

Open Discussion

Moderator: Greg Stevens, Assistant Director, Professional Education, American Association of Museums

Greg Stevens: So what do you all think of this? I admit I was a bit stunned when I first heard the lecture. Not being a gamer, it made me really think

VP: Brought back my Atari Space Invader days

Greg Stevens: Well I was a trekkie and a major Mat Mason guy as a kid....

Lotte Lent: I have to admit it makes me want to get away in nature! Even slip on some REAL ice. But lots of food for getting me thinking more about the possibilities for lofty creations.

Greg Stevens: Major Matt Mason. I wonder if we are ready to think about the future like this?

Elizabeth Hamlett: I have a hard time connecting gaming to happiness because I always found them to be a little frustrating

VP: Gaming isn't new in terms of providing happiness and reaching the tween audience. What's new is the web use and Museums thinking about games as educational. It's only in the last few years that games got respectful attention at my museum.

Greg Stevens: agreed

Andrew Sacher: I suggest we think a little more about Casual Games rather than Gamer Games

Becca Hiller: I admit to getting stuck on the idea that games create happiness...I have a son who lives and breathes his computer and I do not like it. However, as I listened more I was intrigued by the idea that a computer "game" could be used to stimulate a love of history, or at the very least an interest in it.

Ruth Cuadra: I'm not a gamer, but I think the essence of what Jane is saying--that we need to think about why gaming is so attractive and consuming--and apply those principles to what we do in museums is worth a lot.

Greg Stevens: AGREED

Maria Mortati: My sense is that gaming is not a solution for all visitors. Nor is She suggesting that everything literally needs to be a game. But there are many good take aways.

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Lotte Lent: I realize I need to stop thinking about what I would like and think about what VISTORS might relate t that is meaningful...

Greg Stevens: I had to remove myself from my tech phobia and get to the essence of it all, which is meaningful I think

Jack T: I think the biggest barrier to a future that involves more games in Museums lies within the challenge of getting museum pros to realize that 40% of their audience games

Maria Mortati: I think also fostering shared experiences amongst visitors is key

Greg Stevens: YES

Becca Hiller: In a museum setting though can a game be applied that would fully engage a visitor yet still work in the limited time that visitors are willing to spend in a museum

Andrew Sacher: Agree with Maria

Lotte Lent: The cemetery program she mentioned was interesting - is there any more info somewhere on that?

Becca Hiller: sorry I am a terrible fast typer

Andrew Sacher: My sense is that this is just as much Collaborative Play as it is Casual Gaming

Greg Stevens: I LOVED the happiness stuff though. Made perfect sense to me. Adult Learning principals in action, I think

Andrew Sacher: Those shared experiences are extremely important.

Jack T: I don't think that gaming requires collaboration of any type. I think you can talk about games in Museums without collaboration or community at all

Greg Stevens: for me it's about the individual needs and wants

Jack T: right... and of course different individuals need and want different levels of interaction

Andrew Sacher: I'm thinking of the family that goes to the museum together.

Greg Stevens: and..?

Andrew Sacher: a shared authentic experience can make a huge difference.

Elizabeth Keaney: I think the analogy of World of Warcraft is a good one--provide a space where individuals work collaboratively to achieve their own and shared needs/wants and hopefully create community from that

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Greg Stevens: shared experience is like teams somewhat

Andrew Sacher: perhaps

Greg Stevens: everyone brings something unique to the common table

Jack T: what I want to see is a talk that gets more into the nitty gritty of this stuff. "Games" is too broad of a topic to be ultimately very useful. We need to talk about how to cater to people who play solitaire, bejeweled, Sims, Grand Theft Auto and everything in between. We need to examine individual components though.

Kat Burkhart Indiana: I think museum staff are often collaborating in a WOW way, but I am not sure about the museum visitors

Andrew Sacher: Agree with Kat

Elizabeth Keaney: How do we provide that type of space then? Especially in a world that tends to be wary of strangers?

Greg Stevens: Jack, agree, but I think museums need to understand "game" before they can nitty gritty it.

Kat Burkhart: Our museum drafts some members of the community to be "staff" and create exhibits

Andrew Sacher: I just finished a game at the new CA Academy of Science that encourages people to be a new entomologist. Role Playing can be key to getting the "audience" involved.

Martin Rayala: I'd like to hear about museums that place satellite exhibits in schools and/or help schools create their own mini-museums.

Jack T: Greg: of course, define what you are talking about first, and I think that was lacking in the talk today. A game can be looking for a specific artifact in a museum, or it can be engaging with a digital interactive module with constraints and missions and fancy graphics.

Libby Pokel: we recently did the same thing with a group of 2nd-5th graders, asking them to create mini exhibitions with natural history specimens

Greg Stevens: I have to agree about a lack of definition. That was my first response

Andrew Sacher: Empathy is key, right?

Jack T: I don't know... maybe it's just because I game already, and have for 15 years. I just want to be able to go back to my Museum and create something useful at this point.

Greg Stevens: And I'm not a gamer, so I was a bit clueless. I need a bit more of an advance organizer...

Andrew Sacher: Jack, do you prefer to be at the museum? or is this something you would rather do online?

Jack T: well, I work at a museum, but for the most part; I find that I can engage with the content more online. Accessibility is better online and I can augment my learning with other non-museum-provided research

Andrew Sacher: There is a huge challenge, and why I mentioned casual games. People just don't have the time to spend, like when they are playing WOW

Greg Stevens: it amazes me how much time do spend gaming v how little time they spend at an exhibition element

Alex Barker: Is the happiness discussed here qualitatively different than, say, a fan of a TV show that enjoys the show, identifies with the characters and feels like an insider for knowing the plot lines?

Greg Stevens: hmm

Andrew Sacher: It seems we need to speak the language of games, to engage the audience.

Greg Stevens: I liked what she presented about the happiness criteria

Jennifer Barlup: One of the things mentioned in the earlier, COSI in Columbus, Ohio has an exhibit area built around a game. In terms of creating a community, the players of the game did that themselves. They created web pages on chat groups, etc. A few years ago the exhibit closed (it is now only available for special events) and at the end those in the chat groups planned times when they would be in the exhibit finishing the puzzle together. In learning from this experience there is a lot we could - and probably would do now - to facilitate this sense of community. And it wasn't forced. People could choose to participate if they wanted. Now it would be up to us as museums to create those sorts of situations and make sure the public knew about them.

Maria Mortati: Andrew- totally agrees with that

Andrew Sacher: Jennifer, was this geared to repeat visitors?

Greg Stevens: So what do you all think about museums ability (or inability) to influence behavior?

Jennifer Barlup: It was and wasn't. It was a multi level puzzle. The first layer could be solved in one visit. If you wanted to go further than yes. You would need to come back... probably several times.

Jack T: influence behavior for what purpose? Or, in what way?

Greg Stevens: I don't know. Do we want them to be better citizens? Kinder. Smarter. just a thought

Andrew Sacher: I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that museums can learn a lot from theme parks, when it comes to influencing behavior.

Carol Stapp: Does it strike anyone else that the criteria for "optimal human experience" are to be found in religion or in a discipline?

Andrew Sacher: the good ones are very clever at guiding story and expectation

Greg Stevens: yes carol it does and I don't think the theme park limb is too far out.

Jennifer Barlup: COSI is creating models that us to consider behavioral change when we develop.

Martin Rayala: I think schools could benefit by being more like interactive museums and theme parks.

Greg Stevens: ARGs (alt reality games) are designed to influence behavior, right?

Jack T: theme parks, definitely.... I think Museums...libraries...etc. always need to be looking at profit making entertainment entities. They make a profit because people are interested in their presentations so much that they are willing to pay for it.

Andrew Sacher: If I expect to engage in a museum it will certainly change my behavior.

Greg Stevens: Carol, what are your thoughts about your earlier comment?

Jack T: as far as influencing behavior... that's not an approach I think our institution has thought much about... we're much more concerned with changing our behavior to better mesh with what our visitors are bringing to the table...to make our approach work for them.

Jennifer Barlup: I don't think COSI - I don't want to speak for anyone else - considered behavioral change much before now. Learning yes. But thinking about what we wanted them to DO with the new knowledge was not something we pushed on.

Greg Stevens: interesting Jack and Jenn

Pattie Boy: Maybe COSI could create games that build on exhibits for their web site

Greg Stevens: so the experiences we design are about learning not about behavior?

Pattie Boy: COSI- like a game showing how frogs are important inthe environment to go along with the frogs exhibit

Greg Stevens: I liked the idea of "fogs" lol

Andrew Sacher: The behavior of the visitor's behavior must be considered... and I think we can all agree that A.D.D. is a trend!

Erin Weinman: Question: In putting together a business case for developing a game, how would you define the ROI?

Andrew Sacher: (sorry for the typo)

Greg Stevens: along with an increasingly medicated society, for sure!

Jack T: Greg, yes, I think that's how we think about it. Obviously, we all believe that education will influence behavior, but it's up to us to create experiences that facilitate learning. The behavioral change will happen long after the visitor leaves and will be different for each person. It doesn't seem like something we could easily control or guide.

Jennifer Barlup: Online is a gaming format people are comfortable with, but I don't think we have to stop there. The big idea I got out was that people do want structure, because they like feeling like they accomplished something. Creating gaming possibilities that would help to shape their visit could be really interesting. And it could just be an option. One way to visit not the only way to visit.

Greg Stevens: well-said jack

Pattie Boy: I think the games should further their experiences at museum. I just took a class in Flash gaming, and want to do more research into using games for education.

Greg Stevens: how did the class help your thinking about the possibilities?

Martin Rayala: Getting people to actually go to the museum is a good step in furthering their experience of the museum. Using relevant concepts and interests of our time might help (like games).

Andrew Sacher: Pattie, I like the idea of extending the experience beyond the walls of the museum. It seems the museum exhibit should be the hook to get people more engaged (dare I use an entertainment term).

Jack T: Erin... one has to consider this... if a large portion of your visitors are blind, you don't develop all your exhibits without using Braille. You're not going to reach your audience that way. Similarly, if you have a large number of gamers coming into your museum, in order to effectively educate them, you're going to need to adjust your approach to teaching to something that fits within how they have a capacity to learn.

Jennifer Barlup: But when it comes to the behavioral change issue don't we limit our experiences when we don't create towards that goal. When you have to think in terms of what you want the guest to do it can force you to ask interesting questions of your experiences.

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Pattie Boy: Greg -we had to create a game for the OSU student health dept- to educate them on a medical matter

Greg Stevens: interesting. yes, the goal is the key, and of course the outcome. but then of course the issue of measurability

Pattie Boy: Greg-people in the class used games to explain insulin and diabetes, ADD, and more.

Greg Stevens: cool. I've been thinking about how I can use games in professional development programs myself. Corporate training is using them increasingly

Pattie Boy: I read that people learn better from games or interactive media than traditional

Martin Rayala: I'm going to be pursuing the ideas of schools becoming more like museums at <http://andDESIGNmagazine.blogspot.com> if anyone wants to continue this exploration.

Andrew Sacher: Future museum visitors will grow up with games, the Internet, mobile phones, etc. Many of these technologies are changing human behavior in a big way. Are we shifting from a Curatorial to Editorial sensibility in museums?

Greg Stevens: GOOD question

Andrew Sacher: Much of what we are discussing here suggests the later!

Greg Stevens: I agree

Andrew Sacher: It seems the momentum is far too great to influence, and that successful museums will respond... I guess HOW is the big question.

Pattie Boy: I think games can be used to create connections. What about a game connecting the exhibits played on your cell phone or pda? Lots of possibilities there.

Greg Stevens: Ah, HOW. is the question

Pattie Boy: ever heard of the Oxygen program at MIT?

Greg Stevens: no

Andrew Sacher: No, do tell

Pattie Boy: they are developing handheld computers that pick up signals in rooms and download the programs you need instantly

Greg Stevens: neat

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Pattie Boy: The computer itself is 'in the air' and the units are used to operate it. Check out their website.

Kat Burkhart: very Star Trek

Andrew Sacher: The technology is here for sure. However, the more evasive question is to what end?

Greg Stevens: thanks for sharing this

Jennifer Barlup: Thanks everyone! Back to the snow.

Greg Stevens: Andrew, yup, back to goals and outcomes

Andrew Sacher: I'm all for technology if it engages the visitor with the content.

Greg Stevens: Thanks Jennifer!

Lotte Lent: Andrew, I'm with you - meaningful content via any media that works it well.

Andrew Sacher: I was also suggesting that the new audience likes to participate more. Having them help solve problems, research facts, identify patterns, etc.

Carol Stapp: Lotte, I'd add "meaningful outcome" for the person/community/world--a la Excellence and Equity.

Greg Stevens: Lotte, yes but the media is only the delivery method is only Carol, agreed
And of course, the method is only as good as the content as good as the goals, etc, etc, etc. sorry for typos

Pattie Boy: Have to sign off now and shovel more snow. sigh...

Greg Stevens: Thanks PB!

Carol Stapp: Did anyone take the Happiness Inventory? I did, and answering the questions really kept me lol--it's so easy to "game" the system!

Lotte Lent: Time to go play a real game. Thanks Greg and discussants!

Andrew Sacher: Nice chatting with you all!

Greg Stevens: Thanks Andrew!

Carol Stapp: Greg, time for me to sign off, too--love your photo

Thanks Carol! Thanks everyone! Great chatting!