

**The Strong**  
**Summative Evaluation – Imagination Destination**  
**Rochester, New York**

The Strong Museum  
One Manhattan Square  
Rochester, New York 14607 U.S.A.  
Tel 585-410-6341  
[www.museumofplay.org](http://www.museumofplay.org)

**Reviewer Mark Walhimer**  
**Site Visit October 26th, 27th and 28th 2019**  
[Link to photos](#)

### **Executive Summary**

The reviewer spent three days on site at The Strong Museum of Play (The Strong), one day meeting with staff and two days interviewing families using Imagination Destination. The Strong Museum is located in Rochester New York within the area of downtown Rochester. The museum is within walking distance of downtown restaurants and parks. The majority of visitors (the museum refers to visitors as guests) to the museum arrive by car and park on the rear side of the museum. The museum is currently undergoing an expansion and is part of a larger redevelopment of the museum's location. A freeway adjacent to the museum once ran through downtown Rochester has been filled in and the area is being redeveloped.

The museum is currently undergoing a capital campaign to fund the museum expansion. The exhibits of the expansion have been planned to a conceptual level to assist with fundraising. The museum has been successful with four IMLS grants. The most recent being a grant for \$149,994 dollars grant [#MA-10-16-0454-16](#) to assist with underwriting Imagination Destination. The IMLS grant narrative reads "critical dialogue about pretend play and its place in lives, and learn about the important role of pretend play in human emotional, intellectual, social and cultural development." and educate parents with skills and value in imaginative play.

The exhibits staff is an energetic talented group with a large and varied workload. During the day of meeting with staff the reviewer spoke with The Director / CEO, VP of Exhibitions, VP of Guest Services, Director of Exhibitions, Exhibit Design, Graphic Designer and several floor staff. It is clear that the entire staff is focused on guest services and providing the best experience for the visitor. The museum has benchmarked the visitor experience against museums and commercial attractions and the level of professionalism is evident.

The museum has an extensive collection of toys and games and is a world authority on "play". The museum has undergone a re-invention in 2003, transitioning from a museum of industry to a museum of play. The transition has been very successful with consistently growing attendance and demand for public programming.

Imagination Destination is partially new construction and partially a reuse of a previous communication exhibition. The reviewer visited the exhibition 3,000 square feet both while the museum was open and while the museum was closed. During Saturday October 27th and Sunday October 28th the reviewer spent more than ten hours speaking with families in the Imagination Destination space. The exhibition differs from other exhibition areas by use of a large climbing structure (Photo 1) and large rescue helicopter / theater / slide structure.

During the visit there were several on floor programs for Halloween with many children and parents in costume. Both days the weather of the area was cold and rainy increasing demand on the museum. The reviewer was told the attendance 5,000 people (confirm) was typical for a winter weekend. It was clear in the reviewer's conversations with families that The Strong is a much-loved local resource for children drawing families from up to two hours from the museum. From the first interviews it was clear that the very popular climbing structure and slide are areas for concern for parents, wanting to make sure to not lose children. The area also has two exits causing concern for parents. Although the parenting skills materials were available the majority of the caregivers were too concerned about children being hurt in the climbing structure or losing children either on a second level of one of the two structures or through the exits.

Few of the visitors interviewed used the touch screen exhibit with imaginative play information and 15% of the interviewed visitors used the Imagination Destination website prior to visiting the museum.

Imagination Destination is a well-liked informative exhibition but additional layers of content are missed because of the caregivers concerns about losing children or children being hurt. Parents and caregivers using the early childhood area were hesitant to allow their children to use the area for fear of larger children running into the area and accidentally hurting smaller children.

### **Recommendations:**

With the planning of the museum expansion and future exhibits the museum staff spend greater time analyzing the visitor use of spaces. The mix of kinesthetic play and information for caregivers is not conducive to the type of thought requested in understanding the connection between imaginative play as theory and imaginative play in practice.

It is clear that the exhibits staff is a dedicated talented group, but it is also evident that projects are on restricted schedules and budgets. During my conversations with exhibits staff several ideas were not pursued for lack of time and budget. One idea was logos for types of play for each area, the designer took the idea as far as concept but the idea was deemed to take too long.

To quote Walt Disney "Tell people what they are going to see, what they are seeing and what they have seen", greater effort could be made in distilling large concepts into tiered communication or in other words a large sign hanging over the house "constructing worlds" to make concrete the connection between building a house and the value of imagination in play.

Although the floor staff are friendly, and well trained they are specifically trained to not interact with guests (visitors) on a typical museum inquiry-based level. Instead the staff is to clean areas, report lost children and make sure areas are safe.

The Strong has enjoyed significant success and is well positioned to expand the museum and the reach of the “value of play”. Although the reviewer would suggest that the messages of the museum are very clear and provided to audiences in ways that clearly communicate intent.

## **SWOT**

### Strengths

1. Excellent visitor services
2. Excellent level of visitor experience, lighting, exhibits, facility

### Weaknesses

1. Parent stress of losing sight of children
2. Cost, to many financially out of range, membership
3. Membership only option for many families
4. Refinements to exhibition development process
5. Early childhood education (0-1 years old), climbing structure not conducive to early childhood education

### Opportunities

1. Mapping of exhibition spaces
2. Greater control of visitor circulation to reduce parent / caregiver stress and increase opportunity for engagement with exhibition messages
3. Higher level of scholarship available to visitors
4. Areas skipped by adults
5. “What am I going to see, what am I seeing and what have I seen”, tiered guest messages, large font

### Threats

1. Over expansion without solving existing issues
2. Pricing leaving opportunities for less expensive family experiences
3. Other museums planned within 1 1/2 hours?
4. People laughed when asked about visiting without children, not seeing 51% of visitors with children, you can say you are not a children’s museum, but every person interviewed laughed when asked about visiting without a child.
5. Inadequate market research, not seeing visitorship without children or visitors beyond 1.5 hours

## **Floor Staff Interviews**

More than 30 in-depth visitor interviews

Spoke with 4 Floor Staff

Guest Services Staff Member (Asked to be anonymous), Started in September 2018

1. Imagination Destination is the area where parents are the most stressed
2. When there is a code 66 she goes and looks on the second levels (Outer Space and Rescue) to find children
3. The kids love the slide and the climbing structure but not conducive to imaginative play, would be better to locate slide and climbing structure elsewhere in the museum
4. Not fair to 0-1 year olds in Toddler Area many children use Toddler area for running
5. Area having two exits causes stress for caregivers of losing children
6. Difficult mix of modalities imaginative play and climbing (slide and climbing structure)
7. Caregivers tend to sit and watch kids on the climbing structure
8. She was not aware that the exhibition was for adults
9. One History Place is another "exit" for kids and caregiver stress
10. Has not seen 51% of adults without children see a couple of twenty something or retirees, but not 51%

Second Guest Services Staff (Also asked to be anonymous),

1. She does see guests without children, Monday seniors, teens on dates, but she would agree not 51%, bad day for guests without children because of programming
2. Lots of hype about exhibit opened in March, was closed a long time and guests feeling they have to see Imagination Destination
3. Most stressful area in museum Imagination Destination
4. (Laughed) When I said the exhibition was for adults to educate about Imaginative Play in early childhood development
5. Other stressful area One History Place, lots of nooks and crannies

Third Guest Service (Also asked to be anonymous)

1. Parents are the most nervous about larger kids hurting smaller kids in climbing structure
2. Does not see any imaginative play between adults and children
3. Just worked in the area yesterday, parents are the most "checked out" in the area, either "checked out or stressed"
4. Does not seem to be an atmosphere of critique all floor staff concerned about retaliation for giving feedback

Ben, Head of Guest Services

1. Refers to floor staff as Hosts
2. Not the role of Hosts to play with guests
3. An opportunity for Hosts to model behavior for parents / caregivers, this is a way to have imaginative play with kids
4. Was a communication exhibition that included helicopter, and area about flags, but flag area not very popular
5. Also sees imaginative play as theater, helicopter and theater
6. During the week sees imaginative play in One History Place (classroom and kitchen)
7. Added insects to previous communication exhibit
8. Does not see guests reading text panels
9. Does not see guests using Touch Screen
10. Many guests happy about the lack of screens in the Imagination Destination

### **Findings of Interviews:**

Question #1 – 70% Female, 30% Male Interviewees

Question #2 – 43% 35 to 44 years old, 35% 25 to 34 years old interviewees

**Question #3 – 100% Group of adults visiting with children, no adults without children**

**Question #4 – 57% 3 to 5 years old, 30% 6 to 10 years old**

Question #5 – 65% of interviewees with 45 minutes of museum, 26% between 45 and 1 ½ hours from museum

Question #6 – 57% aware that exhibition goal was to educate parents, 30% unaware that goal of exhibition was to educate parents

**Question #7 – 48% interviewees climbing structure favorite exhibit, 17% Build a House favorite exhibit**

**Question #8 – 40% did not read text panels, 40% read in the past not today**

**Question #9 – 45% read the text panels but do not remember, 41% too busy to think about the role of play**

Question #10 – 48% good amount of information about play, 33% lots of useful information about the role of play

Question #11 – **57% think of the exhibition as “fun”, 43% think of it as Imaginative, 0% think of it as educational**

**Question #12 – 57% did not use the touch screen, 29% used the touch screen and found it valuable**

**Question #13 – 52% gained an appreciation of play, 38% don’t remember anything about the role of play**

**Question #14 – 67% would not visit without a child**

**Question #15 – 85% did not visit webpage**

**Question #17 – 90% think of the museum as both fun and educational**

**Question #18 – 55% general understanding of the museum’s mission, 35% have incorporated the museum’s mission into their own lives**

Question #19 – 52% aware of the public library at the museum, 48% unaware of public library at museum

**Question #20 – 60% can describe the museum’s mission to friends, 35% understand but not sure how the museum is different from other children’s museums (often repeated during interviews)**

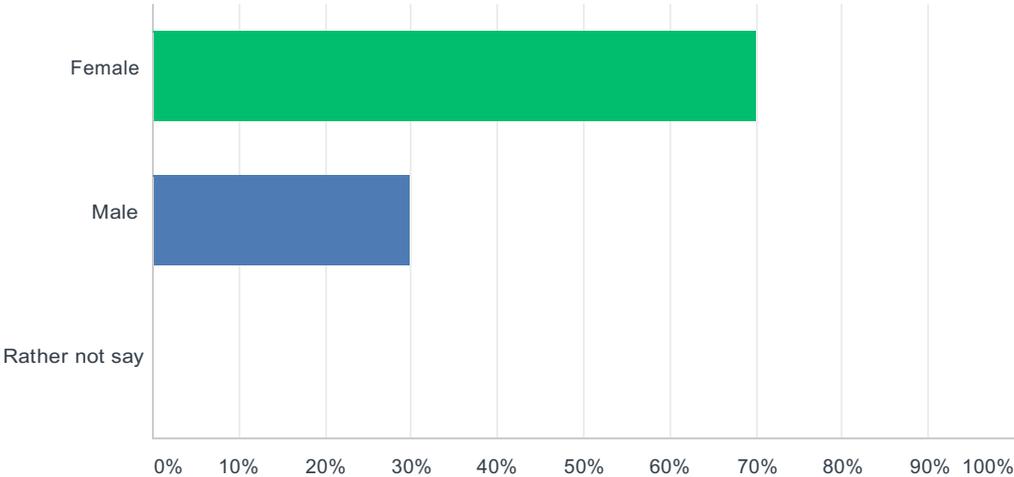
Kudos to the museum staff, 35% of the visitors interviewed said “Yes, I think (of the role of play) as wonderful and have incorporated the thinking into my own life” and 55% “have a general understanding of what it means to be the National Museum of Play”. 60% of visitors interviewed “can describe (the unique message of the museum and the role of play) to friends and relatives” an impressive statistic. 90% of interviewees “think of the Strong Museum as a combination of fun and education”. 52% gained a new understanding of the role of play (in children’s development).

85% of visitors interviewed did not visit the website prior to visiting the exhibition. 67% would not visit the exhibition without a child.

40% “didn’t read the text panels” and 41% of interviewees did not read text panels as they were “too busy watching my kids.

### Q1 Sex

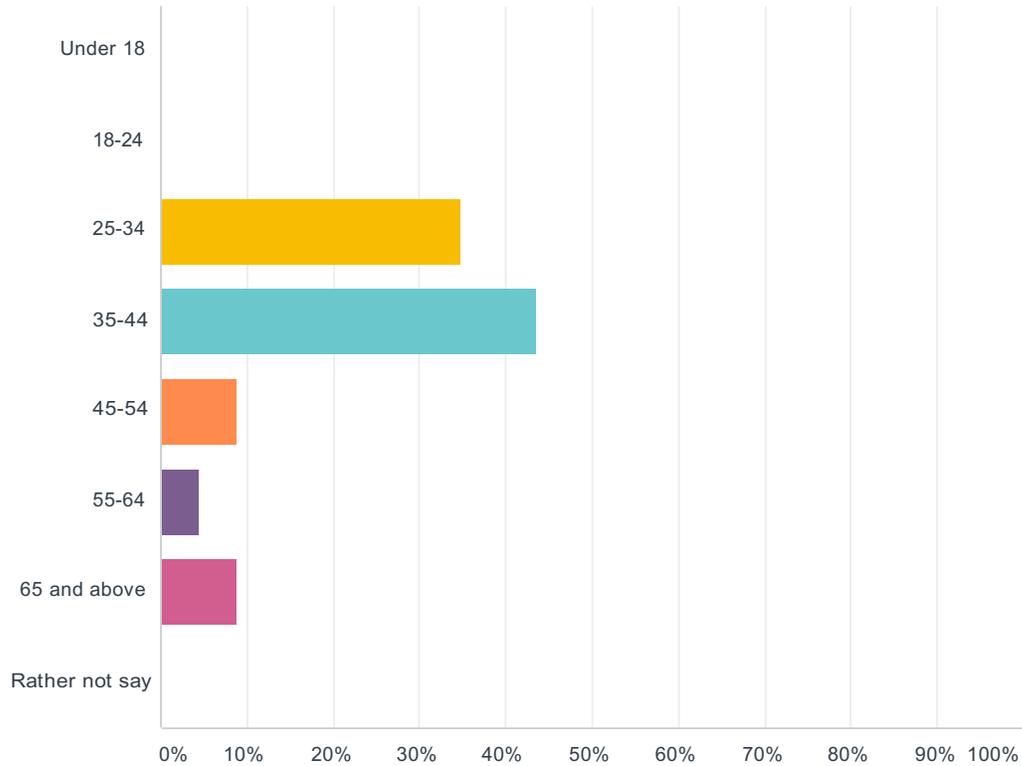
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Female	69.57%	16
Male	30.43%	7
Rather not say	0.00%	0
TOTAL		23

## Q2 Age Category

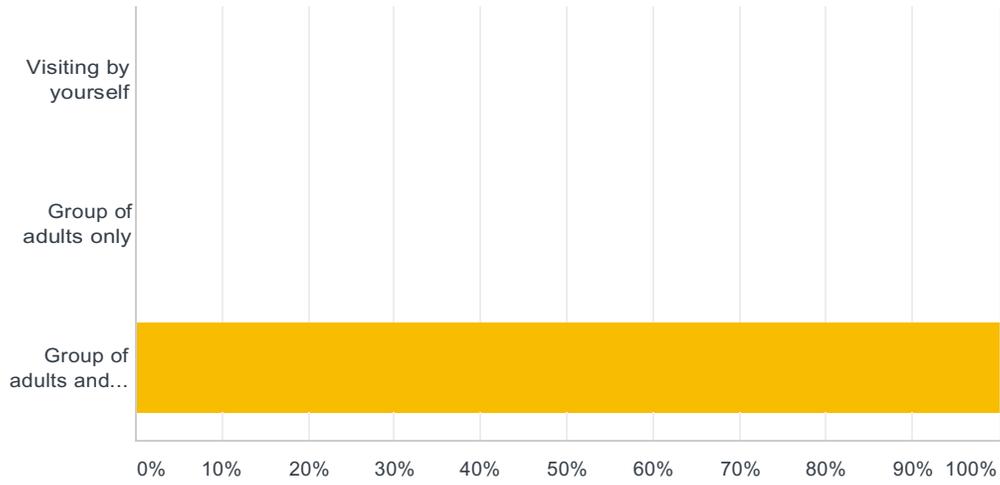
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 18	0.00% 0
18-24	0.00% 0
25-34	34.78% 8
35-44	43.48% 10
45-54	8.70% 2
55-64	4.35% 1
65 and above	8.70% 2
Rather not say	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23</b>

## Q3 Visitor Type

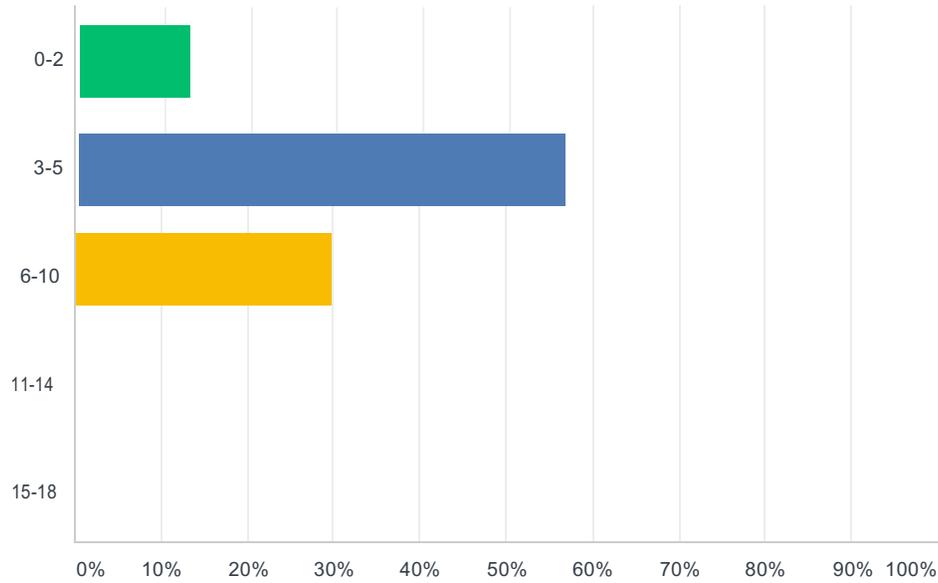
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Visiting by yourself	0.00%	0
Group of adults only	0.00%	0
Group of adults and children	100.00%	23
TOTAL		23

## Q4 Age of Accompanying Children

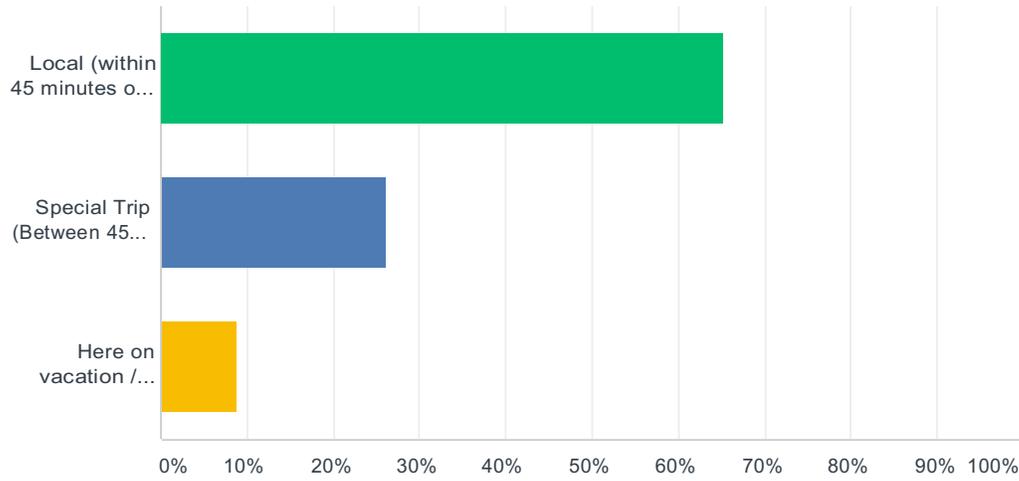
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
0-2	13.04%	3
3-5	56.52%	13
6-10	30.43%	7
11-14	0.00%	0
15-18	0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23</b>

## Q5 Where do you live?

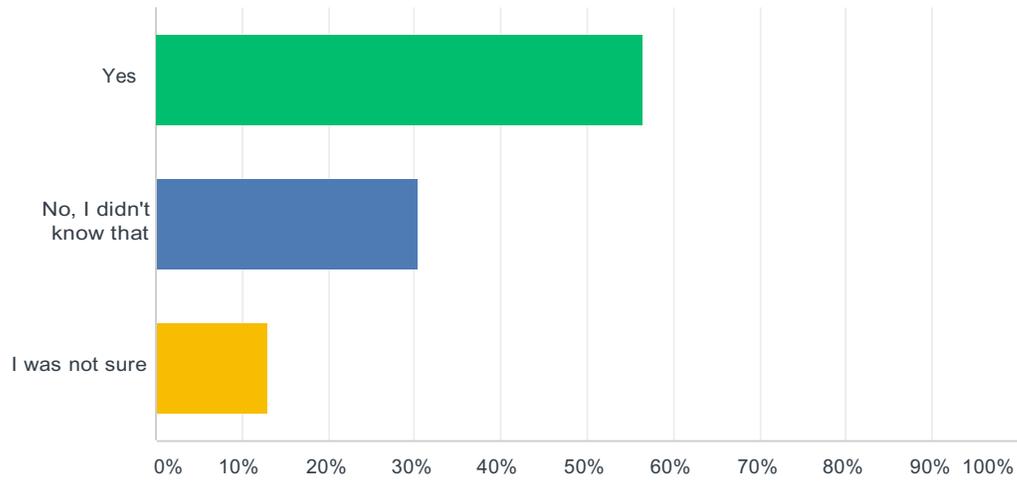
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Local (within 45 minutes of museum)	65.22%	15
Special Trip (Between 45 minutes and 1 1/2 hour away)	26.09%	6
Here on vacation / traveling (more than 1 1/2 hour away)	8.70%	2
TOTAL		23

### Q6 Were you aware that one of the goals of this exhibit is to educate parents on the role of imaginative play in children's development?

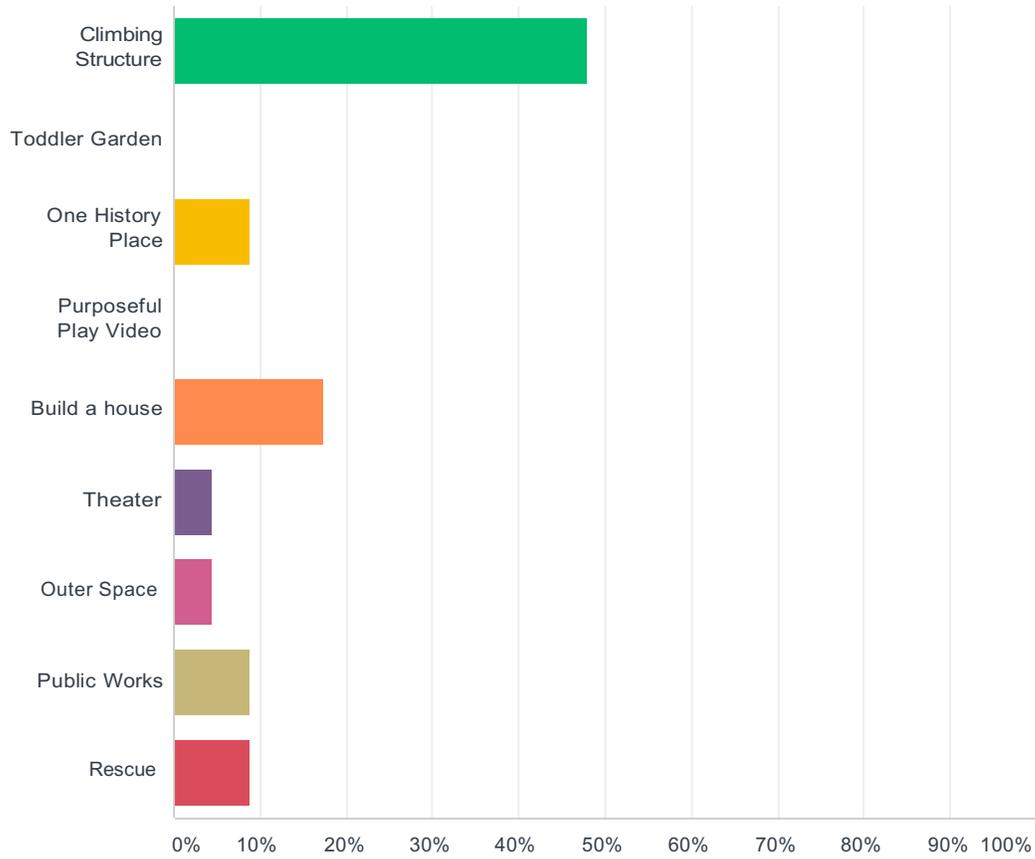
Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	56.52% 13
No, I didn't know that	30.43% 7
I was not sure	13.04% 3
TOTAL	23

## Q7 Which was your favorite section of this exhibit and why?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Climbing Structure	47.83%	11
Toddler Garden	0.00%	0
One History Place	8.70%	2
Purposeful Play Video	0.00%	0
Build a house	17.39%	4
Theater	4.35%	1
Outer Space	4.35%	1
Public Works	8.70%	2
Rescue	8.70%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>23</b>

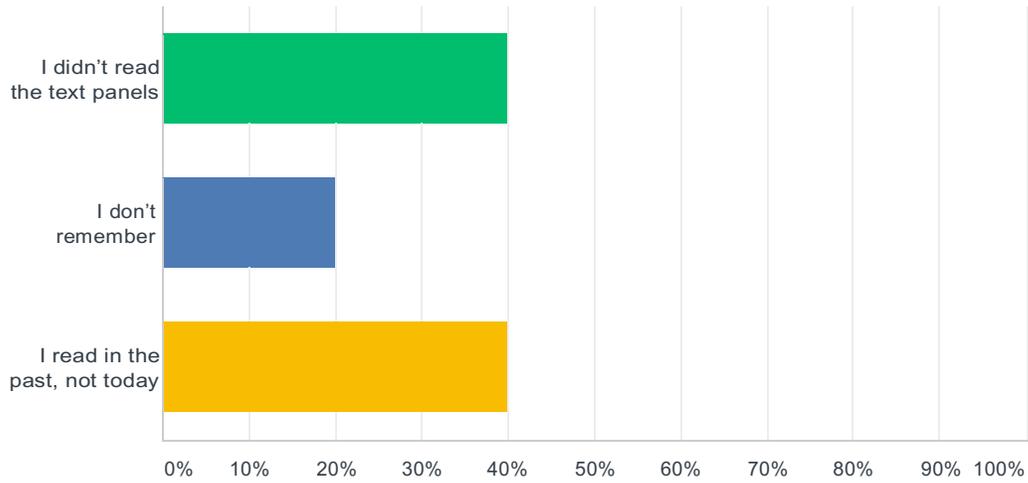
## The Strong Museum Imagination Destination - Summative Evaluation

Which was your favorite section of this exhibit and why?

1. We like to build, multifaceted
2. Kids like this area the best
3. The desks
4. My child loves the exhibit
5. Climbing
6. Daughter likes the exhibit
7. Other museums have them
8. Imagination and dress up
9. Sit and watch kids, lights, colors
10. Fun
11. Climbing swinging
12. Kids like to play
13. She goes there all the time
14. It is cool, I like history
15. Active, raining bad weather, great for running around

## Q8 Did you read the text panels?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 3



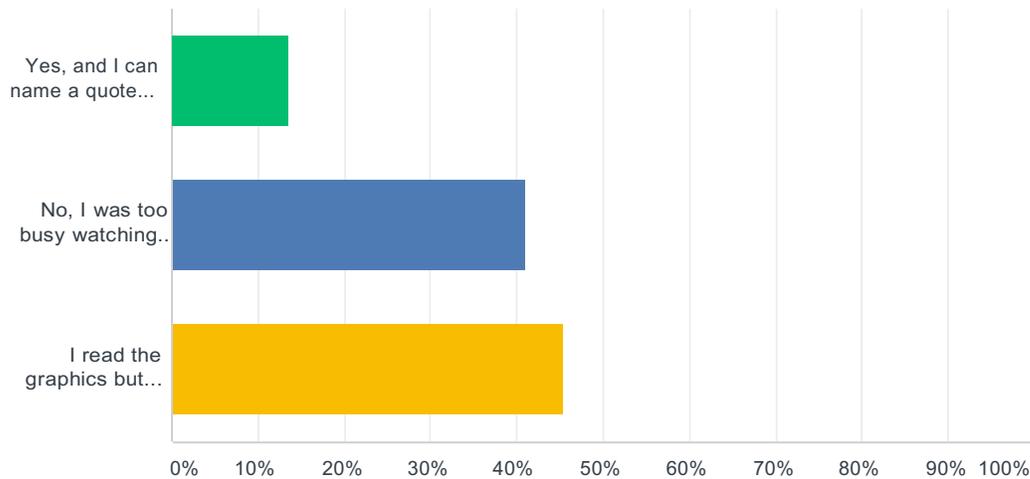
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I didn't read the text panels	40.00%	8
I don't remember	20.00%	4
I read in the past, not today	40.00%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>20</b>

**Comments:**

1. I read them and then I forget them within a few minutes
2. I don't go out of my way to read them
3. A video in the entry What is play?
4. Taking the shoes off, instruction

## Q9 After visiting this exhibition has Imagination Destination changed your thinking about the “important role of pretend play in human emotional, intellectual, social, and cultural development?”

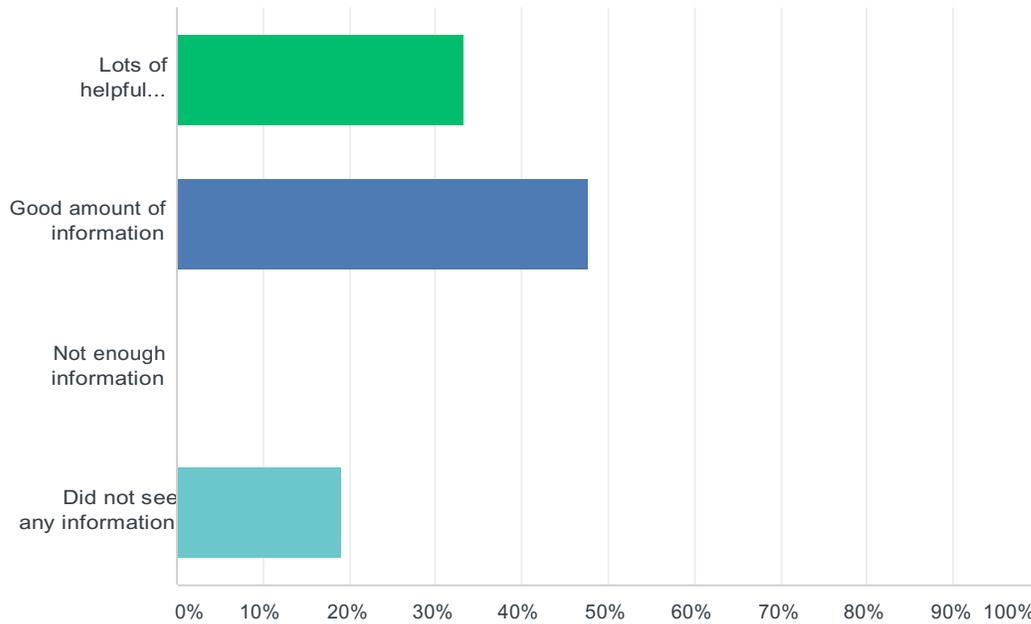
Answered: 22 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, and I can name a quote or a new thought about the role of play	13.64%	3
No, I was too busy watching my kid	40.91%	9
I read the graphics but do not remember anything in particular	45.45%	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>22</b>
<b>Comments:</b>		
1. We love it here and keep coming back		
2. I always believed in the role of imaginative play		
3. They love it and love role playing		
4. Been in education in 46 years		

## Q10 Has Imagination Destination provided you with parenting / caregiver information and tools to help you engage children in imaginative play?

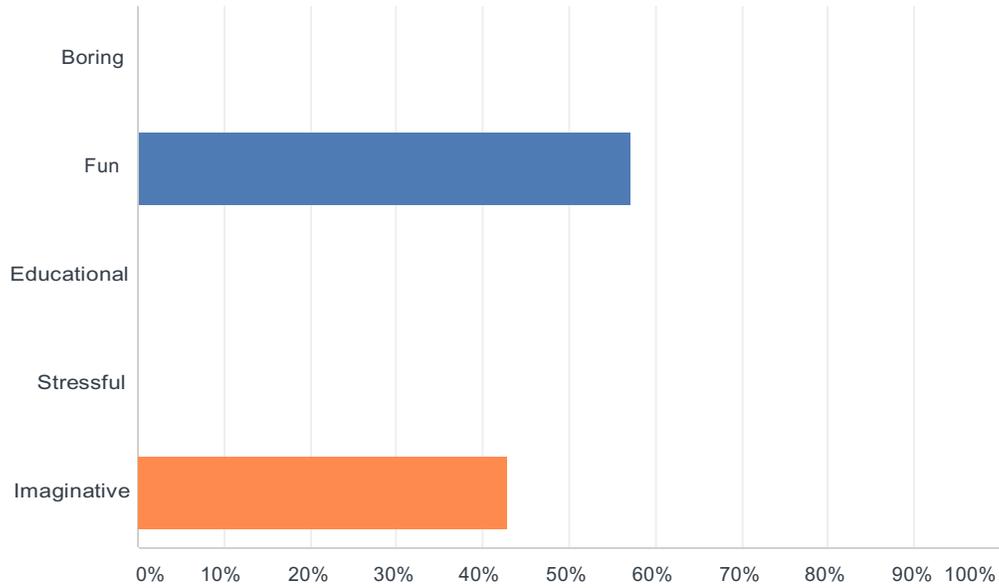
Answered: 21 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Lots of helpful concepts and content to apply with my child at home	33.33%	7
Good amount of information	47.62%	10
Not enough information	0.00%	0
Did not see any information	19.05%	4
TOTAL		21
<b>Comments:</b>		
1. I did not see anything about parenting		
2. Some information, not enough to be good		
3. So busy time to read, collaborative play, parents to keep fostering play		

## Q11 What word best describes this exhibit

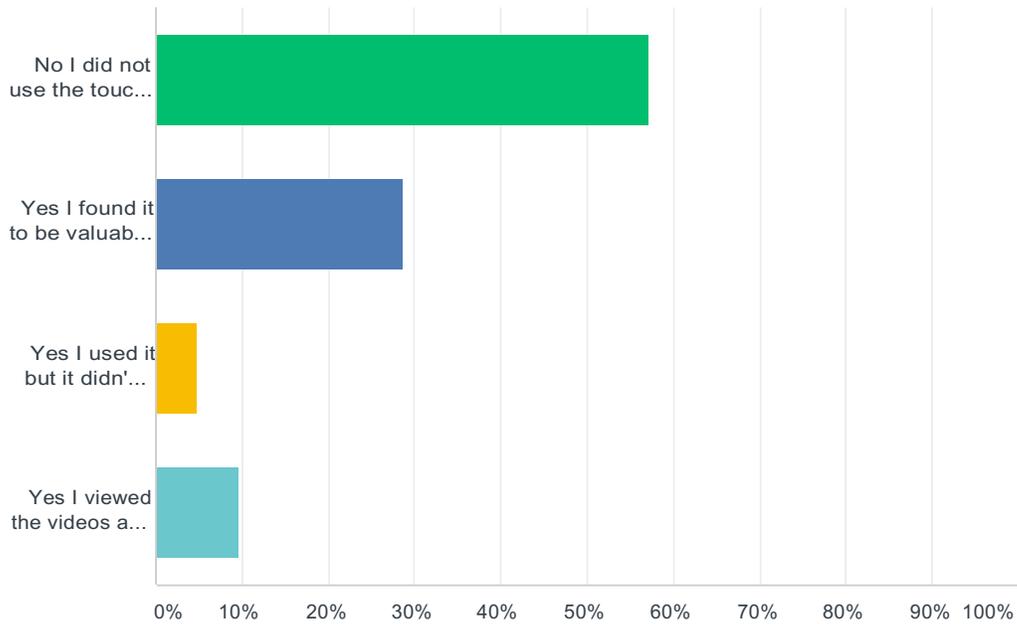
Answered: 21 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Boring	0.00% 0
Fun	57.14% 12
Educational	0.00% 0
Stressful	0.00% 0
Imaginative	42.86% 9
TOTAL	21

## Q12 Did you look at the central touch screen monitor. What did you think?

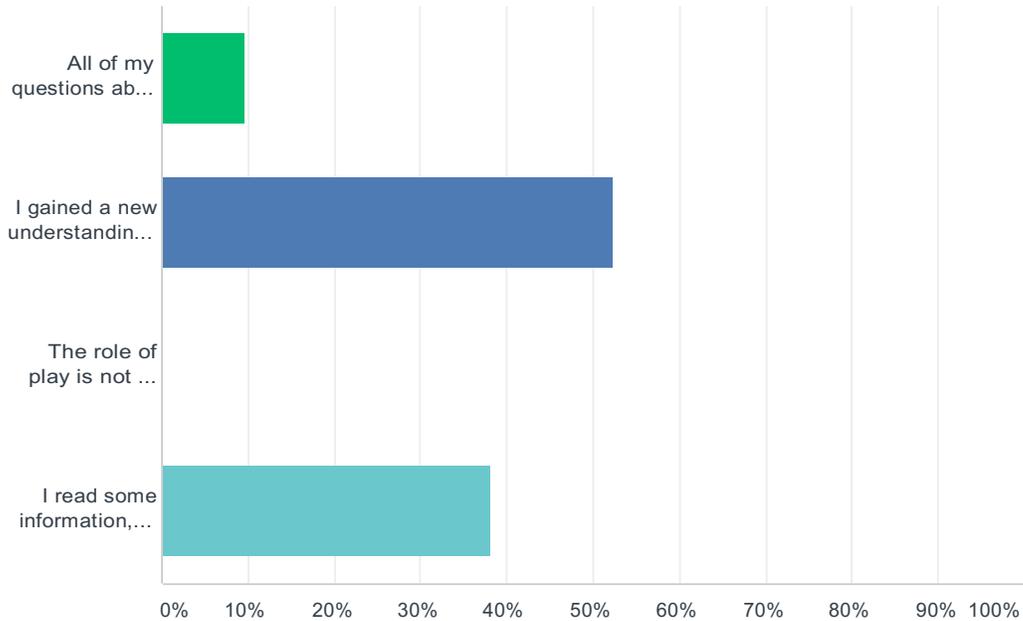
Answered: 21 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
No I did not use the touch screen	57.14%	12
Yes I found it to be valuable information	28.57%	6
Yes I used it but it didn't interest me	4.76%	1
Yes I viewed the videos and found _____ to be the most interesting.	9.52%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>21</b>

### Q13 After visiting the exhibit:

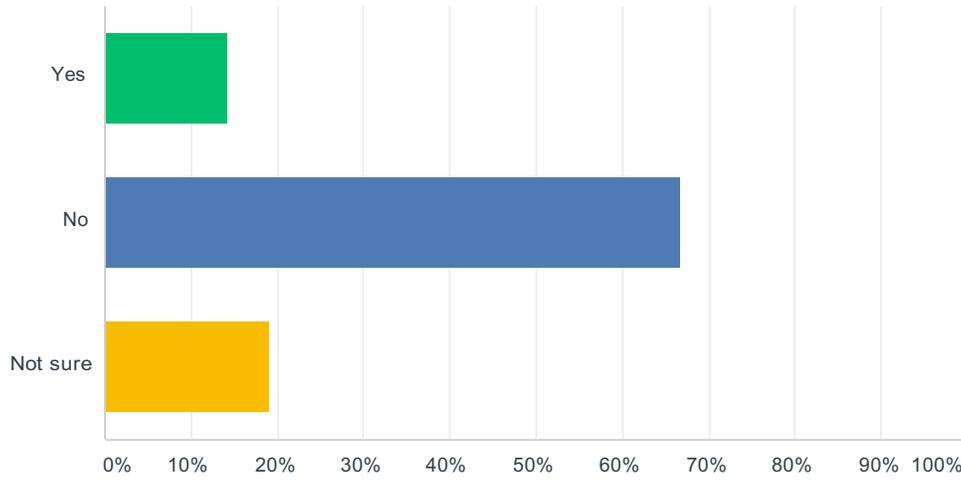
Answered: 21 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
All of my questions about the role of play in early childhood development were answered	9.52%	2
I gained a new understanding of the role of play, but need to learn more	52.38%	11
The role of play is not of interest to me	0.00%	0
I read some information, but don't remember anything significant	38.10%	8
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>21</b>

## Q14 Would you visit this gallery without a child?

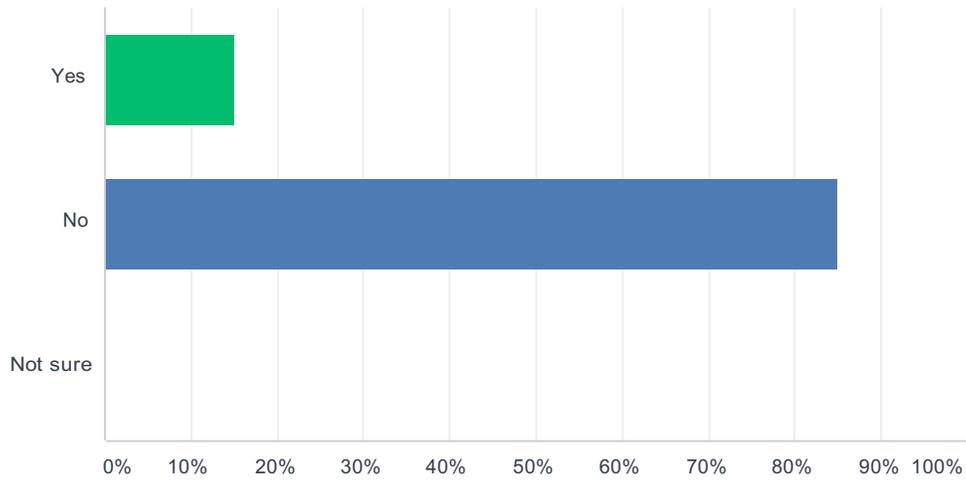
Answered: 21 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	14.29% 3
No	66.67% 14
Not sure	19.05% 4
TOTAL	21

## Q15 Did you look at the Imagination Destination webpage before visiting the museum?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	15.00% 3
No	85.00% 17
Not sure	0.00% 0
TOTAL	20

## Q16 Do you have any suggestions for the staff that might be helpful in ways to assist parents /caregivers in using imaginative play in the development of children?

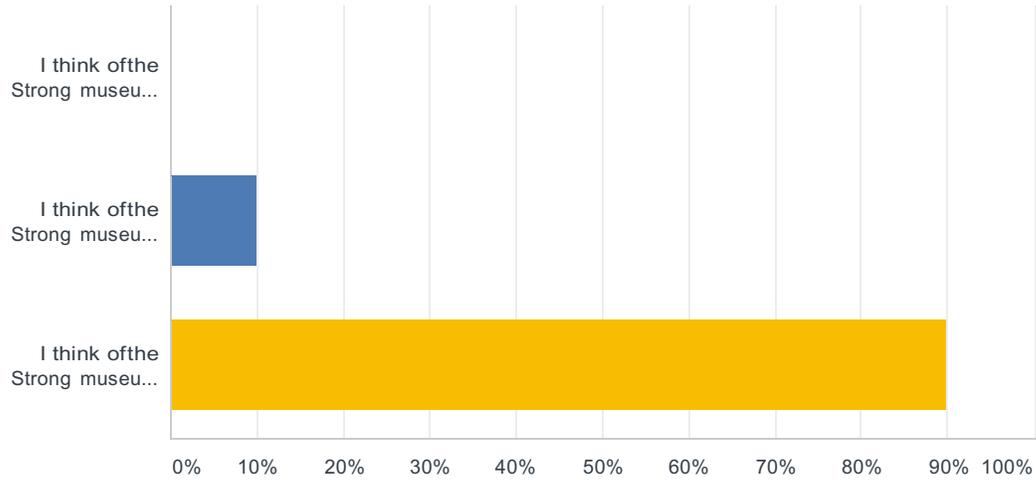
Answered: 13 Skipped: 10

### Comments:

1. Staff is good
2. More contained areas, kids run off, this is a big place
3. No, very nice exhibit, I enjoy it
4. I can follow psychologist and totally believe in the role of free play
5. Think it is good
6. When very busy, slide gets busy
7. Kids not abiding by the rules
8. No
9. Nice the way it is allows them to explore
10. It is good
11. No
12. No not really
13. No suggestions

## Q17 Please select one of the following

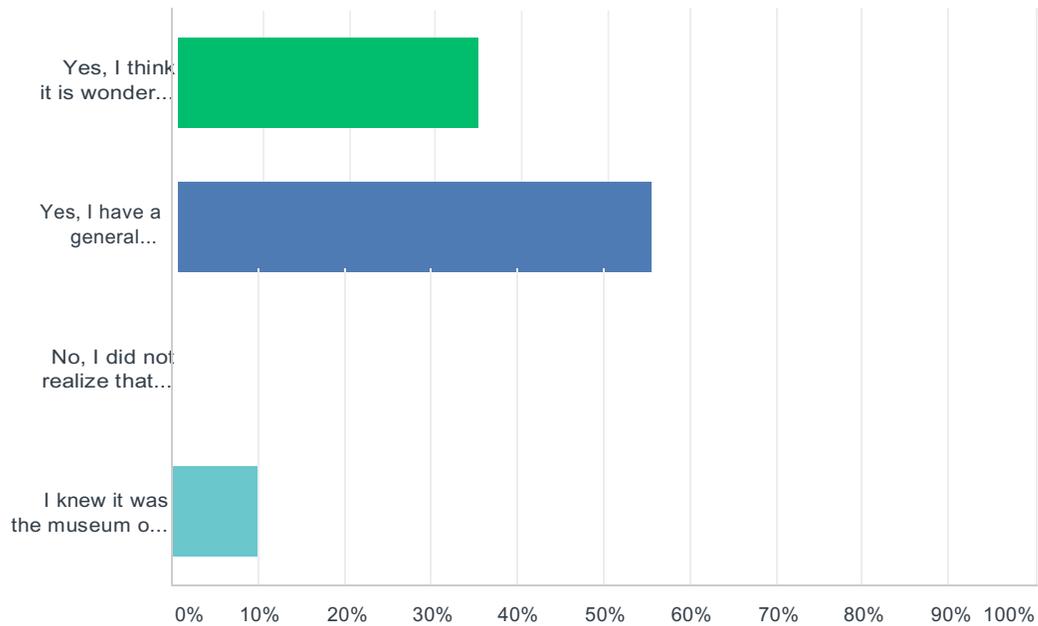
Answered: 20 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
I think of the Strong museum as a resource for me and my child's development	0.00%	0
I think of the Strong museum as a fun time for the family	10.00%	2
I think of the Strong museum as a combination of fun and education for my child	90.00%	18
TOTAL		20

## Q18 Do you have an understanding of the Strong museum as a leading source for the role of play in human emotional, intellectual, social, and cultural development?

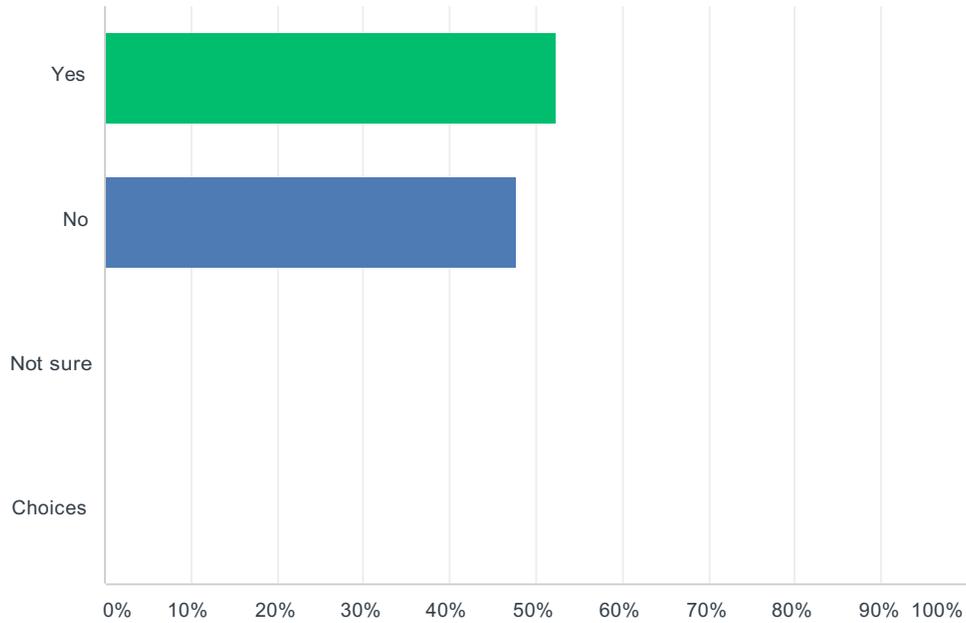
Answered: 20 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes, I think it is wonderful and have incorporated the thinking into my own life	35.00% 7
Yes, I have a general understanding of what it means to be the National Museum of Play	55.00% 11
No, I did not realize that this was a museum about the importance of play	0.00% 0
I knew it was the museum of play, but still not sure what that means	10.00% 2
TOTAL	20
Comments:	
1. Usually serval Strong staff, none today	
2. Wonderful, think it is great	
3. I don't think too much about, kids just having fun	

## Q19 Were you aware that you can check out library books?

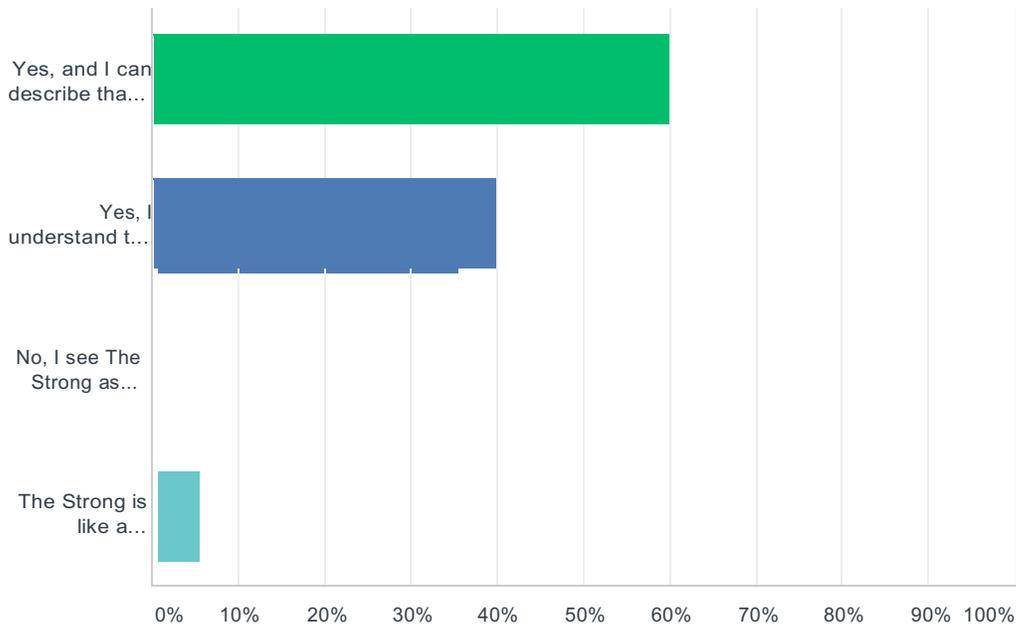
Answered: 21 Skipped: 2



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	52.38%	11
No	47.62%	10
Not sure	0.00%	0
Choices	0.00%	0
TOTAL		21

## Q20 Do you see a clear and unique message regarding the role of play from the Strong Museum?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, and I can describe that message to friends and relatives	60.00%	12
Yes, I understand that The Strong is the National Museum of Play, but not sure of how this is unique	35.00%	7
No, I see The Strong as similar to a playground with a little educational information	0.00%	0
The Strong is like a playground	5.00%	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>20</b>

## Appendix A

### IMLS Summative Evaluation - Imagination Destination Notes

[IMLS Grant MA-10-16-0454-16](#)

#### Background Documents:

1. [IMLS 2016 Museums for America - Learning Experiences Narrative](#)
2. [IMLS Interim Report February 27, 2018](#)
3. [The Why, How, and What of a Museum of Play An Interview with George Rollie Adams](#)
4. [Collecting, Preserving, and Interpreting the History of Electronic Games An Interview with Jon-Paul C. Dyson](#)
5. [Exhibition Floor Plan](#)

#### Notes Phone Call Jon-Paul Monday September 10, 2018

##### Conversation Synopsis:

Imagination Destination was developed to focus on “pretend play”, for an adult audience to understand early childhood development. The gallery is designed with a mix of active physical play and imaginative play. The gallery was planned as a quieter more contemplative gallery to balance out more high energy kinetic galleries for the 8-12 year old audience. “Intellectual Play”, or “Contemplative Play”, are not a goal of Imagination Destination. Interested in evaluation of gallery as part of planning for 100,000 sq. ft expansion to understand adult audience reaction to gallery methodologies.

#### Notes Phone Call Jon-Paul Monday September 10, 2018

1. The Strong Museum has the world’s collection of objects related to play including toys, dolls, board games, video games, other electronic games, books, documents, and other historical materials related to play. From <http://www.museumofplay.org/collections>
2. The museum receives 550,000 visitors per year (2018)
3. The Strong Museum publishes a peer reviewed journal, The Journal of Play <http://www.journalofplay.org/>
4. 2002 revisioning to become the museum of play <http://www.museumofplay.org/about/history>
5. Current visitation 51% Adults and 49% Kids
6. Core audience within an 1 1/2 drive
7. Currently 285,000 sq. ft. will be adding a 100,000 sq. ft. expansion, planning to attract visitors from within a four-hour drive to include Toronto, Albany and Pittsburg
8. Currently adding 1,000 additional parking spaces in a new parking structure
9. Have a high ropes course
10. Concentrate on a family audience
11. 1980’s a low in attendance 55,000 visitors per year
12. The Museum is willing to use many different methodologies including retail methods
13. Jon-Paul has been at the Museum twenty years
14. The museum was a museum of the impact of industrialization
15. During the early 2000’s museum focused collection to be centered on Play
16. 2006 Museum grew from 145,000 sq. ft to 285,000 sq. ft

## The Strong Museum Imagination Destination - Summative Evaluation

17. Museum founded in 1982
18. Second floor of Museum was visible open storage, second visible storage behind Museum of Anthropology at UBC <https://moa.ubc.ca/>
19. Second floor visible storage mixed results, “could fire a cannon through the second floor and not hit anyone”. Although people still call about the doll collection.
20. Museum has successfully applied for and received several IMLS grants on the topic of “Play”
21. “All exhibitions to include the three legs of the stool, interactive, artifacts, and interpretation”
22. Toy Hall of Fame <http://www.toyhalloffame.org/>
23. Video Game Hall of Fame <http://www.worldvideogamehalloffame.org/>
24. Imagination Destination was developed to focus on “pretend play”, including early childhood development, with more of a focus on an adult audience
25. Discussion of “balancing” the galleries between types of interaction, quieter more contemplative galleries to balance out more high energy kinetic galleries for an 8-12 year old audience
26. Imagination Destination developed to be a balance of active physical play and imaginative play more focused on an adult audience
27. Other galleries focused on “Intellectual Play”, “Contemplative Play”, not a goal of Imagination Destination
28. The time-analysis and use of exhibits well understood, more interested in “if the core goals are being met by the target audience”
29. Interested in evaluation of gallery as part of planning for 100,000 sq. ft expansion
30. Gallery developed, designed and built in-house with the exception of the climbing structure a modified “off-the shelf” structure
31. Interested in a “fresh set of eyes” understanding how the target audience relates to the exhibition
32. Mark W. to type up notes and send to Jon-Paul for comment
33. Mark W. to create draft proposal for Jon-Paul review, with possible museum visit in October
34. Journal of Play Articles
  - a. [http://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/5-2-interview-the-why-how-and-what-of-a%20museum-of-play\\_0.pdf](http://www.journalofplay.org/sites/www.journalofplay.org/files/pdf-articles/5-2-interview-the-why-how-and-what-of-a%20museum-of-play_0.pdf)
  - b. <http://www.journalofplay.org/issues/10/1/interview/1-collecting-preserving-and-interpreting-history-electronic-games-interview>

### October 26, 2018 - Onsite at The Strong

**Jon-Paul C. Dyson, PhD** - Vice President for Exhibits

**Steve Dubnik** - President & CEO

**Mike (last name?)** - Director of Exhibits

**Matt Handy** - Senior Exhibit Designer

**Laurie Phelps** - Vice President for Guest and Institutional Services

1. Arrive 10am at the museum
2. Met by Jon-Paul, introduced to Steve Dubnik - President & CEO
3. Quick gallery walkthrough, mention of IMLS as an “overlay”

## The Strong Museum Imagination Destination - Summative Evaluation

4. Get coffee and go to exhibits department meet Mike (last name ?) Director of Exhibitions
5. Discussion of signage 65 word signage
6. Jon-Paul likes to be called “JP” or “Jon-Paul”
7. JP sees the exhibition process as iterative a “team journey”, “Iteration, evaluation, and including a historian”
8. JP as project team historian
9. Project team JP as team lead and historian, peer Chris Bensch Vice President for Collections at The Strong (History M.A.), Mike Director of Exhibits
10. Process includes concept document
11. Have tried to incorporate [Project Management Institute](#) (PMI) process with limited success. Including Project Charter
12. At early stages discussion of graphics at key areas, and circulation to spark dialogue
13. Mark discussion of announcement of exhibition objective at entrance
14. During exhibition walkthrough Mark asks about visitor segments, single mothers? Text written above level of people in need
15. No formal front end evaluation conducted
16. Mark asks about “how does research become exhibit communication?”
17. The Strong is a branch of the [Public Library](#)
18. Discussion of girls and women and STEAM / STEM, no directed programs to girls and STEAM and STEM. Discussion of [Alice and Wonderland](#)
19. Discussion of “Flow” Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and “Play” Vivian Gussin Paley
20. Central Touch screen replaced large artifact case / Timeline of the “History of play and Children’s development”
21. Discussion of “who serves as guest advocate (different than guest services)”. Always make a point of including at least two woman team members
22. Museum moving to an adult audience, discussion of “who serves as adult advocate?”, “early childhood advocate?”
23. Steve Dubnik - Was Board Chairperson [August 2016 became President & CEO](#)
24. Museum undergoing [Capital Campaign](#) and [Museum District Inner Loop Redevelopment](#)
25. Rollie Raleigh did not review graphic text
26. Rollie Strategic Goals
27. Deborah McCoy Assistant Vice President for Education
28. Discussion of Reggio Emilia School at museum
29. Discussion of revisioning Play = The field of play
30. Discussion of “Play Spotter” including the Star Trek two chairs
31. Theater “My life through play”
32. Discussion of Strategic Plan > Museum Master Plan > Tactical Plan for the expansion
33. Met Laurie Phelps, Vice President for Guest and Institutional Services, not education or interpretive role
34. Refer to visitors as “guests”
35. Discussion of “you are a player”
36. Role Guest Services to keep exhibit areas clean
37. “Seed the play”, not put everything way

## The Strong Museum Imagination Destination - Summative Evaluation

38. Wegmans Supermarket as benchmark
39. Staff has attended [Disney Institute](#) training
40. #1 Guest Experience (clean, safe and friendly), #2 Interpretation, Interactivity and Collections.
41. Have benchmarked both non-profits and for-profit visitor experiences
42. Have benchmarked Family Fun Center, Disney and Wegmans
43. Keep database of repairs, high priority to exhibit repairs
44. [#7 Family attraction parents.com](#)
45. Consider “the museum an “attraction” not a “museum”
46. Visitor segment of tourists that travel to Rochester to visit The Strong for two days
47. Consider the museum to be a [Boundaryless Organization](#)
48. [Total Quality Management](#) (TQM)
49. “Less about history more about exhibit design”
50. Super Picky Observation Team (SPOT)
51. [George Rollie Adams previous President & CEO 29 years in role](#)
52. Rollie Adams preferred “clean spaces to messy spaces”
53. Museum of Play (The Strong) vs. Museum for kids (Children’s Museum of Indianapolis)
54. 51% Adults / 49% Kids
55. Prada vs Payless, benchmarking trip to NYC, “object feels special”
56. “Remarkable (take out your iPhone) vs Iconic
57. Story of four people looking at museum display of vases, historian, artist, different points of view of same display
58. No state or federal funding
59. Trust 55% of earned income, 16,000 museum memberships
60. [Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum Charitable Trust \\$65M, \\$16M annual operating costs](#)
61. Strong museum vision and values and importance of hiring and keeping the strongest staff members
62. Discussion of exhibit development, “takes time”
63. Creating a “repeatable system” for permanent exhibitions, concerns of staff burn-out and the “exhibition hamster wheel”
64. The museum has a culture of iteration
65. No current market research or museum audience segmentation
66. 2003 incorporation of the Mission of Play, a collection of world class toys
67. 3,000 sq. ft, at \$125 per sq. ft, + staff time \$400,000, ½ of cost underwritten by IMLS + labor
68. Desire to create a strategy to become an International Destination (vs. a regional destination) an authority on play. Goal of 1 million visitors a year
69. History of Video Game an immersive video game gallery
70. NEH Planning grant \$70,000, \$1M transformation
71. 2003 The Strong National Museum of Play, authority – systemic thinking, analytic the 10 components of play
72. Signal the public “we are about play”
73. Goal of sharpen the authority on play and communicate the authority better
74. BHAG – We are going to attract audiences to play

75. Propellent – HR to steer the organization
76. A competitive culture
77. Not a “museum” culture
78. Not a clear educational philosophy
79. The Anthropology, Biology, History, Psychology and Sociology of Play
80. Museum uses “play” as a lens on all topics
81. Discussion of emotional intelligences, Howard Gardner
82. Goal of creating a “map” of play in all of its incarnations
83. Different than the City Museum or the Pittsburgh Museum, less “messy”, less of an artistic approach, more of an academic approach, scholarship of play
84. Former Director hated mess and surprises, more about “controlled play”
85. “Play is the soil of creativity”, “Higgy of Play”, Prada approach more of a NY, San Francisco, Brooklyn approach than a Rochester approach
86. The physical play of the structure is not consistent with teaching parents about imaginative play
87. Cultural aspects of play, work groups “playing” as part of innovation
88. Creating cross cultural approaches
89. House - Social Play, Star Trek - Collaborative Play, Climbing Structure – Physical Play
90. Need for “Play Tips” / “Prompts” to guide parents / caregivers
91. Offices feel like a library, more academic than many museum offices
92. Museum deaccessioned Industrial objects and furniture
93. “The Hero’s Journey” a Disney approach to exhibits
94. Goal to create traveling exhibits to gain international authority status
95. Are the guests getting the above notes ? How does the museum get different results?
96. Creating a “Play Think Tank”

#### **Discussion with Matt**

1. New Director less risk adverse, slides, climbing structures
2. More physical play spaces
3. Two primary questions, “Are the kids having fun?”, “Are the parents playing with the kids?”
4. Discussion of tiered messages, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary creating an archway “Parent Kid Dialogue
5. The Play Timeline became the artifact case under entrance graphic
6. The narrative of the shark is unclear
7. No need for working drawings, fabricators can build from renderings

#### **Discussion with Mike**

1. “Luxury of building in-house”
  2. Shop can’t be expanded, will need to outsource parts of expansion
  3. Importance of inhouse design and fabrication
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**Notes October 28, 2018**

1. Didn't use touch screen
  2. Don't read text copy
  3. Too busy watching kids
  4. Love the lighting, colors, imagination
  5. Cannot quote anything specific from graphics
  6. Need large messages
  7. Clearly defined spaces
  8. Laughed when asked about visiting without a child
  9. Didn't know about library
  10. No summer camps, but does do programming associated with traveling exhibit
  11. Bigger bolder messages, larger font, clear signage for each exhibit within exhibition
  12. Signage that can be read from a distance
  13. The climbing structure and slide are not conducive to assisting parents with reading and digesting content
  14. Parents stressed over watching children
  15. 3pm rainy Saturday, too busy, I am getting stressed, parents getting stressed
  16. Find ways to distribute crowds,
  17. Best thing in Rochester, but my kid always gets sick after a visit
  18. Two people not wanting to answer questions, so stressed not conducive to evaluation
  19. Parent Visitor Types
    - i. Checked Out: This is a break for me, to relax
    - ii. Stressed: Afraid to lose sight of the child
    - iii. Social: Time to catch up with my friends
    - iv. Engaged: Watching child and aware of environment
  20. Realizing that because of parent visitor types I am self selecting the "Engaged: Watching child and aware of environment" several parents are either too stressed or checked out.
  21. Have not found any guests visiting without children
  22. Difficulty with interviews as requires sitting for 5-10 minutes with guests
  23. Like the Bears area one way in one way out
  24. Imagination Destination at entry sends message of "Children's Museum"
  25. Every single person interviewed stressed over losing sight of child, multiple exits
  26. Modality, slide and climbing structure make use of touch screen, reading text panels difficult
  27. Kids referring to Imagination Destination as a "playground"
  28. Mixed messaging, exhibition for parents / caregivers with slide and climbing structure antithetical to message
  29. Parents having to leave interview because of fear of loss of sight of child
  30. Very nice having benches and places to sit, better job grouping exhibits by modality, having climbing structure next to slide and build a house and early childhood next to each other
  31. The museum having a clear message on Play, is it equal digital play and imaginative play ? Importance of play without screens
  32. During the entire weekend only saw two 20 somethings visiting without children
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  9. Stickdorn, Marc, and J. Schneider. *This Is Service Design Thinking*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
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## Appendix B

### **Reviewer Bio:**

Mark Walhimer, MID

Mark Walhimer is managing partner of Museum Planning, LLC a museum consultancy and a part-time industrial design professor. His company specializes in the planning, design, and management of interactive educational experiences. Walhimer started his firm in 1999 to assist start-up and expanding museums with museum master planning, exhibition design, and museum project management. His firm has completed more than 40 projects worldwide for an international clientele that includes science centers, art museums, history museums, libraries, and corporations. Projects include Museo Interactivo de Economía (MIDE) in Mexico City, “Alcatraz: Life on the Rock,” traveling exhibition and Trans Studio Science Center in Bandung, Indonesia. Prior to starting his company, Walhimer held positions at Discovery Science Center in Santa Ana, California, the Children’s Museum of Indianapolis, and Liberty Science Center, Jersey City, New Jersey. Walhimer is author of Museums 101, a how-to guide for creating and organizing all varieties of museums. Walhimer has a bachelor’s degree in studio art from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York, and a master’s degree in industrial design and exhibition design from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York.

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