

## VISIT TO BALBOA ISLAND MUSEUM 210 Marine Avenue, Newport Beach



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Pete Beatty, Al & Pat Corfield, Bob & Susie McIntosh

The purpose of this visit was to get museum design ideas and to talk with their Museum staff about their recent renovation.

### **Background**

This is a new location for the Balboa Museum. They negotiated a 10-year lease ("We would not have undertaken this remodel without a long-term lease!" says Tiffany Pepys Hoey, Executive Director) and they spent three months gutting the space (it was most recently an upscale shop), constructing the interior, and setting up the displays; they have been operating with the remodel for the past six months.

- There are at least two paid positions at this museum (Executive Director, and an Office Manager). The retail clerk who runs the book sales desk in the front of the Museum could also be a paid employee. The Museum is open seven days a week, 10 am to 5 pm Mon-Thurs., 10 am to 6 pm Fri-Sunday.
- Before the renovation and at the old location.....they had trouble getting members and getting volunteers. "The remodel changed *everything*." Now they get more memberships, volunteers, and they occasionally rent out the Museum for private parties at \$1500 per event (with no kitchen, whomever rents must bring food already prepared to be served and no washing area for food containers is provided).
- The Executive Director Tiffany Hoey came up with the design after consulting with an architect ("He worked for us pro-bono.") and then a handyman was hired to carry out the designed plans.
- They had plans in place *before* they solicited funding in order to fight the negativity the community had from other organizations' funding drives in their area where the project never materialized after the money was collected. Proving that the project was ready to implement—and not just a dream—was key to getting donations. They had determined the amount of lighting fixtures, the type of sound and video systems, "pod" construction details, expected costs (without donations) and they provided a mock-up of the entire renovation project.



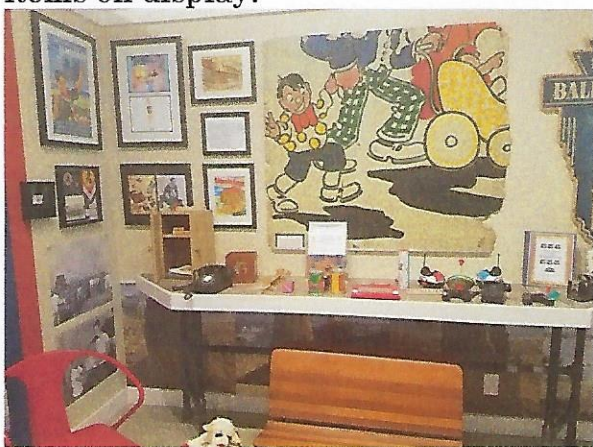
## “Pod” Concept

After gutting the room, all walls were painted bright white (which we noticed enhanced the feeling of *space*)—and short, perpendicular walls were constructed, installed and also painted white. These perpendicular walls (approximately 8 ft. tall by 6 ft. long and about 4” thick) create “pods” with a theme and design unique to the others. There are approximately four pods on each side of the room. The use of a small (about 8 ft. high, 2 ft. wide, 2” thick) perpendicular board at the end of some (but not all) of the pod side walls adds more room for photos.

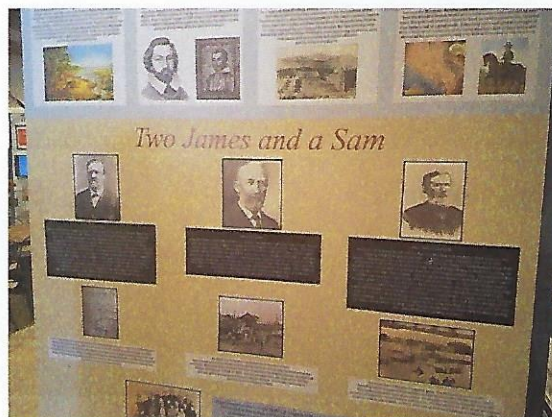


Each pod is separated by a wall (as detailed above), each side of the wall acting as a holder of display materials, usually photographs, written information, and/or TVs. Each pod is self-contained in that it holds information concerning the history of one or two subjects. Each pod tells a story about its subject.

One pod is set up so that youngsters can enjoy themselves by interacting with toys or certain items on display.



One of the first pods is set up to tell almost the same history that Joe Spreckelmeyer used to tell the 3<sup>rd</sup> graders about the native Indians being the first occupiers of Orange County, then came the Spanish, etc.





In some of the pods, small monitors were installed with a sound system above, in order to show films appropriate to the pod's theme or to show looping photos that were not already hanging on the pod's walls. The monitor and sound system wiring is hidden above the back walls of the pods by white wood molding that runs on either side of the room above the pods.



### Display Design

Instead of having old "things" and artifacts on display, which take up a lot of space and are sometimes difficult to move around, they use photographs and written information to educate the visitor about the item. Sometimes they will have artifacts within the pod but those are often contained in a glass cabinet in the center front of the pod. The Museum Executive Director used Illustrator for the wall décor. Their Visitor Experience Chair, Celeste Dennerline, wrote all the text (using 6<sup>th</sup>-grade level language).

There are long, rectangular tables placed end to end with chairs running the length of the middle of the room. These are used for occasional meetings or chatting with visitors; one table, closest to the entrance, displayed some of their items for sale.



There is a pull-down screen in the back corner of the room, with the audio/visual system affixed to a wood beam opposite the screen. Tract lighting is used generously throughout the room.

Frequently, they have speakers' nights for which they charge \$20 per person; they move away the long tables and place chairs across the center of the room. The speaker stands in the back, next to the pull-down screen.

Window space is used to display merchandise and to provide seating for customers while they enjoy a cup of coffee. Major museum donor's names are visibly displayed on two donor plaques as you enter and leave the museum. See photos on next page.





Close-up of front south window. Coffee machine can be seen on nearby counter.



View of North Window Area & Book Store



View of South Front Window



Donor Walls, either side of Inside Entrance (8 ft. high, 2" thick "walls")



A donation box greets visitors as they enter.



Docents are trained on how to introduce new <sup>visitors</sup> customers to the museum and how to introduce the idea of museum membership to new local customers. If visitors are local non-members, they are encouraged to enjoy the exhibits counter-clockwise around the Museum, then are met at the end of their visit by the docent near the door who explains the benefits of membership.