

SEARCH CRITERIA

Model	Model D: Information Access
Industry	Education, recreation, tourism, science
Focus/Level	Community
Approach to information needs	Information centre
Special Interest Groups	Other

1. PROJECT TITLE:

Scienceworks Museum – Melbourne

2. FUNDERS:

- Victorian State Government (> 65%)
- Revenues (30%): admission, shops, commercial activities, etc
- Partnerships/ sponsorships (< 5%):

E.g. Victoria University (contribute \$100,000) to develop a facility and program of high voltage electricity to be used for public demonstration and for course work and research purposes of the University.

Other Foundation sponsors of the Scienceworks Museum:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| ▪ Aberfoyle Limited | ▪ BHP Community Trust |
| ▪ ACI Glass Packaging Australia | ▪ The City of Williamstown |
| ▪ Ashton Mining Limited | ▪ Melbourne Water |
| ▪ Australian Airlines | ▪ The Department of School Education |
| ▪ Energy Victoria | ▪ Kodak (Australia) Pty Ltd |
| ▪ Gas and Fuel Corporation of Victoria | ▪ Invicta Group Industries Pty Ltd |
| ▪ The Ian Potter Foundation | ▪ Maxiterm Boilers (Vic) Pty Ltd |
| ▪ IBM Australia Limited | ▪ Telecom Australia |
| ▪ Newcrest Mining Limited | ▪ Vic Health Promotion Foundation |
| ▪ Salzer Constructions Pty Ltd | ▪ Western Mining Corp Limited |
| ▪ The Sidney Myer Fund | |
| ▪ Sutton Tools | |

3. PROVIDERS:

- Small organisations providing the Museum with advice;
- Formal partners who have an agreement with the Museum, e.g. Victoria University, Melbourne Water, City of Hobsons Bay. They provide information and resources – eg finds, equipment, research or information.
- The Museum has 150 active volunteers. It has an extensive volunteer program where the Museum calls for applications, interviews applicants, selects candidates, trains them, puts them through a probation period. Police checks are also made (because they work with many children and general public). The volunteers then host groups around the site, greet visitors on arrival, help them to become oriented with the museum,

answer questions, help with the activity programs, such as making kites, etc.

There are around 6-10 volunteers at Scienceworks, every day, 7 days a week.

The volunteer program allows the Museum to provide:

- more value;
- a very good network for those people who are able to keep their minds active and give back to the community; and
- a good marketing network for the organisation.

The volunteers are not trained to take formal education programs, they are only trained to meet visitors, show them around the site but not to take the place of formally qualified teachers.

- The Museum has trained educators on staff to carry out the education programs and activities.

4. KEY CONTACTS:

<http://www.museum.vic.gov.au>

5.INDUSTRY/ISSUE/GEOGRAPHY:

The museum mainly belongs to the education industry. It also belongs to the recreation, tourism and the science industries (The Scienceworks Museum works with Dept of Innovation Industry and Regional Development to help with the Science Awareness Program.

6. PROJECT CONTEXT:

The establishment:

The Museum of Victoria was first located in Swanton Street, Melbourne, in 1854. There was a Natural History Museum and a Science Museum side by side. They amalgamated in 1983. Because there was not enough space for the Museum development, there was a suggestion to shift the Science Museum to a site that could make use of historic technology such as the Sewage Pumping Station for Melbourne, which was built in 1890 and stopped functioning in 1960 and is heritage listed. The site would also be used to show case new technology. The idea was first talked in mid 1980s, and agreed to be funded in 1989 and opened in March 1992 as the Scienceworks Museum. The Museum has progressively developed the site over 10 year period, and restored the Pumping Station building and to make it more accessible.

The advantage of having an outdoor space is to provide opportunity for children to run around and also to provide space for technology and science experiments and demonstrations. Also, being located on the river, people can come to the Museum via ferry as well. This was a good decision. People were first sceptical about building the Museum in the Western suburbs of Melbourne and being far away from the centre of the City, but it has been very good.

The vision:

- To help people appreciate and understand science and technology in ways that are meaningful to them. The staff at Scienceworks try to make sure that visitors are able to involve themselves with the exhibitions, interact with them

to improve their science knowledge in order to live and work more safely, make more informed decisions, and

- To have more students take on science education and careers, the staff also point out different types of careers that science can lead to through different disciplines.

The scope:

- Main audience is families with children aged between 3-15;
- School groups (up to year 12 and now university students also with the Planetarium and the High Voltage Theatre); and
- Seniors (with or without grandchildren).

Geography

- Displays and activities within the main building;
- Outdoor displays (heritage clock, Sun dial);
- The historic Sewerage Pumping Station; and
- High Voltage Theatre.

7.PROJECT NICHE (SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES):

- Attendance target for the financial year 2004 is 370,000, of which 100,00 are students;
- Education program attracts 25-30% of audience;
- A particular activity program for each of the 4 school holidays;
- Changing over one or two exhibitions each year to provide new experiences for people who come to visit more than once a year;
- Level of customer satisfaction is at least 80%; and
- Redevelopment on site.

8.PHILOSOPHY/APPROACH:

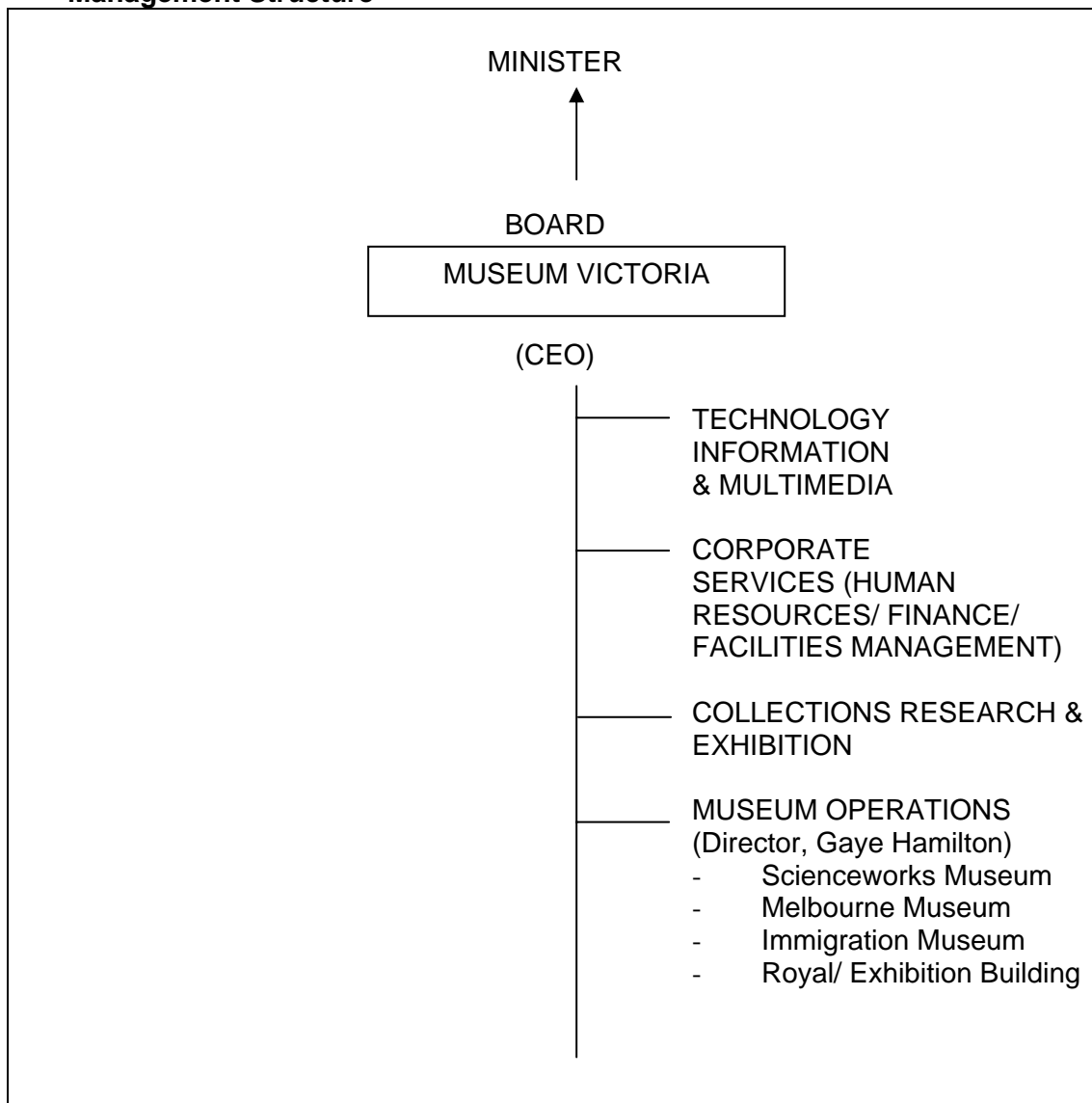
The specific approach of the museum is the Information Access Model. It demonstrates a central repository of information collected by an industry body, government department, private company, educational institution or community organisation. In particular it aims:

- To make the Museum an accessible, colourful and interactive place; and
- To make sure that science and technology information is delivered in a way that is a meaningful, positive and fun experience.

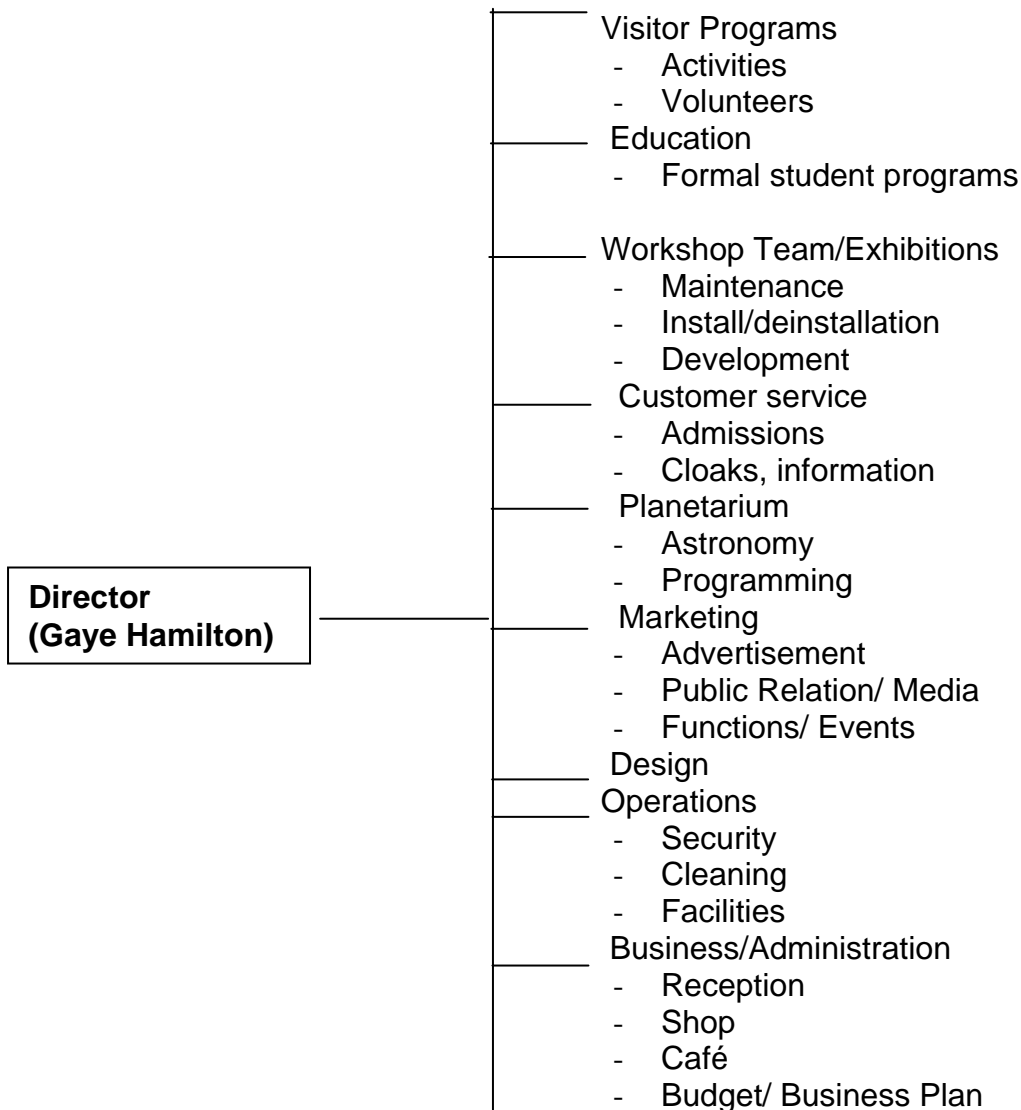
9. RESOURCES, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING STRUCTURES:

- 50 full-time staff (working 7 days a week)
- 10 casual staff (used in emergency)
- 150 volunteers

Management Structure



Staffing Structure of the Scienceworks Museum



10.PROCESS/METHODS USED:

When the Museum staff develop an exhibition or an activity program, they go through a process of:

- Brain-storming the whole range of ideas;
- Collecting as much information as they can about the audience;
- Deciding what messages that they want to provide in terms of the area of science and technology; and
- Designing an exhibition or a program that is suitable for different age groups, suitable for people with and without science background.

For example, a new exhibition opened last week called the House of Secrets. It looks at the physics, chemistry and biology in the home. There are many puzzles, things to look at and to play with that engage children aged 3-8. There are also touch screens and more interactive information that engage science students. There are chemistry and physics demonstrations that can provide information further. So

within one exhibition, there are three levels of information: An introductory level for small children; a higher level for those with more science knowledge like young school students or adults without a science background; and complex level for those who have a good knowledge of science.

Apart from the regular exhibition program, the Museum also has short-term exhibitions running from 4-6 weeks, such as the recently finished exhibition from the Australian Customs Service, looking at prohibited imports and why they are prohibited. The Museum also has special lectures or seminars, special weekend events and Planetarium shows. Other methods of communication include item displays, and publishing information on the internet.

11. IMPACTS TO DATE (AND EVALUATION APPROACHES USED):

Self-assessment by:

- Setting target and performance indicators each year in the business plan;
- Quarterly measuring the progress against those indicators (internally);
- Monitoring complaints through the customer feedback system by inviting people to write down comments at the information desk (written feedback), receiving on-line comments (telephone feedback) and emails (electronic feedback);
- Undertaking a Quality Assurance Assessment every three years right across the organisations; and
- Undertaking a Risk Assessment every two years, in terms of business risk and physical risk.

Other approaches used include:

- The Museum has undertaken twice a year a formal evaluation from customers, who did and did not visit the Museum;
- Customer feedback system;
- From business point of view, the Museum has External Auditors; and
- The Scienceworks is accredited by Museums Australia every three years

Measuring customer satisfaction:

The Museum has a Market Research Department, which designs an instrument to measure customer satisfaction in terms of awareness, whether they enjoyed themselves or not.

The process includes:

- Undertaking research from customers: what are the 20 things that are most important to them? This is done by collecting information through focus groups on and off-site. The results showed that customers want things like clean, accessible toilets, clean, cost-effective food, exhibitions that are educational and in working order and activities for the children.
- Undertake surveys on-site to see how well the Museum performs in the 20 areas that the customers expected. From this, a satisfaction index is developed. The survey is most successfully done by on-site interviews, questionnaires and telephone interviews. Other methods included an on-the-bus survey, asking customer information on admission, and an online questionnaire (the last method was found not to be very effective).

- If it turns out that the satisfaction level is more than 80%, the Museum feel they have done well.

People normally provide complaints through written feedback. People rarely provide written feedback if they have a good day. Things people complain about are interesting, often because the staff might also have had a bad day. If they have a lot of complaints about the one issue, they address it. The Museum reviews on a monthly basis to make sure there are no “hot spots”. The Museum’s view is that ‘if customers are unhappy, then tell us, if they are happy, tell others’.

12. EFFECTIVENESS:

In terms of content displayed (variety, unique, interesting, fun):

Some visitors always want more, however most visitors are happy and feel that there is too much to do in a short time.

In term of services provided:

Very cost-effective. Customer satisfaction is around 85-87%.

On an overall score, the Museum has generally managed to achieve all targets. In terms of cost per service, the Scienceworks Museum ranks quite successfully, among top 1 or 2 of all the Science Museums in Australia. The Museum does the benchmarking nationally on an annual basis.

13. PROJECT DOCUMENTATION AVAILABLE:

Most of documents are available from the website (<http://scienceworks.museum.vic.gov.au/>). There are also education materials for schools, and publishing books, including:

Rasmusen, Carolyn., 2001, *A museum for the people : a history of Museum Victoria and its predecessors 1854-2000*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne.

(This book is not specifically about the Scienceworks Museum. It’s about history of Museum development up to 2000)

Museum Victoria, *Museums Board of Victoria*, Annual Report 2001/2002.

14. ISSUES:

Lack of Capital development money to undertake refurbishment:

- Most facilities are about 10 years old, they are tired, need refurbishing
- The Scienceworks Museum was designed to support between 250,000-300,000 visitors per year. However, for the last 3 years, the Museum has over 350,000 visitors, making the Museum very crowded for visitors and hard to keep the acceptable standard.

On-going challenge of running a public provider of information 7 days a week, 12 months a year:

- Staff get tired because there is never an end of a year
- Staff do not get holiday at the usual time, they work when everyone else is on holiday
- Effort to refresh the staff is difficult.

The Museum has tried a number of ways to deal with this problem, such as providing regular professional development programs, changing staff around to different tasks, and making sure that some of them go on holidays during school holiday times.

15. COMMENTS/CONCLUSIONS:

There are activities used by the Scienceworks Museum that can be applied to other situations. For example, information centres in rural industry can use some of the ideas behind the interactive displays to demonstrate to and teach individuals about the workings of machinery, animals, pastures and so on. It is a way of bringing rural and urban Australia closer together.

There are also lessons to be learned about some of the organisational achievements of the Museum such as the extensive use of volunteers and keeping them motivated.

The extensive review methods also provide lessons about the need to keep in touch with the target audience.

Lessons learned include:

- Lots of people underestimate the difficulty of running an organisation that operates everyday of the year;
- It is particularly important to keep up with community expectations. To do this, you must continuously find out what the audience is thinking, what they want, what are their expectations;
- The highest priority would be to look after the staff because without them the organisation would be nothing;
- It is very important for the organisation to continuously listening and learning, and be open to new ideas and changes; and
- Take changes and try different things is also important. Letting the staff take risks, let them put new ideas in place and if it doesn't work, learn from it.

Future targets and development plans for the museum include:

- Complete the High Voltage Theatre for opening next year;
- Obtain funds for Capital Redevelopment; and
- To continue to provide the exhibitions of high standard so that the Museum can maintain the number of audience.

16. REVIEW METHODS:

- Reviewing available reports and literature on the museum
- Personal interview