel from Museums Wellington and with experience of the case study: the project manager, director and head of collections and exhibitions. These occurred between 2014 and 2015. The key focus here was the project manager where three interviews were arranged. All interviews took place in a location agreed upon by the participants.

Interviews followed an informal, semi-structured approach, with a format comprising three sections – pre-scribed questions about themselves, about their experience with the Museum and *Death and Diversity* exhibition, and about their experiences or knowledge of project management. Slight alterations to questioning reflected each participant's role and connection to the case study. Within the questioning there was 'room for the respondents more spontaneous descriptions and narratives' (Brinkmann, in Given, 2008, p.471-473).

An additional interview with the project manager was also conducted, which took us both back to the central component of the exhibition, the *Memory Chain*. Through touring the space, recounting the process, viewing imagery and designs, and re-reading visitors' experiences, both of us relived the experience, comparing the process and outcome with initial expectations.

## Ethnographic study

Owing to the gap in available research and the objectives of this thesis, it was determined ethnographic research of the Museum project manager was of

value. This involved data gathered from the interviews and additional participant observation. Personal engagement with the interviewee was key to understanding the role of the project manager. The relationship already established allowed for the appreciation needed for ethnographic analysis.

Ethnographic interviewing was conducted with purposeful conversations, particularly during the interview. Data was also gathered by participant observation. This involved observing and partaking in interaction between the project manager and the project team during eight meetings over a two-month period in 2015. As participant, I was an active party to the meetings and thus was able to reflect on accounts first-hand. Gathered data advised on human management behaviour of the project manager during such activity and under such circumstances.

#### Document research

To support all other research, examination of an array of primary and secondary documentation was conducted. This mostly included documents sourced from the Wellington Museums Trust, Museums Wellington, and Wellington City Council, and included policies, annual reports, and statements of intent. Supplementary documentation included archives, minutes, and data gathered from organisation websites. Specifically, archival research provided material on exhibition practice and in particular, material on the exhibition *Death and Diversity*. Additionally, the job description for the Museums Wellington project manager position provided essential information on the role, responsibilities and sought-after attributes of the Museum's project manager role.

All documents satisfied authenticity and credibility criteria.

## **Ethical conduct of the research**

Ethical consent was granted from Massey University in support of this study. It is deemed Low Risk and is registered as such on the Low Risk Database by the Massey University Human Ethics Committees (MUHEC).

### *Researching as an insider*

There are advantages to qualitative research involving close associations between researcher and the institution, case study and participants being studied. There are also challenges to this approach however. Researching as an insider, i.e. conducting research within one's own organisation, including interviewing and studying colleagues and senior management, offers the challenge of exercising and maintaining critical analysis. To avoid bias, a research approach of working reflexively was adopted. Reflexivity, as defined by Anderson (2004):

[...] entails the researcher being aware of his effect on the process and outcomes of research. In carrying out qualitative research, it is impossible to remain 'outside' our subject matter; our presence, in whatever form, will have some kind of effect. Reflexive research takes account of this researcher involvement (p.3).

Thus steps were initiated to manage this approach. The first involved introspective reflexivity (Anderson, 2004, p.3) where I asserted a degree of self-consciousness of my potential influence on the design, process and data being collected. This involved a continuous stream of reflection throughout all stages of research. Secondly, it was vital to consider a reinterpretation of the interpretation of the gathered data. For the latter, I attempted to distance myself from my already interpreted text and reinterpret from a position outside this environment.

## **Core argument of the thesis**

The research will demonstrate that project management is vital to ensuring museum exhibition success, and that such success is dependent on the unique skill and ability of the project manager. The thesis argues that the museum project manager needs to be proficient in communication and relationship building, as the most important consideration is 'people'. This is a skill and an art. In the museum world, it is the 'art' of the project manager that keeps the 'creative museum ark' afloat and on target.

To build this argument it is important to first survey current and past research and literature on project management. The next chapter will do this by identifying and introducing key sources vital to and used throughout this study.



## CHAPTER TWO

# A survey of literature on project management

## *In the field*

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### Introduction

An essential starting point for this thesis is an investigation into past and current literature on project management. This chapter surveys key sources available.

The chapter is organised into three sections: project management; project management and museums; and project management, museums, and capital developments. The segmentation is designed to introduce the reader to project management topics specific to this study and identify potential gaps in current research. I also aim to weed through the abundant material available on project management and identify key sources.

Interestingly, little of the voluminous material on project management focuses on the activity within museums, and even less focus on a New Zealand context. As will be shown however, there is no shortage of resource prescribing frameworks and guidelines beneficial to any project manager.

### Project management

Though not an old discipline, there are numerous texts, guidebooks and manuals focusing on project management in a corporate for-profit environment. Many of these publications focus on theoretical analysis and processes while utilising complex language and concepts associated expressly with project management (see, for example, Edkins, Geraldi, Morris, and Smith, 2013). Others such as Shenhar and Dvir (2007) analyse project management practice within their existing environments. The dilemma, they argue, is that most

projects fail owing to conventional concepts that cannot adapt appropriately to the increasingly dynamic business environment. Their model is offered as a way to plan and manage projects to desired outcomes. Looking at the bigger business picture, Kaufman (2011) offers greater insight into leadership and management in a general sense, by focusing on the concept of 'to success' rather than 'for success'.

Training resources, guidebooks and workbooks for new and experienced project managers have also been published. Kasten (2012) is an apt example here, while Kaufman (2011) and Kerzner (2013) showcase numerous successful and unsuccessful case studies. Some of the best resources on project management are those identifying, and analysing, such real examples. While many instructional publications are from experienced professionals and as such follow legitimate principles of recognised accreditation and certification, more contemporary training resources, such as Clark-Craig (2012), focus toward professionals without a formal qualification. Taylor (2012) takes this further in the *Lazy Project Manager* series by providing a platform to create and practice the difficult challenges that can lead to failure.

In the New Zealand context, there appears limited resource of value to this study. Jones (2011) however, presents a contemporary viewpoint of management throughout the country arguing for the necessary 'appreciation' of surrounding changes and events in order to understand contemporary business. Schermerhorn (2011) extends the context to include the Asian influence, emphasising the 'importance of the Asian region' to contemporary Australasian organisations. Young (2008) offers an authoritative view on New Zealand project management, including a comprehensive framework to follow particularly during times of resource constraint and pressure.

## And museums

Although an increased emphasis on project management exists within museums today, comparisons can be drawn between facets of project management and facets of museum practice over history (Moore, 1999). Moore argues that the principles of project management and the skills and attributes of project managers are the same irrespective of organisations or projects.

There is a body of literature present from the 1990s that focus on exhibition development. Publications of interest include: Belcher (1991); the American Association of Museums (1992); McLean (1993); Greenberg, Ferguson and Nairne (1996); and Dean (1996) among others. These provide useful resources to appreciate the need for project management. Other resources of value include Ambrose and Paine's *Museum Basics* (2006) as well as Marincola (2007), Hughes (2010), Lorenz, Skolnick and Berger (2010), Jacob (2011), and Klobe (2012). Together these authors offer a great insight into exhibition design. Further, Houtgraaf and Vitali (2008), who draw on extensive experience from *Naturalis*'s redevelopment in the Netherlands, assert the importance of always considering the intended 'message' throughout any development. Their dissection of the planning and development process of exhibitions is invaluable.

From 2005, an emphasis appeared on museum project management. Where Marstine (2005) focuses on theory, Jacob (2009) looks at the various museum projects being conducted around the world and analyses changes in thinking and practice. Macdonald and Basu (2007) also consider the recent changes to management practice but focus on the ideals of experimentation. In the last decade, authors have also developed evaluation criteria to measure project success. Von Naredi-Rainer (2004) uses over 70 case studies to highlight practice and solutions to building design challenges. More recently Bogle (2013) examines planning and design in exhibitions and provides evaluation criteria.

Of particular interest to this study is research by Martin and Watson (2006) into museum project management, and Carpenter (2011), who focuses on project

management theory and practice in museums, libraries and archives including interactions with the public sector. In particular, Carpenter identifies the necessary attributes of an effective project manager.

Of more contemporary value is Walhimer (2015), who offers the most recent analysis on museum project management. His argument is that 'museum projects are inherently different from other businesses' and that museums require a unique project management system to satisfy the goal of meeting mission rather than making profit (p.104). Walhimer progresses further to define the steps necessary for conducting a museum project.

But it is the contributions of Barry and Gail Lord in museum management, who offer many texts of relevance – *Museum Exhibitions* (2001), *Strategic Planning for Museums* (2007), *Museum Management* (2009) and most recently and of most importance here, *Museum Planning: Sustainable Space, Facilities, and Operations* (2012). Exhaustive case studies across all these resources shed valuable light on real practice. The last publication in particular is a definitive text on museum planning and refers to facets of project management throughout. The authors focus on 21<sup>st</sup> century practice and emphasise sustainability, a growing concern for contemporary museums. Consequently, the publication offers valuable insight into the environment, practice and role of the museum project manager.

### **And capital development**

Apart from Lord, Lord and Martin's (2012) contribution, there are few resources on capital projects in museums. Information on large-scale capital projects is located in the wider literature. For example, Mead and Gruneberg (2013) analyse London's successful 2012 Olympic construction project program and provide insight into the measures for success on large-scale capital developments.

Of particular interest are resources referring to non-profits and the public sector. One such text is Weinstein (2003) *Capital Campaigns from the Ground Up*, a resource for the 'non-profit leader' where Weinstein sets out the steps to achieving a successful project. Kassel (2010) dives further into public sector project management, providing a framework for both projects and programmes with strategic recommendations and a comprehensive look into factors that lead to both success and failure. Of immense value is Kassel's investigation into the differences between public versus private sector project management.

In regards to risk management, there are several texts that provide useful content. From Cooper, Grey, Raymond and Walker (2004) through to the latest research of Raydugin (2013) and Agarwal (2013), there are resources that detail the principles and practices for appropriately managing risk in projects and procurements for decision makers. Agarwal in particular, highlights the pressures of leaders to 'outdo competitors' and provides measures and criteria to follow to achieve capital project success.

## **Summary**

Despite abundant material on project management, there is a lack of literature, research and analysis conducted with a New Zealand museum perspective and in particular focusing on exhibition development. This highlights that the project management profession is still relatively young and especially so within the museum sector.

Further, most existing literature and research focus on project management practice and theory, and touch only lightly on the project manager role or consider issues through the project manager's eyes. Although most publications are written by project management professionals, they seldom take a personal perspective, focusing instead on the process.

The lacunae identified in this survey of the literature suggest that this particular study of the role of one project manager in a single museum is overdue. The

case study on the Wellington Museum has the potential to offer greater awareness of project management in museums.

This museum environment is explored in the next chapter. By establishing an institutional context, Chapter Three details the conditions at the Wellington Museum prior to the exhibition *Death and Diversity* and subsequent establishment of the project manager role.

## CHAPTER THREE

# Wellington Museum

## *The hillside*

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### Introduction

There will always be projects in museums (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Those were the emphatic words spoken by Museums Wellington Director Brett Mason as we sat in one of the offices adorning the highest northeastern corner of the historic *Bond Store* (home of the Wellington Museum – former Museum of Wellington City & Sea). If so, then museums and projects coexist in their environment in similar ways to sand and water.

As I suggest in the previous chapter, this close association is not, however, abundantly clear in the literature. Yet the lack of literature about museum project management is not totally unexpected. Museums operating under business models are recent phenomena. This is despite museum experience with business components such as projects, many in the form of exhibitions, for many years. What has ultimately increased the business emphasis of late, is that in this modern world public scrutiny and justification for existence, purpose and expenditure are increasingly creating pressures as much in museums as in any business (Anderson, 2004, p.249). Therefore, with the presence of project work, it is just as important to understand how project management functions in the museum sector as in the corporate world. Narrowing the focus further, there is a need to investigate how project management functions in regard to museum exhibition development.

This chapter establishes the institutional context of Wellington Museum leading up to the exhibition *Death and Diversity*. In my approach, I liken the Wellington Museum to a coastal hill. Like any hill, the Museum has evolved over time,

comprising many compositional layers changing in response to its environment. If we slice through the Museum - like an exposed hillside outcrop - we gain insight into its complexities deep within.



Figure 3.1

*The Bond Store, Queens Wharf, Wellington, 2012.  
Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

### Standing on the cliff edge

Overseeing the cliff-face and continuously monitoring the wider landscape, is Brett Mason. A long-time participant in the museum sector and strong advocate for project work in museums, Mason has career origins in publishing and marketing<sup>2</sup> and a Museum Studies qualification through Victoria University of Wellington (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). As part of these studies Mason undertook a six month placement in exhibition development at the Museum of

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<sup>2</sup> Gilmore and Rentschler (2002) refer to the importance of marketing experience in a museum director. 'With the drive toward accountability, these changes have increased the need for museum directors to have the orientation and skills of marketing managers, in addition to their custodial skills' (p.746).

New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. He recalls his focus on museums after joining the Museums Wellington group part-time in 2001 as Marketing Manager – a position that was shared with Capital E –

I had [long] thought about the opportunities there were in this museum, as well as the whole museum sector (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

In 2003 Mason was appointed to the full-time position of Marketing and Public Programmes Manager at the Museum (WMT, website, 2015). During this time the Museum produced public programmes for the 30th Anniversary Commemoration of the *Wahine* Disaster and the exhibition *Telling Tales*. He was appointed Director in 2006 and has remained at the helm since.

Listening to Mason, it is evident that he is the main driver in the Museum's current progress. He sees the constant need to keep on top of the game recognising project work as a means to achieve that (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

### **The hillside**

While meeting with Mason, a storm continuously barraged the corner of the building drawing comparisons to a coastal hill long-battered by offshore winds. The Museum's exposure to coastal winds on the Wellington waterfront makes this easy to imagine. It is fitting that the Museum is affected by the same tempered winds that the city is widely renowned for.

Reflecting on the Museum, Mason agrees it resides in an enviable setting. Housed within the heritage-listed *Bond Store*, the Museum has been a guardian of the central Wellington waterfront for many years and is an apt reminder of the city's harbour history (Morrow, 2000, p.4; Heritage New Zealand, website, 2015). Now sitting among a growing city-scape (in mass, height, and modernity), the Museum's historic and unique exterior still stands-out. The Museum (and building) is thus an icon for many Wellington communities:

The Capital's never had as good a city-focused museum as this one. The Previous Maritime Museum exhibition in the same building barely tapped the possibilities [...] The Bond Store, designed by Frederick [de Jersey] Clere and opened in 1892, makes a splendid home [...] Plaudits are due to those behind it (*The Dominion Post*, 1999, Nov 29, p.4).

The building, however, has not been immune to change, undergoing much transition since its inception in 1892 (Morrow, 2000). This further enhances the building's value to the city. It reflects (as a time record) the very essence the Museum strives to communicate within.

### *The underlying Bond*

Long before museum occupation, the building served a different purpose. Land reclamations in early Wellington helped extend the city into the harbour developing a much-needed port (Johnson, 1996, p.81-91). The additional bonus of this reclamation was the construction of Queens Wharf, the original and underlying layer for the future Museum hillside (Heritage New Zealand, website, 2015).

Built upon the wharf in 1892, the *Bond Store* was designed by leading architect Frederick de Jersey Clere at a time when Wellington was burgeoning (Morrow, 2000, p.7). The building immediately became a key asset on the waterfront and functioned as a hive of activity for the wharves. Despite its grand exterior, the building served as a bonded cargo warehouse withholding goods requiring customs duty payment before release (Morrow, 2000, p.5). This warehouse feel has been the constant throughout every building transition, and owes much to the actions of the Wellington Harbour Board (WHB)<sup>3</sup> (Morrow, 2000; Thompson, 2007).

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<sup>3</sup> Established in 1880 following a campaign by the city's Chamber of Commerce to effectively manage and develop the harbour and its facilities (Morrow, 2000, p.7).

### Founding layer

The WHB directed de Jersey Clere to design a building that incorporated 'practical features and specifications' for a bond store but also a Board office to 'reflect its influence and status' (Morrow, 2000, p.11). Such opulence reflected the WHB's ambitions of being a vital centre and player for early Wellington (Morrow, 2000, p.18-21).

The WHB resided here for many years amid times both prosperous and controversial, such as the 1913 Waterfront Strike (Morrow, 2000, p.21). During the 1920s, the WHB expanded and refurbished the Head Office in response to a declining need for bonded shipping storage. Advancements in road and rail in the 1950s further changed the WHB's operation of the *Bond Store* and by the 1960s, there were major changes facing the shipping sector. Introduced methods of cargo handling, containerisation, and roll-on/roll-off ferries had adverse effects for Wellington's wharf operation and, no less, the operation of the *Bond Store* (Morrow, 2000, p.22). By the early 1970s, the hillside no longer functioned as a centre of wharf activity and the founding layers were beginning to erode (Morrow, 2000, p.26).



Figure 3.2

A crowd gathering in front of the Wellington Harbour Board office during the 1913 waterfront strike, 1913. Museums Wellington Collection. Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)

### First treasure trove

The WHB laid the foundation layers for the museum era in 1972. Making use of now vacant space, ‘a single room’ (Loud, 2014, p.25) was converted into a museum suitable for housing the WHB’s small collection. The Marine Museum of Wellington Harbour was formed. Over the next twenty years, the Museum built a strong following amongst maritime enthusiasts and supporters, and grew its maritime collection (Morrow, 2000, p.26).

The continued acceleration of waterfront change however, together with a restructure in local government (Loud, 2014, p.25), would eventually lead to the WHB’s demise – the initial treasure layers were coming to an end. Following amalgamation of Harbour organisations across the country the WHB ceded responsibility of harbour operation to the Regional Council (pers. comm., Mason, 2014) in 1989 and relinquished the *Bond Store* with its collections to a

newly established charitable trust who renamed the Museum the Wellington Maritime Museum (Morrow, 2000, p.27).

The WHB finally departed in the mid-1990s and passed Museum organisation to the Wellington City Council (WCC). By this time, the Museum had vastly expanded exhibition spaces and increased public programming (Morrow, 2000, p.27). One of the WHB's final actions upon departure was a monetary donation to the WCC to 'keep the building, upgrade it, and to care for the collections' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

### Prevailing layers

At a time of strong public demand for Wellington to develop more civic amenities, the WCC saw the gem in front of them (Morrow, 2000, p.28). Regarding the Museum hillside within a much larger landscape, the WCC founded a prevailing layer stretching along the entire coast – the Wellington Museum Trust (The Trust) (see Appendix A).

Established by a Trust Deed between the WCC and Trustees in October 1995, and revised in August 2007 (WMT, Annual Report, 2009), The Trust's intention was to reposition a number of Wellington's prime heritage services and assets under one umbrella, and subsequently open up opportunities for major projects within the cultural sector<sup>4</sup>. The overarching objective was to develop museum and cultural activities within the city for the benefit of residents and the wider community. Specifically, The Trust provided support in strategic direction, funding and resource to each institution enabling development of amenities and services to best serve that institution's targeted communities (WMT, Annual Report, 2008).

The Trust's first acquisition was City Gallery Wellington between 1995 and 1996 (formerly Wellington City Art Gallery), followed by the Wellington Museum and

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<sup>4</sup> The Trust evolved into a Council-Controlled Organisation in 2002 (see Local Government Act, 2002, S.6) and as such was governed at arm's length by the WCC with freedom to operate separately under its own Board of Trustees.

Nairn Street Cottage (formerly Colonial Cottage Museum) in the same period. Over the following years, The Trust's portfolio of Wellington arts and heritage organisations expanded to include: Capital E; The Cable Car Museum; and most recently Space Place at Carter Observatory (formerly Carter Observatory) in 2010. The Trust also has a joint-management partnership of the New Zealand Cricket Museum with the New Zealand Cricket Museum Trust (WMT, Annual Report, 2013, p.3; WCC, Museums Policy, 2015, p.3). This grouping of cultural and heritage attractions became the largest of its kind in Wellington and together are currently key contributors to the WCC's long-term planning for creativity and innovation (WMT, Annual Report, 2006, p.1).

Now a dominant force over the hillside, The Trust remained active throughout the decade, undertaking major development projects for both new and existing museum facilities (see WMT annual reports, 2013-2014/15) – The Trust is no stranger to project work. And with the ensuing museum-wide development of the Wellington Museum on the horizon, The Trust looks set to continue further development, just as it did for the Museum in 1999.

### *Rich top soil*

The most dynamic and enriching component of the hillside is that of topsoil. No other layer has a greater ability to influence, provide for and promote growth. The Wellington Museum acts in this manner by building on the experience of all older layers, while providing sustenance for its many internal and external stakeholders.

This rich layer dates back to the 1990s. Wellington was experiencing positive growth with a cultural renaissance and surge of civic pride. With the newly acquired *Bond Store*, the Wellington City Council had the perfect place to celebrate Wellington's heritage (Morrow, 2000, p.28), particularly at a time when the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa was developing nearby.

Despite a strong maritime following, the Council looked to expand the Museum's mandate (Loud, 2014, p.25). The newly formed Trust acquired control and with support from Council, 'the former Wellington Harbour Board, Community Trust of Wellington, the Lottery Grants Board and other big sponsors and private donations' (The Dominion Post, 1999, Nov 23, p.19), progressed with plans of extensive restoration, conservation<sup>5</sup> and development<sup>6</sup>. In 1999 the Museum rebranded itself as the Museum of Wellington City & Sea<sup>7</sup> (Morrow, 2000, p.28-31).

The Museum's new purpose was to preserve, present and promote Wellington's social and cultural history as well as its maritime heritage (Morrow, 2000). Paul Thompson (2007), Museum director at the time, emphasised the Museum refocus as 'broadening, not abandoning, its maritime focus' (p.10). As such, the 'Museum could be marketed to appeal to a wider audience' (Loud, 2014, p.25), and 'become a part of the entire community' (*The Dominion Post*, 1999, Nov 23, p.19). The Museum hillside represented more than just the coast and adjoining coastal waters – it was about the inner landscape too. Thompson considered these changes necessary to meet the 'changing needs of making a museum relevant to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century audience' (Mulrooney, 2004, p.14). He reiterated this focus in 2007, asking who the museum is for? 'If we receive public funding, then we have a duty to make it as accessible and interesting to as wide a number of people as possible' (Thompson, 2007, p.10).

Over the following decade the Museum strived to satisfy public demand through temporary exhibition and public programming, and in 2008, the coastal landscape underwent a further transformation. At that time, new Trust Chief Executive, Pat Stuart<sup>8</sup>, reorganised The Trust's assets by establishing *Museums Wellington*, the management unit under The Trust responsible for a

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<sup>5</sup> A key requirement of the building's conservation involved the installation of base isolators for structural support (Morrow, 2000, p.29).

<sup>6</sup> As with The Trust, it is worth noting that through this development, the Wellington Museum is also no stranger to capital projects.

<sup>7</sup> The name reflected loyalty to maritime origins.

<sup>8</sup> Stuart possesses extensive experience in the cultural sector (WMT, website, 2014 [wmt.org.nz/aboutPeople.html](http://wmt.org.nz/aboutPeople.html))

museum cluster including the Wellington Museum<sup>9</sup> (WMT, Annual Report, 2013, p.11). Mason notes that the Museums Wellington Director's role has 'kept expanding' since<sup>10</sup> (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). The Museum also faced a continual need to inform many stakeholders about the institution's new purpose. In fact, the maritime tag still lingers today. Letters to newspaper editors over the years have shown some of the oppositional opinion towards the Museum's changes:

New Zealand is still a maritime nation [...] The Museum of Wellington City and Sea has (or used to have?) a collection of [maritime] objects [...] their emphasis on maritime matters has sadly been reduced in recent years... (Ken Scadden [former Museum of Wellington City & Sea director], in The Dominion Post, 2014, Mar 17, p.8).

The rich history of shipping in Wellington has been slowly eroded over the last few years. Sadly this has now been filled with a lot of rubbish and the marine aspect has been pushed aside to the detriment of the city and the surrounding history (Rod Page, in The Dominion Post, 2015, May 26, p.6).

I strongly support Rod Page's point [...] as to Wellington's deep maritime history and how inappropriate it therefore is to downgrade this in the museum's activities. It is part of who we are (Judy Malone, in The Dominion Post, 2015, May 28, p.10).

To further distance itself from maritime thinking, the Museum enacted a number of smaller projects. The most notable of these involved the collections<sup>11</sup>, which Mason recalls being:

[...] a majority, maritime [...] what they were calling the collection was what the Wellington Harbour Board had left in sheds and not bothered to get rid of [...] office furniture, dinghies and boats – ultimately many objects in no state for keeping, let alone showing... (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

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<sup>9</sup> This cluster also includes: the Nairn Street Cottage, the Cable Car Museum and more recently, Space Place at Carter Observatory.

<sup>10</sup> One area in which Mason needed up-skilling was collection management.

<sup>11</sup> This was not confined to the collections of the Museum of Wellington City & Sea but across the entire Trust.

The Museum thus sought to amalgamate and refine the collection (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). A commissioned report by the Trust (2006) also 'concluded that the conditions in the [collection] store were detrimental to the care of the collections and placed them at risk' (Loud, 2014, p.27). These factors contributed to the collections (rationalisation, repurposing and rehousing) project (Loud, 2014).

This is just one of several projects the Museum has facilitated with the backing of The Trust (see for example, various projects prioritised in WMT, Sol, 2014-2015, p.7). Today the *Bond Store* is again functioning as a hive of activity – though somewhat differently from 1892 – and the Museum, as topsoil, is providing much community sustenance. It is worthwhile to note though that the topsoil layer is also the layer most susceptible to change, which conversely threatens the very existence of that layer. The Museum is aware of this need to weather any change and adapt to meet the needs of its communities, and this is reflected in its vision (WMT, Sol, 2013-2014).

### Modern landscaping

Constantly monitoring the modern landscaping of the Museum is The Trust. Underneath this umbrella, the Museum follows The Trust's Vision, Mission, and Values, which have remained largely unchanged since 2007<sup>12</sup>. The vision is as follows:

Our vision is that Wellingtonians and visitors to the city experience new ways of seeing arts, culture, heritage, creativity, space, science and Wellington: visitors engaged in thought-provoking experiences that achieve high standards of quality, critical acclaim and public participation and appreciation (WMT, Sol, 2013-14).

A key word here is *new*. The vision presents the Museum with the drive to continuously seek improvement. This continual working environment of

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<sup>12</sup> At the time of writing, The Trust has begun a review into the current suitability of the existing vision.

investigation, innovation and experimentation provides an apt setting for project work.

### Reworking of the layers

During the growth of any hillside, geological layers directly influence the older layer below, as well as undergo change themselves via chemical and/or physical pressures. This change can occur slowly over a period of time or very quickly and dramatically. The Museum has grown in a similar way since The Trust assumed control undergoing changes in organisational structure, management and operation in response to external environmental changes. This has become more predominant as The Trust continues to operate under financial pressure (WMT, Annual Report, 2013, p.4).

One dramatic change as stated earlier was the reorganisation in 2008 of several Trust assets under one entity, Museums Wellington. The follow-on affect was the reorganisation of personnel to operate across the museum cluster. The new team largely resembled the original from the Wellington Museum with newly appointed Director, Brett Mason, and a senior management team overseeing various departments beneath (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

A notable feature of Museums Wellington was that some personnel oversaw more than one department portfolio in response to organisational need. One such amalgamation combined the managerial roles of the exhibition and collection departments in 2010 (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Further, Museums Wellington has on numerous occasions shuffled personnel *across* the organisation either into new roles or into secondments (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). This reshuffle is evident of a reflexive organisation undertaking tasks (and projects) in response to need. The biggest of late was the temporary repositioning of a key role to oversee the collections project and the reorganisation of many roles during the incorporation of Carter Observatory into the Museums Wellington group in 2012 (WMT, Annual Report, 2013, p.7).

Such organisational flexibility has proven valuable. The evolving Wellington Museum has often received recognition in the museum sector and community for exhibitions and public programming that are bold and new (see list of NZ Museum Awards finalists over the years, Museums Aotearoa, website). This was recognised by UK's *The Times* in 2013, where an esteemed panel cited the museum as one of the top 50 in the world (Tom, 2013).

### Changing composition

As hill growth continues, internal factors bring further change to the layers within. Some layers transform completely owing to variables in heat and pressure. Such can be said for museum exhibitions, which can change in part or completely, and also change often as part of exhibition programming. In direct response to external environmental changes the Museum has evolved exhibition programming in both content and practice.

The *Bond Store* building caters for three floors of exhibition space<sup>13</sup>. From the earliest days, exhibitions focused on permanent displays, gradually evolving to reflect the strategic vision of the organisation. With the onset of the 1999 rebranding, the Museum committed more resource to a temporary exhibition programme and has received much acclaim for that over recent years (*The Dominion Post*, 2014, Nov 27). The philosophy of the Museum is one that has driven much of this progress.

One of the defining features of that philosophy continues to be the freedom to evolve and innovate (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). The latest methodology driving exhibition development is to abandon the temporary programme and focus more on the collections, thereby improving greater access to them. The aim is to facilitate more experiences that celebrate Wellington's objects and stories (WMT, Annual Report, 2015, p.26).

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<sup>13</sup> The Museum has plans to open up a fourth floor, the Attic, during the first stage of the Museum's impending development. This top floor of the Museum is currently used as office space.

The exhibition team also evolved during this period. Initially, much of the early exhibition development was undertaken by a sole curator. Gradually, a small team emerged primarily comprising a curator, collections manager, exhibitions manager, and public programmes and learning manager. Together the team developed, designed and delivered the exhibition programme. Apart from one role which was always exhibitions focused – evolving from a curator, to an exhibition developer, to an exhibitions and public programmes developer – most others in this core team performed exhibition development tasks in addition to their other departmental tasks. These team members consulted other colleagues as and when needed during development (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

In essence, the exhibition team for most of the years leading up to *Death and Diversity* operated much like a project team. And although the team followed a lead person, this was not someone in a project manager role, nor someone with project management experience.



**Figure 3.3**  
Exhibition marketing posters hanging in a conference room, Wellington Museum, 2015.  
Photographed by author.

## Weathering

Filtering throughout the hillside is a major player that has the potential to effect great change. This is the weathering agent. Above ground, this agent can take many forms, but within the hillside, it is commonly water. As well as the ability to erode, it can sculpt and even strengthen. In a museum, this agent is the project manager, or at least the person leading as one.

Leading up to the exhibition *Death and Diversity*, the Wellington Museum had experienced a number of projects either directly through the Museum or indirectly through projects facilitated by Museums Wellington or The Trust (See WCC, Museums Policy, 2015, p.3). The largest of these projects was the development and transformation of the Museum from the Maritime Museum of Wellington to the Museum of Wellington City & Sea in 1999. The first step of devising a conservation plan was given to Ian Bowman, conservator. He recalled that despite being straightforward, it was an 'interesting project because it had to include strengthening, and to reveal the big timber frame areas of the old Bond Store which were hidden before' (The Dominion Post, 1999, 25 Jun).

The multi-faceted development was then managed by Shand Shelton and involved base isolation (Holmes Consulting Group) and architectural development (Athfield Architects). Hewitt Pender Associates then took control for the internal fit-out and exhibition development (Morrow, 2000, p.29-31). The project was made even more complex by the buildings heritage status, and therefore the strict measures that were placed upon the development. This multi-faceted project furnishes specific evidence of an embedded project management layer within the organisation.

Some of these projects were contracted to external parties (some being project managers), others conducted in-house by existing staff members (Museums Wellington, exhibition archives, accessed 2015). The process of exhibition development often requires players within or without a team to operate in a project-like manner considering the many project-like qualities of an exhibition.

A new exhibition is a project in that it is a unique activity and 'not routine operation' (Walhimer, 2015, p.105).

The exhibitions team within the Museum then, had successfully undertaken exhibition projects for a number of years and without the oversight of a project manager. This appears a trait among similar and smaller museums, who lack financial capability to create such a role. In a small museum, each person may need to fulfill several roles (Walhimer, 2015, p.106). Further, during 2011, the Museum's Exhibitions Manager shifted into a collections position to oversee the collections project. His successful application of this project (pers. comm., Mason, 2014) was achieved without any project management experience. Mason however deemed him to have the qualities necessary to complete the task.

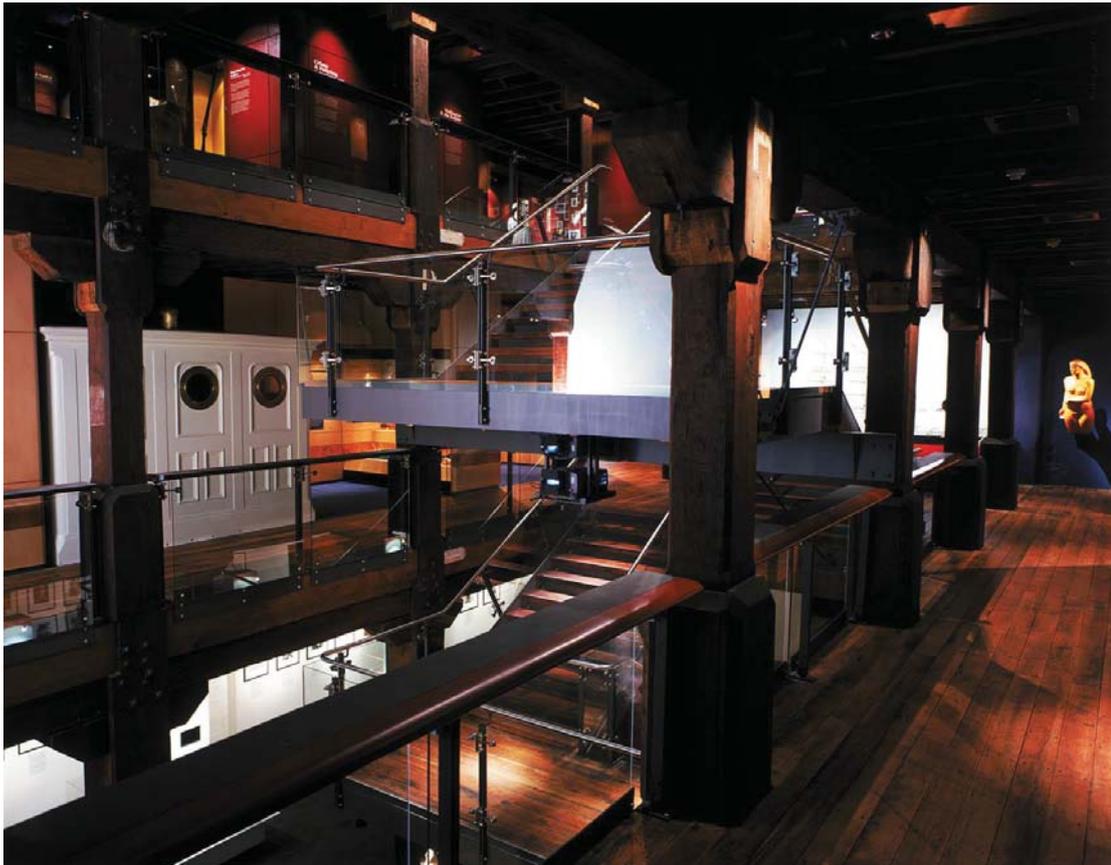
#### *Future weathering – the impending development*

Regardless of the presence of a project manager, projects are a strong way forward for museums to remain relevant while keeping an eye on the future. If the rich topsoil is to weather all those eroding elements to survive, then it must adapt to the surrounding environment and be an essential part of it. Likewise, museums must draw on their histories, deep experiences and the knowledge acquired over many years, while remaining connected and relevant to those communities existing above.

After more than a decade, the Museum is undertaking another extensive capital project. This project will be the most substantial since 1999. 'We have ambitious plans to develop the Museum to emphasis its commitment to being the home of Wellington stories' (Mason: in *The Big Idea*, 2013, 15 May). In doing so, the Museum is transforming from a city museum into a regional museum, a move Mason sees as 'a major progression in meeting community obligations' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Mason aims to propel this vision with a rejuvenation of existing exhibitions mixed with new experiences. Alongside this objective, is the desire to reveal

more of the Museum's Collection. The objects, and stories associated with them, 'belong to the people of Wellington and should be shared' (pers. comm., Mason 2014), a mantra reflected in the Museum's mission statement – 'sharing Wellington's stories' (WMT, Annual Report, 2014, p.21). With that vision, the Museum is living testament to practising what it preaches.



**Figure 3.4**  
*Central staircase, Wellington Museum, 2014.*  
*Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

## Summary

The Wellington Museum sits upon the Wellington waterfront as a coastal hill does on the shoreline. And just like that environmental setting, the Museum has witnessed much change throughout its lifespan in physical appearance, construct, organisation, purpose, exhibition practice and the practitioners within. The Museum has been able to evolve and be reflexive to suit the needs

of society. This ensures the Museum remains relevant to its communities. During times of financial justification for any business, being relevant to stakeholders is a must for survival.

Helping the Museum grow and respond to its environment is the experience of undertaking projects. This has provided the Museum with exposure to project management, even if some of those projects have been undertaken without a project manager. In addition, The Trust's experience with projects is equally valuable. The Trust's mission is to develop new experiences through its key assets, and lists key projects as priorities in the Trust's annual Statement of Intent (Sol). The Trust declares,

These priorities reflect our desire to make a relevant and compelling contribution to the city's future and our commitment to work closely with Council to help it realise its growth strategy for Wellington (WMT, Sol 2014-2015, p.3).

A way to achieve this is through a continual programme of projects. Brett Mason's first words 'there will always be projects in museums' appear to ring true. If so, then there is an evident relationship existing between museums and project management. More specifically, as exhibition projects are a common activity within museums, this relationship is even stronger. This activity, and thus relationship, will be explored further in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# ***Death and Diversity* and project management**

## *Layers and weathering*

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### **Introduction**

Every exhibition, I suppose, is a project (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Project management has become increasingly desirable to museums in recent years. This is particularly so for exhibition development. Yet exhibition practices vary from site to site and not all museums contract project managers. Common restraints surround resource, cost and need, but with the arrival of project management as a modern discipline and the growing justification of specialists to control ever-increasing projects of complex nature, there is a growing advocacy for the role. The Wellington Museum sought a project specialist to oversee the *Death and Diversity* exhibition in 2011, and it is this occurrence and the associating museum environment that is of interest here.

Like a geologist analysing an exposed hillside layer to determine composition and gain insight into its geological history, I aim to dissect *Death and Diversity* for insight into exhibition practice at the Wellington Museum. The key aspect here is the hillside's weathering and weathering agent – project management and the project manager – and the influence the project manager may have had on the eventual successful application of that exhibition. As this weathering enacted much change at the Museum, I liken the impact to that of a coastal storm where such weathering is most influential.

As an inside researcher, and a curator involved with exhibition development, I have been careful to avoid bias in my interpretation and analysis of this case study, institution, and of the practices within. This has been a difficult task owing to my close proximity to each, and even more so in investigating a single

retrospective case study. While being descriptive and explanatory (Keddie, in Jupp, 2006), I have attempted to avoid generalisations and acknowledge the importance of maintaining an appropriate level of critical analysis. I have also considered how participant memory can influence data and so have sought data to corroborate. Lastly, the geological metaphor threaded throughout the chapter enables another explanation and layer of interpretation that corroborates the argument presented.

What materialises is a compelling argument for project management practice in museums and this relationship is explored in detail. I further strive to understand how project management contributes to exhibition development. As not all projects succeed, I aim to establish whether project management practice leads to exhibition success.



Figure 4.1  
 Death and Diversity entry signage, Wellington Museum, 2012.  
 Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)

## The desirability of project management

### The approaching storm

Project management has been in existence for a long time although known only recently by that name (Lock, 2013, preface). The methodology has quickly become 'indispensable to organisations across all industries' (Young, 2008, preface) and the discipline is now an internationally regarded profession. Any kind of project will benefit from 'recognising project management methods' (Lock, 2013, p.2) as it helps define tasks and steps required for planning and implementation (Clark-Craig, 2012, loc.103)<sup>14</sup>. Further, the more complex the project, the more important it is to use project management methodology as 'project management is meant for complexity, not simplicity' (Barbara Allen, in Carpenter, 2011, p.3).

At the fundamental core are *projects* – a 'set of goals and activities designed to achieve a stated objective' (Carpenter, 2011, p.5), or objectives, and are human enterprises usually associated with risk (Lock, 2013, p.1). Lock identifies four main types: construction; manufacturing<sup>15</sup>; scientific research; and management/organisational change. The most notable features of all projects are that they are new and finite (Lock, 2013, p.2), result in outputs that differ from other day-to-day operations or organisational outputs (Walhimer, 2015, p.105), and use defined and predetermined resources to achieve required outcomes (Carpenter, 2011, p.5). The common element throughout all definitions is that no two projects are exactly alike, although they often 'share common characteristics and phases' (Lock, 2013, p.2). Lock identifies these phases in a project's typical life-cycle as: concept/recognition of need; project definition/business plan; design; fulfillment; commissioning; useful working life; and disposal (p.3-5).

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<sup>14</sup> A portfolio of projects is called a 'programme', which is 'designed to exploit economies of scale and reduce coordination of costs and risks' (Carpenter, 2011, p.5).

<sup>15</sup> Museum exhibition development projects typically fall into this category, although they often cross over into construction too.

Definitions of a project manager are numerous (Young, 2008; Carpenter, 2011; Lock, 2013; Moore, 1999; and Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012 among others). Taylor (2012, loc.444) sums the role up neatly: it is a profession with the authority and responsibility (and accountability) for all aspects of a project in achieving specific objectives on behalf of the 'owner'. This is acknowledged as an essential and difficult role: I examine the attributes and skills of a single project manager in Chapter Five.

### *The museum landscape*

Museums are becoming increasingly complex organisations. Lord and Markert (2007) suggest that the factors contributing to this are: competition within leisure, recreation and tourism, and education sectors; policies linked to education and social objectives; emphasis on accessibility; and rising public demand and expectation. Funding for museums is also in decline (p.2). In addition, there have been increases in: professionalism, museum standards – with many more board members having corporate experience and business expectations; operating costs, collection growth (and associated costs), and building expansions; administrative personnel needed to increase revenue streams; and in the dependence on blockbuster exhibitions (Lord and Markert, 2007; Lord and Lord, 2009; Genoways and Ireland, 2003).

This is an exhaustive list. Houtgraff and Vitali (2008) stress the importance of planning to counter these museum challenges as well as to satisfy 'audience expectations and experience' (p.20). Museums must consider strategic plans that focus activities and resources both human and financial (p.18). Cemented to planning is the undertaking of projects – a recurring quantitative need for renovation, expansion, or new construction of space and facilities. What makes museum project management more complex is that visitor expectations for more advanced ways of telling stories augments pressure for qualitative change as well (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, preface). In addition, the:

[...] museum's goal is to meet mission rather than make a profit [...] requires a unique project management system [...] a much more difficult criterion to define than profitability (Walhimer, 2015, p.104).

Understanding this emphasis of mission over profit is a requirement of the museum practitioner. But this philosophy has often been at odds with the increasing professionalism throughout the museum sector (Lord and Markert, 2007). Two aspects of this are of importance here: an increasing emphasis on management, and an increase in museum specific qualifications. Towards the end of last century 'almost all sectors of New Zealand society witnessed radical change' (Jones, 2011, p.44). From the 1980s, 'managers of all organisations (public and private) were forced to improve their own and their organisation's performance. Management professions began to emerge as respectable fields of study' (p.5)<sup>16</sup>, and the number one growth area in many universities. In museums, 'a new breed of professional was needed to meet the challenges of the rapidly evolving museum world' (Genoways and Ireland, 2003, p.55).

Museums Wellington exemplifies this growth in professionalism. The establishment of the Wellington Museums Trust in 1995 was to assign greater management control over Wellington's cultural assets (WMT, Annual Report, 2008). The formation and subsequent restructuring of Museums Wellington in 2008 was to improve organisational management and performance (WMT, Annual Report, 2009). And many of the current senior leadership team come from management or business backgrounds (for example, the director, marketing manager, and commercial manager), while at least two key personnel (two of the participants in this study) have completed museum specific qualifications (not including myself). The museum professional described by Genoways and Ireland (2003) is present within Museums Wellington.

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<sup>16</sup> Jones details the growth of management in New Zealand and identifies governmental reforms as a key factor in this growth: 'reform implications were profound and long lasting. They changed every aspect of life in New Zealand and that influenced all aspects of the economy. With a more open economy, organisations became more competitive [...] effective management of organisations increased in importance' (Jones, 2011, p.14-15).

Despite evolving organisational structures and practices, the physical construct of the Wellington Museum (both in architecture and spatial/interior design) had remained largely the same since the 1999 museum-wide development. Up until 2011, the Museum 'hill' had developed and managed exhibition layers which predominantly featured permanent exhibitions supported by a smaller temporary exhibition programme (MW, exhibition archives, accessed 2015). Prior to *Death and Diversity* in 2011, exhibition development was orchestrated by the Museum's curator, or designated exhibitions position, who worked with colleagues to create, develop and conceptually design exhibitions<sup>17</sup>.

The world however, is a dynamic, resourceful and ever-evolving entity that demands change as part of survival (Taylor, 2012, loc.461), and museums must be 'capable of changing with the times' (Finlay, 1977, p.16). *Death and Diversity* sparked such a change in thinking at the Wellington Museum. It was the last major temporary exhibition, before the Museum's shift in focus to more permanent displays. The exhibition also tested social boundaries by tackling the generally considered taboo of death. It highlighted those differences and similarities between Wellington's diverse cultures (pers. comm., Mason, 2014) and in a:

[...] celebratory fashion [...] Through a focus on personal stories we draw out the ordinary virtues and societal values that we all share in our everyday lives and that makes for a strong and cohesive society (Museums Wellington, *Death and Diversity* proposal, 2010, p.4).

Here, the Museum is adapting to the principles of social inclusion outlined by Richard Sandell (1998) and also commented on in Sharon Heal's blog (MA – UK, Sep 2015). Heal argues that 'museums should do more to reflect contemporary concerns', a concern shared by Sandell; 'within a climate of accountability and competition for scarce public resources, museums have faced even greater pressure to present a convincing case for their role and value to society' (Sandell, 1998, p.403). The Museum feels obliged to offer

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<sup>17</sup> The Museum often contracted out exhibition design, production, build and installation. This in itself is akin to project work, and again gave the Museum exposure to project processes and systems.

experiences that challenge community perceptions (pers. comm., Mason, 2014)<sup>18</sup>. That type of thinking brings complexity, and as evident in *Death and Diversity* such complexity warrants project management.

### Storm thirst

Project management assumes responsibility for communication, reporting, team management, and ensuring key milestones are met and approvals occur in a timely and efficient manner (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.100). Yet, adopting project management methodology is no guarantee of success. Most businesses let alone museums, face uncertainties around where to begin the process with little or no project management training or skill (Clark-Craig, 2012, loc.59). For some, a small to medium project appears not to need a significant, professional consultant-laden project management process (loc.64). In addition, 'projectisation' of work has led to inappropriate use of terminology. 'People talk of project managing something when often meaning problem solving and decision-making' (Carpenter, 2011, p.1). And, whereas larger museums are fortunate to have professional diversified staff, smaller museums must 'design and produce professional quality exhibitions' by themselves (Bogle, 2013, p.96). Museums Wellington has faced these same concerns, operating much like the latter prior to the recruitment of a project specialist in 2011 (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Key to that recruitment was acknowledging the importance of project work. Mason believes there's always a project requirement in some form. If not for the capital development project at the Museum, there would be demand elsewhere within the organisation. It was intriguing then that the institution had not pursued a project manager before. Coincidentally, Mason reflected on Nairn Street Cottage, where a prior project there grew out of control. 'If we had had someone with project management experience [overseeing it], they could have

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<sup>18</sup> It appeared Museums Wellington felt this was a rare undertaking. There are examples however of other museums addressing topics of death and culture. See for example: *Memory and Mourning* (1993), Strong Museum, Rochester, NY State; *The Last Taboo* (2003), Australian Museum, Sydney; and *Death a Self-Portrait* (2012), Wellcome Collection, London.

seen the full scope of it' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014), and therefore maintain adequate control.

Houtgraaf and Vitali (2008) emphasise that project creation and realisation benefit from a 'well-structured organisation of museum knowledge and collection resource' (p.16). It is not then, just enough to have a project manager present as Mason suggests. What is needed, is a stable and structured organisation. This is particularly necessary for exhibition development, a common project activity of museums, which in itself is a complex and growing field (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.91). Contributing factors include increases in resources necessary for both creation and operation, and in personnel from multiple disciplines. Adding to this complexity is a continuous stream of advancing technology, and methods, skills and personnel varying widely from institution to institution. A concentration on temporary exhibition programmes in the past half-century has compounded this and recently some professionals have urged a return to more permanent exhibitions (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.225). This shift is central to the Wellington Museum's current planning.

It is also widely and inaccurately believed that planning and designing exhibitions is simple and intuitive. As Bogle (2013) affirms, 'it is a multifaceted endeavour that combines artistic, intellectual, and practical techniques and theories' (p.25). Exhibition development is a 'phase by phase process involving a great deal of multi-tasking and problem-solving, and regardless of complexity, needs to be well-organised to proceed in a systematic and logical manner from start to finish' (p.7). Thus project management methodology can assist this activity by providing the essential systematic framework.

Supporting this framework, and for most exhibition projects, it is preferable to have a specific project team (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.122). Advocates are needed for every museum component (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.36). Museums Wellington staff, as participants of the exhibition development team, acted in this way by advocating for their respective departments. But their knowledge of project management was limited. Raydugin (2013) states that 'to assure quality inputs and outputs, team members and decision makers should

know methods of project management well enough' (preface). From this statement, we can gather that if this knowledge is lacking in the team, having an overseeing manager proficient in project management methodology is extremely beneficial – if not essential – to the project process.

### *The Weathering agent*

Project managers are the conduits through which stakeholders' dreams flow (Young, 2008, preface).

Museums Wellington welcomed Tamsin Falconer (the weathering agent) in mid-2011. At that time, Falconer's professional history included a variety of project experiences, hitherto not as a project manager and without any formal project management training. She recalls sliding into the profession 'sideways' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). This began with an architecture degree from Victoria University of Wellington where she indirectly acquired project management skills through dealing with construction methodology and sequencing. Afterwards Falconer travelled to London to work for the National Trust – her first foray into the heritage sector. An interest kindled that would later lead to the museum sector.

Returning to New Zealand and to Victoria University's Antarctic Research Centre as Centre Manager – essentially lead administrator – Falconer unexpectedly developed project management skills further through the planning of large national and international Antarctic projects. She also completed a Museum Studies qualification through Massey University. Falconer brought this array of aptitudes, skills and experiences to the position of project manager at Museums Wellington.

Falconer's arrival marked a key phase (design phase) in the *Death and Diversity* development with the Museum looking to solve two needs. The first involved requiring a project manager to slowly progress planning towards the Museum's future capital development, yet the Museum was unable to provide enough justification to take on a full-time role at such an early stage (pers.

comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). There is a need to justify expenditure, purpose and practice in many public sector institutions and Falconer doubted the Museum would have employed a project manager without the capital project on the horizon. This challenges Mason's earlier comment regarding the continuous presence of projects in museums (if not for the capital project there would be others) and the value placed on a specialist to oversee these. With this belief, then there was definitely justification for the role. Perhaps at that time, Museums Wellington had not yet fully understood the benefits of a project manager to oversee projects. If that was the case, then taking on Falconer appeared a risk. For Museums Wellington, the initiation of the design phase of *Death and Diversity* provided an avenue to minimize that risk – a project manager could oversee temporary exhibitions alongside initial planning for the larger capital project ahead.

The second need arose from the desire to reorganise current staff to accommodate a simultaneous collections project in 2011. This was an intensive project focusing on the Museum's collection with two primary objectives: to relocate and refurbish the Collection Store, and then refine and repurpose the Collection itself. Consequently, a reorganisation of the senior leadership team took place. David Waller (Exhibitions and Collections Manager at that time) relinquished exhibition duties to shift fully into a collections role. This was to afford him necessary time and resource to concentrate on the Collections project.

Together these institutional needs, which Falconer likens to 'packaging up enough stuff' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1), presented the Museum enough justification to develop a project manager role. These delegations are reflected in the role's job description at that time:

The purpose of this position is to lead the development project at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea, and to assist when required with the delivery of permanent and temporary exhibitions and building services (WMT, Museums Wellington project manager job description, 2011).

The role included tasks aligned with: project management; exhibition delivery; building services and maintenance; business management; leadership and strategic planning; resource management; and staff management. Specialist competences within the job description (WMT, Museums Wellington project manager job description, 2011) included:

- Proven leadership experience ideally within a museum, heritage or cultural organisation.
- Proven financial management ability and experience.
- Project management experience.
- Experience of delivering exhibitions is desirable.
- Experience of delivering building services.
- Experience of working collaboratively at a senior management level.
- Staff management experience.
- The ability to build and sustain relevant networks.
- Relevant tertiary qualification(s)

Despite a lack of experience to match the criteria above, Falconer's skill mixture appeared to be the defining factor. She openly admits being neither a qualified expert in project management nor greatly accustomed to museum practice<sup>19</sup>, but was the most appealing candidate owing to moderate experience in both disciplines<sup>20</sup>. Her experience in both project management and museums, which 'although limited, provided a base knowledge that could help grow her into the role and with the organisation' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). According to the Museum, Falconer's limitations could be learnt through the role, but other essential skills – such as being communicable and personable – were both 'rare and vital in leading projects' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Additionally, Falconer was able to bring professional skills from another sector (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

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<sup>19</sup> Although she had recently completed a Post Graduate Diploma in Museum Studies, undertaken an internship at the Akaroa Museum, and possessed a general interest in museums.

<sup>20</sup> Falconer notes, 'they had two other strong candidates - one had really strong project management experience but very little knowledge of museums, and the other had very strong museums experience but very little project management' (Falconer, 2014, 1).

### State of the hillside

When assigning a project manager, there are three actions institutions can take: re-assign an employee already handling projects; create a new position and fill from within or without; or contract out. It is customary for the first two options to involve a project team and for such teams to be established then dissolved at project end. Larger institutions can have multiple permanent project teams operating an ongoing project programme (Lock, 2013, p.29). Others operate a matrix organisation handling multiple, often smaller, projects with 'workers dispersed over functional departments' (p.34). The latter was the case for the Wellington Museum, where members and contributors of the exhibition team were assigned underneath an exhibition lead (prior to Tamsin Falconer this was an exhibitions and public programmes developer, and earlier, a mixture of curatorial roles) while still remaining in various departments. This 'reorganisation to fit project personnel' owes much to a majority of projects operating horizontally across departments (Lock, 2013, p.27).

The Museum also witnessed organisational change upon Falconer's commencement. With the shift of David Waller (Exhibitions and Collections Manager) to oversee the collections project<sup>21</sup>, Falconer acquired the exhibitions role. Brett Mason recalls the opportunity to bring on a project manager for the collection project but with Waller volunteering, 'having someone in-house was beneficial' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). This is in contrast to the appointment of Falconer which involved recruiting externally. The decision appears to be based on need. For the collections project, institutional knowledge was deemed paramount.

Mason recognises this particular personnel reorganisation is unconventional – moving entirely from one role to another. With Waller's previous collection

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<sup>21</sup> Brett Mason recalls: '[the Collection project was] one of the bigger projects when I first got here. [The Museum was] also managing the *Plimmers Ark* project, so there was quite a lot going on. When I became Director I focused more on the Collection - not only getting that right but getting the housing right. Typically with developments collections get left behind. We could [also] gain better knowledge of the Collection enabling better use of it right through everything we do.' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

experience with the National Library together with a familiarity of the Museum's collection, 'it made sense. He had a skill-set really valuable to us [and] he delivered on budget, and on time' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Mason was using resources in a way that best-fit the organisation. It was also reciprocal – 'you're giving someone satisfaction about the work they do' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). With Falconer's appointment, he was attempting to build more members in specific areas but at the same time allow [for] 'cross-pollination' such as with Waller (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Waller's original position of overseeing both the Exhibitions and Collections departments was in addition to exhibition design responsibilities. This combination of delegations and tasks were consumed into the role over time (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). In Waller's shift to the collections project, he relinquished exhibition duties to Falconer, a project manager with lesser practical skill and experience. Considering Waller's prior role, and his appointment to the collections project, one can rightly argue that he was already acting in a project manager capacity himself, albeit without the title. Museums who operate without a project manager may operate in a similar manner. For the Museum's capital project ahead, there were specific attributes that the Museum was seeking in a project manager, and these were found in Falconer. This is discussed more thoroughly in the next chapter.

### *First weathered layer – 'Death and Diversity'*

Tamsin Falconer's long-range goal was the large-scale museum development on the horizon, which she reiterates was the substantive reason for her employment (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). Her short-term responsibility was overseeing exhibition changeovers however. Inherently this role encompassed more. A wider view of the exhibition process was needed and as a result the role morphed into one of exhibition management. Falconer admits being initially out of her depth, and this was not an easy transition for her.

Falconer's first task was overseeing the design phase of *Death and Diversity*, which was scheduled to open six months from her appointment. This short time

frame would appear daunting, even for someone with specialist experience, but Falconer considers much of project management as ‘common sense. You have to plan, you have to budget, you have to communicate with everyone, you have regular things set up to check on – It is all very obvious’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). Although this highlights a valuable quality of a project manager – an ability to consider projects with calm and ease – this does not reflect the complexity of project management methodology and perhaps highlights Falconer’s initial inexperience with the discipline.

*Death and Diversity* arose from an initial approach to the Museum by the Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA) and this developed into a collaboration between the two organisations. The exhibition exemplified the Museum’s thinking and the value placed on exhibitions for communities. The ‘best museums bring important things to life and create places for meaningful exchange of ideas’ (Wood and Latham, 2014, p.9), and modes of presentation used in exhibitions define ways in which any museum communicates with the public (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.117). Brett Mason recognised this relevance and saw the opportunity to work with different Wellington communities to bring new voices into the Museum.

The original concept of the exhibition revolved around birth, death, and marriage, and how different ethnic communities approached those rituals. The Museum’s spatial constraints required that the initial concept be scaled down. Therefore the exhibition focused on death only, an exciting prospect for the team. Death was a topic that ‘museums and society as a whole don’t really talk about in an open way’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

The delicacy surrounding the key theme ensured an initial tense six-month period for staff and key partners in finalising the concept. Once resolved, working with relevant communities took centre-stage. The Museum’s Exhibitions and Public Programmes Developer Jaqui Knowles, supported by a community consultant contracted by the Museum but funded by the OEA, fostered various vital community relationships (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Evident early on was the need to ‘present diversity *within* cultures as well as *across* cultures’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1), adding complexity to

community dealings. What also added to such complexity was an intensive and extensive public-programming schedule devised in conjunction with the exhibition. Subsequently *Death and Diversity* was regarded amongst the team as a project opposed to just an exhibition and thus validated the justification for a project manager role.

Upon Falconer's arrival, much of the exhibition's development had already progressed. Themes had been devised, background research largely completed, and some decisions, such as contractors, made. David Waller had completed concept design and Wellington-based Workshop E was contracted for developed design and exhibition build. Previously, Waller would have worked design through to the detailed stage. Instead, Falconer took over exhibitions and thus developed design was contracted externally.

Falconer recalls those initial months where a lack of any existing system to slot into proved difficult. It was especially challenging adapting project management systems into the exhibition development process already existing within the organisation while simultaneously developing the new role. 'It wasn't a question of replacing somebody, but starting something a bit new' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). A task made more difficult due to others' unfamiliarity with project management and variation in team member advocacy as McKenna-Cress and Kamien's suggest (2013). I sensed this was a frustrating time for Falconer. If not for her prior experience with museum environments, the task would have been more difficult.

There was however, assistance available. Colleagues such as, Jaqui Knowles had worked with project managers at other museums. Although having strong expectations of the project manager role, she helped Falconer through the process. The contractor, Workshop E, also provided early support. Despite her frustrations, the short time frame was comparable to the small number of projects Falconer had encountered previously and this aided in her planning. Again, perhaps this apparent ease and confidence upon engaging a new project is the very justification for such a project manager role over others.

## Project management assists exhibition development

From concept to opening, exhibition layers differ among museum hillsides for a variety of reasons. Project management ensures any development follows a successful systematic format regardless of exhibition variety. There are several key procedural areas here: planning and resource allocation; quality control (processes and outputs); information, communications and reporting; financial planning; and staff/personnel management. The last area is of particular importance within the museum environment where 'emphasis on human resource is one of several distinguishing characteristics' (Carpenter, 2011, p.16).



Figure 4.2

*Death and Diversity exhibition panels, Wellington Museum, 2012.*

*Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

### Layer formation - managing the process

Applying a systematic process to manage all parts of the project – for purposes here, the exhibition layer of the Museum hill – was one of Tamsin Falconer's first actions upon her arrival at Museums Wellington. Her steps to achieving this are outlined in the following sections.

#### **Layer planning**

There are a variety of project situations that exist in museums. Falconer's introduction to the Museum resembled one where the designated project manager was absent from the original round of preparation and planning, and 'rationale and assumptions had been made as part of the process and clearly defined' (Carpenter, 2011, p.23). To Falconer, developed design phases were where projects increased in complexity and warranted project managers (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). This contradicts many sources that advocate for a project manager presence during the earliest stages. It may be that Mason was acting in this role himself until Falconer's appointment. This may also highlight a difference between exhibition projects and capital projects and may depend upon project complexity and risk. For instance, for the Wellington Museum's current capital project, Falconer has been involved from the earliest stages.

Despite Falconer's absence in the early phases of the *Death and Diversity* development, for purposes of this study I'll summarise the planning process here. In a typical project setting and prior to planning, various activities are necessary for consideration. Firstly, a feasibility study questions the benefits for both visitor and institution, the viability of the project, the likelihood of achieving objectives, likely costs (and funding), resources required, and staff availability to develop (then operate) the exhibition. The larger the project, the more 'extensive and diversified the investigation and team has to be' (Bogle, 2013, p.8-9). Again, this may indicate why Falconer was there from the beginning for the Museum's current capital project as it was a considerably larger project than *Death and Diversity*.

Following this, an exhibition concept plan identifies (among other things) an initial projection of schedule. To support the concept plan, a formative evaluation and interpretation plan (design brief) factor in developmental phases such as 'schematic design, design development, construction and installation, commissioning, and evaluation' (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.124-125). All planning objectives need to be SMART (specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic, and time-bound) and an analysis of work content organised into packages, tasks and activities. Of importance here is 'consideration of effort and duration of each task' (Carpenter, 2011, p.24). In the concept plan, there may also be a business case, which defines why the work is required, anticipates problems or threats, and provides justification. In Prince2 methodology, one of several project management methodologies followed throughout the world and widely used in 'New Zealand's public and private sectors including in local and central government' (p.11), the 'business case must drive the project' (p.35). I should note here that Museums Wellington did not use Prince2 nor any other project management methodology, prior to or during *Death and Diversity development*, or even currently for that matter. Falconer, and her predecessors, have however used various project management sources (for example Young, 2008) to guide in project management.

In addition to previous plans, a monitoring plan is then used to gather information and enable measures of progress. Regular monitoring is essential, and whenever activities deviate from the schedule, consequences for other activities and resource must be considered. Project management must therefore ensure that the 'planning of activities reflects the time required to mobilise resource required' (Carpenter, 2011, p.37). Similarly, project managers need to react promptly if project assumptions are failing and jeopardising project success (p.39).

Although initial planning was completed for *Death and Diversity*, Falconer was able to develop planning aspects not yet conceived and to a level of detail necessary. Planning and scheduling are essential components of any project, and thus where the project manager produces their maximum effort. Critical stages are at the project's beginning and end, but a 'well known project maxim

states that projects don't fail at the end - they fail at beginning' (Taylor, 2012, p.17-22). Falconer's introduction earlier in the process, and therefore involvement in initial planning, may have been beneficial to counter issues discussed further in this chapter.

Critical to planning is developing the schedule. This provides the framework to monitor and control activities, assist in resource allocation, assess time delay impacts; and track progress (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.532). Establishing a schedule early in the process is essential, with agreement over major milestones and completion dates. The most accurate schedule is created with everyone's participation and needs in mind (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.32) and can be created in various ways. Falconer worked backwards from the exhibition's last possible installation date and developed a schedule to suit (see Appendix B). She developed this without project management-specific software, which in her case may have been easier to manage. Without specific project management training she may have been unfamiliar with specific software.

Falconer also possibly faced an easier challenge by entering at the design phase of the development where milestones were clearer to identify and calculate than would have been at earlier phases<sup>22</sup>. Getting to know colleagues was an immediate priority however, for 'knowing how much time people need to complete tasks' is one of the biggest issues in developing an accurate schedule<sup>23</sup> (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.199).

Alongside scheduling is the equally important budget. For *Death and Diversity*, Workshop E provided an outline and budget for design development upon Falconer's arrival. She factored this into the overall exhibition budget, and prioritised lining up both budget and design to ensure everyone was happy with direction. This was achieved later than preferred. 'There was a bit of working to

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<sup>22</sup> There are more unknowns during research and conceptual phases. Being closer to exhibition install dates, Falconer would have had a clearer picture of what needed to be done and by when.

<sup>23</sup> The less known about colleague work behavior, the more difficult it is to predict and thus plan for human inaccuracies.

make [design] work to budget' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1), but she was able to make inroads at re-working and adjusting the budget as her experience increased. This is a necessary quality in overseeing exhibition development – to forecast financial resources to a level of detail required, determine when to review expenditure and adjust forecasts to ensure availability of funds when required (Carpenter, 2011, p.14). Falconer also made the budget accessible for everyone believing in transparency as McKenna-Cress and Kamien (2013, p.207) advise.

### ***Layer cycle***

All project cycle variations formalise what would otherwise seem 'unstructured activities, undertaken outside everyday operations and with multiple stakeholders' (Carpenter, 2011, p.1). Project planning is also a repeatable process hence the term cycle (p.11).

Typical projects can include many phases. For exhibition development there may be the following: exhibition concept; exhibition planning (schematic conceptual phase; preliminary phase; intermediate phase; final phase; documentation phase; bidding phase); and post-exhibition planning/designing (construction phase; installation phase; post-opening phase) (Bogle, 2013, p.11-22; McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.270-300). Houtgraaf and Vitali's *Mastering a Museum Plan* (2008, p.11) highlights how exhibitions vary from place to place, and so too do phases. Falconer agrees it is a 'bit loose how you define [phases]' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

When Falconer joined the Museum, *Death and Diversity* was transitioning into the detailed design phase having already satisfied conceptual objectives, look and feel, and a draft layout. Key features of the design involved curving the walls of the space to provide a freeform, breaking exhibition linearity, and creating a central meditative feature where visitors could contemplate personal experiences of death (this is the *Memory Tree* and is discussed later in this chapter). Falconer sums up developed design as 'answering specific questions of the space – how to move concept through to reality, and with what?' (pers.

comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). This stage also incorporated developing exhibition identity and increasing participant involvement.

### ***Layer decisions***

One of the first actions a project manager takes is identifying the *decision network* by classifying key people and their roles in project governance and/or delivery. Such roles can include: authorisers (those indirectly involved with the power to sign-off/veto); owners (those responsible for presenting decisions to steering groups); gatekeepers (who control access to key figures, resources, and messages); key influencers (who provide owner support or influence over authorisers); and influencers (who have less say) (Carpenter, 2011, p.86).

For Falconer, the Museum's network was reasonably straightforward with few reporting lines. Subsequently, decision-making was equally straightforward. The exhibition team made a majority of the decisions and Brett Mason acted as authoriser/owner when required. For most decisions, the process involved identification of a problem or opportunity then discussing this as a team. Falconer admits being initially standoffish in dealing with that process, wanting everybody onboard and to avoid tension. Consequently, team consensus took longer to achieve, as members advocating for their respective departments often overshadowed the project's primary objectives. Today, she's far more dogmatic in her approach (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

Alongside Falconer's team, Workshop E (external contractors responsible for exhibition fabrication) provided valuable support in terms of decision-making on design practicalities, often suggesting more sustainable (and affordable) alternatives. This was particularly useful for decisions regarding budget and advocates for having a contractor familiar with the institution in both physical space and operation. One example included designing infrastructure Workshop E could reuse afterwards, so the company footed those costs.

Falconer acknowledges that, although beneficial, this is unconventional and cites the close relationship between the two organisations as the key factor for resolutions such as this (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). As a result, the

Museum was able to progress with additional exhibition components otherwise unaffordable. This signifies the importance of careful and appropriate contractor selection – for the project and also the organisation. Typically, the project manager is responsible for identifying, forging and maintaining such relationships. Although not the case for *Death and Diversity* as these relationships had already been established, this is identified in the Museum’s project manager job description: ‘The project manager will develop and maintain positive relationships with relevant individuals, groups and organisations’ (WMT, Museums Wellington project manager job description, 2011) including:

- colleagues in equivalent positions in other cultural institutions particularly in the museum, heritage and arts sector;
- suppliers and contractors; and
- key Museum and Trust stakeholders.

This emphasis on relationships suggests that, throughout their professional career, project managers build a relationship reservoir beneficial for use for and between projects. Specifically for *Death and Diversity*, Mason acknowledges that Falconer’s role was made easier by working with only the one contractor and one with extensive project experience. Whether intentional or not, it seems this was another tool the Museum used to help ease and grow Falconer into the project manager position.

#### Layer reworking - managing the resource

One of the most challenging aspects of project management is managing resources: scheduling; financial management; and managing the exhibition team. This may be the defining quality of a project manager – understanding how best to utilise these while also knowing how they positively and negatively affect each other. Alter one and others are likely to be affected. The same can be said of the hillside where pressure or heat increases can enact physical and chemical change.

An awareness of such relationships is critical to the project's success, as well as knowing where to concentrate efforts and what to dismiss. The Pareto principle states that for 'many phenomena, 80% of consequences stem from 20% causes' (Taylor, 2012, p.5). For the project manager, focusing on the 20% that matters will produce 80% of the results. Ultimately, effective resource management stems from good planning in the early phases of the project. If planning has been 'realistic and robust, management of resources other than human (resources) is mainly about effective monitoring, reviewing and revising in response to external events' (Carpenter, 2011, p.107).

### ***Heat and pressure – time and money***

The effects of heat and pressure on coastal hill environments can be likened to the effects of time and money on any project. This can be both a positive and negative effect, and must always be considered. For instance, underestimating time is the 'most common error' in resource management (Carpenter, 2011, p.108-113). Developing accurate estimations for all tasks and scheduling enough slack and lag-time is essential. These estimations depend upon human resource capability and realism about deadlines to overcompensate human inaccuracies.

Creating a detailed timeline with milestones is also crucial (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.66). Tamsin Falconer's first action for *Death and Diversity* was to design such a schedule. In particular, setting milestones for Workshop E, ensured progress was charted, monitored and maintained. The exhibition included six thematic bays, and Workshop E produced a prototype for the team, which Falconer recalls upon seeing as a 'significant milestone' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). This monitoring is critical to project management. It considers what should be happening compared to what is actually happening (Carpenter, 2011, p.108).

Time management is particularly critical in a time-limited project such as *Death and Diversity*, and Falconer was mindful of this resource. She attempted to create an effective environment by setting up good procedures and management tools from the outset, and wherever possible lead the way in

prioritising her own work and effective management of meetings: I detail an observational study on Falconer's project meetings in the next chapter. Management of time during meetings is extremely beneficial, particularly when scheduled to mark milestones (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.69) as was the case with Workshop E's prototype.

Where a task is found lagging, the project manager either increases resource or decreases work to counter. One concern during *Death and Diversity* involved the elongated development of exhibition text right up until installation. Acknowledging that exhibition text is often reworked during development, Falconer stresses how delays with this exhibition aspect can enact delays elsewhere. She was forced to shuffle schedules and add resource to the writing team at the latter stages to accommodate delays. Exhibition design was also scheduled into thematic stages, so there was an additional risk of inconsistency throughout the exhibition text. This created an uneasiness Falconer would avoid today by scheduling text development and completion far earlier in the process (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

Effective financial management is equally essential. Such management 'depends upon accurate and realistic project budgets' (Carpenter, 2011, p.114), and is likely to change as activities are implemented. Project management foresees any such change and considers likely impacts, while budget reviewing and reporting ensure the project is on track (p.118). Allowing for fluidity, the project manager can constantly work estimating and apportioning (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.32). It is essential for the project manager to 'master [and be master of] the budget' (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.69), including understanding how 'costs of a typical project are broken down into elements' (Lock, 2013, p.14). This was another learning curve for Falconer yet her constant reworking of the budget ensured the exhibition not only arrived on time but (largely) on budget.

Management of the budget ultimately involves everyone (Genoways and Ireland, 2003, p.100) and it is essential every contributor take responsibility for

the process. This is where the project manager is valuable not only in budget control but in sharing responsibility throughout the team.

### ***The rocks – humans***

Another key geological resource of the coastal hill are 'rocks', which are naturally occurring solid aggregates of one or more minerals. Human groups make a similar essential make-up of a project. In fact, one of the most essential components of project management is managing this human resource. This involves 'project inputs and behaviour of all human contributors including boards and steering groups' who 'must be managed to meet specific project timetables and targets' (Carpenter, 2011, p.85). The project manager is as much responsible for managing multi-stakeholder partnerships as managing the project itself (p.85).

Partnerships are additionally essential in public service and academic institutions for any project. In museums 'you're working with many people outside of your organisation' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). For externally funded projects and programmes the collaboration between a range of different partner organisations is typically paramount - it is 'intended to stimulate cross-sectoral cooperation and maximise impact and effectiveness of project outcomes' (Carpenter, 2011, p.41). This includes local government and other partnership policies. In most cases, this is the only way most 'city projects and services can be delivered' (p.41), and is the case with the Wellington Museum.

Despite complexities and work effort required, there are multiple benefits to maintaining museum partnerships. These include enhanced access to people, resources, and organisations; ownership and quality; exposure to new ideas/approaches; use of resources; and motivation (Carpenter, 2011, p.45-46). Conversely, benefits can easily turn negative if not managed effectively, and this highlights the importance of the exhibition leader to understand partnerships and more importantly the effects of good communication. After opening, *Death and Diversity* received praise from all of the exhibition's partners.

Another consideration is expectation – externally and internally. ‘We had our expectations, and also those from the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the Funeral Directors and the New Zealand Police, [but] most importantly, the community’ (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Many conversations were needed to keep all expectations in mind. Much of this is usually conducted by the project manager who has ‘the hard work of delivering the reality of it’ (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

For *Death and Diversity* partnerships were forged long before Falconer’s arrival, though she ensured she was accessible for advice and assistance whenever required. The exhibition involved a number of partners, and with many partners comes a greater amount of time and attention to detail (Carpenter, 2011, p.47). Thus the project manager has an important role in: ‘creating openness, trust, honesty; facilitating agreement of shared goals and values; and ensuring regular communications’ (p.48). For the Museum, and prior to Falconer’s arrival, that amount of effort was extremely draining for the exhibitions and public programmes developer. If a project manager had been present earlier in the process, such ‘draining’ may have been mitigated.

In a typical medium-sized project there are several key players. These can include sponsors, communities, visitors, contractors, and staff. Like all geological elements involved in creating a hillside layer, all participants need to understand ‘different forms of group engagement, potential models of successful teamwork, and how natural human behaviours affect process’ (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.7). ‘To sustain process and maintain enthusiasm of all participants and contributors, it is essential the project is well organised and transparent’ (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.64). Falconer agreed that the development involved many different people, but that would be expected of such a project (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

With the Wellington Museum’s accomplishments over the years it had attracted interest from various groups. Some of the Museum’s temporary exhibition concepts arose from approaches from such groups. ‘They knew us and knew

we could do things in a different way, or that we'd be open to the idea' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Some partnerships such as with the Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA) were never straightforward. For instance, the differences in expectations noted earlier, and also the OEA's primary liaison's departure, for unknown reasons, during the project lessened communication. Other partnerships, including those with the New Zealand Police, were easier. Such partnerships were mutually beneficial. Mason noted how the Police partnership opened his eyes to their work within the community.

The Museum still faced funding challenges however. *Death and Diversity's* initial concept included a nation-wide tour. But after the Museum progressed with planning and securing nationwide interest, the principle sponsor, a philanthropic trust, removed their support. Mason considers this a personal decision by one of the trust's members not approving of the topic. Subsequently, tour planning was abandoned (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

The most valued partnerships of the exhibition were with various communities, though again, this was far from easy. Falconer recalls the difficulty in keeping them focused. These were communities not used to dealing with museums let alone exhibition projects bounded by cost and time frames. The OEA wanted to see an exhibition that created a broad understanding about the way in which different ethnic communities viewed death. But what became apparent was that every death was a personal death. There could be 'several differing reasons such as religion or ethnicity that despite similarities, would tell a different story' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). A lot of time and effort was spent by both the exhibitions and public programmes developer and Falconer in maintaining relationships with community partners. This is the very real challenge of museums and requires patience as well as skill in scheduling. The exhibition public programme was in itself a huge job. By the time Jaqui Knowles resigned her position after *Death and Diversity*, she was 'burnt out. It was such a heavy subject too' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Another form of partnership is with museum visitors. 'With many museum projects, the client is the visitor' (Walhimer, 2015, p.105). They can be the 'most

important collaborators and their opinions, needs, and input must be considered' (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.5). *Death and Diversity* enabled input from the communities represented within. Although popular among visitors<sup>24</sup> there were still occasions that highlighted the difficulty in working with many stakeholders while simultaneously attempting to appease all visitors. One particular situation involved a member of public whose displeasure lasted several months, including complaints to WMT CEO Pat Stuart and the city mayor. This was directed at an artist's work within the exhibition titled the *Sand Art Project*. 'We didn't know what we were doing apparently and the artist didn't either – [it was] a purely subjective approach' by the visitor, but one that caused some grief amongst the team (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). This was a situation handled by Mason, but is one example where exhibition projects can involve a variety of stakeholders and harvest much subjectivity.

### ***Key minerals - staff***

Geological minerals are the smallest but most vital component of the coastal hill. Essentially building blocks, they can be extremely dynamic, varied and complex. The staff of the museum can be considered in the same light.

The most valuable human resource involves those direct contributors to the project. Effective management of team members is essential to exhibition development success and commonly involves defining personnel tasks, roles and responsibilities, identifying and organising training needs, and ensuring team building and motivation (Carpenter, 2011, p.14). When comparing management styles between Falconer and her predecessor, Mason noted that decisions and processes were conducted differently. Both styles worked, but Falconer was stronger in communication. She herself sees this as a critical component of project management and especially so within a museum environment.

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<sup>24</sup> Amassed from visitor numbers, feedback and staff comments.

One such occasion tested Falconer's communication and people management skills. There was rising tension between the Marketing and Exhibition teams with conflicting ideas on graphic identity and branding for both within the exhibition space and on collateral. Although Falconer led mediation between the teams and believed the issue resolved, it became apparent the Marketing team remained unhappy with what was seen as an unwanted compromise. Falconer was empathetic to their situation, particularly considering the difficulties in marketing a show about death. She remained steadfast however on what was important for achieving project completion and sided in favour of the overall team. She admits how that situation evolved owed much to her lack of experience and was more a result of inadequate communication – members feeling excluded – than the actual decision. Believing a different outcome may not have been possible; she acknowledges involving all parties earlier in the process would have been beneficial.

As the project lead, Falconer was the bridge and communicator between director and team. Mason signed off on final content, ensuring final decision-making and responsibility resided at the very top. This also provided additional benefit by ensuring someone distant from the creating could appropriately critique (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Communicating with Mason was particularly essential when the project reached key decision points or where there was a need for budget review. At times, Falconer would deem it important for Mason to be involved in team meetings.

The team itself evolved during development, growing as tasks increased and relationships tightened. Workshop E's graphic designer 'came into the team in a way' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2) and another extension of the team were subcontractors and suppliers. As museums increase project activity the need increases 'to subcontract external consulting and expert services' (Carpenter, 2011, p.120). Having an exhibition leader experienced in this area enables a more effective procurement process, which in turn ensures appropriate selection of 'subbies and suppliers', contract negotiation and performance monitoring (Carpenter, 2011, p.124-125).

### Layer protection - managing the problems

As all projects involve change and all change incurs risk, some amount of risk-taking is inevitable (Carpenter, 2011, p.63). This is 'arguably the single most important component of project management' (p.64) and where the project specialist manages exposure to risk, probability of specific risks occurring and potential impact if they do. Ultimately they should 'plan for crisis' (Taylor, 2012, p.77).

Alongside planning and monitoring, critical to managing risk is realising not all risks can be controlled, a realisation for Tamsin Falconer when pursuing community objects involved in the tradition of washing bodies after death. Community members had earlier agreed to supply such objects but once the objects arrived, they resembled inexpensive retail products rather than treasures. The exhibition team was conflicted – how to present 'very utilitarian plastic things in place of carefully selected treasures and displayed in cases designed for small beautiful things?' Loaning and acquiring objects and stories from many community groups increases project risk. 'It wasn't just things we knew how to control' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

A project manager's role is in prioritising tasks and problems. Dealing only with that which is important and monitoring the rest (Taylor, 2012, p.80) and the key is filtering then delegating. Having planned for such risks, Falconer was able to direct the designers who had factored an element of uncertainty into their design and were able to compensate for these objects. Flexibility was (and is) important to Falconer, particularly in dealing with communities. 'These weren't objects from our collection. We couldn't take the objects six months ahead of time. We couldn't be casual about it' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Like all aspects of project management, 'common sense and logical thought' must drive risk management (Lock, 2013, p.73).

A further measure of that flexibility was in dealing with issues surrounding a collaborative theatre performance with Voice Arts Trust<sup>25</sup> planned alongside the installation of *Death and Diversity*. The idea was to launch the framework of the exhibition which ‘though a lovely idea’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1), proved challenging. The event disrupted install timeframes, and as a consequence, the completion of the exhibition’s installation was delayed by one week. Again, planning for such a risk, Falconer had allocated leeway in the schedule and was able to accommodate accordingly.

In addition, *Death and Diversity*’s curved walls extended further outwards than originally planned, posing spatial constraints on the performance. Installation was again restricted to accommodate. The performers also couldn’t practice earlier owing to de-installation of the previous exhibition. This further highlights a challenge of project work within museums. ‘You can’t have things fully set up [theatre set] and leave them set up usually. Negotiating how that was going to work was quite hard’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). She would advise against planning something similar today.

Lastly, Falconer acknowledges that budget is a constant challenge for any project. She has an optimistic view – ‘It’s best to have lots of ideas and not enough budget’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). Accommodating this means compromise and negotiation, an important attribute of project leaders. For budget reasons, intended freeform walls for *Death and Diversity* evolved into identical bays. Manufacturing wise, it was cheaper to replicate. ‘We ended up with something more in a strict framework’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). Other compromises involved building materials and deciding on the frame structure for the exhibition’s central feature, *The Memory Tree*. There was much negotiation determining what was most important in terms of budget, but also advocating for the visitor experience.

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<sup>25</sup> Voice Arts Trust worked with several communities, mainly migrants, to develop and workshop this performance.

### ***Unseen subterranean fissures – hidden tension in the team***

Hidden fissures beneath the coastal hill surface pose a risk to the fabrication and functionality of that landscape. As evident throughout this chapter, the complexities of museum projects and exhibition development, and the variation of advocacy and creativity among museum personnel, can construct comparable *fissures* within the team and working environments that pose a similar risk to the museum.

*Death and Diversity* exemplifies the tension that can be present in exhibition development. As an inside researcher I was careful not to create tension myself in discussing these topics and this may be a weakness in conducting research such as this. I was however able to see threads that are worth mentioning here.

Although not stated, it appears the exhibition generated a hidden level of anxiety, stress and burn out from a number of factors: the chosen candidate for the project manager role; sensitivities surrounding the topic; involvement of multiple stakeholders; complexities of community dealings and the workload and time necessary to manage these; coordinating an extensive public programme alongside exhibition development; and project management inexperience of both the project manager and Museum team. For instance, the 'burn-out' of Jaqui Knowles, exhibitions and public programmes developer whose role in the project was substantial, from long before and until after exhibition opening. A more experienced project manager onboard from the beginning may have been able to foresee this and been able to provide some means of mitigation.

However, tensions such as these are not uncommon in projects nor in exhibition development. Managing tensions is routine for project managers and the qualities that assist them in this activity are discussed in the next chapter.

Layer feature - the Memory Tree

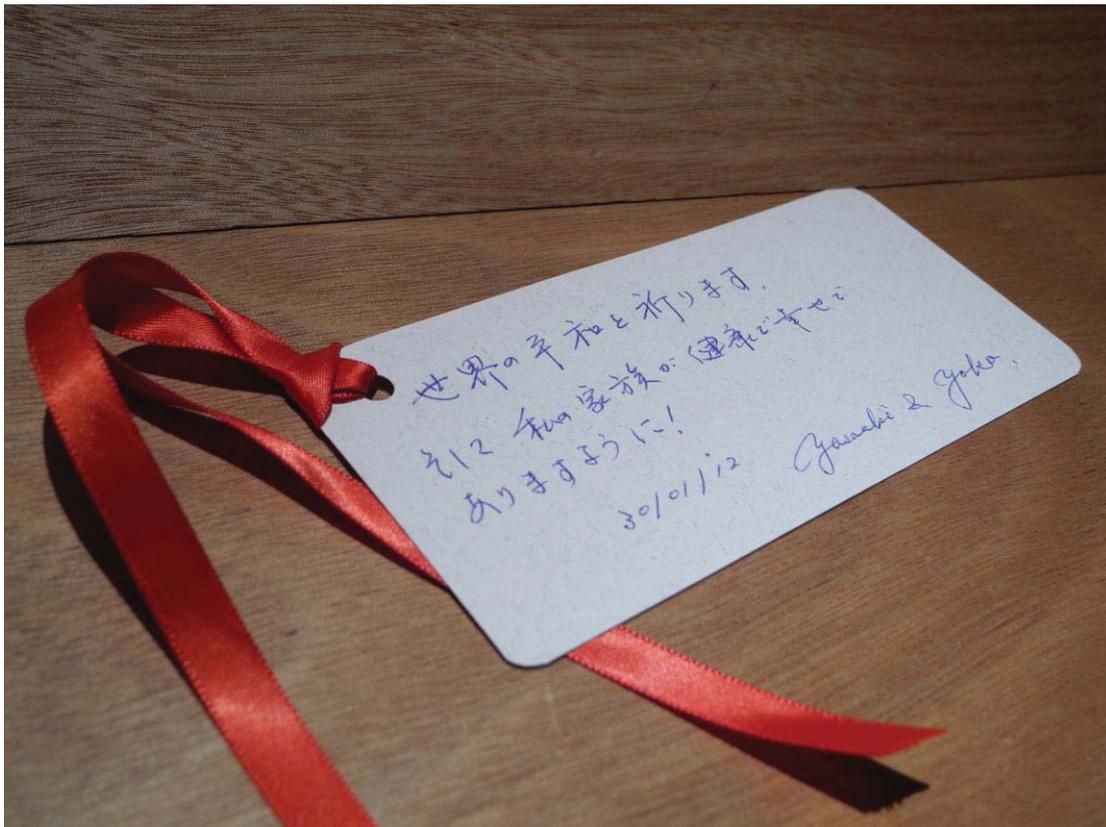


**Figure 4.3 (above) and Figure 4.4 (below)**  
*The Memory Tree, Wellington Museum, 2012.*  
*Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*



The *Memory Tree* was the central component of *Death and Diversity* where visitors could leave comments and ‘memories’ on a tree-shape form suspended from the ceiling. Tamsin Falconer and I took a moment to enter the space as it is now, to relive the experience in both its development and in its post-opening usage.

Talking with Falconer it became apparent how much of a design challenge the feature was. The initial concept involved a helix design, which progressed through many design evolutions. Throughout the process it was unclear as to who was driving the design. At that point David Waller had designed exhibitions but Falconer, as project manager, was looked at to resolve – either by self-design or arranging an artist. She felt uncomfortable about that, particularly at that early stage of her museum career, believing herself not to have all the required skills.



**Figure 4.5**

A visitor's memory left for the *Memory Tree*, Wellington Museum, 2012.

Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)

There were also technical parameters to consider. The experience was about people's memories around death and thus should be treated in a special way – not having comments too low or touching the floor. In addition the team had to consider the likelihood that visitors would hang their comments mostly at eye height, and not all over the tree, as warranted for dimensionality. A combination of these considerations, her inexperience, confusion over leadership and decision-making, and a variety of personnel expectations and opinions contributed to a difficult management process of this feature. If Falconer had been involved at an earlier stage of the development, she may have devised a more appropriate plan for handling this and doing so confidently. Subsequently, she resolved tensions through tapping into the collective knowledge and experience of all the other team members. She curbed her own frustrations and strategically proceeded step by step, and the respect fostered by her relationships with colleagues, ensured a communication pathway existed for information and support.



**Figure 4.6**  
*The Memory Tree, Wellington Museum, 2012.*  
*Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

I gather this was a complicated experience for her and something with which only experience could assist. The design and management complexities combined with the sensitive topic highlight the uniqueness museums have over other organisations handling projects and why it may be important to have a project specialist in such environments.

Ultimately the *Memory Tree* became one of the most successful aspects of the exhibition both in use and

regard. Falconer still fondly remembers regularly visiting the tree and reading the new memories. 'It was always quite moving' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 3). She found it extraordinary that people would interact with a feature in this way, particularly with such emotional context. The team had initial concerns over the potential for disrespectful visitors or those using the experience in a way unintended, but this behaviour did not eventuate. It 'proves if you set things up right, people will engage appropriately' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 3).

In fact, the success of the installation was such that it has enabled similar exhibition experiences since, and the Museum has been proactive in exploring the ideas surrounding visitor engagement further. The amount of pressure felt throughout design of the *Memory Tree* appears all the more worthwhile to Falconer knowing what the Museum learned from such an experience. And of course, she also learned much from it as well.

### **Project management leads to exhibition success**

After investigating the relationship between hillsides, exhibition layers and weathering agents, the question remains as to whether this can lead to successful exhibition layers. To determine whether exhibition project management can be successful in a museum, first is a need to determine whether *Death and Diversity* itself was a success.

#### Layer strength

The exhibition satisfied all objectives. The first was in raising awareness within and among Wellington's minority communities regarding the sensitive topic of death and helping participants talk about and share such experiences beyond a personal level. In achieving this, the Museum satisfied its goal on being socially inclusive:

Being socially active is what we have to be in the community [the exhibition offered] voices the opportunity to be heard in a perspective they otherwise wouldn't necessarily get (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Such voices can be hidden or forgotten in New Zealand communities, so providing that voice is 'the difference we can offer' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

*Death and Diversity* also satisfied attendance objectives. Both exhibition and the public programmes were immensely popular with visitation over 50,000 (MW, exhibition archives, accessed 2015). For many museums, visitation is often seen by governing bodies as the utmost important measure of success. Another is in quality of experience. Brett Mason notes how visitors treated the exhibition space differently to other museum spaces. There was much more contemplation. Tamsin Falconer recalls recently being in casual conversation with a fellow train passenger, and although failing to remember the exhibition's name, he was able to recount his *Death and Diversity* experience with praise.

Another important component of an exhibition is relationship-building. Despite forging meaningful relationships during projects, museums often fail to maintain these beyond project conclusion. The Museum struggled with the same issues owing to resource constraints. Mason still maintains the exhibition achieved relationship objectives. Following *Death and Diversity* some participants offered objects to the Museum collection and have continued to do so. In addition, it broadened community perception of the Museum including an understanding of its role as part of and for those communities.

Most notably, the exhibition was a success in the eyes of the exhibition team and wider staff. Falconer recalls how colleagues would say 'I wish we had done this, or that' which she would expect knowing there's always learning from such endeavours, but conversely there 'were some lovely things that went beyond what we had hoped' such as the *Memory Tree* (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Mason agreed, it 'showed us a lot about response and participation' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014). Subsequently, the exhibition taught the Museum about exhibition design surrounding visitor engagement.

Lastly, the exhibition succeeded in enhancing the Museum's reputation. If 'museums are to come alive and stay alive, they must present more than collections: they must present ideas' (Finlay, 1977, p.15). This is exactly what *Death and Diversity* was about. Museums should take opportunities to 'see things differently and to question what is implicit in the lenses of our own interpretive glasses' (Knell, 2004, p.156). It appears best said by Silverman and O'Neil (2004) 'perhaps the single most important task for the field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not to find more money, or more objects, or even more visitors, but to find the courage to embrace complexity in museums' (p.245). Not only is Museums Wellington, and therefore the Wellington Museum, undertaking topics and projects of complexity, it appears it also understands the importance of having a project manager to lead the Museum through that complexity.

### Analysing the cliff-face

That's the funny thing with exhibitions. You go through all the planning, and when it opens it's finished only to some. To others, that's when it starts (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

Always in need of justification, a project not only undergoes quality management throughout but also upon completion. Evaluation and review of the hillside are important tools to assist in future projects. This is usually one of the final acts of a project manager<sup>26</sup>, although taking Falconer's quote above, this phase is just the start (or middle) for many others in museums, such as those in public programming.

The budget for *Death and Diversity* over-ran marginally, due to unexpected costs after opening. This included ordering more *Memory Tree* tags due to popularity and graphic panel reprints as remedial work. Falconer reaffirms that these costs were acceptable and managed appropriately.

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<sup>26</sup> As Falconer also oversaw exhibition management, she continued to oversee *Death and Diversity* until the exhibition closed.

The exhibition and accompanying public programmes were recognised in terms of awards (Diversity Award from the Human Rights Commission (Loud, 2014, p.26)) and peer reviews (finalist for Museums Aotearoa's 2012 New Zealand Museum Awards in the Social History Exhibition section (see MA, Press Release, 2012)). However, as Falconer adds, it is 'not really about our museum colleagues' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). In regard to visitor surveying she comments on it being 'resource intensive, costly and tricky' to word surveys, and believes the Museum is yet to have the skill internally to conduct this research. The importance in doing this however, is expressed widely in both project management and visitor study literature, including approaches and methods. It appears odd then that the Museum did not conduct this for *Death and Diversity* and has not done so since. This contradicts the Museum's stance on best practice. I should note however, that planning for such evaluation is currently underway for the exhibition component of the Museum's current capital development.

Evaluation often involves a team debrief. Falconer admits this was absent for *Death and Diversity*<sup>27</sup> but there was a team discussion that identified elements in need of fixing (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2), scheduling of maintenance and remedial work. Although these costs were included in the Museum's operational budget, Falconer tracked them as exhibition costs. Her thoughts on remedial work were,

What's good enough? There are many judgments made about what is necessary and what is not. Is a small grammatical error acceptable? You can spend a lot of money changing mistakes (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

Falconer now conducts team briefing in all her project work. It is essential to reflect on self-learning too. Despite believing it the best option at the time, Falconer would avoid planning a theatre performance during any future

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<sup>27</sup> As Exhibitions and Public Programmes Developer, Jaqui Knowles did however conduct a report with team input, for submission to the Board and beyond, highlighting the development and exhibition post-install. Ordinarily this would be the project manager's task but Jaqui undertook this owing to her long association with the project.

exhibition installation. She would also schedule exhibition text development earlier in the process and having to reprint several graphic panels after installation of the exhibition is a 'reflection of that' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). She reiterates that there's always something to struggle with, the reason problem-solving is needed throughout. 'Until it actually opens, it's not yet done. When it opens, that's [only] when the project's fine'. *Death and Diversity* opened on time and largely to budget thus satisfying the core requirements of any project. As shown throughout this chapter the use of project management principles contributed to exhibition success.

It is important to remember that some projects fail. Reasons for failure can include insufficiencies and inadequacies in: attention to business case; attention to quality from the outset; definitions of required outcomes and thus project expectations; communication with all stakeholders and wrong products delivered; planning and resource coordination; and in measurable control over progress. These point to 'either ineffective project management or the wrong project manager' (Carpenter, 2011, p.12).

*Death and Diversity* succeeded on many levels. This owes much to those points discussed thus far, and it is evident that paramount to such success is effective management by the project manager. Core to this is ensuring the project experience is an enjoyable one, an aspect Falconer strives to create, for an effective project manager is one who does not forget to have 'fun' (Taylor, 2012, p.68).

## **Summary**

There is an evident and strengthening relationship between museum hillsides and project management weathering. Firstly, project management is increasingly desirable to museums for a number of reasons. More than ever museums are pressured to justify operation and expenditure. 'Project management is fast becoming the preferred way for companies to get things

done and in a global economy, project management makes companies more competitive' (Taylor, 2009, loc.492).

Secondly, project management aids hillside layer (exhibition) development and delivery. 'Anyone putting on temporary exhibitions is doing project management on some level' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). The increased complexities of exhibitions in all facets warrant project management. As a result, most exhibition professionals focus a majority of their time on 'deadlines, budgets and quality' (Hammond, 2011, p.8). A new pressure museums now face is that of sustainability. There is a growing concern particularly in New Zealand for 'finding and developing sustainable activities' (Jones, 2011, p.88), and similar to evolving contemporary product design, 'exhibition design now has a growing understanding of the fragile environment'. Recognising and planning for this, 'gives project teams the freedom and support to achieve meaningful sustainable goals' (Hammond, 2011, p.8). Walhimer (2015) states the challenge facing museums:

It is meeting mission that is the most difficult in managing museum projects. Museums exist to fulfill mission [...] one way in which museum projects are different from for-profit projects. Profit is quantitative; meeting mission is qualitative and subjective (p.107-108).

There is also an essential relationship between the weathering process and weathering agent of project management and project managers. Project management can lead to exhibition success, but that level of success is determined by the presence of a project manager. 'Change demands projects, and projects demand project managers' (Taylor, 2009, loc.461). Despite Tamsin Falconer's earlier comment that a lot of project management is common sense, having an 'understanding of more of the formalities of project management' is extremely important (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Now more than ever, it is critical for a project to succeed, and 'succeed with a higher level of certainty than seen before' (Taylor, 2009, loc.461). Therefore, those leading projects are increasingly 'expected to deliver higher business impact, be under closer scrutiny from senior management and be under far more pressure to succeed' (Taylor, 2009, loc.461).

This pressure appears enormous. If project managers are considered the ideal candidates for these endeavours, then it stands to reason there must be distinct qualities project managers possess making them best suitable for the task. Such qualities have been hinted at throughout this chapter and will be explored further in the following chapter. By examining the project manager position currently at Museums Wellington, and the Wellington Museum, the chapter also addresses the question of whether a certain type of project manager is best suited to the museum environment. Ethnographic research includes an observational study that sheds light on the social interactions of project managers in such environments.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Project managers

#### *The evolving weathering agents*

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#### Introduction

I make things happen. I don't come up with the ideas, but I have to make it happen [Tamsin Falconer, Museums Wellington Project Manager] (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

The increasing appeal of project management in museums has subsequently seen an increasing presence of project managers within the sector (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.12). Institutions without a project specialist risk having professionals lacking project experience and familiarity with design and construction, and also risk working with contractors unfamiliar with museums as building types or of functional requirements (p.12). A professional museum planner, therefore, who 'understands both museology and building processes maximises communication lines' (p.12), and thus is of great benefit to museums. This is the essential relationship between the museum and the project manager.

As already established, it is common for projects to be overseen by project managers (Carpenter, 2011; also Young, 2008) and the qualities required of this specialist are discussed in this chapter. By examining Tamsin Falconer's professional growth from 2011 to 2015, I gained insight into how a project manager begins and grows into an adept project professional. My aim was to ascertain some of those qualities desirable and also unique to the profession as it operates within this one museum environment.

In addition, an observation study of Falconer's team interaction during a series of project meetings conducted between September and October 2015, provided insight into some of the key mechanisms and behaviours a project

leader uses to interact, motivate and manage staff. I address the question of whether a certain type of person is best suited to such an environment as Lord, Lord and Martin (2012) suggest. I also consider the additional complexity of creativity within museums.

I draw again on the geological metaphor of a coastal hill environment and the geological processes of weathering to describe the relationship between the museum environment and the project manager. Here the project manager, as the weathering agent of water, conducts work and enacts change within the museum in a similar light.



**Figure 5.1**

*Wellington Museum covered in construction wrap during the 2015 development, 2015.*

*Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

## **From raindrop to stream**

The weathering of a natural landscape can be physical (mechanical) and/or chemical (Skinner and Porter, 1992, p.190). For purposes here, weathering by water solutions vary from small- to large-scale impacts over short to long time periods, and can occur through the suspension of moisture in the atmosphere, raindrops lightly impacting the surface, or with intense rainfall that culminates in pools and streams across the landscape. How this water then seeps down through the porous stratigraphic layers depends upon atmospheric conditions, rainfall intensity and the geological structure of the landform (p.190-200). I liken this transition from 'raindrop' to 'stream' to the growth of a project manager. Over the course of a career, the project manager gathers skills, training and experiences (raindrops) that together evolve the project manager into a more assured professional (stream). Within an institution, a project manager's first learning of the role and gaining of experience can also be likened to individual raindrops causing minimal influence. With an increase in knowledge, experience and ability, these drops amalgamate into a torrent stronger in power and influence.

Similarly, Tamsin Falconer has grown as a project manager through a variety of project and non-project specific experiences. From a skillset learnt through tertiary studies, heritage sector experience in London, Antarctic project planning with Victoria University of Wellington (VUW), and exhibition and building management with Museums Wellington, Falconer has honed her abilities. This skill mixture complements the mixture of operating and physical environments existing in many museums, and in particular, Museums Wellington.

### Raindrop

Falconer's professional career stems from her architecture degree, and although not project management specific, she learnt valuable project management skills through this study. Her understanding of project management at this juncture was limited to architecture-specific elements, such

as construction methods and sequencing. But architecture practice is intrinsically linked to project work. It is reasonable therefore, to suggest that Falconer would have gained an understanding of at least the basics of project management during this time.

Falconer also acquired essential project management skills early in her professional career. Her Antarctic experience offered exposure to project and logistics planning as well as risk management. She recalls how easily the great amount of planning prior to a trip could unravel by weather conditions on the Antarctic continent. This was a factor out of their control. On such occasions that initial planning was beneficial, 'because you knew what all the logic in those sequences were' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Planning offered a measure of control over foreseeable and unforeseeable risks. Falconer not only learned core aspects of planning from this experience, but she acquired practical experience of managing situations that threatened that planning.

Falconer's museum-specific experience was limited to an internship at the Akaroa Museum following her post-graduate qualification in Museum Studies through Massey University. As a recent student of that post-graduate programme, I should note that at least one component of that syllabus now focuses on project management specific to a museum context. With this act, the University appears aware of the activity and worth of project management operating within museums.

Despite her role in Akaroa, which was in a collections capacity, Falconer had an unfamiliarity with the museum sector. She had however, been exposed to environments that provided her with an adequate platform for the museum project role. To the Museums Wellington, the value of her project experience outweighed her lack of formal project training. This is a point of debate for project management – which is of greater value, qualification or experience? By entering the field through the latter channel, Falconer admits to lacking some of those qualified project management skills, particularly regarding construction; 'there are gaps in my knowledge about how things should run including managing risks more' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

Falconer is conscious of other project managers being proficient in project management methodology but not proficient in communicating that methodology. This is something learnt more through experience (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2) and is discussed later in the chapter. She understands the importance of qualification and training, but a project is unlike any other experience. 'The tools that you get with training and the soft experience of actually dealing with people should be complementary' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

For Brett Mason (Museums Wellington Director), undertaking project management requires a specific skill-set. He reflected on the other candidates applying for Falconer's initial museum role, each with adequate qualifications and experience. Falconer had a skill-set predominantly outside the museum setting. Mason regarded her experience as 'slightly distant but proven in another field' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014) and so she offered the prospect of a fresh perspective to the role. 'We're not trying to do what others are doing. Sometimes if you bring people in with experience from somewhere else, they think that that is the model' (pers. comm., Mason, 2014).

Falconer recalls one of her first management meetings at the Museum; 'there was all this random discussion going on. I just sat there and thought, 'wow, they're not linear thinkers. They're creative people and their ideas were going bang, bang, bang' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). She realised the importance of taking responsibility to create a framework for those creative ideas. 'That's how I describe my job sometimes - I make things happen. I don't come up with the ideas, but I have to make it happen'. This need for someone with appropriate skill to harness and drive creativity may be an occurrence among other museums, particularly considering that the very nature of exhibitions, no less museums, are a fragmented reality.

Through her museum experience, Falconer recognises growth in exhibition management, facilities management, project management and human resource management. Her transition into the museum environment was

difficult owing to her lack of experience but she rejects this would have been easier if present from *Death and Diversity's* conception. At those early stages 'there would [not] have been much need for a project manager [...] You have a project manager [come] onboard when you are going to concept design, when you have more people involved and it needs a level of management' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). As mentioned earlier, this contrasts with project management literature where many authors stress the importance of a project manager being present from project outset. Falconer too has emphasised how essential early planning is to the process. It is logical then, to suggest her presence earlier in the exhibition's development would have helped both her development and her management of the exhibition project.

## Training

Following the growth in project management throughout many sectors, professional associations and training programmes are now prevalent<sup>28</sup>. Complementing these professional networks and frameworks are various resources including a plethora of self-help guides designed to provide valuable assistance for those already in the field. These particular resources have become more prevalent recently and are now focusing more on the concept of effectiveness. There are 'many books out there with every detail of every component of project management skill set and process' (Taylor, 2012, p.4), but 'most are either heavily comprehensive or too light' (Lock, 2013, pref.). It is worth noting that both Falconer and Brett Mason have capitalised on and favour Young (2008), who provides a comprehensive project management resource with a New Zealand focus.

The shift in literature and resource to focus more on being effective as a project manager suggests that; the level to which a project succeeds is dependent

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<sup>28</sup> Three core associations exist: the International Project Management Association (IPMA); the Association for Project Management (APM); and the Project Management Institute (PMI). Stemming from these associations are structured project management methodologies: the PMI Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) and the APM Body of Knowledge define principles governing best practice; the International Standards Organisation (ISO), known for the ISO9000 series of quality standards; and PRINCE and PRINCE2, acronyms for Projects in Controlled Environments, give direct advice (Lock, 2013, p.109).

upon the effectiveness of the one overseeing it, and being simply proficient in project management methodology does not guarantee project success. Falconer acknowledges how having more formal training would have benefited her knowledge surrounding process and risk management specific to the construction phase of the current development. Then again, she reiterates that there's no point training in project management 'if you don't know what a project is, so experience, again, is key' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). This may be so, but taking on a project without knowledge of fundamental project principles, terminology and how this fits into a project management framework, can risk achieving project success.

Falconer also touches upon a potential training challenge facing practitioners in New Zealand new to both the project management and museum fields, and without any specific formal qualification. She recalls an experience when National Services Te Paerangi (NSTP) hosted a course on project management at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and where the prerequisite for attending was five or more years in the museum sector. Still new to the profession, this prohibited Falconer – 'it was more about bringing project management to people who had been working in museums and I was coming from the other end' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). I wonder however, if she had approached NSTP, whether an allowance would have been made. Regardless, this is one example that suggests the museum sector is yet to fully understand and appreciate project management as a profession including the value of candidates from external channels. This also hints at the higher worth the sector places on museum experience for the project role.

### Stream

Since 2011, Falconer has continued to develop professionally. As anticipated upon her employment, she currently oversees an extensive capital development project, which has her connected to almost every department across the organisation. Her appointment in 2011 provided her with the exhibition development experience of benefit now.

For Museums Wellington, growth was important. Falconer is now more knowledgeable about building maintenance and maintenance specific to the Wellington Museum. She otherwise admits this would have been a learning difficulty at the onset of the capital development. Reflecting on her first role at the Museum, Falconer refers to that exhibition experience as a small-scale case study which gave her much better grounding for the capital development project (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1). An additional, and perhaps inadvertent, benefit to developing Falconer into the position was providing colleagues with a level of confidence, trust, and now familiarity with how she operates.

Falconer's full transition into the Museum's project manager role occurred in 2012. The capital project she now oversees is extensive and multi-faceted, and includes capital works such as earthquake and building strengthening, external elevator and stairwell tower redevelopment, air-conditioning/climate control improvement, exterior painting, and office relocation. Coinciding with this development is the redevelopment of exhibition spaces, which are scheduled in three phases. The first phase is *The Attic*, a new exhibition floor made accessible from transitioning office space, and conducting structural work on the building's roof. This was completed in 2015. Stage two, scheduled for completion in 2018, involves redeveloping the first and second floor exhibition spaces, and stage three, scheduled for completion in 2020, involves redeveloping the ground floor, entranceway and external surrounds. Role responsibilities also include financial management and overseeing fundraising efforts for the project.

Falconer understands the need for a museum project manager during large projects (including large exhibition projects), particularly for projects stretched over a period of years. Here a project manager can maintain a sense of urgency. 'I can see all the things that need to happen up until then and it seems really close' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). She marks it down to the scale of the individual experience. In dealing with a temporary exhibition with a certain amount of time, floor space, and a quick build, content can develop right up until install. This is different to dealing with '300 square metres, inter-related

parts, third party contractors of five different sizes, and borrowing cases' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

Falconer's professional growth continues. For example, she admits being 'too loose at times' when motivating or driving colleagues and acknowledges her need to improve in this area. While advocating for the need to afford team members time to grapple with problems and achieve good results, she is also aware of needing to be more direct in encouraging someone to stick with a decision (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Knowing when and where this is best approached is one of the essential aspects of the project manager (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.33).

### **The weathering role**

In the hillside, water solutions can filter throughout the geological layers providing and transferring necessary nutrients between. This weathering agent can assist the transformation of layers through chemical weathering, particularly when coming in contact with heat and pressure, but it can also erode through mechanical weathering. At places of great weakness, this weathering can greatly alter the makeup of that layer and affect the entire structure of that landform (Skinner and Porter, 1992, p.190-200). Indicated prior, the project manager operates within an institution in a similar way.

The project manager is a profession with the authority and responsibility (and accountability) for all aspects of a project in achieving specific objectives on behalf of the 'owner' (Taylor, 2009, loc.444). They are the key advocates of the project with responsibility for ensuring the project team produces the best possible product within time and budgetary limits (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.193). McKenna-Cress and Kamien note that this advocacy is one of power, yet power is in service to the team and primarily as a facilitator (p.193). This is an essential and difficult role and Taylor adds that the successful individual is someone who thrives on the challenge, defies the 9am-5pm routine, is not afraid of leading or of project risk, and is someone who wants to

make a difference, who likes people, and of course, ultimately manages projects successfully (2009, loc.444).

Although responsible for team operation, the project manager is not always able to customise it. 'Sometimes, you have options about what tools you have, sometimes you don't' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). This involves a realisation that 'this is our team, [so] how is the best way to manage this situation' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). At the forefront is managing expectations, which should be established from the outset. The museum and project team expect the project manager to: keep things on track; conduct regular (efficient and effective) meetings; communicate issues/changes timely; review session information missed prior to next session; freely pass on useful information; offer help when and where needed; ensure information is clear, concise, understandable; keep team interest in mind; listen attentively, and genuinely seek to understand viewpoints; work to resolve conflicts; and welcome suggestions for improvement (Clark-Craig, 2012, loc.631). This long list highlights the great expectation of the profession. In return, the project manager can appropriately expect from the team: skills and experience; planning; authority; communication; commitment; participation; and reporting (loc.646). A project leader must also manage options when something or someone is underperforming. During Wellington Museum's current development Falconer states that working through the problem is a better option than removing or replacing someone. She always considers which option is of greater project risk, and risk is always on the project manager's mind.

### Vital to the museum

With increases in museum project-related work, practitioners with appropriate skills are increasingly essential to undertake such work. They coordinate and align all activities of both the museum project team and design team, [and] work with chairs/managers of each constituent groups' (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.36). For exhibitions, other duties may include assistance with collection selection and coordinating exhibition content (Bogle, 2013, p.155). Accountability is one area of concern, particularly for those museums with a

connection to local government, and having a proficient knowledge and understanding of this area is paramount. 'Working for a council organisation brings in those politics' adds Falconer but she also acknowledges a level of office politics in every job (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

Any exhibition development involves some level of project management (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). A museum practitioner with an understanding of more of the 'formalities of project management' is extremely beneficial (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). In addition, exhibition participants are often talented and creative people, so the exhibition project leader also needs skill in managing creativity (perhaps even be creative themselves?) and fostering inspiration. They must take creative chances, but be practical (Bogle, 2013, p.76). The exhibition process from concept to reality can include several teams and it is important that everyone understands how the 'teams interface (and also who is dominant)' (p.86).

The project manager job description for Museums Wellington lists the key tasks and responsibilities for Falconer's role and those deemed vital to the organisation (WMT, Museums Wellington project manager job description, 2011). These are listed overleaf.

**Project Management**

- Correctly identify, in consultation with appropriate manager, resourcing needs.
- Actively define, develop and monitor project management plans to ensure project outputs are delivered to schedule, to budget and to required quality.
- Work with Managers to prepare critical paths for project plans and monitor Manager's project deadlines in regular task force meetings. Ensure progress is evaluated, required action taken and any issues of concern are resolved satisfactorily.
- Identify and manage all project risks and bring them immediately to attention of Director for resolution or action.
- To develop and monitor Museums contracts, and/or memorandum of understanding with external parties.

**Exhibition Delivery**

- Oversee the delivery of exhibitions through all stages.

**Building Services and Maintenance (until 01 February 2013)**

- Ensure that all aspects of the physical visitor experience (VE) are maintained.
- Ensure that buildings services including health and safety, environmental conditions, security, cleaning and maintenance are provided.

**Business Management**

- Monitor financial performance and provide accurate and timely reports.
- Check allocated budgets against quoted financial information
- Prepare financial reports submitted as part of grant and sponsorship applications and grant/sponsor acquittal report.

**Leadership and Strategic Planning**

- Contribute as a member of the Museums Wellington management team (MT) to the development and realisation of its strategic direction and business plan.
- Bring a strategic focus to all aspects of responsibilities.

**Resource Management**

- Ensure the effective and efficient operation of the Museums team's work and that outputs are delivered on time and within budget.
- Develop and implement quality improvements to systems and practices.
- Regularly review priorities and processes to maximise value for money.
- Ensure that all Trust policies and procedures are followed particularly in respect of Human Resources, Financial Management, and Health and Safety.

**Staff Management**

- Encourage team-work and the sharing of expertise and knowledge.
- Provide leadership to staff so that they strive for excellence particularly in respect of the provision of customer focused service delivery.
- Staff have clear understanding of the outputs to be delivered and associated performance expectations.
- Staff receive regular and constructive feedback on their performance.
- Staff have access to professional development and training relevant to their roles.

**Figure 5.2**

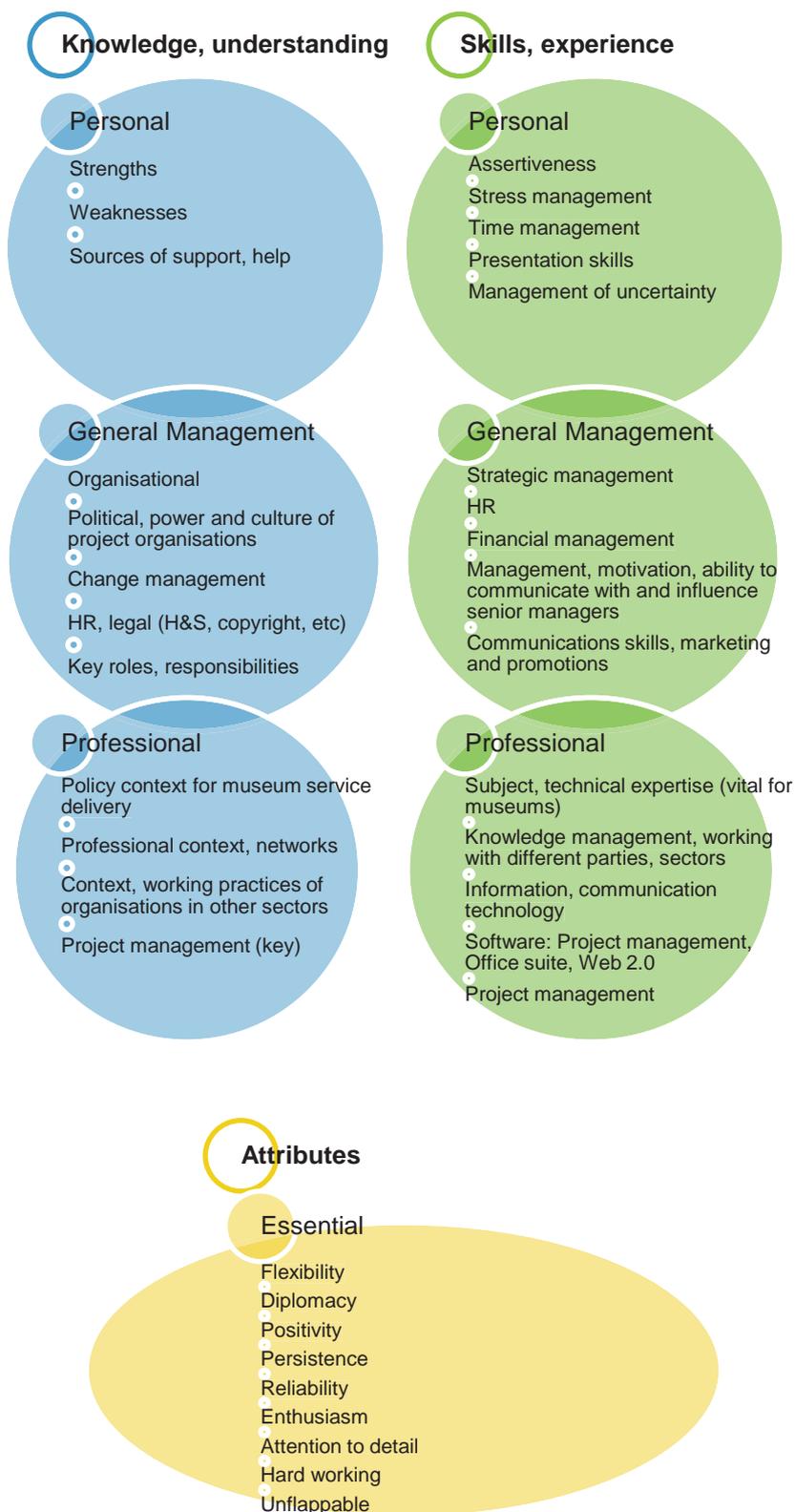
*Tasks and Responsibilities, WMT Museums Wellington project manager job description, 2011. Sourced from WMT*

These tasks and responsibilities may not differ much from a project manager job description in any other sector, except for one aspect – exhibition delivery. Listed second, this responsibility is given high importance for this particular institution. The job description does however fail to mention any other activities specific to the museum environment and that make such an environment unique.

Falconer is unsure as to whether a specialty project manager is necessary for the museum environment. She believes project management skills are essential, but a distinct role depends on the scale of the museum and its objectives. 'I don't think you'd want to do a development project like ours without having a project manager, even if on a smaller scale' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). What is vital however, is someone either knowledgeable or able to quickly transfer into institutions of different cultures – in building, behaviour, and thinking' (Carpenter, 2011, p.90). And this is where Falconer's slow progression into the weathering role was beneficial to the Wellington Museum.

### Desirable traits

Desired traits are numerous for a modern project manager. Carpenter (2011) emphasises a need for wide-ranging knowledge (including insider/institutional knowledge) and human resource management (p.87-88), while Genoways and Ireland (2003, p.100) highlight facilities management and an understanding of ethics. Recently, a greater emphasis has been placed on risk management (Lock, 2013, p.73). A majority of the key traits required for an effective project leader can be segmented into the three broad categories indicated in Figure 5.2 overleaf. These traits have been gathered from Carpenter (2011) and are grouped under headings of 'knowledge and understanding', 'skills and experience', and 'attributes'. An effective project manager must be proficient in most if not all these areas. It is worth noting however, the omission from this diagram of ethics – an aspect that should spread across all three categories.



**Figure 5.3**  
*Desirable qualities of a project manager.*  
 After Carpenter, 2011, p.87-88

Once appropriately assigned, project managers must identify and address 'critical management challenges' (Allan, in Carpenter, 2011, p.58-59). Typical examples include: partner dominance<sup>29</sup>; rotating board members; unequal distribution of work or responsibility; added bureaucracy; political interference; and working across different cultures and sectors (Allan, in Carpenter, 2011, p.58-59). The 'twenty-first century skill-set must include critical thinking, communication, creative problem solving, and collaboration' (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.1).

### Elements for success

Bogle (2013) advocates that every phase of a project must have a designated project manager (p.154). This alone does not equate to success however. A term recently emerged in the field is *productive laziness* – 'success, with far less effort' (Taylor, 2012, p.1). *Lazy* refers to being 'focused in project management effort and learning to exercise effort where it matters and where there's most impact' (p.3). Productiveness refers to 'maximum output for any given input, with an eye to minimising input also' (p.12).

Foremost to success, is knowledge and understanding of the organisation and environment (internal and external). Aware of her lack of project qualification, Falconer actively used the many resources at her disposal (both written and colleague-based), including support lines such as Mason, to aid her knowledge of the profession. Her earlier experience within the Museum formulated critical institutional knowledge of the organisation, and of the people and roles within. Knowledge about roles assists in 'getting people to move in respective circles' (Dahlager, in McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.193).

Falconer sees communication as fundamental to project success (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2), for 'communication is the cornerstone of effective project management' (Pritchard, 2014, p.1). Yet ineffective communication is

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<sup>29</sup> There is no one model for partnerships, but Carpenter (2011, p.48-49) provides a checklist for success.

commonplace. 'Most is ad hoc, driven by individuals, personalities, and preferences rather than by needs, protocols, processes and procedures' (Pritchard, 2014, p.1). Challenges can also include communication barriers, the type of medium used, cultural differences (Taylor, 2012, p.55) and the sheer volume of information communicated in this modern world (p.52). In fact, communication breakdowns are cited as one of the key reasons projects fail, which is why communication should be 'addressed as a critical activity and skill for [all] project managers' (Pritchard, 2014, p.1).

Falconer re-emphasises the importance of verbal and written communication<sup>30</sup>, particularly in the articulation of schedules and progress, in representing the project, and in presenting 'why it is exciting' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Knowing 'how and when to step up a gear and present projects in the best possible light, through whatever means relevant' is an important quality (Taylor, 2009, loc.320). An effective communicator isolates critical information utilising the optimum method for the person with whom they are communicating (Taylor, 2012, p.53). This is the 'biggest activity, and also the greatest opportunity to save 70% of time' (p.54).

Effective management of time is also paramount. This includes: managing the processes not the decisions; establishing daily, short-term, mid-term, and long-term priorities; ensuring meetings have purpose, time-limits, and essential members; maintaining accurate calendars; knowing when to stop tasks; delegating and empowering the team; ensuring appropriate time for high priority tasks; using checklists and to-do lists; and adjusting priorities with new tasks (Carpenter, 2011, p.113). Falconer also acknowledges how critical it is to change direction when time dependent, especially when presumptions have been wrong, such as with council delays in decision-making. Vital here is being able to adapt – 'keeping an eye on the long game but also problem solving', adapting throughout, knowing when to change, and when to 'stick to your guns' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

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<sup>30</sup> Including documenting, proofing, following up, and record keeping.

Another factor critical to project success is measuring milestones and celebrating success. Falconer admits paying less attention to successes and milestones as opposed to outstanding tasks or the potential of failure. She does however, understand how recognising milestones is important to both herself and the team (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). This emphasis on human management is essential. Key is making individual assessments, managing skillsets, and then communicating appropriately. Falconer goes so far as organising visual charts for colleagues who understand such material better. 'If I don't get people to buy in to where I think it's going, or I can't communicate why a milestone is so important and to stick with it, and they don't think it's important then it's not going to work' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Buy in is essential for the museum. Lord, Lord and Martin (2012), state that 'museums seem to be about objects, but they are really about people' (p.39). This resonates with Falconer. She regards making breakthroughs with colleagues – 'when they're suddenly singing from the same song sheet' – as particularly significant (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). She cites an example here of graphic design development during *Death and Diversity*. Obtaining approval (and mutual consensus) from colleagues over milestones in graphic design, where everyone is 'yes, this is the way to go' was not only a project success, but a personal success too (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

### **Mineral assemblages – team meetings**

An observational study

The varieties and abundances of minerals present in rocks are commonly called mineral assemblages (Skinner and Porter, 1992, p.66). As a group, they are 'important pieces of information for interpreting how a rock formed' (p.66). What minerals are present and how they have interacted with and influenced others in the assemblage provides a greater geological understanding of that environment. Analysing project teams in the same light provides insight into how projects form. The greatest 'assemblage' of the project team is when the team gathers for meetings with the project manager facilitating, and where project discussion, decision-making and social interaction is at its greatest.

Analysis here shows insight into how the team functions as well as how it contributes to the project.

Meetings and projects go hand in hand. They are 'used to inform, gather ideas, consider changes, review progress, decide actions, and celebrate success' (Lock, 2013, p.99). Expressed across the spectrum of project management literature and resources is the importance of such meetings, and specifically the importance of the project manager to facilitate them efficiently and effectively. Owing to this, I undertook an observational study that focused on how Tamsin Falconer, as project manager, conducts project meetings at the Wellington Museum, and in a way beneficial to her, the team, and the project.

This involved participant observation of the exhibition project team while working on the new *Attic* exhibition floor and occurred during eight meetings between September and October 2015. Tamsin Falconer, as project manager, organised and managed these meetings, which were predominately held weekly at the Wellington Museum and lasted anywhere from one-two hours with follow-up meetings and discussions in the *Attic* itself. Participating as Curator, I was actively involved with these meetings, and as well as noting interactions among the team, and between the team and the project manager, I also reflected on my own experience and inclusion in this activity. Data was then collated alongside meeting minutes afterwards.

### Meetings and participants

Those partaking in meetings have a valuable role to play. Museum participants not only bring professional expertise to the team but are often 'skilled in working cross-functionally and understanding the needs of other disciplines' (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.123). For the Wellington Museum, the current exhibition project team consisted of several participants; Falconer, an exhibition designer (acting also as head of exhibitions and collections), head of content, a curator (my role), registrar, graphic designer, and various contracted parties for exhibition build, technical and lighting needs.

As project leaders, project managers often host such meetings. But the lead role can change throughout the project and typically the 'first development is driven by content' (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.60). Likewise, and prior to observation, the *Attic* exhibition meetings were jointly organised and conducted by the head of content and exhibition designer. Overseeing the wider project, but still a member of this exhibition team, Falconer remained in the background and only assumed a lead role when exhibition development increased in complexity and entwined more with the overall project schedule and budget.

Of value to managing meetings is teamwork training and 'an experienced project manager contracted externally can [sometimes] be the best way to achieve results' (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.72). For the Museum, this was not necessary. Team relationships had already been established through Falconer's prior introduction and as such, she had acquired knowledge of individual participants including their personality types. Owing to a 'project's nature, the project manager often lacks recourse to standard checks, balances, and levels of people management' (Carpenter, 2011, p.103). Although unable to select team members, Falconer's understanding of participant dynamic, need, and working style were of great benefit to managing the project, team and meetings. For the latter in particular, Falconer appeared comfortable in leading the meetings. This may owe much to her previous meeting experience, but it was evident knowledge of the team was beneficial. She was able to show understanding of team member roles and often expressed this when discussing tasks. For instance, on one occasion when discussing text development with the head of content and with myself, she expressed an understanding of the challenge of developing this prior to other content aspects. Having worked alongside Falconer prior, I for one felt she was not only being sympathetic but had enough reputable knowledge in this area that I could respect. This enabled a greater openness, on my behalf, to suggestions from Falconer on how better to progress with this development.

Team knowledge aside, the project manager's role in meetings is as the organiser, process driver, and reviewer of progress, schedule and budget (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.60). The *effective* project manager facilitates

rather than leads and must be knowledgeable in calling, running and documenting such meetings (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.33). This facilitation was evident in Falconer's meetings, where the team drove decision-making and Falconer more-so managed the decision process.

When organising meetings, the project manager must also consider team costs in participant hours and prevention from performing their other functions (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.72). Upon assuming control, Falconer reworked the meeting timeslot and process to suit all participants – having everyone present ensured greater effectiveness, and high participant attendance happened more often than not. Prior to these meetings, she facilitated information and previous documentation in a clear concise manner, clearly labeling tasks – including highlighting those overdue and of high priority – upcoming deadlines, items to be aware of and to address. This was commonly presented in a group email that addressed key aspects and was appended with minutes from the previous meeting. This simplistic method of correspondence was an effective method of dispersing information accessible to everyone in the group. I should note however, that despite being readily accessible, some members often neglected to read it prior to the meetings. On such occasions, Falconer would have copies of the email to address when needed throughout the meeting.

Following each successive meeting, Falconer would repeat the process, showing a clear line of project and task progress. Closer towards exhibition installation, she identified and separated every task (and even each participant's contribution to that task) into an easy-to-follow 'Progress' document (part of this document is shown on the following page).

#	Story	AV	Lighting	Designer	Collections team	PM - Tamsin	Exhibition builder	Content team	Graphic designer
13	Richard Fuchs	Yes	[name]	Headset location & mount			Monitor surround		
15	Battle for Kapiti		[name]		Object in before lighting		Locking rqd for mounts		
20	US Marines	Yes	[name]	Headset location & mount (bakelite). Get back bd in					Canvas screen
22	Colonialism / Wakefields		[name]	Confirm names with [name]. Confirm wiring for spots			Mount ready by 13/10		Confirm names with [name]
39	Māori Land March /Walking sticks/Mary Macfarlane/Whina		[name]	Advise dimensions of frame	[name] to install - wk of 19th Oct		Put frame together		
48	Power to the People. Cook Strait cable	Yes	[name]						
66	Jacob Heberley. Hei paraoa		[name]	Touch object in progress ([name])					
81	The Bypass (protests etc)/ Andrew Ross photos	Yes	[name]	Headset location & mount	T-shirt mount	Figure out plugs/cabling	Frame for monitor		
114	Te Aro Pā, The Brass Pouwhenua		[name]				Box on floor		
129	de Clere			Design over hatch					
158	Over the Hill'. Bragge's journey to the Wairarapa over Rimutaka Road	Yes	[name]	Confirm button location	Paperwork for props			Select and bring in props/theming	

Figure 5.4

Wellington Museum Attic 'Progress' document (part of), 2015. Names have been omitted and are shown here as [name].

Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)

Again this document highlighted those tasks specific to each team member. Not only did this act as a reminder of our required input, but it allowed us to see the other contributors to a particular task. This understanding allowed participants to track progress from around the team and thus encouraged the team to work more collaboratively outside of the meeting.

Facilitating the meetings enabled Falconer appropriate management and tracking of exhibition tasks, schedules and the budget. Considering human cost on occasion (particularly near exhibition install) she reorganised meetings to fit workloads and communicated messages in alternate ways such as through email, face-to-face, or gathering the team in the *Attic* to discuss topics requiring attention. One of those occasions involved immersing the team in the environment of the *Capital Room* – a room within the *Attic* needing to satisfy multiple functions; an exhibition space, a meeting room, and a function space. Being immersed within the space and working through the room's contrasting objectives contributed to the team's understanding of why these objectives were important. This aided decisions in how best to progress with development, and was extremely beneficial considering the diverse opinions from the group

on how this space should manifest. By being in the environment, the team was better able to reach compromise and consensus. The resulting room environment blended meeting room aspects with a subtle exhibition feel so that both functions could coexist for the benefit of both the visitor and the client.

Owing to such participant diversity in personality, experience, skill and working styles, there are 'many varied ways of managing and getting the best out of teams' (Taylor, 2012, p.83). Falconer's approach was twofold: tailor making communication outside of meetings, but coordinating a collective process within. This included wider project updates, gathering and disseminating material on progress, and facilitating discussion and decisions as a group. A fundamental quality of the project manager is making and maintaining the project's 'attractiveness' and Falconer frequently highlighted milestones (achieved and upcoming), reminding everyone of the project's ultimate goal. Reiterating the milestone, for example, of moving a majority of exhibition cabinetry into the space, appeared to reinvigorate the team. I myself, considered this as an important project milestone where seeing tangible progress not only spurred my energy but forced me to think more carefully about how content already in progress would best function within and alongside this physical framework. That experience, I believe, has made for a more considered and valuable result.

Drawing on her planning experience, Falconer was quick to understand workloads and establish suitable schedules, goals, deadlines, and steps to accomplish these. This also included the meeting process and decision criteria. It is important for the project manager to drive and structure the meeting as wanted (Taylor, 2012, p.24), and Falconer often had a schedule she wished to follow. This is something the team had come to know and expect from Falconer's operating style instilled in the team from prior workings together. By establishing these and project expectations, Falconer informed the team of what was needed to meet goals (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.13), and consequently, the team gained confidence in Falconer's project control; effective teams need trust in the project manager (Taylor, 2012, p.86).

Falconer always started the meeting on time. Where someone was yet to arrive but was needed for discussion, she reorganised the schedule so essential information was not missed. A typical meeting agenda was organised as follows: general business; tasks overdue; tasks itemised by priority; round-table progress and discussion; items of concern; summary, and tasks and steps for the week ahead. Although proceeding in an orderly fashion, Falconer was also flexible to move between items depending on discussion direction. This was particularly visible when Falconer used her knowledge on all aspects of the project, to connect separate tasks materialising within a discussion. It appeared to be important to Falconer to capture discussion points in the moment and not defer to later in the meeting where such impetus could be lost. Flexibility is a key project manager quality for the museum (Carpenter, 2011, p.88), but this flexibility was extended only to a point. Conscious of time and maintaining progress, she often drew discussion back to the focus and strived to end any discussion with either a decision or the next step identified. This was best witnessed during development of audio handsets for the exhibition. Falconer was conscious of the time lag in ordering these items from overseas, and therefore tightly controlled the decision process for these features.

Falconer considered the preparation of information and material prior to meetings as paramount. Owing to this she was able to facilitate meetings without much interruption (such as either herself or participants leaving to acquire supporting or requested information) or stalemate (presenting all the materials necessary for a decision). Knowing facts to support or defend positions can save time, energy and facilitate a more positive resolution (Taylor, 2012, p.26). This includes anticipating as much as possible. Falconer frequently visited team member desks prior to meetings and this and the associated social interactions enabled her to gauge progress and identify issues. On more than one occasion, Falconer approached my desk concerning matters not only specific to my role and input, but also those of the head of content when unavailable and whom I worked closely with. In doing so, she could gauge and foresee what issues may appear from his opinions during the meeting.

This knowledge prior to meetings was extremely beneficial. But of highest value was her knowledge of the entire project as well as the organisation. Falconer drove meeting discussion owing to her knowledge of the wider project and as liaison between team and project sponsor (Brett Mason), facilitated questions and points of debate between the parties. Of benefit to the team, was her understanding of Mason's vision and expectations, thus saving valuable meeting time. On occasion, Falconer could advise the team when heading down a discussion path that would not align with Mason's vision. Although not a primary driver of the decision-making, when the team was aware of the challenge of pushing a particular need, they would consider this among other priorities to the team.

Falconer's knowledge of the director also included knowing when it was appropriate to involve him in meetings. On one such occasion, his input was necessary to resolve conflicting opinions over window treatment. One participant called for window blinds to restrict natural light for collection object protection and to enhance the *Attic* aesthetic. Other members were advocating for views and suggested window film treatment instead. I myself saw merits in both concepts. Falconer ultimately sought Mason's input, which favoured the film solution, and this was the decisive input influencing the team's direction on this matter.

### Collaboration and conflict

Collaborative meetings are effective meetings (Carpenter, 2011, p.94), therefore, 'building a coherent team and sense of ownership and shared responsibility is vital' (p.94). Part of this is 'respect for each other, and the freedom and ability to challenge' (Taylor, 2012, p.86). The collaboration model used by the Wellington Museum followed a mixture of collaboration and teamwork: 'collaboration to define, mission, goals, and of exhibition then; team to carry out individual deliverables' (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.8). The team worked together to collaborate on ideas, then individually undertook tasks before re-meeting for approval. Throughout development the designer advised on content, and content advised on design. Falconer encouraged this

collaboration in meetings and strove for mutual agreement. When not possible, she stepped in and drove the team to either a decision or compromise. One such example, involved unease from the designer regarding sexual references made within media arranged by the content team to support an artist's work. His query was whether this was appropriate for the Museum's audience. Falconer advised the content team to reconsider the value of this component and ascertain whether such concern was warranted. Through further discussion (and disagreement) the team decided through compromise to retain the content, but to also include an appropriate disclaimer.

Key to this collaboration is trust, understanding and mutual respect. For any collaboration 'good project management is necessary to create a welcoming environment, and takes more skill than sometimes realised (both technical and human)' (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.194). Falconer advocated for everyone to have a voice, and respected members' opinions, deadlines and workloads (including the struggle members sometimes had with those). The designer for instance, had an extensive workload dealing with aspects of design, production and installation. Where possible, Falconer reworked schedules to accommodate to the evident appreciation of the designer. This respectful environment was borne from Falconer's past workings with museum members and a core aspect was being reasonable. As shown, Falconer often shifted targets to accommodate the team – a better outcome than team angst or distress. For the above example, she also encouraged other members of the team to assist, reiterating the shared goals of the project team. Shared responsibility is one key factor in effective meetings.

McKenna-Cress and Kamien (2013) aptly refer to the project manager role as being a good parent – 'nagging when necessary, but allowing true independence' (p.8). But managing the 'balance between power given' (p.194) and 'letting the team work things out for themselves' (Taylor, 2012, p.92) is a difficult task. Falconer often stood by and allowed the team valuable discussion on exhibition matters while recording tasks and decisions, but interjected whenever progress halted. This may have appeared abrupt to the team, but was necessary to keep the meeting moving and members engaged. The true

value of skilled facilitators is appropriately guiding the team to make their own decisions (if sometimes only perceived) and subtly stepping in when not the case.

Being conscious of potential negativity, such as complaints, criticism, conflict, and unwelcome compromise, is pivotal (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.14-15). As a measure to mitigate negativity, Falconer acknowledged points from all sides and on many occasions, helped clarify a member's point when they struggled to argue it. This occurred frequently in regards to graphic design, where Falconer showed an understanding of the immense workload and tight timeframes the graphic designer faced, and often advocated for this role. She also clearly stated consequences of inaction or delays in decision-making. Such clarification helped awareness of that decision's importance and thus led to more timely resolutions such as progress on the audio handsets already mentioned. With progress in mind the 'project manager must be adroit' enough to hold people to agreed-upon tasks, agile enough to figure something out when that fails, and skilled enough to get everyone else to go along with the fix' (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.32).

A museum reality is that the complex makeup of any exhibition team poses a conflict risk during meetings. Regardless of willingness for collaboration, 'power issues are bound to come up' between team members advocating for their respective departments (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.36). This is where the project manager can provide additional information (for instance, past decisions or cost comparisons), suggest testing of ideas and storylines, or facilitate prototypes for further discussion. Differing focuses of the content and design teams often provided much debate, and Falconer encouraged each team to supply representations of their ideas. She provided updated floor layouts, constantly referred to schedules herself, and facilitated testing (with the team designer) for various elements such as lightboxes and window filters. Falconer often moved the meeting into the *Attic* so the team could gain a better sense of the environment.

Such conflict can often be triggered by creative variation within museums and as meetings are forums for staff ideas and creativity (Lord and Lord, 2009, p.123), this needs careful management. Falconer allowed for useful fluidity in the creative process, particularly when the team (or members of the team) wanted to go back a design step. Everyone provided valuable input and was able to share aspects of the vision, and hence any compromise was accepted as all members felt part of the process and equally part of the final product. This shared vision was essential to a smooth working and effective team. As such, the team worked largely effortlessly together.

### Communication

Communication is 'part and parcel of day-to-day activities for the project manager', who changes communication tools depending on 'size and number of communication lines' (Pritchard, 2014, p.2). For meetings, the importance of effective communication is paramount and project managers should seek to achieve a balanced, open communication forum. Without this, decision-making progress can be slowed (Carpenter, 2011, p.102). Falconer sought this balanced, open forum, a task made easier owing to the established relationships existing between herself and the team. After welcoming everyone to the meeting, and allowing for social conversation, she systematically progressed through the meeting schedule. Each conversation began with direct questions on a specific task or item, facilitating response and discussion. She would often keep asking questions of the task (if the group was not doing this themselves) until a decision or the next step was identified.

Always aware of productivity, Falconer was concise and clear with the content and context of any communication, ensuring it was appropriate for the topic, the time and the group. She primarily remained direct, yet casual in her approach. For example, when pushing for final acquisition and clearance of graphic material such as images, she presented a calm demeanour while clearly pushing for a faster resolution and citing how delays here were creating delays in graphic design. This demeanour encouraged rather than hindered progress. When needing to be more direct, the point was made clearer and emphasised

by elevation in tone and volume, but always maintaining control. Valuable throughout these exchanges were facial expressions and body behaviour that matched her tone. This included warm and open body language, such as a relaxed posture and composed use of hands, particularly when dealing with challenges affecting the team – delays in exhibition fabrication for instance. Her composure had a calming effect on the team, and further encouraged trust and open discussion.

When directing enquires towards any particular individual, she would subtly alter communication methods to suit that individual. Some participants required reminders which Falconer delivered calmly but repeatedly. Other participants often needed visual aids (such as coloured Gantt charts) to understand either the message or importance of a point or progression, and Falconer used both verbal and non-verbal communication methods to communicate that message.

One key observation was of Falconer's non-verbal communication when leading, observing and recording group discussion. While writing notes, she kept eye contact with those speaking as well as constantly rotating this contact around the group, even when participants were not speaking. Not only did this contribute to a respectful meeting environment, but it appeared Falconer was using her own observational technique to check individual reaction at any given time. She was then able to step in when seeing someone unsure or uncomfortable to either clarify or defend a point, change discussion direction, or gauge general agreement on an issue. This occurred frequently throughout all meetings. By pursuing effectiveness, Falconer was able to remain driven while showing mutual respect and empathy to each participants' opinions and needs, and this is essential to achieving productive meetings.

### Team health

As discussed, museum environments can have a variety of people working within. Acquiring a people-centric approach is therefore paramount, particularly for environments often unfamiliar with project management methodology, and where the 'principle resource and main costs are project personnel' (Allen in

Carpenter, 2011, p.13). Falconer's continual consideration of member workloads and stresses was evident. She even strived to hide her own stresses for the better of the team, though on occasion it was obvious she encountered the same stresses affecting any other member. It is the quality of the project manager to effectively manage that stress, along with the team's, on the path to achieving project success.

Guidelines for a people-centric project manager can include: 'positivity and confidence; listening and supporting (and helping); good informal contact; good planning; ensuring promises are kept and minimal bureaucracy; and handling problems and/or complaints quickly and within the team' (Carpenter, 2011, p.103). Falconer demonstrated all of these and most have been disclosed throughout this chapter. Carrying two hats – project manager, and team member – she was firm but always encouraging. Vital to this approach is being accessible, but 'being there when needed and being there all the time are very different things' (Taylor, 2012, p.92) – the project manager should be reachable in a controlled manner. Expressing her availability, Falconer also deferred conversation to a time or place more appropriate, and thus maintained control over meeting productivity. This was particular so for when technological matters required in-depth discussion with the designer and necessary contractor.

The most important people-centric element for an effective team however, and doubly so for the museum environment, is the necessary 'customised love' (Taylor, 2012, p.88), or respect, given to each individual. This was certainly true of the Museum exhibition project team, with Falconer needing to identify and tailor-make interactions for individual variety within the team. I myself operate in a systematic way, and so Falconer ensured I could see all the process steps of a particular task which best suited my working style. By striving to ensure productive management of individual members, Falconer pursued greater team working efficiency.

Essential to meeting management is keeping on top of the 'health of the process' (McKenna-Cress and Kamien, 2013, p.33). A healthy process ensures productive meetings with members well-informed, a process adequately

documented with appropriate dissemination of decisions, and usefully keeping parties in the loop and at the right times. Vital to this is continual evaluation. Falconer frequently checked how the process was working with the team and tweaked accordingly. Consequently the meeting evolved into two phases – the core team to begin with, then the wider team (including contractors) joining half way through for the second phase. For the later phase, she would begin the meeting with health and safety matters – a growing organisational concern for any environment, let alone project spaces. Also, as workloads increased towards installation, Falconer dedicated the start of meetings for the graphic designer allowing her leave to continue a mounting workload. A structured yet fluid meeting process more often than not tasks progressed and decisions were made – never was a meeting without some task progression.

The ultimate measure of meeting health is when members leave satisfied their voices were heard and progress made, and this was evident from positive behaviour observed upon meeting conclusion and from comments after. Team members commonly left in high spirit, and on occasion the excitement from achieving a milestone was observed. One such occurrence followed the team approval of all graphic design content (including samples) and the push towards graphic production. This appeared a huge relief to much of the team (including myself), where a reasonably lengthy text and graphic development was completed and was a result the team was clearly happy with. Falconer's productive handling of this process and the subsequent celebration of the milestone was appreciated by the team.

Within the meetings, members contributed equally to all aspects of the project and the wellbeing of the team. This owes much to the relationships already forged between the team, and also the underlying light-heartedness facilitated throughout the meetings by Falconer. Often she would draw attention to humorous moments that had occurred over the week, and would allow the jovial conversation to continue until deeming it important to progress with the meeting. This banter and conversation is symbolic of a well-working team functioning in a comfortable environment (Genoways and Ireland, 2003, p.63) – an environment Falconer was committed to facilitate. She was, and is, always

conscious of the benefits to having 'fun', including the need for the project experience to also be an enjoyable one for herself (Taylor, 2012).

### More than the sum

The exhibition team is 'more than the sum of individual parts' (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.60). A good team is not just about right skills, but also 'right levels of enthusiasm and energy' (Taylor, 2012, p.85). Team 'synergy and dynamics determine working style' and the 'ability to complement and inspire one another is essential' (Houtgraaf and Vitali, 2008, p.60). Thus, the ability of the project manager to drive and inspire a team through achievable tasks and schedules, and using clear concise communication in a positive, energetic and shared meeting environment, is paramount to the exhibition project.

The effective project manager is one skilled in effective interaction and communication, and with the ability to use a mixture of tools to customise approaches to different team members while ensuring the highest productivity of the team. This is no easy task and is why the project manager is the ideal candidate to lead the team, especially in meetings. They are aware of the project's goals, budget and schedules, drive the team through milestones, and celebrate achievements.

Ultimately, customising communication and the *love* (as Taylor (2012) suggests) or respect given to different individuals, not only gave a sense of worth to exhibition participants and to their tasks, but ensured participants worked to effective levels themselves. Seeing participants as each unique and essential contributors to the project is key to a continual successful project programme and doubly key to the project manager role within museums.

### **Weathering agents of the future**

Although an increasing discipline, project management practice can still be an uncomfortable fit for those museums without a project specialist and particularly

so for a sector characterised by learning, research, cultural heritage and artistic exploration (Carpenter, 2011, p.16). Project managers are likely to come from middle management and have professional or curatorial rather than management backgrounds (p.16). As with any role, there are common pitfalls to contend with and McKenna-Cress and Kamien (2013) identify just a few for the project manager. These include tasks given to and overwhelming an existing role, to someone inadequate in skill, or where someone experienced uses subjectivity to shape decisions (p.33). The first adds weight to the Museum's decision for a new role as opposed to elevating an existing staff member. Therefore, and to reiterate Lord, Lord, and Martin (2012), a professional museum planner, who 'understands both museology and building processes' is essential (Carpenter, 2011, p.12).

In addition, for a better 'fit', skills and practices need to grow organically from professional knowledge and experience within the sector (Carpenter, 2011, p.16). Project management needs to be demystified and developed to fit organisational cultures and realities (p.16). Further, projects require a disciplined framework that provides rather than relies on heroic leadership and luck, yet these frameworks should be applied with discretion and common sense. People, not frameworks or processes, deliver projects (Young, 2008, p.21).

Existing components critical to achieving project success will continue to be essential in the future museum hillside with the need for competent project managers and a team possessing the appropriate social and technical ability, necessary authority, and efficient working relationships (Young, 2008, p.21). Of increasing importance is establishing a trust-rich environment. 'Cultivating trust is the key to developing effective teams and productive work environments' (Genoways and Ireland, 2003, p.63). The modern project manager must also evolve from the SMART philosophy (Smart, Measurable, Agree upon, Realistic, Time-bound) to be SMARTER, a philosophy stating a project should now also be Ethical and Resourced (Clark-Craig, 2012, loc.160). Further, a successful museum (or any business) of the '21st century recognises the value of niche project managers working under a supportive executive that has a foundation

of project core skills' (Taylor, 2012, loc.530). This emphasises how having such project skills filtered throughout the museum environment, and especially from the top of the organisation, is beneficial to ensure project success.

Tamsin Falconer believes she'll continue to grow as a project manager. Her advice for others is to seek out people with the experience desired then respect, listen, and pay attention to how they operate. Also pay attention to what motivates people –

[...] how they think, what's a success for them, what's their preferred communication style and using those, not to manipulate them, but to make things easier for you and for them. Which can help with team conflict situations as well. You try to get people to communicate with others on their terms. People are people. If they're having a shitty day for whatever reason, that influences how the project goes. Sometimes you can help with it. Sometimes you can't but if you don't know any of it, there could be trouble (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2).

This aspect of continual learning is essential. Project managers often transition from one project to another, and even from one organisation to another. The ability to do this quickly and efficiently is one definable quality of a project manager and their ability to learn and grow their skill-set from project to project sets them apart. *Death and Diversity* was Falconer's first project and the current capital development project will not be her last. She will 'closeout' and take the lessons learnt from this project into the next, and this activity may be the most important milestone of the entire project. Achieving this in a 'correct and complete manner' and making the most of any learning opportunities is vital, including finding out the unknown unknowns, conducting a full retrospective review and gathering input from others (Taylor, 2012, p.102-104). Ultimately it is worthwhile for project managers to reflect on this well-known maxim at the end of each project:

You know what you know, you know what you don't know, you know now what you didn't know you know; and you know at least a little more about what you didn't know that you didn't know (Taylor, 2012, p.104).

## Summary

Project managers are the key and necessary advocate of the project. They have responsibility for ensuring the project team produces the best product possible within time and budgetary limits, and are adept at operating like a facilitator. Desired traits are numerous and project managers use various 'tools' in their 'toolkits' to achieve project completion, but keys to success include effective financial management, time management, and human management (pers. comm., Mason, 2014) with communication of the utmost importance. It is 'generally accepted that a completely successful project satisfies all its stakeholders' (Lock, 2013, p.7), and this includes the project manager themselves.

Project management and project managers are essential in a world becoming more complex. Falconer however feels this is a consequence of our own actions – 'sometimes we make it more complex than it needs to be', citing health and safety as an example. 'Before, people would have just got on with it'. [Now] there's a level of documentation required. Fundamentally, is it changing what we're all doing?' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Regardless, the skillset of project managers enable them to be the best practitioners to oversee complex project work. This is despite occurrences where non-project specialists have obtained skills from non-project-specific roles. Falconer commented on much project management being 'conducted that's not necessarily called that'. While working for a project manager early in her career, Falconer was doing 'much more of what you would think as project management than what was in his [job]' (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

Project managers have increased in presence throughout both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. With the increase in project-related work within museums, practitioners with the appropriate skill are increasingly essential to undertake such work. Understanding both museology and building processes, is no doubt of great benefit. Falconer believes having skills in project management is important in a museum setting, but having a specific role is dependent on museum scale and objective. Her growth within the institution

was important for the Museum. Brett Mason adds, 'now that we've seen what is achieved with one in place, [there's] realisation that even on our scale it makes sense to have someone dedicated to these resources' (pers. comm., Mason 2014).

Through observation of Falconer during project meetings at Museums Wellington it is clear how a project manager can use various tools in their toolkit to manage people and situations. Having participated in this process, I can attest to the value of structure not only placed upon the project but within meetings. Further, the museum project leader requires the ability to manage creativity and foster inspiration. If not managed and led satisfactorily, creativity can 'either destroy or enhance the person's and organisation's performance' (Kliem, 2014, preface). 'Although a museum exists to collect, preserve and interpret things, it is the staff that are the museum's most valuable asset' (Genoways and Ireland, 2003, p.39) and 'despite the best intentions and group processes, conflict in museums is inevitable' (p.67). Managing this is extremely important and 'problem solving through compromise and collaboration is the most effective response' (p.69). This is where the project manager, in particular, their skill-set and personality, are essential for the museum sector. Necessary is the need to 'identify ways to capitalise on creative talents and manage in a way that not only achieves project vision but that exceeds expectations' (Kliem, 2014, preface). Kliem adds that 'companies that fail to embrace the importance of creativity often discover themselves lacking the ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic changing economy'. 'Like energy, it is in everyone but is largely untapped' (preface).



## CHAPTER SIX

### Summary and discussion

#### *Peering into the cliff face*

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#### Introduction

People, not frameworks or processes deliver projects (Young, 2008, p.21).

The value of project management to organisations undertaking project work is immense. Yet, the project management profession is still relatively young and little research has been conducted into this practice in New Zealand. Further, from minimal avenues of museum literature and resource in this field, it is unclear how effective project management, and subsequently the project manager, is in developing exhibitions. It was this gap in knowledge that this study aimed to address.

In an exploration of this practice and role during museum exhibition development, this study concentrated on four primary questions: how has project management developed within the museum sector and how is project management perceived in contemporary practice; what tools do project managers utilise to realise exhibition completion; how much of an influence does the thinking and skill-set of the project manager influence exhibition success; and how do project managers interact with others in their working environments and what mechanisms do they enact to ensure efficient teamwork?

For this investigation a variety of qualitative research methods were used: an examination of the wider context of project management and the project manager role based on the literature; a retrospective case study on the *Death and Diversity* exhibition at the Wellington Museum (formerly Museum of

Wellington City & Sea); and an ethnographic study on the Museum's project manager.

The Wellington Museum case study was central to this thesis. It focused on the process of project management during the development of *Death and Diversity*, an exhibition that opened at the Museum in 2011. This environment offered a valuable opportunity to assess the effects and attributes of project management. At this time, the Museum established an inaugural project role for the exhibition's development, and then retained that role for a significant museum-wide development currently underway. The environment prior to, during, and after the introduction of this role formed the basis of this study.

Keddie (in Jupp, 2006) states that case studies are valuable in providing examples of a current social phenomenon (p.21-22). The Wellington Museum case was a qualitative investigation into such a phenomenon – a practical example of project management operating within a museum environment. Despite the inability for comparative analysis owing to the single study, the full portrayal of the case, depth of investigation, interviewing and document research, and the rigour of analysis, aimed to satisfy thesis objectives. My close association with the institution enabled an easier transition of information and data gathering, and although retrospective, the case was a recent occurrence that connected to the project environment currently existing within the Wellington Museum.

The ethnographic component of this study involved a three-pronged approach. The first was open in-depth interviewing where my rapport with the subject enabled insight into their professional life and growth. The second research method was a participant interview where both subject and I recounted and relived a particular experience that occurred during the case study. The last method was participant observation of the interaction between the project manager and the project team during eight project meetings. Over this period, I noted comments and behaviour of all participants as well as reflected afterward on my own involvement in the process.

Throughout the research, it was important to work reflexively to avoid bias and tension. This was owing to my role as an inside researcher – i.e., conducting research within my own working organisation and with colleagues and senior management. I managed this with constant reflection and consideration of my influence. I also reinterpreted the data gathered after initial interpretation as a measure of maintaining critical analysis.

Finally, throughout this thesis, the use of a geological metaphor has attempted to offer the reader a comparable, and perhaps more familiar, explanation of the concepts regarding project management and the relationship to museums. I've drawn an analogy between the museum environment and a coastal hill where facets of the process of project management and the project manager role can be compared to facets of weathering systems operating on hill environments. At times during writing, the metaphor became lost in translation, but through revisions, the analogy has been made clearer for purposes of reader legibility and understanding.



**Figure 6.1**  
*The completed Attic exhibition floor, Wellington Museum, 2015.*  
*Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

## Hillsides and weathering

A coastal hillside environment can be compared to the environment of any institution, including museums. This landscape has developed over time through a succession of geological layers, which have formed atop one another from varying mechanisms and have been shaped by the surrounding environment. Through time, these layers have continued to develop and reflect events and environments in history. Simultaneously, another phenomenon has been in operation – weathering. Weathering is ‘the chemical alteration and mechanical breakdown of rock materials during exposure to air, moisture, and organic matter’ (Skinner and Porter, 1992, p.557). Depending on multiple geological and atmospheric variables, weathering has the potential to greatly alter or erode the geological makeup of any natural landform. Thus, this evolving hillside environment can be likened to the evolving structure of a museum, and the process of weathering can be likened to that of project management.

There is an evident relationship between project management and museums. Project management is increasingly desirable to museums for a variety of reasons and in a global economy it is project management that makes these organisations more competitive. Part of being competitive is being relevant – a must for museum survival – and key to remaining relevant is undertaking project work. With museums pressured more than ever to justify operation and expenditure, project management methodologies have become, and continue to become, ever appealing.

Providing a valuable means to accomplish capital works in museums, project management also aids exhibition development and delivery. Increases in complexity through all facets of exhibition development have warranted this need. Project management ensures development follows a successful systematic format regardless of exhibition variety. Although many museums conduct project work however, not all can or choose to engage with project managers for exhibition development.

The Wellington Museum has evolved through valuable exposure to project management. Prior to 2011, Museums Wellington (the business unit beneath the WMT responsible for the management and operation of the Wellington Museum) had undertaken a variety of significant projects including heritage conservation and renovation of the Wellington Museum (1999), the Cable Car Museum (2000) and Nairn Street Cottage (former Colonial Cottage) (2002)<sup>31</sup>. These projects involved external project organisations yet another project – rehousing the Collection Store – saw an existing manager assigned the task owing to a connection to the project. Exhibition projects were achieved either in-house by existing staff or, again, contracted externally – the size and scope of the exhibition determined which path was chosen. Of note here is the number of projects conducted without a project manager or by people without the project manager title.

Establishing the project manager role in 2011 occurred despite a successful exhibition programme prior. Regardless of past success the Museum incorporated such a role and it is apparent this introduction was not solely for exhibition purposes, but for wider reach into the Museum's future project aspirations. Having witnessed project management in the past, the organisation appreciated the potential of a role housed within. Prior to *Death and Diversity*, there was little justification for it. This may be the harsh reality of most modern day museums – recognising the value of project management but not having the knowledge or means to conduct it. This highlights another essential and existing relationship associated with this study – that between project management and project managers.

Environmental conditions at the Museum during 2011 enabled such justification. Aside from continued exhibition development and the filling of an organisational void, the Museum had an extensive museum-wide development project on the horizon. Exhibition development for *Death and Diversity* was just the starting point for the Museum's newly established project role, and new

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<sup>31</sup> The Cottage has also undergone recent earthquake strengthening and is currently in the midst of a rejuvenation of exhibition spaces.

recruit, Tamsin Falconer. The Museum slowly progressed Falconer through development of *Death and Diversity* towards the larger project goal ahead, and overseeing this exhibition development enhanced her knowledge, skillset and understanding of the Museum environment as intended.

Falconer was absent from the initial planning of *Death and Diversity*, and the challenges that arose during exhibition development may have been mitigated or foreseen if Falconer had been present from the project's inception. Many project management sources advocate for a project manager presence at the onset of any project. Notwithstanding, instilling project management principles upon her arrival, Falconer managed the development process through extensive planning including itemising and prioritising phases, milestones and tasks, and managing direction and decisions (Chapter 4, p.57-59). In doing so, she filtered the complexities of the project into a system more efficiently managed and controlled. She also dedicated much time to managing resource, a core component of project management in ensuring schedules were kept and progress maintained (Chapter 4, p.61-68). Aside from time and financial management, control over human resources (partners, contractors and staff) was essential for the museum environment. So too was risk management and continual problem solving, evident in the development of the exhibition's central feature, the *Memory Tree* (Chapter 4, p.81-84). Rising confusion over who was driving design led Falconer to take over design responsibility. In making that decision, she increased her skillset and knowledge further, and despite the challenge, this aspect remains her fondest exhibition task to date and especially so considering its overwhelming success.

*Death and Diversity* also subtly exemplified the tension that can be present in exhibition development. It appeared there was an underlying level of tension, generated from anxiety, stress and burn out. The latter was an observation from the director regarding the resignation of the exhibitions and public programmes developer shortly after exhibition closure. The demands and stresses of the initial exhibition development, the sensitive and heavy topic of death, and the complexities of community relationship management, may have contributed to this. Falconer's late introduction to the role, combined with her inexperience in

both project management and museum institutions, may have also been a factor. Managing tension is a key component of the project manager role. A project specialist who also specialises in exhibition development, a unique activity in museums, may have been more effective in managing this tension. This is an attribute Falconer has now learnt through experience. Effective management of team dynamic and tension is a key element to project success.

The *Death and Diversity* exhibition project was regarded as successful on many levels. This included meeting project requirements such as deadlines and budget, and meeting exhibition requirements such as visitation, popularity, positive community relationship building, and other exhibition objectives. It is possible the Museum may have reached the same successful result without a project manager. But by focusing on project management methodology, the Museum ensured exhibition objectives were not only met but also exceeded. Following a well-structured and efficient process ensured a higher chance of completion and success.

A final essential component of the project process is project reflection and evaluation, which informs all future projects. Led by the exhibitions and public programmes developer, the Museum compiled a team report for dispersal to senior management and the WMT Board. This was neither an intensive nor extensive document however and focused little on the project's process. Along with an absence of any application of visitor studies during or following exhibition closure, the Museum missed incorporating components considered by many sources to be vital in exhibition development, no less project management. This may provide another example where the initial inexperience of Falconer was exposed, but where her capability for learning since then (with institutional encouragement), has benefited the current development. Falconer is presently leading progress into visitor research and project reporting. It appears the experience she has gained at the Museum since 2011 is driving the larger development currently underway.

That current project is designed to aid the Museum's aspirations of continually adapting to meet the needs of its communities. The extensive project includes

an entire building upgrade, a new exhibition floor, and a rejuvenation of existing exhibitions mixed with new experiences that celebrate the region as well as the city. The overarching objective is to share *more* of Wellington's stories and key to this project has been retaining the project manager role created four years prior.

### **Hillsides and weathering agents**

The weathering agent is the mechanism through which the weathering process occurs. Skinner and Porter (1992) list these as water, ice, acids, salt, plants, animals, and changes in temperature (p.190-200). The agent of focus for this thesis is water, which can impact the surface of the hill through varying intensities of moisture and rainfall, and seep through geological layers. The weathering influence depends upon the force of the water, the structure of the hill, and how porous the stratigraphic layers are. Project managers operate in a similar way. Infiltrating the museum environment, the project manager seeps throughout the organisation and their influence is dependent upon the project manager (skills and experience), the institution (environment), and the project (scale, type and requirements). This thesis examined the practice and value of this profession at one institution, Museums Wellington.

In an ever-complex world, modern day museums are in a state of constant change. Change brings projects, projects bring project management, and the project management profession has become an appealing prospect for many institutions. Project managers are increasingly essential as key project advocates, and have the appropriate authority and responsibility (and accountability) for all aspects of a project in achieving specific objectives. Operating as a facilitator rather than ultimate leader is key to the role, particularly during exhibition development. Further, museums often function with less than desirable resources so management of the exhibition process is vital not only financially, but in people management too. Museums can consist of individuals with unique and varied personalities, roles and agendas. Bringing this and all other project aspects together to create meaningful visitor

experiences is an organisational and creative requirement of the museum project manager.

Although difficult to assign a common skill-set that fits all, there are certain traits essential for the modern project manager. Figure 5.3 (Chapter 5, p.104) highlighted these traits under group headings of knowledge and understanding, skills and experience, and attributes. For Museums Wellington, it was museum need and the situation surrounding the Wellington Museum's project programme, which identified sought after traits. Falconer's moderate experience and broad knowledge of both project management and museology formed the basis for her successful candidacy. It was however, her personable skills that were the defining factor – indicative of which traits were considered essential to the Museum's vision.

Throughout her professional career, Falconer has grown as a project manager through a variety of project and non-project specific experiences. This is despite any project specific qualification. With many formal qualifications and training resources available today, a common source for debate is whether qualification or experience is more valuable for the role. For Falconer, project experience is vital, yet anyone can obtain project skills from non-project-specific roles. For the Museum, a mixed skillset was essential with institutional growth towards the impending capital development paramount.

That project is currently underway. Consequently Falconer is now connected to almost every department within the Museum. The benefits of her adoption into the Museum in 2011 are now evident. Despite her comment that a lot of project management is common sense, having an understanding of project management formalities is essential. Now more than ever, it is critical for a project to succeed and with a high level of certainty. Project managers are well suited for this task and pressure.

Considering success, there are many factors necessary in this pursuit. Some key aspects exposed in this study included: being productive and exercising effort where it matters; extensive and exhaustive planning; tailored and clear

communication; appropriate time and financial management; continual problem solving with foresight for project completion; scheduling and celebrating milestones; continual risk management; and human management. There are of course many other factors. A current focus however, is in the effectiveness of project managers. Adding the term *effective* to all aspects emphasises, among other things, a need for project managers to 'fit' organisations and to tailor the process depending on museum need and surrounding environment, method of operation, and people and practices within.

My observation of project meetings within the Wellington Museum offered insight into project manager interactions and thus insight into this concept of effectiveness. Essential from the start is team knowledge and clearly instilling project attractiveness, roles, objectives and schedules. Falconer's previously obtained knowledge of the Museum and its participants made this process more effective. She usefully organised and managed the team by being: driven but respectful and empathetic; organised but flexible; firm but encouraging; controlling but open to collaboration and shared responsibility; risk averse but able and willing to problem solve; and by maintaining an enjoyable environment throughout the process.

Throughout the period of participant observation, two aspects appear most essential; effective communication (interface management), and being people centric. Customising communication and management style for different individuals, not only gave a sense of worth to participants and their tasks, but also ensured they worked effectively themselves. The key was in knowing the team, institution, and environment – valuable knowledge Falconer acquired from her first introduction to the Museum.

### **Important to museum hillsides**

The need for project managers in exhibition development was an underlying argument of this study. The Wellington Museum, and wider Museums Wellington and Wellington Museums Trust, had conducted a variety of projects

– some in-house – from which we can determine that organisations *are* able to undertake projects without project manager input or expertise. Falconer feels having a specific role is dependent on museum scale and objective. For Brett Mason, Museums Wellington Director, the role is valuable regardless of institution size, especially seeing how well it worked for *Death and Diversity* and for capital development since. With increases in museum project-related work, practitioners with appropriate skill are increasingly essential and an understanding of both museology and project management is preferable.

Project managers use various tools in their toolkit to manage people and situations during a project. Managing people is vital for the sector as creative variation sets museums apart. Project leaders must manage this creativity and foster inspiration, as Genoways states, staff are the ‘museum’s most valuable asset’ (2003, p.39), and to re-emphasise Young, ‘people, not frameworks or processes deliver projects’ (2008, p.21). Falconer notes the value of the open and creative philosophy immediately evident upon her arrival. This encouraged her to think constructively in handling creativity within the team (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Necessary is the need to ‘identify ways to capitalise on creative talents and manage in a way that not only achieves project vision but that exceeds expectations’ (Kliem, 2014, preface). A project manager with an understanding of people and creativity is paramount. Thus, project managers involved in museum exhibition development are both unique and essential for an equally unique museum environment.

Despite project management practice still being an uncomfortable fit for many, museum reliance on project work will continue to increase and components critical to achieving project success will remain. While many overseeing projects are still likely to be without project management backgrounds, there is an increasing need for competent project managers. There is also a need for organic growth of skills and practices from professional knowledge and experience sector-wide, and for frameworks applied with discretion and common sense. Further, the future museum must recognise the value of niche project managers working for, with and amongst others who also have core project skills.

For Museums Wellington, the role looks certain to remain – in some form at least – following the current development. Brett Mason acknowledges there is always a project to conduct in some form, and considering the Trust’s continued intentions, this looks likely. The Trust’s mission enables a focus on developing new experiences across its portfolio and this ensures the Museum is able to continue exploring a project programme well into the future. As for Falconer, she has a desire to remain with the Museum and in a project capacity. She will continue to grow within the profession, as a weathering agent strengthens within the hillside, and advises most of all, to pay attention to what motivates others. ‘People are people’, she reiterates, supporting Young (2008) in the epigram for this chapter, and noted how *their* day can influence the project (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 2). Perhaps a project manager’s best quality is efficiently transitioning between projects and between organisations while growing their skill-set. Making the most of such learning opportunities is vital to project manager growth, and thus continued effectiveness.

Taylor (2012), asks whether ‘project management [is] no longer a niche capability but a core skill for [all]?’ (loc.500). His question is curious. If so, will the future professional have core skills of project management similar to today’s professional with core computer skills? For now, the project manager profession is too valuable for museums to ignore and should remain an important consideration; at least that is, until the museum hillside evolves once more.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Conclusion

#### *The built landscape*

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Managing large, complex projects with substantial risk, diverse stakeholders, a geographically distributed team, multiple constraints and high stakes is best reserved for experts (Taylor, 2009, loc.522).

From the beginning of this thesis, I asked the reader to envisage an old coastal hill weathered through years of environmental activity, and featuring a multitude of geological rock layers exposed in a cliff-face. The hill was representative of an exhibition landscape and the cliff-face exposed many components, layers, and meanings. That hillside was also representative of the entire museum landscape with the cliff-face exposing structural and organisational development. Evident from the bottom-most layer to the upper-most, the hill (and museum) has developed through a process of systematic steps and is fractured throughout with a variety of elements formed by various forces. As an exhibition, the hillside has developed like an exhibition project, and as a museum, the hillside has developed like a project programme

Consider many of those individual layers as a variety of projects constructed at varying times in history. Some of these are minuscule while others are extensive and stretch across the entire horizontal plane of the museum landscape. Some layers are exhibitions, and these layers have been key contributors in the institution's formation. Like a coastal hillside, the museum keeps evolving and growing with new layers above and eroding layers below. This is the landscape of the modern day museum.

Looking at the upper layers of the museum hillside the newer project components are more structured and intricate than those below. This suggests a recent system has created these project layers and that system is project management. The relationship between this phenomena and the museum landscape is increasingly important in the modern world. Further, forces

operating throughout the hillside, such as temperature and pressure, can be likened to those affecting the museum sector. One force in particular creeps throughout the museum and can connect, mould, and potentially erode, the layers within. This is the weathering agent of water, or for purposes here, the project manager. As project management methodology and practice is increasingly important in cultural institutions, so too is the relationship between such practice and the project manager. In addition, looking down the coastline one could assume all hill structures are geologically alike. But the museum hillside is different. It is a complicated variety of components, resources and above all, participants. Although project managers are known to move from project to project, organisation to organisation, the project manager within a museum context is unique. This relationship between project manager and museum is perhaps the most essential of all.

These relationships have been investigated throughout this thesis. Similar to the geological relationships existing throughout a coastal hillside, the relationships existing between museum, project management and the project manager are dynamic and essential to the project goals of the museum. To highlight this dynamism in one museum environment, I attempt to connect the three elements of 'museum', 'project management' and 'project manager' into one framework (p.151) that identifies the essential aspects between each element as they operate within this one museum environment. The aim of this framework is to establish the vital components that lead to project success, and thus support the thesis argument that the project manager (and their effectiveness) is an essential component to exhibition development success.

Before drawing conclusions however, it is important to note difficulties I encountered in maintaining critical analysis. Throughout this process, I strived to conduct research through a mode of reflexively. This was to avoid bias and tension owing to my role as an inside researcher. I aimed to assert constant reflection and reinterpretation of the data gathered and the importance of mitigating potential tension became increasingly evident. Upon reflection now, I may have inadvertently missed or refrained from asking a line of questioning or following opportunities that would have fleshed out valuable data for this

study. I recognise the value of further research conducted by an independent researcher. Upon further reflection it may be possible that the participants of this study refrained from disclosing sensitive material seeking to avoid generating tension themselves. I have nothing to base this on apart from a feeling that although, as an inside researcher, I was able to produce a candid, free-flowing interview environment, sensitivities between our relationships subconsciously and inadvertently may have hindered data gathering. Thus the greatest advantage to this case of working as an inside researcher also appeared to be this case's weakness, and any conclusions drawn must consider these points as influences.



**Figure 7.1**

*The completed exterior of the Bond Store redevelopment, Wellington Museum, 2015.  
Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

## **Building storeys and stories**

This study set out to address four primary questions. These are outlined in the following sections. Through these questions the thesis aimed to argue that project management is a valuable means to completing projects within museum institutions and that the presence, and subsequent effectiveness of the project manager, is an essential component to this project success. This role includes overseeing the *building* of museum and exhibition storeys (physically and conceptually) and stories (arrangement and development of). This is the very complicated nature of project work in museum settings, where a project can be both a tangible and intangible entity.

### ***1. How has project management developed within the museum sector and how is project management perceived in contemporary practice***

The lack of pre-existing material surrounding this subject with specific reference to New Zealand, and to museums within New Zealand, made it difficult to detail how project management developed within the New Zealand museum sector. Through internationally focused material, research based on other sectors, and the research conducted for this thesis, the data pointed to generalisations that may be loosely applied to the New Zealand museum sector. Certainly, these points can be attributed to the Wellington Museum – the one museum environment featured as a case study here.

The origin of the project management profession in New Zealand stems from the 1990s, where increases in management and professionalism were evident in organisations throughout society. Subsequent to this increase in management, increases in project work provided a means for organisations to justify existence. With increases in project work, project management evolved into the discipline it is today. Owing to the business focus and complexity in modern-day society, it is reasonable to conclude that project management is increasingly desirable and indispensable across all industries and sectors. Recognising project management methodology can benefit any project, and as a consequence of the ever-increasingly complexities of the museum sector,

project-based work within such environments has likewise increased. In particular, project management is a useful mechanism for exhibition development, which in itself is a complex and growing field' (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.91), and museums must recognise that this process involves a close-knit, interrelated system requiring both broad and precise management protocols.

The Wellington Museum (under management of Museums Wellington – a business unit of the Wellington Museums Trust) has conducted several extensive projects ranging in size and complexity since coming under the Trust in 1995. Museums Wellington has further conducted projects across its portfolio of cultural sites, and therefore is in a good position to comment on the value of project management within their museum setting.

Perceptions of project management both at Museums Wellington and in literature appear positive, although there exist many variations of the practice and role in operation. The former ranges from organisations embracing project management to those conducting projects without following project management methodologies. The latter ranges from specialised project managers to professionals with project management responsibilities but without the project manager title. All participants of this study agreed with the literature that project work was an increasing activity within any organisation let alone museums. Participants also appeared to understand the value in project management with vital aspects including the coordination of the process and enabling mitigation of problems. Above all, the final result was considered paramount. And this is where project management is useful to museum and exhibition developments, as project management methodology drives success.

Wellington Museum's *Death and Diversity* exhibition was one example of this success. Through careful planning and management the exhibition appropriately achieved its objectives of drawing attention to the often-taboo concept of death in regards to how different ethnic Wellington communities approached the concept. It satisfied key sponsors, was seen favourably among visitors and peers alike, and was acknowledged with a Human Rights Diversity

Award. For those represented communities, it also raised awareness about the taboos of death beyond personal experiences and heightened brand awareness of the Wellington Museum, including signalling what the Museum was attempting to achieve among the community.



**Figure 7.2**

*Museums Wellington Director Brett Mason receiving the Diversity Award from Auckland Mayor Len Brown and Human Rights Commissioner Joris de Bres, 2012.  
Sourced from Museums Wellington (permission granted)*

From a project point of view, development of the exhibition was also regarded a success. Complexities and challenges throughout the process were well managed although, as identified in this study, there were elements of the process that could have been better handled if greater project experience was present. As project manager Tamsin Falconer otherwise delivered the exhibition project on time and largely on budget, which are core components of effective project management. As a measure of personal satisfaction however, she replied that ‘there will always be something you struggle with [...] and until it actually opens and is complete, it’s not yet done’ (pers. comm., Falconer, 2014, 1).

Project management is therefore highly regarded as an activity, and as a tool, to accomplish aspirational project goals. Both Falconer and Mason regard this as a necessary mechanism for Museums Wellington and the Wellington Museum to progress into the future, and it is strongly advocated in both museum and project management literature. Yet, adopting project management methodology is no guarantee of project success. Most organisations with project needs, let alone museums, face common challenges when it comes to project management. Owing to this, a museum professional with project management experience is extremely valuable.

## **2. *What tools do project managers utilise to realise exhibition completion***

There are many tools at a project manager's disposal and many of these have been detailed throughout this study. The range of tools available depends upon the individual's knowledge and experience, as well as the environment operating within – in organisational structure and orientation, institutional knowledge and experience, available resources, and staff dynamic. As expressed, no two projects are alike, so it appears experience truly is the predominant factor to assure exhibition success.

In conducting project work, project managers appear the best practitioners in facilitating project management and assuring project completion meets project objectives. In museums, exhibitions need to be well organised to proceed in a systematic and logical manner from start to finish. To Falconer, much of project management is common sense. The value of a project manager to consider projects with such calm and ease is understated here.

Foremost is planning. Falconer factored much of her early time on this, which, although work and time intensive, was worthwhile. A project manager's maximum effort is required at critical project stages and nowhere is this more important than at project beginning. Despite being absent from *Death and Diversity's* initiation, planning enacted upon Tamsin's introduction was immensely valuable.

Another quality is in managing resource. Project management ensures that planning of activities reflects the time required to mobilise required resource (Carpenter, 2011, p.37) and to react promptly and appropriately when not the case. There are many resources project managers have at their disposal but time and money are two of the most important. In particular, financial management is a core activity of the project manager and managing this efficiently is essential to project completion.

The management of human resource is paramount for the museum sector. 'Project inputs and behaviour of all people contributions including project boards and steering groups must be managed to meet specific project timetables and targets (Carpenter, 2011, p.85). Further, project managers are often responsible for managing multi-stakeholder partnerships and this is essential in public service and academic institutions for any project. While internally, Falconer used her skillset to monitor and resolve tension between team members, *Death and Diversity* also involved a number of partners and stakeholders, which increased project complexity and required a greater amount of time and attention to detail.

Above all, project management is about risk management. Like environmental processes acting upon a coastal landscape, all projects are about changing something, and all change incurs risk. The project manager is necessary to manage any project's exposure to risk, probability of specific risks occurring and potential impact if they do. The predominant risk for *Death and Diversity* involved planning a public programme to coincide with installation and opening. Owing to timing and spatial constraints, installation was affected and delayed, but by foreseeing this, Falconer was able to plan alternative measures.

Most of the tools identified in this study can be attributed to any project. But the museum environment requires an emphasis on tools associated with cultural institutions that consider creativity and a variety of creative participants and partners. As complexities continue to increase in society and in business environments, the tools available to project managers will likely evolve to meet

requirements. With the increase in museum practitioners within the sector, and with project management being an area of study for some qualifications it is reasonable to conclude that there will be more and more professionals in the sector knowledgeable of the practice and therefore able to conduct project management to some level of success. It could also be argued that with the increase in project managers throughout all sectors, museums are better placed to employ specialists from outside the museum environment. As highlighted throughout this thesis however, what is of benefit is a professional skilled or at least experienced in both disciplines, for a project manager with the right ability is beneficial to museum and/or exhibition project delivery and success.

### ***3. How much of an influence does the thinking and skill-set of the project manager influence exhibition success***

Incorporating a project manager raises the chance of exhibition development success, but the level of that success is influenced by their various qualities. This study has detailed many of those necessary, and especially so in a museum landscape. Museums are complicated hillsides, often in a variety of complex settings, undertaking a variety of complex activities, and with and through a variety of complex people. The project manager best suited to this environment is one with not only the right skillset, but mindset.

Undeniably the thinking and skill-set of the person overseeing exhibition development is paramount to the successful undertaking of the process and completion of the project. Recently the term effectiveness has taken an emphasis on project manager working style and ability. Successful exhibition development depends on effective project managers. It is well documented that the wide-ranging knowledge, skills and attributes of this role are important to any project, but it is the effective project manager who ensures a high-level of success. These specialists are proficient at closing out projects to time and budget while uncompromising on quality. They also effectively oversee the project team that may or may not have the right social and technical abilities, necessary authority, and well working relationships. Brett Mason, Museums

Wellington Director, now realises more, the value of a project manager after seeing what is achieved with one in place.

An effective project manager also has the ability to effortlessly transition between projects. This is alongside growing their skill-set to the benefit of all future projects. Likewise, Falconer continues learning. For instance, she now pushes content signoff far earlier than that experienced during *Death and Diversity* and is far more knowledgeable about constraints (both physical and human) existing within the Museum. Her earlier introduction to the Museum emphasises the importance of project managers having an understanding of museum environments.

Desired experience, knowledge and training for a museum project professional is dependent on institutional need. For the Wellington Museum the need was to grow the role with and within the organisation. Prior to 2011, Falconer's path through the discipline was experience-based as opposed to qualification-based and the Museum regarded this as most useful. In addition, her experience in both project management and museums was appealing. Any lacking knowledge could be learnt through the role but essential general management, people and organisational skills were valuable assets rare and vital in leading projects.

With many creative professionals residing within the museum environment, project managers need a firm grasp on the organisation and the sector to effectively work within. Conversely, the qualities of a project manager appear more desirable for complex museum project work over elevating staff members from within (though for smaller projects this appears adequate). Museum project managers are therefore unique, and as mentioned above, one who 'understands both museology and building process, facilities, and staff input into the process' (Lord, Lord and Martin, 2012, p.12) is extremely beneficial.

Considering the increasing justification and challenges facing museums today, museums conducting project work need to ensure the appropriate people are integrated to oversee these activities. Considering this role greatly influences

the outcome of the project, considerable thought is required in selecting someone with the thinking and mindset tailored to that institution. And this includes the ability to effectively manage the human element of the project, a key operational component of museum organisations.

***4. How do project managers interact with others in their working environments and what mechanisms do they enact to ensure efficient teamwork?***

This is where project specialists can excel in this endeavor over other candidates. Always considering risk, team dynamic, and reaching milestones and ultimate project completion, project managers are equipped to understand, appreciate and cater for variations in team working style and needs. This understanding is heightened when there is greater knowledge of the organisation, its direction and culture. A warm and positive personality is key to achieving this. Inspiring and moulding a creative team to lofty goals in an encouraging, open environment, is best achieved from a positive, proactive and likeable project manager, where respect, trust, and confidence are highly valued.

This 'emphasis on human resource is one of several distinguishing characteristics' of the museum environment (Carpenter, 2011, p.16). How project managers interact with others in their social environments and the mechanisms they enact to ensure efficient teamwork is vital to any museum project. Falconer has proven this in her positive interactions with the team. She emphasises the importance of spending quality time on communicating and interacting with others, even if just socially. Her belief that the health of the team directly influences the health of the project is appropriately reflected in the geological hill landscape – a healthy series of layers and undergrowth ensures hill stability, and thus the likelihood of a continuation of healthy layers to come. Such is the same for the museum environment.

The observational aspect of this study unearthed working and practical examples of the various mechanisms used by the Museum's project manager

to motivate and propel the team towards planned outcomes. This careful management and relationship building enabled the team to achieve completion of the project and in a manner that encouraged positive interaction and a positive environment. This in turn enabled timely resolutions when challenges or conflict arose.

The ultimate value of Falconer's museum experience is evident in how she now understands the unique characteristics and unavoidable challenges existing in the museum landscape. Having the foresight to deal with these challenges is essential. Her experience with exhibition development is invaluable too. But most valuable perhaps is not how she understands museums, the building, or even the organisation, but the people connected to and within it. The additional benefit to having worked with and alongside Falconer is that those people now replicate her understanding. Perhaps this is why this relationship, project managers and museums, is the most important of all.

## Building a hillside framework

The three relationships threaded throughout this thesis can be organised into an interconnecting framework (Figure 7.3). Originally, this conceptual framework was designed as a means to assist thesis planning. Evident from this model however, were the interconnecting aspects existing between the elements, their shifting dominance, and how all three elements aspired to the same central goal of project completion and exhibition success.

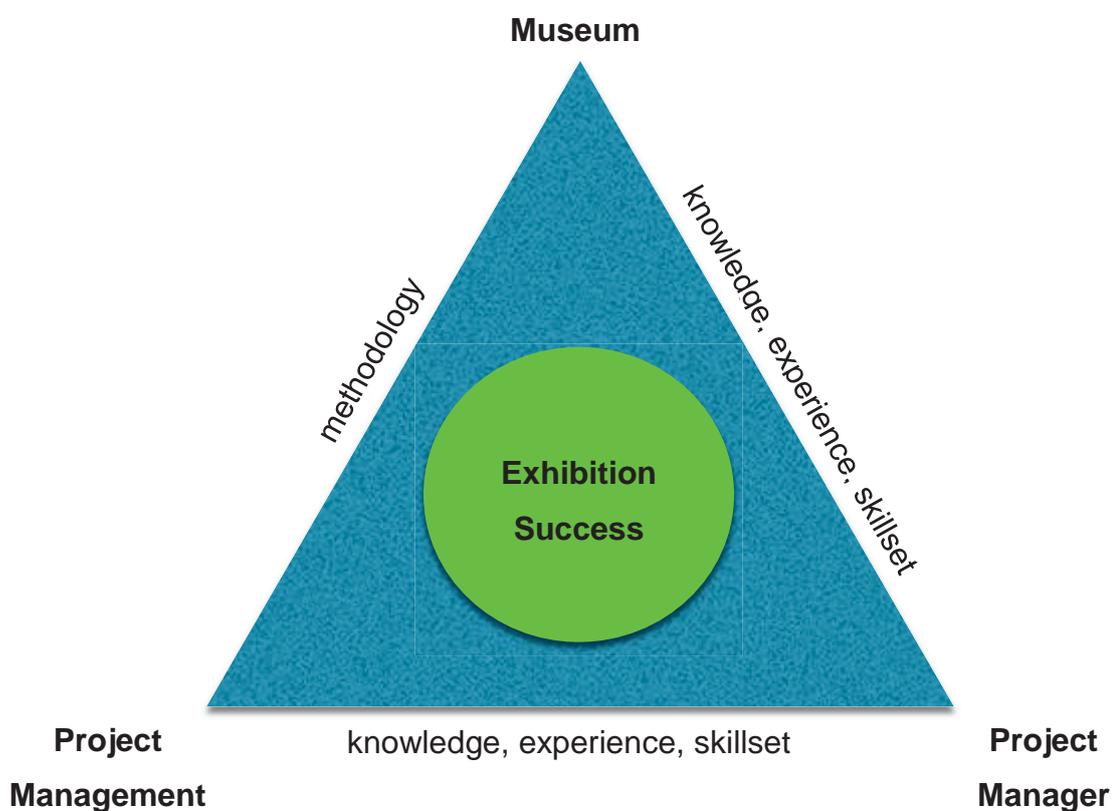


Figure 7.3

*Museum, Project Management and Project Manager Relationship Framework*

If we consider the first relationship, *museums* and *project management*, we see that museums either choose to engage or choose not to engage project management to achieve exhibition project objectives. This appears to be dependent on museum need and the size (and complexity) of the exhibition project. In choosing not to conduct project management, particularly when the project warrants it, the museum risks failing to achieve project completion, as

the development process is not conducted to the structure or quality otherwise instilled with project management. If exhibition completion is achieved on the other hand, the level of that success may not reach the level initially intended. For instance on the framework (Figure 7.3), that success level may only reach the outer extremities of the 'exhibition success' circle, and the museum may (knowingly or unknowingly) be compromising exhibition quality, and opportunity, in getting to the final deadline.

Undertaking project management ensures such risks are minimised and mitigated. It ensures resources, such as time and money, are better and more efficiently managed, subsequently ensuring a greater chance of success. This is not to say that smaller museums without the ability to conduct project management do not achieve exhibition project success. Rather, a higher level of success is guaranteed with the use of project management. Again, this is more important the greater the complexity and stakes of the exhibition project.

But project work can involve many complexities and project management can be a complicated process. Therefore, someone knowledgeable and experienced in project management methodology is best able to drive exhibition projects to their full potential. This highlights the second relationship, between *project management* and the *project manager*. Although this role is not essential to project completion – many museum professionals undertake project-work and/or utilise project skills in their roles – it does ensure, to a greater capability, that the exhibition development process is more efficiently managed towards the anticipated outcome. A knowledgeable and experienced project manager is best able to work the system, manage resource, and react to challenges and risks that threaten the project. The presence of a project manager heightens the odds, and thus level on the framework, of exhibition success.

This is not to say that having a project manager overseeing project work is a guarantee of project success either. Uncontrollable environmental factors (either externally or internally within the organisation), or project manager incompetence, can both contribute to project failure. This includes project

professionals being an inappropriate fit for the organisation. It is therefore essential to have a project manager that not only fits with project requirements but with organisational requirements too. Thus, the third relationship is most important (if not *the* most important) between *museum* and *project manager*. Museums can, and do, undertake project work in-house. Some use aspects of project management and some professionals have project management skill and/or conduct project management if not calling it as such. To re-emphasise the value in the project role however, incorporating a project professional heightens the odds of successful project completion.

Lastly, being knowledgeable and experienced in project management methodology is not enough for some museum environments. As stated throughout this study, such an environment can be extremely complex and diverse in physicality, operation and personnel – the passions of which can often challenge the process. A successful project manager in the museum environment must therefore be an appropriate fit. To drive the museum towards a successful exhibition completion, the professional needs an understanding of museum environments, the sector, museology, and of the creative people often within such environments.

The overall assumption drawn from this framework is that any two of the framework's elements (*museum*, *project management*, and *project manager*), can work in unison to develop exhibitions. Combining all three elements draws the focal (intersection) point closer towards the framework's centre and proximity to the centre correlates to the level of exhibition success. Simply combining all three elements however, does not guarantee the greatest level of exhibition success. Having any one relationship dominant over the others pulls the focal point towards the point of domination. This point can also fluctuate during the exhibition project with any corresponding changes in relationship focus. Therefore, how effectively these three elements, and their relationships, coexist in the museum environment is the ultimate determination of level of exhibition development success. Only the effective balance between all three draws the focal point directly to the absolute centre of the framework.

By analysing these concepts we can make the following conclusion: that project management methodology is an effective mechanism for managing exhibition development in the modern museum; but exhibition project success is more guaranteed with the inclusion of a project manager; and that level of success is determined by the quality of that project manager and how effective they work within the museum organisation. It appears the most essential element here is the project manager. For the museum sector, that individual needs certain skills suitable to the museum environment as well as an understanding of the uniqueness of such environments. In the modern world, museums (hillsides) are constantly involved in change. Change demands projects (weathering), and projects demand project managers (weathering agents).

### **Potential for further investigation**

As identified, the project management profession in New Zealand is still relatively young and little research has been conducted into this practice with specific reference to museums. There is a strong case for continued research in this field, particularly considering the increasing challenges facing contemporary museums. This thesis goes some way to explore the phenomenon operating within one museum environment. Although an in-depth analysis, it is a single study that cannot provide a standard across the profession and sector. Further investigation is therefore warranted.

Research based on multiple cases will provide a greater analysis of project management practice and appropriately apply findings to the wider sector. This could be multiple cases focusing on any of the following: museum project management; museum exhibition project management; exhibitions concerning sensitive topics; or project management within cultural institutions, trust organisations or council controlled organisations. Cases sourced from within New Zealand would be of great value.

A primary objective of this thesis was to study the project manager role and behavior as it was unclear how effective project management, and

subsequently the project manager, was in developing exhibitions. Owing to this, there is value in investigating a case not involving a project manager for comparative analysis. This could add weight regarding the differences and similarities of both operating structures.

Operating and global environments are fluid and prone to change. The Wellington Museum's current focus may not be the focus of the future Museum. Stakeholder and community expectations may also differ. For the foreseeable future, project work is likely to increase, but this may not always be so. It would be interesting therefore to see if the observations made during the course of this study are reflected over time. Revisiting this institution in future years could offer an analysis in any change in attitudes and practices, and on the role and its influence on the organisation.

Finally, the ethnographic component of this study is only a beginning. For a more complete analysis, research would need to follow the subject for their entire professional career. This may not be viable. There is value however in revisiting Tamsin Falconer over the course of her career and analysing her growth and experiences in the field. There may also be the ability to use other ethnographic research methods that provide insight from varying directions and viewpoints.

## At the cliff edge

Taylor (2013) declares that it is a 'fantastic' time to be a project manager. A great network now exists, and 'there have never been so many books, never so many sources of great inspiration and advice', as well as 'social project management communities' (loc.365). Experience is paramount, and entering the field in a controlled way is now not only preferable but the norm: the 'days of being given a project without experience are gone' (loc.99). This statement reflects the situation surrounding the growth of the project manager role at Museums Wellington.

Taylor (2012) further advocates for engaging a project specialist stating that:

[...] project management methodology is a core skill which all managers need to be aware of, but actual project management activity is still the niche capability that requires additional training and experience in order to be successful [...] Managing large, complex projects with substantial risk, diverse stakeholders, a geographically distributed team, multiple constraints and high stakes is best reserved for experts (loc.500-522).

Taylor identifies the need for project management knowledge to be filtered throughout the management structure of any organisation. He acknowledges however, the value in project specialists, and particularly advocates for this specialist when projects are complex.

A key piece of advice emphasised by modern literature and practitioners alike, is to maintain the 'fun' aspect of project management. Falconer strives to apply this throughout her current role. Her demeanor is subtly exposed on the Museums Wellington intranet where she jokingly compares the Museum environment to the Antarctic landscape: 'I have found that the environment at Museums Wellington is not as cold, the people are just as warm and there is a distinct lack of penguins' (Museums Wellington intranet, Falconer, 2013). The organisation may well be lacking in penguins, but the Museum's professionals operate in much the same way. As penguins are vitally important to their ecosystem, museum professionals are equally as vital to the ecosystem of

museum organisations. Therefore, the effective management of exhibition participants, let alone overarching development, is a skill and an art. There are many contributors to bringing exhibitions to fruition, but pulling the pieces together to 'build' them successfully is truly the art form of the museum project manager.

As a lasting thought, I'm drawn back to my past experiences in geology where often I saw cliff-face after cliff-face while knee-deep in water. I see a distinct connection between geological and museological contexts. Those cliffs lying before me are a collection of exhibitions pieced together like the jigsaw within a museum. The size, type, and number of cliffs correspond with the variations in museums. I can't help but think that nature is a project manager overseeing the build of such landscapes – though obviously working to far bigger schedules, deadlines and budgets. I wonder then, if nature could, would she operate as efficiently in overseeing exhibition projects?



**Figure 7.4**

*Coast near Dunedin, 1865, by Nicholas Chevalier. Gift of Mrs Caroline Chevalier, the artist's widow, England, 1912*

*Sourced from Te Papa, 1912-0044-17 (under creative commons license)*



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Observation participants:

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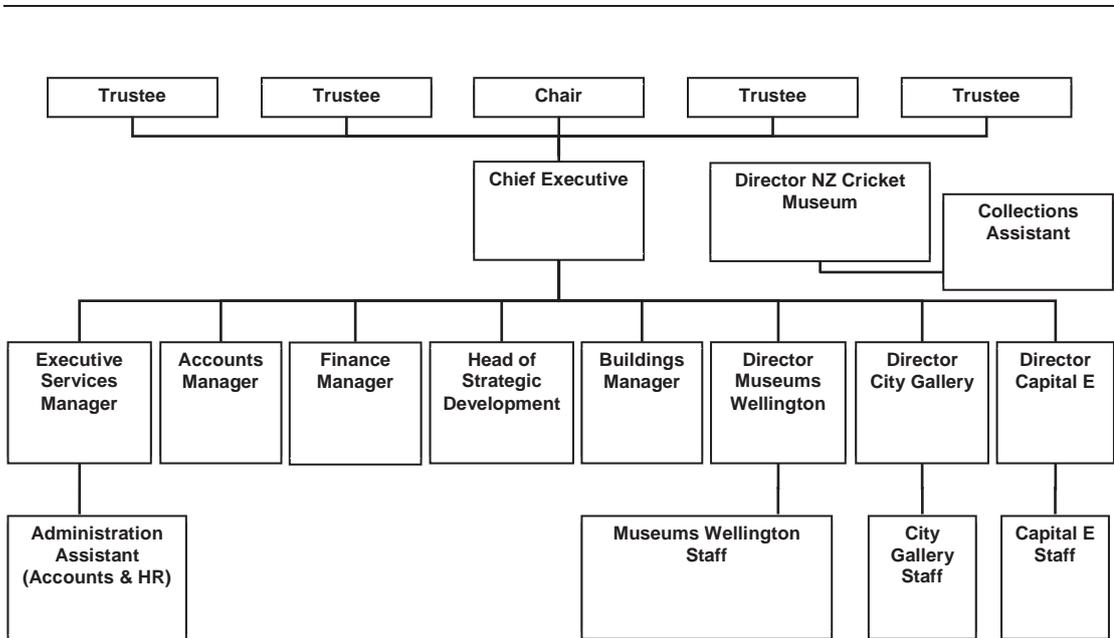
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## APPENDIX A

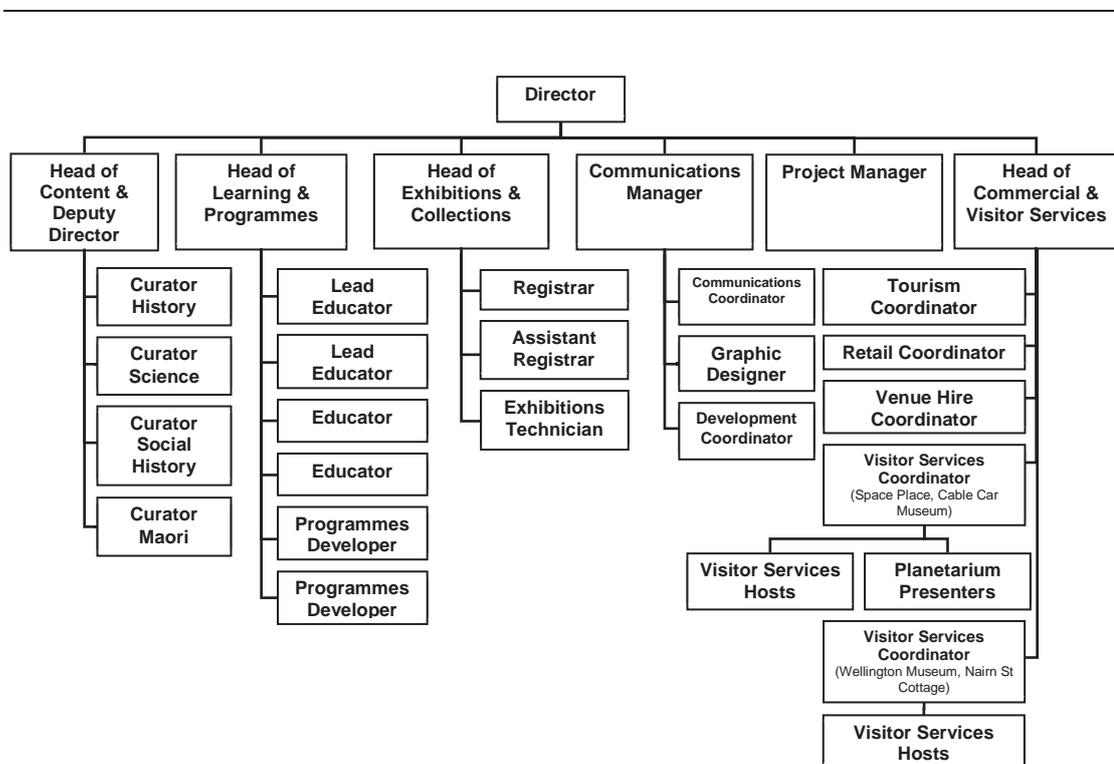
Current Wellington Museum Trust Organisation Chart, 2015

Sourced from the Trust's Induction-Kit document, 2015



Current Museums Wellington Organisation Chart, 2015

Sourced from the Trust's Induction-Kit document, 2015





## APPENDIX B

Death and Diversity Development Timeline/Schedule, 2012

Sourced from Museums Wellington Archives, 2015

DEATH AND DIVERSITY - Development Timeline												Comments
Coordinator	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec			
<b>Community engagement</b>												
Discussions	JK											
Transcriptions	JK											
Writing	JK/PT											
<b>Graphic design</b>												
Graphic identity	JK/Emily											
Sign off graphic identity	PT/BM											
Draft text	JK											
Sign off draft text	PT/BM											
Draft graphic design	Emily/JK											
Sign off graphic design incl final text	PT/BM											
Graphic design production	TF/Emily											May be applied at WkshpE
<b>Construction</b>												
Layout concept	TF/JK/PT											
Confirm budget for construction	TF/WkE											
Developed design	TF/WkE											Objects, graphics, other
Offsite construction	WkE											
<b>Objects</b>												
Draft loan agreement	ST											Review next week
Request objects	JK											
Receive objects	JK/ST/DW											
Select and place objects	JK/PT											
<b>Film</b>												
Confirm films	JK											
Delivery of films	JK/PT/CapE											
Format checked	JK/PT											
<b>Photography</b>												
Confirm photo essays	PT	Done										
Loan/fees agreement for photo essays	PT											
Delivery of photo essays	PT											
Portraits (Pat Shepherd) finalised	JK											
Screens organised	TF/MA											
<b>Audio</b>												
Audio content	JK/CapE											
Delivery of audio	PT/JK											
Equipment organised	TF/MA											
<b>Interactive space</b>												
Confirm design	JK/TF											
Quote for build	TF/WkE											
Select resources	PT											
Purchase resources	JK/PT											
<b>Resource room</b>												
Design	TF											
Select & acquire furniture	TF/MA											
Delivery of Police video	TF											
Request resources from communities	TF											
Move tool room	MA/TF											Alternative location
Fitout	MA/TF											
<b>Education</b>												
Develop ideas	RI/SG											
E-newsletter out to teachers	CH											
?	?											
<b>Voice Arts Trust</b>												
Confirm programme	?											
Rehearsals	?											
Performances												
<b>Public Programme</b>												
Police	?											
? Other events	?											
<b>Marketing</b>												
Deadline for graphic identity	?											Graphic identity confirmed
Update to communities	ky/ch											Twice before exhibition
Public Programme marketing	KY											Lead times?
Sponsorship liaison	KY											



## APPENDIX C

Ethics documentation

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**Massey University**

Te Kunenga ki Pūrehuroa

### NOTIFICATION OF LOW RISK RESEARCH/EVALUATION INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

#### SECTION A:

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**1. Project Title** *Building Stories - the Art of the Project Manager in Museum Exhibition Development: an Analysis on Project Management and the Death and Diversity Exhibition at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea*

**Projected start date for data collection** 1 October 2013 **Projected end date** 1 June 2014

*(Low risk notifications will not be processed if recruitment and/or data collection has already begun.)*

---

#### 2. Applicant Details *(Select the appropriate box and complete details)*

##### ACADEMIC STAFF NOTIFICATION

**Full Name of Staff Applicant/s** .....

**School/Department/Institute** .....

**Region *(mark one only)***

Albany

Palmerston North

Wellington

**Telephone** .....

**Email Address** .....

##### STUDENT NOTIFICATION

**Full Name of Student Applicant** Brent Fafeita

**Postal Address** 161B Grafton Road, Roseneath, Wellington 6011

**Telephone** 022 0378180

**Email Address** [bfafeita@gmail.com](mailto:bfafeita@gmail.com)

**Employer *(if applicable)*** Wellington Museums Trust

**Full Name of Supervisor(s)** Susan Abasa

**School/Department/Institute** School of People, Environment and Planning, Massey University

**Region (mark one only)**      Albany     Palmerston North     Wellington   
**Telephone** 06 3505799      **Email Address** S.F.Abasa@massey.ac.nz

**GENERAL STAFF NOTIFICATION**

**Full Name of Applicant** .....  
**Section** .....  
**Region (mark one only)**      Albany     Palmerston North     Wellington   
**Telephone** .....      **Email Address** .....  
**Full Name of Line Manager** .....  
**Section** .....  
**Telephone** .....      **Email Address** .....

**3 Type of Project (provide detail as appropriate)**

<b>Staff Research/Evaluation:</b>	<b>Student Research:</b>	<b>If other, please specify:</b>
Academic Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Name of Qualification <input type="checkbox"/> MAMS
General Staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Credit Value of Research <input type="checkbox"/>
Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/>	(e.g. 30, 60, 90, 120, 240, 360)

**4. Describe the process that has been used to discuss and analyse the ethical issues present in this project.**  
*(Please refer to the Low Risk Guidelines on the Massey University Human Ethics Committee website)*

1. The course supervisor has instructed the student/applicant in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Training and Evaluations involving Human Participants. In addition, an ethical analysis of the project has also been discussed with the supervisor and all ethical considerations will be adhered to.
2. Material on ethics procedures especially informed and voluntary consent has been documented as part of prior Massey coursework, on STREAM and in assignment instructions.

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## 5. Summary of Project

1. The purpose of this research is to support the project titled *Building Stories - the Art of the Project Manager in Museum Exhibition Development: an Analysis on Project Management and the Death and Diversity Exhibition at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea*, being undertaken by the researcher. The project aims to:
  - Briefly analyse the rise of project management in the New Zealand museum sector, and draw comparisons to such development internationally.
  - Analyse the role of the museum project manager and in particular the unique growth/experience gained from working within the museum sector.
  - Ascertain how project management influences museum exhibition development and whether such application equates to exhibition success.
  - Ascertain whether the corporate project management mould fits well within the museum environment.
2. Method of research used.
  - (a) A series of interviews will be conducted with:
    - The project manager and associated professionals involved with the *Death and Diversity* exhibition at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea.
    - Appropriate and relevant professionals in the museum field.

\*The interviews will be no longer than 60 minutes. Where there is a series of interviews intended, the interviews will be spaced apart to the discretion of the participant.

\*Interview participants will be invited to participate, will receive an information sheet about the project and will be asked to sign an informed consent as well as transcript release form.
  - (b) Literature review and analysis.
  - (c) Investigation of archival sources and material.
  - (d) Other research as and when required.

*(Note: ALL the information provided in the notification is potentially available if a request is made under the Official Information Act. In the event that a request is made, the University, in the first instance, would endeavour to satisfy that request by providing this summary. Please ensure that the language used is comprehensible to all)*

**Please submit this Low Risk Notification (with the completed Screening Questionnaire) to:**

**The Ethics Administrator  
Research Ethics Office  
Sir Geoffrey Peren Building, PN221  
Massey University  
Private Bag 11 222  
Palmerston North**

## **SECTION B: DECLARATION** *(Complete appropriate box)*

### **ACADEMIC STAFF RESEARCH**

#### **Declaration for Academic Staff Applicant**

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. My Head of Department/School/Institute knows that I am undertaking this research.

The information contained in this notification is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Staff Applicant's Signature

Date:

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## STUDENT RESEARCH

### Declaration for Student Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. The information contained in this notification is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

Student Applicant's Signature

Date: 01/10/2013

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### Declaration for Supervisor

I have assisted the student in the ethical analysis of this project. As supervisor of this research I will ensure that the research is carried out according to the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants.

Supervisor's Signature

Date:

Print Name

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## GENERAL STAFF RESEARCH/EVALUATIONS

### Declaration for General Staff Applicant

I have read the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and discussed the ethical analysis with my Supervisor. I understand my obligations and the rights of the participants. I agree to undertake the research as set out in the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants. The information contained in this notification is to the very best of my knowledge accurate and not misleading.

General Staff Applicant's  
Signature

Date:

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### Declaration for Line Manager

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, this notification complies with the Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants and that I have approved its content and agreed that it can be submitted.

Line Manager's Signature

Date:

Print Name

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# *Building Stories* - the Art of the Project Manager in Exhibition Development: an Analysis on Project Management and the Death and Diversity Exhibition at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea

Brent Fafeita (a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Museum Studies, Massey University, New Zealand)  
July 2014

## INFORMATION SHEET

### **Researcher Introduction**

The researcher is undertaking research in accordance for completing a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Museum Studies, Massey University, New Zealand.

In addition to these studies, the researcher has a strong passion for the museum environment and currently works for Museums Wellington. Prior experience within the museum sector includes a small internship at the National Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (plus three years previously with Te Papa) and work on the development and subsequent operation of the Aoraki Mount Cook Trust Museum, Aoraki Mount Cook.

The researcher aims to continue and enhance his career in the museum sector, and in doing so, contribute to museum practice throughout New Zealand.

### **Project Description and Invitation**

Showcasing 'stories' is arguably the core function of the museum. Imagining them within is an art-form of many, but building and realising them is the true art-form of the project manager - an increasingly connected role to and within the museum field. This study will strive to analyse that role and in particular, assess how the personality and skill-set of the project manager influences exhibition success.

This research aims to argue that:

- Project management is essential for modern exhibition development. But;
- The success of museum exhibition development is not just down to effective project management but effective project managers.

In doing so, the research will address three primary questions:

- How project management has developed within the New Zealand museum sector and how project management is perceived in contemporary practice?
- What tools project managers utilise and how much of an influence does the mind and skill-set of the project manager influence exhibition success? And;
- How do project managers interact with others in their social environments and what mechanisms do they enact to ensure efficient teamwork?

To address these questions, the study will utilise a mixture of research methods. One such method involves interviews primarily focused around those involved with the *Death and Diversity* exhibition held at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea, 2010. There may be opportunities to interview others with museum project management experience also.

With this in mind I invite the selected participants to partake in said interviews to aid in the research of the project.

### **Participant Identification and Recruitment**

Participants have been identified owing to their connection to the intended case study as well as their association to either the project management field or museum sector. Further participant names have been acquired from the Museum Studies course coordinator.

No discomforts or risks to participants as a result of their participation are anticipated and all ethical considerations will be strictly adhered to.

### **Project Procedures**

Interviews of no longer than 60 minutes will be conducted (dependent on participant response and time restraints). Interviews will take place at the participants' leisure and at a location of mutual agreement. There are no issues or conflicts of interest anticipated.

### **Data Management**

The use of the data collected from this interview will be for the sole use of this thesis.

### **Participant's Rights**

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study (specify timeframe);
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

### **Project Contacts**

You may contact the researcher and/or supervisor if you have any questions concerning the project or interview.

#### *Researcher:*

Brent Fafeita

ph: 022 0378180

email: [bfafeita@gmail.com](mailto:bfafeita@gmail.com)

#### *Supervisor/course coordinator:*

Susan Abasa

ph: 06 3505799

email: [S.F.Abasa@massey.ac.nz](mailto:S.F.Abasa@massey.ac.nz)

### **Additional Statements**

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 350 5249, email [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz)".

# *Building Stories* - the Art of the Project Manager in Museum Exhibition Development: an Analysis on Project Management and the Death and Diversity Exhibition at the Museum of Wellington City & Sea

Brent Fafeita (a thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Museum Studies at Massey University, New Zealand)  
May 2014

## **PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being recorded.

I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

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**Full Name - printed**

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