

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

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

Master of Arts

In

Museum Studies

At Massey University, Manawatū,
New Zealand

Brent Raymond Fafeita

2016

ABSTRACT

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.

AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous support from Museums Wellington, and overarching Wellington Museums Trust, for enabling me necessary research and writing time, as well as pivotal access to records, imagery and employees.

In particular, Tamsin Falconer (Museums Wellington Project Manager) offered a substantial amount of time and insight into project management practice and the role. As a key figure and contributor, I am indebted to her openness and willingness to participate in this study. Thanks are also extended to Brett Mason (Museums Wellington Director), and the Wellington Museum *Attic* exhibition development/design team for their participation in the observational study.

I wish also to acknowledge the foresight and assistance provided by my supervisor Dr. Susan Abasa (Massey University Museum Studies Programme Coordinator). Her expertise and guidance were central to achieving completion of this study.

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

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.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Reader's note	vi
List of figures	x
Abbreviations	xi

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction – <i>the vista ahead</i>	13
<i>Rationale for this study</i>	15
<i>Aims of this research</i>	16
<i>Structure of this research</i>	17
<i>Research methods</i>	18
<i>Case study</i>	18
<i>Interviews</i>	20
<i>Ethnographic study</i>	20
<i>Document research</i>	21
<i>Ethical conduct of the research</i>	22
<i>Researching as an insider</i>	22
<i>Core argument of the thesis</i>	23

CHAPTER TWO

A survey of literature on project management – <i>in the field</i>	25
<i>Introduction</i>	25
<i>Project management</i>	25
<i>And museums</i>	27
<i>And capital development</i>	28
<i>Summary</i>	29

CHAPTER THREE

Wellington Museum – <i>the hillside</i>	31
<i>Introduction</i>	31
<i>Standing at the cliff edge</i>	32
<i>The hillside</i>	33
<i>The underlying Bond</i>	34
<i>Founding layer</i>	35
<i>First treasure trove</i>	36
<i>Prevailing layers</i>	37
<i>Rich top soil</i>	38
<i>Modern landscaping</i>	41
<i>Reworking the layers</i>	42
<i>Changing composition</i>	43
<i>Weathering</i>	45
<i>Future weathering – the impending development</i>	46
<i>Summary</i>	47

CHAPTER FOUR

Death and Diversity, and project management – <i>layers and weathering</i>	49
<i>Introduction</i>	49
<i>The desirability of project management</i>	51
<i>The approaching storm</i>	51
<i>The museum landscape</i>	52
<i>Storm thirst</i>	55
<i>The weathering agent</i>	57
<i>State of the hillside</i>	60
<i>First weathered layer – ‘Death and Diversity’</i>	61
<i>Project management assists exhibition development</i>	64
<i>Layer formation – managing the process</i>	65
<i>Layer planning</i>	65
<i>Layer cycle</i>	68
<i>Layer decisions</i>	69
<i>Layer reworking – managing the resource</i>	70
<i>Heat and pressure – time and money</i>	71
<i>The rocks – humans</i>	73
<i>Key minerals - staff</i>	76
<i>Layer protection – managing the problems</i>	78
<i>Unseen subterranean fissures – hidden tensions in the team</i>	80
<i>Layer feature – the Memory Tree</i>	81
<i>Project management leads to exhibition success</i>	84
<i>Layer strength</i>	84
<i>Analysing the cliff-face</i>	86
<i>Summary</i>	88

CHAPTER FIVE

Project managers – <i>the evolving weathering agents</i>	91
<i>Introduction</i>	91
<i>From raindrop to stream</i>	93
<i>Raindrop</i>	93
<i>Training</i>	96
<i>Stream</i>	97
<i>The weathering role</i>	99
<i>Vital to the museum</i>	100
<i>Desirable traits</i>	103
<i>Elements for success</i>	105
<i>Mineral assemblages – team meetings (an observational study)</i>	107
<i>Meetings and participants</i>	108
<i>Collaboration and conflict</i>	114
<i>Communication</i>	117
<i>Team health</i>	118
<i>More than the sum</i>	121
<i>Weathering agents of the future</i>	121
<i>Summary</i>	124

CHAPTER SIX

Summary and discussion – <i>peering into the cliff face</i>	127
<i>Introduction</i>	127

<i>Hillsides and weathering</i>	130
<i>Hillsides and weathering agents</i>	134
<i>Important to museum hillsides</i>	136
 CHAPTER SEVEN	
Conclusion – <i>the built landscape</i>	139
<i>Building storeys and stories</i>	142
<i>Building a hillside framework</i>	151
<i>Potential for further investigation</i>	154
<i>At the cliff edge</i>	156
 References	159
 Appendix A	
Current Wellington Museum Trust Organisation Chart, 2015.....	167
Current Museums Wellington Organisation Chart, 2015	167
 Appendix B	
<i>Death and Diversity</i> Development Timeline/Schedule, 2012.....	169
 Appendix C	
Ethics documentation.....	171

LIST OF FIGURES

3.1. <i>The Bond Store, Queens Wharf, Wellington, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington	32
3.2. <i>A crowd gathering in front of the Wellington Harbour Board office during the 1913 waterfront strike, 1913.</i> Museums Wellington Collection	36
3.3. <i>Exhibition marketing posters hanging in a conference room, Wellington Museum, 2015.</i> Photographed by author.....	44
3.4. <i>Central staircase, Wellington Museum, 2014.</i> Museums Wellington.....	47
4.1. <i>Death and Diversity entry signage, Wellington Museum, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington	50
4.2. <i>Death and Diversity exhibition panels, Wellington Museum, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington	64
4.3. <i>The Memory Tree, Wellington Museum, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington	81
4.4. <i>The Memory Tree, Wellington Museum, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington	81
4.5. <i>A visitor's memory left for the Memory Tree, Wellington Museum, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington.....	82
4.6. <i>The Memory Tree, Wellington Museum, 2012.</i> Museums Wellington	83
5.1. <i>Wellington Museum covered in construction wrap during the 2015 development, 2015.</i> Museums Wellington	92
5.2. <i>Tasks and Responsibilities, WMT Museums Wellington project manager job description, 2011.</i> Wellington Museums Trust (WMT)	102
5.3. <i>Desirable qualities of a project manager.</i> After Carpenter, 2011, p/87-88	104
5.4. <i>Wellington Museum Attic 'Progress' document (part of), 2015.</i> Museums Wellington ...	111
6.1. <i>The completed Attic exhibition floor, Wellington Museum, 2015.</i> Museums Wellington.	129
7.1. <i>The completed exterior of the Bond Store redevelopment, Wellington Museum, 2015.</i> Museums Wellington.....	141

7.2. <i>Museums Wellington Director Brett Mason receiving the Diversity Award from Auckland Mayor Len Brown and Human Rights Commissioner Joris de Bres, 2012. Museums Wellington</i>	144
7.3. Museum, Project Management and Project Manager Relationship Framework	151
7.4. <i>Coast near Dunedin, 1865, by Nicholas Chevalier. Gift of Mrs. Caroline Chevalier, the artist's widow, England, 1912. Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, 1912-0044-17</i>	157

ABBREVIATIONS

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

