

RACHEL HELLENGA

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PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

I lead high-performing teams to create world-class exhibitions that evoke wonder, inspire experimentation, and bring people together in memorable settings. Demonstrated ability to generate breakthrough ideas, attract key talent, and manage multi-million-dollar projects with award-winning results.

KEY SKILLS

Directing Creative Teams	Experience Design	Conceptual Planning	Museum Operations
Writing & Public Speaking	Interactive Technology	Exhibit Prototyping	Budgets & Schedules
Exhibit Fundraising	Learning Research	Vendor Oversight	Contract Negotiation

EXPERIENCE

HELLENGA PROJECTS - Elmhurst, IL

January 2012 to present

Creative Director - 2012 to 2019

Perform strategic planning, conceptual development, fundraising, and project management for clients pursuing major exhibition initiatives. Manage in-house teams and external design resources to deliver compelling learning experiences which engage audiences, attract funding, and drive attendance. Collaborate with museum associations to communicate best practices in publications and conference presentations. Selected clients:

GREAT LAKES SCIENCE CENTER - Cleveland, OH

Oversaw *Mission to STEM* project. Led multimedia vendors and in-house staff in story development and beta-testing for mobile app. Space missions in the NASA Glenn Visitor Center guided visitors through completion of augmented reality and virtual reality challenges featuring NASA mission artifacts. Wrote exhibit description for successful \$1-million NASA proposal.

THE DISCOVERY MUSEUM OF ACTON - Acton, MA

Articulated experience goals and translated master plan into exhibit concepts for several projects opening in the new facility, March 2018. Led story development and early conceptual planning based on key research findings on early brain development, math anxiety, best practices for inclusive design, and creative outdoor play. Won four consecutive grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services totaling \$500K.

THE WORKS - Bloomington, MN

Researched and developed strategic planning recommendations for engineering museum's Board of Directors. Outlined key trends in technology innovation, engineering education, and museum visitation. Mentored staff from concept through installation of *Sensor Zone*, which invited visitors to explore sensors by triggering lights and sounds in a life-sized maze, a high-tech club house, and other exhibit stations.

CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF INFORMAL SCIENCE EDUCATION - Washington, D.C.

Managed team of senior museum professionals to produce *The Principal Investigator's Guide: Managing Evaluation in Informal STEM Education*, an online guide for informal STEM education projects. Presented findings at the National Science Foundation convening (2012).

Professional Maker & Inventor - 2014 to 2019

Invented and patented paper-thin circuits which snap under bricks. Used storytelling power of LEGO to make DIY electronics more appealing and meaningful to children (especially girls). Presented interactive prototypes at Maker Faires and LEGO conventions, and at conferences hosted by LEGO Education, the National Science Teachers Association, the American Association of Libraries, and the Association of Science-Technology Centers.

- Obtained 2 patents with further patents pending
- Procured funding from Maker Ed foundation & YMCA
- Beta-tested flexible circuits in workshops and summer camps
- In licensing discussions with toy companies

ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & EDUCATION CENTER – Skokie, IL

June 2010 to December 2011

Director of Program Services

Reported to President and CEO and oversaw Exhibitions, Collections, Education, and Marketing Departments. Provided progress metrics to the Board of Directors. Led the \$1-million *Make a Difference!* anti-bullying initiative featuring an exhibition, outreach programs, and a symposium for Chicago-area high school principals. Coached in-house team and managed external vendors in design and installation of permanent and temporary exhibitions, leading to additional school group bookings and increased foundation support.

MUSEUM OF SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY – Chicago, IL

August 2006 to June 2010

Project Director – 2007 to 2010

Senior Project Manager – 2006 to 2007

Served as the creative lead for *Science Storms*, a 26,000 s.f. permanent exhibition on physics and chemistry featuring a 3-story tornado, live fire, a 30-foot rainbow, and an avalanche machine. Directed creative efforts of staff and 25+ vendors, designing 50 interactive exhibits and 120 artifacts from Detailed Design through launch. Performed project management through Schematic Design, establishing the \$32-million budget projection, developing the four-year schedule, and producing RFPs and contracts for exhibit design, media production, and engineering feasibility prototypes. Delivered world-class project recognized by the industry's highest awards:

- American Alliance of Museums award for Overall Excellence in Exhibitions (AAM 2011)
- Roy Shafer Leading Edge Award for Visitor Experience (ASTC 2011)
- Thea Award for Outstanding Achievement (Themed Entertainment Association 2010)
- 20 Most Influential Exhibitions This Century (SEGC 2018)

CHICAGO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM – Chicago, IL

August 2003 to July 2006

Associate Vice President, Partnership of Playful Learners – 2004 to 2006

Associate Vice President, Production & New Ventures – 2003 to 2004

Developed cost projections, cash flow, and schedule for the museum's \$30-million renovation & expansion. Initiated successful \$1.7-million proposal to the National Science Foundation for the Partnership of Playful Learners, featuring an exhibition on skyscraper engineering, *Skyline*, and a university research partnership.

- Introduced time-lapse photography and DIY multimedia stories to capture the building activity
- Experimented with design strategies that increased girls' participation to match the boys'
- Researched conversational design approaches to deepen family collaboration
- AAM award for Special Achievement in Cooperative Learning (2010)

THE TECH MUSEUM OF INNOVATION – San Jose, CA

June 1999 to June 2003

Senior Director of Exhibits and Programs – 2002 to 2003

Director of Exhibits – 1999 to 2002

Reported to VP of Exhibitions and supervised a team of 13 exhibit developers, exhibit designers, graphic designers, writers, educators, and project managers in design and installation of travelling and permanent exhibitions and related programs. Managed \$2.3-million annual capital and operations budget. Introduced experimental technology including a robotic arm-wrestling exhibit which linked visitors to the New York Hall of Science and a full-body butterfly projection which was replicated by more than 50 venues nationwide.

- Secured NIH Science Education Partnership and NSF awards totaling \$2.5 million
- Presented exhibition concepts to CEOs of HP, Microsoft, and other companies during capital campaign
- Closed out 15+ unresolved contracts totaling several million dollars after The Tech's grand opening
- Streamlined exhibit design, fabrication, and installation by documenting milestones and standards

EDUCATION

HARVARD UNIVERSITY – Cambridge, MA

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology (John Harvard Scholarship for high academic distinction)