

## Museums + Happiness

### Moderator: Peter Linett, Slover Linett Strategies

**Peter Linett:** Welcome, you prolific chatters! I'm Peter, a partner in the audience research firm of Slover Linett Strategies. I hope you enjoyed the lecture, as I did, but please feel free to question and challenge what you heard, too. I'd like to know what "thought bombs" she set off in your heads. So chime in and let's dig into this rich topic. Here are a few questions to get us started.

1. Is the mental energy ("cognitive surplus") that goes into a game like World of Warcraft really transferable to the problems that, say, an art museum or an aquarium hope to solve? Jane seems to suggest that the \*content\* of these popular games is pretty much beside the point, and therefore that if museums adopt some of their structural characteristics they'll be correspondingly participatory. (I have a hard time ignoring the shoot-em up aspect here, and I'm not sure it's incidental to the enormous popularity of the game.)
2. Of Jane's four characteristics of the happy life, do virtual-reality games (as a category) really offer that first one: "meaningful work"? For some people, doesn't meaningful entail having an active engagement with the real world -- and some kind of effect on it? Can "meaningfulness" itself be virtual?
3. In an everyday, practical sense, happiness is sometimes synonymous with "fun." But fun is still a vexed and contentious word in museum circles. Why is that? Are we worried about not being taken seriously, e.g. as educators or researchers?

Your thoughts? Let's really listen to each other and build on each other's ideas and questions.

**Nina Simon:** I'm really curious about this question of whether, as Matthew Jenkins commented: "Still don't grasp why is creating sustainable world happiness the primary mission of a museum?"

**Alex Barker:** Happiness as defined here is bounded and rule-based; all games are by definition. That seems at odds with the emphasis on letting visitors create their own experiences.

**Peter Linett:** Right, Nina. Do museums WANT to contribute to happiness? Is it a primary goal?

**Tom Henderson:** Isn't a primary mission of a museum getting people to come to the museum?

**AAM:** @Nina -- would you propose other emotions, instead?

**Peter Linett:** Tom, that sounds self-contained.

**Michal Rachlin:** I was wondering if Tom has it right - if people have positive experiences, they'll want to come to the museum.

**Meg Anderson:** A question has to be - does this happiness work toward the larger mission of the museum. I'm guessing in most cases it will.

**Peter Linett:** Sure, but to what further ends?

**Tom Henderson:** I suppose, but if the museum is in the business of providing a variety of experiences

**Jonathan Yockey:** getting the people to the museum is a means to another end: education, happiness, social betterment, etc.

**Michal Rachlin:** Whether the museum chooses to pursue a broader mission - still need people to want to come/be involved

**David Smith:** I got the impression that Jane was predicting that happiness would become the economic engine of the world and that if you didn't tap into it, you would be left behind

**Amelia Wiggins:** I agreed with Matthew when he said that, but I think the real issue is what we're defining as happiness. I see the "happiness" we find in games a very different (and much more short-lived) happiness than the one I want to promote in my museum - love of lifelong learning, community involvement, etc.

**Elsa Bailey:** Yes, Amelia, I agree completely!

**Melissa Rosengard:** I'm worried that we put too much stake in "happiness" and not enough in people simply feeling valued

**Tamara Schwarz:** I wonder if it's the word "happiness" that gives me pause... has a certain level of superficial connotation to me; well-being seems more important.

**Amelia Wiggins:** Tamara, yes.

**Michal Rachlin:** but part of this "happiness" is feeling valued

**Martha Lindsey:** but doesn't 'valued' mean happiness?

**Jason Herrington:** I am happy when I feel valued

**David Smith:** Happiness as she defined it is deeper than the superficial, smile on my face

**Suzanne Fischer:** Right, Melissa, Reach Advisors recently found about 10% of visitors feel staff care about them

**Mark Christal:** Is happiness a good thing?

**Melissa Rosengard:** well, not necessarily...think of the work stoic

**Peter Linett:** Does Jane's 4-part definition of happiness resonate? It certainly isn't a superficial one, is it?

**Len Steinbach:** To what extent does the notion of instilling happiness conflict with intellectual challenge, broadening of ideas, political and social change and civic dialog... museum functions indeed

**Nina Simon:** Well, I really buy Jane's argument that games are well-designed happiness engines. And I would believe that ANY industry can learn from that. But I was most interested by her argument that there are particular types of happiness that museums don't accommodate, and that we should focus there.

**Peter Linett:** What kinds, Nina?

**Jonathan Yockey:** I think that feeling valued is a component of happiness that she did not properly address (it is a subcomponent of being good at something)

**Donna McAlear:** Her point about "happiness" appears to center on individuals having a stake in forming the information, altering the environment in some way by participating. Thus, less authority on the part of the museum to exert the museum's viewpoint. I agree that "happiness" is relative.

**Terry Liu:** Maybe happiness leads to engagement.

**Michal Rachlin:** Challenge - balanced with feeling achievement/comfort - can be a great flow experience.

**Nina Simon:** She suggested that museums are GOOD at the collective experience and time spent with others, but BAD at being good at something and having meaningful work.

**Melissa Rosengard:** ok, that makes more sense now

**Jenny Sayre Ramberg:** Or engagement leads to happiness

**Jason Herrington:** happiness is a product of community, engagement, accomplishment, failure, challenge

**Maria Mortati:** thanks for that Nina, that helps

**Melissa Rosengard:** how about satisfaction?

**Kim Bortnem:** I think museums are linked to education, and if we can show that learning is fun and diverse, I think we spread happiness.

**Martha Lindsey:** I agree w/ Jonathan. Museums have such a strong intellectual overtone sometimes that working happiness (through encouraging togetherness and success) might help ease that

**Suzanne Fischer:** The "being good at something" bit of happiness seems like a challenging one for museums

**mary case:** Lets not get too hung up on "happiness." It's the four components leading to that emotion: satisfying work, the experience of being good at something, spending time with people we love or like, and helping them be part of something bigger than themselves. These criteria, if stressed in our design thinking (IDEO) will attract people, help museums, sustain the planet.

**Melissa Rosengard:** that seems more what we want

**David Smith:** The missing pieces according to Jane were having satisfying work and being good at something - I would say those are coming into more play in some museums (not mine so much), but not in many

**Amelia Wiggins:** Yes, Nina, and I agreed with her on those points - there are few museums that give the visitor opportunities to do meaningful work

**Douglas Worts:** Happiness may be an interesting way to enter the world of cultural wellbeing, which presumably has something to do with museum missions (even if it is not explicit)

**Nina Simon:** Good point, Mary. I've certainly found in co-creating exhibits with visitors that feeling valued for a real contribution is a HUGE motivator to get non-museum-goers engaged.

**Eric:** First, I think it needs to be recognized that happiness is not simply personal (only for our visitors/players), but also for others. Second, I believe that the premise is that primary motivation is to do things which increase happiness (and avoid suffering)

**Martha Lindsey:** So it's balancing the line of creating a happy experience but to avoid the 'disney-fication' of the museum.

**Brenna Cothran:** Nina, can you give an example?

**Elsa Bailey:** Happiness is viewed by each differently. For some it is thrills. For some it is their positive reflection in other's perspective. It is hardly a simple concept.

**Peter Linett:** Feeling involved and valued -- sure, but is that always about doing work?

**Jenny Sayre Ramberg:** SO what does having satisfying work and being good at something look like in a museum exhibit on our economic crisis or climate change?

**Martha Lindsey:** Peter.. I think it's more about being HEARD

**Jason Herrington:** one can be a valued user; not necessarily a producer or produser

**Alex Barker:** I'm still struggling with the notion that happiness, as defined here, is implicitly competitive. Tom's suggested cooperation plays a role too (the old Kropotkin vs. Huxley point), but I think we're talking about a single and perhaps not representative kind of happiness.

**Peter Linett:** Alex, good question. Does one have fiero without triumphing over something?

**Suzanne Fischer:** It can be triumph over a personal challenge

**Peter Linett:** Yes, a challenge set personally, intrinsically. It's not always instrumental in the world, nor set by an outside organization.

**mary case:** The research points to the combination of the four criteria Jane mentioned.

**Tom Henderson:** Jane sometimes calls this "the economy of engagement"... engagement may be a better word at times

**David Smith:** The triumph can be over a problem

**Douglas Worts:** Museums do not have cultural feedback loops that guide their activities. That seems to be a big issue. Satisfying a series of corporate goals, without understanding impacts at individual, community and global levels is a major shortcoming of museums.

**David Smith:** I never felt better than the day I discovered and fixed a huge problem in my own research

**Maria Mortat:** People come to museums to learn, reflect... they are usually coming during a "happy" time (weekend, for entertainment)

**Eric:** Yes, Elsa. Happiness is not about external factors (like thrills or positive feedback), it's about what the individual does with it internally/psychologically

**Jason Herrington:** museums generally provide a static experience when they should be dynamic and changing

**Alex Barker:** The research, to be valid needs to show that WoW gamers are happier than non-gamers. I don't think it shows that. It shows they derive enjoyment from the game, a very different thing.

**Martha Lindsey:** So as museums... we can face our visitors with a small challenge to be overcome.. and provide a small bit of success in their museum experience

**Martha Lindsey:** something to enhance what we are already doing rather than just replacing everything at once

**Amelia Wiggins:** Another question I had during the lecture was: Who sets the goals/rules of a game in a museum? As an educator, that job might fall to me, but I'd prefer the visitor to create his own path for experiencing art...

**Daryl Fischer:** Success builds on success

**Donna McAlear:** As Tom and Doug point out, her superstructure model is based on multi-actor collaboration in a trust network. This challenges museum organizational models of expertise, greatly.

**Maria Mortat:** Alex- do you think the level of participation is a good meter?

**Peter Linett:** Except that one reason some people don't go to museums is that they're (implicitly) challenging in negative ways. We would have to make that both explicit and fun.

**David Smith:** I don't think we can effectively set the challenge, I think that has to come from the visitor's experience

**Alex Barker:** Let me try a different angle. Art museums can be really quite intimidating for visitors (in ways that other museums aren't). Do you think that's because modern and contemporary art is less accessible, so there's less of a feeling of success?

**Carolina Kaufman:** and inclusive

**Peter Linett:** Anyone agree with Alex, that it has to come from the visitor?

**Terry Liu:** Satisfaction is not as catalytic as happiness

**David Smith:** Or from context, the oil game was set in a real-world problem

**Elsa Bailey:** Perhaps we should be considering this for museums in terms of providing multiple entry points for experiencing happiness. Similar to the way we look at multiple entry points for "learning."

**Peter Linett:** Right -- so David, we're back to the question of whether museums want to solve those real-world problems.

**Nina Simon:** Elsa, yes! I see it as just more strategies to add to the design toolbox

**Donna McAlear:** The museum has to put a framework in place to engage the visitor, and this doesn't happen, often. How and when will the visitor engage?

**Maria Mortat:** Yes, I agree with you, Alex. But the set up for success comes from the museum understanding their audience to an extent.

**Jenny Sayre Ramberg:** Nice point Elsa--some visitors just want to watch rather than play

**mary case:** This happiness work stems from Marty Seligman, and many others who in the past two decades have developed the positive psychology movement in this country. He became president of the Am Psych Association during a year when they published 40,000 articles on depression and 40 on joy. He thought there was something depressing about that and determined to do something about it. Happiness research, foundation funding, self-help books have resulted in full measure. Museums haven't much noticed but I think it might be time. Yes, we can!

**Carolina Kaufman:** it does have to have contributions from visitors and museums will have to go beyond their own walls to implement appropriate approached and strategies in implementing projects

**David Smith:** I'm not sure the question is as much do WE want to solve them, as are we willing to be agents in facilitating solutions

**Jason Herrington:** Users/viewers are just as important as producers/actors

**Nina Simon:** David, I hope so.

**Martha Lindsey:** Maria..i think Jane's lecture might give us the tools to understand them better. 69% of homes of gamers.. knowing why they engage in that can help us understand how to reach them better

**Jason Herrington:** viewers help validate the actors

**Maria Mortat:** Thanks, Mary.

**Tom Henderson:** Nina, what was that exhibit where folks of different backgrounds got to see how earlier visitors had polled in response to a question?

**Maria Mortat:** Yes, Martha. I think in the future everyone doesn't have to cross your threshold to be a participant.

**Tom Henderson:** I think that's one of the best examples of museum engagement that can get us to not think about WoW =)

**Dylan McNamee:** One thing a game could do that affects happiness is to allow individuals contribute, like a wiki, to the permanent state of the "exhibit"...the challenge posed here is to keep that from being truly constructive, not just graffiti

**Nina Simon:** Tom, it's at the Anne Frank house in Amsterdam.

**Libby Pokel:** the McCormick freedom museum does a lot with polling as well

**Tom Henderson:** thank you

**Sheila Grinell:** for years museums have been discussing whether they're about something or for somebody. To me, the new element here is harnessing the wisdom of the crowd, and museumgoers are a powerful crowd.

**Nina Simon:** But I'm thinking more of co-creation projects, where visitors are "players" and the game is to make an exhibition.

**Carolina Kaufman:** I agree with Jason fully. Also a hybrid approach is preferable when it comes to the use of technology

**Maria Mortat:** Nina, or where they're playing is the exhibition

**Terry Liu:** interactions in play are so temporal - unlike collections and archives

**Douglas Worts:** It is important to remember that it isn't just the 'participants' who benefit from engaging in the types of dynamics suggested here. The museum as an organization, if it is to be a 'learning organization' also has to see how this will contribute to its own learning. Because of the preference of museums for hierarchical power structures, this will be a challenge. But the time has come for museums to rethink their roles in society.

**Donna McAlear:** Many museums have collaborated with community partners to create exhibitions, so I don't see this action as being new to the field.

**Martin Rayala:** It would be great if we had three portals to happiness - a happier real world through better design; happier simulated worlds like theme parks and museums; and happier virtual worlds like Sim City and Civilization.

**Peter Linett:** Douglas, what are some other/newer conceptions of museums roles that we need to get to?

**Daryl Fischer:** To Doug's point, giving up control is the hardest part. But also the greatest potential.

**Nina Simon:** Doug, the hierarchy of experiences and objects can also be the basis for a system of game rules. Chess has its kings, museums have their curators.

**mary case:** happy, happy, happy

**Maria Mortat:** But the relationships are what persist. Making the interconnections from person to artifact to larger idea to shared experience/idea. That's delightful.

**James Leventhal:** Nina: but is the public the pawns or the Queens?

**AAM:** or are they checkers?

**Peter Linett:** Nina, are you suggesting that games are the right metaphor for all kinds of museum experiences, or only one of many helpful metaphors?

**Elsa Bailey:** Yes Sheila, it's time to shift our thinking to museums are about the greater "we" and thus the crowd must be part of the dialogue.

**Nina Simon:** One of many. In fact, I think several of the games she discussed are better as metaphors than in actual delivery. Lost Ring sounds better than it played, in my opinion as a non-gamer kind of player.

**Douglas Worts:** Perhaps, but museums should be prepared to acknowledge that cultural impacts are not only within the domain and physical space of museum buildings. Culture existed long before museums. Now we tend to think that our cultural organizations somehow equal the cultural dimension of society. I think we need a stratified approach to assessing the cultural impacts of museums.

**Eric:** Hi, Sheila. Yes, this does seem to be part of a progression. I believe it is towards our ability to "engineer" experiences with a good understanding of social constructivism. First, we recognized that visitors came to us with prior knowledge/experiences. Now, we need to celebrate the natural process of social building of knowledge and experience

**Peter Linett:** So can we throw out some other metaphors, to go along with "museum as game"? Any thoughts?

**Donna McAlear:** Her model suggests sharing the knowledge pool in museums and opening it up to new interpretations, in the same way as gaming communities do. This requires a value shift in how museums think about and use collections.

**Peter Linett:** Museum as community garden? (or is that a game, too?)

**Daryl Fischer:** How about "museum as sport"? Kind of an interesting nuance there.

**Peter Linett:** Museum exhibit as like a novel, or a dream? I like the sport idea -- although most sports are games.

**Libby Pokel:** museum as a choose-your-own-adventure story

**Douglas Worts:** I think the notion of 'gaming' is a bit dangerous because in experience of many people 'game' is a trivialization.

**Jason Herrington:** museum as virtual reality

**Kat Burkhart:** Is anyone familiar with James Burks project the knowledge Web?

**Maria Mortat:** I just love that museums have the potential to be all these things to people

**mary case:** museums as a wiki, museums as a home page, museums a home room, a home base, a meaning maker, a culture keeper,

**Nina Simon:** Peter, I think there are many models we could discuss... but do they all promote happiness? and is that important? What's the relationship in your mind between museum missions and happiness-promotion?

**Kat Burkhardt:** it ties objects and info together in a six degrees of separation like

**Peter Linett:** Yes, multiplicity is vital here, I think. That's why I asked.

**Douglas Worts:** I am curious about the profiles of gamers - demographically, and psychographically. I suspect that this exists. Does anyone know?

**mary case:** I love that museums are big enough to be all these things, too.

**Eric:** From the engineering perspective, museums are an agora to come together to dream and build a better world

**Myriam Springuel:** I don't think that we are trying to create happiness in the museum, as much as acknowledging that by pursuing happiness people will do things that are fulfilling and add to the common good

**Peter Linett:** Nina, I just think happiness is more complex than she frames it, and we'd need to know much more about it to promote it. Yes, I think museums are centrally about making people happy.

**Bruce Falk:** Nina, Myriam, knowledge = happiness? The wonder factor

**Donna McAlear:** I don't know, Doug, but I did wonder about the economic demographic of gamers while listening to this lecture, and what "community" they represent, globally, in light of museums and society change.

**emerritt:** Profile of gamers--see Pew research center on the Internet and American Life for that data

**Myriam Springuel:** Peter: yes museums are about making people happy, but not for the sake of happiness, but the sake of what other things happiness achieves

**Maria Mortat:** Eric-- I agree. Also, people go to museums during 'happy times' of the day/week/etc.

**Peter Linett:** Don't we need to say, some kinds of knowledge, experienced in some kinds of ways, leads to some kinds of happiness?

**Nina Simon:** and the MacArthur study that showed that 95% of American teens play games every day

**Myriam Springuel:** Bruce: Knowledge does not = happiness. But knowledge leads to happiness

**Maria Mortat:** So my teenagers aren't doing their homework?

**Bruce Falk:** I'd settle for contentment.

**Jason Herrington:** we are all constantly on a quest to become happier. it drives everything we do.

**Peter Linett:** So the stats show that these "tools" are important if we want to serve large(r) audiences. And it sounds like we agree museums should become platforms for collaboration.

**Daryl Fischer:** But it's not just teens, in a recent panel at the High I was surprised to learn how many middle-aged women play games regularly.

**Martin Rayala:** Have you seen how dumb some of the homework your kids aren't doing is?

**Maria Mortat:** Yes, Martin, I have. They make fun of it.

**Elsa Bailey:** Jason, that's an interesting thought - but for so long we have valued the realities, the real authentic objects for engaging learners. We don't want to lose that uniqueness by exchanging it for the virtual. Let's try to not lose our strengths but add to them with these new ideas.

**Eric:** Myriam. Yes, Buddhism, which encapsulates positive psychology, says that unhappiness comes from ignorance

**Douglas Worts:** From my perspective, the pursuit of happiness makes sense from the perspective of individuals, but if museums feel that they have a role in helping to shape a 'culture of sustainability' then they have to approach the challenge of public programming with multiple lenses simultaneously

**Terry Liu:** huhh?

**Myriam Springuel:** Bruce: And that is the problem with the word happiness. It means different things to different people. I'd settle for contentment too, that's part of the definition

**Nina Simon:** Elsa made an early comment about cultural definitions of happiness. It strikes me that the countries on the "happy side" of the list are not as achievement-focused as Americans are. Is "leveling up" a driver only for cultures that don't provide a more contented kind of happiness?

**Daryl Fischer:** Is satisfaction a better word?

**Maria Mortat:** Hmn, good point Nina.

**Peter Linett:** Great question, Nina. Jane's goal-oriented point is exactly about that kind of achievement.

**Jason Herrington:** Elsa; being rooted in objects is static, where museums should be dynamic. I feel strongly that we are experience-oriented institutions that use objects in unique ways

**Eric:** Nina . great question. I'd like to broaden the issue to focus on intrinsic rather vs. extrinsic motivators

**Richard Urban:** @nina (jumping in late) well and happiness doesn't always mean easy or "fun" challenges can be satisfying too

**Maria Mortat:** Yes, but sharing a goal can be wonderful thing in any culture.

**Myriam Springuel:** Eric: great point... so museums help overcome ignorance

**Martin Rayala:** Good designers aren't afraid of concepts like "play" and "happiness". These are much more important than us "serious" folks acknowledge in learning and education.

**Peter Linett:** Well said, Martin.

**Bruce Falk:** Myriam - so what we have is a fairly broad definition of happiness, or at least many elements that can make up positive psychology. Knowledge should be a component (unless ignorance is bliss, sadder but wiser). I hearken back to the Aha eureka element that museums should be offering. Wonder. Transcendence. Insight. Discovery. All things one can take home and continue to develop later

**Eric:** Yes, coming from a science museum background, museums are largely to give visitors the tools to question and better understand their world

**Suzanne Fischer:** "Leveling up" is one kind of feedback competitive folks look for; other kinds of positive community feedback are also useful and happiness producing

**Eric:** .. and, to act in this world (another level)

**Terry Liu:** "Wonder. Transcendence. Insight. Discovery" now that's a path to happiness

**Peter Linett:** Bruce, do you get that eureka moment without a goal/mission/work? Is eureka different from fiero?

**mary case:** And let me just point out -- many people go to science and children's museums and there isn't a "real" thing in sight. Yet they have a very real experience.

**Libby Pokel:** could leveling up = repeat visitation?

**Myriam Springuel:** Peter: I think eureka, fiero, and being "in the flow" are all the same thing.

**Peter Linett:** Important point, Mary.

**Elsa Bailey:** Jason, I'm not suggesting staying rooted in object, just not to "throw our the baby with the bath water." I think we should be thinking about building on the old by using the new. In other words enhance our strengths through the use of new tools and ideas.

**Jason Herrington:** what about membership profiles? published statistics and achievements

**Peter Linett:** Myriam, the museum ed world has embraced the work of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, which implies the same thing (we get into "flow" by working through a challenge). But there are other kinds of bliss and pleasurable immersion.

**mary case:** what about staff profiles, for heavens sake?

**Jason Herrington:** yes, those too!

**Myriam Springuel:** Peter: Yes, there are other kinds of bliss and pleasurable immersion. They all depend of having knowledge and skills to accomplish/enjoy/participate in something successfully

**Nina Simon:** mary, when testing a game in a museum recently, we asked kids what prize/reward was most appealing. One boy immediately grabbed the staff member's badge and was adamant that it was the best reward.

**Richard Urban:** @jason can we get beyond affiliation with a single inst. I might be more willing to participate if it allowed me to "level up" across museums

**Peter Linett:** Maybe, but I wonder if attending a classical music concert requires the skills that our counterparts in classical music think it does. Just for example.

**Nina Simon:** I think visitors see that having a real job to do in the museum is really rewarding.

**Bruce Falk:** Peter, I thought Fiero was pride, eureka's more recognition of something not previously understood. Certainly you can achieve it without a mission, but I think the point of a mission (or any objective) is to focus people toward specific achievements. "Fiero! I found the restrooms!" may be a museum-related experience, but is probably not mission-driven. Likewise, I suppose, "Aha! I see that stairs bottleneck less quickly than escalators" is probably not either, unless you're trying to teach about fluid dynamics and traffic (and why not?)

**Mary Case:** you've all given me a chance to be with people I like these two hours, and to be a part of something bigger, and to be satisfied with the work we're doing together, but I must sign off now. Thank you everyone!

**Jason Herrington:** So what about something like a Facebook application? Where you could track specific accomplishments (and failures) and share them with the world?

**Peter Linett:** Bye Mary.

**Terry Liu:** Interesting! For passive audiences a concert is like going to a museum

**Elsa Bailey:** Thanks Mary. Hope to see you soon!

**Myriam Springuel:** Peter, Bruce, I think we are all saying the same thing. There are inherent challenges to the museum experience, and it is pleasurable (we want to come back) when there is a success (and that success takes many many shapes)

**Richard Urban:** anyone looked at PMMOG <http://pmog.com/>

**Peter Linett:** Interesting -- isn't a Facebook page like an exhibition? Aren't those people engaging in amateur exhibit design?

**Jason Herrington:** absolutely

**Nina Simon:** Richard, I wrote about it years ago, but then dropped off in interest/use.

**Jack T:** I don't think a Facebook page, as used by any typical Facebook user, is at all like exhibit design or a game.

**Jack T:** a Facebook page is entirely too restricted

**John Maccabee:** If the Facebook page belongs to an in-game character who is a curator at a museum, it can

**Peter Linett:** Exhibit(ionism)? Is it not like an online exhibit? Why not?

**Bruce Falk:** Agreed with Nina's last point. Must also run, alas. Quick re Terry and concerts, for me, most successful concerts were Bernstein's, Slatkin's, BBC's in which time was taken at the onset to explain some of the things people would be hearing. Increased attention, enjoyment and ultimately appreciation. Thanks to all for this. Looking forward to transcripts.

**Nina Simon:** I'm heading out as well. So glad that an ice storm 2000 miles away made it possible for me to participate!

**Jack T:** I guess I'm thinking of "exhibit" in a useful sense... you know, educating someone

**Jason Herrington:** A Facebook page has content, feedback, design... how is it different from an exhibit?

**Peter Linett:** Thanks Bruce and Nina!

**Jason Herrington:** It's an exhibit in the Youseum

**Douglas Worts:** one of the characteristics I saw in the gaming model was that individuals invested a lot of time, over an extended period of time. In museums, that describes staff and volunteers, but not much else. This brings me back to how museums would characterize the kind of engagement presented today, while still maintaining its focus within the physical building? Are there any examples of museums that have achieved this type of public engagement?

**Terry Liu:** What about blogs then?

**Jack T:** perhaps you could argue that a Facebook page is the simplest form of an exhibit. But where does that get you? There are limits to what a Facebook page can be that will never get you the benefits of a Museum exhibit.

**Martin Rayala:** A real strength of museums is that people actually made something (images, objects, spaces, and experiences) to help us learn, rather than just telling or writing about the ideas.

**Jason Herrington:** There are real strengths in Facebook that are difficult to find in museum exhibits too. Participation, for instance

**Richard Urban:** but exhibits don't generally talk back to me..

**Myriam Springuel:** Thanks all for good conversation. Gotta go.

**Terry Liu:** Video bloggers - the ones that actually shoot edit and upload videos are sometimes quite educational

**Maria Mortat:** these things that people make are manifestations of ideas. gaming paradigms allow us to consider these ideas and oftentimes run with them.

**Donna McAlear:** Doug, museums are doing blogs, online exhibitions, interactive collection dialogues (online). Has their success been measured? I've seen some blogs that have ended rather soon, but remain on museum websites, stagnant.

**Elsa Bailey:** Yes, probably time to put all this happiness aside and get down to some more boring detailed stuff. But this has been great. Hope to continue these conversations with you all. Perhaps at AAM? Maybe there should be a way to arrange that in Philly?

**Peter Linett:** Youseum is nice. Isn't what we're talking about making the museum more subjective -- where the "subject" (grammatically speaking) is the visitor? The do-er?

**Jason Herrington:** That's the "collect and preserve" part of the mission coming out

**Terry Liu:** Games as a term implies an objective to win to be happy. We're talking about something broader.

**Maria Mortat:** yes, great conversation all. thank you.

**Peter Linett:** Anyone want (or have time) to keep rolling?

**Kat Burkhardt:** keep up the discussion, in Philly, LA and beyond!

**Douglas Worts:** Donna, yes, there are blogs and online resources, but they seem very secondary to the 'core functions' of most museums. And I would love to hear of a museum that really learns from its engagement with audiences.

**Terry Liu:** I'm going back to the mundane world.

**Jason Herrington:** I think game is a process

**Martin Rayala:** Many people have a perception of museums as a place where old stuff is stored. Perhaps our conception of what "games" are is also stereotyped and limited.

**Jason Herrington:** I like the idea that we game (verb) rather than seeing museums as a game (noun)

**Richard Urban:** Thanks everyone, have to run.

**Donna McAlear:** Doug, I agree, and will catch up with you later re: examples. I've got to run now, so thanks, all and AAM for this opportunity!

**Peter Linett:** Right, Martin. That's a danger here -- we're mostly non-gamers talking about how to use game-like design.

**Jack T:** heh which is why I'm frustrated, because I am a gamer

**Peter Linett:** How wrong are we getting it, Jack?

**Richard Urban:** @peter make some time to play some games!!

**Peter Linett:** I will, now. What's your best recommendation?

**Jack T:** well I don't know about "wrong" in most cases.... it just strikes me as a lot of non-targeted discussion. for example, a gamer isn't going to look at Facebook as a game.

**Richard Urban:** @Peter depends on what you like, just like movies, books, etc. There's a game for everyone

**Jack T:** so if we are trying to connect to gamers... is that a useful comparison?

**John Maccabee:** arg-ers do look at Facebook as a platform for a game

**Jason Herrington:** The idea isn't necessarily to connect to gamers, which is a specific audience

**Jack T:** I'm just getting into arg's.... that's not a realm I know much about. I did just hire a student who runs her own ARG though.... so perhaps I'll learn soon.

**Jason Herrington:** rather, it is to use the theory of gaming to make museum experiences better

**John Maccabee:** Jason, I think you're spot on

**Jason Herrington:** objective -> success/failure -> reward -> repeat

**Jack T:** Jason... yes, that's a valid point. I was taking the 40% stat from the talk and pointing that considerable audience

**Carolina Kaufman:** it wouldn't hurt then for non-gamers to start stepping more in to the gaming world to see it for themselves or begin dialogue with those that do game and why they game. however if you like games like Taboo, Chess, Clue, Monopoly, Risk or watching Jeopardy, Family Feud, then you can be a gaming advocate

**Peter Linett:** A concluding thought? (I have to run too.) Museums have long been concerned about providing an alternative to pop culture in all its manifestations, including (lately) the technological. Yet museums are also eager to embrace the latest tools and stay relevant.

**Jack T:** The trouble is that "gaming concepts" are hard to tack down, for gamers and non-gamers alike.

**Terry Liu:** Is role play necessary to be a "gamer "

**Carolina Kaufman:** no, I don't believe so Terry

**John Maccabee:** no.

**Jason Herrington:** a gamer is someone who plays a game. any game! I play tag, therefore I am a gamer

**John Maccabee:** right

**Douglas Worts:** I think we are getting too fixated on the notion of 'gaming' instead of looking at the characteristics of gaming that museums and the public might both benefit from.

**Jack T:** well sure, but does your experience in tag make you an expert at Museum games?

**Terry Liu:** Then why is Facebook so remote from gaming?

**John Maccabee:** games are a means to an end, what remains is what ends are you trying to reach with the game

**Jason Herrington:** tag was the simplest game I could think of, to make a point

**Kat Burkhardt:** Tag is a challenge declared

**Peter Linett:** Douglas, so do you agree with Jane's notion of importing some of those characteristics to exhibit experiences?

**Carolina Kaufman:** Yes... if you are challenged and there is a strategic way to gain momentum successfully whether it be in stages or not then you can put your self in the gaming world

**Martin Rayala:** Check out work by Henry Jenkins at MIT and his book "Convergence Culture".

**Carolina Kaufman:** More importantly if you are having fun, all the better...conceptually if you learn something or with someone else then all the better

**Terry Liu:** Maybe the word "play" is useful

**Carolina Kaufman:** I would also look at the work that Mitchel Resnick of the MIT Media Lab...

**Carolina Kaufman:** and his focus on Play and Design

**Douglas Worts:** First of all, I wouldn't stay stuck to the central vehicle of exhibits. That is part of the museum problem. Gaming, as we've discussed today, because it is not constrained by the assumptions of museums.

**Carolina Kaufman:** His group, The Kindergarten Learning group brings a revived concept that play is not only important but necessary in today's global market

**Peter Linett:** Okay, the museum experience. Should it become more like a game in those ways?

**Douglas Worts:** I meant to say 'Gaming is successful...'

**Martin Rayala:** Yes, Mitchell Resnick and his predecessor, Seymour Papert.

**Carolina Kaufman:** Thanks again for putting this together CFM and Learningtimes!

**Kat Burkhart:** What do museums "Dare" people to do? What challenge is offered?

**Jason Herrington:** I try to challenge preconceived notions, ignorance, complacency

**Carolina Kaufman:** By the way here is Mitchel Resnick's MIT Media Lab site which I recommend <http://admissions.media.mit.edu/research/group/lifelong-kindergarten>

**Douglas Worts:** I think that there is value in looking at the motivational side of gaming - personalization, skill development, feeling part of something, etc. - and then connect them to the cultural challenges of our day (e.g. global inequity, climate change, etc.).

**Jason Herrington:** Early childhood education theory is something we should all take another look at

**Carolina Kaufman:** Yes...why does everyone not complain about kindergarten but when it comes to middle school and high school the interest goes down

**Jason Herrington:** Doug: I think that's a great point

**Terry Liu:** Yes Carolina! Nintendo may make a lot of sales but there are still more children engaged in other forms of play, wonder, imagination, transcendence, insight, and discovery as paths to happiness...

**Carolina Kaufman:** Exploration, experimentation, play are key concepts in Kindergarten learning and there is not enough of this in higher levels of schooling or learning

**Peter Linett:** I agree, Douglas, I just wonder about the broadening audience notion here. Is the mental energy ("cognitive surplus") that goes into a game like World of Warcraft really transferable to the problems that, say, an art museum or an aquarium hope to solve? Jane seems to suggest that the \*content\* of these popular games is pretty much beside the point, and therefore that if museums adopt some of their structural characteristics they'll be correspondingly participatory.

**Terry Liu:** Well - we can talk about all kinds of participatory activities besides gaming

**Carolina Kaufman:** Watch this...Sowing the Seeds for a more Creative society and then you will understand...<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qWF1SJ4LGI>

**Peter Linett:** Terry, I agree. That's why I was trying to broaden this earlier.

**Terry Liu:** Ooh - another lecture - I'll have to watch Sowing Seeds later.

**Douglas Worts:** To me, attending this gaming session was a bit of a long shot. But I saw in the presenter's arguments that the underlying respect for the potential of individuals to participate is what I found compelling.

**Peter Linett:** Also don't forget Clay Shirky's book -- I agree with Jane that it's terrific.

**Terry Liu:** Well - very stimulating afternoon - I have to go! Thank you.

Center for the Future of Museums  
Transcript of Webcast Chat  
"Gaming the Future of Museums" by Dr. Jane McGonigal

**Peter Linett:** Thanks, all. Very stimulating and diverse contributions all around.

**Douglas Worts:** Thank you!

**Jason Herrington:** Thanks everyone

**Carolina Kaufman:** Agreed, very stimulating and love everyone's input and comments, very enriching. I plan to share this experience and pass on the You Tube lecture to my colleagues here at the Art Institute of Chicago.