

PEORIA RIVERFRONT MUSEUM

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PEORIA RIVERFRONT MUSEUM GIANT SCREEN THEATER UPDATE

Peoria Riverfront Museum (PRM) board members and staff learned at a recent Giant Screen Cinema Association convention that the industry has changed dramatically since planning for the new museum began 10 years ago.

“There are a lot of exciting things on the horizon, with new digital technologies, expanding film libraries and all of the flexible programming options that will meet the mission of our museum,” said Jim Richerson, PRM president and CEO.

The group met key industry players, including system integrators, technology/hardware providers and film producers, and benchmarked with other mission-driven museums across the country to talk about technology and programming options and get general tips on attendance.

“It’s clear that with our giant screen size and theater set-up, the experience will be amazing no matter which vendor provides the technology,” said Richerson. “We saw a film called ‘Catch the Wave,’ and it was so intense that my legs were wobbly when it was time to leave the theater. We watched more than eight hours of film and were very impressed with the quality and variety of the library.”

Exciting opportunities exist with both the IMAX brand and with other alternatives, said PRM chairman Dave Ransburg. “We’re continuing our talks with IMAX and weighing the options that are available to us. Our priority hasn’t changed. We want to provide the best possible immersive experience for visitors that we possibly can. And we’re confident we’ll do that whether we go with IMAX or an independent offering.”

The board recently learned that IMAX has entered into an agreement with a national commercial theater operator to operate an IMAX theater in the Peoria area. The past few years have seen a shift in IMAX’s strategy toward new releases—competing with traditional first-run cinemas—and away from its traditional focus on high-end educational films for museums.

“We’re evaluating how that change in strategy would affect the museum should we choose to partner with IMAX,” said Ransburg. “There are a lot of variables to consider, including the IMAX film library, programming flexibility, analog vs. digital technologies and a changing IMAX brand.”

Ransburg stressed that no decisions have been made. “We’re still talking and will share more news as it becomes available,” he said. “We feel a responsibility to do a thorough job of investigating all the possibilities and hope to have final decision on how we will operate our theater by the Nov. 4 PRM board meeting.”

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