

2018 AAPA Communications Awards Program

Entry Classification: Special Events

Entry Title: *History of Ships* Exhibition



Summary

The Montreal Port Authority's (MPA) *History of Ships* exhibition showcases the rich history of the Port of Montreal and highlights the benefits and value of port and shipping activities in Montreal both past and present. It is part of the MPA's continuing communications effort to raise awareness about the port with the general public, including port neighbours.

History of Ships is the first exhibition staged in the MPA's new Port Centre – the first interpretation centre in the province of Quebec dedicated to port activity. Two large murals and six magnificent ship models tell the story of the history of goods and passenger transportation through the port.

History of Ships is the MPA's special contribution to celebrations that marked in 2017 the 375th anniversary of Montreal and the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.



1. What are/were the entry's specific communications challenges or opportunities?

Challenges

The Port of Montreal is a major international port that handles each year more than 2,000 ships carrying some 38 million tonnes of all types of cargo to and from all parts of the world and welcomes international cruise vessels and their guests. The port stretches along 16 miles of waterfront and its cargo-handling operations are generally hidden from public view. It also is often confused with the Old Port of Montreal recreation and tourism site.

Our challenge was to create an aesthetically pleasing, family-friendly exhibition that would attract and interest the general public, including port neighbours and local and international tourists. It would highlight Montreal’s maritime heritage while at the same time provide a greater understanding of how the port operates and deliver key messages about the impact of port operations on the economy and the role that the port plays in people’s daily lives.

Opportunities

Our Port Centre is on the second floor of our new cruise terminal on Alexandra Pier, which is located in the heart of Old Montreal, a bustling recreation and tourism district that attracted some 5.7 million people alone from May to October 2017.

This unique space provides the perfect opportunity for the MPA to engage the general public, explain the port and project its image, deliver key messages about the importance of port and shipping activities past and present, promote port-related trades and professions, and allow people to experience the real port and learn through “Edutainment.” These are some of the essential objectives of a port centre as defined in the Missions Charter of a Port Centre, published by the Worldwide Network of Port Cities, known internationally by its French acronym AIVP (Association Internationale des Villes Portuaires). Its mission is to improve cohabitation between ports and cities. The MPA ratified the charter in 2014.



2. How does the communication used in the entry complement the organization's overall mission?

The Port of Montreal is a North American seaport at the heart of the continent and a hub for world trade. Our mission is to contribute to the prosperity of our clients and partners and to the economic development of Greater Montreal, Quebec and Canada while respecting the environment. Our vision is to be a diversified, successful and innovative port that exercises inspiring leadership and provides competitive value-added services, making it a partner of choice in the logistics chain.

Within our mission, *History of Ships* communicates our values of:

- Responsibility. The exhibition demonstrates our willingness and desire to fulfil our role as a responsible corporate citizen, that we are a sustainable organization that values our neighbouring communities, the environment and our contribution to the economy, and that we act in accordance with the rules of conduct dictated by honesty, transparency and accountability.
- Commitment. The exhibition confirms our commitment to help Montrealers make the port their own and be proud to define themselves as citizens of a port city, and our commitment to create the best possible experience for our clients and partners.
- Innovation. *History of Ships* shows how we have constantly reinvented our practices throughout the years in order to assert our leadership in the logistics chain.

From an historical perspective, the exhibition generates interest in Montreal's maritime heritage, reminds people that the port is a founding component of the City of Montreal and a key player in the settlement and industrialization of Canada, and depicts the port's pivotal role in the ethnocultural development of Montreal as the landing point for immigrants and in the socioeconomic development of the city, the province and the country.

From a modern-day perspective, it raises general awareness about the port while demonstrating that the port is:

- A vital international cargo logistics hub that handles all types of goods;
- A tourism hub that welcomes more than 100,000 cruise passengers and crew members annually;

- A strategic tool for economic development and a catalyst for economic growth for Montreal, Quebec and Canada: port activity in Montreal is responsible for \$2.1 billion annually in added value to the Canadian economy; and
- A creator of jobs: port activity in Montreal supports 16,000 direct, indirect and induced jobs.



3. What were the communications planning and programming components used for this entry?

Goal:

Our goal was to have the general public be able to sail back in time to relive the milestones in Montreal's rich port history and develop a greater appreciation of Montreal's maritime heritage while at the same time familiarize themselves with current-day port activities and be able to better understand the importance of the port, its impact on the economy and the role that it plays in their daily lives.

Objectives:

- Deliver pertinent messages about the port in a clear, concise and visually appealing manner, where guests can visit at their own pace;
- Get closer to the community;
- Reach out to Montrealers and meet port neighbours face-to-face;
- Further build our mailing list and increase the number of people who receive timely and pertinent information about the port and its activities.

Target Audiences:

Primary audience:

The port is generally hidden from public view and often mistaken for the Old Port recreation and tourism site. We use all opportunities possible to deliver key messages about the port to residents of Greater Montreal. This is our primary audience for the *History of Ships* exhibition, including the 16,000 households within 1,000 feet of the port that we have identified are most concerned by port activity.

The port has made it a priority to strengthen and maintain dialogue with these neighbours. It is a partner in many projects led by organizations working to improve the community's quality of life, ensure its economic development and protect its environment. Through our Neighbours of the Port program, we hold information sessions to inform neighbours about projects in their area, and send them our *Logbook* community e-magazine as well as special invitations to certain events.

Secondary audience:

Other Montrealers and Quebeckers, and local and international tourists, including cruise passenger guests. We are targeting these audiences in order to raise awareness about the port and, in particular, highlight its economic benefits and demonstrate its impact on everyday life.

4. What actions were taken and what communication outputs were employed in this entry?

As a founding component of the city, a key player in the settlement and industrialization of the country and a responsible corporate citizen, the MPA wanted to play a special role in and contribute to celebrations in 2017 marking the 375th anniversary of Montreal and the 150th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada.

The MPA had been interested in developing a Port Centre aligned with the Missions Charter of a Port Centre published by the AIVP ever since it ratified the charter in 2014. The construction of our new cruise terminal provided us with the perfect opportunity to do just that.



Our strategy was to combine information and items from our extensive archival collection and produce new material in order to create an historical exhibition that would tie in to the present-day port. We decided that the exhibition would be free in order to attract as many visitors as possible.

We put together a team of 10 employees from various MPA departments to develop the project. Work began in early 2017. With the large, open and bright space that we had at the cruise terminal, we chose to produce two large murals of textual, visual and video information.

One mural illustrates the history of goods transportation under six themes:

1. An overview of the port then and now with a focus on 1900 to the present;
2. Overall port development in terms of cargo handling and infrastructure, presented thematically (the shoreline, the dock, the pier and the current port);

3. The modern era, featuring Alexandra Pier, cargo warehouses, land routes, grain elevators, etc.;
4. Diversity of goods handled and the heyday of wheat;
5. The modern port facilities of the 21st century; and
6. Jobs in and around the port.

The second mural covers passenger transportation, and in particular:

1. Ship arrival and departure areas through time;
2. Passenger terminals for the Expo 67 Universal and International Exhibition; and
3. An overview of the port's new cruise terminal project.

The *History of Ships* team conducted the research to find documents, audio-visual items and artifacts, developed new material and wrote texts to be incorporated into the murals. It worked closely with two outside contractors to create the exhibition. Architectural firm Lupien Matteau developed the design and staging, and custom woodworking company Atelier LaBoutique handled construction and production.

We also carefully relocated to the Port Centre six beautiful ship models that had been on display in our administration building but, unfortunately, were not accessible to the general public. The ship models represent the vessels – various types of cargo ships and passenger vessels – that have sailed to and from the port through time.

We developed signage that we placed throughout the Old Port to promote the exhibition and attract Montrealers and tourists to the site. We issued press releases announcing the launch and continuation of the exhibition and sent a *PortInfo Express* to our 6,000 subscribers:

- <https://www.port-montreal.com/en/exhibition-en.html>
- <https://www.port-montreal.com/en/Exhibition-Success-en.html>
- <https://www.port-montreal.com/en/piexpress-Exh-Board-TC-CCEM-en.html>

We ran a story in our *Logbook* community e-magazine, which has some 3,000 subscribers: <https://www.port-montreal.com/en/logbook-nov2017.html>

We also made extensive use of our website <https://www.port-montreal.com/en/history-of-ships-exhibition-community.html> and the following social media platforms, where we have some 17,000 followers, to promote the exhibition:

- Facebook: <https://fr-ca.facebook.com/events/138720366690657/>

- Twitter, where we created the hashtag “*History of Ships*”: <https://twitter.com/hashtag/HistoryofShips?src=hash>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/port-of-montreal/>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BWsGon7gS0l/?taken-by=portmtl>
- *Port Window*, our platform that features content from our *Logbook* community e-magazine as well as profiles and vignettes:
- <http://lehublot.port-montreal.com/en/history-of-ships-a-free-exhibition/>.

We also released a short video on our YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjGcAOLeSpY>

History of Ships opened on July 19, 2017, during the peak summertime tourism season. Opening hours were from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday until October, then from 12 to 5 p.m. on weekends and holidays.

Under the supervision of the director of Alexandra Pier, a MPA staff member is always on site to greet visitors and answer questions during the exhibition’s opening hours.

We are also able to get immediate feedback on *History of Ships* through short surveys that visitors can complete on iPads available at the exhibition.

The total budget for the *History of Ships* project is \$220,000.

5. What were the communications outcomes from this entry and what evaluation methods were used to assess them?

History of Ships has succeeded in meeting the following objectives:

Objective:

We wanted to attract as many people as possible to the exhibition, in particular residents of Greater Montreal, reach out to port neighbours and get closer to the community.

Result:

Attendance has well exceeded expectations. In fact, from the opening of *History of Ships* on July 19, 2017, through November, more than 25,000 people had visited the exhibition. In the wake of this success, the MPA decided to extend *History of Ships*, keeping it open on weekends and holidays from 12 to 5 p.m. during late fall, winter and

spring. More than 27,000 people had visited *History of Ships* through mid-April 2018. The schedule was to be reviewed in spring 2018.

We also succeeded in attracting people who live in the Greater Montreal area. We had iPads available on-site and asked visitors to fill out a quick online survey. Of the 384 people who answered the question “Where are you from?” 164 or 43% were from the Greater Montreal area.

Objective:

We wanted people to learn and be entertained in an aesthetically pleasing setting, to deliver key messages about the port in a clear and concise fashion, and have people better understand what the port does.

Result:

Comments from Montrealers and local and international tourists have been extremely positive. Results from the iPad survey show the following:

- 314 or 79.5% of 395 respondents rated the exhibition a 4 or 5 on 5;
- 330 or 84.4% of 391 respondents said they would recommend the exhibition to family and friends;
- 315 or 79.7% of 395 respondents rated the exhibition a 4 or 5 on 5 in allowing them to better understand what the port does;
- 333 or 84.3% of 395 respondents rated the greeting they received from port personnel as a 4 or 5 on 5.

Objective:

We wanted to be able to build our mailing list and send information about the port to a greater number of people.

Result:

Eighty-five people who answered the iPad survey provided an email or mailing address to receive key information about the port, including the port’s *Logbook* community e-magazine.

Reaction to *History of Ships* has been very positive. In informal discussions, visitors told us that they enjoyed taking a trip through history, and many reminisced that their ancestors had arrived in Canada from overseas through the Port of Montreal. They said that messages about the port’s benefits and value were delivered clearly and concisely. Many added that prior to visiting the exhibition they had little or no idea of the role that

the port plays in their everyday lives and that it is responsible for delivering many of the items that they consume and use on a daily basis, from food products and fresh produce such as fruits and vegetables to electronic devices and paper products.

History of Ships clearly allows the general public to better understand the vital role that the port plays in the economic and social fabric of Montreal and in people's daily lives, and it expresses the port's desire to get closer to its community and fulfil its role as a responsible corporate citizen.

The interest in *History of Ships* has encouraged the MPA to further enhance this initiative. It will soon develop a new concept for the Port Centre aligned with the Missions Charter of a Port Centre published by the AIVP. The MPA intends to create a more elaborate, lively and dynamic Port Centre that will be interactive and get visitors involved.

