



5-2014

# Education and the Museum

Courtney Mary Morse  
*Dominican University of California*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholar.dominican.edu/senior-theses>

---

## Recommended Citation

Morse, Courtney Mary, "Education and the Museum" (2014). *Senior Theses and Capstone Projects*. 18.  
<http://scholar.dominican.edu/senior-theses/18>

This Senior Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Capstone Projects at Dominican Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Theses and Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of Dominican Scholar. For more information, please contact [michael.pujals@dominican.edu](mailto:michael.pujals@dominican.edu).

Education and the Museum

A senior thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Bachelor of Arts  
in Humanities and Cultural Studies

By  
Courtney Morse  
San Rafael, CA  
May 8, 2014

---

Sister Patricia Dougherty, O.P  
Professor, History

---

Chase Clow, Ph.D. Cand.  
Director, Humanities and Cultural Studies

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Background of Education and Museums.....	7
Museums and Schools.....	8
Marketing.....	10
Visitors.....	11
Museums as a Source of Knowledge.....	16
Capability Enhancement.....	22
Understanding.....	24
Conclusion.....	26
Works Cited.....	28

## **Introduction**

Societal perspective of the purpose and significance of museums has shifted in modern times. No longer are they simply storage of ancient artifacts, but they provide deep insight into their designated field. Today's museums demand a reaction from their visitor. In the San Francisco Bay Area, the varieties of museums display a wide spectrum of influences. Children museums, science museums, history museums, and art museums all practice unique methods to achieve their own specified mission. The success of reaching their missions has come under study in recent years in order to establish the reason, importance, and justification of museum's existence. Much research has been completed in order to learn about the impacts and influences of museums, especially in regards to educational success.

The fundamental aspect of museums is to educate. Education entails a broad arrange of disciplines which all can be achieved in numerous ways. It is up to the individual museum to determine their discipline and method. The educational aspect of museums is unique in its accessibility, audience, and teaching methods. Studying five museums in the San Francisco Bay area provides insight into the varying ways that museums develop their method of educating visitors. For example, Bay Area Discovery Museum utilizes creative thinking through the senses to influence their young audience. This paper will reveal that access to education provided by museums is hugely important to society because it increases knowledge, capabilities, and understanding of the world in which we live. The evidence for this importance of museums is seen by experiencing, thinking, teaching, and, of course, ways of learning at museums.

The five museums to be observed, The Exploratorium, the Marin History Museum, the Bay Area Discovery Museum, the de Young Museum, and the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco all provide good examples of the varying uses of museums and the resulting education

for their audience. All five of these museums have different missions; from promotion of creative thinking, to the understanding of different cultures, to innovative learning, and to pride and knowledge of one's community. All serve crucial purposes in their own ways. Ultimately, all museums share one common goal, the goal that is most important to their existence: to educate. These are the five museums that will be reviewed in this project with the support of scholarly works, and observing the operations that museum education entails.

The goals, or mission statements of the museums under study, are now going to be explained. The de Young Museum, along with the Legion of Honor, is one of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco. Its mission is "to serve as one of the premier public institutions in the Western United States, existing to provide its community and region with high quality exhibitions, programs, education, and outreach, and to care for San Francisco's esteemed art collection," (de Young Museum). The de Young has a large education program. All school programs are free, so do not discriminate against who may benefit. Due to its large size and international acclaim the museum has numerous donors that allow for such an amazing array of resources for education: one oriented for K-12 students, another for college students, and another for educators. Furthermore, docents are trained and educated on how to teach and explain material. Within each resource there are several options to choose from, whether it is class visits or curriculum supported visits, which contribute to the school's agenda. A wonderful program is their Museum Ambassador program; the de Young staff trains high school teens to lead tours and give presentations to elementary school groups.

The goal of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco is "to lead a diverse, global audience in discovering the distinctive materials, aesthetics and intellectual achievements of Asian art and cultures, and to serve as a bridge of understanding between Asia and the United States, and

between the diverse cultures of Asia,” (Asian Art Museum). The museum, like the de Young, provides educational programs free of charge and divided up by age range. Storytelling tours enlighten kindergarteners to sixth graders. For fourth through twelfth grades there are designated school tours. Teachers may also choose to lead their own tour of the museum based on their own curriculum. Aside from tours, there are also extracurricular activities that enhance student education such as Asian dancing, painting, or writing.

In Sausalito, the Bay Area Discovery Museum’s mission is “to ignite and advance creative thinking for all children,” (Bay Area Discovery Museum). The museum charges \$11 per person over 6 months of age. The museum aims towards educational development of children. The ability to think creatively begins early in life and the more access to creative thinking a child has while young, their problem solving abilities and innovative skills in the future will be that much more. The interactive exhibits and location of the Bay Area Discovery Museum provides an excellent educational foundation for children.

The Exploratorium aims “to change the way the world learns, creating innovative learning environments, enthusiastic leaders, and new knowledge for teacher professional development,” (Exploratorium). The Exploratorium utilizes an abundance of methods of learning catering to different types of people. For example, the museum teaches through experience, art, dialogue, and tinkering. Education is the capstone of the Exploratorium. Essentially every exhibit requires some sort of visitor interaction. Their list of programs is broad and accommodates all types of people of all ages. The main focus of the museum is science, they provide informal methods of learning, research and leadership programs. The museum is comprised of six galleries, all with their own theme. The South Gallery is fueled by “tinkering,” which according to the *Webster Dictionary* is an “attempt to repair or improve something in a casual or desultory

way, often to no useful effect.” At the Exploratorium visitors can see the relationship between cause and effect; when one action is completed, a reaction occurs. For one example, the South Gallery has a marble machine where visitors may build devices consisting of little tunnels and pathways then send marbles through to see how they travel through the self-made device. The East Gallery investigates the living world. Through tools such as microscopes visitors may investigate life at new levels; they can see micro-organisms that cannot be seen with the naked eye. The West Gallery is unique at the Exploratorium; it explores human thoughts, feelings, and social behaviors. There are a variety of amazing exhibits that investigate the social constructions in which humans live. The Central Gallery examines the senses of vision, sound, and hearing. The Outdoor Gallery reveals the local geography. For example, it contains a large harp that is played by the wind. The Bay Observatory is the sixth gallery, correlates with the Outdoor Gallery in that it observes the geography, history, and ecology of the Bay Area.

The Marin History Museum in San Rafael “celebrates the traditions of innovation and creativity of Marin County,” (Marin History Museum). This museum provides a sense of community pride and identity. History museums are responsible for reinterpreting their exhibits to reflect today’s modern times. In Marin History Museum’s case, it is local history. The museum is small, but their outreach is great. Much of their work is completed outside the walls of the museum because the staff brings history to museum classrooms themselves. They also conduct historical walking tours, educating visitors on the history of the community. The Marin History Museum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, meaning it is exempt from federal income tax because it’s activities are educational. Since its establishment in 1935, the museum has relied on private donations and grants to maintain its existence and importance to Marin. This small museum displays the strength and significance of museums, regardless to its size. While the

other museums under study have large financial supply to work with, the Marin History Museum shows community perseverance and determination to uphold its history and culture.

### **Background of Education and Museums**

Views of education have become much more progressive in regards to acceptance of alternative forms of education in the last three decades. Historically, education was primarily reserved for only certain people. In Europe's High Middle Ages, for instance, education was primarily for teaching the clergy. Lay people were only taught events pertaining to day-to-day life. Literacy was prevented in an effort to control the public, because with reading came new ideas which threatened the stability of the governments and the church (Orme, page 33). The concept of education has adapted greatly since then. Today, education in the United States is offered to all with the public school system. The welfare of citizens is now the responsibility of the government. Knowledge is no longer limited to certain people, and actions have since been taken to educate all citizens. Educational theorists, such as John Cotton Sana and John Dana support the belief that education is an essential tool for the success of a society, especially a democratic one where individuals thrive off of their ability to think and rationalize on their own accord (Garcia, page 47). In addition, teaching is recognized in a variety of methods, such as the active process between the learner and their environment which museums provide. This active process is available in museums since they support the learner's personal educational process through interaction with objects.

A museum, defined by the display of objects for the edification and entertainment of the public, is a product of the eighteenth century (Hein, page 2). Early museums in nineteenth



century Europe were primarily places to display the wealth and power of the nation. People saw first-hand exotic materials found abroad. The display of international material has mainly remained limited to former imperialist countries, such as England and France. Museums in other countries often keep national treasures displayed. George Hein, the founding director of the Lesley University PhD program in educational studies, in his book *Learning in the Museum*, explains the evolution of museums in the late nineteenth century in correlation with advancements in science and technology,

“Museums were included among the agencies available to help people better themselves and to appreciate the value of modern life. Museum exhibitions, for example, were mounted in support of public campaigns for health education; to show off magnificent developments in industry or advances in technology; or to exhibit curiosities, marvels, and wonders for public entertainment” (Hein, 4).

Since the end of World War II, museums have been the fastest growing segment in cultural enterprise (Weil, page 3). Much of this has to do with the exponential growth rate of inventions. People are continually fascinated by new finds, and therefore also intrigued by past practices and ways of life. The existence of people living only fifty years ago now seems archaic.

### **Museums and Schools**

The kindergarten through twelfth grades school system in the U.S. is a regulated and structured institution. There are inspectors, tests, and curriculum that are all highly managed in order to establish an organized and balanced education for its students. The difference with museum education is that they are free to utilize methods as according to their own mission. Students are not required to attend museums as they are schools, so museums are managed

differently. In recent decades the importance of alternative forms of education has been addressed. Not everyone learns in the same way. Unfortunately, past and present students exist who feel they are failures since they do or did not excel in the public school system. These students think that education is not for them since they generalize all education as one method. For this reason, museums are all the more important because they have the flexibility and freedom to provide alternative forms of education that is accessed by students and people of all ages and learning types.

Museums are accessible to all; people of all ages, cultures, and educational backgrounds. Visitors physically enter a museum and are able make of it what they wish. While schools have set times and materials for organization and regulation purposes, museums provide experiences that are voluntary and can be revisited. Their varying approaches provide visitors with a sense of flexibility and empowerment in that their education and experience is of their own choosing. Hein discusses the educational value of museums,

“First, routine experiences that do not challenge and stimulate us may not be educative. This idea is now frequently enunciated in the phrase that in order to be educative, experiences must be not only ‘hands-on’ but also ‘minds-on.’ Second, it is not sufficient for experience to be ‘lively, vivid, and interesting’; they must also be organized” (Hein, 2).

The layout of a museum is strategically planned in order to enhance delivery.

“Now more than ever museums can (and must) articulate the value of an approach to learning that favors inquiry over achievement, intrinsic motivation over extrinsic, and free choice over prescription” (Garcia, page 50).

According to Alma S. Wittlin in *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*, museums provide three functions: depositories, centers of research, and educational agencies. While one museum may provide predominately one function, it is more likely that a combination of the

three functions will be utilized. The presentation of museums is varied. The United States is composed of a variety of cultures, religions, and ethnicities. Pluralism, a condition where multiple principles coexist, is a built-in feature in the United States so peripheral features are understood and expected (Wittlin, Page 1). The San Francisco Bay Area exhibits an even greater sense of pluralism than a majority of the United States based on its diverse and abundant population. For this reason, most of the museums studied for this project provide a multitude of means to educate the public. A complicating aspect is that the museums must maintain defined goals in order to remain effective.

School and museums, in order to increase productivity and outreach, also can benefit from joining forces.

“That museums should serve school audiences is beyond question. Formal and informal educational such as schools and museums should serve as the yin and the yang of learning in a healthy community: equally necessary for education of the whole person” (Garcia, page 52).

## **Marketing**

Museums are expensive to run. Therefore, in order to not overcharge visitors, museum management must find methods to boost revenue.

“Due to diminishing or stand-still budgets, and under pressure to deliver bigger and better services, museums had had to raise income from a number of sources. These income generations can be carried out through the shop, café, tours, educational services, loans, copyright fees, corporate entertainment or even from providing venues for weddings” (Lang, 7).

Marketing theory and practice consume a lot of museum resources concerning staff and time, due to the fact revenue is essential for running a museum. The information produced by

marketing theory is highly beneficial to the museum because it forces the museum to be forward thinking and concentrate on their most significant attributes. It requires forward thinking because marketing theory studies human behavior which entails observing patterns, changes, and what people will spend money on. These observations require theorists to make predictions not only about human behavior, but also about the overall establishment and management of the museum. These two, human behavior and museum management, play key roles in a museum, and being able to change with the times while keeping the museum's identity is conducive to the survival of a museum. In addition, it makes museum staff acknowledge what keeps the audiences coming, therefore developing a reciprocal relationship between the museum and its public.

The Marin History does much fundraising as their financial assets are acquired fundamentally through donations. From their website, to hosting actual events, the museum has to work hard to keep its doors open. All four other museums not only host their own cafés, but souvenir shops as well. They sell t-shirts advertising their museum, as well as books, and postcards displaying art that has appeared within their walls.

## **Visitors**

Visitor studies in museums have a one hundred year history (Hein, 13). Focusing on visitors is the most useful way to develop programs and exhibitions, since the museum then tailors appropriate exhibits based on their audience. Aside from enhancing the visitor's appreciation of the exhibit, visitor studies also allow the museum to maximize human growth

and learning. Therefore, museums need a conscious educational theory in order to produce a method for the museum's desired experience. Through observing museums exhibits, layout, and general atmosphere, the educational message is revealed.

Observing the visitors at a museum reveals much. If there is a specific demographic that attends the museum then clearly the museum is catering to a certain audience. The Exploratorium caters to people of all ages and backgrounds. While they accept free fieldtrips from any Title I school, along with a letter from the principle, the Exploratorium also has weekly "adult only" nights. This variation in their audience and in their accommodation methods is a clever marketing tool since it increases their customers. Aside from museum's specified educational programs, their impact upon all visitors provides an educational impact.

The de Young Museum is located in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. Fong & Chan Architects of San Francisco designed the famed layout of the museum. The beautiful structure is a sight worthy of a visit by itself. Natural materials such as copper, stone, wood, and glass, make up the building with the effect of matching the surrounding environment of the park. The blending is the purpose of the design, the many windows also create a sense of combining the indoors with the outdoors. The de Young hosts its own café, which is hugely beneficial to the visitor's experience because it allows them to sit, eat, and re-energize which allows them to prolong their attention span. There is also outdoor space for people to get fresh air; additionally there is a children's garden for the children to release pent up energy.

The de Young Museum has 73,200 square feet of permanent collection space, 12,000 square feet of temporary exhibition space, and 20,000 square feet of educational space. Although there are often large crowds, the property provides plenty of space. Permanent collections provide more education for the visitor because there is so much to learn that repeated visits are

often necessary. For a first time, spontaneous visitor the de Young provides opportunities for the visitor to make their own agenda. Finding a balance between having an audience of routine members with visitors who are one-time visitors and tourists is a difficult position to develop. However, the de Young successfully combines a San Francisco experience by utilizing the Golden Gate Park with a historical and cultural influence that is reflected in its exhibits.

The Asian Art Museum is centrally located in downtown San Francisco. With multiple floors, high ceilings, columns, and white interior, the museum provides spaciousness. The museum also hosts Café Asia so there is a place for people to rest their minds and bodies. The environment of the museum combines old and new world elements. Between the architecture and the exhibits, a visitor feels a peaceful balance. Art from all over Asia from ancient religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, to Shintoism, as well as specific country's art, provides evidence of the varying cultures that exist and have existed within Asia.

The physical location of the Bay Area Discovery Museum greatly correlates with its mission in that it ignites curiosity and plays into imagination and perspective. It is located in Sausalito, a city located on the San Francisco Bay in Marin County. It is surrounded by the enhancements of the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin Headlands. In order to connect children with the geographic surroundings, the Wave Workshop replicates habitats underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. The Bay Hall also incorporates aspects of the Bay Area by replicating Fisherman's Wharf and the Port of Oakland; it has trains and underwater tunnels for children to learn how to navigate. A series of art studios allow children to paint and experiment with art supplies, and in the Imagination Playground where children may use their own imagination and skills to create a playground to their liking. George Hein explains that when students participate in a process that connects ideas with outcomes, they have a better memory and learning experience. He writes:

“Children orient themselves, engage in fantasy play, carry out investigations, and generally interact with objects” (Hein, 142). These aspects are easier for children than for adults because they are still developing and have not cemented their learning method.

The Exploratorium on Pier 15 in San Francisco also ignites curiosity and imagination. Both outdoor and indoor spaces provide stimulating exhibits. All include visitor participation and action. It is almost overwhelming upon first entering the museum but one immediately becomes absorbed in the activities and could easily pass the whole day there. Different types of exhibits target every aspect of human existence. The energy is exciting and a visitor definitely leaves feeling satisfied, yet exhausted.

According to George Hein, educational theory requires three issues: a theory of knowledge, a theory of learning, and a theory of teaching. These issues often reflect the beliefs of the staff and embedded cultural and social constructions in which they live. The theory of knowledge consists of the material the museums display for visitors to interpret. Learning through individual bits of information or as an active process significantly registers within the mind of the learner. Teaching is based on how people believe others learn. Teaching in museums is primarily led by the learner themselves, but by following the exhibit layout. A common method used to teach material in a museum is stimulus-response education, which is a learning theory with didactic, expository approach. The museum reveals at the beginning what is to be learned through the exhibits. The material to be learned is repeatedly impressed upon the learner throughout the exhibits. It also provides a direct entrance and exit, with a sequential order of material in between so it is easy for the visitor to follow.

Museum staff takes advantage of different ways of enhancing the educational impact on the visitor. There are a series of actions that a museum takes in order to accommodate learning.

For example, the physical arrangement of a museum is taken into account to design a space cohesive to learning. Factors such as illumination, heights of exhibits, and the path visitor's take through the museum, all contribute to a visitor's comfort. Places to rest are important as visitors often lose motivation and focus as they navigate through the museum. The five museums observed provided numerous benches and places to rest. Throughout the de Young, Asian Art Museum, Exploratorium, and the Bay Area Discovery Museum there are restrooms and water fountains. Due to their large size, these are necessary aspects. The Marin History Museum, however, is so small that such rest places are not necessary. It is an old Victorian gatehouse. Upon entering, a visitor immediately feels at home. Environmental factors also impact the ability of visitor's ability to learn. Noise, crowds, and colors affect the environment.

Studies reveal that visitors usually stop at less than half the components at an exhibit, and spend only a few seconds to a minute on each component (Hein, 138). Additionally, it is after less than thirty minutes that a visitor's attention will begin to wane. For this reason it makes it all the more important to the wording and construction used on every component of the exhibit. Visitors answering questionnaires after their museum visit showed that when accessibility to physical and intellectual contents of exhibits is enhanced, it greatly increases the amount of knowledge gained (Hein, 138).

Today's society is extremely stimulant drive; people want to be entertained. This is an interesting issue to analyze when observing the museum experience. Emeritus Professor of Museum Studies, Eileen Hooper-Greenhill, addresses these issues in her book *Museums and Their Visitors*: "Museums and galleries are fundamentally educational in character, that is, they offer opportunities to people for increasing reservoirs of knowledge and experience. They are not fundamentally about entertainment; entertainment in museums always has the ulterior motive of



offering something new, exciting and potentially valuable. Entertainment in museums, however it might be presented, is used as a method of education, in the full knowledge that learning is best achieved in circumstances of enjoyment” (Hooper-Greenhill, 140).

### **Museums as a Source of Knowledge**

Museums provide knowledge to their visitors through unique channels, the uniqueness being the ability to take advantage of objects to produce educational results. Ben Garcia, who is Head of Interpretation and Operations at the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology at University of California, Berkeley, explains “those of us who work as educators in museums know that these objects have the power to illuminate so many of the dark regions of our minds and beings beyond those addressed in the classroom, and it is our responsibility to advocate for that power” (Garcia, 48). The significance of this statement lies in the illumination of the dark regions of our minds. The human mind is a complicated thing and the more stimulating educative materials obtained the better. Different ways of learning produce different ways of thinking. Garcia encourages museums to separate material from school curriculum. A museum trying to appease academic curriculum limits a museum and defeats its purpose. Museum’s significance lies in the ability to be flexible and build its own methodology.

The Bay Area Discovery Museum’s focus on developing creative thinking is an example of how a visitor may accumulate new ways of thinking and analyzing. The objects that the children experiment require skills ranging from problem-solving to imagination. The educative process supported by the Bay Area Discovery Museum’s lies in the fact that it is open-ended. The child can make of and process the material however their mind wishes. “We want children

to hang onto the spark that allows them to see infinite possibilities, and try new things so they can grow into innovative adults capable of creative solutions to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Bay Area Discovery Museum).

The Discovery Museum facilitates their own research focusing on their educative mission, called the Center for Childhood Creativity (CCC). The CCC conducts research on early child development. Partnerships with other studies focusing on the same subject matter have also been made. For example, Caren Walker, a Ph.D. student from University of California, Berkeley, is currently studying children from 18 to 30 months at the Discovery Museum to analyze their relational reasoning, which occurs when an individual is able to make inferences without direct experience. This, according to CCC, leads to the development of abstract knowledge. By seeing how children learn without the presence of new observations, the researcher learns how children produce a causal structure of the real world based on their own imagination and reasoning. Once a child develops abstract knowledge, it can be applied to a variety of scenarios, such as problem-solving, and memorization abilities. Caren studied the children by arranging a scenario with a music box playing music only when certain blocks were put on it; she wanted to see if young children could figure it out. The study was that successful in that it revealed that young children could see the causal relationship between certain blocks and the music box. It may seem minor but this study supports the crucial formative years of early childhood which the Discovery Museum stimulates. Research such as this shows the extent museums go to in order to establish a valid educative method to produce knowledge in its visitors. The CCC aims to provide information to schools, teachers, and parents in an effort to encourage children’s creativity in contexts outside of the museum.

The de Young Museum provides knowledge for its visitors through four subject matters: families with children, K-12 students, college programs, resources for educators, and docents. These options provide an educational opportunity for everyone. The families with children category offers four different programs which will be discussed. The first program is free Saturday classes. It is available to children aged four to twelve. The families begin with a tour given by an educated docent through the permanent and current exhibitions. Through the facilitated tour, visitors are easily able to ask questions and learn important facts and information that an unchaperoned visit does not provide. Following the tour, a workshop is provided by professional artist- teachers. The hands-on action of participating in art contributes to imagination, creativity, and understanding of art (de Young Museum). These programs are available to member, and non-member museum visitors at different times on Saturdays. This is a beneficial educative experience because it correlates knowledge with a special family memory.

The art after school program that the de Young hosts is a great opportunity for students because it abides by California state standards for first through eighth grades. The program educates students on art and their cultures of origin. Through this instruction and accompanying activities, “these classes investigate the connections between the visual arts, language arts and social studies” (de Young Museum). Prices range from \$20 to \$25 depending on membership.

The de Young also provides a summer art camp which combines elements such as outdoor activities in Golden Gate Park, performance art, and visual design. The week-long camps provide eight hour days for the children ranging from six to twelve. The children learn from a structured schedule with varying forms of entertainment in order to keep their focus throughout the day. In addition, students benefit from individual attention from profession artist-

teachers. Routine and daily exposure to such activities provide greater opportunity for students to absorb and obtain vital information.

The kindergarten through twelfth grade based education at the de Young offers class visits, curriculum supported visits, museum ambassador training, and a poetry class. The curriculum supported visits the de Young hosts, called the “Get Smart with Art” program, abide by California state standards. Teachers are given preparatory materials for their classes, and based on which grade level, a specific theme is supported when the class visits the museum. For example, fourth graders learn about the history of California while seventh graders learn about the art of Africa and Mesoamerica. Once at the museum, a docent leads a tour and encourages active participation from the students. Following the tour, the students are lead to an art studio where they study and review the main concepts and themes of the culture they learned. The field trips are free and students benefit from the out-of-classroom experience. The unique experience of visiting and learning in a new environment is stimulating and provides a memorable and educational impact.

The Asian Art Museum also provides an abundance of educative options for visitors. Firstly, anyone can access their free materials offered on their website. It is free due to lead funding provided by Bank of America. These materials range from videos, to images with explanations, to lesson plans and accompanying assignments. The videos provided include explanations from docents inside the museum, to actual tours of real situations in Asia such as a tour of a Confucian scholar’s house in Korea. An educator or curious individual can access these materials by searching through the abundant data base hosted on the Asian Art Museum’s website. This accessibility allows people to review information before and after visiting the

museum, or without even visiting, thus enhancing the knowledge of the material the Asian Art Museum shares.

The Asian Art Museum has free school tours, and like the de Young, the tours support California state standards in History/Social Science, English/Language Arts, and Visual and Performing Arts (Asian Art Museum). Designated for kindergarten through sixth grade, the Asian Art Museum has a storytelling program divided into two groups: themes, such as New Year's, and regional, where stories from specific areas are told. Through utilizing student's imaginations through entertainment, concepts and traditions of different cultures are grasped.

The Exploratorium takes on a progressive and aggressive approach to maximize the amount of knowledge visitors acquire. The museum hosts the Center for Informal Learning and Schools (CILS). The Exploratorium's website explains the significance of CILS:

“Our Center for Informal Learning and Schools- a collaboration with a number of universities and research agencies- was founded to develop a new generation of leaders (academics, researchers, and practitioners) who could better understand and support science learning across formal and informal settings. We have a decades-long commitment to art as a way of knowing about the natural world.”

Not only is the Exploratorium at the forefront in current contemporary learning methods, but the museum's facilities are conducting research in order to enhance the education of the future.

Through books, reports, and studies conducted by the CILS, education worldwide will benefit.

For example, studies on how children can be supported to learn science through equity-oriented tinkering programs at the Boys & Girls Clubs in San Francisco (“Experience the Exploratorium”).

The knowledge people gain from visiting the Exploratorium is a result of their stimulated curiosity. The staff takes advantage of every-day materials and situations to firstly create a

common understanding. Then a scientific correlation is learned. An example of this method is “Skateboard Science.” This intrigues many male youths. The staff uses the skateboard to explain the engineering concepts of material, angle, and shape to create the moves possible on a skateboard. Visitors develop a more in-depth understanding of cause and effect.

The Marin History Museum teaches through simple, yet meaningful methods such as films, lectures, historical walking tours, crafting events, and an educational trunk show. The educational trunk show packs up historical entities and brings them into Marin classrooms, with an audience of around 500 elementary school students a year (Marin History Museum). Jean Zurrodo, the President of the Board of Directors for the Marin History Museum explains, “With 20,000 artifacts, over 200,000 historical photographs and a research facility that serves as a frequent information source for many historians, students, writers and other media, the museum continues to serve as a repository of Marin History.” The photographs Marin History Museum hosts provide much insight into Marin’s history and development. In addition, photography gives an understanding of the self and others in contemporary culture, as well as having an educational impact (Newbury, page 349). History allows for existential perspective, which is something everyone, from an individual to community level, needs.

Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, Ph.D, director of the American Studies program at Salem State University and has worked as an educator at several museums, discusses a concept referred to as “shared authority” in an article written for *Journal of Museum Education*. Shared authority is more than a simple collaboration, but an understanding that all parties involved have the power and position to fully co-create involving a topic of value (Duclos-Orsello, page 122). It provides an accessible tool for museum’s capability to fulfill educative responsibilities to the public.

“We must recognize that we always and already share authority, for we do not have all the answers- or even all the questions. And we need, perhaps more than anything, to be open to engaging in acts of translation in which we seek to understand fully another’s voice and perspective and demystify the language that we and others use to talk about what we do” (Duclos-Orsello, page 122).

Sharing authority can be seen in many different forms. Museums that work with other entities make communities all the more responsive to them because they have diversified their approach in order to reach out to more people. For example, working with schools has served as a major tool for museums. Field trips, curriculum supported programs, research at the Exploratorium, courses for credit that the de Young has that are accepted by the City College of San Francisco, or travelling directly to schools like the History of Marin Museum, all serve crucial outreach opportunities. Additionally, all who use collaboration with non-museum entities increase their potential in successfully delivering knowledge to the public.

### **Capability Enhancement**

Museums encourage the acquisition of skills that greatly enhance a person’s capabilities. Skills such as communication, confidence, and the realization of one’s best individual learning method are all learnt at museums.

The ability to communicate is an important skill to develop that will be useful for all of one’s life. For one, it allows for the opportunity to question, and not blindly accept something on first glance. Museums have docents and educators who encourage questions. There are also questions asked of visitors themselves. Visitors primarily tour in groups so when one person asks a question, everyone benefits. Interactive discussion also occurs on tours where different opinions or new information is shared. The sooner in life that a person is introduced to

interactive dialogue and the allowance of questions, the greater their problem-solving and critical thinking may be. As opposed to only learning facts, they can dissect information through figuring it out for themselves.

Studies have shown that students who are encouraged and positively motivated to learn display higher abilities at completing cognitive tasks than their counterparts (Dweck, page 1040). The quality of the task is greatly impacted by the motivation the student receives. The Bay Area Discovery Museum applies to this method due to their creative approach that provides no right or wrong answer. A child only has to exercise their imagination and creativity and they are then supported and applauded. The years of early childhood are major formative years, therefore experiencing inspiration and encouragement during that time will help them embrace their minds in the future. Fear holds many people back because it makes them distrust their own abilities. The hands-on activities at the Exploratorium also help make a person feel confident because they completed an event on their own. Belief that a single mind is capable can provide a confidence that will guide someone into a more successful future whether it is in relation to career or personal life choices.

Educator William Watson Purkey discusses in the Third Edition of his book *Inviting School Success: A Self-Concept Approach to Teaching, Learning, and Democratic Practice* that all people have untapped potential holding them back from maximizing their success (Purkey, page 10). Purkey goes on to say that potential can be realized when specific programs, policies, institutions, or the like, invite development. The person needs to be a willing participant as well (Purkey, page 12). The five museums studies are all examples of institutions and programs that



invite development. From science courses at the Exploratorium, to art classes at the Asian Art Museum, to poetry at the de Young, they all have something to offer.

### **Understanding of the World and the Self**

The museums studied help visitors form an understanding of the world in which we live. Additionally, an individual can see their own life from a different perspective, revealing a new concept of self and their community.

In recent years yoga has become extremely popular as a form of exercise for all types of people. The Asian Art Museum currently has an exhibit called “Yoga: The Art of Transformation.” The exhibit displays yoga’s rich and long history. Its fundamental purpose of exercising the mind and body is looked at in relation to the specific religions that practice it: Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Sufism (Asian Art Museum). The practice of yoga has maintained much of its Indian origin in terms of vocabulary and spirit of healing mind and body. However, all practitioners are not aware of its historical and spiritual significance. Learning about this practice that is booming with popularity in contemporary times juxtaposes its ancient origins. It is an example of the universality and benefits that an experience may provide; some events can transcend through time. Additionally, the different approaches to yoga that different religions have provide discrepancies among religions that Western civilization has tended to group together. A yoga practitioner who sees this site may realize specifically what it is they love about yoga, and what it is doing not only for their body, but their mind as well.

Lookout Cove at the Bay Area Discovery Museum uses replicas of Bay Area icons for children to play and experiment with. The cover is 2.5 acres large and allows or children to

physically and mentally explore. For example, there is the aftermath of a pretend landslide. Children wear hardhats and help clean it up. In this interactive process the children learn not only about the geographical event of a landslide, but the process that maintenance and cleaning up entails. This is just one example where the children are put into pretend real-life scenarios. The museum supplies children with opportunities to grasp the geographic landscape in which they are being raised or visiting. By becoming involved in its events, children feel pride at their work and like they are a part of the community. In addition, they realize they share this world with other organisms and with the environment itself.

The Marin History Museum boosts local pride and understanding of the place in which we live. Aerial photographs of Marin during settlement show its rapid development over the last century. This insight gives Marin almost a sense of “newness” in that it is still developing. The museum also hosts information on popular Marin artists, from poets to musicians.

The Exploratorium is home to the Tactile Dome, a large dome full of tunnels that people are to navigate in pitch darkness. Whether a person goes through on their own or with a group, the psychological effect of being in the dark is immense. A person may be completely confident from the get-go but realize they are claustrophobic and anxious once in the dark. It requires patience, calm, trust, and communication. Travelling through the dome with another person requires a seemingly intimate level of communication. Communication without the presence of facial expression and hand gestures is fascinating. People can only rely on their voices to describe where they are, what they are doing, and what they are physically feeling. Afterwards, appreciation for all functioning senses is renewed. Additionally, realization in the usefulness of touch, and its possibility and challenge of relying only on such, is learned.

The de Young Museum currently has an exhibit entitled “The Bay Bridge: A Work in Progress 1933-1966.” This exhibit reveals photos of the construction of the bridge by photographer Peter Stackpole. Stackpole climbed up the bridge to terrifying heights right along with the construction workers. He documented their brave work and his exposure of them increased the United State’s pride in their workforce. The construction took place during the Great Depression so its modernity and development was a source of much awe during its time. It is fascinating seeing these pictures in current times and realizes that something that was once viewed with so much pride has seemingly lost its spark over time. The new bridge has relit some of this spark, and appreciation for the original structure may be renewed through these images. Additionally, the images give credit to those who physically built it. It is one thing to engineer a bridge, and another to climb to such heights to bring it to life. These pictures provide history and understanding of an icon in the San Francisco Bay Area.

## **Conclusion**

“Now is the time for museums to fully embrace their educative potential, to become articulate about their public value, and to enter the national conversation about how children and adults learn” (Garcia, page 54). Museums have remained fairly quite in regards to educational dialogue in the United States. It is now time for awareness of their value to be broadcasted so that they can continue to progress in a positive direction. Written in 2013, Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello explains, “During the past five years, economic and social concerns everywhere have shined an ever brighter spotlight on both the long history and current understanding of the civic role(s) and public good of museums” (Duclos-Orsello, page 121). Museums and those they

collaborate with need to justify museum existence by revealing the huge role they play in society: the role of extreme educational value.

As this paper has explained, museums benefit a broad range of people on numerous levels. Museum policy does not limit methods of learning; the museum educators can use variations and alternative methods to target their audience. The role of museum education in society is beneficial because it increases knowledge, capabilities, and stimulates untapped potential. Knowledge can be gained through such museum aspects as the encouragement of creative thinking, or creating artwork. Museums collaboration with schools provides easy incentive for schools to use museum resources to benefit their student's educations. Informal learning, like that at the Exploratorium, requires individuals to think in different ways. The intimate one-on-one capacity of the Marin History Museums allows people to discuss history and learn about the place they are in. In addition, the capability of individuals is brought to light through museum education. The encouragement of communication allows one to draw personal conclusions. The confidence a person gains when they realize they can do or figure something out on their own allows them to feel more hopeful in their future. Visitors, through interaction and study, can access untapped skills and abilities that could change their life forever. Lastly, the sense of understanding of the world that comes with museum education is very impactful in that it helps cross cultural bridges. Learning about other traditions, religions, and countries opens a mental door that provides space for different ways of life. Understanding is also realized on personal and community levels. People can experience how they best learn, and the life their community has lived. The beauty of museums is that they allow an individual to learn for themselves. They may even have fun while they are doing it.

## Works Cited

- "Asian Art Museum." *Asian Art Museum*. Asian Art Museum Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture, 2014. Web. 09 Feb. 2014.
- "Bay Area Discovery Museum." *Home | Bay Area Discovery Museum*. Bay Area Discovery Museum, 2010. Web. 09 Feb. 2014.
- Bennett, Tony. *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Dewdney, Andrew; Dibosa, David; Walsh, Victoria. *Post Critical Museology: Theory and Practice in the Art Museum*. New York: Routledge, 2013. Print.
- "De Young Museum | De Young." *De Young Museum | De Young*. Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, 2014. Web. 09 Feb. 2014.
- Duclos-Orsello, Elizabeth. "Shared Authority: The Key to Museum Education as Social Change." *Journal of Museum Education* 38.3 (2013): 121-128.
- Dweck, Carol S. "Motivational Processes Affecting Learning." *American Psychologist* 4.10 (1986):1040-1048.
- "Experience the Exploratorium." *Exploratorium*. The Exploratorium, 2014. Web. 03 Apr. 2014.
- Fortescue, Ann. "Excellence in Practice: Museum Education and Standards." *American Association of Museums* (2001): 1-16. *EdCom*. Web. 2 Mar. 2014.
- Garcia, Ben. "What We Do Best: Making the Case for the Museum Learning in Its Own Right." *Journal of Museum Education* 37.2 (2012): 47-56.
- Hein, George E. *Learning in the Museum*. London: Routledge, 1998. Print.
- Hooper-Greenhill, Eilean. *Museums and Their Visitors*. London: Routledge, 1994. Print.
- Lang, Caroline, John Reeve, and Vicky Woollard. *The Responsive Museum: Working with Audiences in the Twenty-First Century*. Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2006. Print.
- Lord, Gail Dexter, and Barry Lord. *The Manual of Museum Management*. Lanham, MD: AltaMira, 2009. Print.
- "Marin History Museum." *Preserving The Past, Building The Future*. Pearl Heart Media, 2014. Web. 02 Mar. 2014.

McClellan, Andrew. *The Art Museum from Boullée to Bilbao*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2008. Print.

Newbury, Darren. "Reconstructing the Self: Photography, Education, and Disability." *Disability & Society* 11.3(1996):349-360.

Orme, Nicholas (2006). *Medieval Schools*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Purkey, William Watson., and John M. Novak. *Inviting School Success: A Self-concept Approach to Teaching, Learning, and Democratic Practice*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Pub., 1996. Print.

Weil, Stephen. *Making Museums Matter*. Washington D.C: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002. Print.

Wittlin, Alma Stephanie. *Museums: In Search of a Usable Future*. Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1970. Print.