

# INDUSTRY WEEKLY DIGEST

YOUR WEEKLY DIGEST OF CONTEMPORARY INDUSTRY TRENDS

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 **shtm**  
SCHOOL OF HOSPITALITY  
& TOURISM MANAGEMENT

## THE FIELDTRIP

### A Virtual or a Visceral Experience?

The fieldtrip is an illustration of experience-based learning and teaching (ELT). It provides students with a rich and complex setting to re-examine their classroom materials and readings, to test theories and hypotheses for themselves, and to demonstrate personal resilience in their own education and adaptability in their studies. But does it still have a place in education in an era of so-called climate emergency and with availability of the Metaverse?

In this week's Industry Digest, [Jonathan Skinner](#) considers if future fieldtrips should be virtual or a visceral experiences.

Have a great weekend!

*The Harland & Wolff Drawing Rooms, 1900 and 2022, photos by author*



## SECOND LIFE AND HERITAGE

### Jonathan Skinner

Here, IEM student Alison Ho shows us the Harland & Wolff Drawing Rooms of the 1900s as illustrated in Belfast's Titanic Experience, an immersive and interactive set of galleries that take the visitor through the launch, sailing and ill-fated sinking of RMS Titanic in 1912. We also see Alison in the renovated Drawing Rooms in 2022 during our fieldtrip to Belfast's Titanic Quarter – Europe's largest waterfront regeneration space. The light draughtmen's space has become a bar and restaurant area of Titanic Belfast Hotel, a careful heritage restoration of the shipbuilders' headquarters into an 'authentic' Titanic hotel. The before and after is evident in the photo and is one of the destination's selling points. This is the second life of heritage, virtual in the past life referred to in the present.

Recognising the current climate emergency that we live in, Christian Schott (2017) has proposed the case for virtual fieldtrips instead of the physical presence. The use of virtual reality for a student fieldtrip is, for him, a valid carbon sensitive alternative to the international travel of a student class. His example is a virtual reality fieldtrip to Fiji for his students using Open Simulator, a variant of Second Life. He prepared recordings made from a real-space visit to an island village in Fiji where he interviewed villagers about climate change. Twenty clips were embedded in a scaled 1:3 ratio of the virtual island. Mediated by their headsets, students could wander – virtually - through the environment learning about the impact of climate change.

This could be done without harming the environment from the comfort of their own student home. It engaged the students and transformed their understanding of issues.

And yet the visceral presence of walking through the titanic galleries, following the inescapable winds through the post-industrial landscape, and sheltering in the warmth of the Drawing Rooms with a pint of Guinness still appeals to the student. It fosters a deeply memorable learning experience. "Being there" is still important. It is also the time in-between itinerary learning experiences that adds to the educational fieldtrip. Feedback in student evaluations at Surrey suggest that it builds the cohort, bringing people together – especially important post-COVID-19 after teaching was online Zoom or Teams class. The students respond to these unscripted moments; to serendipitous engagements with the public that can range from challenges to their sense of national identity to receiving a round of drinks from local patrons; and the extra-curricular conversations and insights into staff and student lives. We return for the better - knowing others better, if not ourselves. Sláinte.

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*Schott, C. (2017). Virtual fieldtrips and climate change education for tourism students. Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education, 21, 13-22.*