

**Buffalo Bill Historical Center
Draper Museum of Natural History
Front-end Evaluation**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY iii

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... vii

INTRODUCTION.....1

 Methodology 1

 Data Analysis and Method of Reporting 2

I. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUPS WITH CODY-AREA RESIDENTS3

 Background Information 3

 Leisure Activities of Participants 5

 Opinions about the BBHC 6

 Overall Response to the Planned DMNH 8

 Reaction to the Main Idea 11

 Essential Opinions 12

 Preferred Media for Presenting Different Points of View 17

 Advice to DMNH Development Team 18

II. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS WITH TOURISTS..... 19

 Background Information 19

 Associations with and Feelings about Natural History Museums 19

 Feelings about Science Exhibits 20

 Knowledge of Yellowstone National Park 21

 Reaction to the Main Idea 21

 Relationship between People and Nature 23

 Environmental Issues in Yellowstone National Park..... 23

 Reactions to Stakeholders 24

 Presenting Controversial Issues in the DMNH 25

 DMNH Approach..... 26

APPENDICES 27

LIST OF TABLES

Table I.1: Focus Group Participants' Demographic Characteristics	3
Table I.2: Focus Group Participants' Education Level and Profession.....	4
Table I.3: Focus Group Participants' Visitation to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center	4
Table II.1: Interviewees' Demographic Characteristics	19

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings from a front-end evaluation of the Draper Museum of Natural History (DMNH) that is being developed by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC) in Cody, Wyoming. For this study, Randi Korn & Associates (RK&A) conducted focus groups and interviews to help the exhibition development team better understand the target audiences—tourists and residents—and find common ground between the content, themes, and interpretive strategy of the DMNH and its potential visitors. Data were collected in March, April, and May 2001.

Only selected highlights of the study are included in this summary. Readers are urged to consult the body of the report for a detailed account of the findings. The report includes informative and cogent visitors comments.

I. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUPS WITH CODY-AREA RESIDENTS

Background Information

A total of eighteen individuals participated in two groups. Nine were male and nine were female. The median age was forty-seven years. More than half had a high school education or less. All of the focus group participants had visited the BBHC. Of the eighteen individuals, five were frequent visitors, reporting having visited five or more times in the past two years.

Participants' Leisure Activities

Both groups reported spending much of their leisure time doing outdoor activities and expressed an enjoyment of nature. While museum visiting was not specifically listed as a pastime, all had visited the BBHC at least once. Furthermore, during the course of the conversation, some described visits to several other museums.

Participants who had not recently visited the Center spoke highly of it, but suggested that its size makes it somewhat difficult to visit. Such comments demonstrate that some residents think of visiting the BBHC only on special occasions and that marketing may be needed to introduce them to alternative museum visiting options.

Opinions about the BBHC

Overall, both groups had positive feelings about the BBHC, praising its world-class collection and gift shop. The first group however, also noted some problems: visiting the BBHC requires considerable standing and walking. In addition, viewing cases full of artifacts can be overwhelming and planning a visit is difficult because of the extent of the collections. While participants' comments suggest that physical exhaustion is a problem, poor orientation may be the cause of their complaints. Furthermore, offering a range of experiences will also decrease fatigue. A few participants confirmed this as they praised the use of interpretation and interactive exhibits in the revamped Plains Indian Museum.

When participants were asked specifically about the “town and gown” issue, nearly all felt the Museum was for townspeople. In fact, many complimented the BBHC's recent efforts to attract residents with its free winter programs.

Overall Response to the Planned DMNH

Both groups expressed approval for the interactive nature of the planned exhibition and focus on the Yellowstone Area. The first group was particularly intrigued by the Draper Museum's desire to discuss the role people play in the Yellowstone ecosystem and the current issues affecting the area. In contrast, the second group was interested in learning how to interpret nature and in having important features of the Yellowstone ecosystem showcased. They had reservations about a natural history museum dealing with current topics and including different points of view.

Reaction to the Main Idea

Overall, participants agreed with the main idea: "The Yellowstone Area is a unique, highly diverse ecosystem and it represents different things to different people." In particular, they noted that residents and tourists would have very different perspectives on Yellowstone. However, both groups thought the statement was fairly broad and expressed some apprehension with the second half of the statement. They wanted to know whose opinions would be included in the exhibition.

Essential Opinions

The first group wanted to ensure that a local perspective would be represented in the exhibition. The second group had a stronger reaction, assuming that the DMNH might have an agenda that would determine the content of exhibition. As their conversations continued, the group expressed a range of opinions about Yellowstone issues, demonstrating that there is not one "local perspective."

The first group was more optimistic than the second when specifically asked how they would feel if opinions with which they strongly disagreed were included in the Museum. The first group thought divergent ideas would work if the presentation were balanced. Some participants in the second group did not think people with radically different opinions would be able to come together for a dialogue; others thought presenting different opinions was not only possible but also an important role for the DMNH to undertake.

Preferred Media for Presenting Different Points of View

Both groups thought video or interactive media would be more effective for presenting such issues than would text panels. Participants said they wanted an interactive way to respond to different opinions, and also said that seeing the faces of other people expressing their points of view would be very powerful.

Advice to DMNH Development Team

Both groups reiterated the importance of including the opinions of residents, but warned that the Museum should not become the mouthpiece of any special interest. Additionally, some in the first group stressed that the DMNH should be a place for people of all ages. Others remarked that the Museum should be easy to get around and provide seating and other visitor amenities. Regardless of whether participants liked the idea of discussing current issues, many were

concerned about potential controversy. Some thought that the Museum should try to develop an exhibition that would bring people together rather than highlight their different opinions.

II. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS WITH TOURISTS

Background Information

Drop-in museum visitors were interviewed at the National Museum of Natural History Smithsonian Institution (NMNH), the Eiteljorg Museum, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. A total of forty-five visitor groups were interviewed (fifteen at each site). Interviewees were evenly divided between men and women. The median age was forty-seven years.

Associations with and Feelings about Natural History Museums

Overall, interviewees said they visit natural history museums and have positive feelings about them. Natural history museums were most frequently associated with exhibitions about ancient life, especially dinosaurs, as well as various aspects of geology and anthropology.

Feelings about Science Exhibits

In general, interviewees at the NMNH and Monterey were positive about science exhibits; whereas, those at the Eiteljorg had mixed feelings. Those who enjoyed science exhibits praised their interactive and educational qualities. The interviewees who responded negatively were interested in natural history and anthropology but did not equate either with science.

Knowledge of Yellowstone National Park

While interviewees felt positively about Yellowstone National Park, many knew little about it. Even the few who had visited remembered scant details. The most frequently recalled feature of Yellowstone was its geysers, including Old Faithful.

Reaction to the Main Idea

Interviewees agreed that the Yellowstone Area is a “unique, highly diverse ecosystem,” yet they had mixed responses to the idea that it “represents different things to different people.” Some did not fully understand the main idea’s reference to people, interpreting it instead as a conservation message or thinking it meant that visitors to Yellowstone would have different interests. A few perceived part of the intended message—that opinions about how Yellowstone should be managed differ. A few others disagreed with the statement, primarily because it was so broad.

Relationship between People and Nature

All of the interviewees perceived a connection between people and nature. In general, they valued nature and believed that it should be protected against environmental damage.

Environmental Issues in Yellowstone National Park

Interviewees were evenly split between those who were aware of the debates concerning Yellowstone and those who were not. Those informed recalled a few specific controversies, including allowing snowmobiling and the reintroduction of wolves into the area.

Reactions to Stakeholders

Nearly all interviewees readily identified with proenvironmental opinions. Many, however, acknowledged that issues are complex and thought it was important to learn about other points of view. A few interviewees held strong opinions against stakeholders with a commercial interest in the park.

Presenting Controversial Issues in the DMNH

Most interviewees responded positively to the Museum's handling of Yellowstone controversies, noting it would be educational for the public. They stressed that a balanced presentation of the issues is key.

DMNH Approach

All of the interviewees praised the Museum's plans to use an interactive and interdisciplinary approach to the exhibition, as they thought it would work well for adults and children.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Yellowstone National Park inspired awe and appreciation by Cody-area residents and tourists. There was a sense, by both those who had visited the park and those who had not, that Yellowstone is a place of unparalleled natural beauty. Such positive feelings about Yellowstone created an immediate interest in the DMNH. Residents and tourists alike welcomed the development of a natural history museum that examines the Greater Yellowstone Area.

In terms of the Museum's content, residents had varying degrees of knowledge about the natural history of Yellowstone and tourists knew very little. The DMNH's goal to highlight noteworthy aspects of the park and provide visitors with tools for interpreting nature fits the needs of both audiences. Similarly, the Museum's plans to discuss the role people play in the Yellowstone ecosystem will create a dialogue between residents with different opinions as well as inform tourists, who are either unaware of the issues or their complexity.

Interpretation and Exhibitory

Because of differences in knowledge and opinions of residents and tourists, carefully planned exhibition interpretation is key. Findings from the focus groups and interviews show that the DMNH's approach to natural history presents a new way of thinking for most potential visitors, because it includes people in the storyline. For example, residents and tourists readily agreed with the description of Yellowstone as "a unique and highly diverse ecosystem." They also liked the idea of having art and culture included in the exhibition. Many, however, had difficulty with the idea that the ecosystem "represents different things to different people." Some residents were surprised that the Museum would address controversial issues in an exhibition. Others thought the Museum might be promoting a proconservation agenda at the expense of a local business perspective. Many tourists, on the other hand, assumed that a proconservation stance was the only possible opinion.

As both residents and tourists heard more about the different perspectives about the park, interesting conversations developed. In fact, some in each group acknowledged that fostering such a dialogue is exactly what the Museum should do. Overall, both groups thought the Museum has great educational potential if it gives a balanced presentation of the issues with multiple perspectives. Most residents were particularly excited to hear that a local perspective would be included and that the Museum has been talking with ranchers and other local business interests. A few, however, remained unconvinced that natural history museums should discuss current issues.

As residents and tourists talked about the Museum's message, the discussion turned to the media. Even though residents spend much of their leisure engaged in outdoor activities, the first focus group felt that it would be important for the Museum to create immersive environments that captured the feeling of being in Yellowstone. They suggested incorporating recreated scenes, sounds, smells—full sensory experiences that would give visitors a sense of scale and place. The second focus group also thought authenticity was important but was more interested in exhibits that would explain the flora, fauna, and geology of Yellowstone than in recreating the ecosystem within the Museum. Tourists, too, thought the Museum should provide information that would help them get more out of their visit to the park. Both residents and tourists suggested that

regardless of the kind of information presented, they prefer a variety of materials, including video, text, specimens, and especially hands-on exhibits. All of these comments support the existing plans for the DMNH.

In terms of ways to present different points of view, some residents and tourists thought video and audio would be more appropriate than text. They worried that visitors would not read text panels or that visitors would read only one opinion and assume that the Museum was espousing that point of view. They believed, moreover, that seeing the facial expressions and hearing the voices of passionate stakeholders would be very powerful. A few residents particularly enjoyed the format of the focus groups and suggested duplicating this in the Museum. They were excited to hear about the plans for the minitheater where such discussions could take place.

Recommendations:

- Since the main idea provides a new perspective for many visitors, it needs to be explicitly stated and explained at the beginning of the exhibition as well as restated and supported with specific examples throughout the exhibition.
- Visitors may not know how to respond to exhibits that present different opinions. To help them understand that the intention is for them to listen to the different points of view and then make up their own minds, consider posing a question like, “What do you think?”
- When different opinions are expressed about an issue, they need to be integrated into one complete experience. For example, if using text, the opinions should be placed on one text panel, in vertical columns, with each statement at the same height on the panel—not on different panels or layered horizontally. Then all the opinions are visually given equal weight. If using multimedia, consider using a prompt screen and/or audio on a continuous loop that asks a question and then includes excerpts from the different responses—then even if the visitor chooses not to listen to each opinion he or she will at least understand that there are contrasting views. Both of these strategies will prevent visitors from thinking that only one perspective is being presented.
- To prevent visitors from thinking that the opinions expressed in the exhibition are those of the Museum, use verbatim quotations and clearly state the authorship. For example, include a statement from ranchers about specific issues rather than a composite “rancher” opinion. Additionally, a photo of the speaker would add a human touch to the display.
- Selecting people to represent the different opinions should be carefully considered. Interviewing representatives of stakeholder organizations or asking such groups to suggest a spokesperson may be one way to ensure accuracy and create buy-in.
- Provide a range of opinions for each issue discussed. Because it will be impossible to include all possible opinions, explicitly acknowledge that fact in the interpretation and also invite visitor responses (see below).
- At exhibits that present particularly controversial issues, include a way for visitors to leave their opinions. Staff time for screening these comments will need to be considered when selecting either computer or hand-written responses; however, having hand-written responses

is much more personal. Furthermore, a low-tech option will be appealing to noncomputer savvy visitors.

- Creating “talk back boards” that post correspondence from opposing stakeholders about a specific exhibit can also be effective (e.g., the Field Museum’s human sacrifice diorama, the Science Museum of Minnesota’s mummy exhibit). Both give visitors the feeling that a dialogue is taking place, as the boards can be changed more readily than text panels.
- All opinions displayed in the Museum should be meticulously fact checked. Any changes that are needed to be made should be explained to the author, and the final copy should be agreed upon by the Museum and the author.
- While the different points of view should be presented in a variety of ways to ensure exposure to the maximum number of visitors, consider using video and audio as the primary mean for more controversial issues. Additionally, the minitheater can play a vital role as a forum in which opposing sides can come together for discussion.
- To help visitors understand which exhibits are opinions and which are strictly natural history, consider developing a standard look (e.g., color, graphics) for the issues exhibits.
- Conduct formative evaluation on all issues exhibits with residents and tourists.
- There is a large body of work about controversies in museums by museum professionals, historians, scientists, etc. Consider holding a colloquium on the issue to help the local community, donors, staff, and others understand the changing roles of museums.

Infrastructure

In addition to the interpretation and exhibits, the experience of visitors in the DMNH will also depend on the infrastructure of the BBHC. While residents were extremely positive about the BBHC and reported that “town and gown” sentiments are not prevalent in the surrounding community, they did have a few suggestions for the BBHC as a whole.

Residents praised the recent community outreach efforts of the BBHC, stating that they hoped these would continue in the future. Specifically, residents appreciated the free “Fourth Friday” programs during the winter. They also complimented the BBHC for being proactive by holding focus groups to examine residents’ opinions about the DMNH. Additionally, presentations given by Museum staff have created positive word-of-mouth advertising for the Museum. For example, one participant in the first focus group enthusiastically supported the development of the DMNH having attended a talk by Dr. Preston. This made others in the first focus group excited about the project and more responsive to the multiple-perspectives strategy than was the second group.

While hearing praise from residents is likely the strongest selling point for other residents, additional marketing should also be employed to address perceptions about the Museum. Some residents thought the size and density of the BBHC was somewhat overwhelming. They thought of visiting the BBHC only as a special event, as they felt obliged to spend a whole day viewing the different museums rather than visiting only portions of them. Specific marketing may be needed to introduce residents to other ways of visiting the Museum. Furthermore, a membership

campaign may be necessary, to encourage shorter, more frequent visits. While some residents spoke very favorably about the benefits of membership, including free admission, others were unaware of the benefits.

Changes to the layout and facilities will also be necessary to improve visitors' experiences and decrease the opinion that visiting the BBHC is a daunting task. Some residents, for example, complained that the BBHC requires a lot of standing and walking. Additionally, they noted that viewing cases full of artifacts can be overwhelming and that planning what to see and do is difficult because there is so much available. While these comments suggest that physical fatigue is a problem, poor orientation may be at the heart of the complaints. If visitors knew exactly what was in each museum and were given suggestions for planning a visit, they may not have to try to see and do everything at once. Furthermore, varying the experiences of visitors also decreases mental fatigue, something a few participants acknowledged as they praised the use of interpretation and interactive exhibits in the revamped Plains Indian Museum.

Recommendations:

- Continue to provide programming specifically for residents and to keep them informed with community presentations. Other studies RK&A has conducted have shown that positive word-of-mouth advertising is one of the most effective tools for increasing museum visitation.
- Consider developing a marketing strategy for residents. Emphasize that visiting a specific BBHC exhibition is a worthwhile way to spend an hour or two. A membership drive could also be combined with marketing efforts.
- Additional seating in the galleries and pliant flooring materials in the DMNH may address the physical exhaustion of visitors.
- Because the size of the BBHC is greatly increasing with the addition of another museum, an introduction and orientation exhibition for the entire institution should be added. This exhibition should help visitors understand the physical and conceptual layout of the complex. Brief descriptions of the collections and mention of important artifacts or experiences will help visitors plan their visits. A variety of media (text, images, computer kiosks) should be used in this area to make it appeal to all visitors. Text and images should be large scale, and multiple versions of the same computer kiosks should be included to prevent bottlenecks.
- Consider providing time estimates for visiting each museum. The National Park Services does this in its trail maps. Also, consider giving suggestions on how visitors should spend their time. For example, erect a sign that says, "If you only have one hour, please be sure to see X, Y, and Z."
- Consider creating a highlights tour—either a self-guided brochure, a docent led one, or an audio guide—that helps visitors become oriented to the buildings and the collections in a brief amount of time. In the future, additional tours could be developed (e.g., a "Women in the West" tour that highlights artifacts from each museum, or a tour designed specifically for families with young children).

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from a front-end evaluation of the Draper Museum of Natural History (DMNH) being developed by the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (BBHC) in Cody, Wyoming. For this study, Randi Korn & Associates (RK&A) conducted focus groups and interviews to help the exhibition development team better understand the target audiences—tourists and residents—and find common ground between the content, themes, and interpretive strategy of the DMNH and its potential visitors. The specific objectives of the study are to determine:

- Tourists and residents' expectations of and comfort level with natural history museums;
- Tourists and residents' preconceived notions about and comfort level with science;
- Tourists and residents' prior knowledge about the biology and geology of the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA);
- Tourists and residents' prior knowledge of conservation and land-use issues faced in the GYA;
- Tourists and residents' cognitive and affective connections to nature in general, and the GYA in particular;
- Tourists and residents' reactions to the “big idea”;
- Tourists and residents' reactions to proposed experiences (e.g., hands-on components, specimens, multimedia, etc.);
- Tourists and residents' reaction to the multiple perspectives about GYA issues featured in the DMNH;
- Residents' perceptions of and past barriers to visiting the BBHC;
- Residents' visitation patterns to the BBHC;
- Residents' current leisure-time activities;
- Residents' preferences for potential DMNH programs.

METHODOLOGY

Data were collected in March, April, and May 2001. Two instruments were used to achieve the objectives of the evaluation: focus groups and interviews.

Focus Groups

Focus groups are a qualitative research method in which a limited number of participants engage in roundtable discussions about topics presented by a facilitator. Because one of the target audiences of the DMNH are Cody-area residents, all of the focus group participants were selected from zip codes within an hour's drive of the BBHC. To ensure a random selection from the designated areas, RK&A contracted with Western Wats, a market research company specializing in the Wyoming, Idaho, and Utah markets, to professionally recruit participants following a screening protocol designed by RK&A (see Appendix A). The two focus groups took place in Cody at the Shoshone National Bank. A total of eighteen individuals participated in the two groups.

Each focus group met for ninety minutes. The conversations were shaped by the discussion guide and Johanna Jones was the facilitator (see Appendix B). Participants in all groups were encouraged to give frank responses. Conversations in all groups were tape recorded and video taped with participants' knowledge, and transcriptions were produced for analysis.

Interviews

Interviews are useful tools for understanding background knowledge and opinions of potential audiences. Open-ended interviews produce data rich in information because interviewees talk about their experiences from a personal perspective. In particular, interviews allow participants to respond in their own words and to explain why they think or feel a certain way.

The interviews gathered information from tourists, the DMNH's second target audience. To gauge the reaction of potential tourists, interviews were conducted with visitors at institutions that share similarities with either the BBHC or the DMNH: the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.; the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art in Indianapolis, Indiana; and the Monterey Bay Aquarium in Monterey, California.

At each institution, interviewees were intercepted following a continuous random sampling method. In accordance with this method, a trained interviewer was stationed in an area of moderate traffic flow. The first eligible visitor (English speaking, sixteen years of age or older) to pass was asked to participate in the study. When the interview was complete, the interviewer thanked the participant and waited for the next eligible visitor.

Interviewees were asked to several questions about the exhibition content and themes (see Appendix C). The interview guide was intentionally open-ended to allow interviewees the freedom to discuss what they felt was meaningful. All interviews were tape recorded with the knowledge of the participants and transcribed to facilitate analysis. A total of forty-five interviews were conducted (fifteen at each site).

DATA ANALYSIS AND METHOD OF REPORTING

The data are qualitative, meaning that results are descriptive, following from the conversational nature of the discussion groups and interviews. In analyzing this data, the evaluator studies the responses for meaningful patterns. As patterns and trends emerge, similar responses are grouped together. Verbatim quotations (edited for clarity) are provided in this report to illustrate the thoughts and ideas of participants as fully as possible. Within quotations, the interviewer's questions appear in parentheses and an asterisk (*) signifies the start of a different speaker's comments.

The findings are presented in two sections as follows:

- I. Focus Groups
- II. Interviews

I. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: FOCUS GROUPS WITH CODY-AREA RESIDENTS

Background Information

A total of eighteen individuals participated in the two groups. As Table I.I shows, both groups were nearly identical in demographic composition. In total, half of the participants were male and half were female. The majority were between forty and forty-nine years of age, with the median age being forty-seven years. More than half do not have children under eighteen years living at home. Nearly all were Caucasian, with the exception of two Native Americans.

Table I.1.
Focus Group Participants' Demographic Characteristics (n = 18)

Characteristics	Group 1 n	Group 2 n	Total n
Gender			
Male	5	4	9
Female	4	5	9
Age			
35 years or younger	0	2	2
36-45	4	2	6
46-55	3	3	6
56 years or older	2	2	4
Presence of children under 18 living at home			
No	5	6	11
Yes	4	3	7
Ethnicity			
Caucasian	8	8	16
Native American	1	1	2

Table I.2 presents the education levels and professions of focus group participants. More than half had a high school education or less. Most were retired or had professions not related to the DMNH content. Of the five individuals who had related professions, two were ranch managers, one was an oil and gas driller, and the final one was a land developer.

Table I.2.
Focus Group Participants' Education Level and Profession (*n* = 18)

Characteristics	Group 1 <i>n</i>	Group 2 <i>n</i>	Total <i>n</i>
Education			
High school or less	6	4	10
Associate degree	2	1	3
Bachelor's degree	1	1	2
Graduate degree	0	2	2
Profession			
Related to DMNH content	4	1	5
Unrelated to DMNH content	3	6	9
Retired	2	2	4

All of the focus group participants had visited the BBHC (see Table I.3). Six had not visited the BBHC in the past two years, and another six had visited one to two times. Five reported visiting five or more times.

Table I.3.
Focus Group Participants' Visitation to the Buffalo Bill Historical Center (*n* = 18)

Characteristics	Group 1 <i>n</i>	Group 2 <i>n</i>	Total <i>n</i>
Prior Visitation to BBHC			
Yes	9	9	18
No	0	0	0
Number of visits to BBHC in the past two years			
0	3	3	6
1-2	3	3	6
3-4	1	0	1
5 or more	2	3	5

Leisure Activities of Participants

Nearly all of the men and women in each group reported spending much of their leisure time doing outdoor activities (see the quotation below¹). In fact, during the course of the conversations, many participants expressed an interest in and enjoyment of nature. Some were in awe of Yellowstone's unique geological and biological features, such as Heart Mountain and thermophilic bacteria, and they stressed that these were important items to highlight in the Draper Museum. Others were fascinated to learn about such things from their fellow participants, demonstrating two things: a range of knowledge of the natural world and the educational potential of the DMNH for this audience.

I was born and raised here so it's pretty easy for me to say the same things [as everyone else] as far as hunting, camping, fishing. All those things I was raised doing and enjoy doing very much. I have three boys and so the outdoors is our main activity in leisure time and even vacations. Whatever we do is geared to outdoors and activity.

While museum visiting was not listed as a pastime, it became clear as participants talked about their experiences that several in each group had visited natural history museums while on vacation. They referenced the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, the Field Museum, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, and the American Museum of Natural History as points of comparison to the DNMN.

When participants were asked specifically about visiting the BBHC, all had been to the Museum at least once. About half had visited within a few years or even a few months, including some who reported being museum members and frequent visitors. The other half had not visited for at least seven years, including two who had not been for more than forty years. The most frequent reasons for visiting the BBHC were to attend specific programs, such as the free "Fourth Friday" evenings, or to take out-of-town guests to the Museum. A few also mentioned visiting to see specific artifacts.

Participants who had not recently visited did not have any particular reason for avoiding the BBHC. They spoke highly of the Center and suggested that they simply lacked enough free time to take advantage of it. There was general agreement within the first group, however, that the size of the BBHC is somewhat daunting. They felt its large size made it difficult to visit (see the quotation below). Such comments suggest that some residents may perceive visiting the BBHC only as a special event, as they feel obliged to spend a whole day viewing the different museums rather than visiting portions of them for shorter amounts of time. Specific marketing may be needed to introduce residents to alternative ways of visiting the BBHC.

I think you have to allow at least a day, to go through that [the BBHC], because there's so much to see. That's usually a problem—to have that much time to spare.

¹ Throughout the report, quotations exceeding twenty words are presented as indented text. Within the quotations, the facilitator's remarks appear in parentheses and an asterisk (*) signifies the start of a different speaker's comments.

Opinions about the BBHC

Overall, participants had positive feelings about the BBHC, expressing pride that such a world-class museum was in their town. Many praised the collection—both the quality and variety of artifacts. Several also mentioned the quality of the gift shop. Two excerpts are presented below to exemplify the conversations.

It [the BBHC] really has something for all types of tastes whether it's guns, art, or local history. *I thought it was actually remarkable for a town this size to have a museum of that caliber. Granted it's not Denver's Museum of Natural History, or Chicago's, but it actually does have a lot of other different things and, like you said, it's got something for just about everybody.

When you think of a community this size and a facility of that nature, it's a blessing to have such a thing like that. It's world class. You can see art in there that you cannot see anywhere else. That's why we're members. It's just an incredible resource, incredible. . . . I don't how much of a draw it [is] to Cody, but I know that there [are] plenty of folks that come from Montana down to visit. And then a lot of people, I think, are surprised as they come through Cody. . . . It's a great resource and it does so much for the community too, above and beyond just being a museum. And it's a great place to take your kids and learn about other things and the gift shop is a great gift shop. At Christmas, they make really great presents at really good prices, too. *Done that many times, yeah. *It's kind of surprising.

Although both groups made positive remarks about the BBHC, the first group noted improvements that should be made. One major issue was museum fatigue: visiting the BBHC requires a lot of standing and walking, viewing cases full of artifacts can be overwhelming, and planning what to see and do is difficult because there is so much available (see the quotation below). Participants made some practical suggestions for decreasing the physical strain on visitors—including additional seating in the galleries, using pliant flooring materials instead of cement or tile in the new building—as well as impractical ones—adding moving walkways in the galleries, making motorized vehicles (e.g., scooters or golf carts) available for visitors.

The only down [side] is the amount of time it takes you to go through there. You can get awful tuckered out. How do [you] respond to people with bad knees. [They're] aching after a few hours, [and] my legs are hurting, too. It's a big building to go through. There's a lot to see, and there's a lot to study. It's very interesting. It's well worth it, but it just takes a lot, a long time. It's something you just don't go through, and wham-bam you're out again.

While these comments suggest that physical exhaustion is a problem, poor orientation may be at the heart of the complaints. If visitors knew exactly what was in each museum and were given suggestions for planning a visit, they may not have to strain themselves trying to see and do everything at once. Furthermore, varying visitors' experiences also decreases fatigue, something a few participants themselves acknowledged as they praised the use of interpretation and interactive exhibits in the revamped Plains Indian Museum (see the quotation below).

I think the update they did on the [Plains] Indian Museum was pretty needed. I think what these guys are saying is that it's too much just walking and looking. I'm the kind of person [who] likes hands-on stuff [and] to be able to read stuff. I like history. And when you go through Buffalo Bill, there's variety. It's not just guns, guns, guns. Now I like guns. But I don't like guns, guns, guns. You know what I mean? The way [the Museum] break it up helps somewhat. Putting things in different rooms and things with a different background. [Like] in the Plains Indian Museum—they [have] done some more interactive stuff, which I think is probably where they need to [go with] the new museum, especially [for] bringing kids or [increasing] people's attention span. . . . You know people want to see history. You can see a gun, but where's the history? You can see how it was built, how it was made. But when you have fifty on a wall, unless you're just a fanatic about understanding guns, that's almost too much.

To address the “town and gown” issue, participants were asked specifically about whether people in the Cody area had any negative perceptions about the BBHC. Nearly all felt that the Museum was for townspeople, with many complimenting the BBHC's recent efforts to attract other residents with its free winter programs (see the first two excerpts below). Some others expressed the value of membership (see the third excerpt). As shown in the fourth excerpt, a few acknowledged that the patron's ball and some of the other of the Museum's special events were exclusive but, for the most part, understood that these were fundraising functions essential to the operations of the institution. In contrast with the majority of focus group participants, there were a few who thought the BBHC was geared more towards tourists than residents. They had not visited in many years and were not aware of the Museums' programming opportunities.

I think the fourth Friday [program] has really taken the ‘us and them’ stigma away. Opening it up more for the community has made me more willing to [go]. Instead of, ‘It's for the tourists, it's for the tourists.’ No, it's for us, too.

I guess I've felt [that] they've tried to get more local involvement in the last few years with open houses, or if they have a specific show coming in, you can go to those. . . . *I think off-season, once a month [the BBHC] opens the doors. That's basically [for] local people. There're not too many people coming from out-of-state to those events. I've been to two or three of them. They've been pretty well attended. And I've seen a pretty good mix of people. I think that's given them much better exposure—a realization that it is a community-type of museum. All their fund raising is for patrons and that's [for] very high-end people [who] can donate large chunks of money to [the Museum]. But I think what they've done over the winter months has been a very positive influence as far as I'm concerned. Proactive, rather than waiting for them to say something—they're opening their doors to people.

It's forty dollars for a family membership for the year. I don't think that's unreasonable for all there is to take advantage of, especially if you have kids like I do. You get them involved in the programs they offer in the summer for the kids, and I think forty dollars is very reasonable myself. *Yeah, I agree and that's why my wife and I have an annual membership. And when I go there, [and] I don't go there often enough, but I like to go in

the winter when it's not crowded. I don't even look at it like I'm going to take a whole day. I just [go for] an hour or two, and I might just want to go look at art for awhile or maybe go look up specific guns or something like that. I go do that and then I leave. And it is overwhelming trying to make the whole circle in [its] entirety. But I think it's easy to drive by it and not stop, but if you've got an hour or two, to me it's worth it to stop in and look at something for a little while.

(Have you ever heard anyone express that the Museum is for wealthy out-of-towners and not locals?) I think for most people what they're referring to is probably the patron's ball. *There you go. *More than anything else, that shouldn't take anything away from what the Museum is doing. I mean [the patron's ball is] a money-raising function. If they get the wealthy people in there, go for it. *Go for it. *But, I think it's kind of negative. I've never been to it, but it goes on all night or something and it's just kind of--*Well I've been there, it's great. *Is it? *It's an absolutely amazing event, but you should go with a group of people, so you have somebody that you can talk to, because they're people there from Europe and all over back East, I mean there are wealthy people from everywhere. *It's Cody's prom for the adults. . . . *But they have to do that, you know, to raise money.

Overall Response to the Planned DMNH

Participants were shown a short promotional video about the DMNH and were then asked their reaction to the proposed museum. At the beginning of the conversation, both groups gave somewhat cautious responses. Some participants in the first group wondered how the museum would accomplish everything described in the video, and then one participant relayed some additional details about the planned exhibition that she had heard in a presentation by Dr. Charles Preston (see the first quotation below). Her comments allayed some people's concerns and her enthusiasm for the new Museum increased others' excitement about it. A few participants in the second group had a more negative response, questioning the role of the donor (Nancy Draper), expressing concern that the new museum would simply be a copy of others, and rejecting the "slickness" of the video presentation (see the second excerpt).

I went to a talk at the Museum on this. It's going to go in a spiral so that you're actually starting out like in Cody, which sits in the lowlands and you're going to gradually climb and as you climb the landscape changes until you get up to the alpine. It sounds like it's just going to be the neatest thing to me. I think if it comes together like I'm understanding it, it's going to be really something. I'm really excited about this. [*Group 1*]

My reaction—I've never seen that before, but I'll just go negative. It was kind of slick. It did a lot of talking and then I started thinking, 'What is this going to look like?' I wasn't really sure what to expect. . . . *This sounds like Denver's Museum of Natural History. It's the same thing. They're not recreating the wheel. They've done some marketing research that shows what people like, right? And is that what we're going to be in store for—the same kind of thing? (That's a very good question. . . . They're hoping to be very different from other natural history museums across the county by introducing people—by talking about the interaction of people and nature.) *Are the 'people' only Nancy [Draper]? [*Group 2*]

As the conversations developed, however, both groups expressed approval for the interactive nature of the planned exhibits and their focus on the Yellowstone Area. Two excerpts are presented below to exemplify these responses.

I think the interactive part will really be a draw for the Museum. The rest of it you just walk, look, and read. And I've been to some other museums like in Chicago where you walk through a submarine—a U boat—and you can't really visualize it until you're walking [through it] and think, 'How could these guys live in this?' I guess that's what I like about this [new museum]. That you're actually living part of it. You're not just saying this was done in 1804, and this is how it was done. It sounds like to me that you're going to be kind of exploring. And I think the interaction appeals to me. It will be a different variety from what you're already doing in the Museum, which is watching and looking. It sounds like there's going to be some participation with some museum artifacts and stuff like that. [*Group 1*]

I think it's going to be a wonderful addition, because I think it's something that the Museum has been lacking. Information specific—especially from a geological perspective—to this particular area, because I think there's a lot of geology that's very fascinating about Wyoming and Yellowstone. And a lot of people are interested in those kinds of things. *I think all the hands-on activities will be real good for getting the locals in—a lot of school activities—a lot of kids in. [*Group 2*]

The first group was particularly intrigued by Museum's desire to discuss the role people play in the Yellowstone ecosystem and the current issues affecting the area (see the first excerpt below). They were also excited about the potential immersive quality of the exhibitry, remarking that the environment should be as realistic as possible and use all the senses (see the second excerpt). When the facilitator queried the group about a desire for authenticity, participants stressed the importance of making the exhibition feel like the real ecosystems—even for people who live in the area and who visit nature often (see the third excerpt below).

One of the things I really like is the way that they're going to approach—you know a lot of times with the natural history it's to do with just dinosaurs or whatever, but they're going to bring in the oil industry, how it plays a part, the rancher, how he plays a part. It's not just—*Rocks and trees and minerals. *Yeah and back three thousand years ago. They [are going to] bring into [this Museum] what my grandpa [did] as a rancher here, and how those things played an important role in what we are today. And I like that. *I do think the human interaction with nature is something that needs to be focused on. I guess I see humans as a part of nature a little more, so I guess that's a good thing to have.

It'll be great if they use like envirosystems [*sic*]*—something [that] makes you feel like you're in it, whether it's sound or temperature. You just feel like you're there. You can hear the Old Faithful go off, you feel steam coming on you face. . . . *You can smell the sulfur and—*But something that's interactive with your senses, to me, would bring people in. I like to go to stuff you just walk in the door, you smell fresh bread or something. You know, that just brings out senses. And if they're going do stuff that's different and not just*

stuff behind the glass—*Or maybe that room with that little video screen [issues theater]. If they show river rafting or anything like that—a mist of cool air or something. Smell the pines and the sunshine. *A real life adventure. Real life adventure museum [that] feels like you're right there in the forest. That would be great.

Make it [the exhibition] as realistic as possible. . . . (Even for people like you guys who are fortunate enough to live in an area with nature?) Oh, yeah. I'd spend a lot more time there if they had something like that. *Because not everyone has seen a wolf. Not everyone has seen a grizzly or a moose face-to-face. I mean you can say a moose is seven-feet tall. O.K., but as opposed to what? When you walk around the corner of a building and there he is, you know what seven-feet tall is.

The second group was also interested in being provided tools to help them interpret the nature around them and in having important features of the Yellowstone ecosystem showcased. In contrast with the first group, however, many participants in the second group had concerns about a natural history museum dealing with current topics and including different points of view. An excerpt is provided below demonstrates this.

Why would anybody want to go and look at somebody else's opinion on that? (To either support or—) How many times would you go up there to do it? How many people from New York would want to go look at my opinion on a wolf or a grizzly bear? I don't think anybody would. Why do they call it history, if they're going to do issues? *Yeah, I mean, if it's going [to] be history, history means in the past, why don't they stick with that. That's a drawing factor for what the Museum is about. When you start talking issues in this area, boy I'll tell you, you're opening up a real fire. *And it's never going [to] change. *Yeah, but . . . it's a combination of people and natural history and their interaction with each other. And people have opinions. *And the natural history keeps going, it's not something that stops. *And just like it keeps going, people's attitudes will change with time, just like at the turn of the century it was 'Get rid of all the wolves,' and now it's, 'Bring them back.' *Well, I'm not sure that you're quite right. If you went through the town of Cody, I'm not sure you'd find too many people support your opinion on that thing. . . . *Just people in Washington and New York and California. *That's probably why they're having you do this is. Because they realize that there [are] different opinions across the nation that are very different. *Well it's very political. . . . *I'm just absolutely floored that [this is] even being thought about for a natural history museum. It just sounds like a place for a political think tank. . . . *I know nothing about the major donor, [but] perhaps she wants to perpetuate her political opinion. Maybe she's using her wealth to make a statement. *But there's no way to do it without bringing personal opinion and politics here. *When you first started talking about setting us up with a spiral and looking through the different types of ecosystems, and the different elevations and all the stuff that is in the Alpine zone, that was a good idea. . . . But most of us here can go out and see that in real life. We don't have to go to a museum to see that. Somebody from New York might have to go to a museum to see it. There [are] so many other things that are in this area that are of interest to people. . . . We have some people who are just fantastic that know the whole history of the flora patterns in Yellowstone National Park. Why don't [the developers of the DMNH] include something like that? So when you actually go out and see this little yellow flower,

you'll be able to come back and identify the darn thing [Agreement by many others.]
*Yeah, that's cool. *And the history of the people who made those discoveries. That's fascinating—what they went through and how they explored. That's really interesting stuff. *But part of that history is how ranchers came in and decimated the wolf population. . . . That's part of the history of this particular area. If they say that wolves were destroyed because they were against the cows . . . 150 years ago, that's part of the history, and then the next questions is, well, where are [the wolves] now?

Reaction to the Main Idea

Participants were asked to respond to the main idea statement, “The Yellowstone Area is a unique, highly diverse ecosystem and it represents different things to different people.” Overall, participants agreed with the statement, but thought it was somewhat broad. In particular, they thought that residents and tourists would have very different perspectives on Yellowstone. They also emphasized the importance of using a broad definition of “Yellowstone” and not concentrating solely on the park. A few participants expressed concern with “ecosystem,” explaining that it “has a negative connotation to some people in this area.”

Both groups expressed some apprehension about the phrase “different things to different people.” Many wanted to know exactly whose opinions would be included in the Museum. Others were concerned that the Museum might water-down the opinions so as to not offend anyone. Three excerpts are provided below that exemplify these attitudes.

There [are] a lot of people who come here and see it differently than other people. If they're from back East, 'Oh, wow.' And people who live here already know about it. . . .
*I lived in Yellowstone Park for three summers when I was young and so that area means something totally different [to me] than [for] somebody who's just out for a weekend or a tourist who comes through. I saw what really happens with the ecosystem. . . . * It's a highly diverse ecosystem—not just Yellowstone National Park but the whole area. A lot of people think that when they come out here they should be able to see all the wildlife, [that] they shouldn't see the ranchers' cows grazing in the timber. They have their ideas about what Yellowstone's supposed to be like.

I think you hit the nail on the head before when you said, you've got the locals here who [are] the preponderance of people, [who] don't want wolves, don't want grizzly bears. And then the foreigners who come here, [and] that's exactly what they [do] want. And how do they keep the locals coming to the Museum and happy and yet still keep the tourists coming and happy? Well, you can't do it. *Unless you do the opinion thing. *And the issues are complex and they don't want to simplify them, so that's the whole problem.

You're going to dilute [the issues] so far that's it's not going to mean anything if you're not real careful—unless you're going to rotate through a whole bunch of different exhibits at one time. Because if it's different things to different people, [then] one thing that some people are really fascinated with is going to be very objectionable to their neighbor. And so if you make it so that most people are happy, it's not really going to satisfy anybody. *I don't think it should be a matter of objectionable or not objectionable. If that's the theme,

then it needs to touch on everything. Someone who doesn't like oil and gas exploration, that's beside the point. That's part of Yellowstone. Somebody [who] doesn't [like] grazing on public lands, that's beside the point. That's part of the—*That's part of the history. *As well as the hunting, fishing, the wildlife—everything. *You need to put a true picture out there. If somebody doesn't like sections of it, maybe they'll be a little disappointed here—then they'll go over there and be really thrilled. So you cannot make something that will make everybody happy all the time.

Essential Opinions

As participants responded to the idea of having different opinions expressed in the DMNH, the facilitator asked them to name some of the views that should be included in the exhibition. Participants in both groups were concerned about whose opinions would be featured. The first group wanted to make sure that a local perspective, in particular local industries, would be represented (see the two excerpts below).

I think besides [having] an advisory group for each [of] the topics they're going to cover, the [advisors] should also have a hand in the display—what is displayed, how it's displayed—because [the rancher] that's their expertise. The curator in the Museum or anybody else who doesn't associate with [that perspective] is not going to portray it the right way. . . . *And issues of snow mobiling—I'm not a snow mobiler but that is something local people have enjoyed doing for years and years—not Easterners. *No, right. That's the Forest Service, a lot of it. (. . . So if the Museum wants to tackle some of these controversial issues, how do you think it should do that?) Just make sure you have the facts straight to start with and then go from there. Because you've got to have your basic facts. *And I think like he said, get the different groups that are the actual ranchers, [and] somebody who represents the oil industry. *[Go to] the production companies and drilling companies and get their input.

I think that people need to know that there's a two-way street on using [Yellowstone]. What our livelihood depends on is a balanced use of it. Don't let the Forest Service say that everything is A-O.K. the way they want to do it. I think we have to be able to say, farmers, or ranchers, or oil people have a right if they can preserve the natural system of the land. *They can use it without ruining it. *Right, and how long have they ranched and farmed the Yellowstone and still get area for wildlife?

The second group had a stronger reaction, assuming that the DMNH might have an agenda that would determine what stories were told. They expressed a range of opinions about Yellowstone issues, demonstrating that there is not one “local perspective.” An excerpt is provided below.

Who's agenda are you going to promote? *Yeah. *It's like going to the Denver Museum of Natural History and my reaction was kind of negative. If you were one who didn't believe in the creation theory or whatever—you've got those two groups—you could be very offended by some of this stuff. . . . What you just said sounds like they're going to be promoting their agenda. They're going to be promoting some agenda. I'm not sure which—we want wolves, we don't want wolves, we don't want guns, we want guns—but it

that what it's intended to do? (They hope to have no agenda and to have—) That's impossible. (Have a range of opinions, maybe six or so, ranging from very conservative to very liberal and the whole spectrum. . . . That's what they're aiming for, so that's why we're talking to people to know what opinions need to be included for you to feel like this is a balanced presentation.) How can Nancy donate her money with her attitude? (I don't know Nancy Draper.) I do, unfortunately. I also live up in South Fork, not as far up as she does, but we have sheep. She likes them little wolves and they come down within two miles of my farm, and I do a lot crying when one of my animals dies. And she thinks they ought to be here and I'm going, 'Wait a minute.' *They weren't ever gone. *I know that but they weren't ever this close. They were always up there, but they were way up there. They weren't that close. And when the grizzly came down in the basin, that was really close to my place, and I'm offended by that. And I've got hoot owls up there. They keep getting my chickens, and I call Fish and Game and they say, 'Well, you could build a fence around them.' Excuse me, it's my farm. Take the hoot owls and just move them. I don't care what you do with them. Take them off my land. *But then you've got to figure that you're in the hoot owls' home. *No, I'm not in the hoot owls' home. I was there first. *We ought to get rid of every dang predator there is [laughs]. *No, I was there first [laughter]. *No, you weren't [laughter].

Participants were also specifically asked how they would feel if opinions with which they strongly disagreed were included in the Museum. The first group was more optimistic than the second that presenting different points of view would work within a museum setting, as long as the presentation was evenhanded. Some participants in the second group did not think people with radically different opinions would be able to come together for a dialogue; others thought it was not only possible but also an important role for the DMNH to undertake. A few questioned why visitors would want to see other people's opinions at all. Excerpts from each group are provided on the following pages.²

² Because of the length of the excerpts, they have been double spaced to make them easier to read.

I would want a comment card [that] I could scribble on and then drop it in a box and someone would read it. *Not just dump in the garbage at night, but actually read it. (What if they posted it?) That would be great. * To me it's like going into an art museum and seeing a picture—an abstract. I can't stand that stuff. I want something where you can see the face and whatever. You just walk to the next one. You say, 'Well that's good, and the guy must enjoy doing that, but I want to go look the art I like.' *You're going to have some real negative comments and some real good ones. *You're going to have some people say, 'That's great,' just like [when] we talked about people coming from the East and West coasts. They don't realize our livelihood in this community thrives off Yellowstone. Whether it's tourism or exploration or ranching. And they think the park is just an enclosed ecosystem. It's not. You're going to have ranchers going in. You're going to have people going in cutting timber—that helps the fire situation. There [are] a lot of things that people don't understand. There [are] things that I still don't understand. Why do you have to manage the park like this, or why can't you have snow mobiles? I mean there just seems to be things that nobody really has an answer to, and I think you will come up with people that'll not agree with the certain subjects that you bring up. That's just life. . . . *Like you said, this is different to different people. *It would stimulate talk, stimulate different points of view. People who haven't really thought about it, would maybe start thinking about it in a positive or negative way. *I think it all depends on how it is presented. The different views—from the rancher—they just have to be presented very delicately. *I think if you're presenting both sides, there's less room for argument, though, as long as both sides are being presented. *Or three or four sides, you know. *I think that's the way to do it. Then I can see their perspective. I think we've fought [about] that

many times. Wolves, to me, died out in the park. . . . *Except the wolves didn't die out. You may not have seen them, but they were here. *But that's been an issue for farmers, for people in the communities. There're always going to be issues. Should they have them, should they not? Why did they reintroduce them [if] they were here? . . . So if that's fact, then someone's lying. When you talk about ecosystems—should you preserve it only for that which exists there or should people enjoy it? I always think that parks are for people to enjoy, as long as they can show some responsibility in using those facilities. *That's why I think it's extremely important that somebody represent the different areas that are going to be there. That they give an honest assessment of what's going on, past, present, and where it's headed as they see it. And just tell it from their side, without the extremism creeping into it. You can't argue with facts, in a way. *A lot of times it's the interpretation of the facts. The way they are presented. . . . Depends on your bias. . . . *Right. *It needs to be a middle-of-the-road, balanced approach. [*Group 1*]

See these are the issues that are going to get really hot. *And they will be hot. *They can be explosive depending on how you present them. *I would suggest you look at a neutral presentation on some of this stuff. *Real neutral. [General agreement from the group.]

*And let people form their own opinions about if they want to buy into that or not.

*Because there's not just two sides to the wolf situation. *Right. (What if they show eight sides?) Then you're going to need eight buildings because you're going to have bloodshed. (Let's say there was one opinion that you really, really, disagreed with. Would you think, 'I don't want to go back to the Draper, that's not a place for me?') It could. *When we

first moved out here, we lived next to a rancher who is third generation. He drove his cattle right by my house—‘by God my grandfather and my great-grandfather got rid of all these wolves and bears’ and you just agreed. And you didn’t argue with him, [because] he grew up in a totally different culture. . . . You can’t disrespect that. . . . And those are the people who settled this area—homesteaded a whole mountaintop that I’m now living on in a brand new house. We got along fine, and I consider them very good friends. But it was a whole new experience for us to listen to somebody who actually lived it. Other than somebody who was squawking on the TV about [it] from his office in New York City. *I think that part’s key. Whether you have two opinions or two thousand opinions, in order for individuals to grow intellectually we have to hear the other sides. As an animal rights person, I can empathize when somebody loses his cattle—those kinds of things. But I still feel that we need to have certain animals available to us, because they need to be here for a number of reasons. But unless I listen to somebody else who says they cry when they lose their cattle or sheep, or it costs them five thousand dollars when a number of animals are destroyed by a predator, I’m not going to understand that. I’m not going to, at least, be able to empathize, and I’m not going to, at least, attempt to go to the middle ground so that both of us can come away with something. I can come away with my animals, and she can come away with her animals, or some sort of financial reimbursement, or whatever the case may be. If you want to use the Museum as a scenario for the development of that kind of a perspective, that would be really good. How to do that would be the difficult problem. (What if you could put your point of view up in the Museum? Would that make any difference about dealing with these issues?) It wouldn’t mine. I’m losing chickens. . . . The point is I cry and I die every time I lose one of them. Nobody understands that. It’s

not a financial thing. Chickens are not worth a lot, but it kills me. . . . *Could you understand that it would make me cry to see a hoot owl die? And it's that kind of understanding—*Yeah, I do. *You wouldn't get that unless you have a lot of different people expressing their opinions. *It might help some people blow off some steam. *Yes, and it would help me. [Group 2]

Preferred Media for Presenting Different Points of View

As participants talked about the different points of view that should be included in the DMNH, they began discussing the types of exhibitry that might be best suited to presenting different opinions. Both groups thought video or interactive media would be more appropriate for presenting such issues than would text panels (see the three excerpts below). A few participants also suggested providing hand-outs—something that visitors could take home with them—explaining specific topics (e.g., oil drilling, snow-mobiling regulations).

How many people really read something? They're just walking by, and they'll get an impression or perception. They may come away with something totally wrong.

They do a lot of studies on how people absorb information and what is the best way. I personally can't imagine somebody walking along, reading all this stuff about opinions. Now I can see [them] horded into a theater and putting it on a screen. . . . *Would it be a perception thing—if it is written smack on the wall, that [it] is fact or perceived as fact by some people? Where [if] it's audio and it's moving away, you only absorb so much of that. . . . *That's a thought. But think back on the times in your life in which opinions you may have held deeply, how were they changed? Were they changed by listening to an audio or reading something? No, they were changed by the person sitting across from you expressing his opinion. So if it's something that [the Museum] wanted to do . . . it would be in a dialogue similar to this. And the only way to replicate something like that would be [to] videotape a rancher whose stock has been slaughtered by wolves and demonstrate what kind of a financial and/or emotional repercussion this has had and then videotape an animal proponent, then see what that particular individual has to say. Because it's the expressions on the faces—it's the emotions [that] visually we pick up . . . that can help you listen and maybe change your opinions or modify your opinion.

Maybe [the Museum] should use videos, somebody talking. I don't like to read stuff. I'd like [to hear] a rancher saying, 'I've ranched in Yellowstone for fifty years. Here's how we ranch but yet preserved the wildlife.' And maybe some interactive stuff. . . . So the people can interact with the questions, rather than just sit[ting] down and read[ing] them. Sometimes when you can ask questions and people think and they say, 'Gosh, I never thought of it that way.' I think maybe you can ask questions and let people interact with

the questions. They'll remember it longer. *Or maybe those interactive things, choose A B, or C. *Right. *What I was going to suggest is a video [with] maybe of a series of buttons and a small screen [for] each—ranching or whatever. And have some interviews with ranchers and so that they can, in their own words, express their side of it.

Advice to DMNH Development Team

At the end of each focus group, participants were asked to give one piece of advice to the team developing the new museum. Both groups reiterated the importance of including the opinions of residents, but warned that the Museum not “kowtow to any special interest groups.” Additionally, some in the first group stressed that the DMNH should be a place for people of all ages. As one participant said, “Keep things simple and not too complicated so that people can understand what they're looking at.” Others remarked that the Museum should be easy to navigate and to provide visitor amenities (e.g., places to rest). Regardless of whether participants liked the idea of discussing current issues, many were concerned about potential controversy. Some thought that the Museum should “stick to the facts” and “keep our personal opinions out of it.” Others had less defined opinions but suggested a more neutral interpretation (see the two excerpts below).

Basically take everything out there and bring [it] into the museum. . . . Just keep it real.
[Take] what we have and make it a grand adventure for anybody who goes in there.
*That's a good one—grand adventure. *Consider [changing] the thing [main idea] from ‘it represents different things to different people’ [to] ‘it is an adventure of discovery.’

I would maybe suggest they consider a goal or some kind of mission that would focus on an experience that unites people, not divides them, while at the same time explaining the facts of the case.

II. PRINCIPAL FINDINGS: INTERVIEWS WITH TOURISTS

Background Information

Drop-in museum visitors were intercepted at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), the Eiteljorg Museum, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. A total of forty-five visitor groups were interviewed (fifteen at each site). The refusal rate varied for each site—the fewest refusals taking place at the Eiteljorg Museum (4 percent) and the most at the Monterey Bay Aquarium (46 percent).

The forty-five visitor groups comprised fifty-five individuals. As Table II.1 shows, about half of the interviewees were female and half were male. Interviewees ranged from seventeen to seventy years of age, with their median age being forty-eight.

Table II.1.
Interviewees’ Demographic Characteristics (n = 45)

Characteristics	NMNH <i>n</i>	Eiteljorg <i>n</i>	Monterey <i>n</i>	Total (<i>n</i> = 55) %
Gender				
Female	11	9	9	51.8
Male	10	8	9	48.2
Age				
25 years or younger	4	0	2	10.7
26-35	2	3	6	19.6
36-45	2	2	1	8.9
46-55	10	8	3	37.5
56 years or older	3	4	6	23.2
	NMNH	Eiteljorg	Monterey	Total
Median age (in years)	46	50	43	48

Associations with and Feelings about Natural History Museums

Overall, interviewees visit natural history museums and have positive feelings about them. Natural history museums were most frequently associated with ancient life, especially dinosaurs, as well as various aspects of geology and anthropology.

Visitors at the Eiteljorg and Monterey were asked whether they go to natural history museums. Most interviewees at the Eiteljorg and nearly all at Monterey reported visiting such museums. Often their visits took place during vacations, with the American Museum of Natural History,

Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, and the Field Museum frequently being referenced. For those interviewees who do not visit natural history museums, the most frequent reason was that they do not live near any.

Regardless of whether they visit natural history museums, interviewees made positive remarks about them. They enjoy the variety of topics that natural history museums cover and find specimens particularly interesting, noting that natural history museums display “things you can't see anywhere else.” Overall, interviewees view such institutions as “educational” for adults and children. When visitors at each site were asked to name specific topics that they associate with natural history museums, they had remarkably similar answers. “Prehistoric life,” including “dinosaurs” was the topic most frequently linked with natural history museums. Additionally, animals, especially taxidermied specimens, geology (e.g., “gems,” “minerals”), and anthropology (e.g., “archaeology,” “human cultures,” “Egyptian mummies,” “Native American artifacts”) were often mentioned. A few interviewees at each site said natural history museums discuss “evolution” of humans and animals. A few at the NMNH and Monterey also said they explain “animals and things that are alive today” and how people should “preserve nature.”

Feelings about Science Exhibits

In general, interviewees at the NMNH and Monterey were positive about science exhibits; whereas, those at the Eiteljorg had mixed feelings. Those who enjoyed science exhibits praised them for being interactive and educational for both adults and children. The interviewees who responded negatively were interested in natural history and anthropology but did not equate these topics with science.

Because the DMNH intends on presenting science-rich natural history exhibits, visitors were asked how they felt about science exhibits. Nearly of the interviewees at the NMNH and Monterey, and some at the Eiteljorg enjoy science exhibits. Some expressed a general interest in science while others, mostly scientists, were passionate about the subject (see the first two quotations below³). Several interviewees said they enjoy some science exhibits—those that provide understandable explanations (see the third quotation) and “hands-on” experiences. Interviewees who are parents thought their children would benefit from science exhibits, as they equated science with education.

I like science exhibits as an adult. That's why I go to museums. . . . I like to learn more, engage more. I like it when they have stuff that's on the level for children to understand . . . and you [as an adult] can also get a deeper understanding [of] it.

I love science exhibits. I've always loved science museums, in general. I think they're very good for . . . teaching people. For instance at the Air and Space Museum there's an exhibit on how airplanes fly. . . . I think those are great. As a scientist, I'm always interested in getting people excited about science. I think science museums are a good way to get kids interested in science.

³ Throughout the report, quotations exceeding twenty words are presented as indented text. Within the quotations, the interviewer's remarks appear in parentheses and an asterisk (*) signifies the start of a different speaker's comments.

My first goal is to come here [the NMNH] and learn. . . . Sometimes science is very complicated. The easier it is for me, the more I appreciate it. There are some exhibits that are very scientific and they take hours to understand, and even then you cannot understand them. So I like [it] when it's presented quite simply.

More than half of the interviewees at the Eiteljorg and a few at both the NMNH and Monterey had negative feelings about science. As the first quotation below demonstrates, several visitors at the Eiteljorg indicated that they were not interested in science but rather in human history and the cultures of different groups. Similarly, a few interviewees at each site did not think that natural history is science (see the second quotation).

I'm not that interested in that [science] myself. (Can you tell me a little more about why that is?) I'm more interested in the people who used to live here, cultures, and that kind of thing. That area happens to interest me more than the sciences.

I don't consider it [natural history] science. . . . I'd be more likely to go to a natural history museum than I would a science museum. . . . I would be less likely to go to a museum that would have exhibits that were technical or scientific.

Knowledge of Yellowstone National Park

While interviewees were positive about Yellowstone National Park, they knew little about it. Even the few who had visited remembered scant details about the park. The most frequently recalled feature of Yellowstone was its geysers, including Old Faithful.

Visitors were told that the DMNH would be located in Cody, Wyoming, and would concentrate on the plants, animals, and terrain of the Greater Yellowstone Area. They were then asked whether they knew anything about the park. A few interviewees at each site had visited Yellowstone. However, they did not recall much from their visit, and their responses were similar to those of interviewees who had not visited.

Many interviewees at the NMNH and a few at the other two sites talked about geothermal activity in the park, naming, for example, "hot springs," "geysers," and "Old Faithful." Several at each site described Yellowstone as a place with "natural wonders" and "great natural areas and wildlife." Some at the NMNH and Monterey remarked that the park's terrain includes "unique rock formations" and "beautiful mountains." A few mentioned animals, including bears, buffalo, and wolves, including one person who expressed concern for how snowmobiling in the park is effecting wildlife.

Reaction to the Main Idea

While interviewees agree that the Yellowstone Area is a unique, highly diverse ecosystem, they had mixed responses to the idea that it represents different things to different people. Some did not fully understand the reference to people, thinking it meant that visitors to Yellowstone would have different interests or that people should preserve nature. A few perceived part of the intended message—that people's opinions differ about how Yellowstone

should be managed. A few others disagreed with the statement, primarily because it was so broad.

Visitors were asked to respond to the exhibition's proposed main idea: "The Yellowstone Area is a unique, highly diverse ecosystem and represents different things to different people." Most of the interviewees at each site said they agreed with the statement and in particular the description of Yellowstone as "a unique, highly diverse ecosystem" (see the quotation below).

That says it all—a highly diverse ecosystem indicates all types of life: woodlands, plants, animals. You name it, it's there. It's just amazing.

Many, however, misinterpreted the second half of the statement. Some thought it meant that people have diverse interests and would be attracted to different aspects of Yellowstone (see the first quotation). Others assumed that it was a conservation message, likely because that is what they wanted to hear (see the second quotation).

Different people are going [to have] different interests. . . . The five members of our family will probably [each] find something different that [he or she] enjoys most.

(What does this statement mean to you?) That we want to preserve it for the enjoyment of everybody.

In contrast, a few interviewees who agree with the statement understood at least part of the "different things to different people" message. They discussed how various groups (e.g., residents, conservationists) might view the park differently from each other. As one interviewee said, "There're the commercial interests and the environmental interests." Two interviewees specifically discussed current Yellowstone issues: wolf reintroduction and snow mobiling (see the quotations below).

(What does this statement mean to you?) I would say that is true, but probably most people aren't aware of [that]. . . . I think there are a lot of local topics that visitors don't see like the wolf reintroduction up there and all the problems that it created. (What else do you know about wolf reintroduction?) The ranchers—well, they're finding dead wolves.

(What does this statement mean to you?) Snow mobiling issue. It's damaging the environment. We know it's going to take away the very things that we go to see. [It's] a very delicate balance between us trying to . . . enjoy all parts of the park and yet preserving parts of the park so that they're still there fifty years from now.

Several interviewees simply disagreed with the statement. Some thought the statement was too vague and "meaningless." The others had idiosyncratic responses. One thought the discussion of Yellowstone's ecosystem was "science and not open to interpretation." Another complained that the statement was "politically correct." A third did not agree with the statement's "conservation" message.

Relationship between People and Nature

All of the interviewees perceived a connection between people and nature. In general, they valued nature and believed that it should be protected against damage from people.

After discussing the main idea, visitors were asked to describe the relationship between people and nature. The comments at each site were remarkably similar. As exemplified by the quotations below, three related opinions were expressed: nature needs to be preserved, people generally have an antagonistic relationship with nature, and people and nature are inherently connected. Readers will note the proconservation tone in each of these remarks.

We are more aware now—we're getting more aware about how important it is to preserve it [nature] and take care of it. I think people are more concerned now.

I think we tend to take advantage of nature. There's a tendency to take nature as if it's there for our enjoyment. We do get a lot of enjoyment out of participating in the natural world. But we also take it for granted so there's a tendency to wreck it—destroy it—either because we throw our trash in [it], we build roads through it, we cut down the forests. We spoil it.

We can't live without it. One feeds off the other. If we don't treat it well, it's not going to treat us well. It takes care of us. It's a basic life system.

Environmental Issues in Yellowstone National Park

Interviewees were evenly split between those who were aware of the debates concerning Yellowstone and those who were not. Knowledgeable interviewees recalled a few specific controversies, including wolf reintroduction and snowmobiling.

Visitors were asked whether they had heard about any issues in the past few years, concerning natural resources management, wildlife management, or the effect of people using Yellowstone National Park. About half of the interviewees had not heard of any concerns facing the park, while the other half recalled several. A few interviewees at each site mentioned forest fires, wolf reintroduction, snowmobiling, and bear populations (see the quotations below).

Yellowstone was a focal point [for] rereleasing wolves—whether that was the right thing to do. [There was] a big controversy [about] trying to get the wolf population started again. Another thing is whether they could snowmobile across Yellowstone—what snowmobiling does to the environment and how it might ruin nature.

The resource management is a joke, and the Bureau of Land Management wasn't doing very good either. . . . The worst thing they ever did was in 1982 to allow that fire to burn almost a million acres. It should have been stopped a long time before that.

The ones I know [about] are the winter eco-tourism with snowmobiles and also the relocation of bears and other high-end predators. Because people's desire to be more

familiar with the animals leads to bad habits . . . and their inability to cope in a natural setting without being interfered with by people.

Reactions to Stakeholders

Nearly all interviewees readily identified with proenvironment opinions. Many, however, acknowledged that the issues are complex and thought it was important to learn about other points of view. A few interviewees took a strong position against stakeholders with a commercial interest in the park.

Visitors were shown a list of stakeholders—conservationists, the National Park Service, ranchers, preservationists, the Lakota, farmers, hunters, recreational users, local businesses, and miners—who may be featured in the DMNH. They were then asked to identify the stakeholders who might share their opinion.

All of the interviewees selected two or more stakeholders with which they agreed, and nearly all identified with at least one proenvironment group. Across the three sites, most interviewees immediately associated with conservationists. Many also chose preservationists, stressing that they agreed with groups that want to “keep the park intact.” At the NMNH and Monterey, the National Park Service and recreational users were also frequently selected. A few visitors at each site empathized with farmers, ranchers, hunters, Lakota, or local businesses. One interviewee at each site thought all opinions were valid. Another at NMNH said loggers should be added to the list.

While a few interviewees adamantly opposed certain points of view, many thought it was important to hear from a variety of perspectives. Some understood that the issues are complex and that certain groups that they may not agree with have a right to be part of the dialogue. A selection of quotations is provided below.

There are certain things like mining or oil drilling that are really bad for the environment, so I don't think I'd learn anything from a group like that. But other groups like farmers and ranchers or even recreational users like me, it's not so cut and dry. I think you've got to show a range [of opinions].

Local businesses ought to be a long way away from the ecosystem. Recreational users ought to be limited to foot traffic or horse traffic, and that includes the hunters. The hunters are a natural part of the ecosystem, and they can't be done away with. . . . And hunters have been some of the best conservationists over the years. . . . [As] for preservationists—there are some trees that should live a long life and die on their own [but] there are others that need to be harvested to make room for other things to grow. The ranchers have a small part of that, too, but I don't think the ranchers ought to run the land, but they ought [to] have their side [represented], too. . . . I'm all for the environment, but if you only present the conservation-side that could be extreme in its own way. I don't want to be associated with those people who put nails in trees to hurt loggers—that's not right either.

(Who might have the same opinion as you?) It's hard to say. I'm all [for] preserving things, but I understand that at the same time [people] have to earn a living. . . . So we need farmers, and, honestly, I don't have a problem with hunters if there is an over abundance of animals. Farmers and ranchers have a hard time making a living—the weather can be tough on [them]—but they also have to do it responsibly so they don't pollute the park with fertilizer run-off and trample everything with their cattle.

(Who might have the same opinion as you?) Conservationist or preservationist. I think it's important for people to be able to understand the issues, so they need to be able to see the different points of view. If I were a rancher and my family had been there for five generations, I would probably feel differently about the wolves. (And you would like to hear that point-of-view?) Absolutely, you have to see all the points of view before you can make a decision.

Presenting Controversial Issues in the DMNH

Most interviewees responded positively to the Museum's dealing with Yellowstone controversies, as they felt it would be educational for the public. They stressed that a balanced presentation of the issues is key.

Visitors were asked what concerns they might have about the Museum presenting potentially controversial topics. At each of the three sites, most interviewees did not have any concerns as long as each side of the argument was included (see the first quotation below). In fact, some favored controversy as a means for getting people to think about issues and form their own opinions (see the second quotation).

I would think controversial issues would be the point of a museum up there. I wouldn't have any concerns about that, but I would want to see different ideas. I think it would be smart to have all those sorts of views presented. I think a lot of people aren't familiar with the different angles, and they don't understand when people get gung ho about introducing wolves. They're not familiar with the impact that it has on a herder. I think it would be very smart to present a well-rounded approach like that.

I would love for the Museum to present them. That's the only way people and students are going to understand what's going on. . . . [Present] the different issues the way they are, and let people make up their own minds. Don't be partial.

Some interviewees were surprised that a museum would consider undertaking controversial issues. In total, five thought the “conservation-side is the only valid opinion,” expressing disinterest in learning about any other points of view. Two others were concerned because they “go to museums to see facts, not opinions.” Another two questioned the agenda of the Museum's board (see the quotation below).

I would love to talk to the board of directors of the Museum and find out what their true issues are. Not what they say they are. I have found in my experience throughout life, that

boards, trustees, investors, politicians—they [say] one thing and [where] their heart is [is] quite a different issue.

As a follow-up question, interviewees who were in favor of the Museum presenting controversial issues were asked to describe how the Museum should do so. Many thought it was important for the Museum to provide a “balanced” presentation of the issues (see the first quotation below). Others did not have any suggestions. Two thought a video presentation would be better than text panels (see the second quotation). One suggested using a “neutral tone.”

(How should the Museum address the issues?) Openly—hear both sides so that [visitors] can make their own decision. The more ideas [presented], the more that people can find ways to work together.

(How should the Museum address the issues?) Equality throughout, so have a section about each one. (So you’d like to hear from each of these groups?) Absolutely. Wouldn’t that have the greatest impact? (Yeah, you’re right.) How [about] little theaters with videos? You can have panel discussions that are edited films so somebody could [watch] a fairly brief presentation and hear right from the people who live there—what their feelings are about [the issues]. I think that people could identify with that more than just reading it.

DMNH Approach

All of the interviewees praised the Museum’s plans to use an interactive and interdisciplinary approach, as they thought it would work well for adults and children.

As a concluding question, visitors were asked to give their opinion about the Museum’s plans to incorporate a variety of media and subjects to tell Yellowstone’s complex story. Many said they enjoy hands-on exhibits, including specimens to touch, staff demonstrations, and computer interactives (see the first quotation below). Some emphasized the importance of specimens and the use of all one’s senses (see the second quotation). A few cautioned the Museum to provide multiple stations of the same exhibit, as interactive museums often entail waiting in line to use popular components. Others thought an IMAX theater should be added to the Museum. Two interviewees at the Eiteljorg were excited about the possibility of art works being displayed in a natural history museum.

I think that’s appealing because people learn in different ways. If you can have hands-on [experiences], I think there’s more opportunity for them to learn. (What kinds of hands-on exhibits do you like?) Where kids can build things or you can touch a rock sample—maybe people doing experiments and involving the audience.

I’m concerned that sometimes there’s an emphasis on interactives and use of computers. . . . I’ve noticed that sometimes [children] get so involved in the technology that they ignore the things that are around them. . . . I think it’s important to look at the real thing and understand the real thing, not look at a picture of an artifact on a computer screen. I think it’s a fine balance. . . . We have to be careful that we don’t ignore the senses.

APPENDICES

Removed for proprietary reasons