Re-Envisioning Libraries & Museums in the 21st Century

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Present Two Big Ideas

- To thrive in the 21st Century libraries and museums will need to ensure that their ways of operating are consistent with the needs of a Knowledge Age leisure marketplace.

- The reason the public uses libraries and museums is to satisfy their own personal, identity-related needs.
We are deep into a radical and rapid transition from an Industrial/Thing-Based Age to a Knowledge/Learning-Based Age. We are witnessing huge shifts in the public’s expectations of public institutions like libraries and museums. Libraries and museums are still largely operating with models rooted in the Industrial Age.
Industrial Age Model

- Top-Down (organization – out) & linear.
- Exist to serve the masses, one-size fits all, individual unimportant.
- Success is measured by number of units produced or served (e.g., number of books in circulation, exhibitions mounted, number of users to institution) rather than impact of the institution has on its users.
Knowledge Age Trends

What’s important are NOT Products (be they goods or services) but Experiences.

Shift from Mass Production to Individualization and Personalization.

Desire for Knowledge, Delivered via Free-Choice Learning.

Increasing Public Expectation for Quality.
Succeeding in the Knowledge Age

- Experiences are BOTTOM-UP, starting with user-needs.
- Institutions provide personalized, learning-rich experiences that meet the specific, REAL needs of individuals.
- Provide measurable evidence that the institution’s social contract is fulfilled – It’s about LIVES CHANGED not numbers served!
So How Does an Institution Meet ALL of It’s User’s Needs?
Most efforts to describe and understand library and museum users have begun and ended inside the “four walls” of the institution.
Efforts have focused on tangible things like what the institution offers such as its collections, exhibits or programs. Or it focuses on some quality of the user such as user age, race/ethnicity, visit frequency or social arrangement.
The library/museum user experience is not something tangible and immutable.

The user experience is an ephemeral, constructed relationship that uniquely occurs each time a user interacts with a library or a museum.
The library and museum user-experience extends beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of the institution.

It begins before the visit and is shaped by the expectations and preconceptions of the public about both the institution and the visit.

It involves experiences in the library/museum.

And ends with memories and meanings created long after the experience is over.
People Use Libraries & Museums to Satisfy Identity-Related Reasons

The vast majority of User Identity-Related Needs fall within 5 basic categories:

- Explorers
- Facilitators
- Experience Seekers
- Professional/Hobbyists
- Recharger
Explorer

I come here primarily because it interests me and I like it.

Motivated by Personal Curiosity
I come here primarily because it will satisfy other people’s needs.
I come here primarily because it is an attraction or thing to do in this community; its reputation.

Motivated by Desire to See & Experience Place
Professional/Hobbyist

Motivated by Specific Knowledge-Related Goals

I come here primarily because it relates to my work or is something I actively pursue as a hobby.
I come here primarily because it helps me feel refreshed or focused or appreciative.
Research Has Shown That:

- The majority of users of libraries and all kinds of museums, zoos, aquariums and gardens can be successfully categorized as using the institution for one, or some combination of these five identity-related reasons.

- Individuals with similar identity-related motivations have qualitatively similar user experiences and describe the impact of their experiences in qualitatively similar ways.
Bringing Two Big Ideas Together

- Libraries and Museum need to become increasingly customer-focused, BOTTOM-UP.
- The identity-related model provides an initial way to begin to customize experiences so as to better meet individual user’s needs.
- 21st century success requires a shift from counting books in circulation or user numbers to measuring LIVES TRANSFORMED.
- If we’re going to measure lives transformed than we need to begin where the user begins –their identity-related visit motivations.
How to get in touch with John

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