

***Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy, Performance.* Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. London: Routledge, 2007. 231 pp.¹**

Reviewed by Deeksha Nagar

It is not uncommon for museum educators around the world to criticize their government for their lack of interest in and understanding of museum education programs. This is rightly so, as a vast number of museums in the world display exhibits from an educational perspective, while their governments seldom recognize their importance or grant them sufficient resources to develop, evaluate, and improve their educational programs. Government agencies regard museums as places of learning, yet are unable to recognize the depth and extent of that learning. When it comes to investing resources, most governments are interested in the statistics—determining success of a project by the number of people who have profited from the program. But in the cultural sector, it is challenging for agencies like museum to measure the effectiveness of their education programs, particularly those directed towards school children, solely on the basis of the number of visitors. The lack of quantifiable data to support the worth of their education programs makes it daunting for museums to convince their governments to provide sufficient funds for the promotion of museum education programs.

Museums and Education by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill is an interesting study that demonstrates how national and regional museums are important institutions for learning. They foster knowledge, creativity, and understanding among visitors of all ages and communities. The educational programs, when combined with school tours and academic curriculum, have a powerful influence on the social, cultural, and intellectual learning of children. In this work, Hooper-Greenhill makes a strong case for museum education by presenting quantifiable, measurable data, documented through qualitative and quantitative research methods, that are rooted in the experiences of teachers, pupils, and museum educators. Hooper-Greenhill's analysis demonstrates that the learning experience in museums can be measured and applied to evaluate museum education programs. It also highlights how government participation can contribute to the assessment and development of museum education programs.

The book examines the research on museum education that was funded by the British government and carried out at various national and regional museums by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG) affiliated with the Department of Museum Studies at the University of Leicester. The book is rooted in four studies: “Learning Impact Research Project (LIRP);” “Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO);” “Renaissance in the Regions;” and “Strategic Commissioning Museum Education Programme.” While LIRP and GLO studies conceptualized, defined, and theorized the nature, scope, and methods for measuring learning, the “Renaissance in the Regions,” and “Strategic Commissioning Museum Education Programme” measured learning in the museum by conducting visitor studies, primarily of school groups.

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This book can be broadly divided into three parts. The first four chapters set the stage for understanding the museum education program in England by presenting an overview of the effect of Britain's cultural policies on museums. The information presented in these chapters indicate that it was not until the 1990s that a focused movement to expand and strengthen the museum education programs began in England. The new research approaches developed since 2000 aimed at defining and measuring learning in the museums and identifying Generic Learning Outcomes (GLO) as the basis for understanding the impact of that learning. The research was targeted to evaluate learning experience of school-aged children by examining how museum experience contributed to their learning with reference to the following GLOs: 1) Knowledge and Understanding; 2) Activity, Behavior, and Progression; 3) Enjoyment, Inspiration, and Creativity; 4) Attitudes and Values; and 5) Skills.

Chapters 5 through 9 describe how the above mentioned GLOs were examined within national and regional museums through qualitative and quantitative research methods. Chapter 5, "Research Programming in the Museum," describes a comprehensive project design that allows readers to understand the logistics of how visitor studies were carried out among school groups. According to Hooper-Greenhill, "the five GLOs [mentioned above] were used to structure the research tools and to shape the analysis and interpretation of the data" (p. 75). The RCMG employed fixed and flexible processes to gather the data. Fixed processes included surveys given to students and teachers immediately after their museum visit to examine their views about learning outcomes. Flexible processes included "observational visits, teacher focus groups, school case studies, and seminars with the museum research participants" (p. 75). Since flexible processes were more discussion oriented, they contributed to "the qualitative data which allowed detailed analysis of the contexts and character of learning" (p. 76) that was highlighted in the quantitative study.

Chapters 6 and 7, focusing on "The Pattern of School Use of Museums" and "The Value of Museums to Teachers," present and analyze a range of statistical data to demonstrate that museums play a vital role in expanding the horizons of knowledge of their young visitors to schools who bring students to the museum visits. Chapter 7, in particular, analyses teachers' attitudes to the GLO and their pupils' attitudes towards learning. This chapter includes an interesting discussion on teachers' responses and ratings of each of the five GLOs. Based on these responses, the Enjoyment, Inspiration, and Creativity GLO is the guiding force that leads students to acquire knowledge and understanding, which brings about changes in attitudes and values and ultimately affects their actions and behavior. In this whole process they acquire certain skills that become an integral part of their learning process.

Chapter 9 is the heart of the book. It consists of the voices and drawings of the children that illustrate reflections and viewpoints on their own learning in relationship to the GLOs. The GLOs, such as Enjoyment, Inspiration and Creativity, when presented in the form of open ended comment fields like, "the whole trip was inspiration or what amazed me most about the museum was..." or "When I came away my brain was full of things" (both from the GLO on Knowledge and Understanding) (p. 140-153) solicited a tremendous response from the children about concepts and observations that cast a deep impression on them and which they would most likely retain or utilize for acquiring further information on the topic. This chapter could inspire the

museum educator to come up with his or her own creative ideas to evaluate and enrich interpretation practices with new interactive ideas.

Chapter 10, “Characteristics and Significance of Learning in Museums” demonstrates that learning in museums is “immersive, embodied, holistic and pleasurable” (p. 187), leading learners to adopt an open-minded and receptive outlook. Chapter 11, “Learning in the Post Museum,” reminds educators that questions about educational purpose, pedagogy, and performance converge together in our post modern times, but if these questions are answered “honestly and with analytical clarity,” they will contribute to “the emergence of diverse approaches to the post museum” (p. 207).

In conclusion, the objectives and the evaluation model presented in this study may remind the American museum professionals of the Outcome Based Program Evaluation model that is employed by a large number of American museums today in designing and deciphering the success of their programs. Although the title of book is *Museums and Education: Purpose, Pedagogy and Performance*, the book is heavy on the performance and measuring learning aspects. It offers few, but interesting, approaches for curators of education in the area of interpretation. The study is more suited for researchers and professionals who are specializing in visitor studies and are interested in reviewing and designing models to understand the measurable impact of their exhibits on school-aged children and for those who are interested in learning about the history of the development of museum education programs in the United Kingdom. One serious failing, however, is that this book is laden with acronyms. It lacks a handy glossary, so the reader has to go back to the main chapters to find the meaning of the acronyms. This, in my opinion, is a major nuisance that would prevent many instructors from using relevant chapters in their classroom without providing their students with the list of acronyms.

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