

Alexander the Great exhibition

Front-end evaluation

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Introduction

A brief front-end evaluation was undertaken for the Alexander the Great exhibition with the purpose of evaluating visitors' existing knowledge of the subject, what they would like to know, and what they expected an exhibition on the topic to look like. The respondents were asked to rate a selection of potential titles in order of their preference.

49 visitors were surveyed at various locations within the Museum in October and November 2011.

Key findings

Existing knowledge of Alexander the Great

71% of people said they knew who Alexander the Great was, however their knowledge was sometimes incorrect.

Those who provided correct information identified him as Greek, a conqueror, a warrior, and not necessarily of good character.

What people would like to know

People said they would like to know a chronology of events and overall history, personal details and motivations, and why is still known now.

Preferred titles

The three highest rated titles were *Alexander: Warrior King*, *Alexander: Life & Legend*, and *Alexander: Hero, tyrant, god*.

The three lowest rated titles were *Alexander the Great: Treasures of Empire*, *Alexander the Great*, and *Alexander the Great: Riches from the Hermitage*.

Full details of title rankings can be found in the Appendix

Do you know who Alexander the Great was?

35 people claimed to know who Alexander the Great was; 14 admitted no knowledge. Many who professed to know who he was were incorrect in their knowledge.

Correct knowledge of Alexander the Great included:

He was Greek:

- *He was Greek*
- *Ancient/Greek. Not know what he did*
- *Greek legend*
- *Greek - first big Empire*
- *Greek. Died young, homosexual*
- *Just that he's famous*

He was a conqueror:

- *Conquerer*
- *Conquerer, not sure where*
- *Conquered a great deal. City named after him. Drank a lot!*
- *Conquered parts of North Africa. He was Greek*
- *That he went to India*
- *Traversed much land - across India / Middle East. Was a powerful influence on followers*
- *Was an invader of countries*

He was a warrior:

- *Represents war*
- *was a fighter and a leader*
- *A great warrior*
- *Great military leader*
- *Nothing except he was in many battles in history?*

He was a not a nice person:

- *was a tyrant*
- *One of the most feared men in history*
- *He was a villain. And glorified*
- *Significant historical figure. Was controversial?*
- *He was a manipulator; clever and ruthless; demonstrated how greedy humans can be*
- *He gathered a great following to fortify his cause*
- *That he was one of the great leaders that precipitated change*

Other:

- *Son of Philip of Macedon, in early 20s conquered nations all the way to India. Died of disease young. 300BC.*
- *Macedonian leader who ventured into the Middle East to invade Mather with Ptolemy. Had male lovers; wife's name was Roxanne*
- *Only that he travelled a lot - by horse?*
- *Power -> young. Something to do with Constantinople?*
- *Vague memories in high school*

Examples of misconceptions included:

- *From Thessalonika - went to war with Ghengis Khan*
- *Russian. Trying to take over Europe. He had a lovely horse*
- *Just that he was Russian*
- *Venetians and war ships come to mind*
- *Wasn't he a roman?*
- *Very little - Roman warrior?*
- *Early figure in history, crossed Alps, was a great force*
- *He was great! Roman general went across & opened up Asia with his elephants*
- *Ruler – England*

What would you like to know about Alexander the Great?

Personal details and motivations:

- *Biographical details*
- *His life story -> how he grew up & what the life style was like*
- *His personal life and childhood*
- *A detailed examination of how he got to where he did - perhaps a year by year account*
- *His childhood to help explain why he grew into what he did*
- *His childhood. Motivations*
- *What drove him*
- *General curiosities - timeline of his personal and public life*
- *Small details / how lived, what ate, marching what on foot etc*
- *Person behind the bravado. Motives for invasion*
- *more info, chronology*
- *Where his conscience was*
- *The man behind the public face*
- *Where he died*
- *Why he went as far as he did; travel route*

Why he was/is Great:

- *How he got to be so notorious*
- *Why he was so influential*
- *Why do we know his name today?*
- *Why he's so famous*
- *Why so great. Who thought he was great*
- *Why such a big deal was made out of him*

Other:

- *How he motivated followers. How logistics managed to defeat armies or opposition*
- *Timeframe of his battles. Where, what he conquered*
- *History*
- *Overall history*
- *The extent of his ambition in a historical context*
- *Interesting overview of time period*

What would you expect an exhibition on Alexander the Great to look like?

Note that the responses below include those from people who had incorrect knowledge about the subject matter.

Style / atmosphere

- *Ancient*
- *Dark, forboding*
- *Dark, with lots of chariots. It should smell like the roman days. Be interactive*
- *European-influenced*
- *Flattering; lots of pillars*
- *Flowery*
- *It would mirror his era*
- *Like his time*
- *Medieval-looking*
- *Military like*
- *Mood lighting; maybe ancient stone walls*
- *No idea - historical I suppose*
- *Old*
- *Ornate*
- *probably like a smaller version of the Hermitage*
- *Roman*
- *Visual, particularly for kids*
- *Would expect it to replicate the period re: lighting, music, etc*

Content

- *Big classical look of sculpture. Lots of nations conquered*
- *Buildings ancient times - tell story*
- *Dioramas / maps / where / uniforms / tactics*
- *Display of Russian culture. How he developed as a public figure*
- *Documentary-style short films; examples of weapons; original artefacts; art depicting the Great Battle*
- *Excerpts about what he said. What drove him. What's happening at the same time. Little facts*
- *General info on life, photos/history/letters*
- *Interesting artefacts*
- *Lots of pictures/descriptions of the things used in battle*
- *Lots of weaponry, ceremonial artefacts, original letters/documents?, footage??*
- *Many swords, armour, paintings of battles*
- *Maps charting battles. Clothing of the day. Daily life during warfare*
- *Marble statues / heads / coins*
- *Montage, wouldn't expect real objects. Copies, statues*
- *Objects*
- *Progression (of power). What happened to him at the end*
- *Roman military, statue*
- *Saturated with info on military. Details of ships. But does this proposed exhibition really have a place at this museum?*
- *Similar to Aborig - artefacts. Touchscreen for more info*
- *Weapons, way they moved the troops, way of live during that time*

Do you know where the Hermitage museum is located?

Only 11 people said they knew where it was located. Of those that included comments, two had been there, and two said it was somewhere other than Russia.

Title testing

Titles were ranked in preference on a scale of 1 to 9 (1 being the most preferred). The titles in order of descending preference were:

1. Alexander: Warrior King
2. Alexander: Life & Legend
3. Alexander: Hero, tyrant, god
4. Alexander: Conquerer and hero
5. The Immortal Alexander
6. The Legendary Alexander
7. Alexander the Great: Riches from the Hermitage
8. Alexander the Great
9. Alexander the Great: Treasures of Empire

"Alexander: Warrior King" was the most preferred, with 18 people placing it in their top five choices, 10 of whom chose it as their most preferred title. Similarly, 18 people placed *"Alexander: Life & Legend"* in their top five, with 8 choosing it as their most preferred title.

Please choose the one you like the most and tell us why

Alexander: Warrior King

- *Strong*
- *Would appeal to the masses, get the attention of children/young adults*
- *Smart & punchy*
- *Interesting*
- *Short catchy, kids excited by word 'warrior'*
- *Wow factor*
- *Because all I know about him is that he was a fighter*
- *Edgy*
- *Exciting; draws you in*
- *Intimates battle; excitement*

Alexander: Life & Legend

- *It is descriptive of what I would like to know*
- *Implies that you are going to investigate his life that happened to him, and also the hype around him.*
- *Unique*
- *Rings of history, truth behind the legend (I'm a history nerd)*
- *To find out about his life & why he is a legend*
- *When I look at it, I feel like it's something I'd want to explore*
- *All embracing*
- *Different*

Appendix

Title testing

Below are the titles which were tested, listing the number of times each was rated in the top one, three or five placed, and how many times it was placed in the bottom five, and the average ranking for each title.

Title	Avg. Rank	Most Favourite?	Top 3?	Top 5?	Bottom 5?
Alexander: Warrior King	3.4	10	15	18	12
Alexander: Life & Legend	3.6	8	13	18	10
Alexander: Hero, tyrant, god	3.8	7	13	15	10
Alexander: Conquerer and hero	4.0	3	9	15	11
The Immortal Alexander	4.4	3	8	12	11
The Legendary Alexander	4.8	3	7	13	18
Alexander the Great: Riches from the Hermitage	5.1	4	4	4	6
Alexander the Great	5.4	8	12	13	22
Alexander the Great: Treasures of Empire	5.7	2	3	4	8

Age of respondents

A representative age sample of museum visitors was interviewed for this evaluation.

