

ABSTRACT:

A Summer Odyssey: Uncovering My Professional Self in the Rainiest City in America

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I spent the summer of 2022 interning at the Exploreum Science Center in Mobile, Alabama. Although originally hired to work for ten weeks with the first two weeks in exhibit development and the remaining in the education department, my job evolved into a 19-week internship across the administration, education, and exhibit departments. During the internship, I spent most of my time researching and developing an exhibit that would eventually become the center's new permanent winter exhibit, *Subzero: Discovering Life Among the Ice*. I also worked closely with the director and helped with minor administration tasks as well as was a backup summer camp educator when needed. Because the center is a smaller institution, it was necessary for me to work in multiple departments and switch my roles at a moment's notice. The report talks further about the work done at the Exploreum as well as how the internship allowed me to utilize knowledge and skills from my coursework, how it deepened my knowledge of the museum profession, and how it deepened my own personal knowledge.

by

Approved by the Department of Museum Studies

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Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts

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I worked in various departments this summer at the Exploreum Science Center. In the first two weeks, I put up the new *Illusions* exhibit and created an exhibit guide for guests to use. In the remaining eight weeks I had many roles. Once or twice I worked in the box office. I also worked as a summer camp reliever for the four educators. On Mondays, I was the teacher for one of the educators who had the day off. During the rest of the week, I would give teachers lunch and bathroom breaks as well as restock the classrooms. Although this was something I did for eight weeks, I would say my main job was to work with the director to design the new winter exhibit *Subzero: Discovering Life Among the Ice*. Since I was working so close to the director, I got administration experience and saw what it takes to be a leader and run an institution.

As I already stated, my main role was to help the director in designing the new exhibit on the Arctic and Antarctic regions. The Exploreum is trying to create more of their own exhibits instead of renting, which is smart because it is usually more cost effective. In the beginning of the exhibit development process, the director gave me about 360 pages of research on the Arctic and Antarctic regions and I slowly got it down to about 75 pages over a few days. From there, I started to put the information into specific categories and began to create the exhibit layout. This was also the time when we began looking for pieces to put in the exhibit. After this stage, we wrote panels and began the editing process. The goal by the end of my internship was to get the panels completely done, but we ran out of time. So, the museum hired me to stay on and work remotely until the project was done. This was how my internship of 10 weeks technically became a 19-week internship. During the last nine weeks, the director and I completely finalized the panels, decided on all imagery and media, and completed the floorplan layout. The exhibit was installed in October while I was in school and was opened to the public in November. In December, I travelled back to the Gulf Coast to see my work. The public's reaction to the exhibit

was absolutely amazing. The director and I saw things that we would tweak and things we would like to add to the exhibit. I am extremely proud of everything I accomplished at the Exploreum.

This internship allowed me to utilize knowledge and skills from my coursework. My knowledge in museum administration proved useful when trying to understand the organization's structure, which is not government funded and is extremely short staffed. This helped me better understand why I was working in so many departments. Besides administration, I used my knowledge from museum education to create activities on the one day I taught a summer class. And finally, I used my knowledge from collections management, mainly condition reports, CITES protected items, and copyright laws, when looking for items for the new exhibit. Overall, I feel like my education at Baylor prepared me greatly for my internship. However, I would additionally say that my experience in exhibit development at the Mayborn and my practice in research in undergrad really helped me excel at my role in exhibit development this summer.

This internship also deepened my knowledge of the museum profession. It is one thing to learn about museums in school and another to practice what you learn. Practical application is just as important as theory because you learn things on the job that theory never teaches you. I feel like my education is much more rounded after my experience. On another note, this internship deepened my own personal knowledge. I learned new things about myself such as liking smaller institutions with a smaller staff, and that collaboration plays a big role at smaller institutions like this. While funding is not guaranteed all the time, the freedom and creativity that comes with smaller non-profits is awesome. I also learned that I love exhibit development. Originally, I believed that museum education was my calling, but after actually teaching a class, I realized it is not my passion. I enjoyed the planning more than the teaching. And finally, this internship taught me to have confidence in myself and my work. Because my supervisor had a

strong collaborative personality, I felt like an equal and that I could speak up at any time. He also would tell me when he disagreed with something I did, and I felt that this constructive criticism was very helpful in the exhibit development process. By the end of the internship, I had this new confidence in myself as a worker at a professional institution.

I was really sad to leave my summer internship. Although it is a center and not a museum, the Exploreum Science Center still does amazing educational work without a permanent collection. I found myself to be a valuable member of the team at the Exploreum especially when my knowledge in collections management and exhibit development was helpful as we were trying to build a new exhibit. It was the most amazing experience and I look forward to using my newly learned skills from this internship in the future.

A SUMMER ODYSSEY: UNCOVERING MY PROFESSIONAL SELF IN THE RAINIEST CITY IN AMERICA

By: Catherine Pearson

Baylor Museums Studies Graduate Student

All photos, except those with credit statements, were taken by Catherine Pearson.

THE EXPLOREUM IN MOBILE, ALABAMA



Courtesy of the Exploreum.
<https://www.exploreum.com/about-us/>



THE BEST TEAM AROUND

HISTORY

The Junior League of Mobile provided funding for research and development of a hands-on interactive museum for the children of Mobile.

With this initial commitment, The Explore Center, Inc., a private non-profit 501 (c)(3) educational incorporation, and a Board of Trustees were created.

1976

The Gulf Coast Exploreum "Museum of Science" was opened to the public at Springhill Avenue.

1983

In less than four years, the Exploreum outgrew the Springhill Avenue location thus prompting the Board of Trustees to evaluate and discuss possibly moving to a new location.

Ca. 1987

A Relocation Committee decided to move the center downtown at the site of the National Historic Landmark Matt Sloan Fire Station and a 1950's police building.

1987

After 11 years of planning and fundraising, and three years of construction, the new Exploreum Science Center celebrated its grand opening at 65 Government Street.

1998

Since its inception more than 35 years ago, the Exploreum has been a cornerstone of informal learning on the Gulf Coast by sparking imagination, creating curiosity, and instilling a sense of wonder in the world.

Today

A LITTLE EXTRA

- Small non-profit
 - Funding for the institution: 56% revenue, 44% corporate sponsorships
 - Small staff, lots of collaboration
 - No collections department
 - The center has only created 8 total in-house exhibits, 5 of which have been under this director.
- **Mission:** Our mission is to encourage excellence in science, technology, engineering, and math education (STEM), and to make the excitement of scientific discovery accessible to the gulf region.

WHAT DID I DO

- Guest Services
- Administration
- Education
- Exhibit Development



EDUCATION

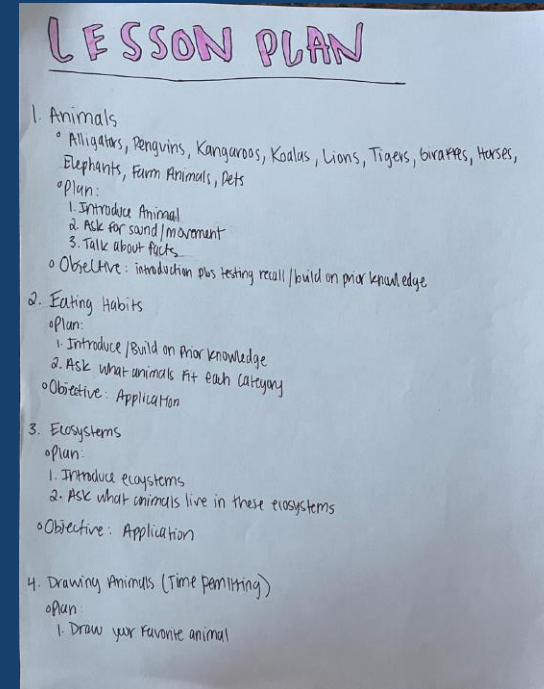
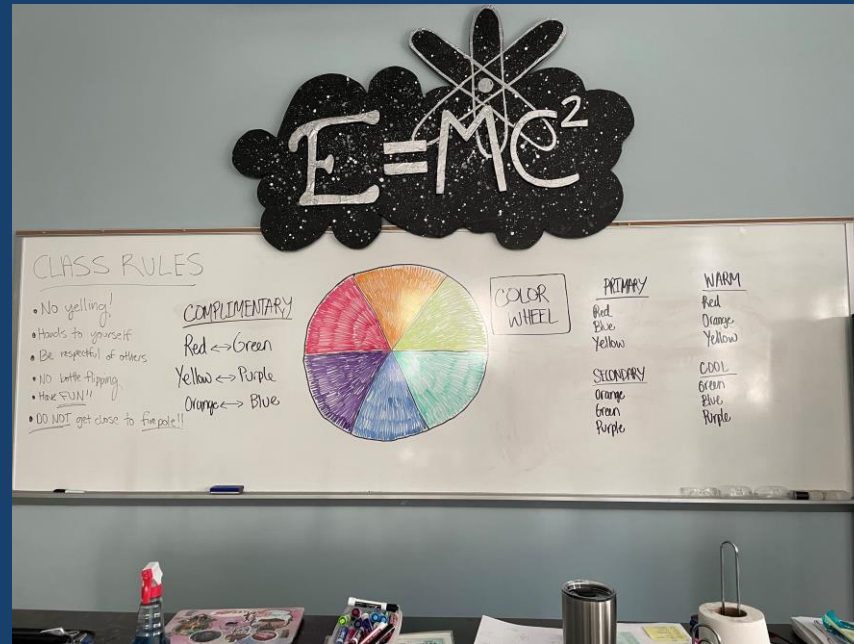


EXHIBIT DEVELOPMENT: ILLUSIONS



ILLUSIONS CONTINUED



EXHIBIT DEVELOPMENT: SUBZERO

SUBZERO

Discovering Life Among t

THE ARCTIC

- The Arctic is a polar region located at the northernmost part of Ocean, adjacent seas, and parts of Canada, Denmark (Greenland), (Murmansk, Siberia, Nenets Okrug, Novaya Zemlya), Sweden and within the Arctic region has seasonally varying snow and ice cover and permafrost (permanently frozen underground ice) containing ice in many places.
- The Arctic region is a unique area among Earth's ecosystems. Indigenous peoples have adapted to its cold and extreme conditions. Life in the Arctic includes zooplankton and phytoplankton, fish and marine mammals, birds, land animals, plants and human societies. Arctic land is bordered by the subarctic.
- The Arctic Circle is one of the two polar circles, and the most northerly of the five major circles of latitude as shown on maps of Earth. Its southern equivalent is the Antarctic Circle.
- The Arctic Circle marks the southernmost latitude at which on the December solstice, the shortest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, the sun will not rise all day, and on the June solstice, the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere, the sun will not set. These phenomena are referred to as polar night and midnight sun respectively, and the further north one progresses, the more pronounced these effects become.

Midnight sun and polar night

- The Arctic Circle is the southernmost latitude in the Northern Hemisphere at which the center of the sun can remain continuously above or below the horizon for twenty-four hours, as a result, at least once each year at any location within the Arctic Circle the center of the sun is visible at local midnight, and at least once the center is not visible at local noon.

Geography

- The Arctic Circle is roughly 16,000 km (9,900 mi) in circumference, 20,000,000 km² (7,700,000 sq mi) and covers roughly 20% of Earth's land area.
- The Arctic Circle passes through the Arctic Ocean, Greenland, and Sweden, Finland, Russia, the United States (Alaska), (Hawaii), Denmark (Greenland), and Iceland (why is Iceland here?)

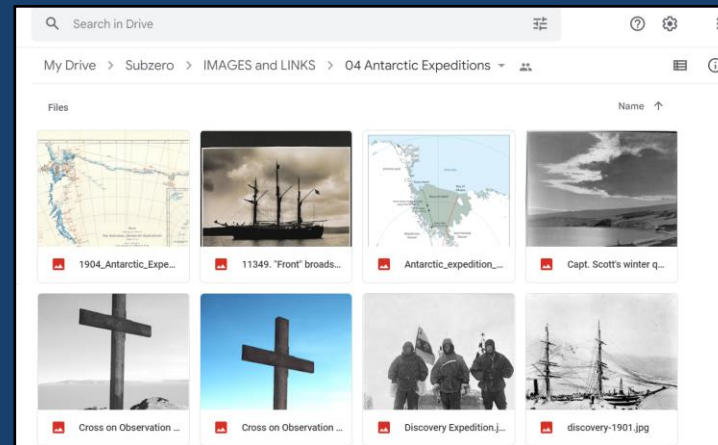
Climate





- The climate north of the Arctic Circle is generally cold, a result of the Gulf Stream, which carries warm water from the tropics. In the interior, summer is cold, for example, summer temperatures in Norilsk, Russia, are frequently below freezing, while the winter temperatures frequently fall below -50°C (-58°F).

What is it?
Where is it? (ie countries)
Land/topography
Brief Statement on Climate
Polar night /Midnight Sun
Ecosystem

KEY

- Red = SUVN
- Orange = Adaptations (Physical)
- Yellow = Fun Facts
- Green = Diet
- Blue = Life Expectancy
- Purple = Brief Description
- Pink = Size/Weight
- Brown = Reproduction
- Black = Distribution



Antarctic Expeditions Citation Log	
	<p>Citation: Lieutenant George F. A. Mulock, original artist, Royal Geographic Society, author and publisher. Map showing the work of the National Antarctic Expedition, 1902-3-4. 1904, map. <i>The Geographical Journal</i>. Public Domain. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons.</p> <p>Description: This map details the explorations of the Discovery Expedition (1901-1904). This map, based on a sketch by Lieutenant George F. A. Mulock, Scott's second in command, was issued in <i>The Geographical Journal</i>, 1904.</p>
	<p>Citation: ATLZN 11714. Ca. 1901-1903, photograph. National Library of New Zealand. Public Domain. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons.</p> <p>Description: From left to right: Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton, Captain Robert Falcon Scott, and Dr. Edward Adrian Wilson on the Discovery Expedition.</p>
	<p>Citation: Sir Ernest Henry Shackleton. <i>The "Discovery" frozen in - backed up with snow</i>. Ca. 1901-1903, photograph. Royal Museums Greenwich. Public Domain. Retrieved from Cool Antarctica.</p> <p>Description: Pictured here is the Discovery stuck in sea ice. It took two years for the ship to finally break free of the ice.</p>
	<p>Citation: John Fox and Henry Mawell. <i>Scott of the Antarctic</i>. 1905, photograph. Public Domain. Retrieved from Wikimedia Commons.</p> <p>Description: Robert Falcon Scott in full regalia. This photograph was reproduced as a frontispiece for Scott's book: <i>The Voyage of the Discovery</i> (London 1905).</p>

04 ANTARCTIC EXPEDITIONS PANELS

South Pole Expeditions [22x25 panel size]

In the early 20th century, the race was on to reach the South Pole, with a number of explorers testing themselves in the freezing Antarctic. Because early explorers confronted extreme obstacles and debilitating conditions, this period of time became known as the "Heroic Age." The main players who competed in the race to the South Pole were Roald Amundsen, Robert Falcon Scott, and Ernest Shackleton.

The first attempt to find a route from the Antarctic coastline to the South Pole was made by British explorer Robert Falcon Scott on his 1901-1904 *Discovery* Expedition. Scott, accompanied by fellow explorers Ernest Shackleton and Edward Wilson, set out with the aim of traveling as far south as possible. On December 31, 1902, Scott and his companions reached 82°16' S before the party was forced to turn back due to ill health and sub-zero conditions.



(Image goes on top of the panel.)



(Images go with the panel.)

The Race Begins [22x25 panel size]

Between 1909-1910, Britain's Robert Falcon Scott and Norway's Roald Amundsen both launched expeditions to reach the Pole. It would end in victory for one and tragedy for the other...

It was always Scott's intention to return to Antarctica, and with the support of the British Admiralty and the government, he set sail again for the Pole. Scott recruited men from his original Antarctic voyage and from Ernest Shackleton's 1909 *Nimrod* Expedition, which had recently returned from the Antarctic. On June 15, 1910, Scott set sail from Cardiff for his nearly two year *Terra Nova* Expedition. Unbeknownst to Scott, he was not the only one trying to get to the Pole.

Roald Amundsen, a respected Norwegian explorer, originally planned to go to the North Pole. However, he changed his mind after Cook and Peary's 1908 and 1909 North Pole claims. After this death blow to his original plans, he was determined to be the first to reach the South Pole.

SUBZERO CONTINUED



Condition Report on Loaned Objects

Evaluated by: _____

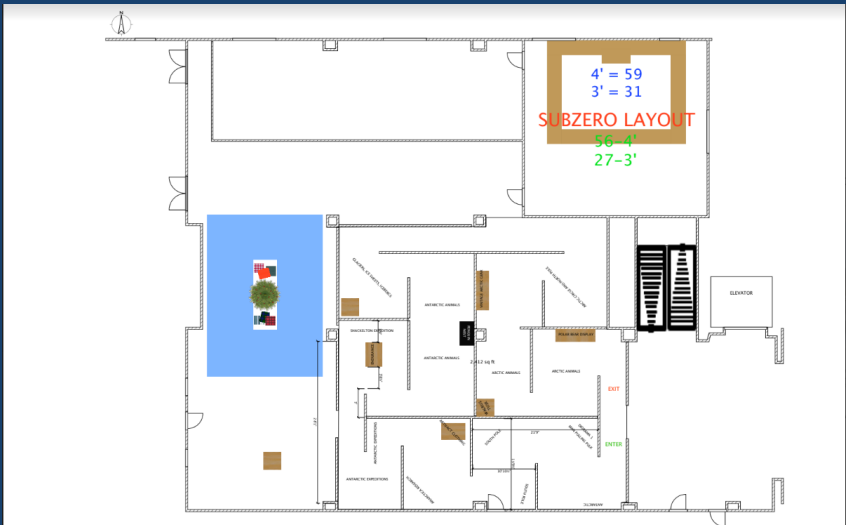
Condition	Explanation
Excellent	Like new or new in the package. No visible damage.
Good	Minor damage but the piece is stable and can easily be displayed.
Fair	Minor to moderate damage but there are some issues with the piece that may prevent it from being displayed.
Poor	This piece is in unstable condition and needs to be considered for conservation or deaccession.

Item: _____

Brief Item Description:

Overall Condition: Excellent Good Fair Poor

Damage, if any: what type of damage is it and where located?



HOW DID I HELP THE CENTER AND ITS MISSION?

- **Simple answer:** I helped the center function. Which in turn, helped the Exploreum to carry out its mission of encouraging excellence in STEM and making the excitement of scientific discovery accessible to the gulf region.
- **In the words of my supervisor:** I helped the center tremendously by bringing in skills from my museum background, many of which were unknown to most of the staff. Thus, I was a vital resource for the center.
 - I.e., condition reporting, ethical acquisitions, copyright law, intensive research skills

WHAT DID I LEARN?

- Prefer exhibit development over education
- Enjoy working at smaller institutions and non-profits
- Love collaboration
- New confidence in myself as a museum professional
- Recognize my value as a museum professional