

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.

**Developing Digital Media for Museum Exhibitions:  
Environment, Collaboration and Delivery**

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Philosophy in Museum Studies  
at Massey University, Manawatū, New Zealand

Neil Anthony Phillips

2011



## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the development and deployment of digital media in museum exhibitions. This thesis aims to discover how developing digital media contributes to new exhibition methodology and development processes in museums by investigating the development of the *Tangata o le Moana* exhibition at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa).

A detailed study of the *Tangata o le Moana* exhibition at Te Papa, and two digital media elements within it; the *New Home: Land of Plenty?* video installation, and the *Pacific Beats Mixing Booth*, are the focus of the research. My experience of the exhibition is recorded. This is followed by participant interviews with the 3D designer and Interpreter. Development documents and organizational archives reveal motivations and goals in developing digital media for exhibitions. In order to place the research in a wider context of exhibition design and visitor behaviour, it focused on three key elements in exhibition creation - environment (the physical and social space), collaboration (the effect of the relationships on development) and delivery (the exhibition). This data is compared with current literature regarding exhibition development. The research demonstrates that by incorporating digital media into exhibitions a new relationship in the exhibition space develops. New museological ideas that place exhibitions in an open-ended framework can align with constructivist learning techniques. Combined with experiential environments and creating liminal experiences, there is significant potential for digital media to contribute to new exhibition methodologies.

The environmental effects of digital media combined with the focus on the media content rather than 'real things' indicates a divergence from traditional museum practice. The thesis argues that these experiential and liminal experiences are largely incidental. Narrative forms of exhibition development predominate. This indicates that involving collaborators with expertise in digital media and experience design is not contributing to developing new exhibition practices.

## ***Acknowledgements***

I would like to thank Sarah Morris and Clayton McGregor, whose participation made the research possible. Staff at Te Papa were extremely helpful at pointing me in the right direction and assisting with resources. Colleagues throughout New Zealand were both a source of information and encouragement. In particular staff at the Whanganui Regional Museum and Te Manawa deserve thanks for their support. The School of People, Environment and Planning aided the research through the Graduate Research Fund. This was of great assistance. My Supervisor, Susan Abasa has been a constant source of advice, encouragement, feedback, guidance and support and whose enthusiasm for the research kept me going. My family contributed in many ways and I could not have achieved this without them. In particular, thank you Margie, who provided amazing support throughout my study and especially in the last few hectic weeks. To Maisie and Barnaby - yes, I can now play cricket with you!

## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	V
LIST OF FIGURES.....	VIII
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
AIM OF THE THESIS .....	2
BACKGROUND .....	3
<i>Scope</i> .....	7
<i>Environment</i> .....	7
<i>Collaboration</i> .....	8
<i>Delivery</i> .....	8
OBJECTIVES .....	8
METHODOLOGY.....	9
<i>Literature search</i> .....	9
<i>Ethics</i> .....	9
<i>Interviews</i> .....	10
<i>Research using digital technology</i> .....	11
<i>Archival searches</i> .....	11
LIMITATIONS .....	12
STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS .....	12
<b>CHAPTER 2 ENVIRONMENT, COLLABORATION, AND DELIVERY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
BACKGROUND .....	15
<i>Environment</i> .....	15
<i>Delivery</i> .....	15
<i>The new museology</i> .....	17
<i>Cultural organizations and their ‘new democracy’</i> .....	18
ENVIRONMENT .....	19
<i>Space</i> .....	22
<i>Liminality</i> .....	24
COLLABORATION.....	27
DELIVERY.....	30
<i>Representation</i> .....	30
<i>The ‘displacement’ of the object</i> .....	32
<i>Accessing experience</i> .....	33
<i>Sharing authority</i> .....	34

LEARNING .....	35
<i>Approaches to Learning</i> .....	36
<i>Prior Knowledge</i> .....	36
<i>Exhibit Strategies</i> .....	40
THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA IN EXHIBITIONS.....	41
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
<b><i>TANGATA O LE MOANA AND NEW HOME: LAND OF PLENTY? 1920 –1980</i> .....</b>	<b>43</b>
EXHIBITION WALK THROUGH .....	44
THE DEVELOPERS’ EXPERIENCE.....	58
<i>Environment</i> .....	58
COLLABORATION.....	63
<i>Experience</i> .....	66
<i>Learning</i> .....	67
DELIVERY.....	71
<b>CHAPTER 4 <i>PACIFIC BEATS</i> .....</b>	<b>77</b>
INTRODUCTION.....	77
ENVIRONMENT .....	77
COLLABORATION.....	84
<i>Function &amp; Purpose</i> .....	84
DELIVERY.....	89
<i>Effectiveness</i> .....	94
<b>CHAPTER 5 <i>DISCUSSION</i> .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<i>Rationales</i> .....	99
<i>Commercial competition</i> .....	99
<i>Accessibility</i> .....	100
<i>Audience engagement</i> .....	100
<i>Learning</i> .....	101
ENVIRONMENT .....	101
<i>Social environment</i> .....	101
<i>Physical environment</i> .....	102
COLLABORATION.....	103
<i>Internal collaboration</i> .....	104
<i>External collaboration – commercial</i> .....	105
<i>External collaboration – community</i> .....	105
DELIVERY.....	106
<i>Tangata o le Moana</i> .....	106
FURTHER TE PAPA DEVELOPMENTS .....	112
SUMMARY .....	113

<b>CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>115</b>
THE RESEARCH REVEALS .....	116
<i>Environment</i> .....	116
<i>Collaboration</i> .....	117
<i>Delivery</i> .....	118
CONCLUSION .....	119
NEXT STEPS.....	120
<b>APPENDIX 1 .....</b>	<b>121</b>
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET.....	121
<b>SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>124</b>



## **List of Figures**

<b>Figure 1</b> <i>Three Variables in exhibition reception</i> .....	20
<b>Figure 2</b> <i>Four Variables in exhibition reception</i> .....	21
<b>Figure 3</b> <i>Tangata o le Moana</i> entrance.....	45
<b>Figure 4</b> Exhibition Layout, including thematic sections.....	46
<b>Figure 5</b> Entrance to Section 2, <i>Pacific Relations</i> .....	50
<b>Figure 6</b> <i>Pacific Blood on the Battlefield</i> .....	51
<b>Figure 7</b> Transition from <i>Pacific Relations</i> to <i>New Home: Land of Plenty?</i> .....	52
<b>Figure 8</b> <i>New Home: Land of Plenty</i> .....	53
<b>Figure 9</b> <i>New Home: Land of Plenty</i> video installation with object cases on wall .....	54
<b>Figure 10</b> Section Four, <i>New Zealand – A Pacific Place?</i> .....	55
<b>Figure 11</b> <i>Case Histories</i> .....	56
<b>Figure 12</b> <i>Case Histories</i> touchscreen.....	56
<b>Figure 13</b> <i>Pacific Beats Mixing Booth</i> .....	57
<b>Figure 14</b> <i>New Home: Land of Plenty?</i> video installation.....	60
<b>Figure 15</b> <i>Pacific Beats Mixing Booth</i> .....	79
<b>Figure 16</b> <i>Pacific Beats</i> interface .....	82