

Chapter 1 : Ms. Margaret B Evans Langhorst - Boston MA, Nurse Practitioner

A child's-eye view / E. Margaret Evans, Melinda S. Mull, and Devereaux A. Poling 5. When the object is digital: properties of digital surrogate objects and implications for learning / C. Olivia Frost.

Although few topics could be more fundamental to our understanding of how museums function as educational, cultural and leisure settings, historically, little thought and even less research has been directed towards this area of inquiry. By its very existence, then, this volume makes an important contribution. However, like so many other aspects of museum visitor research, this topic too is at the earliest stages of development. Represented in this book are perspectives from a wide range of disciplines and schools of thought, many of them quite new to the museum field. Some have focused on objects, some on children, and others on the museum itself; all provide interesting ways to begin to think about how to wrap our minds around this exceedingly complex entity we call museums and the even more complex phenomenon called the museum experience. I found particularly thought provoking the epistemological issues discussed by various authors. In fact, the theoretical framing of issues that occurs throughout the book, appropriately grounded in most cases with rich qualitative examples, is probably its most important contribution. In addition, there were some interesting methodological approaches suggested by Bain and Ellenbogen; van Kraayenoord and Paris; and Piscitelli and Weier that might prove fruitful in the future. As someone who has spent a lifetime investigating people in museums, I personally came away from reading this book with many new ideas and thoughts about not just objects and children in museums, but about how to even begin to think about the museum experience. Such is the benefit of bringing so many varied, bright people together and challenging them with an interesting topic, as was the purpose of this National Science Foundation-funded effort. However, as much as I was heartened by the new approaches and insights offered, so too was I struck by how little we still actually know. When the search image has been appropriate, and the lens suitably selected, museums consistently emerge as extremely powerful learning institutions. In large measure, museums support successful learning experiences for the public in general, and children in particular, because they afford unprecedented opportunities to explore, observe and sense a fairly limited set of contextually relevant, highly structured, concrete experiences; all within a socially and physically novel, but safe, environment. Equally, or perhaps most importantly, museums are also one of the few places left in our society where children can exercise a high degree of personal choice and control over their behavior and learning. In a museum, children normally get to choose what and when to have an experience. They get to choose what to look at, what to touch, what to climb on, and they are permitted a high degree of discretion over whom they might choose to have experiences with. However, choice and control, as well as novelty and safety, are all relative constructs. A similar case could be made for objects as well. Objects, although concrete, actually represent a vast continuum of abstract ideas and inter-related realities. The objects on display in a museum represent whole classes of objects, most of which do not exist only within the context of a museum. Hence, the same boot found in a flea market stall might not arouse as much curiosity or awe as one enshrined in a museum display case with an appropriate label attached. A plane exhibited in the context of a science center exhibition on flight might evoke different experiences than one parked at the airport. And both boot and plane assume particular meanings for the visitor only because he or she has a repertoire of experiences with both footwear and transportation in general, and, ideally, boots and planes, steel workers and flight, in particular. In the absence of such repertoires of experience, the objects would take on entirely different meanings than those intended by the museum. Again, it is not possible to fully understand a museum object, or for that matter any object, by investigating it solely within the physical and temporal bounds of the museum. It is from this perspective, then, that I would suggest an additional way to begin to think about investigations of children, objects and museums: I am referring to the pervasive practice of conceptualizing the museum experience as something that happens uniquely within the physical and temporal envelope of the museum, rather than as an experience that happens, in part, within the museum. The context of the museum experience, including the people who visit it and the objects that reside there, is larger than the museum itself. So too should the

investigations of the museum experience. This problem I refer to, is of course not unique to this book or museums for that matter. Thinking about learning experiences, as well as efforts to investigate the phenomenon, have almost always been narrowly focused physically and temporally. On the surface this makes sense. For example, understanding museum visitors, be they children or adults, would seem most easily accomplished within the museum itself. Although not exactly a captive audience, they are at least identifiable as the audience. Similarly, any effort to understand museum objects seems to logically suggest investigation of only those specific objects displayed and interpreted within the museum; since these are the objects and interpretations in question. As reasonable and obviously convenient as this approach seems, it is arguably a limited and potentially a distorting perspective. Certainly, we need to situate our thinking and investigations of museums within an appropriate museum context. However, to limit our gaze to the spotlighted object or the ephemeral interaction between visitor and object is to risk missing the entire forest because we have focused so intently upon a single tree. Museum professionals, and the researchers who study museums, suffer from the same myopia that has long afflicted other educationally-oriented organizations. In the case of the museum professional the curator, the museum educator, and the exhibition designer, they spend their days within the four walls of the institution. In truth, learning is a continuous process, a state of becoming, rather than a unique product with distinct and totally quantifiable outcomes. There must be a time and space framework that includes the effects of experiences both inside and outside the museum, both prior and subsequent to the museum visit. The same perspective holds for investigations of museum objects. MLWurns more often than not do a wonderful job of situating objects within contexts that have personal meaning for visitors. And visitors, with or without interpretation by the museum, do a wonderful job of contextualizing objects for themselves. However, both museums and visitors contextualize objects in relation to events, experiences and realities that exist beyond the museum. Accommodating this approach, or more accurately perspective, is challenging, but doable. For example, none of the theoretical frameworks or investigations described in this book are antithetical to this perspective; all could be reconfigured to accommodate this perspective. I would assert that POREWOIID xiii incorporating this longer-term perspective is essential if we are to truly come to understand the museum experience; truly understand the role of museum in the lives of those who experience them. In fact, understanding how museums support lifelong learning, which is really the essence of this perspective which I ;In advocating, would be one way in which research on learning from museums could serve as a model for learning research in other domains, including research on learning from schools. In conclusion, I heartily recommend this book to all who are truly interested in discovering more about how we currently understand museum experiences in general, and children and objects in particular. Not only are the chapters in this book ;Luseful time capsule of current understanding, in most cases they represent a reasonable vision for what the near future of understanding could look like ;is well. Without exaggeration, it could be stated that investigations in this area are only now beginning to achieve the critical mass of time and thought necessary to propel us into a new era of understanding of the museum experience. Along with this new understanding will come the development of ;I whole new toolbox of valid and reliable research approaches and methodologies. This book provides encouragement that the near future will provide a better, more theoretically grounded collection of museum investigations. This Page Intentionally Left Blank Preface The first words that you read in this book were the last ones written so I want to provide a broad perspective and a sense of anticipation for readers of this book. Amidst the busloads of children and countless families in tee shirts and shorts in the summer heat, some whining and some wide-eyed, we swiveled our necks to see the sights. The majestic Washington Monument, the White House, and the Capitol dome became familiar landmarks with huge buildings of every size and shape in between. Subsequent discoveries, such as the gardens near the castle, became secret spaces of respite from the crowds. The heat of the summer did not melt the exhilaration I felt each morning as much as the sheer exhaustion from investing emotional energy into the objects I saw. It is the same sense of immersion and excitement that I hope readers experience as they encounter the chapters in this book. I do not need to convince you that a visit to Washington, DC, or a museum can be inspiring, but I would like to persuade readers that the study of such experiences is equally exciting ;und intellectually ;ulventurous. There are several distinct historical precedents that deserve

mention. First, museum educators and curators pioneered the study and exhibition of objects beginning in the nineteenth century. Second, anthropologists examined objects as evidence of material culture and constructed theories about objects and their meanings. Fourth, early childhood educators from Pestalozzi to Froebel to Montessori emphasized the importance of hands-on learning, play, and object study. Fifth, educational philosophers from Herbart to Dewey to Bruner have emphasized the value of educative experiences based on genuine objects. Thus, the numerous issues of pedagogy based on objects have a long and multidisciplinary history. Let me chart the conceptual landscape that I see embodied in the chapters in this book. First, there is a broad uncharted territory of pedagogy and epistemology with authentic objects. The topography includes issues about how people of: It is a transaction between object and person that evokes and allows meaning construction. Learning about, with, and through objects involves hands-on learning and manipulation. Being in the presence of an original object can be uplifting. Talking about your own reactions to objects can be edifying. Responding to an object can deepen the experience. Authentic, unique, and first-hand experiences with objects stimulate curiosity, exploration, and emotions. These are features of an object-based epistemology that stand in contrast to the traditional methods of learning through text and discourse. Authors in this book explore many facets of object-based learning, and I hope readers consider these issues as frontiers for future exploration. A second feature of the landscape concerns the places of learning. It is tempting to make contrasts between learning in schools and museums but this distinction only captures a few hills and valleys. The larger issues include the roles of context on learning and the mini-worlds created for visitors. Consider the ways that museum contexts project visitors to other places. The experiences might include: Museums create contexts that may be authentic or imaginary but all are designed to alter the perspectives, thoughts, and feelings of visitors. Contexts may also affect visitors through the architectural design of shape, size, space, etc. The appeal of these settings is evident in their popularity as destinations for cultural tourism and family gatherings. A third feature of the landscape is the disciplinary orientations to objects evident in the detailed interactions of people in these environments. Museums devoted to scientific objects elicit scientific reasoning and fact-based discussions. Contexts designed to display sculptures, paintings, or art are more likely to elicit aesthetic reactions and discussions. Appreciation of different intellectual domains, as well as discipline-based reasoning, can be nurtured in diverse contexts and these issues, especially as they relate to children and education, are uncharted territory. A fourth feature of the intellectual landscape mapped in this volume is the nature of object-based interactions and discourse. Objects are stimuli for conversations and explorations, a beginning point for discourses that may be scientific, historical, aesthetic, or personal. Some of these discourses may involve narratives about the object or the person that give unique meaning to their interaction. For example, touching the name of a friend on the Vietnam Memorial, touching a moon rock, or looking at an exhibit of your own cultural heritage can elicit deeply personal narratives about your own life and identity. There is a great deal to learn about how people talk about objects and how objects foster question asking and answering. Pedagogical conversations surrounding object investigations are the focus of several chapters in this volume. Readers will find other features of the intellectual landscape of object-based learning equally provocative. If the landscape is constrained in our analyses, it is partly due to the richness of the topics that can be investigated.

Chapter 2 : E. Margaret Evans - Publications

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Chapter 3 : Obituary for Margaret Ree (Evans) Walker (Services)

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Authors E. Margaret Evans, Melinda S. Mull and Devereaux A. Poling discuss the cognitive effects artifacts have on us in the article "The Authentic Object? A.

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Chapter 7 : Neurotree - Harold W. Stevenson Family Tree

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Chapter 8 : 14 Mull Ave, Akron, OH - MLS

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