MUSEUM DOCENTS: PERSONAL SUCCESS IN POSITION DEPENDENT ON PRIOR EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND?

by

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A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Anthropology

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Summer Semester 2013
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
Museum Docents: Personal Success in Position Dependent on Prior Educational Background?

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my family and friends who have supported me through this entire journey.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the friends and family for their support and who have made this happen. To my parents, thank you for letting me pursue my dreams and encouraging and believing me the whole way. To my boyfriend who supported and encouraged me over the years, a big thanks to you and everything you have done for me. Thank you to Dr. Trencher who took on this responsibility and paid a large amount of interest in my research and to the other members of my committee.
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Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to contribute to the success of educational programs in museums by asking whether educational background (prior to work in a museum exhibit as a docent) has an impact on whether docents see themselves as successful in the position. This study concludes that prior educational backgrounds should not and does not determine whether or not an individual should be given a position as a docent in a museum. Based on the small sample engaged here, the finding is that there need be no previous knowledge of a subject matter in order for an individual to become a docent in an exhibit. Educational background was also found to not be the determining factor in whether or not individuals see themselves as being a successful docent.

This study is focused on the perspective of the docent. From that point of view, training programs are found to play a larger role in a docent’s perception of success than their educational background. This study contributes to the effort to improve the use of docents and the experience of the visitor at diverse museum exhibitions as it focuses on
the interaction between these parties during a visit to an exhibit rather than the exhibit itself.
Chapter 1: Introduction

“Volunteer docents bring a vitality, freshness and individuality to the job of museum teaching that no one else can.” (Bleich 1980:20)

In the 1960’s and 1970’s, the education departments in three Fort Worth, Texas art museums agreed that “…they preferred docents to have a comprehensive art history background no matter how they functioned in the gallery. Underlying this preference as part of these programs “…was an agreement about what docents should know...” (Anonymous 1975:1) The result of this underlying view was that only people with an art history background were encouraged to apply or would be eligible for consideration for a docent position at these museums. The term “docent” commonly refers to volunteers placed throughout museums (or other educational spaces, e.g. zoos, historical venues) who engage in educational activities, for example, through scheduled tours and/or answering questions from visitors on an ad hoc basis. The primary question the education departments in the Fort Worth art museums sought to address was: “Could someone without an art history background be hired and see themselves as successful working holding a position as a docent in these museums? Although few museums followed the lead of the Fort Worth museums, their view raised an important question in regarding
requirements placed on potential docents, specifically, their educational backgrounds. The question then, is whether an individual must obtain a specific degree/background in order to be hired (or accepted, i.e. in the case of volunteers to whom docent positions normally apply) as a docent; and further, do docents need this background to see them as successful in that position?

The purpose of this study is to address the question of whether prior educational background has an impact on whether individuals should be hired as docents, and whether or not the educational background plays a role in docent’s evaluation of their own work as successful in relation to the purpose of the docent position. While there are factors other than an educational background that may affect a docent’s perception of their success, such as the quality of their training, this research project is designed to explore whether educational background is the essential factor in considering who and whether to have on staff as a docent, and in whether it plays a decisive role in the self-evaluation of docents in their view of their own success working while in an exhibit. This research was conducted in a specific exhibit at a museum in Washington, D.C. known for its hands-on approach to teaching and learning outside of a formal setting. This exhibit uses museum collection materials as well as real human bones. Thus, this study set out to:

· discover the educational backgrounds of nine docents in the Forensic Anthropology Lab (Lab) at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution;
· determine if they see themselves as successful in their positions as docents in that department; and,
· consider whether their view of success as docents is dependent upon their educational backgrounds.

While this study is limited to one exhibit, results may be generalized when (1) visitor presence in a particular exhibit is evidence of some level of interest by some members of the visiting group, prior to entry and (2) interactions with docents take place in the exhibit.

A main focus of this study is the understanding of success from the perspective of the docent; to that end, a number of docents from the Lab were interviewed during this research. From the standpoint of this research, “success” is defined subjectively, that is, by the docents themselves, i.e.: Do docents think they engaged the visitor’s interest and attention during their time in the exhibit? Did the visitors learn something about the exhibit as part of their interaction with the docent? From this perspective the docent is simultaneously considered, in familiar, here differentially applied, terms in anthropology, that is: as “the native” (here, someone familiar with the exhibit and its meaning) and as the anthropologist, “someone who tries to make sense of how others are making sense” (observing visitors to get a sense of how they are making sense of the things they see, while also contributing to the ways in which things are seen c.f. Geertz:1973)

Each docent interviewed was asked what they considered to be a “successful” visit in order to create an overall understanding by the researcher of a definition that encompassed the assumptions of Lab docents, and put a value on the term “success” (c.f. Glaser and Strauss: 1967). A common theme found in these interviews is the concept of learning while in the Lab. From the point of view as constructed through interviews with
docents, a “successful visit” was seen as one in which visitors left having learned something about items in the exhibit during their time spent there.

**Background and Significance of the Present Study**

Along with the production of future exhibitions, museum education/outreach/volunteer departments can use the findings from this study to contribute to the processes regarding timing for the location, selection and training of future docents. These factors are part of producing and designing a successful exhibit. Although specifically focused on the Forensic Anthropology Lab (in what follows, The Lab), the approach in this study can be applied to a variety of museums and diverse exhibits. In part, this study is geared toward changing the operational dynamics of museums as part of interactions with the public in cases where institutional practice has been informed by the position that only individuals with specific educational backgrounds related to the subject of a particular exhibit are to be considered for a docent position.

The Lab is part of a temporary exhibition, “Written in Bone: Forensic Files of the 17th Century Chesapeake.” “Written in Bone” is an exhibit visitors can walk through with the Forensic Anthropology Lab. Docent positions were located in a separate room at the end of the exhibit where visitors are allowed to explore as they choose. In The Lab, visitors of all ages could learn by using the skills and strategies of forensic science as used in solving a case. This exhibit was designed to demonstrate to visitors that forensic
science is much more mysterious and engaging than the forensic fiction portrayed on television shows such as *Bones* and *CSI*, which often formed the basis of whatever familiarity visitors had with the subject.

In The Lab exhibit real human bones were used to identify and describe the gender and status of people from the past and which further encouraged visitors to analyze and form conclusions about the lives of these people from history. Human bones (skulls, femurs, pelvic bones, mandibles, and vertebrae) were the main items within The Lab, and gave it its unique atmosphere. Visitors were allowed to handle the collection of artifacts including human bones, colonial nails, sea shells, and various other objects that helped to set the context of a particular “case” seen as a problem to be solved through methods that allowed the use of these materials in relation to larger questions: “What can be determined about these artifacts? Do they, and if so how, do they relate to each other?”

The focus of The Lab was to help visitors use the tools and problem solving skills of forensic anthropology to collect and analyze data through a forensic “lens”.

The experience of the lab as mediated through a forensic “lens” is important because visitors are given the opportunity to learn by doing, an approach to learning and teaching called “experiential learning” that is being attempted in many museums. It is not often that visitors are allowed to touch museum collection materials, especially real human bones. This study is important because by speaking with the docents who are in the position of working in such an exhibit, museums in the future will be able to take into consideration the results from this research, including whether the opportunity to touch the artifacts is a particular factor in the success of the visitor experience. The visitors’
attitude as the progress through the exhibit is the primary factor in determining the success docents feel as they work in their position, and is part and product of how they interact with visitors.

The exhibit materials for The Lab are placed in one room (25ft x 20ft) containing six tables. Each table contains materials pertaining to the same case, and each table allows something different to be discovered. Two to four docents dressed in white medical coats playing the role of forensic anthropologists are stationed around the room. The docents’ purpose is to answer the visitors’ questions and to determine whether to step in and assist visitors with the “case” on display.

The Lab’s purpose is to create an exciting and different approach to the field of forensic anthropology and as part of that effort it presents the subject in a manner that is comprehensible to visitors of any age group. An exhibit of this nature is significant as part of the experiential/hands-on approach to learning that many museums have implemented or are working to incorporate as part of the museum experience for visitors. The setup of such spaces, in terms of artifacts, written materials and docent assistance is intended to create a different visitor experience beyond that of the traditional visit. The Lab is an interactive exhibit with authentic museum collection materials. This specific exhibit is unique in the kinds of artifacts available and the availability of this particular kind of “detective” interaction. Participant observation in and of this space has provided evidence that the docent role has significantly contributed to the success of the entire exhibit. In The Lab, the docents and the bridges they build between available materials and information to visitors are experienced as interactive rather than instructive.
The Museum Experience as a Bridge to Understanding

“...a visit to a museum should not be a lesson, but experiential, and its strategy is to make tours more interactive for every age group.” (Fernandez-Keys 2010:37)

“Exhibits are ‘increasingly dependent on the lost art of storytelling,’ and stories can help emphasize tour objectives...The use of storytelling helps convert the didactic approach into a narrative format, promoting greater interest among visitors. Storytelling seems to assist educators in keeping adults engaged and creating more memorable learning experiences.” (Taylor and Neill 2008:26-27)

The above quotes capture the essence of the philosophy that underlies the docent program at The Lab. As noted, the material on exhibit goes beyond the more traditional format of collections of this sort that typically focus on the reading of plaques on a wall and the placement of museum collection materials behind glass barriers. The Lab itself is designed to create a story about various objects through their placement thus providing the visitor with the opportunity to discover that story, assisted by the docents. All the stations within The Lab are part of an overall storyline created to set the context for the subject. Docents are trained to provide a story that assists in the formation of a
connection to the object through a discussion of its history. Here, the role of the docent is clearly a primary factor in the experience. “Hands on” experience does not in and of itself provide the visitor with a truly interactive experiential visit. To get a better understanding of the docents’ role, it is helpful to explore their history and duties as it have evolved over the past century.

**History of the Docent**

From the 20th century to the present, the term “docent” has been commonly defined as, “a person who is a knowledgeable guide, especially one who conducts visitors through a museum and delivers a commentary on the exhibitions.” (Dictionary.com, LLC) The word “docent” comes from the Latin word, “…docere, which means to teach, instruct, or give instructions.” (Bleck 1980:19) These definitions of a docent encompass the essence of the volunteer’s duties as they have traditionally been set out in museums and similar institutions (e.g. zoos). While museum practice at present generally includes a plan where docents are strategically placed throughout museums and their exhibits in order to interact with visitors by answering questions and helping guests, in the early 1900’s docents needed to be scheduled ahead of time for a museum visit (Anonymous 1907:9). While there are still museums that require an appointment for a tour, most museums have docents available without a scheduled visit, enabling casual and unplanned opportunities.

The position of a museum assistant to visitors occurred independently throughout the world during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but the history of the docent can be
traced back to Boston. In the mid-1890’s, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston already had museum staff guiding visitors through galleries to give them insight into the works of art beyond that normally available to the lay person. Administrators at the Museum of Fine Arts decided to test the possibility of having volunteer representatives come in over the course of three months in order to be available as visitor guides. While this trial placement of docents resulted in the recommendation that the positions be made permanent, due to renovations at the museum, it was not put into practice for a decade. Thus, in 1906, the volunteer “experiment” of the previous decade was formally acknowledged as successful and put into place. The term “docent” was applied to those in volunteer positions. In 1907, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston officially appointed docents along with other volunteer museum instructors throughout the museum.

Within a similar time frame to the activities at the Boston museum, the Louvre in Paris and various museums throughout Germany had also been experimenting with putting into place volunteers with knowledge beyond that expected of the everyday visitor. Eventually the term “docent” stuck to people in this volunteer position. At present, many museums around the world have specifically-trained volunteers to help explain exhibits to the public. (Anonymous 1977:5 and Glaser 1996:88)

Docents as “translators”

Docents are in place throughout exhibits to help visitors experience a more meaningful visit by helping them to interpret their experience in the museum as a whole, or in particular exhibits. These volunteers are there to help convey the mission of the
museum or exhibit in ways that are unavailable to the visitor on their own. As Griffin (2007:39) has argued, if the exhibit or museum is not set up in a way for visitors to easily follow the steps for interpretation that allow them to reach an understanding of the materials, their whole experience becomes “worthless.” In such a situation if visitors are not properly guided through an exhibit or museum, there is the chance that they will not understand the purpose of its existence including the message that the exhibit is intended to convey. In the particular case of The Lab as an example, going through the exhibit can be pointless if visitors are not able to successfully understand the organization and setup of the exhibit on their own.

**Literature**

While there is a significant amount of literature focused on the experience of visitors and efforts by museum staff and exhibit designers to encourage learning as part of the public experience, there is a general lack of research focused on the experience of docents as they work with the public and the ways in which the two populations interact and the product of those interactions.

In general, professional literature in this area neither questions nor proposes a relationship between the docents and the public. An anonymous source from 1973 discusses ideas to be used during training programs for docents, but does not necessarily discuss the expected relationship between the visitor and docent. The researchers/program developers have set in their minds how they want the docent to be in the position but do not take it a step further and evaluate the relationship between visitor
and docent. There is observation of the docent’s performance of their duties but there was no data collected directly from docents about how they feel in the position. Gelman (1986) explores the issue of docents taking on school groups with no common approach about the material and also observes and reports what the docents are seen as doing wrong or needing improvement in. Docents were not questioned during this article and the school teachers and museum staff fixed the problem without ever consulting the docents. These articles exemplify the lack of literature there is acknowledging the docent and how they feel in the position within museums and other institutions. The specific role of docents and their own evaluation of what constitutes success in their work is essential to formulating better questions about visitor experience that ground efforts in museums to better design and explicate their exhibits.

Further, there is scant mention of docent training, educational background, or ability to interact with the public specifically being associated with the docent, all of which contribute to successful interactions from both the docent and visitor perspective. A particular question of significance related to this perspective is whether prior educational background related to the exhibit has any influence on whether or not docents or visitors see their museum experience as worthwhile whether or not they have prior educational background related to particular exhibits. The literature provides scant mention of docent training, including pertinent educational background, or ability to interact with the public specifically relating to the outcome of the docent’s understanding in the position. The assumption made in the early 1900s that the ideal docent has previous
educational background in the area in which they are placed in museums, remains an interesting and open question and as noted, the gaps in the literature are clear.

_Educational Background_

The educational background of docents and whether it is an important factor in docent success as self-evaluated is clearly an underlying interest of this study. For example, Glaser (1996:142) in a work solely dedicated to volunteer-staff relations, states: “They [volunteer staff including docents] come in both genders and from all educational and cultural backgrounds.” This is seemingly innocuous sentence is significant as an acknowledgement that docents have a variety of educational backgrounds. However, the statement itself loses some weight as related to docents as a particular group working with the public in museums because Glaser groups all museum volunteers into this comment, including: information desk volunteers, guides, shop employees, trustees, and docents. Although valuable to this study and supporting the claim that museums encourage and accept people with various educational backgrounds, it does not specify docents in particular exhibits and how their educational background plays into their role. Docents, with their particular role in relation to acting as an educational intermediary about specific exhibits, are quite different from, for instance, the information desk volunteer who interacts with the public by telling them how to get to a particular exhibit within the museum.
Glaser’s work (1996) also includes a list of museum professional positions followed by their qualifications, duties, and responsibilities. The topic of “docents” covers two pages and discusses the specific position (in general terms) within a museum setting. In a section titled “Education” Glaser (1996:89) notes that, “Some museums require coursework in the discipline of the museum or in the field of education, but most museums have no specific educational requirements. Extensive training…[is] usually offered by the museum.” Here, Glaser makes it clear that additional education (that is, as above and beyond that of other museum volunteers) is expected of a docent. Those designing exhibits and recruiting volunteers to help to guide the public through them have certain expectations about knowledge as relevant to the docent experience. An unasked and unanswered question from the point of view of Glaser’s (1996) and other work, is what the docents expectations of themselves are in their ability and opportunity to work successfully with the public in their role as educator-guide. Here, I am interested in pursuing docent expectations about the role or significance of their work, specifically as related to their educational background, and the role it plays in their duties as a volunteer. While museum staff make decisions about what they look for in a docent, a collateral issue of interest in relation to the decisions made related to choice and training of docents, is how docents themselves define “successful” as related to their ability to interact with the public and translate exhibit material.

As further ascertained by a literature search, the term “docent” although in existence for more than one hundred years, has been scarcely used throughout the literature pertaining to museums. Various sources mention museum educators and their
role in a museum, but “museum educators” as a category of work typically encompasses paid staff, guides, and volunteers. This includes a wide range of people and it is not safe to assume that sources are specifically referring to docents when using the term museum educators. Griffin (2007) for example, only mentions “museum educators” in her article, with no reference to docents or even volunteers. Volunteers (docents) are included in the “keyworkers” group as mentioned by Gray and Chadwick (2001). People who give their time to museums are “keyworkers” in this situation.

“Docent” as a Term

The term “docent” seems to be used more often in shorter articles found in databases. Although the term “docent” was used by Glaser (1996) in her book about planning a career in museums, these references are seldom found in book length formats. However, various articles over the years have specifically mentioned docents; e.g. Anonymous 1907 “Guidance in the Galleries. The Office of Docent”; Anonymous (Ann Bay) 1973 “Docent Training Programs”; Anonymous (Barbara Fertig) 1975 (see also: “Cooperative Docent Training, Texas Style”; Anonymous (Benjamin Ives Gilman) 1977 “The Museum Docent”; Charles Bleick’s 1980 “A Volunteer in Art Education: The Art Museum Docent”; Alba Fernandez-Keys’ 2010 “Caught in the Middle: Thoughts and Observations on the Information Needs of Art Museum Docents”; Grenier and Sheckley’s 2008 “Out on the Floor: Experiential Learning and the Implications for the Preparation of Docents”; Pawlkiewicz and Stevens’ 1987 “Docents: We Couldn’t Live Without Them”; and Wolins, Spires and Silverman’s 1986 “Meeting Our Mission:
Phased Education for Museum Docents”). Articles such as the above, specifically include docents as part of their content and reveals the pattern of “article” reference, rather than volume reference. A reasonable inference here is that while docents are understood to merit notice in works related to museum success through exhibitions, docents are still seen as somewhat peripheral rather than integral to the process, on paper, although their role in practice is quite substantial.

Measuring Docent Success

“Success” as a concept is always in some way subjectively related to context, and means of measuring docent success, as noted, has varied widely, except in the lack of focus of the experience as understood by the docents themselves. Sources identifying or acknowledging a common understanding of the guidelines for an understanding of their success from any standpoint are unavailable. Griffin (2007:41) in referring to a study focused on the intertwined nature of museums, students, and teachers noted that, “…museum educators considered a successful visit to be one where the [visitors] find personal relevance in the exhibitions and feel comfortable in the [exhibit]…” Although again “museum educators” is not defined, either as paid staff or volunteers, or by virtue of responsibilities in various roles, there is some benefit to using it to define and understand terms of success. It also reveals another issue in seeking to establish the terms of understood success. The data collected from this study corresponds to the idea of success in the position as perceived by the docent but in doing so brings up another area of salience, that is, the ambiguity of measurement. There is no direct method of
measurement that has been identified that reveals “level of success” of a visit. Each individual personally gages whether the visitor is comfortable or has found personal relevance or new learning in the exhibit. While success as understood in this way is difficult to determine from an objective standpoint; subjectively this kind of experiential success with the visitor is transferred into the docent’s self-perceptions of success. This issue must be acknowledged as an element of this study, but it is understood to support the formulation of relevant questions that focus on subjective terms of success.

Griffin also mentions, “The responsibility for providing successful museum-learning opportunities falls on the shoulders of museum educators.” (2007:40) Although there is no data to support the perspective of “museum educators” as variously defined, it also remains the case that if the visitor is not willing to participate as part of their visit (i.e. in asking questions or seeking answers) which can be a significant factor on the success of the visit. The question arises as to how much pressure the docent subjectively feels when interacting with a visitor, to make their visit a success, and the terms in which they would be able to do so. Clearly docents are not the only factor in a successful museum visit and a study that takes into account the views of both participants, docents and visitors, would be a fruitful opportunity.

**Docent Training**

“One major responsibility the museum has to volunteers is training.” (Glaser 1996:145) Grenier and Sheckley (2008:80) explored the use of experiential learning in the training and preparation of docents. Experiential learning, the process of making
meaning from direct experience, is fairly well recognized in most museums, but is not widely associated with docent training. Although Grenier and Scheckley (2008:79) assert that most docents are volunteering in a museum in which they have previous knowledge of the subject matter, they argue that the process of making meaning (creating understanding) from a direct learning experience during the training program will enhance docent knowledge and the ability to share the information in a more effective way. From this position the question arises that if these authors believe that most volunteers already have a working knowledge of the material, then why should such an in depth approach be taken when discussing the training process? This training process they are talking about means training by doing, not just sitting in a classroom and being lectured. By looking at the material in depth, the process of learning/teaching is pushed further. Trainees are asked to perform a task instead of just watching someone else carry it out. Actually carrying out a duty, as opposed to reading about it hypothetically, is the basis of the experiential learning approach.

While I note here that in the particular example of The Lab, as the focus of this study a large part of the docent position is grounded in the training received to prepare individuals to share the information of the museum or exhibit with the public in a productive way. However, training to be a docent within the museum experience is not understood nor categorized as “prior knowledge.” An experiential learning approach is taking place in the Lab for the visitors and is in many ways a primary focus. By allowing people to learn the job of forensic anthropologists by doing what they do, visitors are learning by doing and not relying just on the visual aspect, i.e. ability to see and handle
forensic material. Visitors get the opportunity to participate and experience the duties of a forensic anthropologist. Why not teach the docents in the same manner they will be teaching the visitors?

Docents are present to enhance a visitor’s trip to a museum. Gelman and Nichols (1986) acknowledged a down side to the presence of docents specifically identified as a lack of a common goal among them. For example, museums are open not just to the public but also to schools to conduct field trips. Elementary teachers in Western Massachusetts found that when their students were divided into various groups and led through a Springfield museum by several docents each group came back having learned very different things. It was difficult to find common themes once the children got back to school to discuss what they experienced. The docents, “…while well informed and eager, often tailored museum programs to their own individual interests to the extent that each group received a completely different educational experience.” (13) These teachers found this to be troublesome and set forth to encourage changes.

Although Gelman and Nichols focused on school groups, the same situation can be applied to the public when visiting museums. The Lab does host school groups during the week, so the lack of consistency among the Springfield, MA docents and the information they are teaching is valuable data and is relevant to this study. This problem with docents in the museum led to a revamped educational program for school groups. A common goal and a more organized approach were created for visits by schools so the students would end having a somewhat similar experience. All docents were given similar guidelines to use as an outline for their tours. This cohesive method allowed for a
positive change to the program. It is interesting to see that when a museum does not have common goals or themes for the docents to use as guidelines for its visitors, whether the public or school groups, they may not be providing a positive or successful outing for all the visitors.

This issue is also acknowledged by Anderson (2004) when discussing the reinventing of museums and the development of exhibitions, “…all with the goal of merging diverse perspectives in order to achieve a more balanced exhibition message and a more effective visitor experience.” (190) While Anderson discusses how many individuals associated with the museum should be included in the creation of an exhibition, from educators to conservators, she does not mention docents. They may be grouped in with the educators, but it would be valuable to include the ideas of those who are working to get the message of the exhibit across to the public. Making sure all those who come in contact with visitors properly portray the mission of a museum or exhibit is important and it is valuable when there is a common message that these sources acknowledge. However, this article does not go into detail and this study picks up where the article drops off in regards to the docents assisting with the transfer of the exhibit message.
Chapter 2: Methods

This research was conducted following an initial period of participant observation to set the context of the environment and the subjects. Initial observation was conducted during the weekday public Lab schedule (1PM to 5PM) to get a basic understanding of how the Lab runs and its routine expectations. Interviews with Lab docents focused on their direct experience as volunteers and were the primary means through which data for this project was collected. The open-ended interview questions were specifically crafted to acquire information on (1) how docents see their educational background affecting their performance as a docent and (2) docent views on museum visitors’ reactions to the time spent with docents in the Lab.

The data collected focused on their educational backgrounds and whether it plays a role in whether or not the docent has an understanding of themselves as successful in the position. The educational backgrounds of each docent was collected and examined for correlations between educational backgrounds and being hired as a docent in the Lab. Further, it was determined if the prior educational backgrounds of the docents played a role in the docent self-assessment of success.

Lab personnel of interest consist of 25 active volunteer docents and two paid supervisory employees. Only nine of these 25 active docents were interviewed for this study. There is always one supervisor scheduled for every shift in the Lab, and there is
another to take the place of the first when a day off is requested. These people are directly connected to the Lab on a routine basis. The docents in the Lab are from diverse backgrounds and are various ages (high school to retirees). There were nine, randomly selected individuals who participated in this study. This random approach for selection of the interviews allowed for the inclusion of docents who have been in the Lab since its beginning (January 2009) to those who had just begun volunteering the month before the interviews took place (January 2013). This provides a useful range of experience in the sample population.

Volunteer requirements from various other museums were collected from their websites as a means to see what they expect of potential docents in regards to education and experience. A Google search was conducted for “museum docent”. From the results listed, various museum websites were explored specifically for information pertaining to requirements for potential volunteers. This information is valuable because it sets the stage for what is commonly expected among potential docents at present.

There were various challenges observed during this research that both assisted and halted the progression of the interviews. A segment of the docents interviewed were not easily able to articulate their views in what they regarded as a form setting, and often interview questions had to be reworded to elicit an explanation of their answers (semi-structured interviews). There was thus an attempt to spark conversation and move past simple yes or no answers. Interview facilitation in the form of “prodding” for thoughts to be made explicit, was used to obtain satisfactory data. (This technique is familiar in anthropology as part of “cognitive interview” construction). Another hurdle was a sense
of hesitation from some of the docents. To overcome this slight opposition, a more
conversational style was used. Discussion, rather than an interview, seemed to facilitate
communication and lead to more productive evidentiary conversations.

It is useful here to comment on the position of the “auto-ethnographer.” My own
position as a researcher presented both a challenge and a delight. Having a direct
connection to the Lab, having been a docent there for almost four years, presented a twist
within the study. Having the opportunity to research further into a topic that holds great
interest and has personal effects is quite exciting; however, being able to separate ones
self enough to objectively approach this topic was a challenge.
Chapter 3: Educational Backgrounds & Docent Perception of Success

This chapter explores the data collected from the nine docents interviewed from the Lab in their position.

Educational Backgrounds of Docents

After interviewing the nine docents from the Lab, interesting themes came to light regarding the docents’ educational backgrounds. Thus, it was revealed that not all the docents had any sort of educational background directly related to Forensic Anthropology. Also, the educational backgrounds did not seem to play a role in determining whether or not people were hired for the docent position in the Lab. The docents came from an array of educational backgrounds which will be explored next.

Since the driving interest of this study as self-evaluation of differentially defined successful visits, an important question throughout the interviews was the education each of the docents has received in the past and in the present. Findings resulted in several commonalities in educational backgrounds of the Lab docents interviewed. Only two of the docents (Docent 7 and Docent 8) have educational backgrounds directly pertaining to Forensic Anthropology. Docent 4 is still in high school, thus her educational background was “limited” by age and opportunity. With the exception of Docent 4, all docents had received four year college degrees. The following docents all have an educational
background connected to Anthropology. Docent 1 received a BA in political science, has an MA in Education and is currently working on an undergraduate degree in Anthropology. Docent 2 has a BA in Anthropology with a concentration in Archaeology and History. Docent 3 has a BA in Anthropology and Archaeology and double majored in Art History. Docents 6 and 9 have a BA in Anthropology and a minor in Psychology.

Docents 7 and 8 have specific degrees in Forensic/Physical Anthropology, as well as several other degrees. Docent 8 received a BA in Biology, an MA in Cell Biology, and an ABD (all but dissertation) in Physical Anthropology. Docent 7 studied Biology and Biochemistry as an undergraduate and subsequently received an MA in Forensic Anthropology and an MA in Biology, and then completed a PhD in Molecular Biology. Docent 5 is the only docent aside from Docent 4 (above) who does not have a degree in anthropology or a related field. The undergraduate degree was earned in Mechanical Engineering and Economics, followed by a graduate degree in Mechanical Engineering.

It is not unexpected that an exhibit titled ‘Forensic Anthropology Lab’ would attract individuals who are interested in that subject. Whether formally educated in the subject or related field; or as part of a “recreational” interest, it is worth noting that the entire random population of docents in this study have an interest in some form of science. There are significant differences, however, in the docent education as part of formal or informal educational training, the latter including personal reading by study participants. When asked what about the opportunity at The Lab interested them, Docent 4 responded that, “…well I wanted to learn more about forensic anthropology because I didn’t really know anything and it seemed like a fun thing to do…” This docent, the
youngest of the group, had no prior knowledge about forensic anthropology before becoming a docent. This individual’s lack of knowledge before their time as a docent did not prevent the museum from selecting the applicant. This is a good illustration (albeit a small sample) providing evidence that the museum will accept applicants with a wide range of educational background and on its own education does not act as a single determinant in the acceptance process for the position.

A study focused on a program narrowing the gap between visitors and exhibits created by a collaboration between a school in Brooklyn and the New York Aquarium (also located in Brooklyn) provided interesting findings that relate to this research, on the requirements of volunteers and changes to programs. In the Brooklyn example, the Junior Docent Program was a program centered around marine science and, “…the aquarium developed a large pool of students to draw from…Initially limited to students in nearby schools offering marine science, [they] subsequently opened the program to highly motivated students from schools throughout the city.” (Hensel and Kafka 1986:8) Before the change and acceptance of other non-marine science students, the program listed the selection requirements, which included “…(2) a background in the sciences as well as basic knowledge of our subject matter…[and]…(5) a career-related interest in an associated discipline.” (Hensel and Kafka 1986:8) This selection process is interesting because most students of this age have not had too much exposure to marine science other than as part of a biology class, for example.

This example demonstrates that the aquarium staff originally wanted volunteers with a specific educational background in marine science, but they were eventually
willing to expand and provide the opportunity to other students when they were able to establish the base of ineligibility was not useful. Just like The Lab, individuals who did not have a direct connection with marine science were allowed the opportunity to join the program. The ability to be flexible in decisions regarding docent population and criteria for inclusion can lead to change and a significantly better outcome across the span of participants in the project.

Thus, questions that can be usefully addressed by those that create, manage and participate in docent programs include those focused on specific requirements as a legitimate or useful means to determine participant eligibility. Further, what made the museum think students with other interests would not make good docents? When students join the docent program, would they, or do they see themselves as less successful than others if they have a different or more limited prior background as related to the exhibit in which they volunteer?

The situation with the docent program at the aquarium touches upon the doubts that fueled this study. While initially discriminating against students without a marine science focus, the requirements were eventually changed and the program opened to others. It is valuable to see that a program changed its docent requirements and now allows those without a particular background to act as docents. A useful point of application in this case and that of The Lab is that a person’s educational background should not determine whether they should be accepted for the position as a docent in a museum.
Docent’s Perception of Success in the Lab

Once established that while there was some similarity in background for most of the docents participating in The Lab (e.g. 8 out of 9 with an interest in science), it did not serve as the determining factor in their selection as docents. It is useful to understand from the point of view of their individual experience whether docents themselves evaluate their success (or lack of it) as docents based on the education/knowledge they bring to their time working with the public in the exhibit.

Success is a difficult concept to define or to find a common understanding for, among a number of people, perhaps particularly as relevant in a museum setting where learning is involved. Trying to determine the grounds on which docents consider themselves to be successful in a museum environment is a central piece of understanding the interaction between docent and visitor. Success is perhaps always subjectively defined, and evidence for this emerged after interviewing a docent from The Lab when they were asked, “What do you consider to be a successful visit for a museum goer?”

Many of the docents shared similar thoughts on the idea of success for a visit in the Lab. Learning was a common theme among docent responses. Docents 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 all mentioned learning as directly connected to whether or not a visit is successful. If the visitors leave having learned something most of the docents considered the visit a successful one. Docent 4 said if their visitors leave being able to teach what they learned, it is a great outcome for the interaction. Docent 5 said they would like for people to leave more curious about the world they live in but have had their questions
answered while in the Lab. Opening people’s minds to the field of forensic anthropology and beyond was an idea addressed by the docents.

Having fun while in the Lab is another way to measure the success of a visit. Docents 3, 4, and 5 all mentioned “fun” in their responses. Non-verbal cues and the observation of behavior allow for a docent to determine whether or not a visitor is “having fun” as suggested by elements such as, being focused, asking questions, writing something nice in the Visitor Comment Book and helping teach other members in the group. Docent 5 shared the elements of successfully being able to evaluate whether a visitor is having fun in the Lab. This is in line with an article in the 1970’s stating that, “The purpose of the docent is to lead his disciples on to enjoyment” (Anonymous 1977:3).

Docent 9 mentioned another way to measure success of a visit was to see how visitors apply their new knowledge in their life. For instance, when trying to figure out how old the victim is in one of the cases, visitors use the mandibles, the bottom jaw bones with its teeth, to determine the age. Different teeth emerge at certain ages, so scientists can use the teeth present in the jaw to get an estimate of the age of the person when they died. This docent has seen children open their mouths and try to look at their teeth. The visitors already know their age but Docent 9 sees them trying to apply what they learned to real life. Docent 9 views this as a measurement of the success of the interaction between the docent and the visitor.

The following quotes are interesting responses from docents in regard to their views of a successful museum visit:
“I think for the most part…when I’ve interacted with them [the visitor] they walk away with a successful experience. They gain something, whether it’s opened up an interest or answered a couple questions or just seeing what’s here. Um, I think most people leave feeling they’ve learned something.” –Docent 1

“…for a visitor to ask questions. They don’t need to complete all six stations because that’s a lot but for them to ask questions shows interest. It shows they want to learn and it shows they are ready to learn which I think is the best success we can ask for.” –Docent 3

“…it entirely depends on how interested the person is…You have to gage how interested they are and how interested they are reflects how successful their visit will be.” –Docent 9

These responses are powerful and show a real goal among those docents to deliver a great experience to the visitors. Questions and learning are common among the docent responses. The third response is helpful in acknowledging that the level of success of the docent/visitor interaction may not solely depend on the docent. This leads to an idea of the visitor entering the Lab or any other exhibit with a certain level of interest and willingness to participate in order for it to be a successful experience.

Docent 2 responded saying a successful visit is one in which the visitor completes all the stations. When probed further, they were asked if someone coming in for ten
minutes could have a successful visit. Docent 2 said yes, but it would be ideal to go through the whole case. The case, including all six tables, on average could take 20 to 45 minutes if visitors were interested in going to each table with the assistance of a docent. This answer differs from most of the other docents when discussing this topic. Docent 2 was the only one to see success as the completion of the whole exhibit. This specific docent has been volunteering in the Lab since September 2012. This docent shared that no formal training programs took place around the time they started. The type of training received or lack of by this docent may play into their perception of success.

Docent 7 also acknowledges the completion of the whole case as being determinate of the success of the visit. This docent however goes on to state that they think by doing the whole case the visitor will, “…understand really what the work is of forensic anthropology by doing the work of the forensic anthropologist in the Lab.” This docent does say the whole case is important, but learning is the unspoken idea.

The Lab is a non-formal setting and docents are non-formal educators. This creates potential for visitors to have a successful visit due to its unique environment and approach to learning. Docents are not testing and questioning people. They are engaging people, answering questions, and guiding people to an understanding. “By its very nature, non-formal education as a concept and as a theoretical framework reminds classroom teachers that much of learning takes place outside formal systems of education.” (Taylor and Neill 2008:25) According to Taylor and Neill, their results can be applied to The Lab as it is already on the road to creating successful visits because it is not a formal learning setting like a classroom. The potential for people to retain information when it is learned
in a non-formal setting is slightly greater. The conversations brought up between the two parties of visitor and docent lead to learning that will be remembered further down the road than if the visitor only read something in an exhibit (Schultz 2011). The responses of Docents 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 fall into line with Taylor and Neill’s concept because they all acknowledged the unique setting of the Lab.

All nine docents see themselves as successful in their position based on each of their own understanding of the concept of success. It is valuable to explore what each docent understands to be synonymous with success because this study focuses on the perspective of the docent in their position and how their educational background plays into this notion. When the docents state what they understand to be a successful visit, they are describing their personal experiences in The Lab. When visitors have what they perceive as a successful visit they in turn see themselves as successful in the position of docent.

*The Visitor’s View on Success in the Lab: The Lab Visitor Comment Book*

While this study is specifically centered on gaging the level of success from the docent’s perspective, it is beneficial to get an idea of how some of the visitors feel about the exhibit. On the counter at the main entrance of the Lab there is always an open notebook with a pen where visitors are encouraged to share their opinions.

The Lab opened to the public in 2009, and since then many people have gone through the exhibit. A good portion of those people left a comment in the notebook. No one stands by the book itself to monitor or solicit comments, so it is likely that when
people take the time to write in the notebook, these comments are consistent with their actual sense of their experience during the visit. The availability of written comments from visitors provides an additional relevant source of material. Given that interviewing the public was beyond the scope of this research, review of the comment book provides a glimpse of the other side of the interaction between docents and visitors, as available in written remarks. For this study, only the current notebook from the past few months was available for review. Below are comments from the notebook relating to the visitors’ experiences in regards to interacting with the docents in The Lab.

- “…It was so amazing. Can’t wait to come back and do it again. Very helpful staff.”
- “The staff was very helpful in explaining the exhibit.”
- “So good! Loved the ‘story’-staff was so helpful + friendly.”
- “This is a very nice addition to the museum, staff is nice + very friendly. Please do not remove this Lab.”
- “It was great. Employees need a raise. They did a great job 😊”
- “You people are all so friendly.”
- “Awesome display! I think you guys are super cool.”

Comments relating to interaction with the docents were of interest, whether positive or negative. There were no negative comments in this notebook, which is taken here as an indicator that most visitors have a positive experience in the Lab, including their interaction with docents. “Friendly” was commonly used by the visitors who left the comments, indicating they found docents helpful and available. Overall, based on the
comments it is reasonable to conclude that visitors (at least those who took the time to enter written comments) enjoyed their visit and had a favorable impression of The Lab, including the docents that provided them with information and assistance while visiting the Lab.

**Conclusion**

*Educational Background*

When it comes to the educational backgrounds of docents in the Lab, it is not vital for the volunteers to have a specific degree or background in Forensic or Physical Anthropology in order to be hired as a docent. As this conclusion applies to the Lab, it is also safe for other museums and exhibits to hire docents with no background in the subject matter. A general interest in the material being covered is enough of a requirement to screen for potential docents. Individuals with various backgrounds bring many positive attributes to the position, so the more variations the better.

A diverse group of people in general makes for a very interesting experience for a museum visitor. A recommendation from an international study on museums and keyworkers (museum educators, docents in this situation) suggests, “It is important that museums value each person’s individuality and to develop an eclectic set of keyworkers. A diverse society requires diverse ways of connecting with people--keyworkers should be reflective of that diversity.” (Gray and Chadwick 2001:438) This includes educational backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, languages, socio-economic statuses, and any other characteristic that differentiates groups of people. “The socio-economic context and the
formative educational experiences of participants are important considerations in
developing particular groups of keyworkers” (439). Although the socio-economic context
and educational experience are mentioned as being important, it does not state they need
to be of a specific background in order for an individual to be considered for a docent
position. The preceding comment states how various individuals would make a diverse
society within the museum.

Docent 5 mentions how potential docents should be chosen based on their
teaching/interacting skills as opposed to a specific educational background. The
following quote comes from a write up on the Discovery Room, also an exhibit at the
Museum of Natural History in DC, acknowledging Docent 5’s idea. This is in regards to
the qualities the docents possess, which are sought out by the people in charge.

“The following characteristics describe a composite or generic Discovery
Room docent:….Although science is a special interest for some, most are
not so interested in the content of the Discovery Room, as in the process
of learning fostered there.” (Pawlkiewicz and Stevens1987:12)

While on a different floor than the Lab, the Discovery Room has the same concept of
allowing visitors to interact directly with museum collection materials. Although The Lab
has a story to it, the Discovery Room is a room of miscellaneous items encouraging
learning and curiosity among the visitors. Docents are not expected to know about
everything covered in the Discovery Room because it so broad. It is the desire to learn
and teach that drives the docents in the Discovery Room and the people in charge are
well aware of this. No specific educational background is necessary to be a docent in the Discovery Room, just as it is and should be in The Lab and other museum exhibits.

When discussing the topic of educational backgrounds and their importance to the success of an exhibit, there is always the possibility someone will not have the answer to every question. This plays into the role of power projected onto the docents by the visitors. Most visitors view The Lab docents as being more than just volunteers. It is assumed the docents know much more about the subject than they do. Even having a specific educational background corresponding to the topics in the exhibit does not mean the docent will be able to answer every question that comes their way. The ability to say, ‘I don’t know’ in response to a question is extremely helpful and powerful. The ability to take that phrase and not leave a hole in the visitor’s experience is crucial. “The explorative nature of science is stressed by teaching docents problem solving methods. Discovery Room docents become generalists who are confident that it is all right to say ‘I don’t know, let’s find out.” (Pawlkiewicz and Stevens1987:13) The Discovery Room docents are not expected to know everything about all the items in the room. The skill of admitting a lack of knowledge but wanting to find out the answer is a great way to teach visitors. Going to the internet or asking another docent are both great steps in solving a problem such as this. This goes to show that even with an educational background in a specific topic, a docent may not necessarily know everything, and this does not make them less of a docent.

This situation shows no matter what the docent’s educational background, they may not have the answers to every question. Why put restrictions on this position when
no one can know everything? Someone with ten PhD’s may still be stumped by a question. This shows that regulating potential docents based on their educational backgrounds cannot prevent all the problems that may arise.

A common theme among the docents was the fact that when asked what about the opportunity interested them, none of them said they wanted to teach the public about something they had knowledge of. A number of them (Docents 1, 3, 5, 6, and 9) specifically said they were interested in learning more about forensic anthropology and found this to be an opportunity to do just that. They wanted to learn about something they found interesting. Not much was mentioned about relaying the information they learned to the general public. There was no sense of selfishness in the decision to become a docent in The Lab, but there were a few docents who mentioned how they wanted to learn about the subject.

*Docent Perception of Success*

As expected, the concept of success is subjective. All the docents see themselves as being successful in their position although they do not all share the same understanding of success. There is also no correlation between seeing themselves as successful and the educational background possessed by the docent. Docents gage the level of success of their interactions with visitors on various criteria. This allows for a great insight into how people, in this case Lab docents, place importance on a certain situation. From the interview answers, most docents gave the impression that the level of success is synonymous with the satisfaction of the visitor. If the docent believes the
visitor has left having learned something during their time in The Lab, then that specific interaction would be labeled as a success.

Having explored the subjective concept of success and its role in the relationship between docent and visitor within The Lab, a majority of the docents seem to share a common goal. Docents 1 through 8 all share the belief that if a visitor leaves The Lab having learned something, it was a successful visit. This in turn makes them see themselves as a successful docent and succeeding in the position. It can be concluded many of the docents share an unspoken underlying goal of The Lab: for the visitors to learn something not necessarily specific to Forensic Anthropology, but about life and the world we are all living in.

The dictionary meaning of “success” acknowledges that it is the achievement of ones’ goals or an “accomplishment of desired end” (Dictionary.com, LLC). This would mean an end result or goal would have to be in place in order for success to occur. Only when that goal is reached is it considered a success. None of the docents mentioned a goal of The Lab they were told about during their training process. Overall, there was more acknowledgment of personal goals set up by the individual docents. These goals were based on what they thought was important as an individual and what they thought the visitors should leave with.

With no structure for the docents to follow in regards to goals for The Lab, there is the possibility visitors will leave without a successful experience. Conducting this research and focusing some questions on the success of docent/visitor interaction has shed light on the organization of The Lab and potentially other exhibits in various
museums. There should be a system implemented for everyone to follow which need not be a strict guideline, but at least a loose idea of what should be expected to happen between the docent and visitor during the exchange. This was something lacking after interviewing the docents from The Lab.

Although there is no goal for The Lab put in place and articulated by museum staff responsible for exhibits and docents, the majority of the docents strive for a similar goal. This goes to show many of them share a general idea of success. If a common objective is put into place in collaboration with the exhibit staff and docents, everyone can work toward a similar goal. The Lab should create a goal for all the docents to work toward so there is an understanding among the population about how the exhibit should be affecting visitors. This is valuable for all museums to apply to existing or future exhibits.

To reach these goals, it would prove beneficial to have as many docents as possible who are willing to participate, meet, and come up with ideas on what makes a successful trip to that specific exhibit. Pooling the ideas of so many individuals is a productive way to get a better understanding of how each docent approaches and interacts with visitors. Knowing how these people think helps guide all docents to approach visitors in an individualized but cohesive way. Although discussing the success of information systems, Raymond Louis touches upon a valuable observation that can be applied to The Lab, “…success depends on the extent to which the particular values fit the organizational environment.” (1990:5) There needs to be an organizational structure for an environment; in this case, it is The Lab and the creation of a goal. This
environment can only succeed if the goal properly fits into the structure and makes sense. Having guidelines on how to interact mixed with the individuality of each docent would make for a common understanding of a successful visit within The Lab.

Successful interactions within The Lab are equally dependent on the visitor and the docent. The previously mentioned Discovery Room exhibit at the Museum of Natural History states, “The visitor’s personal interaction with the volunteers who staff the Discovery Room contributes greatly to the success of the exhibit” (Pawlkiewicz and Stevens 1987:12). Both parties must be willing to interact for there to be a successful visit. The pressure is not fully on the docents. In order for the docents to be successful in The Lab and any other museums, it would be beneficial to create a common goal for all the docents to strive to meet. This allows for a common understanding of the purpose of an exhibit and how it is supposed to influence society. In keeping with these conclusions, the majority of the current docents in The Lab agree that someone with no educational background in Forensic Anthropology has the potential of becoming a successful docent. There was a commonality among a majority of the docent’s educational backgrounds who were interviewed for this study, but only two had a degree directly related to the material in The Lab. Anthropology degrees were frequent among those who did make it through college already. Although there were various anthropology degrees, there were very few Forensic/Physical Anthropology classes taken during the coursework.

Finding that the educational backgrounds of docents does not determine whether or not people should or should not be hired for the position at a museum or play into
whether or not they see themselves as successful in the position leaves one to wonder what does play a role?
Chapter 4: Docent Training Programs

The educational backgrounds of people do not prove to play a role in the hiring of individuals being considered for the position of docent in The Lab. Educational backgrounds also do not play a significant role in whether or not docents see themselves as successful in the role of docent in The Lab. Through the interview process it was undeniable that the training received by the docents, which proved to be very different among the various docents in the group, was a main factor in their ability to see themselves and consider themselves as successful in the position. The interviews brought up issues in regards to the training programs and the preparation of docents. Requirements and training programs from other museums proved to be valuable data when exploring the educational backgrounds of docents because it allows for a better understanding of what is expected in other museums.

The Docent Training Program: The Lab

While exploring the educational backgrounds of docents and the role they play in the success of the individual in that position, the subject of training programs emerges. There was no consistency between The Lab docents and the training programs they participated in before carrying out their duties as volunteers in The Lab. This is important
because the educational backgrounds of the docents along with the training they received results in the level of success within the exhibit including the docents perception of their success.

Inconsistencies in training programs received by The Lab docents were made evident during the interview process. Before and soon after the opening of The Lab, there were very formal training programs. The formal training program consisted of various meetings over multiple weeks, filled with intense preparation such as readings and lectures. As the years have gone on this has changed. The new docents who started since summer 2012 have missed out on this formal training. They have been provided a booklet to study and that is all.

There was a wide array of training preparation received by the nine docents in the sample population. Docent 3 read a training packet, but also came into The Lab multiple times and picked up the answers by observing other docents, which Docent 3 chose to do on their own. Docent 3 also used the internet on their phone to find answers to questions they did not know. Docents 1, 4, and 5 had a one-day course along with the packet. They had to put a skeleton together with a group and heard some of the museum’s forensic anthropologists speak to them about the subject. Docent 5 took part in the class where a skeleton was assembled, but was also part of a training class for the museum and not just The Lab. They walked around the museum observing visitors and noticing their behavior. This was the first time this approach was mentioned. Docent 6 did not get formalized training, and instead interacted with the older docents and filled in the gaps by asking questions. Docent 8 stated they went through a long training process that included six
sessions. This was before January 2009, which was the beginning of the exhibit. At the time, there were larger groups of docents to prepare. Docent 9 shared that the presence of the supervisor helps with a continuous sense of training. When the supervisor is there and a docent does not know the answer to a question, they can answer to the best of his knowledge. The docent learns through this process. These interviews show there is a drastic difference in the training programs received by the docents. Over the years The Lab has been open, various approaches have been taken to prepare docents for their position in the exhibit.

After speaking with other docents, it became apparent that some of the newer docents are well aware of the previous training programs supplied to the older docents in The Lab. The interviewed docents shared their criticism and how they would improve the training program. There were many different suggestions made by the docents when asked, “How do you think the [training] program could be made better?” Docent 1 suggested more follow up action or continuing education specifically for The Lab. Docent 2 believed the docents should be tested on a regular basis during and after the training to keep up on the training education, with refreshers along the way. Docent 3 asked that there be an acknowledgement of the reference materials in the exhibit and more medical coverage because people ask many medical questions. Docent 4 also wished to have learned more beyond the cases. Visitors enter with questions having nothing to do with the cases. An idea shared by Docent 5 included more reading materials presented to the docents in training. This means providing the docents with resources to cover more than just the cases in The Lab. Docents 3, 4, and 5 wished to be better
equipped to answer non-relevant case questions. Docent 5 also suggested having a happy hour or dinner seminar every few months where museum staff or local university faculty could come and talk with docents about exhibit related topics. A FAQ sheet from past trainings would prove beneficial to the new docents, as suggested by Docent 6. Docent 7 was not able to come up with a suggestion to better the program. Docents 8 and 9 both concluded their training programs prepared them well for the position in The Lab. Although Docent 8 liked their training, which consisted of the six week sessions, they did acknowledge that newer docents are not receiving the same training. Docent 8 suggests more in-depth training for them.

Although the nine interviewed docents have experienced various training preparations, for the most part they see the training they did receive as having prepared them well enough to cover the material shared in The Lab. Docents 1, 3, and 6 were the only individuals who hesitated in saying whether or not the training program prepared them well enough for the docent position. There are ways to improve the training, but the majority of the docents view the training in a positive manner, as it prepares those who do not have an educational background in forensic or physical anthropology. The training received by the docents appears to have more of an effect on whether or not the docent sees themselves as successful in the position than their educational background.
Docent Training and Requirements: Findings from Other Studies

Having conducted and gathered data regarding the training received by the current docents of The Lab, it is valuable to see how other museums have approached the process of training volunteers. Data from other studies and information collected from the websites of numerous museums will paint a picture of the requirements of docents outside the walls of The Lab.

While focusing on the inclusion of experiential learning in docent training programs, the study conducted by Grenier and Sheckley results in a number of recommendations to make a successful training program. Some of these ideas include the docents creating portfolios, encouraging self-regulated learning, and exposing docents to more experiential settings. They suggest providing them with classroom learning, but also encouraging the shadowing of other docents throughout the museum, attending field trips and other activities of that nature (Grenier and Sheckley 2008). These suggestions were made for training individuals in preparation to become docents.

The Tampa Museum, a metropolitan art museum, asked for help from local university educators to plan their docent education project. This program is phased and requires individuals to go through steps before becoming a full-fledged docent. Included in the training is the pairing up of experienced docents with new volunteers. This type of training also includes role modeling, formal and informal observation and feedback conferencing (Wolins, Spires, and Silverman 1986).

Wolins, Spires, and Silverman touch upon the element that some docents in the Tampa training program were trained and sent through a workshop specifically to
become a future lead docent. Their sole duty would be to train new volunteers. This is a concept of having experienced and specifically trained docents guide and help the new ones. The shadowing of current docents by new trainees was put in place to create an 

“…open, non-threatening, communicative environment allow[ing] for individual growth and strengthens the docent’s performance. Making connections and sharing meaning are manifest functions of educating, as docents are taught to be responsible for extending, changing, or giving new meaning to the visitor’s experience” (Wolins, Spires, and Silverman 1986:12).

This training program gives the docent responsibilities gradually, and they can only obtain the position of docent if success is shown along the way.

Having explored the docent/volunteer pages on the websites of over 20 museums throughout the United States, this data provides an insight into the requirements expected for docents on a national level. A list of all the requirements and preferences from various museums is provided. These are the pages that individuals who are interested in becoming docents would visit to gather information. The requirements show great variation of what museums are looking for and requiring of their potential docents. It also provides valuable information while comparing the expectations of multiple museums of various subjects and topics. There are natural history museums, art museums, education centers, and anthropology museums included in the following list.

1. Philbrook Museum of Art: “Becoming a Docent”-Tulsa, OK
   -“No previous museum experience or knowledge of the arts is necessary.”
   AND
   -“What does the training program involve?
Docent Intern Training prepares prospective docents to conduct tours of Philbrook’s permanent collection and facilitate museum related experiential activities. Interested people should not feel intimidated—an art history or education background is not required— the Intern Training will provide the learning necessary to become a successful docent. Philbrook’s docents come from a wide range of professions and backgrounds.”

2. Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center- Skokie, IL
   -“Museum docents must be at least 18 years of age and have an interest in the Holocaust, genocide, human rights, and volunteerism.”
   AND
   -“Extensive prior knowledge of the Holocaust or genocide is not required but a prospective docent should have a working knowledge of European, world, or Holocaust history as well as a desire to learn.”

3. Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Center for Sonoran Desert Studies-Tucson, AZ
   - “Docents are adults of all ages, walks of life and educational backgrounds.”

4. High Museum of Art-Atlanta, GA
   - “Docents for the High Museum of Art typically have a background in education or similar fields.”

5. Michael C. Carlos Museum at Emory-Atlanta, GA
   - “Sixty men and women of all ages and backgrounds…”

6. Carnegie Museums of Pittsburgh-Pittsburgh, PA
   -“Volunteer opportunities exist for teens, college students, and adults of all ages…We make every effort to connect qualified volunteers with rewarding experiences and match your interests to the museums’ needs, but please understand that volunteer opportunities are limited.”

7. Portland Art Museum-Portland, OR
   -“WHAT BACKGROUND IS REQUIRED?
   Docent Council members must be members of the Museum. The following is also required: Interest in art.”

8. Phoenix Art Museum-Phoenix, AZ
   -“Docent training lasts for 18 months, covering such topics as art history, public speaking and research. You don’t need an art history background to participate.”
9. Mint Museum-Charlotte, NC
   - “DOCENTS ARE PEOPLE WHO HAVE:
     *an education background, or strong interest in art”

10. New Museum-New York, NY
    - “Qualifications: Candidates must have a working knowledge of
      twentieth-century art history and contemporary art (or have a background
      in studio art or art education).”

11. Chinese American Museum-Los Angeles, CA
    - “Any person age 16 and over can become a docent…If you enjoy
      learning and sharing history, interacting with the public, or have time to
      spare during the weekdays, consider becoming a docent!”

12. The Walters Art Museum-Baltimore, MD
    - “Docents are art history generalists and are trained to know the entire
      permanent collection. They give curriculum-structured tours to students
      and tours of the collection and special exhibitions to the general
      public. Docents have diverse backgrounds, but all have a desire to share
      their love of art with using interactive teaching techniques.”

13. Norton Museum of Art-West Palm Beach, FL
    - “You do not need to have an art background to apply for the docent
      program—we will teach you! The only requirements are enthusiasm,
      flexibility, and a willingness to learn!”

14. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts-Richmond, VA
    - “Who are the VMFA docents?: VMFA docents are a diverse group of
      volunteers who share a passion for art and the community. Docents are
      active, enthusiastic, imaginative, and knowledgeable. Docents help
      visitors discover the world of art by encouraging them to look, explore,
      question, and understand works of art, styles, concepts, artists, history, and
      culture.”

15. The Indiana State Museum-Indianapolis, IN
    - “No special academic background is required but a strong desire to study
      and learn about Indiana’s science and culture is essential.”

16. Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History-Santa Barbara, CA
    - “Requirements:
      • Ability to present information in an engaging way
      • Finger printing for background check
• Minimum commitment: one weekday morning per week during the school year. (9:30 - 12:00)
• Attendance at one monthly continuing education meeting (3rd Thursday, 9:30 - 11:30)"
(No mention of an educational background, just the above.)

17. Sonoma County Museum-Sonoma, CA
   - “A background in education is a big plus.”

18. Asian Art Museum-San Francisco, CA
   - “Fluent spoken English is a necessary requirement, and a second language is desirable.”
   AND
   - “No. But as a docent trainee, you will be responsible for learning all the information presented about Asian art and culture and the museum collection as well as learning appropriate interactive touring techniques.”
   AND
   - “The primary qualities of a good Asian Art Museum docent…a passion for Asian art.”

19. Danforth Museum of Art-Framingham, MA
   - “An art background is not necessary.”

20. New Britain Museum of American Art-New Britain, CT
   - “Are There Any Prerequisites for Joining the Program?: All that is needed is an interest in and commitment to our program. Few of our docents have a degree in art.”

   - “Qualified docents are patient, compassionate, effective communicators, interested in Asian art and cultures, and enthusiastic about learning and teaching.”

22. Museum of Natural History: Forensic Anthropology Lab-Washington, DC
   - “There are exciting volunteer opportunities available to you through the Office of Education & Outreach. They appeal to a wide range of people who join the program with different interests, abilities, and knowledge levels.”
There is a wide array of museums and their requirements for potential docents showing that most museums do not require an educational background in the subject matter of the museum or exhibit. A common theme among these entries is that the current docents are from all backgrounds and the museum is looking for more people to join from various pasts. Most of the museums do not require prior knowledge of the subject matter before training to become a docent. Most of the museums seem confident their training programs will prepare docents with enough working knowledge to successfully represent the museum. Many of the museums do state at least an interest in the subject is a prerequisite to be considered for the docent programs. A desire to teach and interact with people and a passion for the subject are other common themes among the museums’ docent requirements.

Museums such as the Mint Museum do not specifically state an interested individual must have a background in education or interest in art to be a docent. It is, however, worded as to appeal to those who fall under the two categories without alienating too harshly those who do not meet the desired qualities of a potential docent for that specific museum. Museums do state that they prefer to have people with certain interests or backgrounds, but none of the above discriminate against those who do not completely fall under the preferred categories. The New Museum uses strong language to make their prerequisites firm, “Qualifications: Candidates must have a working knowledge of twentieth-century art history and contemporary art (or have a background in studio art or art education).” This, however, does not come off as uninviting to those who may not be as knowledgeable in all the subjects required by the museum.
The last museum on the list is actually the Museum of Natural History and the requirements in regards to the Forensic Anthropology Lab. Although The Lab does not have a specific page for docents, there is a link on the homepage leading to a page about volunteering at the Museum of Natural History. That page provides the above “requirements” for people looking to be volunteers at the museum, along with general docent information with links to specific programs. They acknowledge that the volunteers at the museum are “…a wide range of people who join the program with different interests, abilities, and knowledge levels.” There are no specific requirements that would narrow down the pool of potential docents. The requirements are rather open and accepting of people from all lifestyles and differing backgrounds.

Training and requirements used and expected at other museums is valuable in setting a stage for comparison between The Lab and other museums in the US. Although there may be specific requirements the interviewers look for in a potential docent during the interview process, reaching out to the public and attracting people to the programs is the main goal. These requirements provide a vital layout as to what kind of people are being encouraged to volunteer. A large majority of these museums appear flexible when it comes to the knowledge and education of individuals looking to be docents.

Conclusion

The inconsistency in training received by the various docents is problematic during this study. The training proved to be the main factor in determining whether or not a docent sees themselves as successful in the position. It created interest where it was not
expected and became an important part of the data and analysis. Some docents received formal college-course-like programs, while more recent docents received a booklet with information. This was surprising, but began to make sense as the interviews continued. The newer docents may not have needed as much training because The Lab is due to close July 2013. It was originally supposed to close in 2012, but there have been multiple extensions. This seems to be a logical explanation for this phenomenon, but it raises the question of whether this change in training will have an effect on the level of success for the visitors and docents. This question can be explored with another study, as it is an important question that came up after conducting this research.

Proper training is a very powerful tool in the world of museums. A study on various museums throughout the world and “keyworkers”, or docents, within museums was the focus of an article published in 2003 by Anderson, Gray, and Chadwick. When discussing the training provided to keyworkers at various museums, it states that,

“About one third of museums communicate information on the collections and exhibitions, but other training which might help keyworkers to be more effective in their use of museums, such as training in teaching and learning methods (offered by 10% of institutions), in use of teaching and learning aids, or communication skills, are relatively neglected. It is likely, in consequence, that keyworkers make less effective use of museums than they could otherwise do. A major factor here…is the absence of “training the trainers” programmes.” (360)

Out of the number of museums used for this survey, most of them provide training to volunteers about the material covered in the museum. A few, however, take the training a
step further and prepare the volunteers with skills relating to teaching the materials and engaging visitors. It is acknowledged in this article that there is a consequence when the volunteers are not properly prepared for their position. When there is a lack of trained volunteers, this study shows it may have a negative effect on the visitor experience because the keyworkers do not utilize the museum to the best of their abilities. The need for more well-rounded training programs for museums is a powerful conclusion made from the data collected during this survey.

Many of the improvements the docents said would make The Lab training program better were for the most part acknowledged in a 1973 article discussing a meeting between staff and volunteers from various DC museums. They got together to discuss the training of volunteer docents and they came up with some conclusions to apply to future docent training programs. A bibliography with various sources was handed out before a formal training program took place. This type of training was requested by Docent 5 during the interview. Other recommendations included a few weeks of formal training classes followed by brush-up sessions scattered throughout the year. New docents were required to shadow other docents or museum staff and then do a trial run. There were also follow-up discussions conducted by museum staff and outside experts (Anonymous 1973:1). The responses from the docents were congruent with the decisions from a meeting held decades ago. Lab docents independently came up with similar recommendations, as previously mentioned.

The following quote shows a common theme between the docents of today and the findings from over three decades ago:
“Some museums are finding that they can improve the quality of their education programs by seeking better candidates. They look for prospective docents who may have some teaching experience and personality characteristics essential to working with [visitors]. Others find that they must provide the best possible training within their means to assure competent docent performance.” (Bleich 1980:20)

“Better candidates” does not necessarily mean someone who is an expert on the subject matter of the museum or exhibit. It is specifically noted that a potential docent should exhibit certain characteristics not related to educational background in order to be considered ideal for the position. Teaching experience and interaction with children trumps educational background. Characteristics such as those along with others can be seen as something a museum or school cannot teach. They are capable of teaching the material through training programs, so finding people possessing qualities such as the aforementioned ones would make for a suitable docent candidate.

Although no more formal training will be needed for The Lab, there are many valuable implications that can be applied to training programs for future exhibits at the Museum of Natural History and museums around the world. Consistency is important when it comes to training programs. If all The Lab docents went through the same training program, there would be more uniformity with the knowledge gained by the docents in regards to The Lab subject material. Everyone would have had the same training and have gained similar information. This issue with the training was problematic when discovered during the interviews.
There are various possibilities for improvement when it comes to the aspect of docent training programs. Many of the previous articles and data collected during this study state similar advice. When associated with The Lab, it is too late to strategically fix the training program because of the time left for the existence of The Lab. However, many other museums or future exhibits can take this data into consideration and apply these recommendations to create an elite training program that will produce powerful and successful docents.

Recommendations for proper training programs include teaming up of museum staff and docents to work on creating a common goal for the exhibit. All volunteers and staff members should strive to successfully reach the goal set in place. Formal training classes with mandatory attendance should be expected along with supplemental reading materials. Classes should cover topics such as material touched upon by the exhibit and teaching and engaging visitors in a non-formal setting. A very important aspect of training is the concept of shadowing. All docents should be matched with a current docent and must perform a specific amount of hours of shadowing and observing with that docent before being allowed to take on the exhibit by themselves. This will allow all docents to have experience with similar approaches to engaging with the public based on the common goal of the exhibit. For incoming docents, an FAQ sheet should be handed out. Current docents should always be asked about specific troublesome questions they have encountered during their time on a month-by-month basis. Those will be regularly added to the FAQ sheet. Continuing education programs should be implemented to
continuously educate docents on past, present, and potential future information regarding their exhibit and museum.

As Docent 5 suggested, maybe on an annual or bi-annual basis, museum and local university staff can host a happy hour or dinner seminar for docents interested in attending. The time and money to invest in a greatly successful training program would be a very high number and most museums may not find the possibility to be feasible. In a perfect world with no limitations imposed by money, a great training program would be possible, but in reality it is something only a few museums may be able to achieve.

The highlight of discoveries from this study was the differences in training programs received by the docents. From the sample population for this research, the educational backgrounds were not as expansive as was expected. Many docents did have a slight connection to Anthropology as an educational background, but not necessarily Forensic Anthropology. However, the training programs they were involved in were vastly different.1

In the 1970’s, a group of 30 staff members from Washington, DC area museums concluded that, “A prospective docent should demonstrate an enthusiasm for the museum and an interest in children. There should be no other requirements for her to meet, the imposition of educational prerequisites being unnecessary and restrictive” (Anonymous 1973:2). This concept sums up the intent of this study. In the end, individuals with educational backgrounds prior to their work in a museum exhibit not specific to the subject matter of the museum are able to see themselves as being successful docents. There are other characteristics playing a more significant role in the success of a docent.
than their educational background, most noticeably training programs. Docent training programs should be able to properly train someone with an educational background not pertaining to a museum topic.
A theme that became evident after the interviews and is too important to go unmentioned is the existence of power/authority some of the docents mentioned they felt in their role at The Lab. Their position as docent and previous knowledge played an important role in the findings. While not present in responses from every interviewed docent, several docents seemed to feel an underlying sense of power and authority relating to their positions. These findings are not quantitative, as they resulted more from the atmosphere observed during the interviews, but they play a significant role in the overall experience of The Lab docents.

When asked what subjects they pursued in their formal education, on several occasions the docents responded quickly and with ascertainable pride when their answer was Anthropology. A majority of the docents (Docents 1, 2, 3, 6 and 9) have at least a BA in Anthropology, and Docents 7 and 8 have higher degrees in Anthropology, with a total of seven out of nine docents having some sort of degree in Anthropology. The delivery of this response, including speed of their answers and change in their voice, gave a sense of superiority. The sense of superiority elicited by the response was felt during the interview and sparked an acknowledgement of the change in their delivery. Although most of the docents have an educational connection to Anthropology, not all of them (except Docents 7 and 8) had a direct degree connection with Forensic Anthropology before taking the
position in The Lab. This data shows that many of the docents in The Lab are not Forensic Anthropologists with degrees; however, a majority of them are educated in Anthropology and volunteer in the Forensic Anthropology Lab. Having a degree in Anthropology and being a docent in The Lab may give them a sense of having more knowledge when it comes to interacting with the visitors.

When discussing The Lab, the docents, and the information being set out, it is useful to recognize the nature of authority in this context. Why do the visitors ask the docents questions? Do the visitors believe everything the docents say? Without an educational background in the subject matter, does the docent have credibility when it comes to teaching the information? Here, “authority” is used to refer to the acceptance of the docents by the visitors as individuals of power and knowledge they themselves do not comprehend. Several docents acknowledged the presence of authority among the docents and their interaction with the visitors. Docent 5 states,

“…I think that when we do get into things that we know and what was covered in training it lets us speak with a voice of authority, because we are in a position of authority as educators and we are in the mindset of the visitors asking for the ideology and it helps because people come to learn and they are ready to learn and they are pre-conditioned to learn in that setting…”

Docent 5 goes on to say,

“…this facility [the Lab] has given some degree of authority to speak on the subject you know but it doesn’t sound like much to us but from their [i.e., the visitors] point of view it is…so then they believe what you say…”
Docent 5 held the view that the information learned in the training program created a sense of power over the visitors based on a real or assumed level of knowledge by docents. Further, Docent 5 indirectly claimed that society had conditioned people to trust the information being shared by someone in a docent position, because a docent undertakes training of some sort in the subject. It is assumed by the visitor that the docent has more knowledge and that the knowledge being shared is correct. When people come in and ask questions that, for the most part, the docents are able to answer, that creates a sense among docents that they have authority over the “immature”/less informed minds of visitors.

Docent 3 acknowledged authority in a roundabout way saying, “They [visitors] feel kind of intimidated when you throw out all these scientific terms…” This comment accepts that the visitors do not grasp specific terms that enable them to understand forensic anthropology in the way the docent understands it. This comment exemplifies the sense of power for the docent through knowledge over the visitors. An approach is taken by this specific docent in order to present the exhibit information in a manner they hope will easily translate for the visitor to understand and hold onto.

The acceptance of exhibit information by the visitors can be seen as a form of obedience conditioned by society, as acknowledged by Stanley Milgrim (1963:371). Although a disruptive study, Milgrim’s experiment goes on to conclude that people will behave a specific way based on what someone in an authoritative position requests. When told to administer electric shocks to victims by someone who the participants thought was a doctor, the participants continued to do what they were told even though the victims
were clearly sharing the pain they were feeling (imaginary pain). Milgrim discovered the participants administered the punishment because someone who they thought had authority over them told them to do so (376-377). Although there is nothing of the sort occurring in The Lab, this conclusion can be applied to the phenomenon taking place in the exhibit. Visitors ask the docents questions and for the most part, they accept their answers as truth. None of the docents mentioned being questioned by the visitors after having shared information with them. This would have provided evidence of a hesitation in believing the docent. It appears the visitors take what the docents say as truth because they view the docents as being in an authoritative position. The lab coats all the docents wear may symbolize to the visitors the power of those few people strategically placed throughout The Lab. Most visitors do not know the docents are volunteers, so society has imprinted on them to accept the words of the people wearing the lab coat within this exhibit.

When exploring the idea of authority as it is associated in the classroom setting, Pace and Hemmings state,

“Society traditionally entrusts teachers with the formal right and responsibility to take charge in the classroom and expects students to obey. The character of teacher-student authority relations has great bearing on the quality of students’ educational experience and teachers’ work.” (2007:4)

Although The Lab is not a formal classroom, visitors come in with a sense of being in a learning environment. The docents are there to teach and assist, but not necessarily lecture. Museums can be seen as a type of classroom. From the perspective of
Docents and visitors, the concept of authority transfers into the learning aspect taking place in The Lab. Visitors most likely see themselves as students and the docents as teachers. This thought process will lead to a similar classroom setting where one teaches and the other learns and for the most part accepts what they are being told.

Pace and Hemmings explore ideas from Max Weber and Emile Durkheim and the elements of authority based on social theory. “The right of a person to give commands depends on others’ belief in his or her legitimacy as an authority figure…Authority…is a social relationship in which some people are granted the legitimacy to lead and others to follow.” (2007:6) Authority results from subordinate people allowing others to have the power. Visitors in The Lab enter with little to no knowledge of forensic anthropology. This places power into the hands of the docents because it is assumed the docents know more about the subject. The visitors are the ones placing the idea of authority on the docents, giving them power. If there were visitors who wanted to challenge the ideas of the docents, the power dynamic would completely change.

Power and authority is a social construct that takes two or more groups to allow it to happen. This is evident in The Lab and plays a role in the relationship between visitor and docent. It also plays a role in a few of the docent’s perception of their success in their position. If they see themselves as having the power of knowledge then that places some level of success in their interaction with visitors. If they believe they have power/authority over visitors this in line can mean they have more knowledge on a subject which may lead to them seeing themselves as successful because they know more. The issue of power/authority was not brought up directly during the interview with
the docents. However, it was an interesting topic arising with the responses from Docent 3 and 5 during analysis. They shared a sense of authority felt over the visitors based on the knowledge each party believes they possess.

Conclusion

The presence of the concept of power/authority inside The Lab plays into the social construct of the space. The visitors put power into the hands of the docents by coming in and taking what they say as truth. This gives the docents a sense of power that was evident in a few of the docent interviews. Many of the visitors do not realize they are learning from volunteers, not highly trained forensic anthropologists. This occurrence plays an important role in the dynamics of a museum exhibit staffed by volunteers. It has been found and plays into the findings of this particular study that, “There has been an assumption that school students [and visitors] in museums passively receive the given wisdom presented through the exhibitions or by museum staff [docents]” (Griffin 2007:40). Although an assumption is not fact, this proves to be a common and independently acknowledged idea in regards to educators (docents) and students (museum visitors).

Whether it be educational backgrounds, training received, the combination of both, or some other unknown force, there is a sense of power/authority present in the relationship happening between visitors and docents in The Lab. It can be safe to say this is also present in other exhibits and museums with their docents and volunteers. Society for the most part has conditioned humans to accept the words of those believed to possess
more power and in this case knowledge may be seen as power. This power/authority felt by some of the docents to teach the subject matter of The Lab is brought on by a combination of educational background, training, and personality traits of the individual. It does not come from one area, yet probably from a combination of them and various other outside factors. There are many who stand up against this phenomena and question the world they live in, but no evidence of this appeared during this study. This raises questions that can be used to guide further study or research into other directions of the role and presence of docents in museums.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine whether prior educational background has an impact on whether individuals should be hired as docents at museums and whether or not the educational background plays a role in them seeing themselves as successful in the docent position. Overall, it was concluded that prior educational backgrounds should not determine whether a person should be hired as a docent or not. There needs to be no previous knowledge of a subject matter for an individual to become a docent in an exhibit. Educational background was also found to not be the determining factor in whether or not individuals see themselves as being a successful docent. The understanding of success from the docent’s perspective is valuable for this study because that was of interest during this research. As a surprise, after conducting the interviews, training received by the docents of The Lab was very inconsistent and played a larger role in the determination of success as perceived by the docents than their educational background. Suggestions and recommendations on making the training programs better were collected from the interviewed docents and also concluded based on the results of this study.

This study and research is significant to the field of Anthropology and to mankind because it explored the understanding and thinking of a group of people who have yet to be deeply studied and approached from the angle of this research. The data collected
from this study will prove beneficial to the education/outreach/volunteer programs in museums all over the world when it comes to docents and the role they play in sharing the mission of a museum and/or exhibition.
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Biography

Ellyn Mitowski graduated from West Springfield High School, West Springfield, Massachusetts, in 2004. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Central Connecticut State University in 2008. She was employed as a the Travel Study Coordinator of the Biblical Archaeology Society for four years and received her Master of Arts in Anthropology from George Mason University in 2013.

\[\text{With a personal connection to this study, having been a docent in this exhibit, I do know of various other people I was not able to interview who are orthopedic surgeons, medical doctors, retired air force pilots, and much more. However, the scheduling did not work out so as to interview those people.}\]