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LIS 258: Museum Informatics

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Interactive Technology Assignment

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In “Principles of Participation,”¹ Nina Simon articulates that the design of programs in the “participatory museum” is critical in creating visitor experiences that carry significant meaning and value. According to Simon, museums must let go of the idea of a “consistent” experience and instead allow visitors to co-create with the museum their desired content. In this assignment, I present an interactive tool currently being utilized in conjunction with my own ideas of how interaction with my object can be augmented in the museum space.

Interactive Exhibit and Motivation of Design: <http://www.artic.edu/Journey-Maker>

Producing user-generated content is something for which The Art Institute of Chicago has just received a South by Southwest Innovation Award. Through their JourneyMaker program, an interactive project, children can design “journeys” or museum guides on a kiosk in the Art Institute’s Education Center or from their home computers. Themes are available for potential paths and the experience requires the users to print out their guides in paper/booklet form.

¹ Simon, Nina. “Principles of Participation.” In *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010, pp. 330-350.

Children are then encouraged to write and draw using the guides in the learning center and to share their ideas with one another.² Then, one's self designed tour can begin in the galleries. By design, while walking on one's pre-planned route, one's head consequently will remain more "up" than "down,"³ an inverse of the dilemma of many multimedia guides/apps. This I believe was the main objective of the designers of JourneyMaker. Visitor engagement with a museum's content can take form in a panoply of personally curated shows without removing the art from its relevance while keeping eyes on the objects themselves.

Potential Audiences and Additional Interactive Features/Design Proposal as an Exemplar:

Like Simon, Marty⁴ speaks to the value of interactive, participatory impact, noting the importance of un-siloed experiences, where visitors are engaging with each other. For this reason, I am suggesting that JourneyMaker can also be applied to adult audiences, including all ages of those with disabilities. The facility of pre-planning one's "museum walk" is conducive to not only focusing on one's interests but to one's potential needs. It would be a simple task to be able to print large print guides even from one's own home. The brightness of JourneyMaker

² Graham, Megan. "Art Institute lands SXSW Innovation Award for kid-focused JourneyMaker tool." *Chicago Tribune*. 17 March 2017. <http://www.chicagotribune.com/bluesky/series/SXSW/ct-art-institute-journeymaker-sxsw-innovation-award-bsi-20170317-story.html>. Accessed 25 March 2017.

³ Rodley, Ed. "Looking Around vs. Looking Down: Incorporating Mobility into Your Experience Design." In *Mobile Apps for Museums: The AAM Guide to Planning and Strategy*, ed. Nancy Proctor. Washington D.C.: The AAM Press, 2011, pp. 34-41.

⁴ Marty, Paul. "Interactive Technologies." In *Museum Informatics: People Information, and Technology in Museums*, ed. Paul F. Marty and Katherine Burton Jones. New York: Routledge, 2008, pp. 131-135.

lies in the fact that there should also be a social venue at which visitors may convene. Sharing personalized journeys with each other may take the form of a “critic’s choice” or an online tagging system of journey “likes.” In this way, visitors are not only creating their own way-finding they are making suggestions for other visitors. In many ways, this is a form of a guided, guideless tour that brings communities together in subtle but supportive ways.

How the Whitney Can Use my Modified Version of JourneyMaker:

The Whitney Museum could easily use a version of JourneyMaker in combination with Australia’s National Portrait Gallery’s “Portrait Stories App” which provides comprehensive and contextual information on portraits⁵. The Whitney already has audio guides both online and onsite that provide visitors content on its *Human Interest* exhibition. Utilizing this information by pre-loading text into the JourneyMaker database to accompany the images in the personally made paper guides could help to preface one’s journey interactively *before* one’s tour—in the manner of a personal prep that is fun and educational. Robert Bechtle’s *’61 Pontiac* could be part of a formatted “Selfie Tour” and activities, (yes even for adults), on the Third Floor Artspace could allow for a fostering of social interaction around the printed guides. An evolving database of individually designed tours will allow for variety, garnering opinions and preferences. Sharing one’s tour with another can move out into the galleries as visitors can share their thoughts of their “exhibition planning” with each other. This increase in activity will

⁵ Freeman, A., Adams Becker, S., Cummins, M., McKelroy, E., Giesinger, C., Yuhnke, B., “Mobile Content and Delivery.” In *NMC Horizon Report: 2016 Museum Edition*. Austin: The New Media Consortium, 2016, pp. 16-17.

breathe vigor into the “white cube” as diverse perspectives will be able to complement each other in collaborative, constructive ways.

Benefits of Interactive Tools for Intended Audiences, Before, During, and After One’s Visit:

As Falk, Dierking, and Adams⁶ point out, models of learning are moving towards a “free-choice” or personally navigated configuration. For this reason, interactive technologies that take instruction through kiosks and pcs allow visitors to do just that—inform the device how they want to format their “curriculum.” Placing the control of learning into the user’s hands allows for individuals to not only decide their own course or “agenda,” the learning we can expect to assess must consider pre- and post- visit time frames.⁷ Maximizing the experience of the museum visitor falls on the shoulders of the museum, resolved by implementing designed interactive tools for and as exhibits that benefit audiences of all kinds: children and adults with and without disabilities; families and individuals; neighbors and soon-to-be-no-longer-strangers. Museums carry a great responsibility to provide visitors with vehicles for learning, growth, and connection. Versions of interactive technology that encourage the exploration of art and its meaning while building personal relationships allows for side by side collaboration

⁶ Falk, John H., Dierking, Lynn D. and Marianna Adams. “Living in a Learning Society: Museums and Free-Choice Learning.” In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald. Malden: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 323-339.

⁷ Falk, John. “The Museum Visitor Experience: Who Visits, Why and to What Effect?” In *Reinventing the Museum: The Evolving Conversation on the Paradigm Shift*, ed. Gail Anderson. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2012, pp. 317-350.

that provides opportunities for “top-down”⁸ pedagogical constructs to be re-assessed and re-examined. Interpretations made new, borne of new circuits, both physical and neurological, have the potential to renew and revitalize the museum experience.

⁸ Falk, John H., Dierking, Lynn D. and Adams, Marianna. “Living in a Learning Society: Museums and Free-Choice Learning.” In *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sharon Macdonald, Malden: Blackwell, 2007, pp. 323-339.