

"It's Always Ourselves We Find in the Sea:"
Maritime Museums and Education at
Independence Seaport Museum

By
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in
Anthropology at Bryn Mawr College

May 2004

"It's always ourselves we find in the sea"
-e.e. cummings

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Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude goes to Natasha, Ted, Anita, Elaine, and Jim at the Independence Seaport Museum, for everything. There would be no thesis without them. I would also like to express my appreciation to Donna, for letting me use the materials and make all those free photocopies in the ISM library, and to everyone else at the museum who let me follow them around and/or ask them questions over these past few months.

Senior Conference 2003-2004 advisors Katharine Woodhouse-Beyer and Melissa Pashigian deserve grateful recognition: Katharine for all of her support and encouragement throughout the year, especially as my advisor second semester, and Melissa for her help getting this project rolling first semester and for agreeing to be my second reader this spring.

Other people who were important to the completion of this project and need to be acknowledged include: all of the other seniors in Katharine's section, for always knowing just how I was feeling and being there for support; the Bryn Mawr College Anthropology Department, for funding all those trips to the museum; my friends and family, for all the love and distractions a girl could want; and the faculty, staff, and students of Williams-Mystic S03, for all the joy and inspiration.

I completed the primary research for my senior thesis in anthropology at Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia, PA, between November 2003 and April 2004. I conducted a holistic study of the museum, using methods such as anthropological participant observation, interviews, and library and archival research. These methods enabled me to capture the viewpoints of both museum "insiders" such as administration, staff, and volunteers, and museum visitors.

I chose to examine Independence Seaport Museum through the lens of the education department, as education is a central goal of the museum and something that I am interested in. ISM strives to educate people about the rich maritime heritage of the Delaware Valley. Independence Seaport Museum is the only museum in the city whose exhibits and programs focus on the maritime history of the region, a role its staff takes very seriously. In order to be able to focus on the quality of this programming, ISM must first contend with the many political and economic challenges particular to being a small specialty museum.

One of the challenges the museum is facing at the moment is that of expanding its audience to include more families and ethnic minorities. New exhibits and better publicity could help ISM to better reach these audiences and further fulfill its possibility as a museum. After all, museums are informal educational settings of enormous value that have the ability to bring together people of varying ages, genders, ethnicities, and levels of formal education in the pursuit of entertainment and learning.

Introduction

Museums are very important social institutions in America today. They collect material items, and use them to help the public learn about history, culture, and science; in the process, we learn about ourselves. Museums are institutions of informal teaching and learning, where we are introduced to new concepts and ideas. Many museums, including Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia, where I conducted my fieldwork, have departments of education to guide the process of teaching and learning at these institutions.

The education department at Independence Seaport is vital to the institution's success as a museum: it brings in large numbers of schoolchildren and teachers, and creates programs that draw other visitors in on the weekends. The education programs attract a far more diverse audience for the museum than the exhibits alone do, an issue the museum is working on with the development of new exhibits. The educational programs at Independence Seaport also give the museum staff a sense of satisfaction; that people are actually learning at the museum. Some of the staff are currently more focused on visitor attendance, however, as it has become an increasingly important factor for museums due to the recent economic recession.

This thesis will explore the topics mentioned above, including such diverse issues as education, community involvement, funding, and cultural diversity, and show how they are all found to be beautifully intertwined at museums such as Independence Seaport.

Significance

Although museums are inherently anthropological, there is very little previous anthropological literature about specialty museums such as maritime museums. This study of Independence Seaport Museum, which was conducted with an anthropological perspective and methodology, will begin to fill a significant gap in the literature. The study will also be useful to Independence Seaport Museum, helping it to recognize its strengths and weaknesses as it plans new exhibits and programs. Likewise, other museums, educators, and students of all ages may see their own successes and shortcomings in these pages and be inspired to make changes in their problem areas. By getting to know people in administrative positions, teaching positions, and learning positions, and finding out what is important to each group, the study can highlight similarities and discrepancies amongst the goals and expectations of each group.

Maritime museums such as Independence Seaport Museum tend to bring in visitors who already belong to a maritime subculture. This is composed mostly of adult men, many of whom serve(d) in the Navy or Coast Guard. Most of these people make their living either on the water or studying marine science, maritime history, or other related topics, and many participate in maritime hobbies such as sailing or fishing in their free time. This project will examine ways in which maritime museums serve this subculture as well as ways to bring very important maritime issues to a wider public audience, starting with schoolchildren. The education of these young people will create more awareness of the importance of the port and the water in the Philadelphia community and the world.

Ethics

Anthropological fieldwork, especially that involving children, calls for the consideration of ethics. I consulted the American Anthropological Association's code of ethics, as well as Bryn Mawr College's policy regarding research involving human subjects. In accordance with these documents, I did everything in my power to ensure that my research did not harm the safety, dignity, or privacy of the people with whom I worked and conducted research (American Anthropological Association 1998).

I worked with the education department at Independence Seaport Museum, which posed ethical issues because the primary consumers of the department's services are children. Children are listed as a sensitive population by Bryn Mawr's Institutional Review Board, and I therefore did not ask any questions of anyone under the age of 18, although I did speak with the teachers and observe their classes (Bryn Mawr College 2003). To protect privacy, I used pseudonyms for all people involved in the project. Due to the nature of the study, I was not able to hide the identity of the museum, so I obtained permission from the museum staff to use the institution's name.

I obtained permission from the Museum Educator and the Ship's Programs Coordinator to conduct my research at the facility. I informed all of the teachers that I would be observing their tours and lessons prior to the start of the events. The teachers had the opportunity to object if they felt that my presence was inappropriate, although none chose to do so. I acquired verbal acknowledgement of informed consent from all museum administration, docents, and other staff prior to working with them, and reaffirmed this before formal interviews. The interviewees each gave their permission

for the use of a voice recorder prior to the recording of any conversation or interview. I used a digital voice recorder to record some of the interviews; those files have been erased and recorded over. I conducted other interviews using a more traditional mini tape recorder; these tapes are being kept locked in a file cabinet in my room for the duration of the project and will be destroyed in May (Kilbride 2003).

I did my best to maintain a professional manner while at the museum and to be respectful of all people I came into contact with. It was my duty to do good work at this site to keep it a viable option for anyone who may wish to do work there in the future, and I believe that I fulfilled this duty. After conducting my research, I still have friendly relationships with the many helpful people at the museum (Kilbride 2003).

Positionality

From the beginning of Senior Conference, I knew that I wanted to make my thesis relevant to not only my major in anthropology, but also to my minor in education. I plan to teach elementary school after I graduate, so my minor is very important to me. Hands-on activities and interdisciplinary work are key components of my educational philosophy, and the holistic, field-intensive anthropological background I have received has reinforced their importance. As a student, one of the things that I loved the most about elementary school was taking field trips. I loved going on whale watches, exploring science museums, and visiting historic houses. Seeing the places and objects we were learning about made it all seem so much more real and so much more important. It also allowed us to spend some time both hearing from experts and making intellectual discoveries for ourselves, which I now realize are very important educational practices.

As a future educator, I am very interested to see how school groups used area resources such as museums to strengthen their curriculum. I wanted to learn how museums such as Independence Seaport Museum produce the services that they offer to such groups and how they create awareness of the programs in the community.

I also knew that I wanted to incorporate one of my deepest intellectual passions, the ocean, into my senior thesis. I have been enchanted by the sea since I was very young, and the topic was thrown wide open to me as an intellectual enterprise in the spring of 2003. I spent a semester living and learning at Mystic Seaport's Museum of America and the Sea as a participant in the Williams-Mystic Maritime Studies Program. From the moment I returned to Haverford, I searched for ways to include maritime themes in my work. The creation of a thesis topic, based entirely on my own interests, seemed an ideal situation for this. Philadelphia, the area available to me for field research, is an important and historic port city, and has a maritime museum. At Independence Seaport Museum, I found anthropology, education, and the sea all in one place: my thesis topic was born.

Background Information

In this chapter, I present some information about the museum's facilities, programs, people, and history, in order to familiarize the reader with these aspects of my research site. I also supply background information about the maritime heritage of the Delaware Valley and maritime education in general, to provide insight into the purpose and goals of Independence Seaport Museum and its education department.

The Museum

In 1960 J. Welles Henderson, a local admiralty lawyer and collector, created the Philadelphia Maritime Museum. He wanted to have a world-class maritime museum on the Philadelphia waterfront, but he built toward this dream slowly. The museum began in rented space in Philadelphia's Athenaeum, and gradually grew until it was large enough for its own building on Chestnut Street (ISM Docent Manual 2003). In 1995, the museum created a new identity for itself with another shift in location and a new name. Renamed the Independence Seaport Museum, it is now located on Penn's Landing in Philadelphia at the foot of the Walnut Street bridge. This location on the banks of the Delaware River allowed the museum to take responsibility for two historic ships, the cruiser *Olympia* and the submarine *Becuna*, and to dock them close to the building. The waterfront location, quite fitting for a maritime museum, also allows the museum access to the river for a variety of programs (Elaine 2004).

The current museum building, constructed in 1976, was originally built as a gallery and performing arts space. The idea was unfortunately not a success, and the

building sat empty for many years before Independence Seaport Museum moved in. Consequently, the museum did extensive renovation work prior to moving in. There are still vestiges of the former performance spaces, such as a concert hall that takes up much of the second floor, that frustrate the museum staff with the odd spatial layout left for museum exhibits (Ted 2004). The first floor is home to the majority of the museum's maritime exhibits, and connects to the Workshop on the Water, a wooden-boat-building workshop. There are some exhibits on the second floor, and the classroom and library are also located there. The second-floor auditorium, as well as a large hall on the building's fourth floor, are rented out as facilities to provide an extra source of income for the museum.

Key People at Independence Seaport Museum

Some of the information presented above was gleaned from interviews I conducted with Elaine and Ted, two members of the museum's staff. Ted, Elaine, and several others were invaluable to me as I worked on this project. They let me interview them, observe them at work, and engage in informal conversation about the museum with them. Five of the six people who were the most helpful to me are educators at the museum. They have different titles and different roles, but they all work directly with the public, sharing their knowledge of and enthusiasm for the maritime heritage of the Philadelphia area. The sixth person is the administrator who oversees the work of many departments at the museum, including the education department.

What follows here is some additional information about each of my main informants, so that the reader has a better understanding of who they are and where much of the information presented in this thesis came from.

"*Ted*" is a man, and is about sixty years old. He has been the Museum Educator at ISM for twenty-nine years. Prior to his work at the museum, Ted taught fourth grade in the Philadelphia public schools. Until a few years ago, he was the sole employee of the education department. He is currently in charge of creating lesson plans and executing them in the museum's classroom and gallery spaces. Ted is also involved in recruiting school groups to visit the museum.

"*Natasha*" is a woman in her late twenties. She works closely with Ted, as they have side-by-side offices on the second floor and similar responsibilities. Natasha received a master's degree from a well-respected museum studies program last year, and has been working at ISM as the Ships' Programs Coordinator for about nine months. She creates lesson plans for the historic ships and the galleries, and coordinates all of the tours of the historic ships.

"*Anita*" is a woman in her early thirties. She was a teacher before she became the Coordinator of Gallery Programs at ISM four years ago. About one year ago, she became the Curator of Education. In essence, Anita is the director of the department, in that she makes decisions regarding planning, budgeting, and marketing. She also occasionally leads activities in the galleries, particularly when the museum is very busy.

"*Elaine*" is a woman in her forties. She has been the Vice President for Operations for the past eight years, and oversees the education, boat shop, finance,

visitors services, facility rentals, retail shop, and maintenance departments at the museum.

"*Jim*" is a man in his seventies. He is a very committed volunteer docent who comes in every Friday to lead tours of the ships. He has been a docent at ISM for about a year. Jim was a Captain in the U.S. Coast Guard, and has previously volunteered at another maritime museum.

"*Mike*" is a man in his thirties. He is a new docent at ISM this spring, but he has led educational programs for several years at Fort Mott State Park in New Jersey.

The Historic Ship Zone

Natasha, Jim, and Mike all work primarily in the museum's "Historic Ship Zone." This area, which is located a short walk down Penn's Landing from the museum building, was created in 1996 when the museum took responsibility for the historic ships *Olympia* and *Becuna* from the Cruiser Olympia Association. The *Olympia* (C-6) is a cruiser launched by the US Navy in 1892, and is similar to the many steel warships built in Philadelphia. She is the oldest steel warship still afloat in the world. She served as Admiral Dewey's flagship in the Battle of Manila Bay, firing the first shots of the Spanish-American War. *Olympia* remained in service through World War I, and carried home the body of the Unknown Soldier. She was decommissioned in 1922. The *Becuna* (SS-319) is a submarine launched by the US Navy in 1944, and is similar to the many submarines built in Philadelphia during that time. She served in the Pacific during World War II, sinking three Japanese ships and damaging a fourth. During the Cold War era,

the *Becuna* provided intelligence on Soviet submarines in the Atlantic. She was decommissioned in 1969 (ISM Website 2004).

The Education Program

The Independence Seaport Museum of today "is a history museum that highlights the maritime heritage of the Delaware Valley region" (ISM Brochure 2003). It is dedicated not only to the preservation of historic ships and smaller artifacts, but also to the education of the public. The museum offers tours of its facilities, including the two historic ships and the boat-building workshop, to school groups, Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops, and regular museum visitors. In addition, the museum's education department offers special programs. Each of these educational programs involves a tour of the submarine *Becuna* and the cruiser *Olympia*, an interactive lesson in the museum's classroom, and the opportunity to roam the galleries. Interactive lessons in the galleries are also available by request. See Appendix A for an example of a typical school group visit.

Teachers can choose from ten different themed educational programs during the school year. Possible themes include: the early explorers, pirates, the science and building of boats, and immigration. There are special badge-based programs designed for Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops in addition to the wide variety of programs offered to the general public on the weekends. These public programs include craft workshops, living history programs, and storytelling performances. The museum also offers a lecture series after-hours on weeknights. See Appendices B and C for descriptions of all available programs (ISM Brochure 2003).

Maritime Education

The maritime-centered programs at the museum address themes, ideas, issues, and events that are crucial to American, as well as world history. These programs are intended to help define who we are as a nation, through the lens of the sea. Three quarters of the earth's surface is covered in ocean; it is a socially isolating, as well as a connecting, force. America was brought into contact with citizens of other hemispheres by Europeans who crossed the Atlantic Ocean on ships. The American cities of Philadelphia, New York, and Boston all grew to be very large and important thanks to their prestige as good ports (Gordinier 2003). This tradition of maritime trade and commerce continues today; more than 90% of the world's goods are still transported overseas on container ships, and 50% of the world's people live within 60 miles of a coast. Throughout history, the sea has been an inspiration for writers such as Melville and Hemingway and artists such as Manet and Turner. Thanks to their depictions, even those who do not live near the sea may experience its beauty and utility. (Jackson 2003).

In spite of the fact that the ocean influences nearly every aspect of life here on the East Coast, from the geography of the region to what we eat and what we wear, information on maritime topics is often disregarded when teachers, administrators, and government officials create school curricula. No school that I have spent time in (either as a student or as an intern with the education minor program) has a class, or even a unit, devoted to maritime topics. The sea is often even left out of discussions on topics like the explorers and immigration, where the ocean was a key component in transportation. Even

in cases where our maritime heritage is acknowledged by the curriculum, it is often only mentioned as a sidebar.

Sadly, many teachers do not have adequate knowledge about the topic themselves, and therefore find it very difficult to teach to their students. As a result of this cycle of ignorance, most students are woefully unaware of the important role oceans and ports have played, and continue to play, in their lives. The Independence Seaport Museum acknowledges that this situation should not be the case. The staff and volunteers at the museum have the expert knowledge that is lacking in many schools, and have developed the educational programs in an attempt to raise awareness of the sea among young people, while at the same time placing the museum "on the map."

Philadelphia's Maritime Heritage

Independence Seaport Museum is deeply committed to presenting the unique maritime heritage of the Delaware Valley region, including the history of the port of Philadelphia. The area has been a center for international maritime commerce and innovation for nearly four centuries, and many of the museum's exhibits focus on this remarkable history of exploration, trade, and innovation.

In 1611 Thomas West, Lord de la Ware, was sailing to Virginia, and took refuge from foul weather in the estuary at the mouth of what was to be called the Delaware River. His ship sailed up the river as far as present day Philadelphia (Taylor 1895). In the 1620s, the Dutch ship *Onrust* sailed up the Delaware River as well. The Dutch subsequently established fur-trading settlements along the Delaware, and developed a substantial commerce with both the home country of Holland and the nearby English

colonies (Bauer 1988). In 1674, the Dutch ceded all of their territory in the Americas to the British, and in 1681, King Charles II gave all of the unoccupied land west of the Delaware to William Penn to found the colony of Pennsylvania (Taylor 1895). Penn established the city of Philadelphia in 1682, and a shipyard was constructed by 1683 (Bauer 1988).

Although it lies 100 miles upriver from the Atlantic Ocean, Philadelphia quickly developed a thriving trade, monopolizing the agricultural exports of the rich hinterland of Pennsylvania during the eighteenth century. Philadelphia merchants shipped wheat and other agricultural products to the West Indies and to New England, which was struggling due to "wheat blast" and other diseases (Labaree 1998). This commercial prosperity led to an increase in shipbuilding in Philadelphia. The city's ample merchant fleet, along with newly commissioned frigates built in Philadelphia shipyards, provided the bulk of the vessels for our nation's first navy during the Revolutionary War (Bauer 1988). In the late 1780s, John Fitch made the Delaware River Valley the birthplace of steam navigation. He experimented with steam engines and paddle wheels, and in 1788 a steam-driven boat travelled from Philadelphia to Burlington, NJ at a speed of four miles an hour (Taylor 1895). The regular run he established between Philadelphia, PA and Trenton, NJ in 1790 is considered to be the first commercial use of steamboats (Bauer 1988).

Philadelphia, the largest city in the nation until 1830, continued to be a leading seaport in the nineteenth century, becoming a destination for one of the first coastal packet lines in 1815. The port's uniquely rich hinterland allowed it to support a transatlantic packet line created in 1822. This line regularly operated four or five vessels

until after the Civil War (Bauer 1988). In the mid-nineteenth century grain production shifted south and west and the industrial revolution was in high gear. The combination of these societal changes led the city to shift to being primarily a coal port. The city's location at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill (a word meaning "hidden creek" in Dutch) Rivers allowed it access to the rich anthracite coal fields all over Pennsylvania, and it took advantage of this. The necessity of navigating the narrow locks of the coal canals inspired the Philadelphia shipyards to lead the development and application of screw propulsion techniques starting in the 1830s (Bauer 1988). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia began to focus on shipbuilding with renewed vigor, spurred on by the advent of the Civil War (Schoff 1912).

The museum also uses exhibits and educational programs to explore the topic of immigration with regards to Philadelphia. Throughout its history, Philadelphia has been a major center for immigration. It was a city founded by immigrants, like most American cities, and most of its initial population growth was due to immigration from Europe. More than 1.3 million immigrants have entered the United States through the port of Philadelphia, most between the years of 1870 and 1920. Though most of these immigrants moved on to other places further west, many stayed in the region: large numbers of Italians, Welsh, and Eastern European Jews, among others, established communities here. Philadelphia's population grew and diversified dramatically as a result of the huge influx of immigrants coming into the port from all over the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Miller 2004).

The museum also explores the more modern history of twentieth century commerce in the Philadelphia area. The twentieth century brought two world wars, and

with them the requisite increase in shipbuilding at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard. The port continued to be a hub for shipping as well, particularly for trade with foreign ports. With the advent of containerization in the 1950s, Philadelphia constructed container terminals, and today it is the fourth largest port in the United States for the handling of imported goods. It has a good reputation for items that require special handling such as fruit, meat, steel, and paper pulp. More than 3,000 ships load and unload at the port every year. Philadelphia is accessible by truck and rail service to more major cities than any other port. The city is still one of the most heavily used ports in the nation, 322 years after it was first founded on the banks of the Delaware River (P&O Ports 2004).

As has been seen above, Independence Seaport is a history museum, with a specific focus on the maritime history of the Philadelphia area. History museums generally collect and preserve material objects from the past and use them to provide historical and cultural perspectives: a sense of what life was like in times gone by. These objects, and the museums that organize and display them, are a unique and useful supplement to the valuable text and oral records most frequently used by students of history (Alexander 1979). In the next chapter, I will further explore museums as valuable institutions of learning.

Defining a Museum

A museum today, as defined by the International Council of Museums, is

a nonprofit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of people and their environment (American Association of Museums 2004).

Using this definition, Independence Seaport Museum is indeed a museum. A

section of its mission statement closely follows the above definition:

Independence Seaport Museum is a non-profit institution dedicated to collecting, preserving, exhibiting, and making available art, artifacts, and archival materials pertaining to the rich maritime history and traditions of the Delaware River, Bay, and tributaries, and to interpreting general themes relating to civilization and the sea (ISM Volunteer Docent Manual 2003).

My observations at Independence Seaport make it clear to me that the museum follows this part of its mission statement, and my assertion that ISM meets the criteria for a museum is supported by the American Association of Museums, which has accepted Independence Seaport as a member museum (AAM Website 2004).

Perceptions of Museums Through History

In order to better understand Independence Seaport as a museum, it is necessary to first understand museums today, and to discover how they became what they are by

looking at the evolution of museums through history. Public museums as we know them are a construct of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Western culture. The concept of collecting everything, from all times and places, and organizing it for display as a means of "civilizing the population" was typical of Western thought at the time (Bennett 1995). Governments took it upon themselves to bring culture and civilization to the masses by means of the museum. In the process, museums earned a reputation as purveyors of a singular, "majority" view. In many cases, this reputation was justly earned, as the "civilization" and values being foisted onto entire populations were those of the white, upper and upper-middle class society (Bennett 1995).

In Europe, museums were generally seen as means of bringing culture and civilization, represented by material collections, to the masses. There was, however, an understanding that only those who already possessed a certain level of education would visit such a place. Even these educated folks were denied the right to see a good deal of the finest treasures because they were retained in the private collections of the royalty. The democratic revolution that swept the American colonies in the eighteenth century also entered into the idealistic dreams of some museum founders. The earliest American museum, in Charleston, SC, collected items "illustrative of their country's brief past", "for the enjoyment of all of the people" (Katz 1965).

In the nineteenth century, American museums moved beyond the "curiosity cabinet" principle. They were often constructed with the intent that people would enjoy what they were seeing, and that they would also be establishments "for the increase and diffusion of knowledge among men" (Katz 1965). The notion of "public responsibility" guaranteed that American museums would make education one of their principal

purposes, but it was not immediately evident how these educational purposes could be realized" (Graubard 1999). Museum founders such as P.T. Barnum realized "that learning and entertainment could exist comfortably in a museum setting" (Skramstad 1999). "Visitors to his museum were stimulated by the displays to learn and to enjoy themselves in the process. They were comfortable in knowing they were in a place where discovery, dialogue, and conversation were encouraged" (Skramstad 1999).

Unfortunately for museum-goers, American museums returned to a more conservative method of operations later in the nineteenth century. Led by the example of several large and prominent institutions in major cities, museums became places for displaying economic and cultural power, often in the form of large collections of art. As a consequence, museums again became quiet temples of culture and civilization, founded by the wealthy with the intention of educating, uplifting, and improving the skills and tastes of those in lower socio-economic classes (Skramstad 1999).

Until fairly recently, a museum was viewed as "a temple...a structured sample of reality, not just as a reference but as an objective model against which to compare individual perceptions" (Karp 1991). Around the middle of the twentieth century, people began to question this view, and the notion that the museum was instead a forum became popular. A museum, as a matter of course, "draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it. Decisions are made to emphasize one element and downplay others, to assert some truths and to ignore others" (Karp 1991). Those of different cultural background from the curators may have long disagreed with what they saw, but they have only recently begun to let their displeasure be known.

Rather than being absolute storehouses of concrete knowledge, museums have become places for "confrontation, experimentation, and debate" (Karp 1991). This shift in the museum has led to an increase in museum "popularity". The new American museum is subject to public opinion far more than any in the past, and it may influence what the museum staff chooses to exhibit and how, and how they are seen both by themselves and by the general public. There is a concern that museums today are too commercial, that education, research, and learning are being lost to the need to remain a viable business, but is there any way to avoid such commercialization in today's world? (Graubard 1999).

Remaining a viable business is a valid concern for today's museums, as entrenched as they are in the popular culture of American tourism, entertainment, and education. Independence Seaport, like most other museums, is very concerned with getting high numbers of visitors; it is almost to the point where the quality of exhibitions and programming are secondary to visitation. This is a unique problem, because having a quality museum is often the first step toward getting large numbers of visitors. The influence of the "popular" museum culture of today is clearly visible at ISM, and there are vestiges of past stages as well: there is still very little minority representation in the exhibits, as in several of the earlier constructions of museums, and there are fun, interactive exhibits like those found in the middle of the nineteenth century. All three of these issues will be discussed in greater detail later in this thesis.

The Challenges of Being a Museum Today

As discussed above, Independence Seaport and other museums today face many challenges, and will continue to face them in the future. All museums are affected by patterns of economics, and funding is always a concern of museums. There are dozens of questions on the minds of museum administrators today: Where will the funding come from for new exhibits, projects, and research? (Shafroth 2003). Will today's generation of wealthy Americans, which includes more women and minorities than ever, continue to donate to museums at the same levels as generations past? (Maehara 2003). Will government agencies and private businesses continue to donate? Will they see the need for the realization of the cultural, social, and educational goals of museums? (Graubard 1999). Citizens of today's world also have shorter attention spans than previous generations, which is alright because they also have less free time. It is a major concern of museums to draw people in, to convince them that spending some of their limited free time at a museum is well worth it (Graubard 1999).

Contemporary museums also need to strike a delicate balance with regard to the presentation of their collections. On the one hand, they must acknowledge that there are multiple perspectives on many topics, allowing many diverse communities to see their values represented in a culturally relativistic way in these institutions. On the other hand, they must bear in mind that one of the reasons many people visit museums is that authoritative knowledge is presented in an accessible way. If the authority of the curator and those helping to develop exhibits is no longer absolute, however, a museum may become just another collection of junk to many people (Karp 1991). Genre museums, such as maritime museums, may be less endangered by the above paradox than museums

with more general collections. The oceans cut across time and culture, and it could be fairly easy for a museum such as this one to access a variety of cultural values and perspectives through exhibits on ecology, underwater archaeology, immigration, slavery, international trading, naval warfare, etc. (Karp 1991).

Visitors to museums "interpret museum exhibitions through their prior experiences and through the culturally learned beliefs, values, and perceptual skills that they gain through membership in multiple communities" (Karp 1992). The people who live in the Philadelphia area are part of a large, diverse community, consisting of the interactions of people who also belong to multiple smaller communities of people who share the same ethnic background (African American, Welsh, Italian, Vietnamese, etc.) gender, sexual orientation, level of education, hobbies, etc. These sub-communities all influence the way the larger community reacts to and uses (or neglects) resources such as museums. If there is a disconnect between the community at large and the institution, the museum's role is diminished and the people do not get the benefits they might otherwise: there are some good things about every institution (Karp 1992).

Every museum in Philadelphia will appeal to at least one of the sub-communities, and most will appeal to several. The various museums are then competing with each other for the business of each person's admission ticket. The staff of Independence Seaport does not like the idea of competing with other museums; but there is no way to avoid this in the second largest museum community in the nation (Ted 2004). Each museum must find its niche within the community, and then work out how to appeal to other sub-communities if it wishes to expand further.

Museums as Educational Institutions

One of the sub-communities that Independence Seaport has availed itself of is the community of Philadelphia schoolchildren and their teachers, who come to the museum on field trips. The use of museums as supplemental educational institutions is making a comeback from a low in the late nineteenth century when public schooling in America had become much more prominent. As schools took over as the primary source of education for the entire population, not merely the elite, the public education function of museums took a backseat to research and development of collections (Skramstad 1999).

Fortunately, there were many people who were concerned about the declining focus on museum education. Not only are museums important educational tools for those who are no longer in school, they are an important supplement to what is learned in the classroom. One person concerned with the continuing education of children at museums was Samuel Langley, Secretary of the Smithsonian at the turn of the century, who wrote of children:

We think there is nothing in the world more entertaining than birds, animals, and live things; and next to these is our interest in the same things, even though they are not alive; and next to this is to read about them. All of us care about them and some of us hope to care for them all our lives long. We are not very much interested in the Latin names, and however much they may mean to grown-up people, we do not want to have our entertainment spoiled by its being made a lesson (Skramstad 1999)

Children's museums, such as that pioneered by Langley, have themselves pioneered a new method of museum education that is being taken up by museums of all genres, including Independence Seaport Museum. These educational practices involve activities that engage all five senses, and include participatory learning and problem-

solving activities that require students to use real objects from history, art, or science (Skramstad 1999).

In general, museums are no longer seen as their former incarnations were: as institutions with absolute, authoritative knowledge about anything and everything. People are more willing to question what they see in a museum, but if there is a knowledgeable museum staff in attendance to talk to visitors, questioning can be an excellent format for creating learning. In spite of a healthy skepticism, people still have confidence in museums: 87% view them as trustworthy sources of information, and 38% of people think that a museum is one of the most trustworthy institutions to be found (AAM 2004). The ability of a museum to convey material correctly and well is enhanced by the existence of an education department such as the one at Independence Seaport, where interpretation of the museum's collection by a responsive person can make all the difference in a person's learning.

Regardless of a lack of absolute authority, a museum is still a "[repository] of knowledge" that has the ability to "educate...beyond [that which] can be produced in ordinary educational and civic institutions" (Karp 1992). Museums allow for a "mixing of education, age, gender, and race" not usually found in traditional institutions of learning. This incredible mix often provides for a very rich environment in which to learn (Skramstad 1999).

In the 2000-2001 school year in the United States alone, museums provided more than 18 million instructional hours to children in grades K-12 (Institute of Museum and Library Services 2002). As long as the museum staff takes care to present the information in a way that takes into account the fact that there will be people with many

different perspectives listening, a museum can be an unparalleled educational resource. The trick is to convey all the possible opinions and interpretations in a way that doesn't rob the institution of its authority. If this can be done, the museum can become an integral member of its local (geographical) community, providing an invaluable service.

In the following chapters, I will continue to examine museum education, the economics of museums, and the presence of culture and diversity in museums through the lens of the anthropological fieldwork I conducted at Independence Seaport Museum. The literature presented here provided validation for my observations, created a richer background from which to view my data, and informed my analysis.

General Timeline

I visited the museum twice in November 2003: once as a visitor to gain a first-hand perspective on the site, and once to observe a school group after gaining permission from the Museum Educator. I visited the museum at least once a week to observe group visits from the time I returned to the area at the end of January 2004 until the beginning of March 2004. I spoke with the teachers when they visited the museum, and led formal interviews with the museum staff in late February and early March of 2004. I designed the time frame for the formal interviews in order to allow myself time to develop good rapport and collect background information and observations to inform my questions. I conducted background reading and research prior to and throughout the participant observation period.

Museum Resources

In conducting a holistic study of the Independence Seaport Museum through the lens of its education department, I utilized all of the available resources at the Museum's complex on Penn's Landing: the classroom, the historic ships, the galleries, the library, and the staff.

Participant Observation

I observed the museum visits of nine school groups in an effort to see how the education staff used the Independence Seaport's spaces and resources, and their reasons

for doing so. I also used the time spent with the school groups to speak with the teachers and obtain their perspectives. The school groups were generally divided into two sections, unless they were very small. One group had a lesson in the classroom while the other toured the historic ships, and then the two groups switched. They also alternated eating lunch and having free time to wander the museum's galleries; I usually attached myself to one of the groups and followed that group as they moved from one part of the visit to the other. I tried to be in a group with a teacher if at all possible, to increase the possibility of having time to speak with him or her.

In the classroom space on the building's second floor, the groups were treated to an interactive lesson on a maritime topic led by Ted, the Museum Educator. I sat in the row of seats just behind the last row of visitors and observed the lesson. I made mental notes of the interactions between Ted and the students, the content of the lesson, what materials were used, and my impressions of the general response of the adults and students to the lesson. I did not take physical notes during the lesson, but did so immediately after my visit. I did this partly because I did not want to be distracting to the instructor or the visitors and partly because Ted's style of delivery is so rapid-fire and physically interactive that I would have missed a lot if I were continually trying to get notes down on paper. Unfortunately, by delaying my note taking, I took the chance of forgetting to write down important details. I have a fairly good memory, however, and the benefits of this method of note-taking seemed to outweigh the costs.

The students and their chaperones also took a tour of the Spanish-American War era cruiser *Olympia* and the World War II/Cold War era submarine *Becuna* (unless they were under eight years old, in which case they were not allowed on the submarine for

safety reasons). I accompanied the groups on the tours of both ships; on my first several visits to the museum, I stood as close as possible to the docent on the tour so I could ask her questions. When I visited during the month of March, I frequently brought up the rear of the group, helping to move the visitors along and talking to the teachers and chaperones while we moved from one stop on the tour to the next.

When the children had free time to explore the museum's galleries with the supervision of their chaperones, I also roamed around the galleries. I used this time to observe the ways in which the children and adults interacted with the exhibits and each other. I also frequently used this time to talk with the adults about why they came to the museum and what they hoped to learn by being there. For maps of the galleries and the ships, see Appendix D.

Interviews

I conducted formal interviews with four members of the museum staff; brief, informal interviews with six other members of the museum staff; and quick, informal interviews with nine teachers and one principal who brought their students to the museum.

I sat down for formal interviews with: Elaine, the Vice President of Operations; Anita, the Curator of Education (the director of the education program); Natasha, the Ships' Programs Coordinator; and Ted, the Museum Educator. Each of these interviews was conducted in the interviewee's own office at the museum, and each lasted approximately one hour. I recorded each interview on a voice recorder after gaining permission from the interviewee to use it. I asked each of them for information such as:

how long they have been working in the field, what they do at the museum, what they see as the museum's role in the community, what they want to impart to the visitors, how big a role the museum's materials play in what they do, etc.

It should be noted that I interviewed Natasha twice because the first interview was compromised in several ways. The interview was conducted over lunch at a deli, where the noise level and mouthfuls of food made the use of a voice recorder impractical and taking good notes difficult. She and I were accompanied by a "tag-along" docent, Mike, who was quite willing to talk when he and I were speaking one on one but hardly spoke at all during the discussion with Natasha; his presence may have compromised the interview. The discussion was also cut short by the need to get back to the museum for a visiting school group.

I decided to initiate a second interview with Natasha, who agreed that it would be useful and appropriate. The second interview was conducted in the same manner as the other three more formal interviews and included some of the same questions I asked her the first time. The answers to these repeat questions were fairly similar to the ones gained in the first interview but there were some minor differences. We did not feel as rushed during the second interview, the atmosphere was much more relaxed, and we were not eating, so we were able to give our full attention to the conversation. Natasha gave more complete answers in the second interview, and I therefore obtained additional information about such things as her philosophy of museum education, her goals, and her concerns about Independence Seaport.

Donna, the Librarian; Maureen, the woman who works at the front desk; Paul, the Ships Manager, Bob, a Ship Restorer; and Jim and Mike, two volunteer docents, each

spoke informally with me on several occasions. The questions I asked these people varied widely depending on the person to whom I was speaking, but generally revolved around their responsibilities, their goals, what they viewed as the role of the museum, who they saw as the museum's audience, etc.

I spoke with at least one teacher from every school group that I observed at the museum. All of the teachers that I approached allowed me to talk to them, although the amount of time they were willing to give me and the depth of their answers varied depending on the age, needs, and behavior of their students, as well as their own interest in what I was doing. By looking at the perspective of both the museum staff and the visitors, I obtained a more holistic view, with the opportunity to compare the perspectives of the two groups. I asked the teachers whether they were repeat visitors or first-timers, what they expected to gain from the visit, how it fit into what was going on in their home classroom, where their home classrooms were, and if they had visited other museums.

Archival Research

My work for this project included research conducted in the small library on the second floor of Independence Seaport Museum. I was not able to find as much information on the museum's own history as I had expected to, but I did find useful information in this library. There was a wealth of information on maritime subjects, the proceedings from two sessions of the International Congress of Maritime Museums, and a small archive of the AAM journal *Museum News*, which I had been unable to find anywhere else. These materials all proved to be useful in completing my thesis. They

especially contributed to my understanding of my informants with regard to the upcoming chapters on museum education and funding.

Museum on a Mission:

Education at Independence Seaport Museum

What Kind of Museum is it?

Independence Seaport Museum is a maritime museum. Its collections and exhibits, for the most part, are very focused on the Delaware River Valley and the Port of Philadelphia. Before ever entering the museum, I expected a broad overview of all things having to do with the ocean and other waterways. I also expected the museum to be much bigger than it was, however, because most of my previous experience with maritime museums was at Mystic Seaport's Museum of America and the Sea. Mystic Seaport is the largest maritime museum in the country, is therefore able to cover more topics than a smaller museum such as Independence Seaport. The galleries at Independence Seaport Museum contain allusions to the broader impact of the oceans on our nation and the world, but these references are almost always connected to the Philadelphia Maritime Experience. The museum focuses on the rich maritime heritage of the Delaware River Valley, and as such it falls under the broader category of 'history museum' in addition to the more specific 'maritime museum.'

"As a history museum, our position is to preserve history, to present it, to make it available and relevant," says Vice President of Operations, Elaine. "When we say we're a history museum, our job is to educate. Education is in our mission statement, it's one of our core values." Independence Seaport Museum believes that the education department is central to its success as a museum. The institution has consciously invested in the education department over the last few years, getting grants to expand the department;

adding two new positions to the department staff; and creating new programs and marketing them. They have tried to make the museum "a better, stronger place." Elaine feels like they have accomplished this feat: the museum is stronger than it used to be. Having a larger, stronger education department, is certainly beneficial to the quality of the programming the museum can offer, "but we haven't built the audience to go with it yet" (Elaine 2004). The museum is still searching for ways to get its message out to the museum-going public: this is a unique museum full of interesting things! Come visit!

Some museum staffers feel that the name Independence Seaport may be one of the reasons that the museum has trouble getting its message out. Natasha and Elaine both expressed some doubt over the benefit of the name change undertaken nine years ago. According to Elaine, a lot of thought was put into the decision, but no one I spoke with could tell me the reasoning behind it because they were not involved; with the exception of Bill, none of them were even at the museum at the time. " We used to be called the Philadelphia Maritime Museum, and I wish that we still had that name. Because that really tells you who we are and what we do" (Natasha 2004). "Independence Seaport Museum? What is that? What does that mean?" (Elaine 2004). The two women believe that the presence in the city of an institution clearly labelled a maritime museum raised their issue's profile more clearly.

Filling a Unique Role

When I asked all of my informants at the museum what they saw as the niche in the community of Philadelphia filled by Independence Seaport Museum, I expected to get answers like 'It's the only museum where you can learn about the ocean.' What I got

instead was a surprise. No one even mentioned the word 'ocean'. Ted started me off with his view: "Educationally speaking, we're the only museum that truly tells the history of the city." Therefore, telling the story of the world's oceans is not the only, or perhaps even the primary, role of Philadelphia's maritime museum. Instead, the museum staff, like Natasha, are concerned with telling "a history of the city that other places in the city don't tell: the history of the port and the waterfront." Anita and Elaine each separately concurred that the museum is not only a member of the special subset known as maritime museums, but that it stands alone among all other museums in telling of the maritime heritage of Philadelphia and the surrounding Delaware River Valley.

The museum's staff is committed to fulfilling the institution's unique and important role in the Philadelphia community, and to doing it well. Independence Seaport's mission statement, which was written by the museum's board, expresses the staff's goals in general terms, but does not convey their desire to help people learn about Philadelphia's maritime heritage:

The museum is committed to enhancing the appreciation of our maritime heritage, to exploring the impact of this history on the forces of commerce and culture which shaped the region, and to fostering an awareness of the continuing role of our waterways in contemporary life (ISM Volunteer Docent Manual 2003).

(You can view a full copy of the museum's mission statement in Appendix E.) Both Ted and Natasha feel that the mission statement is too vaguely worded and holds little meaning for them. Each of my four key informants passionately explained to me that "Philadelphia is a huge port and people don't realize it. That it is a port now, it was a port then, that the city grew up around the waterfront" (Natasha). "There's a very strong

disconnect between the city and the water" that shouldn't exist (Anita). The people of Philadelphia should be proud of the city's pioneering maritime heritage as a major port, but they aren't. Most of them don't even know that it exists. This is a situation that the museum is striving to correct, especially with the area's young residents.

Although working to make the area's maritime heritage more widely appreciated by the Philadelphia community is not an easy task, it is one that everyone at the museum seems deeply dedicated to. They feel that the best method they have for spreading the news is the large numbers of people, especially teachers and children, that they can reach through the education programs. Ted also uses Independence Seaport to present to these young visitors a love and understanding for museums in general. He wants them all to learn to look and think, so that they will be able to appreciate all museums better.

Looking and Thinking

Several times during each lesson I observed with Ted, he repeated the phrase "museums teach you to look and think." It was one of the key points he wanted to get across to the students, no matter what the subject matter of the maritime lesson he was teaching them. They were, first and foremost, at a museum. He wanted to make sure that they did not leave the museum without a concept of what museums are all about. Usually at some point in the middle of the lesson, as he was about to show them some unknown object, he would point to some poor, unsuspecting child and ask "what do museums do?" Some of the children he called on remembered, some were frozen on the spot and said nothing, and some gave answers that were too vague or too specific to capture the image Ted wanted to give them of a museum. There were invariably several other children in

the audience who were dying to give the answer if the chosen one did not give the answer Ted was searching for.

Ted has a big, booming voice, which is capable of catching the attention of even the most attitude-laden middle schooler. He firmly believes that "most people--almost everyone--will give you a half hour." It's what he does with the half hour that keeps people coming back to the museum year after year. He says "history can be fun and entertaining. The fact that some people present it as dry and boring is insulting to other historians, and to me. We're talking about a fun way of looking at the sea."

Ted keeps the students' attention through a rapid-fire delivery of information, unusual facts, physical gags such as pretending a plastic replica of a bar shot cannon is the real thing, audience participation, and humor. His voice is often loaded with sarcasm and irony; the kids catch some of it, and the adults realize much more. Both sets of audience members find themselves completely drawn in and laughing out loud through much of the lesson. He has a small collection of museum artifacts, models, and replicas that he uses throughout the lessons. He also has the students participate in the lessons to keep them engaged. Many a child has modelled a sailor's wardrobe, set off sparks with flint and steel, tested drinking water for nitrates, or spun the "wheel of misfortune" during a lesson. It turns out that Ted has another theory about museums to go along with looking and thinking: playing. "That's what museums are all about: you get to play with stuff."

Natasha also believes that the museum and the visitor together do the teaching. Her favorite quotation about museum education is the following: "The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation." Those ten words opened new worlds to

her in museum education. "You come in knowing about a topic, maybe not knowing anything, and hopefully we spark your interest and make you want to learn more in whatever way you would do that" (Natasha 2004). The museum does not have to teach everything about a subject. Indeed, how can it? Natasha does admit, however, that "Anita and I, coming from a museum studies program for education, are really idealistic. Our goal is to teach, and people should be inspired!"

Natasha sees museums as unique opportunities in the world of education. "They can be a supplement for school groups to what they're learning in the classroom." She is still caught up in the idea that museums can be universities for the general public, but thinks that will only be truly successful when all museums get rid of the traditional stuffy, elitist atmosphere. She is a big believer in Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (Brualdi 1996), and shares my devotion to hands-on, immersive environments. "I don't think you can beat coming someplace new and looking at something. It's another way to learn. Sometimes school doesn't work well for people. I think that regardless of how you learn, there's something in a museum that will work for you" (Natasha 2004).

Natasha is also a proponent of Ted's "museums teach you to look and think" principle. As in Ted's engaging classroom lessons, Natasha wants the people who tour the historic ship zone with her or any of her volunteer docents to look, think, and engage in the process of intellectual discovery. She believes that museum staff should always "ask questions of the people that are on the tours. Have them find out for themselves. Have them look at the object and then ask them about it. If you can get kids interested when they're young, in learning and exploring and being open to new ideas, then they're going to carry that throughout their life."

What Life Was Like

Depending on what lesson they do with Ted in the classroom, students may learn what life was like as an immigrant on an English galleon in the seventeenth century or a pirate on the New Jersey coast in the eighteenth century. They may discover what effect being a citizen of America in the twenty first century has on the country's water supplies, and what effect the water supplies have on them.

On the ships, they always receive a lesson about what life was like in the U.S. Navy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Careful research, including interviews and oral histories conducted with veterans of the *Olympia* and the *Becuna* have given Natasha, Jim, Mike, and the other people who lead tours of the historic ship zone a good understanding of what life was like for the men who served on board the ships. They then pass this knowledge along, perhaps inspiring a young scholar to further study the complex culture of shipboard life in the U.S. Navy.

Learning what real people's lives were like is a lesson that cuts across age groups, genders, cultures, and socio-economic classes to connect with everyone. When you learn about "who lived here and what did they do and what was it like? Where did they eat, where did they sleep, then you can connect to the people that were on board. I don't want it to be just some old metal thing you walk through. I want them to think about things they've never considered before" (Natasha 2004). At Independence Seaport, learning about what life was like for sailors, immigrants, longshoremen, and others lets the museum visitors feel like they are really getting to know someone new. The experience is much more intimate than a visit to many other museums would be, and allows for

deeper connections with the people and cultures behind the material objects. There are several personal stories that are recorded and available to hear as part of the gallery exhibits, but unfortunately, many of the school-age visitors never hear them. There is no guidance from museum staff during the children's time in the galleries unless the teacher requests it ahead of time; consequently, the children ignore or misuse most of the exhibits.

Use of Space

The majority of the museum's space and materials, the exhibition galleries, were used very infrequently in the traditional school group visits I observed at ISM. One small group of fifth graders participated in an interactive lesson led by Anita in the What Floats Your Boat? area, at the special request of their teacher. This was the only group that spent any length of time on a guided activity in the galleries. Two groups participating in Ted's shipbuilding lesson sketched some of the ship models displayed in the commerce section, but they spent all of five minutes doing this.

Most of the groups did spend a half hour in "self-guided tours" of the gallery, but what I observed would not be defined by anyone as learning time well spent. The vast majority of students spent their gallery time in one of two places: the What Floats Your Boat? exhibit, and the gift shop. The What Floats Your Boat? exhibit can be an excellent forum for discovery and inquiry based learning, as demonstrated by Anita's special lesson. Without guidance, however, most of the students used the interactive exhibits simply as games and did not appear to be thinking about the science or logic behind any of it. The smaller children especially, such as the second graders from Cherry Hill,

climbed on the rocking boat and the shad skiff without a thought as to what the educational purpose of the materials might be. Museum staff or docents should be available to assist children and teachers during the gallery time, to make better use of the museum's resources and the students' time. The time spent in the gift shop is interesting, because the students often bought sailor hats, boatswain's whistles, or "pirate gems", showing an interest in the things that they had been learning about at the museum. Also, the propensity to purchase material items when visiting a museum reflects the basis of museums: the collection of material goods for display, education, and enjoyment.

The use of space at the museum is something that everyone I interviewed thought could be improved. They had conflicting opinions about what should be done, however, and there was little communication amongst staffers regarding these opinions. In Ted's view, the problem is primarily architectural and curatorial.

Museums are [for] object-oriented education. For teaching, galleries have to tell a story. I don't really care what the story is. Doesn't matter. Could be chronological, could be object-oriented, it could be anything you want. But it's got to have some scope, some sequence. You go in our galleries...and you go uuhhhhh. There's nothing engaging. So yeah. I'm not a real big fan of the galleries. You can make it work, but you shouldn't have to make it work (Ted 2004).

Anita, who is the director of the education department, finds that the problems come from several different areas, both within and without of the education department. "It's very frustrating" to her that the school groups don't use the galleries very much. "Teachers tend to do the same thing year after year after year. So unless you have someone who is actively trying to sell new programs, new ideas, they're not going to sign up for them." She recognizes that Ted doesn't like to use the gallery space, and that his

small collection of artifacts is enough for him to teach effectively, but she would still like to expand the scope of the education program to include more of the museum's resources. "The way [Ted] teaches, he would have trouble using the collection to teach. One thing Natasha's doing is trying to add to what Ted does. What Ted does is very important and significant and effective, but we would like the children to have a better access to the collection, the museum, and the ships" (Anita 2004).

The education department is trying to become a part of the solution to the dilemma over the unused resources at Independence Seaport. Its members "serve on an exhibition development team to think about how exhibitions can be developed that are more accessible to audiences.

That's [Anita's] job on the exhibition team, to serve as the educator. To think about how the spaces are going to be used and how the objects are going to be presented in a way that is going to appeal to the people" (Anita 2004).

Physically interactive exhibits, especially those that engage more than one of the five senses, like *What Floats Your Boat?* tend to be popular both with museums and with museum visitors. Exhibitions that correspond to educational programs or tap into popular culture, such as a new summer exhibit on pirates, are also high on the popularity list, as are exhibits that cut across social divisions such as race and class like the immigration exhibit. Anita also said that "my job is to try and think 'well, how can a program become an actual piece of an exhibition?' A stand-alone thing that can help the audience learn in a different way about what the exhibit represents. Knowing a little bit about how people learn and how people look at things helps a lot" (Anita 2004). An educational viewpoint is very important when designing new exhibits, if they are to be effective at expressing

information clearly and memorably. Incorporating the educational programs as components of new exhibits is also a good way to begin bringing the underused gallery spaces back into the school visits. Some teachers have created their own activities for their students to complete in the galleries, in an effort to be sure that their own needs are met. Sometimes self-designed activities are what is needed, but they should not be the only option for teachers who want to make use of the galleries.

Meeting the Needs of the Teachers

In order to continue functioning as a viable museum education program, Independence Seaport Museum's education staff needs to make sure that the programs and services they offer are meeting the needs of the public school and independent school teachers who bring their students to the museum. In designing lesson plans for the museum's programs, Pennsylvania state standards and Philadelphia public school curricula are taken into account. "Everything we do, we make it fit into the curriculum. All our lessons have standards that go along with them" (Natasha 2004). As Ted phrases it, "We're a service oriented industry." As a result of the museum's dependence on school groups, teachers have more power than most populations when it comes to determining the museum's future programs. The museum offers programs for children in grades 1-12, but those in grades 4-8 are far more likely to come than the older or younger children, so many of the lessons are geared for that age group. Adjustments are, of course, made when younger or older children visit. "Lessons are usually based on exhibits we've had or on requests that were made. Generally, I ask teachers 'what are you doing [in the classroom]? What lessons are interesting to you?'" For instance, the environment is

currently a big issue in many schools' curricula. "You go to enough teacher meetings and you find out that people are really into environment, because it's all in the curriculum. Alright, I get the message. We'll do environment" (Ted 2004).

Environmental Studies and Pennsylvania history are currently both key topics in many fourth through eighth grade classrooms. Traditionally, "lots of schools in fourth through eighth grade deal with some aspect of Pennsylvania history, and they have to integrate that into the curriculum" (Anita 2004). The museum, as a history museum, has had plenty of success relying on this, but recently ISM has seen an opportunity to gain new teacher-supporters through the math and science areas. Anita speaks with many teachers and administrators, and has been hearing of the teachers' desires for help with the new increase of emphasis on math and science in the schools:

We are discovering that math and science programs are a particular need for the schools. They're trying to make sure that they integrate that heavily into the curriculum. So, for us, we want to do programs that really meet what the schools need. So if we develop more science programs, even though we're more of a history museum, then we're more likely to be helpful and useful.

As a result of these observations, the museum has created science-themed programs such as Urban Ecology, Whales and Whalers, and The Science of Boats. (See Appendix B for descriptions of these programs.) These programs do not just cover science, however; they also explore facets of technology, economics, geography, history, and teamwork.

One of the beauties of a maritime museum is that it is interdisciplinary: its topical areas spread across many academic disciplines. The museum's collections and staff cover topics as diverse, and yet interrelated, as the literature of *Treasure Island* and the ecology of the deep sea, the social history of immigration and the economics of the China trade,

the technology of steam engines and the chemistry of pollution. These themes are all present in one or more of the many educational programs offered by the museum, but in the end it boils down to this wisdom from Ted: "What did the teacher want, and when the teacher walked out of here, did the teacher get what the teacher wanted? Museum education supports the classroom teacher. If you're just doing it to affect you, or because you think it's neat, guess what? They don't have to come." The classroom teachers should be aware of the needs and wants of their students, and pick a lesson appropriately, because regardless of what Ted or the classroom teachers want, it is ultimately up to the students to choose to be engaged in the lesson and make the visit worthwhile.

On the ships, Natasha will customize a tour for a teacher if they let her know ahead of time what is being studied in the classroom, and she is also willing to respond to student interests while on the tour. "Sometimes they'll call ahead and say they're studying something. If they're studying something I throw more things from that lesson in. Sometimes you can get from [the students'] questions what they're interested in" (Natasha 2004). Jim, the docent who helps out with school group tours every Friday, is also willing to work specialized information into his tours. On one tour that I observed, the students were studying the Spanish-American War in the classroom, so he went into much greater detail about the war, the battles, and the weapons than he usually did.

Seven of the nine teachers I spoke with informed me that their visit was a supplement to work they were doing in their home classrooms. This surprised me at first, because based on my own experiences, maritime topics are often not covered in class. Most of these curriculum-related visits were parts of interdisciplinary units and not exclusively maritime topics, but the ingenuity of the teachers in applying the museum's

resources to their lessons was amazing. One teacher from Frankford used the Explorers lesson and a guided activity in *What Floats Your Boat?* To expand her class' understanding of the Vikings they were studying. Another teacher, from Moorestown, used the immigration lesson to begin a unit on ethnic diversity and heritage. A dedicated teacher from Mt. Airy used the museum's resources to help her class conduct experiments about the chemistry, physics and ecology of water: something they would not have been able to accomplish at their home school due to a lack of materials. The two groups from California integrated a lesson about pirates and privateers into their study of the American Revolution. (See Appendix E for maps of the teachers' home schools.) The teachers are able to work with Ted, Natasha, and Anita to make the lessons as unique and as successful as possible for each class that comes to visit the museum.

This ability to communicate with all of the various teachers and educators, and then follow through, is extremely valuable at a museum. In order for the museum staff and the visitors to have truly successful teaching and learning experiences, the museum staff must be willing to accommodate all of the various publics they serve.

Bring on the Girl Scouts

One of the important public audiences served by Independence Seaport is the Girl Scouts. Museums operate on the weekends in order to provide service for those who work or go to school during the week. Consequently, the museum staff is often required to work on the weekends. The education programs run on the weekends are more relaxed in mood and pace than the traditional school programs offered during the week, because

there are not as many children and the time constraints are not as strict. Natasha's and Anita's favorite weekend programs are the Girl Scout programs. Anita says

When we get frustrated with the school groups because they aren't coming or they're coming in too many numbers where we can do things in an interesting way, the Girl Scout programs make up for it. They want to be here, and they come in groups of ten. It makes us want to come in on a weekend. We do as many hands-on things as we can do; the kind of stuff we'd love to do with school groups but we have too many kids.

The Museum has a relationship with three Girl Scout Councils: two in Pennsylvania, and one in New Jersey. This wide network allows for the greater possibility of a diverse group of people coming together to learn at the museum. Scouts of all ages come in on the weekends to use the resources and experts at the museum to help them earn badges on such things as the science of water, folk arts, and what goes on behind the scenes at a museum. These weekend programs typically have much smaller numbers of students attending them: just a few troops at a time. This makes it easier to use the gallery space and do more hands-on lessons. These programs often involve such things as learning to use a sextant in the navigation exhibit, using the interactives in *What Floats Your Boat?*, or hearing the stories of immigrants in the immigration gallery. The Girl Scouts seem to like the programs as much as the museum staff does. According to Natasha, the "Girl Scout programs are popular, so I think we're going to do more of them in the future."

The Greater Community

The Girl Scouts and school groups that form so much of the museum's audience are parts of the greater Philadelphia community. Although it sometimes seems that

Independence Seaport Museum hides down on Penn's Landing, waiting for the busloads of children to show up at its door, it is in fact an institution with vibrant connections throughout the greater Philadelphia community and beyond. They have a good working relationship with many of the other museums in the area, and often works in partnership with them to create quality programming for the many residents of the region. The museum sends representatives to the "museum council, and they meet with other sites in the area and plan joint programs. We're working with the Philadelphia Museum of Art on an exhibit on African Art that they're doing, to try and be a part of the greater community" (Natasha 2004). The staff of the education department has found that having partnerships "is a very effective way of getting the word out and providing effective programming" (Anita 2004).

As a means of creating partnerships and strengthening the bonds with the Philadelphia area teaching community, the museum provides several teacher workshops every year. Pennsylvania-certified teachers are required to fulfill a certain number of "Act 48 hours" every year in order to maintain their certification. Providing this service to the teachers is another way of connecting with the greater community while helping the region's maritime heritage find its way into the classrooms. Because these teachers come primarily from the public school systems, it helps ensure that connections are not lost and city children are not denied an important bit of their heritage while the Philadelphia School District tries to sort itself out. Anita confirms that the museum tries to conduct "as many teacher workshops as we can" each year, and that teachers who attend the workshops at the museum often return to bring their students for a visit.

Despite the success with organized groups of adults and children, Independence Seaport Museum struggles with reaching adults and children who are not already coming to the museum. According to Anita, the museum has "a tendency to only bring in out of town, male, adult audiences." She speculates that the museum attracts primarily out-of-towners because the museum is a tourist spot not familiar to many locals. This may indicated an imbalance in the levels or effectiveness of advertising in the different markets. Her theory about the primarily adult male audience is that Americans tend to associate maritime jobs and hobbies with men, and women and children feel that there will not be anything at the museum to interest them (Anita 2004).

It is a major concern of the museum to make Philadelphians aware of the museum, and that "there are issues and aspects of this museum that can apply to anyone. That's our job is to get it out there that really, it's not all technology, that there's human interest stories, there are women's stories, and there are stories that kids would be interested in." The museum has a very strong human component, with most exhibits paying tribute to the people who worked at the various maritime trades or who travelled across huge oceans and up long rivers to new homes. Anita feels that if the human connections available at Independence Seaport were more heavily promoted, the museum might attract more women and children (Anita 2004). The educational programs at Independence Seaport are strongly guided by a respect for the culture of the seafarer and the desire to share its rich heritage with all people, whether landlubber or mariner, man, woman, or child.

The Staff as a United Front?

Unfortunately for the achievement of the museum's goals, there are very different views of the relationships between the people the various departments they work for at Independence Seaport Museum. Anita feels that her goals are not shared by those outside of the education department, and that makes her job that much harder to accomplish. "I honestly think that the museum doesn't realize as much of its educational purpose as it needs to be. Everybody's really focused on increasing the visibility. I'm not sure everybody's thinking about it in terms of making it a better educational resource for the public. I think it'd be nice if we had more effort in making it a better place, and then it's going to be easier to sell" (Anita 2004).

Natasha feels, like Anita does, that there is a strong sense of camaraderie and teamwork among the staff of the education department, and that they all have similar visions for where the museum should be and should be heading. She also sees that there are discrepancies among the goals of all of the departments at the museum. Unlike Anita, however, Natasha sees this variety of opinions as a positive thing. "At every meeting there needs to be someone standing up for the collections. There needs to be someone who says, 'you know what, the bottom line is that we need to bring in this many people.' There needs to be someone who says, 'you know, people really need to learn.' As long as we're able to work toward a compromise, I think disagreement is good" (Natasha 2004).

Elaine has also noticed that individual departments often seem to want to work in isolation from one another, but has recently been pleasantly surprised by the ability of a large and diverse group of staff to agree on a statement of the five things most important to the museum. People seem to be excited about being involved in strategic planning for

the short and long term, and are beginning to break down old departmental barriers, with the aim of working together as a unified force to confront the museum's future (Elaine 2004).

The Tension of the Future

The museum staff has recently held strategic planning sessions to look at the future of the museum, and education remains high atop the list of their goals. They discussed:

The five things that are the most important to the museum, why it exists and why we do what we do. Number one is excellence in preservation, exhibits, and education. Two is donor cultivation. Three is audience development. Four is earned income. Five is reputation, which is related to number one. We bring it back in again because it is really important, and does the first phrase cover *everything*? (Elaine 2004).

Some of the staff members are concerned with their ability to actually bring these ideas to fruition, highlighting some of the difficulties and politics involved with the running of a museum. As Natasha, the Ship's Programs Coordinator, says,

[We're] talking about our goals for the museum, where we want to go, and a lot of that we can't really do. It's the job of the board to really guide what direction the museum is going in. It's the job of the board to set policies and stuff, and it's the job of the staff to work out how. So you need to work together with your board (Natasha 2004).

Nobody that I talked to at the museum seemed to be all that interested in working with the board, however. The few comments made about the board by Anita, Ted and Natasha were directed toward the fact that the board is primarily interested in visitation and numbers. That the members of the board do not share the staff's desire to focus on the creation of quality educational programming. The bottom line is that "we are being

evaluated on the number of kids that are coming through the door, not on the quality of the programs," says Anita. The administration (the director) can report to the board that "We reached out to 25,000 kids this year. Isn't that great?' Well ok, but did they learn anything?" (Anita 2004).

The students of all ages who visit Independence Seaport Museum each year do learn something, judging by the fact that those who happen to attend one of Ted's programs twice often know the answers to all of his questions, even a year or two later. The repeat visitors also tend to have favorite parts of the ships that they can't wait to point out to the first-timers that are with them, proving that finding a human connection in those big pieces of metal is possible. It can only be hoped that they share the same level of enthusiasm that they display while at the museum once they are at home, and that they will bring their memories of their visits to Independence Seaport Museum with them into the future, sharing freely with others as they go.

Unfortunately, the museum's ability to bring quality programming to these enthusiastic students is controlled by economics. Funding plays a large role at museums such as Independence Seaport, and I will be examining this in the next chapter.

Everybody's Talking

One theme that dominated many of the conversations I had with people who work at Independence Seaport Museum was the economics of museums. This fact of life seemed to permeate all corners of the museum, affecting the education department in myriad ways. Although they are not-for-profit entities engaged in public service, museums are businesses with budgets and business plans to create and follow. Life as a museum is tough, particularly at a small specialty museum like ISM. As Ted so bluntly stated what everyone else danced around, "Right now we're in serious trouble."

The museum has performed poorly for the last couple of years in terms of both visitation numbers and financial donations. It turns out that this is not a problem unique to Independence Seaport Museum, but one that has affected museums all over the region and indeed, across the country. The national economic recession of 2002 and 2003, coupled with the 2002 upheaval in the already-troubled School District of Philadelphia, has led to distress at many local museums. Small museums such as Independence Seaport that rely heavily on school group visitation have been among the hardest hit. The tougher competition for the ever-decreasing pools of funds has also made it difficult for museums to create quality new programs to draw in visitors.

Visitation and The Big Move

Visitation, the number of people who visit a museum each year, is a very important financial issue for museums. Museums derive some of their funds from the ticket sales; also, many funding agencies require a certain number of visitors before they will consent to give grants for projects, programs, and research (Natasha 2004). Museum boards of trustees also like to see large numbers of visitors, and the jobs of museum staffers and administration are sometimes in danger if the numbers are not good.

The size and quality of the museum affects its ability to draw visitors, as most people are far more likely to visit a large, well-reputed museum. At the same time, the size and quality of the museum depend on funding, which is often derived from visitation numbers. This is a vicious cycle that is almost constantly in flux, dictating much of what can or cannot be done at any particular museum. According to Ted, "It's very hard to find out exactly how many people show up. Every museum lies about their visitation. You always take 10% off simply because that's what museums do. If you get low numbers, your board starts to ask very embarrassing questions like 'what are you doing wrong?'" (Ted 2004). That is an important question to ask, but the answers are not always obvious, and even when they are, they are often difficult to fix.

Most of the staff at the museum agree that moving to the Penn's Landing location from the smaller building on Chestnut Street was, in general, good for increasing the museum's audience and visitation. The new location is much larger, is visible to anyone travelling southbound on I-95, and has allowed for the acquisition and use of the *Olympia* and the *Becuna*. The staff and the exhibits, and consequently the museum's audience, have all grown since the move nine years ago. There is the feeling among some at the

museum that not enough is being done to keep up Independence Seaport's visibility, however. "Well, there was this big upshot when we first moved in and then it dropped off. And that was eight years ago. So we haven't kept up our visibility. That's clear" (Anita 2004). The museum currently advertises primarily in local parenting magazines such as *MetroKids Pennsylvania* and *Curious Parents: Delaware Valley*, and through mailings sent to teachers and museum members. This strategy is not working well, however; perhaps advertisements in regular newspapers or on the radio would better help to attract new visitors.

The current audience of Independence Seaport Museum is primarily made up of people who plan visits to the museum, rather than people who wander in off the street. This is comforting in that it seems that there are a fair number of people who want to come to the museum. On the other hand, the lack of walk-in visitors means that much of the audience is school groups and people who are on planned vacations, generally not members of the local community that is so important to the museum. It also means that tourists who did not know of Independence Seaport or did not plan it into their schedule will likely miss out on the museum entirely, and the museum will miss them.

At the old location, which is now the Liberty Museum, "We were right in front of Franklin Court. We were in the heart of the tourist trade, and you would get walk-ins without half trying. You're right in the heart of Independence Park" (Ted 2004). The Penn's Landing location is clearly not as conducive to walk-in visitors, so the museum needs to increase its publicity campaigns if it wants to bring in more local citizens. This increased effort to expand visitation is particularly important as the museum community fights off the economic recession of the past two years.

9/11 and the Economic Recession

The terrible tragedies of September 11, 2001 and the ensuing war on terror have contributed heavily to the recent economic downturn in this country. The past two years have been especially difficult for institutions that thrive on tourism and travel, such as museums. Surprisingly, Philadelphia was initially not a part of this decline in tourism. Eventually, however, the upsurge in visitation leveled off and the declining stock market caught up with the region's tourism industry.

For the first six months or so following 9/11, Independence Seaport Museum and many other Philadelphia tourist attractions got remarkably large numbers of visitors and did quite well. Many bus tours, school groups, and families that would otherwise have gone to New York or Washington came to Philadelphia instead. There were several reasons for this: there was far less fear of an attack happening in Philadelphia, it is geographically well-situated to take advantage of those who would otherwise have gone to one of the other two cities, and the large number of historic and patriotic places to visit were compelling to many those who still wished to travel (Ted 2004 and Elaine 2004).

In the spring of 2002, however, the museum's visitation began to drop back to normal levels. A continued decline was a result of many people's disinclination to travel due to continued fear of terrorism and especially to the swiftly deteriorating condition of the national economy. As Elaine said,

With the stock market and such there was a downshift in attendance and everything. Last year was one of the worst years we've had in a long time. We're trying to recover from that, and I think we will. I think it was just a bad year across the board. Retail wise, other museums, tourism-- everything was really bad last year. That was a two year

slump, last year being the worst of the two years (Elaine 2004).

Most of the museum's spending money comes from an investment endowment, and that endowment has decreased fairly dramatically over the past two years because of the unfavorable condition of the stock market. "It's hard, because our budget has gone down and down and down. Like everybody. We've cut back a lot of staff, we've cut back across the board. In all departments there have been cutbacks" (Anita 2004). The decreasing budget makes it difficult to create and run new programs, and even to keep some pre-existing ones running due to the loss of staff, the increasing difficulty in purchasing materials such as knot boards, and a more intensive focus on increasing visitation rather than increasing the quality of programming. Increasing program quality is important: if the museum's programs do not change, visitation will decrease because people will not make repeat visits to boring or stagnant institutions.

To add to the museum's frustration, around the time of 9/11 the building developer pulled out of what was to be a major project on Penn's Landing.

There was supposed to be a huge entertainment complex built right here on the plaza. That's Penn's Landing [pointing out the window] and they have festivals on the plaza in the summer, but the main thing that the Penn's Landing Corporation existed for was to try to develop the waterfront. There was supposed to be a huge entertainment complex, the Please Touch Museum [now located on N 21st Street] was supposed to be a part of it, an aerial tram was supposed to go across the river, there was supposed to be an ice skating rink on the roof of the complex, and it just fell apart. The developer pulled out after long delays (Elaine 2004).

When the museum first moved down to the waterfront, the staff and administration were under the impression that they were to be the first piece of a rejuvenation effort for the Penn's Landing area. There is a lovely Hyatt Regency Hotel right next to the museum, but after many delays, the rest of the projects seemed to have ended even before the developer pulled out. The city has recently started the process of development again. They took bids, and have narrowed it down to two final developers: Founder's Square Partners and Tower Investments (Penn's Landing Corp. 2004). The museum is excited about the prospect of new neighbors that could help draw business and visitors down to the waterfront, but there is a concern that "While it's under construction, it could be really bad for us because it could be hard for people to get here. We just don't know. We'll have to wait and see" (Elaine 2004). While the museum waits for the visitation numbers to climb again, it has to seek funding from elsewhere to help pay for the educational programs and the other operational costs of running a museum

Funding

Because of the recent economic recession, some of the funding that used to be available is no longer there. Also, as times got tough, more institutions were in need of the funding. As a result, "There's no money. And because there used to be, we could go get small grants to underwrite programming, but now everybody's going after the small grants because there's no big grants out there. We're competing with the Pennsylvania Ballet and the Orchestra and the Academy and the Franklin and the Art Museum. It's getting a little hairy out there" (Ted 2004). Independence Seaport Museum has recently acquired a new Vice President for Development who, according to Natasha, is very

enthusiastic and optimistic about getting new grants, so they are hopeful that his work will help them out in the race for funds.

A big problem with funding as far as the education department is concerned is that "A lot of funders don't want to do the school-based programming" (Ted 2004). Many funding agencies feel that their money should be spent on programs that are for everyone, and that schools frequently already receive money from governments and private companies. "I don't understand that. I think the deal is that if the school wants to come, they should pay for it. But that's, well, that's simply not true" (Ted 2004). Many agencies do contribute funds to schools, but instead of giving it directly to the schools or to programs that work with schools, they give it to the bureaucrats at the top of the system. The money is then often spent on nonacademic issues and items (Ted 2004).

The concern for finances and visitation stretches beyond the schools to the other public audiences of the museum. According to Elaine, Independence Seaport Museum doesn't "currently have a lot of business sponsors. We're trying to do more of that. We get some corporate donations, but not a lot." One example of a corporation that does sponsor education at the museum is the PECO Energy Company. "They give us money and say you just have to do one event a month" (Natasha 2004). The museum uses this donation to support its PECO Energy Family Saturdays at the Seaport programs. These programs are hosted by the education department on the first Saturday of each month, and consist of hands-on activities designed around a different theme every month (See Appendix C for examples). These programs are one of the museum's strategies to bring in young families from the area in an effort to further diversify its audience. Because the company provides the funding for the program, they get their name printed on the sign

that goes in the lobby and in the brochure; PECO doesn't seem to mind that the programs are often not well attended.

According to Elaine, Independence Seaport Museum receives funding primarily "from foundations, individuals, and government." Wealthy, generous patrons are favorites of every museum, and this one is no exception. The majority of funding comes from foundations and government sources, however. "Government funding can mean anything really. It can come from the Pennsylvania Historic Museums Commission. Or the National Endowment for the Humanities is a good funding source--even the city of Philadelphia" (Elaine 2004).

"There are certain places where we apply every year. For a long term strategy, we're going to go to the National Endowment for the Humanities--for any big exhibit sort of plans. Our exhibit planning is funded from the Pew Foundation. They have implementation money for the exhibits as well, but the NEH would be the match for it" (Elaine 2004) The NEH is an independent agency that funds education, research, and preservation efforts, but it is associated with the federal government and its budget is part of the federal budget. This has helped the NEH's funds to stay fairly steady over the past few years in spite of the recession. The agency devises guidelines for applying for funding, and it is up to the museums to present programs based in the humanities. "The closer you meet the guidelines, the more likely you are to get the money" (Elaine 2004).

One funding source that makes it fairly easy to meet the guidelines is the Pennsylvania Historic Museums Commission. "We also always apply to the PHMC--they have a couple of different programs--whenever we qualify. They have programs that have to do with preservation, and we apply for them for Olympia in particular"

(Elaine 2004). The PHMC is one of the most reliable sources of funding for museums like Independence Seaport. "The PHMC, they're about funding museums in Pennsylvania, so in most cases if you're a museum in Pennsylvania and you're pretty responsible, you're going to get some kind of money from them." Being responsible with the money that is received is key in continuing to secure money from any good source of funds (Elaine 2004).

Having accreditation from the American Association of Museums, as Independence Seaport Museum does, is also a huge asset when applying for funding. A position as an institution accredited by the AAM implies that the museum has been engaged in rigorous self- and peer-review processes. It is the primary assurance of quality and responsibility in the field of museums (AAM Website 2004). Accreditation holds practical benefits for the museums as well. As Elaine put it, "If you're not accredited by AAM, you're going to have a hard time fundraising." Being listed as a nonprofit organization also implies responsibility and planning because "In order to be a nonprofit you have to follow certain rules. You have to have financial audits and prove that you're responsible with your money. You have to prove that you do strategic planning. Most funders want to see your strategic plan and want to understand that you have a map, that you know where you're going" (Elaine 2004). As discussed in the definition of a museum given earlier, non-profit status is essential to being a museum, so financial planning and responsibility are key components that need to be addressed by every museum that wants to maintain a good reputation, as ISM does.

Something That Finances Everything

Given the fixation with visitation and money expressed so often, one of the comments made in an interview that surprised me the most was when Natasha said to me: "Sure, sometimes we have a group of nine or a group of ten, but that's for optimum learning! You need to have that balance. Not every program that you do has to make money" (Natasha 2004). Almost every other comment I heard regarding small enrollment numbers for any program also involved a statement about how small numbers were fun and great for teaching and learning, but that wasn't what the administration wanted. There was always a push for more students, more visitors. Natasha made a few of these comments herself at other times, but when came to the topic through a discussion of idealism, opportunity, and satisfaction, she admitted that the situation was not as bleak as everyone often made it out to be.

We do programs, and sometimes they don't make money. Just because each one doesn't make money, that's not bad. But you need something that finances everything. So you look to your larger goals. What are your goals for your department? We're not here to make money on every program. If it's educationally sound, and it's really good and useful and people are learning, you can do something else that maybe compromises a little on the learning--that's a little more entertainment than education--and that pays the bills for you to do other things (Natasha).

In support of this statement, she offered some examples of programs that are more educational and ones that are more of a blockbuster type:

We do this play called Immigration, which didn't make as much money as we would have liked, because it's expensive to put on a play. I don't know if we're going to do it again, but the people that came really enjoyed it. There was a period at the end where students could ask questions of the actors and talk to them. It opened up a

really good dialogue, I think. But then we do things like this summer, we're doing our pirates summer. We want it to be educational, you know, have them learn about what were pirates really like, but it's entertainment. You know that that will bring in people. Everyone likes pirates. You do programs like that, that get the people in and get your numbers up for grants and stuff, and you can do the other stuff too. Will they be learning as much as if they came in for Bill's pirates lesson? No. But they'll be having a fun time. And if you can get people in the museum, maybe they'll stay around or come back for something more educational.

And that's the key in museums. Getting people to come back. If a fun lesson about pirates is going to bring people in to the museum, who is going to be the one to try to stop that? Anything that can serve as a "hook", to get people interested in learning about their maritime heritage, is important and should not be overlooked. Topics such as pirates appeal to such diverse groups of people that these exhibits may help increase the diversity of the museum's audience.

Philadelphia Public Schools

For many years, the Philadelphia public school community has been the single largest group of people served by the museum. This diverse group of students and teachers contributes heavily to the museum's visitation. "The next largest school district or student group would be Montgomery County. I think they've got like 88,000 [students]. Which sounds like a lot of people, but Philadelphia Public has probably well over [200,000]" (Ted 2004). Clearly, not all of these students visit the museum, or any museum at all, with their classes each year. The number that do, however, has dramatically decreased in recent years.

In July of 2002, Paul Vallas was appointed CEO of the Philadelphia schools, and he has instituted some sweeping reforms in an effort to improve performance at the district's many schools. His appointment followed the state's takeover of the school district in December of 2001 and the privatization of some of the city's schools in early 2002. "There's been this big transition, and funding and budgets and all of that has been in question. As part of that, field trips were totally cut. And again, that isn't just us, it's across the board. All museums in Philadelphia. Anybody that was dependent on that kind of visitation. And we were" (Elaine 2004).

A consequence of being so reliant on school groups is that the museum is very busy in the spring and summer months (the end of March to the end of August), but less so during the fall and winter. This phenomenon is generally spoken of as "field trip season" in the museum world. Most teachers bring their students on field trips during the spring months for several reasons. At that point in the year, they have had time to get to know their students, they have established themes in the curriculum that may be addressed at the museum visit, and they feel more free to spend their small classroom allowances at the end of the year. Traditional class trips are also taken at the end of the school year. Bus tours, family vacationers, and summer camp groups are large populations that also take advantage of the warm weather and free time traditionally found in these months (Ted 2004).

The absence of large numbers of school groups from the Philadelphia public schools is felt especially strongly during the slow period that runs in opposition to field trip season, from September into March. "The deal with the public schools is they'll come in the end of September through the end of March. They're the ones that fill in

when no one else comes in" (Ted 2004). Unfortunately, for the museum, that doesn't happen much anymore.

As concerned about the situation as everyone is, as a former Philadelphia public school teacher, Ted has the strongest feelings. He has hope that the Philadelphia schools will get back on their feet, but he is not enthralled with the route that they are taking to get there. "Vallas is telling [the teachers] what to do from morning til night and he's got all these programs. What's happening is there's no permission and no money. You don't have the permission to leave the room, and you don't have the money to do so even if you did have permission." Ted is frustrated not only with Vallas, but also with the providers of funding: "Instead of giving it to the school district, they give it to Vallas and he puts their name on all the books they hand out. We're giving pencils and paper where before we gave field trips. I think that's a sad commentary" (Ted 2004).

Rather than give up the Philadelphia schools as a lost cause, however, the museum is keeping faith, "hanging in there, trying to become a part of the solution. We want to serve Philadelphia schools because we're in Philadelphia, and it's important to us, but we just have to be patient and let them get through their process. I think they'll be back" (Elaine 2004). The museum is continuing to keep in touch with the people they know in the Philadelphia School District, and is still endeavoring to make new contacts in the hope that some will find a way to come visit. The museum wants the schools to rely on them as much as they rely on the schools. ISM is helping as much as they can with the financial end of the schools' problem: "Regular programs are I think \$6.00. I don't know about Camden, but for Philly schools sometimes that's a stretch. If it's about finance, we sometimes have the ability to discount. We have some money to subsidize

school visits and we are able to offer a couple of dollars off. We get a grant for \$20,000 to subsidize school visits, and then we're able to offer that to the schools" (Elaine 2004). The education department is also taking an active role: "Ted and Anita are very much in there trying to volunteer to help them write curriculum, and kind of, you know, write us into the curriculum. To be a support to the schools and the kids: it's not just self-serving" (Elaine 2004). The suburban and independent schools in the area do not require this sort of support from the museum; it is good that the schools are organized and well-funded, but the situation does not cultivate the close working relationship that ISM has with the Philadelphia public schools.

The Suburbs

The museum is trying to address the absence of the Philadelphia public school groups by trying much more vigorously to connect with the other schools in Philadelphia: the charter schools and the private schools. They are also looking to the suburban schools to fill the gap and expand the range of children who benefit from the museum's programs. This seems to be working, as Ted has acknowledged: "We're doing well from the suburbs. At least we did last year." Five of the seven local school groups I observed at the museum this spring were from private schools on the geographical fringes of the city or from public and private schools in suburban areas.

The greater effort that has recently been put into getting the word out to the suburbs may have economic benefits for the museum as well.

The suburban market is one that can afford higher end programs, so we market the higher end programs to them. For River Adventure on the Delaware [an all day educational program conducted on a schooner sailing the

river], we have funding for subsidized visits from schools, but the cost of that program is \$23.00, which is quite expensive for a field trip. Philadelphia public schools couldn't afford that, but a lot of suburban schools can spend that kind of money on a field trip. The Riverfest is also a more expensive trip, but it's a full day of education. Wherever schools can afford that kind of program, we'll try to sell it to them (Elaine 2004).

These more intensive, higher quality programs cost more money for the museum to put on, but if they are able to get good grants, much of that cost could be covered. The regular three hour programs are also high quality, but because the more expensive ones are much longer and provide access to wonderful outside resources, they are on a whole different level of interactive museum education programs. The regular three hour programs are still offered to the suburban schools just as they are offered to the city schools, for those who are not able to spend the extra money or time or who are looking for a program with a specific theme to connect with their classroom work. These three hour sessions often require the assistance of a volunteer docent in order to maintain the high quality expected by the museum and the public; the longer, more intense programs tend to require multiple volunteer docents to carry them off smoothly.

Volunteer Docents

The volunteer docents are an extremely valuable asset to Independence Seaport, and to all museums fortunate enough to have them. Natasha acknowledged this several times, proclaiming "I am so thankful for all of my volunteer docents!" There are twenty two docents at ISM, although a few of them are not actively volunteering at this time. They lead tours of the historic ship zone, do hands-on activities at weekend programs,

and work with the Scouts. They will also be leading interactive lessons on the ships and in the galleries when the busy field trip season gets into full swing. Anita agreed that the "volunteers are crucial, if we are going to be able to be effective at all" when hundreds of children come each day in the spring and summer. There is no way that Ted, Anita, and Natasha could handle three hundred children on their own, and actually have any quality learning taking place. The docents allow the museum to be an effective educational institution for hundreds of children every day, despite having just three paid educators on staff.

The other wonderful thing about the volunteers at a specialty museum such as a maritime museum is that they are often people who love the place and the subject matter and know it really well even before they begin volunteering. Anita admits that many of the docents, who are often Navy veterans or maritime history buffs, know more about the ships than any of the paid museum staff does. After they are trained in strategies for teaching, they are one of the best resources the museum has to offer. And they come for free.

The Mailing List

One thing that certainly does not come for free is publicity: one of the major challenges that everyone at Independence Seaport mentioned to me was the issue of getting the word out. The museum has a good reputation, but only among those who have heard of it, of course. The museum, because it is relatively small, is not very well known. Most of the staff is at a loss for what to do about the problem. The museum doesn't actually have a marketing person, which is fairly unusual for a museum, or any

business, because the only way to keep the institution alive is to get people to come. The lack of a marketing staff is more common for small institutions, however. Anita and the group sales contact person, Sarah, do the majority of the marketing. Neither of them is trained to do this, so nearly everything is an experiment. Anita also acknowledged "We don't have a very big budget for advertising," which makes any sort of campaign difficult. This year, they spent "most of the education budget" on one thing: a mass postcard mailing to educators. "We bought a mailing list from an organization that gathers teacher names, educator names. Depending on how much money you have, you can buy half the list, or a certain number of names. So we essentially bought 10,000 names for unlimited use for one year" (Anita 2004).

According to most statistical models, the mailing will only result in a one percent return rate, but Anita is hopeful. "Unless you get it in the teachers' hands, they're not going to sign up for it. You have to get permission from the principal to go, but the teacher has to want to do it. We find that if we just send it to the school office, it just gets in a big pile like you see on my desk and no teacher ever sees it" (Anita 2004). None of the teachers that I spoke to at Independence Seaport mentioned learning about the museum or deciding to come back to the museum because they saw a mailing. The one percent statistic has not held true so far, and it seems that the mass mailing strategy may have been a waste of time, money and materials that should not be repeated. Other publicity strategies employed by competing museums, such as poster in train stations and radio advertisements seem to be a more effective way of increasing visitation.

The Competition

Being museum lovers, it is difficult for most of the staff to think about the other museums in the area as competition, but it is a fact of life in a museum. "Leisure time is precious for everyone. Everybody wants to do a lot of different things and they're not necessarily going to come to a museum more than once a year. Once every five years. You know, that's the reality of it" (Anita 2004). The museum staff needs to find a way to make sure that their museum is the one that is being visited. Anita voiced the opinion of most of the staff when she said "I'd rather not think about it as competition, because everybody should go to all these places; they're all completely different and unique in their own way. But we have to try and get ourselves out there."

The museums that are considered to be the biggest competition are "The big ones. The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Academy of Natural Sciences, the Franklin Institute. They're the ones that draw the largest numbers of people. I think they have more resources. They do. They have bigger exhibits, they have a larger staff for programming. They just can do more and offer more" (Anita 2004); these bigger institutions also have better publicity. It seems that the only way to compete well is to become a better museum with more resources. To do that, Independence Seaport is going to have to "focus on the things that make us unique and take better advantage of them" (Anita 2004). Perhaps if this is done, the museum will be able to focus on what it really wants to--sharing the maritime heritage of the Delaware Valley with as many children as possible--and not on how many kids they *need* to reach in order to stay alive. The numbers game is one that needs to be played at museums, as funding is so intricately intertwined with the institution's ability to serve its publics. These publics are very

diverse groups of people, and the ability to draw in people from many of Philadelphia's sub-communities is not only vital to the economic existence of the museum, but also to its relationship with the greater Philadelphia community. In the next chapter, I will discuss how Independence Seaport both serves and fails to serve the area's diverse sub-communities.

Port of Culture

Independence Seaport indicates in its mission statement that it serves "diverse audiences", but does not explain what it means by this. I believe that there are many forms of diversity that apply to museum audiences: ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic diversity, as well as diversity of interests, political opinions, and values. Essentially, there is diversity in all components of culture here in Philadelphia. Throughout history, seaports have been known as cultural centers. The constantly shifting populations, with people from all geographical locations and socioeconomic classes created a healthy atmosphere of diversity, and often, acceptance of that diversity.

Ports functioned, and still do although to a lesser extent, as centers for the exchange of goods, information, ideas, and cultural traditions. Whether brought by visiting seamen or immigrants who stayed in the area, various foods, customs, foreign words, materials, skills, ideas, and values from many cultures around the world found their way to Philadelphia and stayed here. It would seem to be the duty of a museum examining the maritime heritage of the Philadelphia area to provide information on this important function of a seaport. Independence Seaport seems to be beginning to try to do this, but is not proceeding as quickly or as successfully as one might hope. They do a fairly good job speaking to immigration as a cultural factor, but an exhibit on culture and on the contributions of people who are not part of the majority Euro-American culture in this country is certainly lacking at the museum.

Point of View

Independence Seaport Museum has a primarily male, adult audience, according to Anita. Over the course of many visits to the museum, I have also concluded that the majority of the visitors not coming with school groups are not only adult males, but are also Caucasian. This is fitting as the majority of the exhibits at the museum, as at most museums in this country, are focused around a Euro-American view of history. There are some examples where this is not the case, such as a video showing an African American Navy sailor and an exhibit on the evolution of boats, but there are not many.

People are not likely to visit a museum if they cannot identify well with what is in it, or find images and ideas associated with themselves there. There are no exhibits on the Native Americans who lived in the area and used its waterways prior to European contact; and exhibits that do exist about the Spanish-American War and the China trade are told almost exclusively from the traditional point of view of White America. The voices of those in the Philippines, Spain, or China are not heard in these exhibits, which is unfortunate because they would be a valuable, educational addition to the exhibits. There are large numbers of people who are considered to be ethnic minorities living here in Philadelphia, and it is not fair to them that their voices are not represented in a museum that has a focus as international as the sea.

School Buses

One way the museum does reach significant numbers of people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds is through the schools. There is a large population of students

that is not being served, however, and their identity surprised me. One of the new docents, Mike, who also works at a museum in New Jersey, brought to my attention the fact that school buses are a major issue in who comes to visit the museum. I had never thought about it before, but it costs quite a bit of money to rent a school bus. In most places, it costs about \$150.00 a day to hire a regular yellow school bus from about 9:30 in the morning to 1:30 in the afternoon. The time limits placed by school bus services that need to pick up other children on their regular routes make it even more difficult for teachers to take field trips. It restricts how far the group can travel to reach a museum or other site. If they travel to a place that is far from their home school, they use up most of their time limit travelling and do not have much left to spend at the museum. Attending school located close to a museum, but too far away to walk to it, is also a deterrent to visiting the institution. If it is very close by, it is extremely difficult to justify the use and cost of a school bus (Mike 2004 and Natasha 2004).

The effects of the school's distance from the museum create interesting geographic patterns, and these geographic patterns affect the socioeconomic pattern of the children attending the programs at the museum. Wealthy schools in the suburbs and on the city limits, who often have high populations of wealthy, White students, send children on many more field trips. The cost of the bus is not usually an issue for them, and they are often an ideal geographical distance from the museum. Very poor schools, who often have populations made almost exclusively of poor students of racial or ethnic minorities, usually receive extra funding for items such as field trips. This comes either from government/school district sources, or in the form of subsidies provided by the museum, which allow them to attend. "Schools in the middle get left out" (Mike 2004).

They are neither wealthy enough to manage on their own nor poor enough to be offered much assistance. The wide spread of the students' socioeconomic classes and ethnic backgrounds provides a broad cultural base for the museum to address, in order to effectively reach all of its visitors.

The Immigration Lesson

Each spring at Moorestown Friends School, the students and teachers participate in a six-day unit that, in general, has little to do with the regular academic curriculum. The teachers design a curriculum for the week, and often switch classes to be with students they do not normally teach. One teacher, Mrs. Edwards, has been leading a unit on heritage and diversity for the past several years. She brings her students to sites all over the Philadelphia area that hold evidence of diversity and ethnicity. Mrs. Edwards always begins her unit's field component in the same way: she has the students walk across the Benjamin Franklin Bridge, so they have a sense of taking a journey into Philadelphia, and then brings them to the Independence Seaport Museum for the lesson on immigration (Edwards 2004).

The vast majority of Americans are the descendants of immigrants, or are immigrants themselves. Ted's immigration lesson begins with English galleons like the *Mayflower*, which travelled across the ocean with some of the nation's first immigrants, and then progresses through the packet ships to the steamers. His descriptions, all true, of the journeys endured by the people on these ships result in looks of disbelief, disgusted noises, and words of awe from the students. They all seemed to have a genuine respect for immigrants by the time they left.

Curiously, however, with the exception of a mention of slave ships, I didn't hear any references to non-European immigrants. There were plenty of immigrants from Africa, Asia, and South America who arrived on ships and deserve at least a little attention in the lesson. If they are not mentioned, students of those ethnicities are being deprived of an important piece of their heritage and students not of those ethnicities are, as so often happens, are being denied a wonderful opportunity to learn about those different from themselves.

African Mariner Days

Last fall, the Seaport partnered with a community group called Odunde to pilot a program called African Mariner Days. This program works to demonstrate the rich cultural diversity of a port city like Philadelphia. The museum also worked with the Philadelphia Museum of Art to create special exhibits for the event, borrowing some pieces for display. This community-based program is designed to celebrate "the African American experience in maritime trades" (Anita 2004). Odunde is an African American community group based in Philadelphia. They hold an African American cultural festival every June, so they have plenty of connections to presenters, craftspeople, and artists. What Odunde does is to "help reach out to the community and tell about the program, and help us find artists that can demonstrate the maritime trades. Things like storytelling; things like sculpture and woodcarving; things that have a base in African traditions but they resonate here because they've been translated here. There's evidence that the African American culture in Philadelphia has picked that up" (Anita 2004).

Anita said that the program was created with the intention of drawing in more of the Philadelphia community, and also to connect with the abundance of recent research about African Americans and the maritime community. African Americans were a large part of the maritime community in Philadelphia, and in many other American ports from very early on. The museum "Wanted a program for schools and the community that could demonstrate that. Because we feel like people really don't know that. They think that the only African American experience is on a slave ship. And that really isn't true. They were building the ships, they were repairing the sails" (Anita 2004). African Americans were also sailing the ships. By 1800, one out of every five seamen leaving the port of Philadelphia as part of the crew of a ship was Black (Smith 1990).

Maritime trades were a huge opportunity for the Black community, because they were among the few positions that were willing to pay the workers. Also, prejudice on the sea was not anywhere near as prevalent as on land. Although chances for advancement beyond the level of able seaman were slim, there were some Black officers and even a few captains. In the maritime world, rank outweighs any other qualifier so the sea was also a place where some Black men found respect and power. It also happened that there were frequently situations at sea where each person on board had to rely on his fellow crewmates, and at times like those it simply didn't matter what color the person next to you was (Gordinier 2003). "It's a fascinating story that Philadelphians don't know, so we were trying to develop the program last year and then we're expanding it this year" (Anita 2004).

The story of minorities in the maritime world is indeed a fascinating one, but it is one that deserves more than one program every year. There should be a permanent

exhibition about these topics. Ironically, despite the word "Days" in the name, the program was only available to the public for one day last October. That one day was not very well attended, and anyone who could not or did not attend that day missed out on a very important piece of the Delaware Valley's maritime heritage. Also, the program was advertised in *Homeport Happenings* simply as

"Mariner Days": Explore the world of the ancient mariner by learning skills sailors needed to sail around the globe. Learn about James Forten, an African American sail-maker, who had a profitable business in Philadelphia in the 1700s. At 2 pm, participate in a concert hall performance of music and dance from cultures with a maritime heritage.

This program description does not evoke the intentions or the details of the program the way they were described to me by Natasha and Anita. I am left wondering if this was intentional: why would they offer such a vague description of such a valuable program? Would a more explicit announcement have deterred people who felt that the African American mariners were irrelevant to their lives? The brochure should make clear the importance of the contributions of people of color to the area's maritime heritage, and how the maritime community of the past has influenced the Philadelphia of today for people of all cultures and backgrounds. The museum not only needs more publicity for events like this, it needs appropriate publicity if it is ever to attract the more diverse audience it dreams of.

The Focus Group

Independence Seaport is planning to renovate the main gallery space and re-do the main Homeport Philadelphia exhibition in the next several years. To help them prepare

for this, they have conducted two off-site focus groups to evaluate ideas for the new exhibits. They are working with an outside agency to avoid bias in the results. The agency that constructs and runs the focus group sessions is careful to create culturally diverse groups. "They get their information so they know how many are White, how many are African American, how many are Hispanic, how many are Asian, so they get a broad range" (Anita 2004). They are also sure to include fair numbers of both men and women, in an effort to address all of the populations that might visit the museum.

The museum's plans for the exhibit involved a greater focus on the modern port, which was actually not a huge hit with the focus group. "They liked more the idea of sort of stepping back in time and seeing what the port of Philadelphia used to be like" (Anita 2004). Their favorite part of the plans that they were shown was the immigration section. "Which in my mind, makes sense because people are interested in their own past. If they grew up here, maybe they'd be interested in knowing if their relatives came through here" (Anita 2004).

The concern for people connecting to their own heritage is one that is currently explored in the immigration exhibit only in a limited way: those of Italian and Eastern European descent can watch brief, filmed stories of people of their own ethnic background; this opportunity is not available to people of other ethnicities. Perhaps the new exhibit will address this better by including more choice of films, with a greater diversity of ethnicities represented. The new exhibits would also do well to address the important contributions of the local Native American communities throughout the area's history, the African Americans who fought in the Spanish-American War, and the Chinese point of view on the China trade. Including this kind of information would

certainly be beneficial to the visitors, most of whom are not likely to see the minority viewpoint presented anywhere else. By doing this, the museum could carve out another niche for itself in the local museum community: not only telling the story of the city's history as a port, but also telling the story of its rich cultural diversity.

Conclusion:

In this age of economic hardship, museum education is both more difficult and more necessary than ever. Independence Seaport Museum is struggling to find a niche in the crowded Philadelphia museum community that will allow it to grow as an institution. This will also benefit the city as a whole, because it will permit the museum's staff to serve the population of the Philadelphia area and those who choose to visit it even better than it does today.

The museum has a wealth of unique resources and a passionate desire to educate the community about the region's rich maritime heritage. The museum works together with other museums and institutions in the area to bring the past to life for thousands of schoolchildren every year, but it is not satisfied with just that: Independence Seaport wants to reach the entire Philadelphia community. In order to accomplish this, the museum needs to focus on more effectively communicating its mission to the community. They need to find a way to reach people: whether through print ads, radio and television spots, or something else entirely, the museum should be able to leave them inspired to visit the museum. The acquisition of a staff member whose sole job is to publicize the museum and its goals would be extraordinarily helpful in this regard.

Visitation is key to the survival of a museum today. Due to economic instability and the drought in city, state, and national funding, museums such as Independence Seaport must carefully and strategically plan how to reach as many people as possible while maintaining the integrity of quality that people have come to expect of the

museum. Not every program the museum offers needs to make money, but certain levels of attendance are necessary to maintain the vitality of the museum.

With more visitors, more resources become available and the museum would be able to more readily expand their exhibits to include new points of view and exhibits that would be relevant to everyone. A diverse collection of viewpoints is currently lacking in the museum's exhibit galleries and, to a lesser extent, in the educational programming. A new exhibit underway already will help to explain the meaning behind the river, the Navy yard, the shipping terminals, and the ships that people in the city can see out the windows today. These structures and institutions have helped to define the city and make it what it is today: a populous, ethnically diverse city recognized as a prominent and historical place throughout the nation and indeed, the world.

The Delaware Valley's maritime heritage is an important part of the city that should not be ignored by anyone who lives here. The education department at Independence Seaport is committed to helping as many students as possible discover that heritage for themselves, through examination of historic ships, smaller objects, oral histories, and hands-on activities. These educational programs are the primary method the museum has to reach out to the greater Philadelphia community, and realizing the important role that implies, they take pride in making them as accessible and comprehensible as possible.

There is something in the study of the sea for everyone. Whether it is discovering the voyages of an ancestor, the indispensable everyday objects that were first used by seamen, the bravery of a sailor in the U.S. Navy, the necessity of treating our nation's waterways with care and respect, or the amazing animals and plants that live thousands of

feet under the surface of the ocean, there is something for everyone to learn. By considering the important contributions the water covering three-fourths of our planet has played since life on Earth began, and continues to play in life today, it helps us each to create a better picture of who we are and where we are going. After all, "It's always ourselves we find in the sea."

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