

Reading Summaries

Week 1 – Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions, Think You’re an Auditory or Visual Learner

The differences in the ways in which people learn is most definitely essential in being able to reach as wide of an audience as possible. I liked this article and its attempt to understand how different individuals learn. I had actually done an experiment in high school biology similar to this in order to determine the best way that I learned. Apparently, I am a balanced learner that is capable of learning in most ways; however, my ability to learn from visual cues was high expressed. I think that is great for museum educators to look at how different people learn because, armed with this knowledge, the museum could bring more people into the museum to gain from its insight into learning and education. From the article, I believe that I am an imaginative learner. I tend to want to understand how the facts that I learn relate to the bigger picture and how the why it works the way it does. Making these connections will lead to a better museum, a more sell perceived museum, and, ultimately, more successful at its goal of offering an alternative place of learning.

Week 2 – Museums Places of Learning: Foreword through Museum Visitor Research

I feel that these sections were very essential to the development of a productive and efficient museum set up. The average person does not want to go to a museum and have a million facts and difficult names and dates thrown at them. The discussion of an ergonomic and comfortable learning environment was a very interesting and productive line of thinking. I feel that this principle of ergonomic design is ubiquitous throughout all other business models, living space design, etc. because as humans we are very visual animals. We need things to be organized in very linear and easily understand groups of information. Therefore, another important that the section brought up was the need for the text cards to have a short, concise written description that gets to the point of the exhibit. I feel that great writing skills are necessary for anytime of museum work. Museums have a lot to provide for the public; however, if you cannot get them in the doors then you have lost the battle before it had even begun.

Week 3 – Museums Places of Learning: Educational Theory through Learning for Life

This section of reading was very similar to the very first reading that we did. It was on the ways and methods to how people learn. I feel as though I was either a didactic, expository or stimulus-response type of learner because I very much believe that learning is acquired bit by bit over time; however, I think that knowledge must definitely exist outside of the learner, as well as, constructed personally. While I feel that this is what kind of learner I am, I think it is important, again, to actively consider all of the possibilities in order to reach as many people as possible that come to visit the museum. As the book says, I do not think that it is possible to “overestimate” the benefit and importance of a multi-layer approach by the museum educators. This multi-layer

approach enforces and reinforces the lessons that the educators want to teach and discuss.

Week 4 – Excellence and Equality: Foreword through A Wilder Public Dimension: A Plan for Action

The definition of museum education in this section of reading is what I have always thought museum education should be. "...a term that includes exploration, study observation, critical thinking, contemplation, and dialogue." A museum is, in my opinion, an important alternative location for curiosity and academic thought to be bolstered and encouraged. My favorite museum back home was the Museum of Discovery, and their approach to teaching kids as well as adults is allow them to experience what they are learning. While a science museum is more able of allow kids to put their candy covered hands all over their object, a archaeology museum is not as equipped to provide as much of a hands on approach. However, I really liked how this section challenged the museum community to move towards a more interactive approach to learning. Drawing back on the very first set of reading, most people in the world learn best if something is visual and they can hold in their hands because it makes a strong physical connection to knowledge that they are taking in. It Is important that museum education is dynamic and keeps up with the needs of their audience.

Week 5 – Excellence and Equality: Mission through Conclusion

This section of reading discussed the obligation of a museum to meet the growing diversity of the audiences with a growing diversity in their approaches to how the teach and instruct their audience. Another important, often over looked obligation of a museum, is support and encourage scholarship. Museums can provide a great place for young children and adults to start thinking in the ways that the United States needs our youth to begin to think to match the growing capacity of the global world. Museum resources are perfect for the role for further a child's curiosity into true scholarship and original thought. By providing a space and system of support, the youth who have taken advantage of this system will be better critical thinkers and more equipped to handle the outside world. Next, it is vitally important for the staff and academics of museums to draw on the resources of the surrounding community because they will begin to build relationships with the people they are trying to reach. Often, I believe that people look at museums and see an institution's that is above them, and they can only visit without impacting it. If a museum is able to use volunteers and get the community involved, the museum will only reach more people.

Week 6 – Mastering Civic Engagement: Foreword through Exploring Museums and Communities

This section of reading is really challenge what it is to be a museum and what the requirements of a museum are. The reading uses words like "civic," "nurturing," "comprehensive," and "flexible" to describe what a museum should be perceived as. The reading states that museum have a civic duty to help the community understand its role in

their role in the world, to build a better for the surrounding community through knowledge, and develop social capital. I feel that this author is going a little over board in his approach. While I think that providing an accessible, connected, safe, objective, trustworthy, rewarding, substantive, and reciprocal location for people to come together, I do not agree that a museum is an expansive has helping people progress society. The ability to develop a civic society should be placed in the hands of the people and not an institution. While the institution can provide a space to develop and culture these ideas, the institution should remain objective and non-political. The museum is meant to display and present, objectively, the best of humanity and the best of what it can create.

Week 7 – Mastering Civic Engagement: A Framework for Civic Engagement

This section of reading again stresses the importance of collaboration with the community surrounding its location. I like the first example that the first author provides in thinking outside of the box with the ability of the museum to provide a space for meeting space. This is an example of providing resources that are not first thought of by staff, academics, or the community and is outside of the normal artifact collections, staff expertise, etc. that are thought of as resources of the museum. There is a church in my community who has done this very successfully. While they do not openly make a pact with the visitors that they are allowed to use the church's space if they sit through an hour-long service. The religious information and environment is absorbed through diffusion. Their belief is that by simply being there and seeing the space, it might spark some type of reaction in the visitors. I think that this approach in museums. Some might say that is it coercive or deceptive, but I would disagree. This practice is just another way of indirectly presenting the information and collections that the museum has to offer. Finally, I agree completely with the second author of the section in his thoughts of trying to reduce the elitist perception of the museum by reducing the rigidity of the museum and increase the flexibility and fluidity. By making the museum and its employees on a similar status level as the people, I believe that the author is correcting in saying that you would be able to reach more people.

Week 8 – NO READING – SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – Mastering Civic Engagement: Points of View

This section of reading presented a collection of first hand experiences in how museums had problems reaching the visitors, presenting an inviting landscape, developing the skills and knowledge of the staff, revitalizing the community, etc. These points of view presented the idea that the museum must react to what challenges the world and people surrounding its location quickly and swiftly if they want to survive the shift. With the first example, the museum made mistakes in its design, and, as a result, lost many of its potential visitors because the environment made it a bad experience to simply get into the museum. This museum needed to see the problem and make the changes necessary. In the another example, the community surrounding the museum began to move to newer areas of the city, and therefore, the museum suffered. They then launched a revitalization program in order to champion the heritage of the diverse background represented by the

populations of people who had resided in the community. This example show that if a museum becomes complacent and does not maintain its eyes on the community and surrounding landscapes, etc. the museum will be hit by unforeseen consequences that could spell doom for the museum. The museum must be able to react quickly to changes, and it is able to do that by staying involved.

Week 10 – Code of Ethics for Museums

For me, this section of reading was very straightforward. As I was reading the ethics of museum workers, most of them seemed common sense; however, they were things that had I not seen it writing I would not have thought about them. Things such as being collaborative are essential to an efficient museum education because the new interdisciplinary approach could be invaluable to students. Appropriate documentation is simply good practice for museum to be accountable and responsible with the piece of history they are displaying. The need to protect a specific culture and preserve natural history is a perfect way of representing the goal of a museum. Finally, being a sophisticated and mature institution will only help the surrounding community learn by example and have an institution to look up to in a world of corruption be people with power. The code of ethics was described as dynamic and adaptive, and this approach seems very accurate and necessary to be a successful museum.

Week 11 – National Standards & Best Practices: Section 1

The first section of the National Standards guide talks about who should be using these standards, what standards are, and how they are used. Anyone in the museum system is obviously get to need a working knowledge of what these standards are and how to implement them; however, when the guide listed off journalist and funding for agencies, I was a little confused as to why they would need to understand the inner workings of the museum system and how it worked. But, upon later consideration, the journalist and the agencies need a working knowledge of how the museum works in order to talk about it critically in an article or in discussing how to appropriately distribute funding. The standards allow everyone to be on equal footing and cooperate effectively. I liked how the guide put it, “standards reflect broad ideas.” It only makes sense, if you are going to make a standardized system for all museums, that they need to be broad and all encompassing. The museums need to be able to talk together in the same language, and it allows museums across the country to be able to work towards the same goal. The book says that museum standards are consulted in employment situations, accreditation situations, etc. The standards really provide a framework for the museum system to go by.

Week 12 - National Standards & Best Practices: Section 2

This section of the book outlined in depth the standards of the museum system, and there were a lot of them. I do not know how every person is able to think about all of these things when they are also busy concentrating on there work. I guess it comes with practice, and some of the standards were common sense. However, there were so many. I

think that if I were to have to constantly worry about whether or not I was doing my job in accordance with every single one of those standards, I would either be too afraid to work or I would have to have a lawyer with me at all times to consult if there was ever a question. I have a greater appreciation of the level of complexity that museum educators and any else who is involved in the development, criticism, or accreditation of a museum. They are required to do a lot.

Week 13 - National Standards & Best Practices: Section 3

This section of the book discussed the future of standards for museum and each of the museum educators, faculty, and staff have an obligation to being accountable for measuring changes in standard requirements. The world is a dynamic place, and the museum and its standards need to be dynamic as well in order to match the needs of the public. As it says the book, the museum is public and has an obligation to provide a safe and informative space for alternative learning. The standards of the museum system help museum faculty and staff maintain this goal of museum by making sure that each and every problem as been considered and planned for. The future of standards is in a precarious position at the moment because of the rapid growth and complexity of technology and its implementation. It is important that museum adapt quickly with the rest of world in the incorporation of technology because in order to reach the target audience, they need to have modern methods of communication. Standards will hopefully help the museum stay current and flexible.

Week 14 – 15 – NO READING

Final Reactions

1. Internship v. Individual Study?

I have always seen the difference between an internship and an individual study residing in the fundamental purpose of each. An internship is based on the acquisition of experience and skills relevant to a particular field. An internship provides hands-on development and practical skills that are necessary for current and future success in the field the internship is in. An individual study is based on research and acquisition of specific knowledge necessary to be considered an expert in a specific field of study. An individual study is conducted meaning by reading, organizing, and synthesizing information into a new representation or point of view about a subject. While both internships and individual studies deal with reading articles and books to gain background information, what you choose to do with that information and how you represent that information is very different. Often in an internship, the final product is something that will be used in the field for a practical purpose. For my internship, my final product is a redesigned archaeological education kit. Throughout the semester, I researched the paradigms of museum education, the best ways to reach as many students as possible, and methods to develop sophisticated lesson plans all for the purpose of teaching elementary students about Native American archaeology in the state of North Carolina. My final product was not a thesis or some new study about the ways to museum have advanced over time or how Native American archaeology have changed over time; my final product was an original creation that serves a utility in everyday practice. If I were doing an individual study, I would have expected my final product to be a lengthy paper meant to describe a synthesis of research that is meant to represent new academic scholarship. To conclude, there are subtle differences that distinguish the two types of study, and it is my opinion that my semester was spent participating in an internship because it fits the paradigm of the previously described study.

2. Reflection

I am very satisfied with my work over the past semester. I feel that I have acquired valuable skills that can be applied to most anything in my life. With the help of Mrs. Tina Smith, we have created a product that is informative, educational, and holistic. I hope that the children who get to use this kit are as enthusiastic as I am about archaeology after they complete the subject lessons. I hope that this product will be helpful to the teachers of North Carolina who were struggling to develop a lesson plan from the previous kit. I have put a lot of work, creativity, and knowledge into the archaeology kit, and I hope that it reflects the spirit of Pro Humanitate that Wake Forest lives by.

To Mrs. Tina Smith, I thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. You have presented me with a type of education I have never received before, and I loved every minute. I have never in my life actually wanted to go home and do my homework. However, in this case, you made the homework manageable and the material was always relevant and enlightening. In participating in this internship, I have received a new point of view on education, and, now, I know how difficult it can be to teach. I think that all the readings you gave me were very relevant, the structure of the material was well organized and incrementally developed, and all of the work you asked me to do was manageable and appropriate. I hope that I have been a good intern and have helped you to produce a good product. Please continue with this internship because I believe a lot of Wake Forest students could benefit from this type of study.