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## Internship at the Aquarium of the Americas

Christopher Major  
*University of New Orleans*

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A Report on an Internship  
at the Aquarium of the Americas

A Report  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of the University of New Orleans

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Arts Administration

by  
Christopher Major  
August 1989

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## **ABSTRACT**

This report documents an internship that was served at the Aquarium of the Americas in New Orleans, Louisiana from 16 January 1989 through 7 April 1989.

The purpose of the internship was to observe the administration of the internship organization in order to perform a managerial analysis. Another goal was to engage in administrative tasks in order to gain practical experience at a managerial level.

The Aquarium of the Americas is a department of the Audubon Institute, which, in turn, is supervised by the Audubon Park Commission. As a result, those organizations are also included as subjects for analysis.

The internship is a requirement of the graduate program in Arts Administration at the University of New Orleans.

## INTRODUCTION

Museums exist in order to house and preserve historic artifacts. That is why, for example, reproductions of famous paintings will not be found in any art museum; once the originals are secure, art museums devote their limited resources to obtaining other works in need of preservation. Although the task of museums is conservation, the ultimate purpose is esthetic or educational.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, there would be little point in preserving anything.

Museums do not provide for the skills needed to use their resources. Museums are akin to libraries; despite their vast collections of books, libraries do not teach people how to read or think. Libraries are adjuncts to a school system which does provide instruction, but schools typically do not provide the kind of education which permits the enlightened use of museums; children and adults alike file past artworks with incomprehension or find themselves amused by the animals in a zoo, unaware of the losing struggle by those creatures to survive. For this reason, museums themselves must provide instruction in order to accomplish their purpose.

The dilemma of museums is that they do not possess the  
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<sup>1</sup>The Museum Services Act, 20 U.S.C. @968(4), defines the museum as "a public or private nonprofit agency or institution organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or esthetic purposes which, utilizing a professional staff, owns or utilizes tangible objects, cares for them, and exhibits them to the public on a regular basis."

resources to engage in education. Although the general public is satisfied with recreational use of these facilities, museums are legally bound to engage in education by the federal government in exchange for exemption from income taxes.<sup>2</sup> In consequence, museums provide token educational activities to ensure the continuation of subsidies.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, museums do possess the ability to effect informal lessons, but, inexplicably, museums typically avoid posting informative graphics. The museum goer is on his own, but the failure of museums to engage in formal education is not an issue. Museums are justifiable as conservatories, and they cannot realistically be expected to perform duties that have eluded the school system.

Aquariums and zoos are a special kind of museum in which different criteria apply. Unlike museums, aquariums and zoos are not conservatories. Zoos are now vigorously engaged in the task of preserving endangered species through captive breeding and may one day be regarded primarily as conservation organizations; currently their collections of  
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<sup>2</sup>Specifically, tax exempt organizations must fall within one of the categories named in Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3), which, by a process of default, turns out to be "educational."

<sup>3</sup>For example, the New Orleans Museum of Art only allocates approximately 5% of its money for its education department. For the Audubon Zoo, that figure is closer to 1%. These figures are estimates by staff members of the education departments of the those organizations.

animals are not self sustaining.<sup>4</sup> The issue of conservation by aquariums is complex and discussed later, but aquariums are neither research facilities nor fish hatcheries. They have even farther to go than zoos before their animal collections will be self sustaining through captive breeding. For this reason, aquariums and zoos must engage in real education.

Like museums, aquariums and zoos have traditionally failed to instruct,<sup>5</sup> but the possibility of real education presents itself to zoos and aquariums because of the straightforward nature of ecology. For example, the destruction of animal habitats can easily be explained in a few sentences printed on a sign. The construction of a new aquarium or the expansion of a zoo is occasion to reexamine the possibilities inherent in these facilities and to assess the performance of these public attractions in light of their goals.

The mission of zoos and aquariums, and the legal environments in which they operate, are of significance in -----

<sup>4</sup>For example, the Audubon Zoo 1988 Year-end Animal Inventory presents these figures: Total In - 1246, Total Out - 402, Total Births - 406, Total Deaths - 1003. At least zoos are forthright; aquariums contacted by the intern would not release their figures, presumably in fear of publicity.

<sup>5</sup>Museum exhibit graphics, when they are present at all, vary wildly in the degree to which they provide information. For zoos and aquariums, often only the names of species and their ranges are mentioned. Museum education departments generally ignore the potential of graphics, which are the only means of communicating with the majority of visitors.

light of the public monies that are typically involved in the construction and operation of those facilities. Because of the great expense of exhibiting either rare artifacts or living creatures, museums often receive municipal support that is justified by the benefit to society that these institutions provide. In turn, public support for museums has been accompanied by public scrutiny of the policies and ethics of those who are entrusted with managing these institutions. Additionally, there have been calls for a reexamination of the very nature and purpose of these facilities: Is education really a goal? Does conservation truly occur? Are these institutions merely recreational facilities?

This report will explore those issues in connection with an account of the internship that was served at one such facility, the Aquarium of the Americas, which is a department of the Audubon Institute, a not-for-profit agency.

Of necessity, a managerial analysis begins with a review of the goals of the organization. In turn, the policies guiding the institution towards those goals must be evaluated, followed by an examination of the planning and organizing designed to execute those policies. Although the scope of this report does not permit an all-encompassing and detailed review of the performance of the Aquarium of the Americas and its umbrella organizations, some effort must be made by the intern studying the institution to interpret his

observations in terms of the degree to which the activities of the officers and staff of the concerned organizations contribute to realizing their mission.

In choosing what to study, the intern was free to concentrate on a challenge or problem connected with personnel management, organizational management or fiscal management, but was able to observe significant challenges in each of these areas. Although what follows is a report on several of those challenges, the intern was particularly interested in the issues of goals and policy.

The intern was fortunate to have the cooperation of the senior management of the Aquarium of the Americas and the Audubon Institute, who not only consented to interviews, but who were candid in their response to questions about policy and goals.

# CHAPTER I

## THE AQUARIUM OF THE AMERICAS

### History

Construction and site preparation are not yet complete, so that the history of the Aquarium of the Americas is still largely the story of the development of the concept, and the subsequent piloting of that concept past a variety of hurdles. Another part of the Aquarium story is the work in progress, which includes not only the construction of the facility, but also the creation of an administrative structure and the establishment of a management team. The Aquarium project is intimately connected with the history of the Audubon Zoo and the Zoo's not-for-profit benefactor, the Friends of the Zoo. The operation of the Aquarium will be managed by that non-profit society, and a brief recounting of its story is necessary.

In 1968, the Audubon Zoo was featured in a New Orleans magazine article as an example of mismanagement and animal abuse, and shortly thereafter, the City of New Orleans received word through informal channels that it must develop a plan to improve conditions for the animals or else face closure of the facility<sup>6</sup>. At that time, concerned citizens

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<sup>6</sup>Bill Kurtz, interview by author, New Orleans, 30 March 1989.

formed the Zoological Society of Louisiana and later founded Friends of the Zoo to assist the City in upgrading the quality of the Zoo. The two groups merged in 1977. Friends of the Zoo eventually grew into the role of executive management and fundraising for the facility in behalf of the City of New Orleans. The Bureau of Governmental Research of New Orleans developed a zoo improvement plan in 1971 and the Friends of the Zoo also developed long-range plans, the goals of which were either completed or in the process of fulfillment by 1988.

As the years went by and the City suffered straitened finances, successive administrations found it advantageous to cease funding certain elements of the Zoo's operations by turning over control and responsibility of those operations to Friends of the Zoo. Thus began a trend toward privatization that has continued to this day. The exemplary behavior and performance of Friends of the Zoo executives earned them the trust of the City, and, over time, Friends of the Zoo came to run all aspects of Zoo operations.

Having earned a reputation for success, the Friends of the Zoo began to consider new goals, and a large scale aquarium was deemed to be a natural adjunct to the Zoo, as well as being a feasible project for a city whose primary commercial activity was tourism. City officials responded to the idea of an aquarium, and in 1984, the New Orleans City Council approved a project study by Harrison Price. At



that time, aquariums were regarded as attractive components of downtown revitalization schemes that included waterfront development and festival marketplaces. At one time, more than 30 aquariums were in the planning stages or being contemplated, although today, few of those continue as viable projects because of economic reasons.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, the Price study recommended a \$33 million world-class facility for New Orleans. The enormity of the task revealed itself after the project was deemed feasible and City officials united with civic leaders to begin the campaign to develop the facility. Significant events of the development phase of the Aquarium are listed below, along with the dates in which those events were reported in the Times-Picayune:

N.O. City Council approves \$75,000 aquarium study June 9, 1984  
 N.O. City Council hears presentation on proposed aquarium May 10, 1985  
 N.O. Audubon officials seek permission to build aquarium March 17, 1986  
 La. House committee approves bonds for aquarium project May 14, 1986  
 N.O. Dock Board supports plans May 17, 1986 La. Senate approves property tax for aquarium June 17, 1986  
 N.O. voters approve tax increase November 5, 1986  
 Audubon Park Commission approves aquarium design team December 9, 1986  
 Aquarium design plans presented January 23, 1987  
 Dock Board, City Council approve Bienville St. Wharf site July 15, 1987  
 Louisiana Supreme Court dismisses challenge to tax plan March 4, 1988

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<sup>7</sup> "Critical Mass -- How Big Do You Have to Be to Make It?," Zooplan, 31 January 1989.

Audubon Park Commission calls for private, non-profit organization to manage day-to-day operations March 22, 1988

Audubon Park Commission approves \$25 million bond sale to finance construction of an aquarium March 31, 1988

N.O. City Council approves bond sale April 8, 1988

Low bid for construction \$500,000 below \$40 million construction budget April 22, 1988

Once the legal and financial obstacles had been overcome, site preparation and construction could begin. In addition, there were several other major endeavors to be undertaken. Although \$25 million in bonds had been authorized for the project, another \$15 million in donations from the private sector had been promised. In addition, the goal of engaging the participation of minorities was deemed challenging enough to create the office of Minority Business Coordinator. Another significant endeavor was the need to already have acquired a collection of animals before opening day. This necessitated construction of temporary holding facilities that would, in effect, be a second aquarium of one fifth the water capacity of the permanent one. And finally, the decision to engage Friends of the Zoo to manage the day-to-day operations of the Aquarium prompted a major restructuring of that agency which is still in progress.

The Aquarium of the Americas will be the third largest aquarium in the country in overall terms. The Aquarium and its adjoining riverfront park is a \$40 million project that is rapidly nearing completion. Woldenberg Park will open in the fall of 1989, and the Aquarium of the Americas will open a year later.

### Goals

Because of the variety of agencies and interest groups with some stake in the Aquarium endeavor, it is not surprising that a smorgasbord of goals has evolved in connection with the Aquarium project. Now that the project is well underway, the objectives appropriate for examination are the Audubon Park Commission's legal mandate, the Audubon Institute's corporate objectives and the intentions of the Audubon Institute as expressed in its mission statement. But first it is not inappropriate to examine what was expected to be achieved by the construction of the facility.

The project's appeal was surely the appropriateness of a new recreational attraction in a city whose commercial lifeblood is tourism. The Aquarium is a sensible economic development scheme. A University of New Orleans economic impact study estimated that annual expenditures of the Aquarium and tourists drawn to it would top \$50 million, that construction alone would generate \$100 million of direct and indirect spending and that over 1200 permanent new jobs would be created.<sup>8</sup> Promoting tourism and creating jobs would be a psychological victory as well as an economic shot in the arm for the depressed city that New Orleans had been in recent years. Best of all, as pointed out in a Bureau of Governmental Research economic study, facilities

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<sup>8</sup>Eddystone C. Nebel, The Impact of the Proposed Aquarium on the New Orleans Economy (New Orleans: University of New Orleans, 1986) i.

of this kind tend to be self supporting.<sup>9</sup>

The prospect of an urban revitalization endeavor that might actually pay for itself galvanized City officials and local representatives to the state legislature who were quick to recognize the potential for affirmative action in benefit of minorities. The rationale was that since the citizens of New Orleans would provide the largest portion of startup funds through a property tax, then those citizens, the majority of whom are Blacks in the City proper, should receive significant benefits from the resulting impact of the Aquarium project. Into the state legislation that authorized the Aquarium project, Black leaders included language which mandated that 20% of construction dollars go to minority firms and 30% of goods and services be likewise allocated.<sup>10</sup>

Thus were born the initial goals of the endeavor: economic development with minority participation and urban renewal. Not surprisingly, the millage campaign was based almost exclusively on the justification of jobs. The project leaders required a little prodding and public pressure before vigorously attending to the minority participation mandate, but they are nevertheless credited -----

<sup>9</sup>Bureau of Governmental Research, The Economic Impact of Aquariums on Selected Cities (New Orleans: Bureau of Governmental Research, 1986), 25.

<sup>10</sup>Louisiana Legislature 1986 Act 309 (13)(A).

with good intentions overall.<sup>11</sup>

What project leaders expect to accomplish through operation of the Aquarium of the Americas is expressed in several documents, such as the Audubon Institute mission statement, but there are also the unstated goals of continued economic benefits, financially self-sustaining operations and continued affirmative action for minorities in hiring. For example, Audubon Institute Personnel Director Renee Brunt has indicated the goal of an Aquarium staff that is composed of 30% minorities, in accordance with the spirit of Act 309.

The City of New Orleans owns the aquarium facility but it delegates oversight of the operation to a board of trustees known as the Audubon Park Commission. Aquarium goals must be in accordance with the Commission's mandate, which was originally defined by Act 191 of the 1914 Louisiana Legislature as follows:

Section 3. Be it further enacted, etc., That the duties of the said Audubon Park Commission shall be to take charge and supervision of the said Park, and to preserve and improve it for public recreation and use as a place of public resort and pleasure, and such management, repair, maintenance, development and improvement of the said Park.

Act 309 of 1986 was actually an amendment to enact extra sections of Act 191. These sections authorized the Audubon Park Commission as follows:

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<sup>11</sup>"Aquarium Update: How Involved are Minorities?," New Orleans Tribune, January 1987, 4.

Section 10 (A) In addition to any other powers, duties, functions, or responsibilities heretofore vested in the commission by this or any other Act, the commission may establish, acquire, construct, operate, repair, maintain, control, develop, and improve an aquarium and related facilities located within the city of New Orleans and may supervise and control these facilities for public recreation and use as a place of public resort and pleasure.

The 1986 reference to recreation and public resort is based on the 1914 language, and the result is the seeming desire of the state to effect a recreational facility in which education is of no concern. The original wording was appropriate for Audubon Park, which at that time did not possess a zoo or aquarium, but to apply the purpose of pleasure as the primary justification for the new facility is unfortunate because, technically, one could object to an education or conservation ethic subsuming the goals of public resort and pleasure.

The Audubon Park Commission oversees the Aquarium endeavor, but licenses the day-to-day management of the facility to the Audubon Institute, a not-for-profit agency that is the reconstituted Friends of the Zoo. It is interesting to compare the objectives of Audubon Institute as stated in its new articles of incorporation and by-laws and the objectives of Audubon Institute as put forth in its mission statement. Both are reproduced below:

#### RESTATED ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

##### Article II

This corporation is organized on a non-stock basis and it shall be organized and operated not for private

profit exclusively for educational purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or its successor.

### RESTATED BY-LAWS

#### Article II

The objectives of the corporation shall be:

1. To increase community involvement and interest in educational and cultural activities;
2. To provide volunteer services when needed;
3. To sponsor educational programs and community events;
4. To raise funds for special projects and improvements;
5. To engage in any activity which is in the furtherance of or benefits the maintenance of a zoo, aquarium, animal or cultural and educational facility of any kind.

### MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Audubon Institute is to cultivate awareness and appreciation of life and the earth's resources and to help conserve and enrich our natural world.

#### Objectives

1. Conservation: to participate in the global effort to conserve natural resources by developing and maintaining captive stocks of endangered plants and animals, and by cooperating with related projects in the wild.
2. Education: to impart knowledge and understanding of the interaction of nature and man through programs, exhibits and publications and to encourage participation in global conservation efforts.
3. Recreation: to provide entertaining and pleasurable experiences for all visitors in an attractive clean environment.

4. Research: to foster the collection and dissemination of scientific information that will enhance the conservation and education objectives of the Zoo.

5. Economics: to insure long range financial security by sound fiscal management and continued development funding through creative means that encourage corporate, foundation and individual support.

6. Leadership: to serve as a model in the civic and professional communities. To foster a spirit of cooperation, participation and pride.

The corporate articles establish the Institute as an educational agency with the intent of tax exemption. For any other purpose, the term "educational" is too vague to serve a useful purpose. There is nothing unusual in that arrangement; the goal is to avoid using language that may constrain the activities of the corporation in the future. The disadvantage with such vagueness is that the exact intent of the corporate endeavor is left unclear.

The by-laws refine the incorporation articles with the intent of guiding the activities of the members while remaining malleable to redefinition. The legally binding by-laws may be redefined or repealed by the Board of Directors, whereas a two-thirds vote of the members is required to change the corporate charter.

The by-laws are still rather broad goals. Audubon Institute executives felt that a more precise statement of policy would be of benefit to the Institute. In particular, the staff wanted to emphasize its commitment to conservation and that goal appears first on the mission statement.

It is clear that some goals of the Aquarium project



either have already been attained or are in the process of fulfillment. Urban renewal has occurred as the scarcely used warehouses that blocked public access to the riverfront have been removed to make way for Woldenburg Park and the Aquarium. The goal of minority participation in construction and services has been achieved, although fulfillment of minority participation in operations awaits the phase-in of Aquarium operations that have only recently been initiated. Similarly, the economic objectives of jobs and spending relative to the construction of the facility have been attained while fulfillment of fiscal goals in connection with the operation of the Aquarium awaits its opening.

There is every indication that the economic objectives for Aquarium operations will be met. The Aquarium of the Americas is projected to have a \$1.1 million yearly surplus of operating funds<sup>12</sup>, which is an enviable circumstance as far as museums go. The goal of raising \$15 million from the private sector was announced to have been met as of April, 1989.

That the Aquarium will provide for public resort and recreation is self evident. Unfortunately, the goals of conservation, education and research are problematic and are explored in the section entitled Challenges and Problems.

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<sup>12</sup>Harrison Price Company, Feasibility Analysis and Conceptual Planning for a Major Aquarium Attraction, (Los Angeles: Harrison Price Company, 1985), 7.

### Management Structure

Contrary to what might be expected, the Aquarium of the Americas is not a separate institution with its own management, although it is a large separate physical facility with an imposing presence on the downtown riverfront. Likewise, the Audubon Institute is not an umbrella organization overseeing the management of the Aquarium; it is the management, and the Aquarium is simply one of its departments. To see why this arrangement is actually the most advantageous, it is necessary to discuss the scope of the Audubon Institute's authority and responsibilities, bearing in mind that the management structure of the Institute in connection with the Aquarium is still being refined.

The Harrison Price report commissioned by City officials was not only a feasibility study. It was also a conceptual analysis, and it described four potential organizational structures that could be adopted for the New Orleans aquarium. The first possibility was full ownership and operation by a public agency, usually the municipality itself, with an aquarium society providing supplementary support in areas such as education and fundraising. Seattle has such an arrangement. Another possible form was full ownership and operation by non-profit societies, such as those which manage the aquariums in Boston and Monterey. This arrangement requires major private capital endowment, which was an unlikely circumstance in New Orleans. Problems

of financing ruled out both of these options. Neither the City alone nor private endowment alone seemed capable of funding a major aquarium. A third alternative, private ownership and operation on a commercial, for profit basis, was rejected because it is an arrangement suited only to large-scale sea life parks capable of generating high rates of visitors. No major aquarium is so operated.

By default, that left the fourth possibility, which was a publicly-owned but society-operated attraction in which both public and private funds would support the construction of the facility, but in which funds for ongoing operations would be the responsibility of the not-for-profit management. The report suggested creating a new City commission to oversee the Aquarium and an independent "Friends of the Aquarium" society to operate the facility. It just so happened that everything recommended by Harrison Price already existed in New Orleans as the structure that had evolved to oversee and manage the Audubon Zoo.

There was a difference, however, because most jobs at Audubon Zoo were still civil service positions, and as recently as 1987, the City of New Orleans provided \$400,000 in subsidy to the Zoo<sup>13</sup>. The Aquarium project was the cue to end that subsidy. It was a convenient way of bailing out of an arrangement that had outgrown its usefulness. In the -----

<sup>13</sup>Audubon Park Commission, Financial Statements and Auditor's Report: Year Ended December 31, 1987, (New Orleans: Audubon Park Commission, 1987), 6.

past, municipal support for the Zoo had been both a justification and a means of leverage for retaining the civil service requirement for Zoo employees. Civil service has traditionally been a vehicle for patronage in City government, and in recent times had become a means for promoting minority employment in New Orleans since the advent of significant Black participation in City government in the 1970's. By the time of the Barthelemy administration, however, that goal had largely been fulfilled. The subsidy had become a burden to the financially strapped City. In light of the success of the privatization of the Zoo's financing and management, there was no reason to continue City expenditures other than a case of the jitters by Zoo employees who feared reorganization and privatization. As one worker put it, "Everybody's big question was, 'What's going to happen to me?'" How the Zoo effected its transition from civil service is one of the management challenges discussed later.

Aside from the civil service issue, the City of New Orleans had in place the very structure that Harrison Price was recommending; extending the authority and responsibility of the Audubon Park Commission and Friends of the Zoo was the eminently practical response to that recommendation. Taking on the Aquarium project required more than a name change for Friends of the Zoo, so it was reincorporated as the Audubon Institute. Not only were the articles of

incorporation and the by-laws restated, but the corporate objectives were expanded to encompass the possibility of future large-scale projects.

The reorganization of the Audubon Institute revolved around the need to most effectively utilize currently existing resources. For example, because the executive offices were already in place at the Zoo, and because office space is so much more expensive downtown, the Audubon Institute staff chose to remain where they were for reasons of economy. In a similar manner, because an administrative structure already existed, it was far easier and less expensive to extend that administration to encompass the management of the Aquarium rather than create an entirely new level of management. Why duplicate functions such as personnel and payroll when one office could easily handle those tasks for both the Zoo and the Aquarium? The real question was, what could be centralized and what had to be duplicated? It took several executive sessions and a number of prototypes of organizational schemes to come up with the present arrangement but the eventual policy decision was to maintain a minimal administrative personnel presence at the Aquarium.

Some functions could not be centralized. Both the Zoo and the Aquarium each had unique animal husbandry requirements, necessitating a fully staffed and relatively autonomous department at each facility. The differences between the two types of husbandry is so great that little transfer

of resources between the two departments could be expected. Nevertheless, in some areas, such as veterinary resources, cooperation would be required. The efforts to promote cooperation between the two husbandry departments is one of the management challenges described later.

Duplication of the functions of security and maintenance would have to be accomplished for the Aquarium, but unlike the husbandry departments, those areas would be amenable to cross town transfers of employees based on manpower requirements. Thus, for example, on a rainy day at the Zoo, groundskeepers could be transferred to the indoor Amazon exhibit at the Aquarium in order to maintain the rain forest. The same principle would apply for security guards and, again, the most efficient and economical use of resources would be attained.

The evolution of the reorganization process is apparent in the sequence of three organizational charts that appear in Appendix A. The final chart diagrams the present administrative arrangement. The centralization of some functions and the necessary duplication of others is readily apparent.

One interesting aspect of the Audubon Institute's management is the assertion by its executives that it is they who develop policy rather than the board of trustees<sup>14</sup>. Director of Administration Sudie Carroll points out that  
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<sup>14</sup>Sudie Carroll and Dale Stastny, interview by the author, 29 March 1989, New Orleans.

board members rarely have time for policy discussions. "Of course, it depends if you have a strong board chairman," she says, "but generally the staff recommends policy and then gets board approval." She adds that no significant staff decision has ever been rejected by the boards of the Audubon Institute or the Audubon Park Commission because the staff does the board's homework for them, anticipating any questions they might have.

Such an arrangement is probably the rule rather than the exception in most organizations. "The distribution of responsibilities among trustees, the director and the staff do not fall neatly into the categories of policymaking and implementation," according to Turk and Gallo, who propose a more complex distinction in which policymaking is a shared responsibility.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, if a failure of policy becomes apparent, the staff and director must bear some of the blame.

### Summary

The Audubon Institute with its Zoo and Aquarium is a model of vigor and success. In a city that often seems resigned to circumstance and cynical of deal making, the citizens of New Orleans hold the Audubon Institute in high esteem. Friends of the Zoo lives on as the development department of the Institute, and its Zoo-to-Do is one of the -----

<sup>15</sup>Frederick J. Turk and Robert P. Gallo, Financial Management Strategies for Arts Organizations, (New York: American Council for the Arts, 1984), 62.

nation's premiere fundraisers. It is with much anticipation that the city awaits disclosure of the Audubon Institute's new long-range plans which are currently nearing fruition. One aspect of those designs is Zoo 2000, a master plan that will take Audubon Zoo to the year 2000 and will involve approximately \$20 million in improvements for Audubon Zoo. A second plan is for Phase II of the Aquarium of the Americas, which will allow for the acquisition and exhibition of marine mammals such as whales and dolphins. Other projects being considered are an arboretum for endangered plant species, a natural history museum and an environmental issues museum possibly entitled "The Future of Man."



## **CHAPTER II**

### **INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTION**

In order to perform a managerial analysis, the intern arranged to observe and participate in the activities of the Husbandry Department of the Aquarium of the Americas. At that time, the only existing departments of the Aquarium were the offices of Husbandry, Minority Participation and Construction. The Audubon Institute was also busy with the myriad duties of overseeing the project as a whole. Those duties included refining the administrative structure, and fine tuning the attraction's exhibitry. The latter task involved perpetual consultation with a host of groups, such as the Seattle design and exhibit team of BIOS, and the consortium of New Orleans architects known as the Bienville Group. Furthermore, most decisions had to be made in consultation with the Directors of Construction, Minority Participation and Husbandry. Also, regular progress reports to the Audubon Park Commission were required. As a result, the offices of the Aquarium of the Americas were filled with activity as representatives of various groups and departments came and went to innumerable meetings.

Into this environment, the intern reported for duty on the same day that four of the senior curators of the

Aquarium came on board. At that point, the Husbandry Department shifted into high gear as a number of deadlines loomed. The list of species assigned to the various display tanks had to be approved, and various technical aspects of the exhibits were reviewed. In addition, the curators began planning the numerous collecting expeditions to Florida, Texas and Delaware which required that off-site holding facilities be ready to receive the animals. Although much of the planning and organizing that ensued within Husbandry was of a technical nature, the overall process was a microcosm of the Aquarium project as a whole; the Husbandry staff dealt with their own problems of design, construction, security, personnel, accounting, policies and procedures in connection with the establishment of their department and the creation of off site holding facilities that amounted to a second large scale aquarium. Construction of the holding facilities was a feat accomplished by a staff of only seven persons, including the intern.

For the first third of the internship, the Husbandry staff reported to work at the main offices of the Aquarium near the construction site of the permanent facility. During that time, the role of the intern was largely that of an observer. This circumstance was more than offset by the abundance of executive activity and shop talk, which provided the intern occasion to become acquainted with the senior executives of the Audubon Institute and to observe their

activities. For example, on one occasion, the intern sat in on an executive session of the Audubon Institute in which numerous design, construction and policy issues were discussed or resolved. On another occasion, the intern was able to observe a fundraising pitch to corporate representatives by Development Director Bill Kurtz. Later, the intern interviewed most of the Audubon Institute senior executives and sat in on an Audubon Park Commission meeting. In addition, the arrival of the curators necessitated an elaborate briefing by Director Hewitt of the Aquarium project activities to date. That session became the first of the daily morning staff meetings in which the intern participated and in which the challenges and problems of the Husbandry Department were discussed and resolved.

Director Hewitt and other Audubon Institute personnel were more than generous in keeping their part of the internship bargain. As a result, the intern accumulated a wealth of observations and information with which to perform an analysis of both the Aquarium and the Audubon Institute. In exchange, the intern provided his labors as the Aquarium saw fit, and the last two-thirds of the internship were served in the construction of the off-site holding facility. During that time, daily staff meetings continued and a variety of administrative challenges was observed and recorded by the intern. But the intern's actual labors were devoted to construction of the life support systems for the

animals--a task that was of great interest to the intern but that was not administrative in nature. Nevertheless, the internship provided the opportunity to see an organization spring to life. What follows is a description of some of the duties and challenges directly connected with the internship.

One task delegated to the intern was the design of forms to be used to record the accession, treatment, death or de-accession of animals in the collection. The design of the forms was accomplished in consultation with the curators, and copies of those sheets are included in Appendix B. The forms are of interest because they reflect the nature of this type of museum's holding, in which collection items not only can get sick or be eaten, but can occasionally change sex. The forms do not reflect the fact that many of the Aquarium animals will not be cataloged because they are too difficult to identify as individuals in a large school of the same species, or else because they are relatively short lived creatures. The intern was given an elaborate explanation and demonstration of records keeping and cataloging at the Audubon Zoo by its Registrar, Linda Robledo, but the degree to which the Aquarium husbandry department will account for its collection is unknown to the intern. Animals were not obtained until the week after the internship ended, when the Husbandry staff returned from an expedition to the Florida Keys with nurse sharks.

Another project delegated to the intern was the solicitation of bids for a fence and the oversight of the construction of that fence around the warehouse holding facility. An indication of the need for security measures were the numerous dirty syringes that littered the warehouse yard. Not only were the valuable contents of the facility vulnerable to vandalism, but the staff members themselves might be in need of protection. Because of the prohibitive expense of security guards, the solution was to install an elaborate electronic system and a fence. The security system would also double as a monitor of various aspects of the life support systems, precluding the need to staff the facility around the clock. The fence would presumably keep vandals away from the company vehicles that would be parked in the yard, but events proved otherwise; wheels were stolen from a truck overnight.

All decisions and activities of the internship were carried out with consideration for the larger needs and objectives of the project. For example, a minority fence contractor was suggested to the intern for inclusion in the bid solicitations for the warehouse fence.

In the same way that the resolution of security concerns involved issues such as budget constraints and minority participation, most of the endeavors of the Husbandry Department were accomplished with regard for the concerns of the Aquarium project as a whole. For example,

actions by the Husbandry Department were considered in light of their effect on public relations. One decision by Mr. Hewitt was to acquire as soon as possible several large, impressive sharks in order to give visiting V.I.P.s and potential donors a taste of things to come. Although it was not essential to have the sharks so early, their presence might assist fundraising and publicity efforts.

The intern noted the general public's enthusiasm for the Aquarium project as a whole and for sharks in particular. Director Hewitt engaged in creative efforts to use that enthusiasm for the Aquarium's benefit. He helped devise a sport fishing tournament, to be sponsored by the Gulf Coast Conservation Association, in which any animals hooked would be kept alive by the Aquarium staff and transported back to New Orleans for display. In exchange for prizes and T-shirts, and in exchange for letting the sport fishing community contribute to the project, the Aquarium will generate goodwill and publicity as well as obtain animals with minimal effort.

Because the intern's duties, as compared to his observations, were largely not administrative in nature, the skills and knowledge acquired by the intern as a result of those duties were of a technical nature and applicable only to aquarium management. Administration of the overall operations of such a facility is a goal of the intern, and knowledge of the issues and challenges of the husbandry

department of such a facility is beneficial to a future manager. For this reason, the tasks of the internship were enlightening and pleasurable. In addition, the internship allowed the intern to gain insight into the executive management of such a facility.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS**

##### The Audubon Institute in Transition

When Friends of the Zoo was authorized to operate the Aquarium of the Americas, it faced a major personnel challenge as it contemplated the reorganization necessary to accomplish its new managerial duties. An end to civil service was being considered as the City of New Orleans agreed to the complete privatization of daily operations at Audubon Zoo. Friends of the Zoo reformed as the Audubon Institute by completely restating its corporate charter and by-laws, but its real challenge was to deal with Zoo employees who were being confronted with the possible loss of their job security. How the Institute dealt with this challenge is an example of superior management.

The Harrison Price report described two arrangements in which municipalities and non-profit societies typically cooperated in governing public facilities. In one case, the society played a supporting role and in the other case, the society was responsible for full operation of the facility. What New Orleans possessed, however, was something in between. The arrangement had evolved over the years into a workable, but awkward, structure in which the traditional



ties of authority and responsibility had become unraveled. Civil service employees were only indirectly accountable to their senior managers. In turn, the highest executives were not free to set personnel guidelines. What Zoo employees traded for their immunity to discharge, however, were very low wages. Worse still, the dichotomy of civil service personnel being managed by private, albeit not-for-profit, managers was, as one Zoo employee put it, "schizophrenic." "There was sort of a caste system because people felt that there was no possibility of promotion to the private executive level from the civil service middle management level."

The essence of the problem was that the entire Zoo staff faced the unknown. Both the executive management and the rank and file grappled with uncertainties as the Friends of the Zoo pondered alternatives and civil service personnel awaited their fate.

The solution to the challenge was simple. Let the employees themselves shape their future. Let them evaluate the pros and cons of various alternatives and let them propose solutions and options. Administrators reckoned that any resolution in which the rank and file had significantly contributed to the solution would be firmly supported by those employees. Zoo managers also gambled that the employees would end up proposing practical and workable solutions.

One element of that strategy was the proposal by Renee Brunt, the Audubon Institute Director of Personnel, to have

employees participate in the development of the employee handbook. Previously, there had been no set of guidelines other than tradition by which Zoo affairs were managed, and as staff members faced the transition from the rigid protocol of civil service rules to the non-existent guidelines of the new Audubon Institute, the need to develop policy and procedures was clear. By developing practical guidelines with employee input, Zoo administrators allowed the rank and file to effect a measure of control over their own destiny. The new Audubon Institute handbook is prefaced with an acknowledgement by name of every employee who contributed to the endeavor.

One hurdle had been cleared, but there were others to be overcome as well. One problem that automatically disappeared in the transition from civil service to private management was the barrier to promotion. The biggest problem, however, was what to do with workers who preferred not to leave the civil service. Low pay did not matter to some who were near retirement and its accompanying benefits. Others were perhaps marginal employees who feared discharge once the protection of civil service was removed.

Again, the solution was simple. Let the employees decide for themselves whether or not to remain with the City or go private. Audubon Institute executives preferred an end to civil service in order to effect full managerial authority. They gambled that most workers would choose to go

private in order to receive a pay increase. Although no guarantee of job security was offered, it was clear to the workers that staffing changes were unlikely during the transition, and the lure of a hefty pay increase indeed prompted the Zoo staff as a whole to switch. Only three or four employees chose to remain with the City.

The outcome of the Audubon Institute reorganization has been a satisfied work force and a more effective administration. The City of New Orleans no longer has direct dealings with Zoo hiring or financing. Management of both the Audubon Zoo and the Aquarium of the Americas has successfully been privatized.

#### The Aquarium/Zoo Interface

The Aquarium of the Americas and the Audubon Zoo may be mere departments of the Audubon Institute, but they each possess a huge physical plant and have or will have large operating staffs. Because of the distinct nature of each facility and the unique needs of their respective animal husbandry departments, not to mention the physical distance between the two attractions, one might suspect that very little interaction between these two giant departments of the Audubon Institute would occur. As it turns out, there is a web of mutual concerns that prompted attempts by the Audubon Institute management to effect an interface between the Aquarium and the Zoo. Although the Audubon Institute has plans to shuffle maintenance and security personnel back

and forth between the two facilities, that task is expected to be a routine logistics problem; in contrast, the need to induce cooperation between the two already existing husbandry departments necessitated attempts at diplomacy followed by an executive session to resolve certain conflicts.

The challenge arose because of the Audubon Institute's desire for the two departments to cooperate in the education and conservation objectives of the Institute by augmenting each other's activities. There is some functional overlap between the two departments because, on the one hand, the Zoo maintains aquariums in its Swamp Exhibit and Reptile Encounter, and, on the other hand, the Aquarium will maintain a variety of birds and reptiles in its Amazon Exhibit and Mississippi River Exhibit. Because of the overlap, it would be advantageous for the two departments to share expertise or resources if the need arose. For example, the Aquarium is in a position to obtain better and larger specimens of fish which are species displayed at the Zoo's Swamp Exhibit; the Zoo might consider employing the Aquarium as a supplier of those fish at little or no expense to the Zoo. Likewise, the Zoo might be able to draw upon the Aquarium's collection for breeding purposes; both facilities will have Rainbow Boas, for example. The Aquarium also needs Zoo resources since it cannot legally obtain veterinary drugs to treat its animals without the cooperation of the Zoo's veterinarian. In addition, because the Aquarium is designed with inade-

quate quarantine and treatment facilities, it might need to employ Zoo facilities for some of its bird care.

In response to the desire for everyone to be one happy family, the Audubon Institute instigated a weekend retreat at which high level members of the staffs of each department could become acquainted through conferences and socializing. The overnight stay at a Gulf Coast hotel was even arranged so that staffers from opposite facilities shared rooms overnight. At the conference, each employee gave a brief account of his duties, plans and previous experience. Concerns were raised by Zoo members about possible duplication of the Zoo's education and conservation efforts by the Aquarium. Zoo members also expressed a fear that the Aquarium staff would rely too heavily on Zoo facilities.

The proper use of scarce resources became an issue. Although the retreat was deemed a success, it was also characterized as a "sounding out process," indicating wariness by the participants. That wariness soon became competitiveness as disputes arose over a variety of mutual concerns. For example, the Zoo had too many albino alligators but considered them to be "signature" animals and preferred not to hand over any spares to the Aquarium. On the other hand, the Zoo was willing to offload unwanted birds of prey that tended to accumulate as a result of their bird rehabilitation program, while simultaneously wanting to avoid having the Aquarium place any sick birds from the

Aquarium collection into Zoo treatment facilities. The Zoo also questioned the duplication of display animals at both facilities; why should the Aquarium exhibit species that the Zoo already displayed?

Events came to a head over the issue of whether or not a veterinarian was needed at the Aquarium, with the aquarists contending that they alone possessed the practical medical knowledge to care for fish and the Zoo veterinarian contending that she with her legal credentials as a vet should have final authority. Professional standings were at stake and comments abounded about each facility being a consumer of wildlife. One Zoo staff member even claimed that some of her money was actually in the Aquarium budget and the Aquarium Director of Husbandry was forced to declare that he was in charge of his own facility.

At that point, Audubon Institute executives brought both parties together and the veterinarian and budget issues were resolved in favor of the Aquarium's autonomy. It will be another year before the Aquarium obtains any birds, so the issue of exchanging avian resources is still not settled. Subsequent to the executive session, the two departments have engaged in mutual cooperation and one could not tell that a dispute had ever existed. The intern was not present at the meeting in which a resolution of the problem occurred, so he can not comment on managerial style except to observe that impartiality was maintained by allowing both

parties, in each other's presence, to present their case before their superiors. The issue was then dealt with immediately.

Another challenge of the Zoo/Aquarium interface was the desire by some workers to permanently transfer from the Zoo to the Aquarium. The Audubon Institute was open to allowing Zoo employees to pursue careers as aquarists but it did not want to start a stampede in which the Zoo might find itself suddenly without skilled workers in some departments. The challenge was to develop procedures to prevent that occurrence while avoiding worker dissatisfaction with restrictions on transfers. Favoring that policy was the lack of marine aquarium experience by any Zoo aquarists, so that transferring to the Aquarium would involve their starting at entry level positions. Thus, one decision by the Audubon Institute was that transferring employees should not retain their current salary levels. Because Zoo employees had just received significant pay increases, only those who truly desired to become marine aquarists would have found acceptable their new, lower entry level salaries at the Aquarium. Another decision was to disallow several employees of the same Zoo department transferring simultaneously so as to leave that department without qualified personnel. A problem was that if only one of several employees desiring transfers was initially allowed to go to the Aquarium, he would have seniority over others who had also wanted to go.

Husbandry Director Hewitt resolved that problem by stating that promotion would be based exclusively on merit and not on seniority.

Audubon Institute Director of Administration Sudie Carroll attributes any problems between the two facilities to growing pains. While acknowledging that some Zoo employees might be jealous of the money and attention that the Aquarium is receiving, she contends that other employees are bored with the Aquarium project, noting that in any case, the Audubon Institute will soon unveil its Zoo 2000 plan, which should return some of the limelight to the Zoo.

#### Fulfillment of Goals

For zoos and aquariums, the most basic element of their mission to educate and conserve is a familiarity by the general public with the animals themselves. People are more likely to care about something which they have seen or experienced. On the other hand, a visitor who adores the elephants at the Zoo, but who then purchases ivory at a jewelry store, unaware of his small contribution to the present elephant genocide, can arguably have been entertained rather than educated. Eighteen years ago, the Audubon Park Zoo Study had this to say:

Holding animals in captivity should not be done lightly: zoos must do more than merely provide entertainment. Public services are the means by which zoo become more



than freak shows and menageries. In the area of education, zoo can make outstanding contributions.<sup>16</sup>

Zoos must justify themselves in terms of education, and yet, zoos, in and of themselves, are not educational without supplementary instruction. Museums, including zoos and aquariums, merely "enable educational activities taking place there to have a greater impact." Those points are stated repeatedly in the Zoo Study. Although the study was written at a time when animals were kept in bare metal cages, the principle still applies to the naturalistic enclosures of today's Audubon Zoo; instruction must supplement the mere presentation of animals in order to make the facility more than an amusement park. The question is, what are appropriate educational activities in light of the limited abilities of these facilities? After all, aquariums and zoos are not schools which can require attendance. At best, these museums must employ the visitor's curiosity to effect an informal lesson.

The Audubon Park Zoo Study described in detail two areas of educational activity worthy of effort. In one, guided tours for school groups were recommended, but the study noted that tours for students above the elementary grade level were impractical because of scheduling and also

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<sup>16</sup>Bureau of Governmental Research, Audubon Park Zoo Study Part I: Zoo Improvement Plan, (New Orleans: Bureau of Governmental Research, 1971), 6.

noted that most visitors were adults. Because tours reach only a minority of park visitors, they can not be regarded as a primary educational endeavor of the facility. The education departments of museums typically suffer from a kindergarten complex, in which they devote most of their energies to that minority of visitors, children, while, inexplicably, failing to communicate effectively with the adult majority. Although a variety of services are offered, including lectures, tours, outreach programs, teacher workshops and so on, none of these are directed at the typical visitor who pays his admission, walks through the exhibits, and then leaves. Until these casual visitors are targeted for instruction of some kind, museum education departments will remain failed endeavors.

The other recommendation of the Zoo Study was that the exhibit graphics do more than merely name the species and its range; the graphics should instill environmental understanding or change attitudes. The problem is that this recommendation was never carried out. The Audubon Institute's new Director of Planning and Zoo Operations, Bob Becker, acknowledges that the Zoo has not been making the needed impact. He indicates that zoos are just now entering a new phase of their nature in which conservation and education are truly taking priority over recreation, and points to an effort now under way to evaluate more effective ways of communicating ecological concerns to park visitors

through improved graphics. "The problem," according to Audubon Institute Deputy Director Dale Stastny, "is that graphics now tend to be directed towards dry information rather than attitudes that will translate into action." Unfortunately, that is what the Zoo Study said eighteen years ago.

The current review of Zoo instruction is perhaps sparked by the superior storytelling of the new Aquarium of the Americas. The Aquarium's design team has provided for abundant and succinct messages that are not only informative but which also include environmental education. Here is an example:

#### Turtles in Trouble

Sea Turtles were once common in the Gulf.  
Today they are rare and endangered.  
Turtles are hunted for meat, oil,  
and shells for "tortoise-shell" jewelry.

Other human activities threaten turtles.  
Turtles drown in shrimp nets  
and choke on plastic bags  
they mistake for jellyfish.  
Many of their tropical nesting beaches  
are now covered with resort hotels.  
Oil spills and other pollution  
can be fatal for turtles.

In deciding on the appropriateness of the educational activities of a zoo or aquarium, the question of priorities arises. The presentation of marine life by a facility such as the Aquarium of the Americas would seem to dictate significant attention to issues such as the disappearance of breeding grounds for fishes or the need to regulate marine

life harvesting. As one of the Aquarium graphics sums it up, "No wetland, no fisheries." In light of today's dramatic environmental difficulties, the traditional emphasis on micro ecology (for example, interesting survival mechanisms) to the exclusion of larger issues (such as why the very survival of that species is in question) should be reevaluated. There is room for both. Whether or not the Aquarium succeeds in this endeavor remains to be seen, although the equal mix of traditional and environmental instruction contained in the tentative Aquarium graphics is grounds for optimism. The Aquarium will apparently endeavor to instruct as it provides recreation. If the Audubon Zoo follows suit, then the Audubon Institute will truly fulfill its mission to educate.

#### Conservation and Research

The goal of conservation is troublesome when applied to zoos and aquariums. Despite well publicized incidents of captive births, both types of facilities essentially consume wildlife because they must replenish their collections from wild populations. Aquariums in particular face the regular task of frequent collecting trips. Aquariums typically seek to prevent the dissemination of information about their consumption of animals<sup>17</sup>. Zoos are generally forthright  
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<sup>17</sup>Three major aquariums contacted by the author refused to divulge animal inventory statistics other than to state the number of species and number of individuals on hand.

with such statistics, although they also tend to avoid publicity over animal losses.

Learning the skills of captive breeding is vitally important in an age of endangered wildlife and only through collecting will captive breeding be learned. Zoos in particular aggressively pursue that task. Unfortunately, due to the complexity of marine life cycles, aquariums are rarely in a position to recreate the conditions necessary for propagation of their collections.

Neither zoos nor aquariums are dedicated research facilities. Instead, they rely on observations and occurrences that are incidental to their task of displaying animals. In this manner, a useful body of knowledge has been accumulated and zoos have been able to capitalize on the propensity of their captives to breed; they have instigated a nationwide effort to coordinate breeding activities through loans of animals. But the long term prospects for public aquarium breeding are still unknown. On the other hand, most marine species are not endangered, so breeding research is less of a concern than it is for zoos. Because of the great expense of life support for water animals, it is perhaps unreasonable to expect a recreational facility to also be a fish hatchery. In any case, the effect of public aquarium collecting on wildlife populations is insignificant in comparison to the predations of commercial fishing, and the educational benefits outweigh any detriments.

Zoos may soon be net producers of animal life, but despite advances in life support technology and the treatment of diseases, the only foreseeable contribution to conservation by aquariums is their potential to educate the general public about the importance of the regulated harvesting of wildlife and the preservation of breeding habitats.

### **CHAPTER III**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### The Audubon Zoo

The Audubon Zoo was recently rated one of the top ten zoos for animal welfare in a national poll<sup>18</sup> but the real action is unseen by the public; most zoos now participate in the Species Survival Plan, in which endangered animals are targeted for concerted breeding efforts. The Audubon Zoo will soon establish a hoofstock breeding facility by purchasing a large tract of land outside of metropolitan New Orleans. The Zoo intends to lead the way with conservation and the intern has no recommendation regarding Audubon Zoo's conservation efforts.

The Zoo also intends to provide an example to other zoos by leading the way in education. Through a major reevaluation of the way it communicates to park visitors, Audubon Zoo hopes to change attitudes and spark action. Because the problem of education is under study by the Zoo, the intern must await the results of that study. The study, however, should vigorously address the issue to amend for past neglect. In addition to recommending improvements in -----

<sup>18</sup>"How Well Would Your Zoo Rate?," Parade, 26 March 1989, 5.

communications to park visitors, the study should include the following two structural improvements to the Zoo's management.

The first change should be the placement of the Graphics Department under the guidance of the Education Department. The Graphics Department may know how to print signs, but it clearly does not know what to say. The Education staff should dictate to the graphics department just what the content of those graphics should be.

The second suggestion for structural improvement is a mechanism by which the process of education receives periodic review. A standing committee on education might have prevented the eighteen years of inadequate graphics and it might enable the avoidance of future problems. In addition, a committee would be alert to the emergence of new trends and improvements worthy of attention. The first recommendation of such a committee should be that the Education Department redirect its efforts towards the casual visitor, in order to address the majority of park users.

There is one last recommendation. Remove the Christmas tree located in the Swamp Exhibit. If the Zoo wants to demonstrate the realities of the minerals industry's presence in Louisiana swamps, let it be a well designed model showing the progressive destruction of wetlands caused in great part by the digging of canals and channels. In the absence of a balanced presentation, and because of the



incongruity of an industrial artifact in a zoo, the Christmas tree presents the appearance of the Zoo's having rewarded the industry for its donations of money to the Zoo. The exhibit of such a device reflects poorly on the judgment of the Audubon Institute.

### The Aquarium of the Americas

The Aquarium of the Americas can be justified in terms of conservation, but only through conservation education. For this reason, the role of education is doubly important for the Aquarium. Fortunately, the possibility of real education presents itself. The tentative graphics for the Aquarium are thoughtful but concise; just right for casual readers. The graphics seem to present both sides of the issues. For example, one narrative describes the benefits to marine life that oil rigs provide, while another mentions the "canals cut for oil and gas activities" that contribute to saltwater intrusion. However, full implementation of the Aquarium's instructional efforts will be necessary to assess the degree to which the mission of education is being accomplished. For example, a standup video area will tell the story of "conservation efforts of the oil and gas industry," but the intern, who worked two years for the oil industry, can not imagine what those conservation efforts are.

What also remains to be seen is the effect of the graphics' ecological message relative to the effect of the massive scale model of an oil rig that will dominate the

largest tank in the Aquarium. The model is arguably a legitimate device because oil rigs are gathering spots for marine life, but so are sunken ships, as every sport diver and fisherman knows. The model does provide relief to what would otherwise be a barren tank; it makes sense from a design standpoint. But a sunken ship would also serve that purpose and possibly be more intriguing to visitors. Oil rigs are a fact of life in local waters, but so are the Lake Pontchartrain hazard signs warning of polluted waters and contaminated shellfish. Because the oil industry has been detrimental to wildlife overall, and because the Aquarium is dedicated to wildlife, the choice of incorporating such a massive industrial monument into an animal exhibit is anathema to the goal of conservation education. Even worse, the Audubon Institute has accepted significant amounts of money from the oil, gas and petrochemical industries. The Audubon Institute is obliged to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest. Instead, project leaders have apparently paid homage to their largest donors. The Aquarium's oil rig is embarrassing and offensive.

What the visitor sees will probably affect him more than what he reads. In particular, the kind of person whose only concern is to be entertained by the funny animals is unlikely to read any graphics. There are other tools at hand; the intern recalls a museum in Cozumel that had a series of exhibits, each displaying the identical coral reef

or beach environments, but each of which revealed a progresssive state of degeneration due to pollution or overdevelopment. No words were necessary to make the point, although graphics did reinforce the message.

Because the role of education is vital to the justification of the Aquarium project, the Aquarium would be well served by being included in the Audubon Institute's comprehensive review of the Zoo's educational efforts. In particular, a standing committee on education should be established to guide and review the usefulness of the Aquarium's educational endeavors. Something as simple as an exit poll for visitors could reveal the effectiveness of the exhibits by asking, "What do you remember?" and "What did you learn?" Reliance on only one type of instructional device, such as graphics, should be abandoned in favor of a multi-faceted approach. The large entrance and exit halls of the facility are not dedicated to display tanks and could perhaps be employed to further the cause of the animals. There is always the danger that those areas will be used primarily to sell Zoo Cruise tickets or thank sponsors. Neither of those efforts are primary goals for the Aquarium.

#### The Audubon Institute

Audubon Institute executives have presided over fifteen years of capital improvements to the Zoo. They are presently overseeing construction of the new Aquarium of the Americas and they are contemplating future capital projects. In

addition, Audubon Institute executives are now responsible for the day to day management of both the Zoo and the Aquarium, and they must ensure the financial solvency of those endeavors. Because of those enormous responsibilities, there will always be the danger that staff members become so preoccupied with maintaining revenues and planning growth that they will neglect their mission to educate. Worse still is the possibility that the goals of the Institute might deliberately be compromised for the purpose of financial expediency. Only the integrity of the staff or the oversight of the trustees could prevent such an occurrence. But the Board of Trustees of the Audubon Institute has engaged only in selective oversight; the existence of standing committees for concessions, membership, fund raising, volunteers, public relations, and legal and financial matters points to a society that is well prepared to maintain its business endeavors, but the absence of standing committees for education or conservation, in light of the presence of the other committees, points to an indifference to the supposed mission of the Institute. And even committees will fail if the trustees are indifferent.

The intern recommends the creation of committees on education and conservation, but his essential plea is that the trustees of Audubon Institute take a critical interest in operating something more than recreational attractions. Audubon Institute board members must periodically review the

degree to which the goals of the Institute are being tended.

The intern also recommends a review of the decision to include an oil rig in the Gulf Tank of the Aquarium. A special committee on ethics might exonerate those who approved the giant model, but, possibly, the committee would reprimand the Audubon Institute staff for an apparent conflict of interest in which the integrity of Audubon Institute goals were seemingly compromised in expectation of significant donations of money to the project.

#### The Audubon Park Commission

The neglect of such a vital function as education by Zoo executives is perhaps understandable in light of the massive capital effort of previous years that preoccupied the staff. That excuse is not true for the Audubon Park Commission, which has had ample opportunity for the contemplation and critical thinking necessary to guide the Zoo staff. It is unfortunate that the Commission's mandate is only for recreation and public resort; in light of those goals, the Park Commission is doing a first class job. On the other hand, if those goals are the only mission, then technically, the Aquarium and Zoo do not merit an exemption from the federal income tax. But money is not the issue. Unless education and conservation take priority over public resort, those recreational facilities may one day run out of "supplies" with which to entertain the public. The Park Commission should assert ethical leadership by drafting a

mission statement of its own, in the way that the Audubon Institute has done. The Audubon Park Commission needs a higher mission than public resort and recreation.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

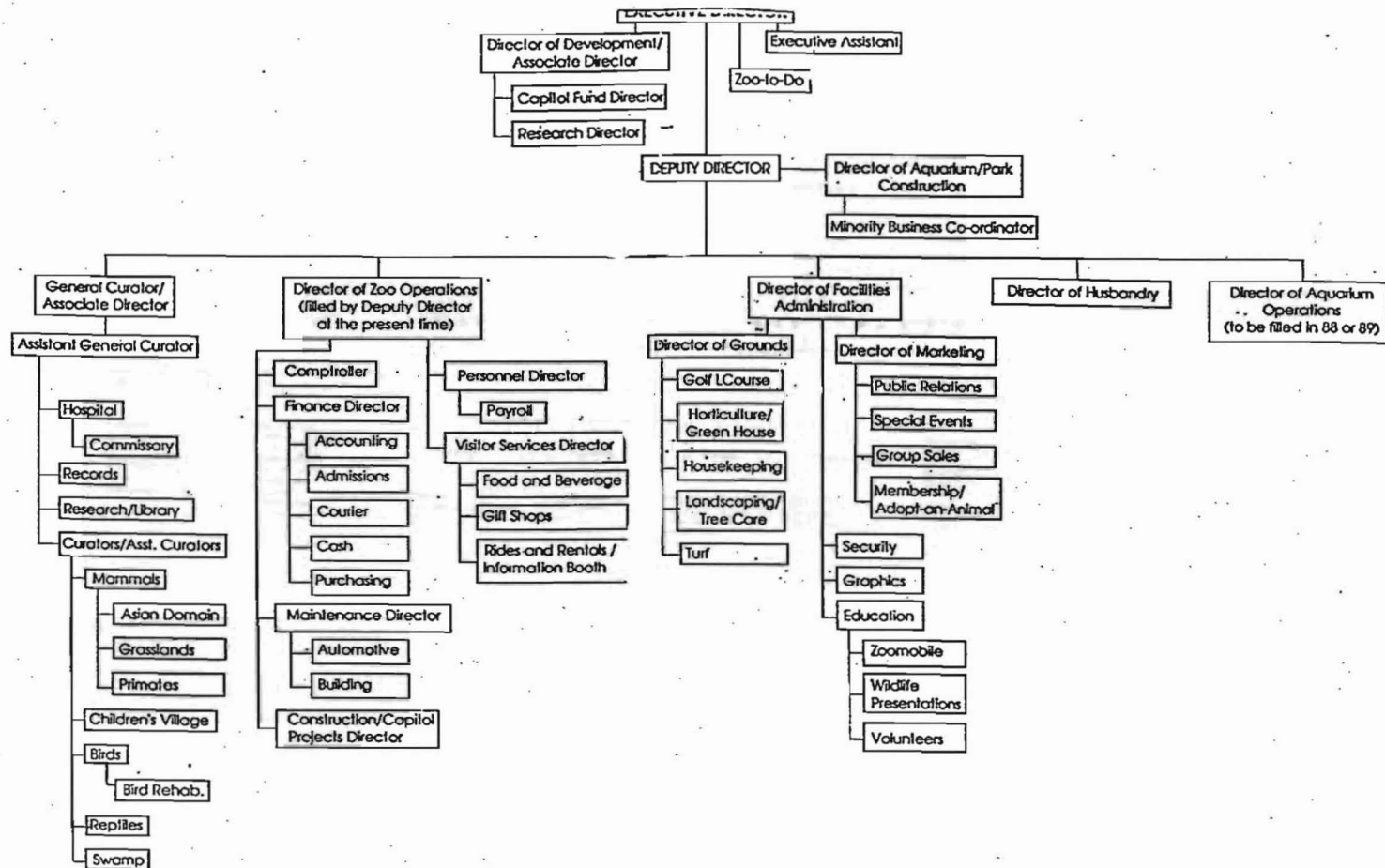
Museums exist in order to preserve artifacts, and that task consumes the resources of those institutions. The law demands instruction but the public seems content with recreation. The result is that museums engage only in perfunctory education. Public support for museums is nevertheless justified because of the conservatory nature of museums.

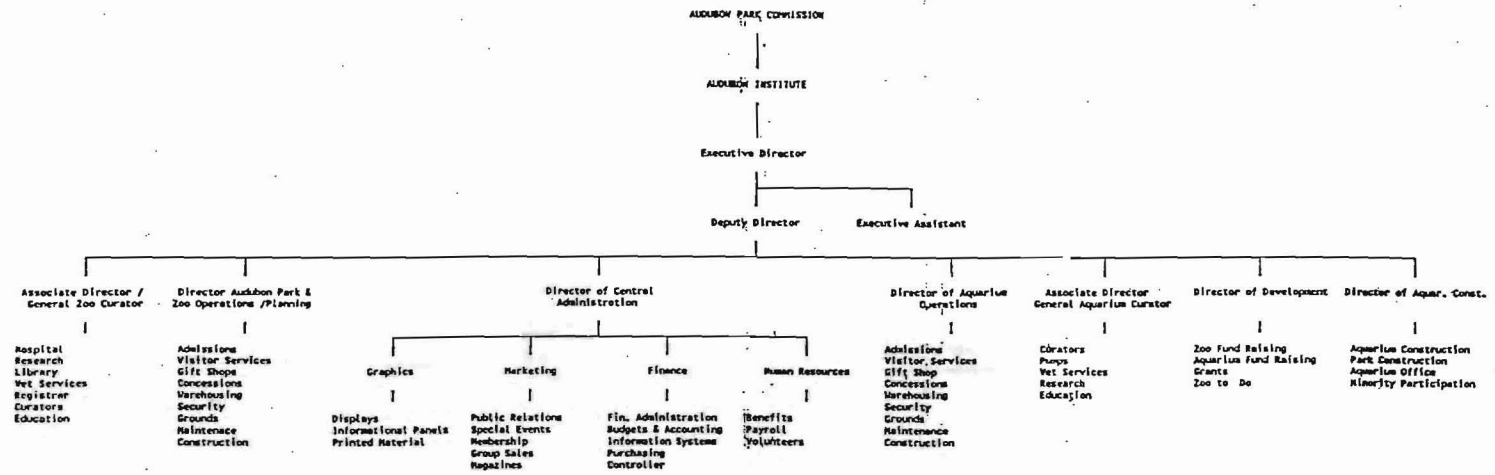
Zoos and aquariums are a special category of museum in which their collections can be preserved only through propagation. Although zoos are approaching that goal, neither type of facility can presently justify itself as a conservatory. For this reason, zoos and aquariums must truly engage in education. Unlike art museums, in which the aura of esthetic appreciation can mask the incomprehension of most visitors, aquariums and zoos very much resemble amusement parks in the absence of supplementary instruction. While other types of museums engage in preserving the world's culture and heritage, zoos and aquariums are in a race against time as wildlife is progressively eliminated from this world. Aquariums and zoos truly have a mission. That mission is to preserve wildlife through actual conservation or else through conservation education. Presently, zoos and

aquariums fail to instruct, but the potential to do so exists. The construction of an aquarium for New Orleans and the improvement of the City's zoo are grounds for optimism that those goals may yet be attained.



## Appendix A







## Appendix B

## AQUARIUM OF THE AMERICAS

## ACCESSION SHEET

Accession sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Common name \_\_\_\_\_ Total quantity \_\_\_\_\_  
 Linnaen name \_\_\_\_\_ Avg approx age \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date acquired \_\_\_\_\_ Avg approx size (cm) \_\_\_\_\_ tl fl  
 Permit # \_\_\_\_\_ Obtained by \_\_\_\_\_

I.D.#	Sex	Age	Weight (grams)	Size (centimeters)
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl
_____	m f ?	_____	_____	_____ tl fl sl

Acquired via: ( ) expedition ( ) vendor ( ) institution ( ) other

## Transport info:

## Acquired from:

Number in box	_____	Name	_____
Time spent in box	_____	Phone	_____
Treatment	_____	Contact	_____
Number of mortalities	_____	Address	_____
Known/suspected cause	_____		_____
Size of box	_____		_____

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## AQUARIUM OF THE AMERICAS

## TREATMENT SHEET

Treatment sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Common name \_\_\_\_\_

Linnaen name \_\_\_\_\_

Display tank # \_\_\_\_\_ Treatment tank # \_\_\_\_\_

Animal I.D.# \_\_\_\_\_ Accession sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Sex m f ? Age \_\_\_\_\_ Weight (grams) \_\_\_\_\_

Size (cm) \_\_\_\_\_ tl  
fl  
sl

Symptoms

Inits Date

Diagnosis

Inits Date

Treatment

Inits Date

Disposition

Inits Date

( ) Recovery

( ) Mortality mortality-sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

( ) Returned to tank

## AQUARIUM OF THE AMERICAS

## MORTALITY SHEET

Mortality sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Common name \_\_\_\_\_

Linnaen name \_\_\_\_\_

Date deceased \_\_\_\_\_

Recorded by \_\_\_\_\_

Display tank # \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment tank # \_\_\_\_\_

Accession sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Treatment sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Animal I.D.# \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Weight (gm) \_\_\_\_\_ Size (cm) \_\_\_\_\_ tl fl sl

Cause of death ( ) known ( ) suspected \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## AQUARIUM OF THE AMERICAS

111 Iberville Street, Suite 500

New Orleans, Louisiana 70130

504 595-3474

## OUTGOING SHEET

Outgoing sheet # \_\_\_\_\_

Common name \_\_\_\_\_  
Linnaen name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date sent \_\_\_\_\_ ( ) trade ( ) sale ( ) gift  
Accession sheet # \_\_\_\_\_ Treatment sheet # \_\_\_\_\_  
Animal I.D.# \_\_\_\_\_ Display tank # \_\_\_\_\_  
Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Weight (gm) \_\_\_\_\_ Size (cm) \_\_\_\_\_ tl fl sl

## Transport info:

## Destination:

Number in box	_____	Name	_____
Treatment	_____	Phone	_____
pH	_____	Contact	_____
Salinity	_____	Address	_____
Water temp	_____		_____
Size of box	_____		_____
Time spent in box	_____		
Number of mortalities	_____		
Known/suspected cause	_____		

## Comments

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## **VITA**

Chris Major was born in Coldwater, Michigan in 1956. He graduated from the University of New Orleans with a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science in 1985. He presently lives in New Orleans.