**Transcript: Video Summary of What Do Parents Want Now? Children’s Virtual Programming During the Pandemic Study by Rockman et al and the Association of Children’s Museums.**

[Link to written report.](https://rockman.com/docs/downloads/2021-REA-Childrens-Museum-Survey-Report-Feb-2021.pdf)

19:07:19 Hello, my name is Scott Burg.

19:07:21 I'm the Senior Research Principal with Rockman et al cooperative, a national research and Evaluation firm.

19:07:27 I'm thrilled to be part of AMM’s Virtual Long Game webinar and to have this opportunity to present a brief synopsis of findings from our recently completed survey with the Association of Children's Museums and 13 independent children's museums on parent-caregiver preferences for virtual programming for young children. Evaluation and audience research have had heightened importance during the Covid 19 pandemic as museum seek to make decisions about opening, closing, programming, and exhibits.

19:08:03 Over the past year, many museums have reached out to their visitors to understand under what conditions they might return, most of these studies have focused mainly on health and safety concerns, for example, mask wearing, social distancing, capacity, etc. And less on cross institutional research on public preferences for alternative programming. More specifically, remote or virtual learning activities.

19:08:31 But one outcome of the pandemic has been a proliferation of museums and online offerings. Museums are still wrestling with how much, or whether to continue to invest in virtual programming, given the considerable time and effort it takes to design and produce these programs.

19:08:49 Given this conundrum, we wanted to learn and how museums, children's museums, in particular, could better design a plan for virtual programs that better align with audience needs and interests. Last fall, we reached out to the CEO of the Children’s Museum in San Francisco, a friend and colleague, about conducting a pro bono survey amongst Bay Area children's museums to collect parent and caregiver feedback on what they would like to see commercial programs for the children. With Carol’s help, we were able to expand this opportunity to other museums, through the Association for Children's Museum network. Eventually, working with 13 different Children's Museum is across the country to distribute a simple survey to their members and mailing lists. The range of museums who participated study, spanning from larger urban based institutions such as the Chicago Children's Museum and the Minnesota Children’s Museum, and those located in small rural areas like Saratoga, and the Children's Museum of Sonoma County. Museums in our sample came largely from the Midwest and West Coast, but all major geographic features of the country were committed to some degree.

19:10:06 After many months of varying degrees of lockdown and museum closures, our studies focus was on understanding what types of virtual programming parents want now from children’s museums. We were also interested in how virtual programming preferences might be influenced by a child’s school or care situation, child age, and the amount of screen time they get each day. Between November, 2020 and January 21, we gathered over 1200 responses from the league of members, and certainly items were developed and field tested in collaboration with a small number of participating museums and then provided a unique link to their audiences. This allowed them to have access to real time edited reports, as well as individual reports, filtered with just their own data. The bulk of respondents to the survey with parents or caregivers with children ages two to seven, participating in a variety of school and care situations, such as those in school or daycare in person, those attending virtually, some of the hybrid solution, and some being homeschooled or cared for at home. Our findings show that parents interested in virtual programming is divided. About half of our respondents didn’t said that they had low interest in virtual programs, while the other half expressed moderate or high interest. Almost 60% of our respondents did indicate their willingness to pay for virtual programming.

19:11:40 One overriding concern for participants regarding virtual programming was the amount of screen time that their children are already experiencing.

19:11:57 One in five participants reported that their child spending more than three hours on a computer or digital device, each day.

19:11:58 In addition to screen time concerns, some parents were worried that their children might not have the attention span to adequately concentrate on the program. Others weren't sure whether they themselves as parents have the capacity to manage the scheduling of in class and virtual activities.

19:12:22 We were surprised to find out that more screen time did not necessarily coincide with less interest in virtual offerings. It appears that everyone's threshold is very different.

19:12:50 The fact that 85% of respondents express some degree of interest in virtual programming should offer museums some interest when considering investments in virtual programming, as a core institutional activity.

19:12:50 Parent interest in virtual programs was late, however, to the package schooling, or care their child is currently receiving.

19:12:58 We found that parents and children were attending school or daycare in person had lower interest in virtual programming, than those whose children were either homeschooled, attending school online, or hybrid situation.

19:13:12 We were also interested to find that the age of a respondent’s child was not related to their interest in virtual programming.

19:13:19 This finding might not surprise all children’s museums who recently learned on a similar thing that they haven't touched on this museum in Berkeley, California has been holding sippy cup social time on zoom, for their very own audiences.

19:13:36 Despite some of the concerns raised in parents open ended responses, it's also clear that during the pandemic, many people are creating the way to reconnect with their local Children's Museum and to somehow replicate that experience in a home environment.

19:13:53 This is what I'm finding indicates that when considering virtual programming, Children's Museums should play to their strengths. Parents showed an interest in programs that offer the kinds of experiential learning that Children's Museums excel at, programs that actively engaged participants versus more passive activities - socialization opportunities such as cooperative activities that encouraged sharing, communication, and negotiation with peers and family members. Programs that enhance creative and critical thinking skills, kinesthetically oriented experience, hands on science experiments, dance and movement activities, and activities that promote independent learning also furnishing time for parents to learn alongside their children.

19:14:42 We believe that carefully designed virtual programming can meet these needs.

19:14:45 Parents clearly did not want activities that replicated what children may already be getting from their virtual or in person school lessons such as read aloud programs that focus on studies.

19:15:01 These are just a few of our findings. We hope that you'll have time to check out our on our website, www.rockman.com and we're grateful to have had the opportunity to investigate this important topic and provide some quick feedback to museums as they seek to make decisions on how or whether or not to invest in virtual. While this study focused on children's needs and audiences, there are important lessons here for all museums considering investing in virtual. Audiences miss their museums and the special experiences they often have. If visitors are going to spend more time on the screen, museums will have to make their program stand apart than the other ways we spend time online.

19:15:43 We are aware that as the pandemic situation changes around us. Museums and schools reopening, continued concerns about health and safety, the needs and desires of museum audiences for museums changes.

19:15:58 This survey prompted insights into the minds of audiences of the fall and winter of 2020, and what may change in the future when your school and museums reopen. Are audiences tired of virtual programs or has the genie been let out of the bottle and remote learning become a mainstay of education and the driver of a visitor's relationship with museums? Can museums use virtual program reach underserved audiences, increase access to diverse communities or add value to their institutions as trusted sources of information and learning. Could collaboration between museums and school districts strengthen both the informal and formal educational landscape? What role can researchers and evaluators play in facilitating this discussion? These are just a few of the questions we hope to explore future studies. Thanks so much.