



**Science  
Museum**  
*of Minnesota*®

# **Volunteer Survey Report**

## **May 2007**

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## Overview

In May 2007, self-administered surveys about their volunteer experience and training were sent to 552 Science Museum of Minnesota volunteers, and 224 volunteers filled it out and returned it for a 41% response rate. The responses from volunteers to many questions were lengthy and detailed; a separate appendix is attached containing all of the commentary provided by volunteer respondents to open-ended questions on the survey. In this summative report, selections of sample responses were included after open-ended questions.

## Results and Discussion

### Volunteer Experience

Of the volunteers who responded, a large majority (86%) were current and active volunteers for SMM, 7% were inactive volunteers, and 7% were on a leave of absence. When asked what their overall volunteer experience was in their particular area, the majority rated their experience as “good”, with a couple of areas being rated as “exceptional” (see Table 1).

**Table 1. How would you rate your overall experience as the following type of volunteer?**

Area	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
Behind the Scenes (n=50)	0%	0%	36%	<b>64%</b>
Clerical Support (n=16)	0%	0%	<b>50%</b>	<b>50%</b>
Special Events (n=51)	0%	2%	<b>51%</b>	47%
Special/Temporary Exhibits (n=114)	0%	6%	<b>50%</b>	44%
Core Galleries (n=100)	1%	3%	<b>54%</b>	42%
School Group Greeter (n=29)	0%	14%	<b>45%</b>	41%
Information Booth (n=27)	0%	11%	<b>52%</b>	37%

Volunteers were asked to comment on any “poor” or “fair” ratings. The following are comments or suggestions, coded into themes, pertaining to volunteer’s experience across various areas within the museum. Some volunteers provided comments that fell into more than one theme. Please consult the appendix for all commentary.

***Please comment on any “poor” or “fair” ratings (n=17).***

*Training (5)*

- I do little with special exhibits now, but when I do, I feel the quality of training has gone down. The exhibits may be special or temporary but training should give the volunteer new knowledge and the activities should be exciting for volunteers as well as the visitors.
- I felt that although there was significant training for the Race Exhibit, I did not feel that I was given the space in the exhibit (I.E., a place to sit like they do at Wild Music). I also felt that volunteers could have been more involved in tours, talking circles, etc.
- Even though my experience is excellent, I would like to see better initial and update training to give volunteers more willingness to engage our visitors.
- Have more detailed info on new or changes in the info booth.
- Things are improving since I first became a SMM volunteer. The INFO booth is the first stop for many visitors, the volunteer is ill prepared to know about upcoming events etc. This is improving but still has no continuity. (Example: OMNI FEST time schedule.)

*Improve Museum Environment (5)*

- Too dark for me in those areas - Special Exhibits.
- SMM needs improved signage at the school group entrance to indicate directions to the OMNI Theater. The request was originated two years ago and there has been no action. Two inside volunteers are needed on Monday AM.
- Air quality in the Collections Gallery continues to be bad. The continual 'locker room' smell is annoying to say the least.
- The last time I volunteered as a substitute school group greeter (several years ago), it seemed like bedlam and not enough room for the kids to eat their lunch. Sort of like at their school, I suppose!
- The glassed in area in collections is more of a storage area than a display area. It would be more inviting if the junk was stored elsewhere.

*Paid Staff Interaction (5)*

- Body Worlds: expected staff to jump in and crowd control, not watch and visit from the sidelines; maybe that is not their job?
- I don't think there is much appreciation of the volunteers.
- Depends on the person in charge on a given day.
- I've been a volunteer in Cell Lab since the new museum opened - actually started at the old museum. I would rate my experience as exceptional, were it not for the fact that we volunteers are invisible and undervalued by museum staff. Christine, now running Cell Lab is the welcome exception.
- Not once did I have a chance to speak to the fellow in charge, and of course never receive any words of appreciation. I was pleased when Casey sought me out and invited me to work in the Student greeting area. I have really enjoyed the staff and my fellow volunteers Rod and Ross.

*Improve Volunteer Experience (3)*

- I volunteer with the RACE exhibit. It's a wonderful exhibit and I love it, but there really isn't anything for volunteers to do. There are activities that have been provided, but visitors aren't really that interested in them and they're not all that relevant to the exhibit.
- Mississippi River Gallery: I thoroughly enjoy working in the gallery, but the gallery is very poorly equipped for volunteers at this point. Exhibits have been removed and we do not have enough in the way of good hands on activities or good activities to capture the attention of visitors.
- I haven't volunteered for any special events for a long time. Generally, I found them to be poorly organized for the volunteers. That may no longer be true.

*Length of shift (2)*

- I volunteered for Body Worlds. It was a great experience but the four-hour shifts were a little long.
- 'Scream Machines' experience was disappointing. Very little staff support. It was difficult to take a break, so many days I worked a solid four-hour shift. At the completion of the exhibit I was just done.

*Other (2)*

- Core galleries - too many children.
- May have been a mismatch with my temperament or it may have been the environment.

Volunteers were provided with a list of possible reasons why they volunteer at SMM. When asked the two main reasons why they volunteered at SMM, over half cited the opportunity to learn new things (59%) and/or to be able to share their skill and expertise with visitors (53%) (see Table 2).

There were a number of individuals that gave reasons, other than the options provided. These "other" responses are listed below the table, with giving back to the community and personal interest most frequently mentioned.

**Table 2. What are the top two reasons why you volunteer at the SMM? (n=218\*)**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Opportunity to learn new things	<b>59%</b>
Share skills and expertise with visitors	<b>53%</b>
Support vision and mission of the museum	42%
Make new friends/socialize	17%
Volunteer benefits (free tickets, etc)	15%
Involved in development	9%
Other	9%

\*Some volunteers provided more than two reasons as to why they volunteer.

*Other Responses (n=20)*

- Makes me feel like I'm "giving something back" to the community.
- To give back to the community.
- Use my extra time for a worthy cause.
- Community service
- Be a service to visitors in any way I can.
- Opportunity to give back to the community.
- I wanted to participate in the Race Exhibit.
- An interest in museum education.
- Recently retired and wanted to remain active with a pursuit I am interested in.
- Maintain my interest in archaeology
- Passion for natural history
- Participate in the unraveling of the history of life.
- It's a job I like to do.
- Something to do.
- When I started to volunteer it was so I could take classes and because I have always been interested in anthropology. I have never taken a class and now I just like being there.
- I wanted to volunteer outside of my neighborhood.
- Live downtown -- convenient!
- Highly involved in diversity and social initiatives at the University of Minnesota. RACE Exhibit was a great opportunity to get involved in the community and off campus.
- Internship.
- Working toward employment.

When asked where they thought SMM volunteers had the greatest impact, respondents gave answers that were then coded along themes. Over half (52%) stated that volunteers made the biggest impact with public relations and improving visitor experience (see Table 3). Themes and a sampling of coded responses are listed below. Please consult the appendix for all commentary.

**Table 3. Where do SMM Volunteers have the biggest impact? (n=192)**

<b>Area of Impact</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Public Relations/ Improving visitor experience	<b>52%</b>
Education/Sharing expertise	20%
Logistics/operations	11%
Cost benefit	10%
Everywhere	10%
Don't know	4%
Other	3%

*Public Relations/Improving Visitor Experience 52% (100)*

- In allowing patrons to see that there are people around if they need them or have questions.
- Visitor experience.
- Greeting patrons. At first glance the museum can be daunting, but the greeters make it much more manageable and offer much needed direction
- During personal engagement with our patron. Talking, joking with visitors enhance their good memory.
- I think volunteers have the most impact interacting with museum visitors.
- In the kids area, working with them to convey a love and enthusiasm for science
- I think that the interactions that the volunteers have with the visitors is the most impactful.
- Visitors get an enriched experience. Talking with a visitor makes them feel important and happy and makes them feel SMM is a great place. In previous years, volunteers have also been used as contract people to do training and have added greatly in that aspect because of their greater time to focus on the materials.
- opened.
- The volunteers I have seen seen to enjoy what they are doing and that reflects on a positive experience for visitors.
- Improving the visitor's experience.
- I think the one on one interaction that volunteers have with museum visitors is the greatest impact.

*Education/Sharing Expertise 20% (39)*

- When a child says 'Oh, so THAT's how it works', that's when I realize that I've just gotten a scientific point across. Many times I've seen the 'light turn on' in a child's head.... a wonderful feeling. The other notice-of-impact is with adults being SO appreciative of that extra moment of attention when they are confused about where things are, how to get to something-or-other, etc. The strongest reaction I receive from visitors is when I actually TAKE them to what it is they wanted to see.
- I think volunteers really make a difference when they take the time and effort to understand the material and are able to present it in a fun way to kids. I work hard at making the Mummy easily understood by young kids who are sometimes pretty fearful. I like this area because I am a student of history and that's important for most archaeology. Am looking forward very much to Pompeii!
- Helping people understand that science can be fun, not just a collection of facts.
- Very knowledgeable about the area in which they work and they are able to communicate their individual knowledge and experiences to the museum visitors.
- Promoting interest and education in the sciences. In the exhibits and school programs (greeters). Staff and bodies in general are needed so much in these areas; it is great supplement/add to the staffing and provide more than just babysitting! The volunteers who can demonstrate and teach are incredible.
- Answer questions and explain exhibits to school students.
- "Teaching" school children - stimulating their minds.
- Where - Human Body Gallery and the Cell Lab. Quoting the children who visit "this is such a cool place. I learned a lot. I want to come back. It's fun. I learned a lot about science, use of the microscope."
- In stimulating interest in science and learning. Especially arousing curiosity in the young.
- Being able to very adequately explain to the visitors their are of info simply.

*Logistics/Operations 11% (21)*

- Supplement and augment expertise of employees that enable employees to better fulfill their objectives.
- Through interactions with visitors in the gallery. I think volunteers are especially important when school groups come in--with large groups, the opportunity to connect with a volunteer can make the visit meaningful rather than a chaotic 'herding' through the crowded galleries.
- They help take the load off of the staff to take the time to talk to visitors. Gives the staff more time to do their necessary tasks.
- Behind the Scenes.
- Information for visitors in a comfortable manner and behind-the-scenes work.
- The volunteers were a big part of the success of the move from the old museum to the new museum of the collections. On a daily basis, the volunteers are wonderful resources for the visitors. From simple bathroom location requests, to the great science shared in the Cell lab extracting DNA they add the much valued human touch.
- Crowd control with students; answer questions and give directions.

*Cost Benefit 5% (10)*

- Staff support and taking some pressure off the budget, allowing for a more progressive Museum.
- They bring their own skills to the job and they save the SMM a lot of money.
- Keeping costs down, so more people can enjoy the benefits of the museum.
- SMM volunteers allow SMM to leverage its funds and expertise in ways that would be impossible if volunteer hours and skills had to be supported by dollars.
- Save on paid staff hours and provide service to visitors that wouldn't be available from paid staff because of budget restraints.
- Helping to keep PT/FT employment costs down.

*Everywhere 5% (10)*

- I don't think there is any part where volunteers are not important. In my opinion they have made a lot of impact in all the parts of SMM.
- EVERYWHERE! Whenever I am at the museum, I cannot turn around without seeing a volunteer. This high presence of volunteer activity on the floor has proven to be helpful and beneficial to the guests. And although they are not seen, I know that the behind the scenes volunteers are just as important.
- In all the departments the volunteers I know like what they're doing.
- Every little bit from everybody helps! I think we all make an impact.
- Wherever they are. We're here because we want to be here and it shows.
- Everywhere; there is always someone around to answer a question.

*Don't Know 4% (7)*

- Unknown.
- Not having the overall view of volunteers, it's difficult for me to say. I think that the special exhibits are great, and I enjoy working in the experimental gallery.

*Other 3% (5)*

- Although I know ALL volunteer positions are valuable, probably I'd vote for the cell lab folks. That area wouldn't exist without them.
- School Services.
- I can't give a very informed answer, but probably in work on the collections and working in exhibit galleries.
- To clean the tables with sponges.
- I volunteer only in the Fossil Gallery at the 3rd floor. I have no idea about the other activities. That is why I cannot determine where volunteers have made the most impact in the museum.

As illustrated below, nearly all of the volunteers who responded (97%) rated their overall SMM volunteer experience as “good” to “exceptional” (see Table 4). Volunteers who listed “fair or “poor” were asked to comment on why.

**Table 4. Overall SMM volunteer experience (n=213)**

	Percent of respondents
Poor	0%
Fair	3%
Good	45%
Exceptional	52%

***If “poor” of “fair”, please comment. (n=5)***

- The exhibit-specific training could have been much better. Also, during my interview I was told that my interest, skills, and previous knowledge would be great in support of the exhibit. At no point did I feel that my knowledge or skills were sought out. Had I not been told that this would have happened, then I wouldn't have been concerned that this did not happen. However, I had hoped to be more involved with the actual exhibit (i.e., activity development).
- I think you should reduce the minimum number of hours for volunteers. I think that 2 hours a week is a significant time commitment for a volunteer position, especially for people who work full time or go to school full time.
- I didn't feel like I was needed in the exhibit.
- Again, more relevant training to exercises to engage the visitors. More support from the staff once volunteer experience started. Great training, though.
- I continue to volunteer in Cell Lab because of my interest in science, the chance to share my appreciation of science and the scientific method with visitors - and to make it fun - and because of the wonderful volunteers with whom I work in Cell Lab. The fact that SMM volunteers are undervalued and under appreciated caused me to take a hiatus last year when my plate got very full. After Christine was hired I was encouraged to return, and am glad I did. I do my shift at Cell Lab and that's it.

Volunteers were also asked about their likelihood of recommending volunteering at SMM. The majority of volunteers (86%) said they would be likely or very likely to recommend volunteering at SMM (see Table 5).

**Table 5. Likelihood of recommending SMM volunteering (n=213)**

	Percent of respondents
Very Unlikely	6%
Unlikely	1%
Somewhat unlikely	1%
Somewhat likely	8%
Likely	30%
Very likely	56%

**Volunteer Training**

Volunteers were asked if they had volunteered in Special or Temporary Exhibits and/or a Permanent Gallery. Volunteers for these areas were then asked to rate their training experience. Half of volunteers who responded (49%) had been a volunteer for Special Exhibits or temporary Exhibits. There were 75 volunteers that had checked an area that they had worked at “behind the scenes”. Most (91%) rated their Special/Temporary Exhibits training as good or exceptional, demonstrated in the table below. A majority of Special/Temporary Exhibits volunteers found that after their training, they felt prepared to answer visitor questions about the exhibit (57%), to engage with visitors about the exhibit (73%), and the answer visitors’ questions more generally about the museum (66%).

Nearly two-thirds of volunteers who responded (60%) had been a volunteer for Permanent Exhibits and Galleries (see Table 6). Most (91%) rated their Permanent Gallery training as “good” or “exceptional” (see Table 7). A majority of Permanent Gallery volunteers found that they felt prepared to answer visitor questions about the exhibit (60%), to engage with visitors about the exhibit (66%), and to answer visitors’ questions (52%) after attending training (see Table 8).

**Table 6. Have you been a SPEX/TempEx of a PermanentEx volunteer?**

Type of Volunteer	Yes	No
SPEX (n=215)	49%	<b>51%</b>
PERM (n=211)	<b>60%</b>	41%

**Table 7. How would you rate your overall training?**

Type of volunteer	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
SPEX (n=106)	1%	9%	47%	44%
PERM (n=126)	1%	8%	52%	39%

**Table 8. After your Exhibit training, how prepared did you feel to do the following?**

	SPEX (Special/Temp Exhibits) (n=106)				PERM (Permanent Gallery) (n=66)			
	Unprepared	Somewhat Unprepared	Somewhat prepared	Prepared	Unprepared	Somewhat Unprepared	Somewhat prepared	Prepared
Engage w/ visitors re: exhibit	0%	4%	24%	<b>73%</b>	3%	3%	28%	<b>66%</b>
Provide general info re: SMM	0%	7%	28%	<b>66%</b>	2%	14%	32%	<b>52%</b>
Answer visitor questions re: exhibit	0%	6%	37%	<b>57%</b>	2%	5%	34%	<b>60%</b>

Volunteers were asked if they had suggestions to improve their training experience. A sampling of their compiled responses, coded by theme, is listed below. Please see the appendix for full commentary. Responses are also grouped and indicated in parentheses which type of training they were referring to (PERM for Permanent Galleries; SPEX for Special/Temp Exhibits.).

**Is there anything you would change or improve about the overall training experience? (n=104)**

*More Hands-on Training 27% (28)*

- More 'hands on' time to practice answering questions and interacting with visitors. (SPEX)
- I don't know that there is a 'perfect' way to give training sessions so that one is fully prepared. I've always felt a little naked going into a new exhibit the first time, but then realize that much of the effectual training actually includes that first day on the job.... being out in the real live world that first day is really a good part of the learning experience. (SPEX)
- It takes a while to find your way in a new area, although experience in one makes the next one easier. (PERM)
- In Wild Music we reviewed the activities with staff the first day we worked. That was very helpful. I'd like to see that done with all special exhibits. Also, during Wild Music we got new 'stuff' to demonstrate several weeks after the exhibit opened. That was fun. (SPEX)



*More General Museum Training 24% (25)*

- Bus route information (often requested) is missing at the information booth. (PERM)
- Also, a whole-museum orientation tour would be good, because people ask directions a lot and I have NO idea where things are. (PERM)
- More thorough tour of the whole museum and not just the section that we are working in so that when guest ask about other exhibits we can be a little more informed. (PERM)
- The initial training was good, but there is a need to keep us informed of changes or new exhibits within the museum. (PERM)

*Positive Comments 20% (21)*

*More Time Shadowing Others 12% (12)*

- I think it would help to have a new volunteer team up with a veteran if possible for the first exposure. I have volunteered on several different exhibits and always feel inadequate the first time around. (SPEX)
- I have found it useful to 'shadow' other knowledgeable volunteers, listen to their 'spiel', and get ideas of how to present ideas to visitors. Would appreciate having more opportunities to do this. (SPEX)
- My final 'assignment' as a school greeter was best covered by on the job training. I work with a couple of veteran volunteers and they have given me great direction. (PERM)
- Here again I'd like opportunities to shadow experienced volunteers before being on my own in a gallery. (PERM)

*More qualified trainers 8% (8)*

- The training for the RACE Exhibit was not appropriate conducted or organized. One of the activities used to train the volunteers and staff (the Cross the Line activity) was facilitated by someone who did not know what they were doing. In fact, I was highly offended by some of the comments made by the facilitator. The facilitator did not allow the group to process the experience and simply explained what she thought the activity was designed to show. (SPEX)
- Make certain that SMM trainers are outstanding speakers and presenters rather than just reading the 'notes' that are available. (SPEX)
- We need more 'experts' for the training. I do value the training on the volunteer cart activities, but it would be nice to have more outside experts to come in and comment on the various components of the exhibit. In addition, some more work needs to be done on the cart activities. (SPEX)
- We were simply told to do our own thing in the demonstration station. We weren't given much time to look around the exhibit during the orientation and ask questions about the exhibit itself. (PERM)

*Different Training Times/Days 3% (3)*

- I'd like training to be offered during the day, Saturday would be great. (SPEX)
- Missed gallery training due to snowstorm caused cancellation. Optional if possible: daytime training. (SPEX)
- More training dates; Eliminate marathon training sessions (or at least include dinner)--the last EG training ran from 3pm until 8pm (or so) with only a snack break (not enough time to go for dinner). Folks (especially those who wanted to be trained in all three activities presented that day) were tired towards the end. (PERM)

*No Suggestions 14% (15)*

A majority of volunteers (68%) reported attending a volunteer training within the last twelve months (from May 2006 to May 2007) (see Table 9). When asked when they would be available for future training, most volunteers listed a preference for weekdays, with over half (54%) preferring weekday evenings (see Table 10).

**Table 9. What time frame did you last attend volunteer training? (n=177)**

Timeframe	Percent of Respondents
Feb 2007-present	18%
Nov 2006-Jan 2007	21%
Aug 2006-Oct 2006	8%
May 2006-July 2006	21%
April 2005-April 2006	17%
Before April 2005	16%

**Table 10. When would you be available to attend enrichment trainings if they were offered? (n=204\*)**

Time/Day	Percent of Respondents
Weekday Morning	42%
Weekday Afternoon	45%
Weekday Evening	54%
Weekend Morning	26%
Weekend Afternoon	19%
Weekend Evening	8%
Not interested in attending enrichment trainings	7%

*\*Some respondents checked more than one answer.*

Volunteers were asked what enrichment training topics would interest them the most. A sampling of their responses, coded along themes, is listed below. Some respondents listed more than one topic they wanted to see offered. (Please consult appendix for a full list of suggestions.)

**What topics would you like to see offered for enrichment trainings? (n=129)**

*Museum Protocols/Information 37% (48)*

- Better emergency response training. Code words, such as 'feedback', are silly and immature. Genuine emergency response training is needed. I attended a Talking Circle 'So what do you want me to do?'
- Anything that will help with increasing comfort level of volunteer engagement. Floor supervisors do not do a good job of checking on and helping to improve volunteer knowledge and performance.
- In the experiment gallery - perhaps math/puzzle and carbon dioxide experiment training for those who have not undergone this training.
- Information about the outreach of the Science Museum under the new leadership. School programs extended outside the Museum.
- For the RACE Exhibit. During the discussion, one of the participants had a seizure. We learned in our training to not call 911, but rather to seek out a staff member. I had to run through three galleries before I found someone, at which point the staff member asked, "What do you want me to do?"
- Internal communications at SMM.
- Who are the permanent staff people, and what do they do? How does this museum work? How do we get new/hot exhibits?
- How best to communicate with other entities (box office, VRS, etc.) of SMM so we can all be "on the same page" for the visitors.
- Construction of exhibits.

*General Science Topics 21% (27)*

- Guest speakers.
- Carbon dioxide activity. Develop a using energy efficiently activity. Global warming.
- More science, talk to us in depth about the exhibits.
- This is a tough question. But I think presentation on current science that may be changing traditional thinking. It seems to me that sometimes 'the truth' changes, and when it does we need to be aware.
- Information about research projects.
- My area of interest is archaeology, perhaps programs related to Minnesota History and archaeology could be offered.
- What about global warming? Could 'An Inconvenient Truth' be shown on any of our theater screens? (Al Gores' Academy Award Documentary).
- Since I am a retired physics professor, I always include historical information and personality sketches when working with visitors doing electricity and magnetism experiments at the Experiment Gallery. Some volunteers might enjoy such background information as a special option in the training program.

*Exhibit Relevant Topics 19% (25)*

- More about Mississippi river gallery - hands on practice experience.
- In Race, I would have liked a follow-up at about 1-2 months into the program, where the volunteers can share their feelings/understandings/misgivings about the exhibit. In general, maybe such follow-ups should be held with all new exhibits once they've been in use for a month or two??? This would give the exhibit developers feedback that could be useful in making any changes or improvements before the exhibit goes on the road.
- New activities for the EG.
- Anything to do with the exhibits.
- Information on temporary exhibits.
- Importance of Collections.
- Topics related to Special exhibits and Omni films.
- Current exhibitions.
- Dinosaurs.
- Instrument making; other craft projects relating to exhibits.
- Someone to talk about Barge traffic on the Mississippi.

*Anything 5% (6)*

- Any areas to enrich my education, kind of like taking a class.
- All of them.
- Anything that I could actually make it to. All enrichment training is usually too early for me to get to since I work. The middle of the afternoon is when almost all training, other than for special exhibits, is done and I will never be able to attend.
- Hard to say as I am interested in all kinds of subjects as a "visitor I just like to learn about the world - past and present eras.

*Other 6% (8)*

- Ways of getting feedback on SMM publication offerings. Promoting use of Web sites for disseminating information and supplementing education of K-12 science and math teachers.
- It would be good to get new volunteers to have a wider range of activities they could do in the experiment gallery. Only have a few to choose from burns most new people out.
- Learning how to learn.

*Don't Know/Not Interested 17% (22)*

- Not sure what is meant by this question. What is enrichment training?
- I had on the job training at the booth only.
- Right now I cannot think of any special ideas. I have found it just very interesting and informative to meet with other people who volunteer in the Paleo. area.
- I am not currently volunteering, so I would not attend additional training.
- Being a long time volunteer (more than 20 years) I feel the training I have received has made me a completely informed volunteer.

Volunteers were asked what outside resource they used to better prepare for and enrich their volunteer experience. The most common responses were other SMM volunteers (63%), print resources (62%), other SMM employees (55%), and the *Collections* newsletter (51%) (see Table 11).

**Table 11. What outside sources do you use to supplement your knowledge and training? (n=224)**

Sources	Percent of Respondents
Other SMM Volunteers	63%
Print Resources	62%
Other SMM Employees	55%
<i>Collections</i> Newsletter	51%
Other Websites	38%
VHQ Employees	33%
Outside Training	25%
SMM Website	24%
Don't use Outside Resources	5%
Other	9%

Some volunteers also cited “other” resources that they use (n=21)

- Previous experiences.
- My own background as a former teacher.
- My own research.
- Volunteer Advisory Council while I was a member over a 4 year period.
- I also volunteer for the MN Historical Society, and MN archaeological Society.
- People I know in areas of specialties. During Body Worlds I consulted a number of people I know in the medical field. For CSI I read books written by those who presented.
- Dinosaur digs, museums.
- Resources that I already had or have used myself.
- I try to follow current archeology finds in Egypt closely.
- I don't want to check 'other SMM employees' because the only one would be Christine, who runs Cell Lab. In the past, Dr. Susan Fleming was the best resource for me at the museum.
- The additional information I collect is to benefit the development of Disease Detectives exhibit for written content.
- Coursework.

Volunteers were asked if they had used outside training to supplement their knowledge and training experience. Of those who responded, two fifths of volunteers utilized college coursework or their college/graduate education as their primary outside training experience. Please consult the appendix for a full listing of volunteers' outside training.

***If you indicated you use outside training to supplement your knowledge and training experience, what types of outside training have you received? (n=57\*)***

*\*Five volunteers who had said they used outside training did not specify what type of outside training they had received.*

*Outside Classes/Training (College and other classes) 61% (35)*

- Computer classes.
- College and Graduate training in the specific areas.
- I have taken outside courses to increase my knowledge in the topics.
- A special outdoor workshop.

*Print Resources 19% (11)*

- Library books, web sites.

*Other Volunteer Experiences 14% (8)*

- Volunteering at other places.
- Volunteered with the local archaeological society for about 5 years.
- Detailed instruction from my volunteer supervisor and previous volunteer experience at other museums.

*Travel/Real World Experiences 7% (4)*

- Personal outdoor experiences.
- Tours to dinosaur sites.

*Media 5% (3)*

- Documentaries.
- TV.

*Other 18% (10)*

- General information and direct instruction from whomever I'm working with.
- Consult with computer experts at U of M on use of software for making information available on the Internet (for use in Bog Hopper).
- Personal research; prior knowledge; career knowledge.
- I do beadwork, spinning and weaving demonstrations in Collections Gallery.
- Field surveys N. American fauna (Canada to Costa Rica); Provide identification services for museums and universities.

**Supervision and Support**

Nearly three quarters of volunteers who responded (72%) said that their requests were consistently met by SMM (see Table 12). Those who found their requests inconsistently met were asked to provide suggestions to improve the meeting of their requests; a sampling of their responses is listed below. Please consult the appendix for the full list.

***Table 12. Extent to which requests are met (n=212)***

	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Consistently Met	<b>72%</b>
Inconsistently Met	14%
Never Met	0%
Have not had a request	14%

***If you said your needs were “inconsistently” or “never” met, what can we do to help your requests get met more consistently? (n=29\*)?***

*\*Two volunteers did not provide a suggestion.*

*Staff/Volunteer Interaction 45% (13)*

- I didn't feel like the exhibit staff really cared about the exhibit or working at SMM at all. I engaged with guests and had much more knowledge about the exhibit than the staff did. They didn't know who to ask if they couldn't answer a question.
- Perhaps more staff is needed.
- Has improved somewhat recently. Some staff don't have the time to visit volunteers at workstation. Recent re-org left us with no knowledge of who reports to whom.
- VRS employees are always good. Attitude of box office employees towards volunteers leaves something to be desired, however.
- Newer staff not always ready for leadership. Too much change in school area Box Office.

*Morale/Suggestions Ignored in Past 24% (7)*

- I think often the request is just forgotten.

*Operations/Logistics 14% (4)*

- Signs rarely get changed on the basis of what a volunteer sees needs changing. Examples: it took 13 years to finally get a sign that points to the mummy. This need was voiced back in the old museum. There is a strong need on the glass doors of the Collections Gallery for 'welcome, come in' signs. The week signage presently on the one glass door is nearly invisible. After 6 years of pointing this out to staffers (with the usual 'Yes, you have a point'), nothing has happened yet.
- Have pond water in the Mississippi River Gallery.
- Explain new exhibits

*Other 17% (5)*

Volunteers were asked to rate various aspects of their experiences with supervision and support at SMM. Nearly all (92%) rated their overall supervision and support “good” to “exceptional” (see Table 13). Over three quarters of volunteers (78%) rated communication of how volunteers fit into the SMM’s strategic plan and vision as “good” or “exceptional”. Nearly all volunteers (90%) rated the initial placement process for volunteering as “good” or “exceptional”.

***Table 13. Please rate the following aspects of your experience with supervision and support as an SMM Volunteer***

	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional
Overall supervision and support you have received (n=210)	1%	7%	<b>45%</b>	<b>47%</b>
Placement process when applying for beginning a new volunteer opportunity (n=180)	3%	7%	<b>54%</b>	<b>36%</b>
Communication of how volunteers fit into the SMM’s strategic plan and leadership’s vision for the museum (n=204)	6%	16%	<b>46%</b>	<b>32%</b>

Volunteers were asked to provide suggestions to improve their support and supervision experiences. A sampling of their responses, coded along themes, is listed below. Please consult the appendix for the full list of suggestions.

***Please provide suggestions on how we can improve our supervision and support for you. (n=82)***

*No Change/Positive Comments 33% (27)*

- None at this time.
- So far, my interaction with SMM staff has been excellent. I learn a lot by asking questions I don't know or sharing with them what I know. My supervisors have been very supportive and encouraging. More visual materials will really help to explain certain things.
- Supervision is sufficient.
- I think the supervision is very good
- The support I have received, especially in the Volunteer Department, has been excellent. Special exhibit support/supervision has seemed somewhat loose or even nonexistent at times. Supervisors should at least know who the volunteers are for their shifts.
- Nothing comes to mind -- SMM and Warner are wonderful!
- Supervision and support for me in my gallery has been excellent. I could use additional direction of my actions/services due to my tendency to be less self-directive (i.e. just told to do this').
- Supervisors are helpful: keep it as is.
- I always remember a floor supervisor who consistently said, "Thank you for your time this week."

*Logistics/Operations 26% (21)*

- Maybe I don't look hard enough, but I would like the opportunity to view other assignments within the SMM. Change is stimulating and invigorating, as long as one is able to understand the material and science involved.
- I think there could be better communication between the box office and information desk. A quick call from the box office to the information desk volunteer as to sold out movies, etc. would be of assistance to the volunteer by keeping the volunteer up to date. I have given information on times to visitors only to have them come back to me and tell me the show was sold out. The information desk is too far away to see if any shows are sold out so one would need to leave the booth to find out this.
- At the experiment gallery volunteers often consume supplies that need to be replaced. Having all teaching materials and consumable supplies available is done reactively (needs are met only after making a request, rather than proactive (anticipating needs and having adequate supplies, teaching aids, etc. constantly on tap. About 1 in 10 times, volunteers fail to properly clean up and store materials and supplies at the end of a shift.
- Be sure supervision is available when needed. Currently that's usually the case in my area.
- Have a VRM inform me of what is happening or has changed since my last time at SMM
- Floor volunteers need updates.
- Could a journal be kept at the exhibit? Supervisors could enter things that we need to know specific to the exhibit or other volunteers could share ideas. Or, if there is one of these, could someone tell me where it is?
- Supervisors might benefit from a checklist that directs "What to do" with each new volunteer or shift; how to check-in and orient a volunteer, etc.
- I liked the "walkabouts" that used to be done. I know the department is really busy but I really felt recognized with check in.
- Have a chart of staff.

*Staff/Volunteer Interaction 12% (10)*

- The supervisor I have interacted with most, Althea (sp?), has been very unengaged with the experience of the volunteers. I know others can echo my concern. She stands in the corner or leans up against an exhibit with her arms crossed. Her body language sends a message that is inconsistent with what a customer service professional should be sending. Other times, she has spent a significant amount of time in the office with the door closed.
- There needs to be a 'presence of being' of the gallery staff. We rarely see the staff around, especially when you have questions. The core staff needs to be better trained on teaching and interacting with the volunteers. Training in Interpersonal communications could go a long way in improving overall communications.
- There was no daily 'supervisor' appointed for the exhibit.
- The supervisors could be a little more friendly.
- Attitudes of employees towards volunteers needs work.

*Training/Professionalism 10% (8)*

- It seems that the 'standards' that volunteers are expected to meet are not consistently or clearly communicated. Initial overall volunteer training did not address all the unwritten rules communicated by supervisors. Provide a better mechanism for finding substitute volunteers when we are unable to be at the SMM during our normal scheduled time. How about a volunteer scheduling web site? There volunteers can indicate that they are available as substitutes on certain days & times.
- Organize a 'shadow' program.
- More training, updated exhibit materials (fossils), manuals, interaction among volunteers (exchanging ideas on what works best.)
- Teach front line people to smile and seem interested in customer -- volunteers are much better at this.

*Morale of Volunteers/Staff 6% (7)*

- I had better opportunities for mingling and getting to know other volunteers in the old museum than in the new one. In the new museum, people are spaced out on different floors and cubicles and not as easily accessible. I miss some of the fellowship I enjoyed with other volunteers in the old museum.
- Make volunteers feel needed in the exhibits.
- I work nights, the only time I ever see the regular museum staff (i.e. not gallery supervisors) is when I see them leaving the building as I'm coming in. A nice organization chart with pictures in the Volunteer break area would be nice. At least if I run them over in the parking garage as they are leaving I'll recognize them (and yes that is a joke)!
- Please treat volunteers as a more valuable resource.
- In assigning volunteer positions consider the volunteers' interests and desires. I was told I was incapable of any skilled work and should meet school buses.

*Other 11% (9)*

- I would like to change my day from Sunday to any day during the week except Wednesday.
- I'd like SMM staff to be introduced at Special Exhibit training - sometimes they have been, sometimes they haven't been.
- I believe people like myself are somewhat self motivated and I generally don't expect people to come looking for me to see if all is OK. I operate on my own and if I need something I will go looking till I find it. The only thing I think may be lacking is good 'experts' in the individual areas. However, having said this, I work in special exhibits most of the time and it would be impossible for the museum to have experts on all the special exhibits brought in.
- Anything written is better so I can go back to it and review.
- Start taking management as seriously as a non-non-profit would.



## Visitor Experience

Volunteers were asked to provide suggestions that they thought would help improve visitor experience. A sampling of their responses, coded along themes, is listed below. Please consult the appendix for the full list of suggestions.

### *Suggestions to Improve Visitor Experience? (n=117)*

#### *Operations/Logistics 31% (36)*

- One suggestion is hours of operation of the restaurant - patrons asking for food after 7pm. Shorter, but bolder description next to exponents.
- People in the Collections Gallery often mention the smell as being obnoxious. We've been assured it's not hazardous, but is annoying. Also more clocks would help, it's the second most frequently asked question after 'where's the bathroom' ( or third most in Collections Gallery where the top question is 'where's the mummy').
- Have a special window for members; also internet purchased tickets. Also a better system for people to be aware when the movies are sold out.
- One of the big problems is the parking for the student buses. Occasionally a chaperone may also be the bus driver. It would be helpful if a convenient bus parking site could be arranged.
- It would be nice to get items fixed faster in the kits, things break and then they are gone, the visitors don't know what they missed but they do miss things.
- Although I don't necessarily agree with this, I do have questions from students about more hands-on activities in MRG. Some activities that we now have (i.e. fossil-picking) don't work well with throngs of kids.
- I think a lot of our visitors have expertise that they would like to share with others. Not to the extent of volunteering on a regular basis, but perhaps a couple of days (perhaps on the weekend).
- Longer food court hours.
- More food options during evening hours.
- Some of the exhibits would be much more meaningful to visitors if there was a volunteer available to answer questions or ASK questions as visitors interact with the various stations.
- In my gallery, visitors (of all ages) seem to enjoy the quiet and relaxation of sitting down and having a hands-on experience. When school groups are here with lots of running around and loud noises, it can make for difficult viewing or reading of exhibit information. I'm sorry but I don't have a solution for this dilemma.
- The chaperones should be better prepared. The children, before the visit, should choose the area they most want to visit, and the class should be divided to accommodate.
- Have volunteers during more shifts.
- Encourage --no, Demand -- all teachers of school groups be with their students.
- Bring back window in Dinos & Fossils Gallery where visitors could observe work on fossils.
- Start putting parts of the collections on informal, temporary display to help our visitors understand the scope and purpose of our wonderful collections.

#### *Information/Advertisement 16% (19)*

- More advertising of events/exhibits/etc. The Senior Tuesday program needs promotion more than just being on the SMM website. Don't forget, many seniors still do not use computers. The info needs to be in newspapers, church bulletins, senior activities announcements, square dance organization's announcements, or maybe even on TV if the costs are not exorbitant. Better signage. When I asked about the TTY phone, only one person in the box office knew where it was....'Over with the other phones'.
- Little pointers to help visitors locate different areas of the Museums and exhibits. So far , I think the Museum is doing its best and the Visitors are happy to come visit.
- More general information available to the visitors. Possibly stock the galleries with daily calendars that can be given to visitors.

## Volunteer Survey Report

- Maps or diagrams of specific exhibits; i.e. what's where within the exhibit.
- The only comment I would make is that there were several medical questions during Body Worlds which I was unable to answer. It would have been nice to have a 'floating' volunteer MD available.
- Signage is extremely important to the visitor. Stanchions block the visitor's path to the box office from the information booth on Monday mornings when attendance is light.
- Include more information on the parking costs and rebates for better understanding by members. They really would like more OMNI shows similar to OMNI FEST. The 3D Theater needs more promotion in the lobby area. Once they learn of it, they are interested...the price is better for the visitors with younger children.
- Reminder to view the exhibits on the ceiling in the Mississippi River Gallery.
- I will frequently ask a visitor if their current visit is a first time visit or if they have been there before. From this information I will attempt to point out certain things or exhibits that they should see before leaving. I also try to stay current on the Science Live programs too.

### *Staff Training/Professionalism 12% (14)*

- More direct engagement and help in understanding and appreciating the exhibits.
- Please impart a sense of volunteer urgency to each volunteer! This means stressing to the volunteer that the customer's satisfaction is important.
- The more interactive we can get with people the better. The new 'audio tours' etc. are good but I think we often let these things along with graphic 'do our work for us'. There is nothing better than 'face to face'.
- Have a supervisor that is actually interested in talking with us, and willing to give our ideas consideration.
- Having friendly, interactive staff and volunteers present on the floor to explain the areas.
- Better training for the gallery staff on how to interact with visitors. Most just stand around without any contact with visitors. Enforce a reasonable dress code for staff similar to that for volunteers.
- Just remind the staff to be friendly and approachable.
- Again, communication, communication, communication. It is embarrassing to me and I would think not good for SMM when we give visitors wrong information due to lack of information.

### *No Change 10% (12)*

- I feel that the visitors experience is what drives the museum, and therefore a lot of attention and detail has been dedicated to ensuring a positive experience for the visitors.
- I think its a great science museum.
- Is excellent now.
- Since I must answer this - I have learned all asterisk numbers must be answered or you can't proceed - What I hear from visitors is 'Thank you'.
- I think the SMM is currently very responsive to visitors.
- The visitors I see almost always seem to be enjoying themselves. My shift, Friday night, is during a time that is not often extremely busy. Family groups that are used to coming on weekends often comment on how nice and calm it is in the evening. Because of this I suspect I here less complaints about a visit then some other volunteers.
- People have been very happy.

### *Audience Expansion 9% (10)*

- I think that the Race Exhibit was a very adult-content exhibit and more time/energy could have been focused on entertaining/ involving children.
- Please consider the age of the visitor to engage him/her in the learning process. I saw several times give lectures to children who were bored with the explanation.
- When there is text explaining an exhibit, I recommend three levels of font size and difficulty. Large - third grade, Medium - ninth grade, Regular – college.

## Volunteer Survey Report

- If exhibits or even parts of them can have some designation of age appropriateness it could be helpful.
- Increase the effort to appeal to life-long learners. At times it appears we forget there is life beyond high school. Too much direction of the museum comes large offices that promote their areas and think they are doing science.
- Adults only day.
- Some adult only hours. It's unnerving for some people to encounter hoards of children.

### *Cost/Incentives 9% (10)*

- Cheap days!
- Many complain about the cost of the Omni theater or not having enough time to see an omni theater show.
- Once visitors buy their tickets they object to paying extra for activities - avoid fee activities on the exhibit floor.
- Providing more incentives for members over general admission.
- Members often want "priority line" at ticket office, ex. Body Worlds.
- I have been told the single membership category has been eliminated -- this should be an available option for single people.

### *Guides/Tours 3% (3)*

- Resume Group Tours.
- Train a cadre of guides who would be available for tours of the different areas... either group or individual.
- Guides in certain galleries -- for example, a guide(s) could be stationed in the Paleo Gallery and offer to show small groups that may be in the gallery the key points or interesting features of the gallery and offer to answer questions on exhibits. (In addition to the "behind the desk" volunteers.)

### *Other 9% (11)*

- Many visitors and chaperones are in a real hurry. To really experience our museum you need time to comprehend, apprehend and think about what you are seeing and hearing. Lots of folks just rush thru to say they have been here.
- The seating area in the Paleo. area has been so warmly received. Parents relax. Children play with the puppets and puzzles. The books are in constant use. That has been such a plus. I really felt a need to comment on that. It is such a great improvement. I would like to see a time line that people can comfortably use. I would like to see more on geology, since this relates so to the dating of the earth and so on.
- Nothing that I can think of that is relevant. I remember people concerned about Body World, but I believe that exhibit is gone. Big Back Yard seemed to be a little boring for folks who didn't want to pay to golf.

## **Collections Newsletter**

Nearly all volunteers surveyed (90%) read the Collections newsletter, with 4% unaware of the newsletter (see Table 14). Volunteers were provided with a list of possible features to add to Collections. Over three quarters of volunteers (78%) were interested in seeing resources and information about SMM exhibits and gallery updates (77%) added to Collections (see Table 15).

**Table 14. Do you read our volunteer newsletter, *Collections*? (n=214)**

	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Yes	<b>90%</b>
No	6%
Not aware of it	4%

**Table 15. Is there anything else you would like to see added to the Collections newsletter? (n=224)**

	Percent of Respondents
Resources and Information about SMM Exhibits	78%
Gallery Updates	77%
Volunteer Opportunities at SMM, Warner Nature Center, and St.Croix Watershed Research Station	56%
Scientific Trivia	51%
SMM, Warner Nature Center and St. Croix Watershed Research Station Volunteer Profiles	41%

*\*Some respondents gave more than one answer.*

Volunteers were also asked if they would like to see any other features added. and below is a sampling of suggestions coded along themes. Please consult the appendix for the complete list of suggestions.

***What else should Collections include? (n=36)***

*Staff/Museum News/Information 17% (6)*

- Perhaps periodic get-togethers with other volunteers in your area of endeavor to talk about what we tell people and how we respond to common questions. I'd like to make sure I'm saying the right stuff and telling the right stuff, and there are a lot of people a lot smarter than me running around the SMM
- Staff profiles.
- I hope to see a synopsis of the meetings this week. I couldn't attend the April 16th afternoon with Dr. Jolly, so would really like a recap. Also, I'm looking forward to the results of this survey. I don't know how we, as volunteers, fit into the strategic plan and vision for the museum.
- It would be nice to be informed of changes in paid-staff that have a direct bearing on core exhibits. (Not necessary; just nice.)
- Cite recent publications by staff, volunteers.

*Volunteer Info/Features 17% (6)*

- Usually volunteers work only their shift, on a certain day and don't get to know the others working rest of the week. Photos/stories of individual volunteers may be interesting to others.
- Regular listing of volunteer needs, even if short term. I may be able to periodically help out for projects (such as Geek Prom, etc.) if I knew about it in advance.
- How about a profile of new volunteers as well as one-at-a-time "old" ones?

*SMM Updates 14% (5)*

- New hires -- those doing special jobs related to museum (not marketing stuff) specialists.

*Schedules of events 8% (3)*

- Schedule of new showing of Omnitheater.
- Schedule of enrichment opportunities.

*Entertainment 8% (3)*

- Science cartoon (such as Sidney Harris).

*Other 3% (3)*

- This probably would not go in the Newsletter, but how about a resource/skills listing of volunteers willing to share their expertise (either paid or not). For example I'm willing to teach people to spin or do beadwork and we've been know to do 'enrichment' classes for other volunteers every so often. I've also been known to trade spinning classes for fiber (from the zoo) or to go to schools to do demonstrations.
- An invitation to more young men to volunteer at the Science Museum. So far it seems women are volunteering far more than the guys.
- Maybe some recommended reading/films about subjects in our exhibits, or about things such as natural history, anthropology, etc.

*No Suggestions 17% (6)*

- It seems like most of it is an unnecessary expense. A summary of meetings on the bulletin board would be sufficient and save labor and cost.
- Only add items if it won't make the newsletter longer. I find I put a longer newsletter aside to read later - - - and then often find I have missed important dates.

**Final Comments**

Volunteers were also asked to make any final suggestions; a sampling of their responses, coded along themes, is listed below. Please consult the appendix for the full list of comments and suggestions.

*Any final recommendations? (n=61)*

*Positive responses 26% (16)*

- I wish I could spend more time there!
- The only thing I did not like about volunteering at SMM was the drive. Other than that I learned a lot, I had fun talking with people and I thought it was a fun and exciting place to spend an afternoon.
- SMM already does a fine job of making the volunteers feel appreciated.
- No, the people are very friendly and enjoyable to work with and the volunteer program is very well organized.
- Thank you for remembering us with notes telling us you appreciate our efforts... I know it's a form letter, but it DOES mean a lot. Thank you.
- I was totally impressed that with all of the volunteers at SMM, that Linda P. takes the time to greet people by name, is always accessible by email, and actually signs all of those cards! The other day, one of the marketing employees that I hadn't seen for a while came up and gave me a hug. The people that I have worked with at SMM are truly dedicated to making volunteers and visitors feel welcome and appreciated.

*Benefits/Appreciation of Volunteers 23% (14)*

- Engage the volunteers more during training. Also, make note of skills and attributes during the interview and see how these individuals can be better used to benefit the museum.
- It would be nice to get a free lunch in the cafe or a free caribou coffee after/during volunteering.
- Keep giving us free SMM vouchers! That's the unexpected frosting on the cake (reward)! Also, keep validating our parking tickets (cost to park is expensive!).
- Keep paying our parking.
- Shifts to enjoy a snack with some presentations. The event would be open to all volunteers.
- A greater number of free tickets for family members!
- I would like to have more all-volunteer activities, such as pot-luck lectures on scientific topics-- they're fun and informative.

*Staff/Volunteer Interaction 16% (10)*

- Better interaction between museum staff and volunteers demonstrating real interest in what volunteers are doing how their work can be improved.
- While weekly/bi-weekly volunteering is optimal to keep the individual in tune and in touch with the SMM, it's not always feasible. If a person is on call so to speak, find ways for the individual to get in touch with what's going on in the VHQ either on shift or beforehand, even if it's to wander the museum and get their bearings. If Special Events volunteering, find ways so they can walk away with something of emotional or intellectual value, even if it's a handout or piece of information.
- Develop a means for training SMM staff to respect volunteers. Improve training so that training staff can be better at communicating information.

*Feedback/Communication 8% (5)*

- I feel a suggestion box is in order would be very useful and appreciated. And to make it a valuable assist to SMM, a form might be supplied that volunteers would use, a form that says the contributor 'must sign the form in order for his/her suggestion to be considered' or something like that... this would force the contributor to give valuable suggestions rather than having the suggestion box merely being a gripe box.
- Have briefings with Volunteers after like 2 months after they start volunteering. Get feedback that will help orient volunteers to areas they feel will be better for them and for the Museum.
- Follow up on volunteer suggestions input; have regular volunteer training update/sessions/forums.

*Training 7% (4)*

- The EG could use someone dedicated to maintaining the gallery and planning for the future. The current activities are getting a bit worn, some fun activities have been discontinued, and there hasn't been a really good new activity introduced for a few years (the last new activity was dismantled over the years). Current management seems stretched too thin to give the gallery the care it deserves.

*More Volunteers 5% (3)*

*Negative Responses 3% (2)*

- It's easy for weekend people to feel out of the loop.
- Suggestions made by volunteers in the past 5-6 years have been completely ignored.

*Other 11% (7)*

- In this information resource age, I am surprised that your volunteer library is so ancient. It needs a total remake. The museum needs a very small focused collection built around the current core galleries; including a number of popular science periodicals - These periodicals should be scanned and the citations of relevant articles should be posted. I love to work on this project.
- Most training sessions are at night. I do not like to drive to the museum and back after dark by myself. For this reason I have not volunteered for special exhibits that I would have like to work in.

**General Volunteer Information**

A majority of volunteers (67%) have volunteered at SMM for four or more years. Nearly a third (30%) of volunteers participate between 16-20 hours per month; a third (34%) travel 6 to 10 miles one way to volunteer at SMM, with another quarter traveling 11 to 15 miles one way.

**Table 16. How long have you volunteered at SMM? (n=220)**

Number of Years	Percent of Respondents
Less than a year	20%
1-3 years	13%
4-7 years	30%
8-10 years	10%
11-15 years	12%
16-20 years	5%
21-30 years	8%
More than 30 years	3%

**Table 17. How many hours per month do you volunteer? (n=217)**

Number of hours	Percent of Respondents
2-4 hours	13%
5-8 hours	21%
9-12 hours	12%
13-15 hours	10%
16-20 hours	<b>30%</b>
21-25 hours	4%
More than 25 hours	11%

**Table 18. How many miles do you travel one-way to volunteer at SMM? (n=217)**

Distance	Percent of Respondents
1-5 miles	21%
6-10 miles	<b>34%</b>
11-15 miles	24%
16-20 miles	12%
21-55 miles	8%
More than 55 miles	1%

The 55 volunteers who reported volunteering “Behind the Scenes” were asked to identify where they volunteered. “Collections” was most frequently cited (45%).

**Table 19. If you volunteered “Behind the Scenes” at SMM, in what areas have you volunteered? (n=55\*)**

Area	Percent of Volunteers
Collections	45%
Members Behind the Scenes	25%
Paleontology	16%
Archeology	15%
Exhibit Design/Construction	9%
Biology	7%
Ethnology	7%
Other	11%

\*Some respondents volunteered in more than one area.

*Other Responses (n=6)*

- Conservation lab. (2)
- Preparing materials for mathematics.
- Wayzata Science Fair & Volunteer Advisory Board.
- Clerical. (2)

The majority of volunteers who responded (84%) said that SMM was not their first volunteer experience. In fact, most SMM volunteers (92%) also have and continue to volunteer for other organizations as well. Please consult the appendix for a table of what percentage and what types of volunteer activities respondents engage in and how long they have done so is listed below; a listing of “other” responses regarding type of volunteering is in the appendix.

**Volunteer Demographics**

The highest percentage of SMM volunteers (47%) fall between the ages of 55 to 74 and over half (57%) are female. Three quarters of volunteers have a college degree or higher. Of those volunteers who possess college or post-graduate degrees, the largest percentages were majors in the natural sciences (32%), education (18%), and the social sciences (17%). A listing of other majors and fields of study of volunteers are in the appendix.

**Table 20. Age range (n=212)**

	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
18-24	9%
25-34	9%
35-44	3%
45-54	10%
55-64	<b>20%</b>
65-74	<b>27%</b>
75-84	18%
85+	5%

**Table 21. Education level (n=211)**

	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Complete high school	7%
Some college/Tech Ed	19%
College degree	<b>40%</b>
Graduate degree	<b>25%</b>
Doctorate	<b>9%</b>

**Table 22. If you have a college, graduate, or doctorate degree, in what area did you major in? (n=156\*)**

<b>Major</b>	<b>Percent of Respondents</b>
Sciences (Includes Biology, Chemistry, Physics, geology/Paleontology)	32%
Education	18%
Social Sciences (Includes Anthropology, History, Economics, Political Science/International Relations, Sociology)	17%
Medicine/Nursing	12%
Engineering	10%
Social Work	10%
Business	7%
Math	5%
Languages	4%
Theology/Religion	3%
Library Science	3%
Other	13%

*\*Some respondents gave more than one answer.*



Over half of volunteers (54%) are retired; just over a fifth (21%) are employed full time. Nearly all (94%) of volunteers identified as white.

**Table 23. Employment status (n=215\*)**

	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Retired	<b>54%</b>
Full time	21%
Student	10%
Part time	8%
Work at home/homemaker	5%
Other**	<1%

\*Some respondents gave more than one answer.

\*\*“Other” = Unemployed, Self-employed.

**Table 24. Ethnicity (n=174)**

	<b>Percentage of respondents</b>
White	<b>94%</b>
Asian	2%
Mixed/Other*	4%

\***Mixed/Other:** Multi-ethnic; Cameroonian; Mixed (Austrian/Jamaican); White/Asian; Mixed race; Hapa; Hispanic; Egyptian origin.

## Appendix A: Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

### Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

#### Survey Introduction

Hello SMM Volunteer!

As an individual who is a current or previous volunteer at the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM), your input is extremely valuable to us. Please be open and honest in your responses as your feedback is critical to improving SMM's volunteer program.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. Your responses will remain anonymous and confidential.

The survey will take around 20 minutes to complete. In appreciation for your time, you will receive one additional volunteer hour. At the end of the survey there are instructions on how to receive this incentive.

If you have any questions about the survey or the SMM Volunteer Program, please contact Heather Cox, SMM Director of Volunteers, at (651) 221-9453 or hcox@smm.org.

Thank you in advance for your time and feedback!

#### Volunteer Experience

The first series of questions ask general information about your experience as a SMM volunteer.

**\* 1. What is your current volunteer status with the SMM?**

- Currently volunteering (active)
- Not volunteering (inactive)
- Leave of absence and plan to return

**\* 2. How would you rate your overall experience as the following type of volunteer? (If you have not volunteered in one of the areas, select N/A)**

	Poor	Fair	Good	Exceptional	N/A
Special/Temporary Exhibits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Behind the Scenes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Core Galleries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Information Booth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Special Events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
School Group Greeter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clerical Support	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**3. Please comment on any "poor" or "fair" ratings for your experience in the various volunteer areas above. Indicate which volunteer area your comment is referring to.**

**4. If you have volunteered "Behind the Scenes" at SMM, in what area or areas have you volunteered? (Check all that apply)**

- Members Behind the Scenes
- Collections
- Biology
- Archeology
- Ethnology
- Exhibit design/construction
- Paleontology
- Other (please specify)

### Volunteer Experience

**\* 5. What are the top two reasons why you volunteer at the SMM? (Only check two options)**

- Be involved in the development of SMM exhibits and programs
- Make new friends/socialize
- Share skills and expertise with visitors
- Support the mission and vision of the museum
- Opportunity to learn new things
- Volunteer benefits at the SMM (free tickets, discounted classes, etc.)
- Other (please specify)

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**\* 6. Where do you think SMM volunteers have made the most impact in the museum? Please explain your answer.**

### General Volunteer Information

**\* 7. How long have you volunteered at the SMM?**

- Less than a year
- 1 - 3 years
- 4 - 7 years
- 8 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- 21 - 30 years
- More than 30 years

**\* 8. How many hours, on average, do you volunteer each month at the SMM?**

- 2-4 hours
- 5-8 hours
- 9-12 hours
- 13-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- 21-25 hours
- More than 25 hours

**\* 9. How many miles do you travel one-way to volunteer at the SMM?**

- 1-5 miles
- 6-10 miles
- 11-15 miles
- 16-20 miles
- 21-55 miles
- More than 55 miles

**Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007**

**Volunteer Training**

The next series of questions are about volunteer training you have received and resources you have used to supplement your training.

**\* 10. Have you been or are you currently a Special Exhibit or Temporary Exhibit volunteer?**

- Yes
- No

**Special/Temporary Exhibits Training**

**\* 11. How would you rate the overall quality of the Special Exhibit/Temporary Exhibit training you received at the SMM?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

**\* 12. After your Special Exhibit/Temporary Exhibit training, how prepared did you feel to do the following?**

	Unprepared	Somewhat Unprepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared
Answer visitor questions about the exhibit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engage with visitors about the exhibit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide general information about the SMM	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. Thinking about your responses to the above questions, is there anything you would change or improve about the overall Special Exhibit or Temporary Exhibit training experience?**

**Volunteer Training**

**Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007**

**\* 14. Have you been or are you currently a Permanent Gallery/Area volunteer in any of the following areas? (This includes the information booth, school group greeter, core halls, and behind the scenes)**

- Yes
- No

**Permanent Gallery/Area Volunteer Training**

**\* 15. How would you rate the Permanent Gallery/Area training experience you have received at the SMM?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Excellent

**\* 16. After your Permanent Gallery/Area volunteer training, how prepared did you feel to do the following?**

	Unprepared	Somewhat Unprepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared
Answer visitor questions about the exhibit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Engage with visitors about the exhibit	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide general information about the SMM	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Thinking about your responses to the above questions, is there anything you would change or improve about the overall Permanent Gallery/Area training experience? (Please indicate if your responses are specific to volunteering at the information booth, as a school greeter, in the core halls, or behind the scenes)**

**Volunteer Training**

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**\* 18. During what time frame did you last attend any kind of SMM volunteer training?**

- February 2007 - present
- November 2006 - January 2007
- August 2006 - October 2006
- May 2006 - July 2006
- April 2005 - April 2006
- Before April 2005

**\* 19. What topics would you like to see offered for enrichment trainings?**

**\* 20. When would you attend enrichment trainings if they were offered?  
(Check all times you would be available)**

- Weekday morning
- Weekday afternoon
- Weekday evening
- Weekend morning
- Weekend afternoon
- Weekend evening
- Not interested in attending enrichment trainings

## Volunteer Training

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**\* 21. What kinds of additional resources do you use to supplement your knowledge and training experience? (Check all that apply)**

- Volunteer headquarters (VHQ) newsletter, *Collections*
- Volunteer headquarters (VHQ) employees
- SMM website
- Internets sites (outside of SMM website)
- Other SMM volunteers
- Other SMM employees
- Print resources (journals, textbooks, books, newspapers, magazines, etc.)
- Outside training
- I don't use additional resources
- Other (please specify)

### Outside Training

**\* 22. You said you have used outside training to supplement your knowledge and training experience. What types of outside training have you received?**

### Supervision and Support Experience

You are half way done! The next series of questions are about the experience you've had with supervision and support of your volunteer position.

**\* 23. To what extent do you feel your requests for help and information are met by SMM employees?**

- My requests are consistently met
- My requests are inconsistently met
- My requests are never met
- I have not had a request

### Meeting Your Requests



## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**\* 24. You said your requests were "inconsistently" or "never" met. What can we do to help your requests get met more consistently?**

### Supervision and Support Experience

**\* 25. Please rate the following aspects of your experience with supervision and support as a SMM volunteer.**

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Overall supervision and support you have received	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communication of how volunteers fit into the SMM's strategic plan and leadership's vision for the museum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Placement process when applying or beginning a new volunteer opportunity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**26. Please provide suggestions on how we could improve your supervision and support experience at the SMM.**

### Collections Newsletter

This page asks for your feedback about the visitor headquarters newsletter, *Collections*.

**\* 27. Do you read our volunteer newsletter, *Collections*?**

- Yes
- No
- Not aware of the *Collections* newsletter

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**\* 28. Would you like to see any of the following features added to the *Collections* newsletter?**

	Yes	No
Scientific Trivia	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Gallery Updates	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Resources and Information about SMM exhibits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SMM, Warner Nature Center, and St. Croix Watershed Research Station Volunteer Profiles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Volunteer Opportunities at SMM, Warner Nature Center, and St. Croix Watershed Research Station	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**29. Is there anything else you would like to see added to the *Collections* newsletter?**

### Visitor Experience

As a volunteer, you may spend a considerable amount of time interacting with visitors. By doing so, you may have noticed or overheard things which could enhance their visit here at the museum.

**\* 30. Please share any ideas you have on how we can improve the visitor experience at the Science Museum of Minnesota.**

### Volunteering In Other Organizations

You are almost done! Tell us a little bit about your volunteer experience outside of the SMM.

**\* 31. Was the SMM your first volunteer experience?**

- Yes
- No

**Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007**

**\* 32. Have you volunteered in other organizations besides SMM? These organizations could include areas of service addressing people in need, civil rights/community, environmental issues, K-12 education, adult education, scouting, hospital/medical, faith-based, and cultural/arts organizations.**

- Yes
- No

**Volunteering In Other Organizations**

**33. Apart from the SMM, please indicate the number of years you have volunteered in the following areas of service. Choose the number of years from the pull down menus next to the areas of service. If you have not volunteered for one of the service areas, leave it blank.**

	Number of Years
People in Need (e.g. children, families, elders, individuals with disabilities, homeless)	<input type="text"/>
Cultural Organizations (museums, arts, international)	<input type="text"/>
Faith-based	<input type="text"/>
Hospital/Medical	<input type="text"/>
Scouting	<input type="text"/>
K-12 Education	<input type="text"/>
Adult Education	<input type="text"/>
Civil Rights/Community	<input type="text"/>
Environmental	<input type="text"/>

**34. If you have volunteered for a type of service area not listed above, please describe where you have volunteered and for how long (based on the year categories above).**

**Overall Volunteer Experience**

This last series of questions gives you an opportunity to reflect on your overall experience as an SMM volunteer.

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

**\* 35. Taking into consideration how you responded to the rest of the survey questions, how would you rate your overall volunteer experience at the SMM?**

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Exceptional

### Overall Volunteer Experience

**\* 36. You said your overall experience as a SMM volunteer was "poor" or "fair", please explain your rating and what volunteer headquarters could do to improve your experience.**

### Recommendations to Volunteer at SMM

**\* 37. What is the likelihood that you would recommend volunteering at the SMM to a friend or family member?**

- Very Unlikely
- Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Somewhat Likely
- Likely
- Very Likely

### Final Comments

**38. Do you have any final suggestions on how we can make your volunteer experience more rewarding and enjoyable?**

### Volunteer Demographics

The questions on this final page are to help us put your answers in context so we can better serve SMM volunteers. All responses to these questions are voluntary and anonymous.

**Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007**

**39. What is your age range?**

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

**40. What is your gender?**

- Male
- Female

**41. What is your ethnicity?**

**42. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Less than High School
- Completed High School
- Some College or Technical Education
- College Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Doctorate

**43. If you have a College, Graduate, or Doctorate Degree, in what area did you major?**

## Science Museum of Minnesota Volunteer Satisfaction Survey 2007

### 44. What is your employment status? (Check all that apply)

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Not employed outside the home
- Student
- Retired
- Other (please specify)

### Thank You!

Thank you for your time and feedback!

If you would like to talk to the SMM Volunteer Department about any of your responses, either provide your contact information below so someone can get a hold of you or contact the SMM Volunteer Department directly at 651-221-9453.

To receive one volunteer hour, please send an email to [volunteer@smm.org](mailto:volunteer@smm.org) indicating your name and that you have completed the survey.

Click "Done" to submit the survey.

### 45.

Name	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>
Email Address	<input type="text"/>