

Rethinking an Existing Docent Program

What happens when a museum with a one-size-fits-all docent training program radically changes course to a structure where docents train in teams focused on the needs of specific audiences?

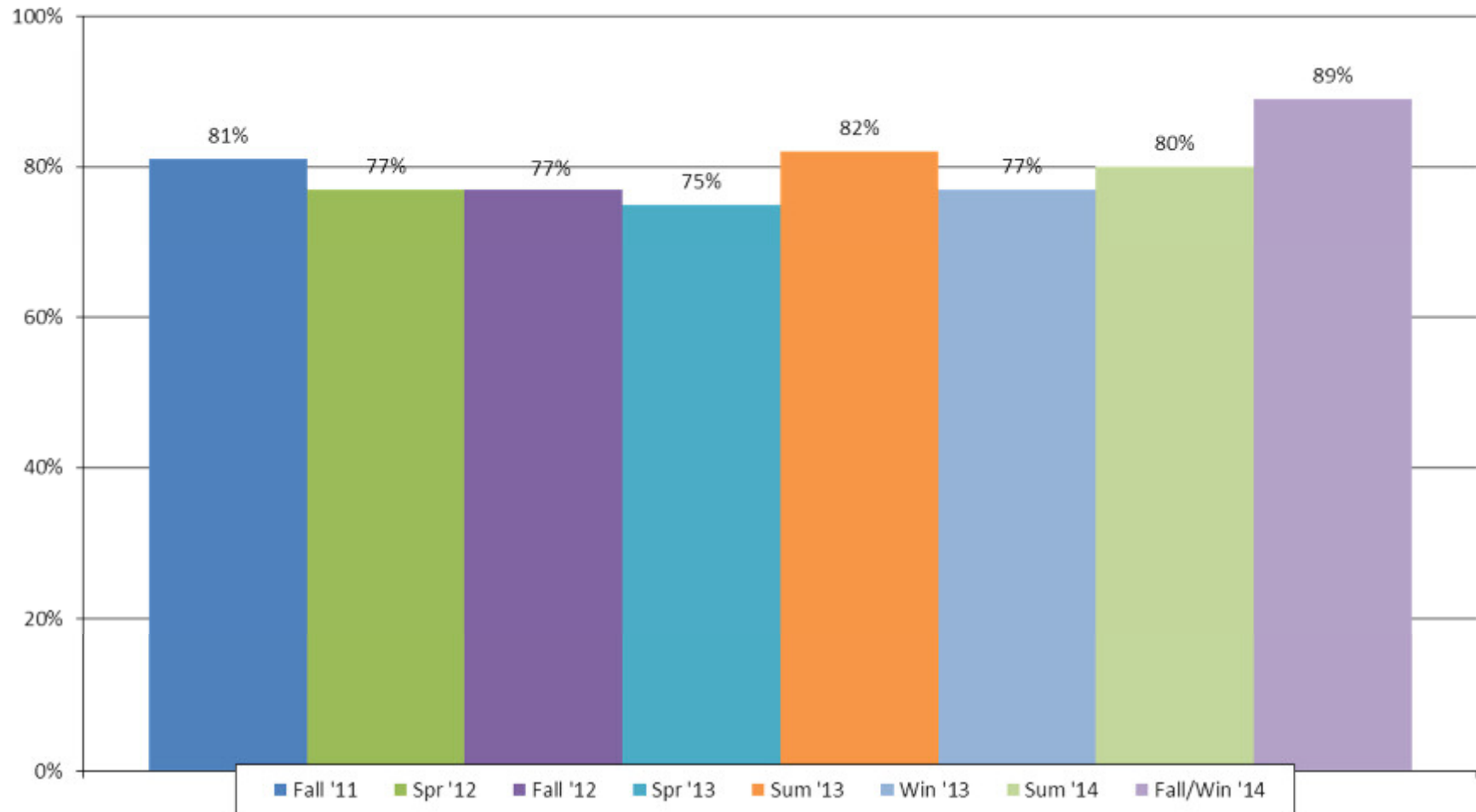
Keith Quenzel and Ellen Soares
Peabody Essex Museum
Salem, MA
September 2015



New Ways on the Banquereau, 1981
Thomas Hoyne

EXCELLENT RATINGS OF DOCENT-GUIDED TOURS

(THOSE WHO GAVE A 9 OR 10 ON A SCALE OF 1-10)



28% of respondents took a docent tour (24% in Winter 2013); participating in a tour was associated with higher levels of overall satisfaction: 89% of those who took a tour rated overall satisfaction as excellent compared to 77% of those who did not.



Why change?

- Support PEM's new interpretive paradigm
- Offer multiple volunteer-facilitated platforms and experiences for communities engaged with the museum
- Develop and diversify the volunteer corps and the nature of volunteering at PEM
- Build the expertise and skills of the guides



PEM Guide Structure - Former

All guides were trained to do all tours we offered, for all of our audiences

PEM Guide Team Structure - Current

Student and Youth Programs	Gallery Hangouts	Tour Experience	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ School programs ▪ Youth and Community ▪ University ▪ Off site 	<p>Drop-in gallery programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Art Carts ▪ Gallery Spots ▪ Pop-ups ▪ Spotlights ▪ Interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Tours for the public and for adults in groups ▪ VIP tours ▪ Special theme tours ▪ House explorations ▪ Special Exhibitions ▪ Off site experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Research support for other teams ▪ Research support for other museum departments, curatorial, interpretation

PEM Guide Minimum Commitment - Former

- Training:

Attend a 13-week initial training course

Attend bimonthly 3-hour guide training meetings from September – June

- Service:

1 three- hour shift per week

1 three-hour weekend shift per month

PEM Guide Teams Minimum Commitment-Current

Student and Youth Programs	Gallery Hang Outs	Tour Experience	Research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend All Guide Team Gatherings (4-6 /year) ▪ Attend monthly team meetings (3 hours, Wed pm) ▪ Service: one 3-hour shift a week 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend All Guide Team Gatherings (4-6/year) ▪ (Wed pm, repeated on Sat am) ▪ Attend monthly team meetings (3 hours, Sat am) ▪ Service: 5 hours a month on a Saturday or Sunday 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend All Guide Team Gatherings (4-6/year) ▪ Attend monthly team meetings (3 hours, Wed pm, repeated on Sat am) ▪ Service: one 2-hour shift a week or one 2-hour shift every other weekend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attend All Guide Team Gatherings (4-6/year) ▪ Attend monthly team meetings (2 hours, Thursday evening) ▪ Service: 5 hours a week of independent research, self-scheduled

PEM Guides – Benefits

- Advanced training in communications, interpretation, object-based teaching, and the delivery of interactive, informal learning experiences according to current best practices .
- Deeper understanding of the range of human creative expression across all fields and strong content knowledge about PEM collections and exhibitions.
- 20% discount in the Museum Shop
- Invitations to annual “thank you” events
- Free parking during service and training