From Cultivating Local Foods to Cultivating Local Audiences

K.T. Jackson
Rochester Institute of Technology, ktj5266@rit.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholarworks.rit.edu/theses

Recommended Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Thesis/Dissertation Collections at RIT Scholar Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of RIT Scholar Works. For more information, please contact rtscholarworks@rit.edu.
# Table of Contents

Abstract 1

**Introduction** 2

**Typology and the Visitor** 4

Comparing Layouts: The Memorial Art Gallery and Other Museums 4

Comparing Layouts: The RPM and other Public Markets 7

**Staying Culturally Relevant** 11

The RPM Community in Brief 11

Public Markets in the Broader Context 14

**Case Studies** 18

Research Methods 18

The Hobbyist Duo and the Orthodox Woman 22

Nana and the Backpacker 26

Think of the Children 28

Further Implications 32

**Maintaining the Mission While In Pursuit of Diverse Visitorship** 33

Visitors in the Eyes of the Institution and its Officials 35

**Concluding Remarks** 40

**Appendix** 43

**Bibliography** 63
Abstract

The Rochester Public Market (RPM) is a city-run institution that offers the public access to fresh produce, ethnic delicacies, and general merchandise at low cost, year-round. Its low barrier for entry and allowance for informal interactions between visitors and vendors are just a few of the reasons why the visitorship is consistently high and diverse. With such attributes, the RPM is a vital institution in the Rochester community, leading to the question “what can local museums learn from the market’s methods?” At the time of this writing more and more museums are becoming event spaces with multipurpose uses that fall well outside of the museums’ strictest functions: to collect and conserve. As museums incorporate more and more public programming events that have a higher entertainment to education value, it is helpful to look to other civic institutions that successfully balance the line between maintaining their mission and cultivating new and dedicated audiences in the digital age. Using historical research, contemporary data gathering in the form of informational interviews, and audience research in the form of participant observations, this thesis identifies the RPM’s successful practices of local engagement with diverse communities that can be adapted to museums both within and beyond Rochester.
In July of 2017, I was invited by my best friend, Cam,\textsuperscript{1} to join her and two others to go and visit the City of Rochester Public Market. It was a hot summer day, and the first time I had ventured outside of my neighborhood. The RPM is located on North Union Street, surrounded by an industrial park of mostly older buildings and machinery. It is a public space almost half-a-mile long, where tens of thousands of residents gather to purchase local and affordable foods. So why did Cam suggest this place as an exciting leisure activity/destination for a group of college students?

The Rochester Public Market is not just a place for people to sell and buy their groceries, although that is one of its primary functions. The RPM is also an event space for art and culture, as well as being a forum for the promotion and debate of ideas. The space is lively in the summer and creates an opportunity for people of all socio-economic backgrounds to learn and participate in things that would otherwise have been closed off to them due to high entrance barriers such as money and other resources. The RPM is a civic institution and gathering point, a hub for all things Rochester. And it is exactly this thought, of a civic institution being a hub and an event space, which led me to writing more about it in this thesis.

Museums often struggle to meet their goal of inclusive visitorship and diverse representation. And as they struggle, there continues to be a detrimental stratification between these formal institutions and the local public (particularly when speaking of less metropolitan areas). The schism created by high barriers to entry and conflicting values between the local community and the museums need to be addressed in order to ensure the broadest range of visitation. Because every museum in Rochester cannot afford to offer free admission, I focus

\textsuperscript{1} Camela Kiernan, graduating chemistry student and my best friend at Rochester Institute of Technology.

here on how museums, operating as multi-purpose event spaces just as the RPM does, can serve their communities to the highest degree.

Evan Lowenstein, Communications and Special Events/Projects Coordinator for the City of Rochester Public Market and Debora McDell-Hernandez, Engagement Manager at the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester were vital resources to the creation of this thesis. Their interviews, seminars, and offering of ample resources and permissions allowed for a more accurate comparison between two cultural institutions dedicated to creating and facilitating programming events which actively and perpetually engage the local Rochester community.

This thesis discusses market typologies in relation to museum exhibit spaces, common histories of public markets as compared to that of museums, as well as the importance and impact of maintaining cultural relevance to obtain inclusive patronage. This thesis will also speak to the importance of co-curation and maintaining the mission of a cultural institution (i.e., museums) while pursuing diverse visitorship from the local community. While art museums and public markets diverge in important respects, including the museum’s commitment to preserving collections for the future, they nonetheless can learn from each other, as they both use public events to supplement their main attraction (be it art or food) in order to cultivate and engage the broadest audience to visit their space.
Typology and the Visitor

“Each design involves a typological decision!”

As a whole, public markets follow common guidelines when it comes to organizing visitor pathways that maximize the quantity and quality of visitation. In this section, “Typology and the Visitor,” I discuss how the layout and typologies of the Rochester Public Market influence and enhance visitor engagement, based upon these guidelines. I also discuss the different types of museum layouts proposed by Hans Wolfgang Hoffman, a scholar of architecture, design, and urban sociology. Utilizing his museum typologies, I compare and highlight similar methods of typological design in public markets and museums—particularly in regards to the RPM and the Rochester Memorial Art Gallery (MAG).

Comparing the Layouts: The RPM and Other Public Markets

With over 300 vending stalls, limited hours of operation, and congested traffic flow, the Rochester Public Market initially seems like a place that will only provide its visitors with sensory overload and an abundance of headaches. Designed by city engineer Edwin Fisher in 1905, the market’s seemingly awkward triangular layout (see Figures 1 and 2) displays the careful consideration of ease of audience navigation through the space. Fisher’s architectural design or layouts, also known as a typology, helps audiences navigate easily throughout the space to reach multiple points of interest and to facilitate the maximum amount of interaction time between visitor and vendors.

---


The RPM is composed of four sheds (Sheds A-D), three of which fit the rectilinear description which Helen Tangires, a prominent scholar of international food systems and commerce, describes below:

The term “shed” is used broadly to encompass the entire repertoire of structures that are usually rectilinear, supported by posts, piers, or columns, open on one or more sides, and covered by a low-pitched roof.4

The RPM’s wide central aisle and multiple bays allow patrons the freedom to circulate without interruption; its multiple points of access offer opportunities for patrons to engage more often with vendors as they stroll the public concourse. With its steel trusses, iron girdles, and posts, the RPM holds a sturdy frame, yet sacrifices maximum protection from the elements to capitalize on the accessibility it offers through the presence of bays in three of the RPM’s four sheds.5

The simple and open design of the “market shed” typology does not require the skilled hands or creativity of designers or architects, and yet its structural design is a form frequently utilized in classical antiquity.6 In fact, the market shed type is commonly referred to as a “basilica type” among urban architects and designers, due to the abundance of light, columns, pillars, and the presence of an arcade.7

Helen Tangires details a list of eight “market typologies”8 that illuminates how market layouts adapt to meet the changing needs of the community they serve by providing facilities that are safe, accessible, and inviting. Tangires also notes that in Ancient Greece marketplaces served

---

5 Rochester Insurance Maps, courtesy of the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County: Local History and Genealogy Division and archives. Monroe County Library System: Rochester, New York. These Rochester Insurance maps, dating back to 1908, detail the building materials used for construction.
8 Helen Tangires, Public Markets, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2008), 25. Tangires creates a list of “market typologies”, which denote the various architectural designs or layouts made and standardized in response to the desire to maintain an orderly flow of business and to protect from undesirable weather. The common market types are as follows: the open-air marketplace, the street vendor, the market shed, the enclosed market house, the central market, and the whole sale terminal market. The Rochester Public Market is an example of
as civic centers, facilitating not only trade and commerce but also as a “forum” or event space for all other public functions.⁹

Tangires stresses the importance of multipurpose use regarding the use of space in cultural institutions as she writes about the boom in multidisciplinary civic centers and partnership between the institution and local government at the beginning of the 19th century onwards, by noting the popularity of multi-use buildings in the United States. Courthouses, city council chambers, museums, and schools are just some of the institutions that had public markets located on the ground floor.¹⁰

Organizations—particularly urban cultural institutions catering to public audiences to garner revenue, impart knowledge, or gather attention—have one uniform element to assert their institution in the community: identifying markers and monuments. “The primary objective [of museum architecture] is to communicate the intrinsic values externally,” by accenting the visual authority of a space through markers such as fountains, arches, columns, statues, towers, and clock towers.¹¹ When the Rochester Public Market first opened in the early 1900’s, a decorative arch was placed at each of its three entrances and a fountain was placed in a central location inside of the RPM, serving as commemorative ornamentation and a functional, public source of water.¹²

---

¹² Nancy Rosin, *The Hands That Feed Us: 100 Years at the Rochester Public Market*. (Rochester: City of Rochester, 2005), 12. Similarly, the Memorial Art Gallery has sculptures by Tom Otterness that also serve as markers to capture and invite the attention of the passerby. The Rochester Museum and Science Center has two large sculptures; a large silver colored circle and the polished bronze Somaini Sculpture that indicate the explorative sciences of the Earth and beyond. The George Eastman Museum has relaxing and inviting gardens of its own that the public are encourage to freely roam. And, the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County keeps their façade extremely traditional as evidenced by its Doric order columns—a call back to timeless Greco-Roman architecture.
Comparing the Layouts: Across Museums

As museums transition out of their helicopter monitoring of the visitor, to providing their visitor with agency in the form of freedom of movement and opportunities to voice their thoughts as respected individuals in the eyes of museum personnel\textsuperscript{13}, there is a growing concern: How can museums maintain relevancy and admiration in the eyes of contemporary society while also maintaining their authority as a primary educational resource? Being seen as fun and inviting is beneficial, but being viewed as one in the same as a theme park is detrimental to the mission of cultivating the intellectual pursuits that the museum seeks to put out into the surrounding community.

Many museums are intentionally incorporating multipurpose use of previously singular-use spaces as a result of the digital age. The increasing integration of technology into various aspects of human life instills within people the desire to not only engage with the authentic objects in a museums’ collection quickly and intimately, but also a strong need to be able to immediately share, discuss, and debate their reaction to the exhibit.\textsuperscript{14}

The established exhibition concepts and predetermined showcases that traditional museums once heavily relied upon to convey an idea are no longer sufficiently engaging by themselves. Christian Schittch, editor-in-chief of Detail magazine and editor of Construction and Design Manual: Museum Buildings, wrote the following regarding the evolution of museums into multipurpose event spaces:

The established tasks of collecting, preserving, researching and presenting are augmented by a wide range of other [tasks performed by the museum]. The


buildings increasingly become an event venue and meeting place (for dining) or a commercial marketplace with their ever larger shops.\textsuperscript{15}

Museums incorporate aspects of event-space methodologies to the best of their ability, but the depth of which a museum integrates the “marketplace” mindset depends, in large part, on the type of museum and its contents. Art museums and territorial museums (places that have historical battlefields or national monuments), for example, may have trouble, as the marketplace mindset is radically different from their traditional and disciplined methodologies that have long been established in their doctrine. There is also a fear of a larger risk to valued collections if the general public is given more liberated access to navigate around the collections or exhibition space.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, there is a concern in the minds of traditional museum professionals of their hard-won aura of authority and respect if they were to begin treating their spaces of contemplation and learning with the same aura as a stereotypical teenager treats a shopping mall: as mindless entertainment.

On the other hand, there are the more technology-savvy, adventurous, and visitor-oriented museums—such as science museums and children’s museums—that proactively accept this new and experimental change in methodologies. Viewing the change as a golden opportunity to link the concepts presented in the exhibits to the outside world, these types of museums are likely to be pioneers in marketplaces methodologies and event museums.

The following is an excerpt from Hans Wolfgang Hoffman’s book, \textit{Construction and Design Manual: Museum Buildings}, on a museum typology that he defines as “event museums”:

Here, museum pieces are only sparse. Cafes and shops are fast becoming central components. Permanent exhibitions and the repository are being interspersed with

\textsuperscript{16} “While our bona fide museums seek to become relevant, maintaining their roles as temples, there must be concurrent creation of forums for confrontation, experimentation, and debate, where the forums are related but discrete institutions.” Duncan F. Cameron, \textit{The Museum, a Temple or the Forum}, Reprint (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2012), 55.
workshops and lecture halls, and not even infrequently replaced by these. Even the aesthetics promise activity, particularly in the form of technoid architecture.\textsuperscript{17}

When comparing what Hoffman defines as “event space” museum typologies to that of traditional museums of art or science, it becomes apparent that the layouts of the latter echo the same stream-lined discipline present in other aspects of the traditional museums’ methodologies on visitor engagement. While simple variations to exhibition spaces are permitted (and encouraged!) in the traditional museum, its resistance to blending temporary and permanent collections in the floor space equates to a visual blandness that pushes visitors away.\textsuperscript{18}

Museum architects and designers carefully consider spatial sequencing\textsuperscript{19}, otherwise known as floor plan/layouts when organizing visitor pathways through the exhibition space. In museums, security, climate control, and proper lighting of collections often comes first when designing visitor pathways. This leads designers to implement spatial sequences such as circuits and one-way routes, which are simple pathways that only allow a visitor to travel in one or two preapproved directions. These types of pathways restrict the freedom of the visitor’s movement the most, as the safety of the objects supersedes the liberty of visitors’ movement through the space.

Since the collections are valuable, rare, or must be viewed in a certain order (to convey a certain idea), which limits the natural flow of visiting patrons, that in turn causes patrons to feel as though they are caught in a current, being pushed or rushed through a space. When architects and design place a little more value in the visitor’s freedom of movement and comfortability, spatial sequences such as construction grids and open floor plans are implemented. These pathways leave every direction open for the visitor to explore the various paths presented (if

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item See Appendix, Figure 8.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
there are any present). It also allows the museum ample space to place rotating/traveling exhibits and an area to put visual references to other remote exhibits, as there are fewer objects/walls blocking a visitors’ line-of-sight.
Staying Culturally Relevant

Within this section, “Staying Culturally Relevant”, I briefly explore the microcosm of the Rochester Public Market by reviewing historical texts and data regarding various socioeconomic and cultural data regarding residential demographics. I then cross-examine how the Rochester Public Market engages the local community in comparison to literature regarding other public markets. This section uses a sociological view in determining group motivations and interests of market place visitors. By dissecting the roles that community and culture play in a more informal civic center (where barriers to entry are comparatively lower than more formalized institutions, such as museums), I discover methods of visitor engagement that museums can adapt into their own practice. These methods allow the museum to preserve the integrity of their original methodologies while maintaining cultural relevance and interest within the local community.

The RPM Community in Brief

Approximately 55,000 immigrants arrived in Rochester between 1900 and 1910. Many of these immigrants were from Southern and Eastern Europe. The neighborhood surrounding the Rochester Public Market, in particular, became home to a surplus of single Italian men from agricultural or blue-collar backgrounds. In 1927, the population of the City of Rochester was approximately 321,000 people, and at the height of the industrial revolution many immigrants from the Southern and Eastern countries of Europe settled in the northeast sector of Rochester, bringing an increase in common laborers as well as conflicting social and economic criticisms.

---

The Rochester Public Market, acting as a public servant to the people of Rochester, was tasked with becoming a consumer-friendly space that would “tame public unrest through minimizing economic disparities between the rural and urban classes.”

The societal norms and values of the previous (elite) residents in Rochester clashed with those of the new arrivals. In hostile attempts to “Americanize” the new Rochesterians, societal reforms reflected political prejudice, stereotyping, and fear mongering. These attempts to culturally erase the identities of local residents created cultural conflicts, which the new immigrants responded to in various ways. One method of retaliation immigrants pursued in the face of “Americanization projects” was to embrace their culture and heritage to combat the cultural infringement and erasure through peaceful means, including traditional cooking. It was only when the cost of Rochester living began to rise and World War I created food shortages leading to food distributors instigating riots that a need for a unified, central, and affordable food market began to bring groups back together out of necessity.

Starting in 1946, Rochester has also become the new home to a large Puerto Rican immigrant population, as the result of a serious of ill-received economic reforms initiated by the new freely elected governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Munoz Marin, during that time. When they arrived in their home in Rochester, these immigrants were “financially poor but rich in family networks and community ties.”

Over 8,000 people immigrated to Rochester from Puerto Rico in the span of a decade. Over the years, the Puerto Rican community, along with the African American community, grew in number, but in conditions that made these minorities feel ignored or cast-aside. These communities then knitted themselves together in a display of solidarity, creating

---


areas where they could celebrate their cultures without fear of infringement or retaliation from the more established residents of Rochester.24

Now in the present day, and with the Rochester population at approximately 208,880 people as of 2016, the RPM sees itself as an economic and social microcosm of Rochester’s history and values.25 Throughout Rochester’s contentious history regarding immigrant assimilation the RPM has primarily served the lower and working class people’s, as it was one of the few places were these groups could find affordable food. Overtime, the presence of these groups led to their cultures melding in to the RPM that we see today; serving foods and sharing languages from a variety of cultures that can’t be found in the commercial grocery stores. The RPM is not a theme park or a museum in the strictest sense, but a living, working institution, where consumers can meet the providers of their goods face-to-face and engage intimately with a mixture of old and new cultures without the fear of becoming “Americanized” by a majority population’s ideas of what they think culture should be.26

To provide a public forum that is as diverse as and equitably representative of the surrounding community, it is important to stress that cultivating diversity is not achieved through singling out one group to promote or increase, which can cause separatism between visitors, nor a matter of appealing solely to a visitor base that seeks out places because of diversity. Evan Lowenstein, the RPM’s Communications and Project/Event coordinator, spoke to the importance of creating a space where people visit both because and in spite of diversity. There are a broad range of socio-economic statuses held by the patrons of the RPM. There are comparatively

26 Nancy Rosin, The Hands That Feed Us, (Rochester: City of Rochester, 2005), 14.
wealthy patrons shopping alongside people who, if they encountered them anywhere else in the city, they’d be likely to go out of their way to cross the street. Why is that? Why are people more accepting/willing to look past their inequalities here and not anywhere else in Rochester?

Public Markets in a Broader Context

Alfonso Morales, associate professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, insists that labor market marginalization drives many new immigrants, displaced workers and aspiring entrepreneurs to become vendors at public markets. The low barriers for entry found in city-run markets are gateways to social and economic opportunities for intellectual growth and financial change. Additionally, Morales explains that public markets are enabling new members of a community to experience some of the familiar comforts of their old home and communities, while simultaneously acclimating members of the established community to newcomers. This informal forum created spaces wherein vendors and customers felt comfortable discussing and sharing freely amongst one-another, cultivating large information channels that promote positive cultural diffusion, healthier environments, and local business that is more representative of the people who live there.

Sociologist and urban planner Alison Alkon underwent a 10-year exploration of identities and inequalities found in racial difference and economic backgrounds of people participating in Oakland’s farmers markets, examining how race and non-Eurocentric cultures influence ideas of local food, agriculture, and environment. Alkon starts by asserting that farmers-market goers tend to categorize and emphasize the space as a public place that is one of the last remaining locations wherein a person can have an authentic experience of public comfort and community. Yet, Alkon points out, community is a state that is achieved by both inclusivity and exclusion,

---

27 Evan Lowenstein, interview by author, Rochester, January 11th, 2018.
with definitions of community being constructed through subjective lenses of race, class, and lifestyle.\textsuperscript{28}

Alkon further states that the word “community” has been frequently and interchangeably used with the word “culture” by vendors and visitors alike when talking about what makes farmers markets so appealing.\textsuperscript{29} While on the surface this seems like a positive remark, Alkon dissects how the word community is a word that holds connotations of inclusiveness and openness, while culture defines itself by how it differs from others. Such is the dichotomy of the cultivation of culture: it is exclusive, possessive, and subject to strict hierarchal categorizations.

Social groups typically interact with one another in one of two ways: primary group interactions, which are more intimate/personal interactions between people, or secondary group interactions, which are more formal, goal-oriented interactions.\textsuperscript{30} The following quote from museum researcher John H. Falk helps to illustrate associations between individuals and, further, the parallel between the Rochester Public Market and museums more acutely:

Museum educators engage with visitors in a variety of ways, including structured interactions, such as museum tours, stage shows, or classroom programs, and unstructured interactions, such as staff facilitated activity tables or informal conversations between staff and visitors at exhibits.\textsuperscript{31}

Vendors, I hypothesize, are the equivalent of professional museum facilitators; they are largely responsible for ensuring that visitors have an enjoyable time and want to come back. These vendors are also expected (or presumed) to be very knowledgeable about the space they


work in and the food they work with, just as a docent is expected to know about the collection in an exhibit. Yet, there is a critical difference in how vendors choose to interpret and engage the world around them to their patrons; it is more fluid and varied, because it is considered normal to engage in a broad range of social topics (that would be regarded as too intimate in a traditional museum setting) with visitors, as a method of creating an aura of ease and belonging. Vendors generate relatability, a sense of community, and loyalty through connections made, thus facilitating cultural connections by sharing common backgrounds with visitors. Docents and hosts, of course, represent their institutions and the institutions’ goals, meaning that their interactions with visitors can sometimes necessitate a higher degree of impersonal politeness in order to maintain formalities.

Then there are those in other museum professions—curators, collections managers, public programmers, educators, security and the like who all work together to ensure the protection and enjoyment of visitors and collections under the domain of the museum. Similarly, in the context of public markets, there is a job where an upper level market authority is placed in charge of and held responsible for maintaining the “market peace.” They duties involved regulating traffic congestion to manageable levels, providing protection against thieves, maintaining fair trade between buyer and seller, and ensuring that the quality of the goods being sold is in line with the standards previously outlined by that particular market. In essence, market peacekeepers are tasked with the mental and physical comfort and happiness of the visitors within a defined space, just as are museum workers in various managerial roles.

As I concluded with drawing these parallels between the staff members at the RPM and in other cultural institutions, I thought about the possibility of similarities between the visitors in

---

these respective spaces as well. If I could discover any significant similarities between museum
visitors and visitors at the RPM—in terms of common motivations or patterns of behavior—then
I could further emphasize the importance of museums becoming more present and accessible in
their local communities in ways that they have not been able to achieve before.

After all, in a single summer the RPM sees approximately 25,000 visitors. Not all of these
people go just for the food alone. They also go for the representation of local culture and
communities; to gather to learn new skills by taking advantage of opportunities such as creative
artist workshops; and to share and display their communal pride. The RPM proves that diverse
visitorship and high regular attendance exists and can be cultivated by utilizing the right
methodologies to approaching and interacting with the visitor. In the next section, “Case
Studies”, you will read about the research I conducted to find out what are those successful
methods and mindsets being used to cultivate diverse visitorship, beyond providing low-barriers
to entry.
Case Studies

In this section I compare the Rochester Public Market’s visitor interactions and experiences to those of museum visitors. Before I make that comparison, I would like to propose the idea that the RPM is by the definition quoted above, a type of museum or ethnographic park. An ethnographic park is a public space dedicated to gathering people’s respective cultures, customs, habits, and mutual differences in a form of fluid or live curation.33

The outdoor museum, as a concept, has been classified as a folk museum or ethnographic park.34

The RPM, in the context of museology, is like an industrialized outdoor museum, akin to the living history museums often found in the remote countryside or farmlands. A civic institution housing cultural histories, creative spaces, and learning opportunities, the RPM and museums hold a lot in common. Just as museums have shifted towards becoming event spaces that offer multipurpose and multicultural community services and programming, so has the Rochester Public Market.

The outdoor museum, a term that has been defined by scholars in museum studies, also has a lot in common with the RPM in terms of how they engage visitors in their space.

These sites employ living history as a form of recreation of the site as well as contextualization of it. Attention should be paid to the ways in which the living history techniques employed at these sites involve a range of theatrical techniques, including first-, second, and third person strategies that seek to enliven the museum experience.35

---

33 Edward P. Alexander, Mary Alexander, and Juliee Decker. Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums. (Lanham, Maryland: Rowan & Littlefield, 2017). 120. Within the text, it formally states that the purpose of outdoor museums in the United States is to present “contemporary cultural traditions [by] sharing the skills, knowledge, and aesthetics that embody community based traditions”.

34 Edward P. Alexander, Mary Alexander, and Juilee Decker. Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc., 2017), 120.

As mentioned in “Staying Culturally Relevant”, public market vendors are the equivalent of museum hosts, relaying the historical information of contemporary life in contemporary fashion that is relatable, approachable (in terms of accessibility), and enjoyable to witness. By creating this comparison, I am able to utilize John H. Falk’s analytical framework regarding visitor identity types to categorize visitors’ needs and motivations for visitation.

**Research Methods: Participant Observation**

John H. Falk and his colleagues performed extensive research and collected data for seven years (from 2002 to 2009) to substantiate their theory that learning and engagement are dictated by an individual’s inclinations or motivations, coined by Falk as “museum identity types.” Identity types categorize motivations for visitation based upon behaviors exhibited by the visitor, the various statuses and roles the visitor may have when they enter the museum (such as being a mom looking after children or a teacher leading a school group), and visitor expectations of the museum.

The five major identity types that Falk defines are as follows: (1) Explorer; (2) Facilitator; (3) Experience seeker; (4) Professional/Hobbyist; (5) Recharger. Each one of these types comes with a specific “leisure attribute” which broadly represents the core reason people visit museums. For example, a recharger visits a museum with the primary goal of physically and mentally separating oneself temporarily from aggravating stimuli in a refreshing environment. A facilitator, on the other hand, will visit the museum with the expectation that it will be a social experience—creating memories with their companion as they guide them through the museum space.

The museum identity types are not a singular trait permanently affixed to each visitor for their lifetime. Identity types change with the visitor’s experiences, moods, and intentions for a
particular day, week, or year. Nonetheless, Falk’s framework provides a way for museums to organize groups by motivation/intentions which can then be used to generate exhibitions and spaces that appeal to their visitors on a personalized level. The information presented in those spaces is then made broad enough that it generates interest with the general or unfamiliar public while also fostering strong seemingly individualized connections with visitors more invested in museum content.

The following case studies address instances of Falk’s visitor identity types that were identified in patrons at the Rochester Public Market. Starting in January 2018, I conducted participant observation research at the RPM on Saturdays, during the hours of operation when visitation was the highest (typically between 9 am and 2 pm). I would start my day by taking the bus from the Rochester Transit Center over to the RPM. This allowed me to scope out any patrons to the RPM and mentally catalogue people’s backgrounds (such as their primary language and motivations for that day) for potential observation later, once we had arrived at our destination. This was the closest I would get to knowing and understanding an individual’s background without skewing responses by formally interviewing them. The communal action of taking public transportation creates a social norm in which it is not only permissible but sometimes even encouraged to sit inches away from someone you do not know for extended periods of time, eavesdrop, and participate in a conversation, uninvited.

Upon arriving at the Rochester Public Market, I would go directly to the Market Office to withdraw funds from the ATM. In doing so, I had accomplish two critical tasks: (1) the opportunity to briefly survey the RPM as I traversed its grounds from one end to another, to reach the Market Office. I had also used this time to make mental note of how many vendors there are, where they are, and where the majority of their patrons seemed to be gathering in
relation to those vendors. (2) The very nature of participant observation connotes the importance of integrating oneself into the local community, so as not to draw attention and risk disingenuous or unnatural reaction from those being observed. While it is not required to purchase items from vendors, there is a noticeable disdain in vendors’ eyes if one simply circumnavigates the market space while circumventing participation in the local business and economy.\footnote{To quote a common idiom, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”.
}

After collecting funds from the ATM, I began my formal observations. Before entering the market space, I had created a hand drawn map template of the Rochester Public Market which denotes the four major vending areas: Sheds A-D (see Appendix, Figure1). This map template also has the location of the smaller, aluminum food stalls, an outline indicating the brick and mortar businesses, the market office, bathroom/water closet, parking lot areas, and major exits. The left-hand side has an area labeled “visitor stats,” where various demographics—supposed gender, age, race/ethnicity, and parental status—are recorded. The right-hand side of the templates are where other significant observations of the visitor are recorded if the information does not fit into the predetermined categories on the left-hand side.

I did not have a rigid system for picking who I would observe. However, I did have two rules that I stuck to:

1. Whoever I observed had to be noticeably different than the last. For example, if I recorded the visitor pathways of a single white male carrying a biker’s helmet, I would try to find a woman in the company of a child or with friends afterwards.

2. The person or group that I was observing had to be navigating the market in the opposite direction (clockwise or counter-clockwise) as the previous person or group. As I was
recording my research at the RPM for long stretches of time, I noticed I would receive many strange looks if I spent hours following the same path.

When I finally chose who I was going to follow, I placed a sheet of transparent paper over the template I have created. I would then quickly fill out the left hand side, and then begin to track their pathways (from a respectable distance). I also noted any unique behaviors or interactions exhibited by the visiting patron to assist me later in categorizing their behavior. In order to indicate the types of interactions visitors had with others at the RPM, I used three different signs to indicate where visitors stopped and approximately how long they stayed with a particular vendor. The observation period ended when the visiting patron left the operating space of the RPM (heading for the parking lot or bus stop) or if they spent more than five minutes with a vendor (because I did not want to bring attention to myself).

My participant observation research at the Rochester Public Market lasted until the first week of March 2018. During that time I formally recorded the pathways, visible demographics, and interactions of 25 individuals (and their accompanying persons). From those 25 formal observations, I have selected participant observations from three different Saturdays to include in the following pages which exemplify—to the highest degree—instances where Falk’s visitor identity types were present in visitors’ interactions at the RPM.

The Hobbyist Duo and the Orthodox Woman

Two women, one between the ages of 18-25 and another between the ages of 46-55, enter Indoor Shed B together with five reusable Aldi bags split between them. They stop briefly at Sue’s Spice Stand to survey offered products, before moving on to Davis Honey. They spend

---

38 See appendix. Map of Shed B that has store owner’s location and business names.
several minutes with the vendor for Davis Honey, discussing the product and making casual conversation. While this happens, my partner, Dr. Juilee Decker, and I are approached by another woman, curious as to what we were doing. After informing her of the broader circumstances of my thesis and visitor observation, she pauses—for a second, I think she might not understand—and then she promptly states that she (and her daughter) have master’s degrees in art history. She then proceeds to state the pressing need for preserving the museum space. Before having the chance to ask her to elaborate, she describes her disdain for how The Strong Museum of Play has incorporated birthday parties into their museum space. By her word and judgement, museum spaces were not for events such as birthday parties, which she asserts take away from a child’s opportunity to learn in the museum space.

When I asked her if there were museums in the Rochester area that she had been to and liked recently, she admitted that she was with her daughter, who had since moved away to complete her schooling. As Decker finished up our conversation with the woman, the original duo that we were initially observing had since made a purchase at Davis Honey and had spent the next five minutes at Johnny’s Wholesale Foods, a meat vendor. Again, the duo made casual conversation while they made their purchase. Then, in an unusual move (as I had not observed this pattern of behavior since my observations began), the duo split up. The younger woman left with three of the five bags (which were visibly full) while the older woman continued to browse Shed B. As the older woman approached Flower City Produce, a vendor selling a variety of

---

39 On this day of observations, I was accompanied by Dr. Juilee Decker, a published scholar, editor, and professor in the Museum Studies department at Rochester Institute of Technology. She is also my Senior Thesis instructor, who volunteered to assist me in my observations so that she to evaluate and attempt to recreate the method results of my visitor observation forms.

40 See Appendix Map of Shed B
produce, her companion returned with emptied out Aldi bags.\textsuperscript{41} Observation ended when the duo exited Shed B.

In this case study, two of Falk’s visitor engagement types are identified: The hobbyist and facilitator. The initial duo observed here exhibited hobbyist behaviors as they tactfully executed a divide and conquer stratagem with little hesitation as they expertly navigated Shed B. Falk defines the hobbyist identity type as one being driven to “satisfy a specific content-related objective.”\textsuperscript{42} Hobbyists such as these two women, feel close ties between specific vendors and content at the RPM which play into their level of excitement. When they weren’t speaking with one another, they were fully engaged in conversation with the vendors they visited—but only just long enough to exchange a short pleasantry and money for a product.

They were engrossed in the experience of grocery shopping, and as evidenced by their amused grins, these women were happily motivated and familiarized with the space. In other observations I had made on my way into and out of the Rochester Public Market, I had noticed other groups similar to this one, who treat their visits to the market like agents going on a secret mission. These groups often pile out of the vehicle they carpooled in, with many recyclable bags in hand as they make beelines towards specific vendors—either to buy something or gather information in short but fulfilling conversation. They all end their visit the same way: divide and conquer, and promptly leaving without loitering or lollygagging; packing up the spoils of their thrilling hobby into the car, to return again one day. While some may not see the appeal or freedom of spontaneity in the hobbyist’s seemingly never-ending agendas and checklists, the hobbyist sees completed tasks and goals as fuel for a fulfilling life.

\textsuperscript{41} See Appendix. Map of Shed B that has store owners' location and business names.
Let us turn then, to our curious woman who interrupted our Hobbyist Duo so that she could share her opinion on museums as events spaces. The woman, who appeared to be around 55 years of age and of Caucasian ancestry, did not introduce herself by name when she approached us—slushy in one hand and 3 or 4 ALDI bags in the other. This woman held clear, personal, and educational ties not only to the RPM (as evidenced by her well-worn recyclable bags) but also to museums (via her daughter’s art history background). She seemed to be preserving an idea of the museum as a traditional institution that did not and should not turn themselves into venues or event spaces for the public to use at their discretion. When she finally acknowledged that she had not visited museums in some time, because her daughter wasn’t there to go with her, I concluded two things:

(1) That her traditional outlook and mind frame regarding museums would never change if she refused to go to any museums in contemporary times. She is likely still operating under the museology of old, when museums saw themselves more as temples of quiet introspection and praise, not forums of debate and incubators of new and revolutionary ideas.

(2) That while she holds some elements of a Hobbyist identity type, I conclude that her primary visitor identity is that of a facilitator, and a rather extreme one at that.

In his text, *Identity and the Museum Experience*, John H. Falk writes:

[The Facilitator], wishes to engage in a meaningful social experience with someone whom [they] care about in an educationally supportive environment.\(^{43}\)

Here, the woman establishes that her visitation to museums is heavily contingent upon whether or not her daughter, who shares her art history background and whom we can assume

the woman cares about, goes with her. Furthermore, her desire to enable the experience and
learning of others in her social group, be it her daughter or others whom she sees as her
intellectual peers (myself to some extent, but mostly Dr. Decker), categorizes her as a devout
member of the Facilitator identity type.

When reviewing Falk’s identity types and comparing them with my own experiences in
museums with visitors over the years and my formal observation with the visitors at the
Rochester Public Market, I’ve begun to view his identity types as two sliding scales. On one
scale, you have the Facilitator identity on one side and the Hobbyist identity on the other, with
the Respectful Pilgrim/Affinity group identity types between them. All four of these groups
presented by Falk are more socially motivated (extroverted) in one sense or another, to varying
degrees. The hobbyist values learning specific content, just as the facilitator does, but the
hobbyist desire to learn is internally motivated and focused solely on educating oneself on a
specific topic, and not others (as seen in facilitators). Within the groups of facilitators, there are
those who view guiding the learning of others as an honor and as something that can be
augmented to fit the learner’s particular style of absorbing information. Then, there are those
who view facilitation like gatekeeping, with strict guidelines with no opportunities for deviation,
in order to learn “properly” what the predetermined “proper content.”

Nana and the Backpacker

It’s a slower morning at the Rochester Public Market, due largely to the cold weather and
prevalent winds.44 There are fewer patrons and vendors—of those present, many of them have
gathered inside of Shed B for warmth. Emerging from the parking lot located nearest Railroad
Street, is a lone elderly woman with white hair, who stands a little over four feet tall. She speaks

44See Appendix. Image of RPM in February winter.
to no one (except to exchange brief hellos) as she briskly walks the entire length of Shed B. She stops at 13 different vendor stations to briefly look at what’s for sale, but ultimately buys nothing. She exits Shed B and makes her way to where all the brick and mortar buildings are located (alongside Shed D). She pauses outside every shop/bakery, but does not go into any one of them. She crosses through Shed D and into Shed A (at the Apple Curve)\textsuperscript{45} and then over to Shed C as she enters the parking lot again. She is visibly smiling to herself as she leaves.

A few minutes later, a young man who appears to be in his early twenties enters Shed B, and by extension, my visitor observation study. He is dressed in full backpacker’s regalia—hiker’s backpack and boots, gloves, cargo pants, reusable water bottle (clipped to said backpack), a form-fitting cap, and UV sunglasses (that are placed backwards and upside down on his head when not in use). He stops at Fare Game Food Company to speak with the vendor and buy sausage. He then proceeds out of Shed B and into Shed A, stopping at the Apple Curve to purchase produce from vendors. He makes casual conversation with the two vendors before heading out of Shed A and leaving via Railroad Street.

As mentioned before, Falk’s identity types fall on two different scales for me—one is geared more towards extroverted actions, such as the Facilitator, Respectful Pilgrim, Affinity Group, or Hobbyist\textsuperscript{46}. The other identity types that Falk defines—Explorer, Recharger, and Experience Seeker—are geared towards more introverted actions. The Explorer, while adventurous and daring, primarily is driven by a need to “satisfy personal curiosity and interest in an intellectual environment”.\textsuperscript{47} In this case study, the backpacker (who was well-prepared for the cold weather and lots of walking), was very engaged in conversation, mentally soaking up all

\textsuperscript{45} A popular spot in Shed A.  
\textsuperscript{46} See Appendix, Figure 7.  
that he could learn from the vendors he was speaking with, and made sure to visit all of the spots where the vendors in the Sheds were located. He was also alone, and visibly content with that fact. He talked to as many people as he could when he did engage in purchasing goods, and left when he had seen and heard all he wanted to see and hear.

In contrast, as mentioned in the beginning of the Case Studies section, rechargers are the most introverted identity type, as they are seeking to refresh themselves from aggravating stimuli. Here we see that recharging does not always mean isolation from all human interaction, as the woman elected of her own free will to visit the space, but only to observe from a distance. She recharged by quietly surrounding herself with the vivacious energy of others, metaphorically feeding herself off of it, and revitalized her internal motivations and appreciation for life.

**Think of the Children**

The museum experience differs depending on whether one walks through a museum with an eight-year-old or with an eighty-year-old in tow, whether one is a parent with two small children, or whether or not one’s companion is knowledgeable about the exhibits.48

Children are a large presence in the daily lives of many people, both inside and outside of cultural institutions. Many actions and motivations of child caregivers reflect what actions and motivations will be the most beneficial to the child, instead of themselves. Therefore, the visitor experience and identity will also change to reflect the responsibilities of child-rearing.

Despite their inability to pay (and lack of verbal comprehension or communication, in some cases) many vendors at the Rochester Public Market can be seen initiating interactions not with cognizant, paying patrons, but their children. While performing my visitor observations at

the RPM, I actively recorded the detailed actions of visible adults—that is, people I presumed to be 18 years old or older. However, many of the people I recorded were accompanied by young children. Though many of these children were being herded by the whim and desire of their caregivers, there were a few instances of children directing the pathways of their caregivers at the RPM.

On one occasion, I had observed a woman, accompanied by her child—a young boy about 5 or 6 years old—and another older woman (presumably her mother). They entered Shed B and the adults appeared to be going in a direction that was straight ahead of them. However, a vendor for Great Ocean Seafood (see Figure 2, stall number 63), made eye contact with the boy and smiled. The vendor, an older gentleman, quickly grabbed one of the larger fish on display and picked it up (with sanitary gloves on) and moved the fish around to mimic the movement of the fish through water towards the boy. The child laughs, which catches the attention of the mother, and suddenly the family is veering off course, towards the vendor. They all exchange smiles and laughs as the vendor and the boy continue in their imaginary sea battle for another minute, before casual conversation starts to form. The adults in the party ask about the vendor’s goods, and if he has kids or grandkids. Within ten minutes, the family is walking away with a bag containing fish, and a smiling child.

On another day of observations, I saw two Dads with their son, waking leisurely through Shed A. They are engaged in happy conversation with their son, and point out a vendor who is selling quartz gems and other interesting rocks on a table that is set at a child’s height. The boy surges ahead of his parents, and starts to eagerly sort through the curated collection of rocks presented. As the boy’s parents leisurely catch-up, they come to a stop at a table adjacent to the rock table, which is also being staffed by the same vendor. This adjacent table is set a few inches
higher than the rock table, where there sits bottles of specially made wine, equally as carefully curated and presented as the rocks.

I have noted a few other instances where in families with young children are drawn to this table as they make their way around the RPM. The vendor, who is incredibly laid-back, knowledgeable, and obviously passionate about both of the products he is selling, is always patient to answer any questions the child, or the parent, may have regarding his inventory. It is a wonderful display of appealing to different interests and intellects simultaneously, to appeal to as broad of an audience base as possible, generating interest and revenue. As the adults discuss the topic of wine, their child is entertained by the tactile objects presented. Moreover, in the case of this particular vendor, he will share a few facts about how the rocks were made or where they came from, which is a great way to stimulate learning about geology or Earth Science in a casual and interesting way. I have yet to see families that stop at this vending station, leave dissatisfied.

Researchers have consistently observed that families spend more time at exhibitions involving interactions with other visitors, or with staff.49

Vendor’s interactions with children at the RPM adds to the appeal of the space. The Rochester Public Market, in its initial days of operation, was solely an official space where the business of exchanging local goods was conducted, no more. Even now, there is no mandate for vendors to appeal to the whims of children, as they have no money or authority to purchase goods without adult consent. Likewise museums, before the 20th century, were places for the wealthy elite to privately show the spoils of their expeditions to an audience consisting of other social and financially elite.

---

Children’s museums as people know them now, were a twentieth century American creation. Their collections consist of mostly tactile objects which are neither rare nor particularly valuable. Their goal is to “engage, integrate, and inform their visitors”, through versatile exhibition galleries and programs that were more experimental and hands-on—allowing unstructured and independent learning opportunities for the child.\(^{50}\) Without the expectations of facilitators looming over head, children are allowed to engage with the content on their own terms, giving them a sense of authority and excitement over pursuing their interests and discoveries to their hearts desire. Even in museums that do not primarily target children as their expected audience, these institutions still make a point to create content where they will feel welcome. Because it is that child’s excitement and joy, that inclines parents to seek out these spaces for their children to safely explore and learn in.

Museum set aside spaces where children and their families slow down their museum visit to touch objects, read labels especially written for them or perhaps complete a puzzle designed to help them understand a specimen from the museum’s collection. In addition to these separate spaces within museums, some exhibitions have adapted the concept and created exhibit “carts” or stations where objects—a beaver pelt or wooden shoe—can be handled within the exhibit.\(^{51}\)

When a child’s caregiver come into contact with places and people who want to encourage that excitement and learning, they are more inclined to stay. Especially if that child’s opportunity for learning allows them to get other tasks, such as grocery shopping, completed with little fuss. I believe the RPM’s way of interacting with children mirrors the same concepts of awareness and interactions with children in ways that the museum is in the process of


perfecting. If you refer back to “Staying Culturally Relevant”, you will recall the mention of vendors being equated to museum hosts. To continue this parallel, I propose that their vending stalls are equivalent to the museum stations and carts mentioned above. These stations serve as access points for community outreach for all age levels, giving adults to learn in a loosely structured environment along with their child, creating a memorable experience.

Moreover, it highlights how an adult’s desire to have some authority over their environment starts when they are young, and does not go away. The desire to be seen as an equal and to interact in meaningful, constructive ways that support that equality is an opportunity for an institution to meet an achievable public need and cultivate diverse visitorship in the process.

**Further Implications**

The research that I completed for these case studies helped me to understand how museums can integrate the RPM’s methodologies regarding local visitor cultivation into their daily practices. The way that the RPM vendors interacted so vivaciously and naturally with each and every visitor complemented the visitor’s motivations and expectations for interactions within the space. The vendors were diverse in background, versatile in customer approach, and filled with genuine passion and authority for their business and the local community. Visitors, upon entry to the RPM, are constantly instantly presented with an abundance of cultures that they can bond exclusively with—creating deeper bonds with visitors, thus turning the casual visitor into and enthusiastic advocate and member of the RPM community.

The RPM appeals to very different visitor types simultaneously and successfully every day, cultivating large and diverse audiences without compromising their institutional values or alienating their visitors. In the next section, I delve in to how they accomplish and maintain those values.
Maintaining the Mission While in Pursuit of Diverse Visitorship

[The RPM is] a demonstration site, you know? Hey, this what we’re doing, you can do it too!\textsuperscript{52}

When I first began my research into the Rochester Public Market, the first person I made contact with was Evan Lowenstein. Evan, as mentioned before, is the Communication and Special Events/Projects Coordinator at the Rochester Public Market. Evan, among other things, holds a Master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Virginia and is responsible for the daily cohesion and planning of the projects, events, and people entering the RPM space. When meeting Evan, one is immediately given the impression that this man is intelligent, forward thinking, prepared, and most importantly approachable.

When I had encountered Evan at the RPM, before our scheduled interviews, he could be seen bouncing around the market space, from one vendor to another, checking in on their business and their personal lives. It was quickly apparent that Evan was seen as another member of the family in the lives of these vendors; a family member that they all appeared glad to see when he strolled through. Evan would take his time, hearing updates in people’s personal lives with patience and focused attention, and return the favor when he was given the opportunity to respond. He is always one for innovative and detailed discussion, with whomever is willing to discuss it with him. It is Evan’s penchant for actively going out every day to interact with the community he serves in a personal and approachable way that gives him the insight that other senior staff members of institutions pay thousands, if not millions of dollars for. For, access into the minds of the public that you are serving allows for better organizational management and

\textsuperscript{52} Evan Lowenstein. \textit{The City of Rochester Public Market: An Exciting Experiment since 1905.} Guest lecturer at Rochester Institute of Technology. Rochester, February 12, 2018.
appropriate responsiveness to situations involving the public that one would otherwise feel estranged from.

Evan holds a natural affinity for being appealing to many different types of people, because he surrounds himself with diverse groups every day and discusses what ideas they value the most. Of course Evan cannot appeal to everyone, all the time—which he does admit to—but those instances are severely minimized by his active participation as a senior staff member of an institution doing what is, in essence, community outreach, every time he goes in to work.

On one such instance, Evan brought up the examples of signage/wayfinding symbols that the Rochester Public Market is in need of in order to provide easier access and navigation options for patrons. Purely digital interfaces don’t fit in with the “old world appeal” of the RPM. To implement large digital screens would incite anger, fear and frustration among the some of the older vendors and longtime patrons of the RPM, as they would see it as moving away from the intended aesthetic and discarding the historic memories of the RPM. The solution that was the most agreed upon, by the staff and vendors at RPM, were colorful wooden signage posts (think old Europe) or weather-resistant small rectangular signs that snapped onto the existing columns throughout the market. Visually appealing, easily interchangeable, weather resistant, minimal upkeep and cheaper than the (at minimum) thousand-dollar interface.53 This design while giving homage to the historic presence of the RPM, would also be attractive and accessible to newer patrons. In this action, Evan and his fellow colleagues have demonstrated their adept institutional awareness.

53 Evan Lowenstein, interview by author, Rochester, January 11, 2018.
Visitors in the Eyes of the Institution and its Officials

John Falk offers no decorative preamble as he denotes with certainty that the key to cultivating audiences is by convincing them that the museum can meet their individual needs like no one else. He reiterates the importance (and in some cases the underutilization) of marketing departments within museums. There is a lack of what Falk refers to as “institutional awareness” within museums that dulls museum officials to the current needs of visitors and causes these officials to have warped perceptions of the importance of older, more traditional values on contemporary visitors.54

This parallels with comments made by Evan, who spoke of always trying to avoid what he called “mission creep,” which occurs when an institution loses its awareness of its original and highly specific mission and strays away with actions that add little to no benefit overall. Evan emphasized that his institution is constantly striving to do better without compromising its “organic character.” The “old world appeal,” as Evan calls it, is a motivating force behind why people visit the market; it is the unique experience sparking curiosity in younger audiences, who might have never encountered so much analog interaction before, as well as sparking waves of nostalgia for older audiences which gives them a sense of comfortableness and belonging.55

Free or public admission into spaces is good for exposure purposes, but it can (and too often does) take away from the fundamentals of the institution’s identity. Evan had discussed how younger audiences will visit the RPM to simply observe or use the location as a personal photoshoot location, which does not help the economy (commerce) of the RPM at all.

55 Evan Lowenstein, interview by author, Rochester, January 11, 2018.
Ideally, museums should want to encourage age diversity in visitorship within the walls of their institutions, but should also participate in the local economy by venturing outside of it, whether it by organizing pop-up exhibits or conducting low-intensity field research by going out and talking with people. Museums should strive to make it so that participation is as frictionless as possible by making goals clear, so that people not only come to the space, but participate as well. It is incredibly frustrating when people come to statically observe and not participate in discussion or a hands-on activity.

The Rochester Memorial Art Gallery (MAG) for instance, is a wonderful art gallery located just one mile away from the RPM. The MAG does a lot of community outreach in the form of hosting artist workshops in one of its rooms, so that people can sign up for a class taught by a legitimate instructor. The host charity events, invite school groups on tours, and have an outdoor sculpture park that the public is freely allowed to walk around in. However, the only spaces that held low-barriers to entry, is the gift shop, which while free to enter, the cost of the items located there in can be off putting to those without strictly managed financial resources, and the main atrium—which has not art on the walls or interactives that guests can gravitate towards. On January 4, 2018 I visited both the RPM and the MAG around mid-day, and found that there were more visitors at the RPM during a snow storm (13 people) than in the art gallery at the MAG (6 people). At the same time, on the other side of the MAG, they were hosting an event for Market America in their ballroom that had around 40-50 people, but none of them ventured to the gallery.

In an interview with Deborah McDell-Hernandez, the former Engagement Manager at the Memorial Art Gallery, she admits that museums can be off-putting, stating that “people are sometimes intimidated by art museums, because they think that they do not “know enough”
about art”. The MAG is in perpetual efforts to remedy this public perception by creating more publicly curated and publicly governed events in which visitors are given the authority of what they believe is art worth sharing. One such exhibit, titled Her Voice Carries, is on display in the MAG’s Hurlbut gallery is an art project with multiple components being displayed all over the city of Rochester. The murals, created by Sarah C. Rutherford, features the portraits of Rochester women in the context of their own lives and in connection with the rest of the world. This exhibit excited new audiences that were of diverse backgrounds and mindsets, and helped to paint the MAG as an institution that cared about what the public had to say and then went to on provide the representation that made visitors feel included and valued within their space.

Direct interaction and communication with the chosen demographic on their home turf is the best way for museums to gain insight into what are the varied interests of these groups. Going to the visitor is like a preemptive strike, which creates a sense of respect and acknowledgement that translates into trust—to trust that the museum will not pigeon-hole its audience but will treat them as equals within and outside of the museum space. This trust is what will get audiences through the door.

The museum visitor is not an empty vessel, waiting to be filled with our wisdom…respect the knowledge and motivations for our visitors and to use our many resources (including collections, staff, and sites) to make a difference in the lives of individuals as well as the quality of life in our communities.

---

56 Deborah McDell-Hernandez, Engagement Manager at the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester. Interview by author, Rochester, February 23, 2018.
57 Deborah McDell-Hernandez, Engagement Manager at the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester. Interview by author, Rochester, February 23, 2018. The Memorial Art Gallery hosts periodic events called “Hidden Passions”, in which members from the local community come to the MAG to share their what is they do when they are not working their ordinary day-jobs.
Another idea that Falk suggests to build diverse audiences and attract new visitors is by working collaboratively within a community and other museums. To help visitors find the museum that’s perfect for them and to prevent visitors having negative experiences in museums due to incompatible engagement types, museums come together to agree upon and establish which types of people would best fit the museum in terms of each individual visitor’s motivations and lifestyles.\textsuperscript{60} This collaborative effort also allows for visitors to exert control over their own experience to a degree that they cannot experience at other museums.

Museums are not alone in their desire to be as appealing to as many people as they can, without compromising their existing values or their mission. In Evans case he focuses “on the benefits of being local”, when it comes to the products being sold and the people selling them.\textsuperscript{61} In McDell-Hernandez’ cases, it is to “put the spotlight on the people outside the building”, by giving the public opportunities to journey inside the museum to share their creative stories in a space surrounded by equally great works of human creativity.\textsuperscript{62} Visitor perceptions, both in the eyes of managerial staff, and in the eyes of the visitors who may or may not interact with them directly, but do interact in the spaces the staff has been assigned responsibility for. The information gathered from my interviews with Evan Lowenstein and Deborah McDell-Hernandez both of whom are high level staff and personnel at their respective institutions highlights their approaches to programming and interactions with visitors overlap in some respects, and diverge completely in others. There is no singular right or wrong method when it comes to pursing

\textsuperscript{62} Deborah McDell-Hernandez, Engagement Manager at the Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester. Interview by author, Rochester, February 23, 2018. The Memorial Art Gallery hosts periodic events called “Hidden Passions”, in which members from the local community come to the MAG to share their what is they do when they are not working their ordinary day-jobs.
diverse visitorship. In my comparison of their methodologies and perspectives of audience interaction in relation to the success achieved by each institution, I aim to further the success of both.
Concluding Remarks

The practice of diversity is no longer solely in the realm of curators and captains of industry; it’s incumbent upon all of us to foster change at every level. On one of my first research visits to the RPM, I met and made friends with several vendors while touring the various stalls. One vendor, who introduced himself simply as Tony, saw me pass by his stall on a particularly cold winter day, when the RPM had few visitors, and engaged in casual conversation with me. Tony shared with me an abbreviated history of his life and what led him to become a vendor: Tony worked for General Electric and retired, but found that stagnancy (sitting at home), didn’t suit him. “I like talking to people, and I love talking about the Lord,” Tony told me, before asking me about my background. I tell him that I was born in St. Louis, Missouri, that I go to Rochester Institute of Technology, and that I am a Museum Studies student. Tony is visibly impressed that I attend RIT, and we continue to talk about the museum studies field for a few minutes more, as I pick out produce from his stall to purchase.

Tony, as well as the majority of the other vendors I had observed, constantly demonstrate one of the key behaviors that gets visitors of all different backgrounds to keep coming back to the RPM: a charming consideration for others that never infringes upon the visitors autonomy, or patronages their experiences or knowledge. Vendors at the RPM are fostering community ties, cultural diffusion, and thoughtful discussion within a highly accessible space that appeals to the broadest array of people. The RPM provides a critical service, providing affordable food in an accessible place, but it also is constantly educating their visitors in informal ways on a variety of

---


64 “Tony”, Vendor at the RPM. Interview conducted by author on site at the City of Rochester Public Market. November 20, 2017.
topics. Pop-up exhibits, visiting performers, creative artist workshops, advocacy groups, and demonstrators are all regular features at the RPM that encourage visitor learning and participation within the local community and economy.

It is because of the RPM’s success, as a cultural institution, in creating and fostering such a rich and easy going atmosphere between the vendors, visitors, and usage of available space, which makes it a great candidate for reference, study, and integration into the museum methodologies and practices.

Currently, there are a variety of initiatives within museums to focus on local visitor cultivation, retention, and education in order to create public advocates who are passionate about the institutions that serve them. I do agree that museums have a responsibility to provide content that can educate those who are interested in the collections where ever they may be located around the globe. Those people’s interests may end with the object or artifact in the collection, and not extend to the cultural value and norms of the community that museum resides in.

However, museums that reside in and rely heavily upon the support of the local community, whether out of selfless charity and willingness to see people succeed together, or in order to receive a particular grant, have an equally pressing responsibility to provide the community with the resources to educate themselves on subjects otherwise obscured from them. As museums in the context of civic institutions in the digital age who are looking to cultivate newer or younger audiences of diverse backgrounds, they need to provide an inviting forum for thoughts, creativity, and debate. After researching the successful practices of one type of civic institution—The Rochester Public Market—and after studying the history, methods, and practices of museums within academia, I
propose the following recommendations to cultivate a consistently high and diverse visitorship:

1. Utilize the space outside of museums, whether it be the museum’s parking lot, lawn space, veranda or even the sidewalk, as a platform for providing engaging content in a place where it is the most accessible.

2. Providing constant opportunities for co-curations on formal, semi-formal, and informal levels in concert.

   Co-curation gives all people who come into contact with the museum—people employed within the institution and the general public the opportunity to become a peer in the collection and exhibition process, creating equal representation. By generating content can be a part of the visitor’s life without requiring the visitor to go out of their way and provides a low-barrier for access. Allows the visitor to decide when, where, and if they want to participate more after showing a taste of what the museum has to offer. Perpetual access, with content that does not need to be managed by curators or need facilitated interactions via hosts, means that the museum is in a sense “open” 24/7 for the public to enjoy for the maximum return with low effort.
Figure 1. Ariel map of The City of Rochester Public Market. Curtesy of the City of Rochester Public Market.
Figure 2. Map of Shed B with vendors names and location. Courtesy of the City of Rochester Public Market.
Figure 3. Map template of RPM created by author for use in participant observations. Diagram by author.
Figure 4. Participant observation used to in *Case Studies: The Nana and the Backpacker*. This follows the older woman. Diagram by author.
Figure 5. Participant Observation used in *Case Studies: The Nana and the Backpacker*. This follows the Backpacker. Diagram by author.
Figure 6. Participant Observation used in Case Studies: The Hobbyist Duo and the Orthodox Woman. Diagram by author.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explorer</th>
<th>Experience Seeker</th>
<th>Recharger</th>
<th>Hobbyist</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A visitor who is driven by a need to “satisfy personal curiosity and interest in an intellectual environment.”</td>
<td>A visitor that sees the museum as a critical point of interest. These types of visitors get their satisfaction from having “been there, done that.”</td>
<td>A museum visitor with the primary goal of physically and mentally separating oneself temporarily from aggravating stimuli in a refreshing environment.</td>
<td>A visitor with a perpetual drive to satisfy a specific content-related objective.</td>
<td>A visitor the museum with the expectation that it will be a social experience—creating memories with their companion as they guide them through the museum space.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Introverted Motivations**

**Extroverted Motivations**

A Respectful Pilgrim is a visitor motivated to travel to a cultural institution out of a sense of duty or obligation. An affinity group (otherwise known as a cultural group), visit to learn more about themselves and how they fit into the culture they are surrounded by.

Figure 7. John H. Falk’s five major Museum-Visitor Identity Types, and the two sub-categories Falk later amended.
Figure 8. Spatial Sequences, diagram, as printed in Hans Wolfgang Hoffman’s Book, *Construction and Design Manual: Museum Buildings*. 
Figure 9 and Figure 10. The City of Rochester Public Market Shed B. Photo by K.T. Jackson
Figure 11. The RPM Office. Photo by author.
Figure 12. A Vendor selling produce. Photo by author.
Figure 13. A vendor selling flowers. Photo by author.
Figure 14 and Figure 15. The North Union Street Sofrito Garden, a community garden, located next to the RPM.
Figure 16. Creative Workshop located at the RPM. Photo by author.
Figure 17. Two University of Rochester students having coffee at the brick and mortar buildings located at the RPM. Photo by author.
Figure 18. Facebook 360 camera team from College of Imaging Arts and Science at RIT capturing 360 video at the Chai Guys booth at the Rochester Public Market, summer 2017. Photo by author.
Figure 19 and Figure 20. Free Books/ Neighborhood Library located at the RPM. Photo by author.
Figure 21. Early morning Shopping at the Rochester Public Market. February 2017. Photo by author.
Figure 2. Vendors setting up shop at the Rochester Public Market. January 2017. Photo by author.
Figure 23. Me (center) My first visitation to the Rochester Public Market, standing with my friends in front of the tiger mural located in between the brick and mortar buildings at the RPM. July 2017. Photo by David.
Bibliography


Flanigan, Robin L. “How 1 artist embodyed 5 women’s stories in her Rochester mural project”.


[http://mag.rochester.edu/exhibitions/her-voice-carries-prelude/](http://mag.rochester.edu/exhibitions/her-voice-carries-prelude/)


United States Census Bureau, 2018.


