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Book Discussion: Section II: The Engaging Museum

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Section 3 – Learning in Museums

Ch. 5 – Museums and Lifelong Learning

- a. Began with the fact that museums in polls in America are the most trustworthy sources of information...
-As museum/library professionals, how can we use this trust to gain more visitors to exhibitions/museums?
- b. Life-long vs. Life-wide
-Learning discussion, discussing that jobs are no longer for life, and that there are many adults seeking to expand their knowledge/ learning society.
- c. Learning as a product, absorptions of fact-based knowledge on labels next to items in a display. Highly passive approach to learning... Need to be more active in getting people to engage! with the collection.
-Museum professionals are a product of the museums they went to and this passive education model has perpetuated throughout that.
- d. Discussion of learning styles
-Vicious vs. Virtuous
- Discovery Learning (Students are encouraged to ask questions and formulate their own tentative answers) – Children’s Museum movement leading to “press button mentality”
- Constructivism – we construct our own understanding of the world we live in.
- e. Reflective Observation – always building an environment that encourages discussion amongst groups and room to step away from an artifact to contemplate its impact.
- f. Adult Learning – Autonomous and Self-Directed, Goal-Oriented, Problem Solvers
- g. Reasons for Learning Poll – For the Joy of Learning 79.7%, Pursue a long standing interest or hobby – 57.9%
- h. INTERNET’s Impact on Learning – Hand out Article! – Discuss the impact on focus of internet content vs. that of in a museum or library

Ch. 6 – Use of Museums by Schools

- a. Museums still not recognized as an equal source of learning as other institutions that schools may visit.
- b. Schools are important to museums, funding, marketing the museums, reaching under-represented audiences, educational rewards
- c. Teachers requirements for a good museum much more practical than expected, curriculum fit, variety of activities to appeal to all, welcoming atmosphere, lunch facilities, gift shop, toilets.
- d. Children wanted more hands-on engagement with exhibits and objects.

Section 4 - Planned to engage

Ch. 7 – Applying the principles of interpretation to museum display

- a. Important to have aids to help interpret exhibits, to answer questions and help guide visitors, using questions, all the senses, and playing to visitors knowledge and interests.
- b. External image of the museum vital, trying to determine what feelings people have towards your museum based on the external appearance. – First impressions count!
- c. Atmosphere also important, interior design that is laid back or more up-tight, can impact the length of a visitors stay within the museum or a specific exhibit.
- d. Remember visitors learn by a variety of methods: Doing, Thinking, Watching, Reading, Listening, Imagining, Interacting, Discussing, Assimilating.
- e. Museum Fatigue! – Break up displays, and anticipate interest in an exhibit if high make sure that people can still move through quickly to avoid lines, and if interest is low tighten up the amount of space that the exhibit is taking so visitors can move to something they will be more interested in perhaps.

Ch. 8 – Interpretive Master Planning

- a. Details how to create a masterplan for selling your exhibition to the museum executives and also the people you need to work with you in making it perfect.
- b. Otherwise this was fairly repetitive of other chapters, discussing marketing methods and ways to highlight the collection to the widest audience possible.

Ch. 9 – Concept development for museum galleries

- a. Specific Audience Targets – these dictate the core of the interest group in your exhibit. Children age 8 -11, American War Veterans, Senior Citizens, Young Adults, etc... Focusing will create a better experience for the bulk of your visitors, and they will bring people outside of the base group and others will also be interested.
- b. Steps for turning a museum exhibit concept into a reality –
 1. Building the Team
 2. Developing/Understanding Target Audience
 3. Defining the Communications Strategy
 4. Developing Themes
 5. Building Structured Educational Use
 6. Agreeing Priorities in the use of Space
 7. Developing the Design Brief

Ch. 10 – The engaging museum

- a. Museums must change or die! – Not just displaying collections and expecting people to come for only that, developing the exhibit into an engaging experience.
- b. Contextualizing the Object Display – Having a story that can carry all the objects through is key to keeping interest on the objects/exhibit.
- c. The label remains a major interpretive tool – Important though to have an active tone that draws the readers' interest in and write in simple and friendly language.