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Regan Forrest

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Gillian Ridsdale

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Jan Packer

Tiina Roppola

Newsletter contact: regan@interactivate.com.au

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museumsaustralia.org.au

President's Musings

Hi all

Welcome to the first bulletin for 2015. Again Regan has done a wonderful job in rounding up a wide range of stories and studies for your reading pleasure. Remember your contributions are always very welcome.

Many people have commented on what a great publication our Bulletin is and through various means have had the opportunity to read it. This prompted the Committee to think that there is much value in sharing our bulletins with others, in particular other Museums Australia networks. Recently, I have been in conversations with members of the Education and Technology Networks and we obviously share a common interest in knowing who our audiences are and delivering the best experiences to them. They have expressed interest to be able to share our bulletin with their members. The individual state Education Networks are very active offering an interesting range of professional development activities to their members and I would encourage you to join in some of those activities.

Our conversations also resulted in an inaugural, collaborative event to be held in May alongside the

Museums Australia Conference. It is called MEET – Museum education, evaluation and technology – and is a day-long session where people can talk about those things that interest them. Further details about the day are in this bulletin. I am quite excited for this day and I hope that there will be some provocative thinking present especially around challenging our sector about what it really means to be an audience-led organisation. At times, I think we talk more about it than we actually do it!

We will keep you posted on other opportunities for sharing and if you have some suggestions also please share!

Regards

Carolyn Meehan

President **EVR**

MEET Day

Museum Education, Evaluation and Technology
21 May 2015, National Maritime Museum

As part of the Museums Australia Conference in Sydney, a new combined education, audience research/evaluation and digital technologies pre-conference day will run on Thursday 21 May, 2015. The Day is a joint initiative of MAE, EVR and MuseTech.

MEET will be a day of presentations, discussions and networking to share ideas and activities. The morning will consist of lightning talks focussed around a series of themes. The afternoon sessions will be an opportunity to dig deeper into agreed areas of interest. Based on the unconference model, attendees will have a chance to submit a topic they'd like to work on with others.

Beyond the talks and discussion, the day will also generate a series of provocations – questions or ideas for attendees to ponder through the rest of the conference.

The cost of MEET is \$40.00 in addition to full conference registration (\$60 if not attending the conference) and includes lunch and morning and afternoon tea. Numbers are limited, so book early.

Registration Options

1. If you wish to register for the **whole Museums Australia Conference** please use this link <http://ma2015.org.au/registration/?IntCatId=38>
2. If you have **already booked for the Museums Australia Conference** and wish to book for the MEET Day (\$40) visit the delegate zone using your access key <http://ma2015.org.au/registration/?IntCatId=38> and use the Meet Day Registration link on the left hand menu to register. If you have already registered to attend the RRC&M Day please de-register using the appropriate menu item.
3. If you wish to **attend the MEET day but not the Museums Australia Conference** (\$60) please use this link. (Registration via this method closes on 25 April) <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/meet-day-museum-education-evaluation-and-technology-tickets-15722155390>

Please note that the MEET Day runs concurrently with the Regional, Remote & Community Museums Day (RRC&M), so you are unable to register to attend both.

On being Australian: Exploring the role of ANZAC museum and heritage interpretive experiences in developing visitors' sense of national identity



Jan Packer, Roy Ballantyne, David Uzzell, Tiina Roppola, Nigel Bond and Regan Forrest

This is an abbreviated version of a research paper presented at the 2015 Visitor Research Forum in Canberra on 9th February 2015.

Project Overview

To coincide with the centenary of the Anzac landings, the research team is conducting a 3 year ARC-funded project that explores the role of the Anzac story, as interpreted at museums and heritage sites, plays in helping new and established Australians to develop their sense of national identity.

It explores the ways in which 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation Australian visitors engage with the Anzac story in building a sense of Australian identity, and will identify the aspects of interpretive experiences at museums and heritage sites that facilitate identity-building and best meet the needs of visitors in today's multicultural society.

This paper focuses on the Stage 1 of the study, conducted by Tiina Roppola at the Australian War

Memorial (AWM) in February-June 2013, i.e., just before the old WWI gallery was closed for renovation.

Stage 1 Method

A total of 93 visitors (45 female; 48 male) were interviewed. The interviews were conducted at the exit to the memorial, as well as at a selection of Anzac-related exhibits and galleries.

Included in the sample were 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation Australians:

- A first generation Australian is someone who lives in Australia now, but was born somewhere other than Australia (24 participants).
- A second generation Australian is someone who was born in Australia and still lives in Australia, but one or both of their parents was born elsewhere (13 participants).
- A third generation Australian is someone who was born in Australia, still lives in Australia, and both of their parents were born in Australia (53 participants).

The first point to note is that 2nd generation

participants were largely missing. Our interpretation of this finding, is that while 1st generation Australians come to the War Memorial to find out more about their adopted country, and 3rd generation Australians come because they have a connection with the War Memorial through a family member who fought in one of the wars, 2nd generation Australians have little reason to visit.

The results from Stage 1 are presented in the form of responses to a number of questions regarding the role of the Anzac story in relation to national identity. These are not necessarily questions that we asked directly, but we feel that these questions and answers provide the best way of summarising what we learnt. Differences between 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation respondents will be highlighted where relevant.

Research Findings

Does the AWM have a role in developing a sense of national identity?

Opinions were divided as to whether the AWM should have a role in helping people understand what it means to be Australian.

On the negative side

- some felt that its purpose was as a memorial – to remember the sacrifice of those who fought and died;
- others felt that its purpose was to present Australian history, as distinct from Australian identity, and to remind us of the past so that we could learn from it;
- some felt it should focus on universal, human impacts of war rather than specifically Australian identity;
- some felt that war experiences were not necessarily central to the Australian national identity - 3rd generation Australians in particular often resisted the idea of war as an integral part of Australian identity.

On the positive side

- some felt that it should reflect Australia's place and role on the world stage and that peacekeeping roles should be just as important as battles;
- others thought that it could help to portray the Australian character, and that sharing personal experiences, letters etc. was important in this

regard;

- Many felt that the exhibits were likely to elicit an emotional response in visitors which for some, could impact on their feelings of appreciation for and attachment to Australia. They reported that the experience should evoke a sense of pride, and that *“it should send [visitors] away with a sense of belonging to something they can be proud of”* (3rd generation Australian).

Some 1st generation Australians specifically made the link between learning the country's history and developing a sense of national identity:

I'm a believer of instilling our history to our young people... it helps them... to actually identify themselves - what am I? (1st generation Australian; migrated from Philippines in 1985)



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

A02022

Australian troops in the Lone Pine trenches.
AWM A02022



How does a visit to the AWM impact on national identity?

Again opinions were divided as to whether the visit had impacted on national identity in any way (e.g., made them think about, or feel anything about, “being Australian”). Clearly, a visit to the AWM evoked a sense of pride and gratitude for many Australians, although this was not always expressed in a nationalistic sense.

It is perhaps the responsibility of interpreters to encourage visitors to reflect on their pride, and to consider more carefully its foundation and implications. As some visitors noted, there may be a fine line between being proud of the ANZACs and glorifying the war:

Australia – I hate to say this – they’re proud of the ANZACs and what they’ve done, but almost proud of the war that they were in... if you don’t have a sense of Australian identity then I don’t think you are going to get anything about who the ANZACs were as people. I think you are just going to feel that Australia is proud of the war. (3rd generation Australian)

For some, the institution itself was part of their national identity:

I think immensely proud. Even when we walked in, just ‘This is our War Memorial, and it’s a part of us’, I think. (3rd generation Australian)

A number of visitors reported that the visit had evoked feelings about being human, rather than being Australian:

My thoughts were always on the experience of war, regardless of whether you’re Australian or German or anything like that. (3rd gen)

Some visitors identified ‘Australian’ character traits that were portrayed in the exhibits, stories or photographs, and that contributed to their sense of connection and Australian identity. These mostly centred on mateship, loyalty and willingness to help.

How do visitors perceive the relevance of the Anzac story to national identity?

Opinions on this question were strongly divided, ranging from no relevance to strong relevance. These divisions were not necessarily on generational lines, with some of the strongest views at either end of the continuum being expressed by 3rd generation Australians:

Very little I think ... there’s lots of other stuff that makes me Australian. (3rd generation Australian)

It’s in my history, it’s part of where I am now... The ANZAC story is a part of me, and I do feel a sense of that. (3rd generation Australian)

By contrast, first and second generation Australians were more likely to accept than reject its relevance:

I think it’s part of the essence of being Australian. It’s probably up there with Vegemite and meat pies. (1st generation Australian; migrated from England in 1964)

I think it’s almost like a trademark. (1st generation Australian; migrated from England in 2000; Indian-born parents)

Again, visitors (especially 3rd generation visitors) focused on 'Australian' character traits as being the main point of connection with the Anzac story:

There are great stories of heroism and pulling together and getting through this stuff. So that would give a clear identity of what we are as Australians and what would be expected of those coming here. (3rd generation Australian)

How do visitors perceive the relevance of the Anzac story to new Australians?

Some visitors felt the Anzac story would not be relevant to new Australians. Others (especially 1st generation Australians) considered it important for new Australians to learn about the Anzac story as it is an important part of Australia's history and culture. As already seen from visitors' responses to earlier questions, the Anzac story is often used to communicate so-called 'Australian' values such as mateship. One 1st generation Australian explained how proud she was that Australian soldiers will never leave anyone behind. They will fight on and they will not leave any man down... She saw it as her responsibility as a new Australian to take on this identity.

How can the Anzac story be interpreted in a way that is relevant to 21st century multicultural Australia?

Some practical suggestions were made by visitors:

- Highlight the different countries of birth of those who have fought for Australia
- Include the viewpoints of other countries that were involved in the wars – both allies and enemies
- Include information about the integration or cooperation between Australian defence forces and those from other countries
- Place as much importance on the peacekeeping roles of the Defence Forces as on the battles
- Focus on lessons that can be learned from war – understanding where things went wrong

- politically, without 'blaming' people groups
- Focus on the universal, human impacts of war
- Use art to depict the horror and suffering of war in ways that resonate universally
- Accommodate multiple languages through audio guides, tour guides, and interpreters that can focus on exhibits from the perspectives of other nationalities
- Offer online and outreach activities to further extend access beyond Canberra
- Finally, the fact that the AWM offers free entry was greatly appreciated by visitors and interpreted as a sign of inclusivity

Conclusions

Many visitors resisted the idea that Australian experiences of war are, or should be, central to our national identity. While there was general acceptance that the sacrifices of war should be remembered and appreciated, most felt this should lead to a realisation of the horror and futility of war rather than its glorification.

In making meaning of the Anzac story, many visitors focussed on the character traits of mateship, loyalty and willingness to help. These traits are exemplified in our war stories but neither start nor end there. Although not exclusively 'Australian' traits, these traits are considered aspirational by many Australians and are integral to their sense of national identity. Rather than presenting an 'exclusive' picture of who does and does not belong, these very traits can be, and often are, applied inclusively, to extend a welcome to new Australians, in the form of 'multicultural mateship'.

Interestingly, first generation Australians were more likely than third generation Australians to unquestioningly accept the relevance of the Anzac story to an Australian national identity. Perhaps the AWM could present and interpret a wider range of views on this subject. In particular, visitors could be encouraged to reflect on the sense of pride that is often evoked by a visit, and asked to consider who or what they are proud of, why, and what they will do to contribute to making the nation in the present. **EVR**

Recent Research and Reports

The Road to Results: Effective Practices for Building Arts Audiences (Wallace Foundation, USA)

Based on case studies of 10 arts organizations that undertook audience-building projects as part of the Wallace Excellence Awards initiative, this guide pinpoints nine practices that successful efforts had in common — from identifying a target group that made sense for the organization to determining what barriers needed to be removed for that target to join the audience. Filled with examples of successes and challenges from the work of museums, opera companies, a theater and other institutions, the report can serve as a guide to audience building for all arts groups.

More at: <http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/audience-development-for-the-arts/strategies-for-expanding-audiences/Pages/The-Road-to-Results-Effective-Practices-for-Building-Arts-Audiences.aspx>

When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance (National Endowment for the Arts, USA)

Over the past few decades, national surveys have documented declines in U.S. adults' attendance across various types of visual and performing arts events. This downward trend has raised concern and prompted many questions about why individuals do or do not choose to attend. Until recently, no nationally representative data were available to answer these questions.

In 2012, the National Endowment for the Arts sponsored a topical module in the General Social Survey (GSS)—a highly regarded, nationally-representative biennial survey of U.S. adults' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions on a wide variety of social issues—to identify not only why and with whom U.S. adults attend the visual and performing arts, but also why individuals decide not to attend, after they identify an exhibit or performance that interests them.

Using these new data, this report highlights salient findings regarding the motivations and barriers that influence U.S. adults' arts attendance, while also taking advantage of the wealth of demographic, socioeconomic, and attitudinal variables available

in the GSS overall to clarify and enrich discussions about who attends the visual and performing arts.¹ Importantly, the 2012 GSS enables unprecedented insights about interested non-attendees—that is, those individuals who express interest in attending exhibits or performances, but do not ultimately follow through. Throughout the report and its conclusions, we highlight similar, different, and unique characteristics of this “missing audience.” Research on arts participation frequently reports differences across observable demographic categories such as age, gender, educational attainment, and income. This report begins with a similar descriptive breakdown, but then aims to integrate an understanding of the changing roles that arts-going may play over the course of people's lives. In particular, we observe that attending the arts presents individuals with opportunities both to define their own sense of identity, and to socialize and deepen bonds with others in their families and in their broader communities— whether they be communities of geography, communities of shared cultural heritage, or communities of common interests.

(extract from Executive Summary, p1. Full report <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/when-going-gets-tough-revised2.pdf>)

Journal of Museum Education Special Issue: Empowering Museum Educators to Evaluate

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Assessing Visitor Engagement in Science Centers

(Sourced from Relating Research to Practice <http://relatingresearchtopractice.org/article/361>)

By Lisa Sindorf

Many have argued that visitors' engagement with museum exhibits is important because it leads to learning outcomes (e.g., Falk & Dierking, 2000; Renninger, 2010). For example, some have argued that engaged learners may be having experiences that they can later connect to other learning (Rennie, Feher, Dierking, & Falk, 2003). Others (e.g., National Research Council, 2009) note that interest in STEM ideas or phenomena is an integral part of—not just a precursor to—learning in STEM; in this conceptualization, engagement at an exhibit is a proxy for interest.

Researchers have developed various frameworks and metrics to assess the effects of learners' experiences in such informal environments as museums and science centers. Observing learners' engagement is relatively easy and unobtrusive (e.g., Humphrey & Gutwill, 2005). Building on prior work on museum visitors' engagement, Barriault and Pearson propose a framework that can be used to assess visitors' engagement and learning across a wide variety of museum exhibits.

Research Design

At Science North, a science center in Sudbury, Canada, Barriault and Pearson created a framework to analyze visitor engagement and learning at exhibits (Barriault, 1999). For more than 10 years, they have used this framework to examine visitor behaviors (either live or video recorded) and to assess visitors' level of engagement with a diverse range of exhibits. This broad application of the framework suggests

that it is robust and practical enough to use across a variety of experiences. In this paper, the researchers describe the framework, which identifies three different levels of visitor engagement with exhibits in a science center. They then discuss the application of the framework in depth.

The authors propose seven observable behaviors and three levels of engagement.

Initiation behaviors are a way for visitors to “test the waters” of an experience. Visitors may:

1. participate in an activity, or
2. watch others doing it.

Transition behaviors happen as visitors become more comfortable and motivated. Visitors may:

1. repeat the activity a few times as they become more engaged, or
2. show positive emotions.

Breakthrough behaviors suggest that visitors are deeply engaged. Visitors may:

1. refer to past experiences,
2. seek and share information, or
3. test variables or make comparisons.

The paper offers examples of each learning behavior. This observational framework can be used to help inform and evaluate changes made to exhibits. For example, evaluators can quantify behaviors to create a profile showing what percentage of visitors are more or less engaged with an exhibit. The authors describe how at Science North, researchers found that visitors at “The Sprint Track” exhibit were not exhibiting as many breakthrough behaviors as expected. At this exhibit, visitors were intended to sprint a short distance and then try again, modifying their running strategies to improve their time. The exhibit included features to help visitors modify their running strategies, such as a video coach, but few visitors used these features.

As a result, museum staff redesigned the exhibit to more strongly encourage visitors to try the suggested strategies. For example, the monitor with the video coach was moved to a new position. Researchers then repeated their observations and found that the number of breakthrough behaviors increased—that is, more visitors modified their running strategies. This finding suggested that the new design was effective in improving visitors' engagement.

Theoretical Basis

This paper draws on constructivist and sociocultural theories of learning, with specific attention to the links between learning and interest. Hidi and Renninger (2006) argue that interest is not static,

but rather can be developed over time. Developing learners' interest in a topic may influence their learning about that topic. A strong interest may lead to more sustained attention to a topic or more willingness to ask questions about it. Because of the connection between personal relevance and learning, visitors' engagement is seen as an important component of the effect of museum experiences. The paper also draws on the model theorized by Rennie and Johnston (2004), who argue that museum visitors learn best when the museum experiences are relevant to their interests and prior knowledge. Van Schijndel, Franse, & Raijmakers (2010) created a similar framework to observe and assess levels of engagement in very young children at interactive science exhibits.

Implications for Practice

This paper's framework for observing and categorizing engagement behaviors may be a valuable addition to practitioners' suite of exhibit evaluation tools. The framework's indicators are broad enough to apply to a variety of exhibits or activities. Museum staff can use the framework to inform changes to an experience and then assess the impact of those changes, without having to develop a custom evaluation plan. Further, the framework can be used to compare learners' engagement across several different kinds of exhibits.

Consistent use of the framework can support an integrated and systemic culture of evaluation. In the case of Science North, the framework has been used to create a common language and a culture of observation and reflection around exhibit design and visitor learning.

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Related Briefs

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Blog Feature: Schools and Museums

Over the past few months, Rebecca Herz' Museum Questions blog has been discussing the nature and benefits of school visits to museums. Through guest posts, she explores a variety of perspectives including museum professionals, teachers and academics.

Contributors to the series include:

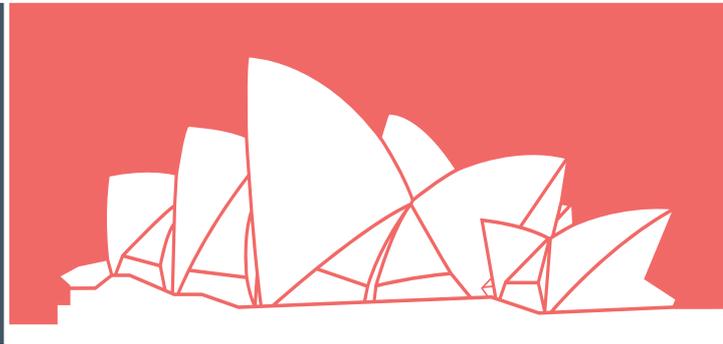
- Jay Rounds, Museologist <http://museumquestions.com/2014/11/03/schools-and-museums-interview-with-jay-rounds/>
- Daniel Willingham, Professor of Psychology <http://museumquestions.com/2014/11/17/schools-and-museums-interview-with-daniel-willingham/>
- Jody Madell, Teacher <http://museumquestions.com/2014/11/24/schools-and-museums-interview-with-jody-madell/>

As well as a number of museum educators. Browse the archives here: <http://museumquestions.com/category/exploration-schools-and-museums/>

MESSAGE ≠ MEDIUM

a _ cultural _ cacophany

MUSEUMS AUSTRALIA
NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Sydney 2015
21-24 May



EXPLORE #MA2015syd

- It has been a decade since the last Museums Australia National Conference was held in Sydney.
- A lot has changed in recent times in terms of the nature of the work done in museums and galleries and the associated operating environment.
- The remote and regional day will be held at the Australian National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour 21st May.
- The timing of the conference aligns with two key signature Sydney events, the launch of Vivid and the Sydney Writers Festival, the conference is part of Vivid Ideas 2015.
- Sydney is Australia's largest and most exciting city, the museums and galleries sector has much to both celebrate and debate concerning the future.
- The conference will attract close to 1000 participants many of whom will be keen to immerse themselves in the cultural life of the city.
- The conference will be wrestling with radical propositions around collections, the agency of people, and the spaces where the two meet under the title Message ≠ Medium: # a _ cultural _ cacophony.

- A greatly expanded "creative industries" trade show designed to engage new audiences is being developed.
- We are planning a high profile public event and many smaller cultural experiences that only Sydney can offer.
- The conference will demonstrate the museum and gallery sector's agility in facing the challenges and opportunities of new technology and changing socio-cultural and economic expectations.
- This will not be a standard Museums Australia conference, there will be valuable professional development and some outstanding Sydney social events.
- It will be a high quality conference event that strongly engages students and young emerging professionals and generates a significant social media footprint.



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