

ABSTRACT

THESIS: THE LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM EXPERIENCE: THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG VISITORS, PHYSICAL OBJECTS, DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY, AND HUMAN INTERPRETERS

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The museum field is brimming with research about visitor experience. However, what is less studied is the relationship among the visitor and the different media contained within a single exhibit. This thesis seeks to understand the relationship between museum visitors, and the media of physical objects, human interpreters, and digital technology. Further, this thesis also seeks to understand how these media provide visitors with an educational and entertaining experience. By taking a mixed-methods approach that includes observation, surveys, and interviews with participants representing demographics of museum visitors, as well as interviews with experts in museum design, development, and interpretation, these relationships became clearer. The analysis of the results shows that participants preferred experiences that include a balance between the different media. Both participants and experts see the forms of media as secondary supporters of the main exhibit narrative as the different forms of media provide elements of education and entertainment. By becoming familiar with the relationship visitors have with the different media, museums and other visitor experience industries can more easily recognize how different media can present their stories and build more meaningful relationships with their visitors.