THE SPIRIT OF MUSEUMS: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOL GROUPS SINCE 1870

A Thesis by

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The following faculty have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Public History.

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DEDICATION

To my family and friends who gave me hope
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

This research evaluates the history of education in museums since 1870 with a particular focus on education programs for schools groups and their relationship with both theoretical and practical trends occurring in the American school system. To complete this research, the writings of museum professionals and related studies concerning education in museums were examined.

It is concluded that in order to maintain creativity in their education programs; museum professionals must make sure that, while they always have to be aware of educational trends in traditional schools; they also safeguard their role as unique institutions of informal learning.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

“Many consider public education to be the most significant contribution this country has made to the evolution of the museum concept... If collections are the heart of museum, what we have come to call education – the commitment to presenting objects and ideas in an informative and stimulating way – is the spirit.” Commission on Museums for a New Century in *Museums for a New Century* (1984)

My most influential experience at a museum occurred at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Abilene, Kansas. It did not take place while I was looking at anything monumental, such as the papers ordering the launching of D-Day or the jewel-encased swords he received as gifts during his presidency. Instead, it was a simple letter written to a father from a son. In the letter the son, a student at Kansas State University in the early 1940s, describes his feelings about going to college while he knew his friends and countrymen were fighting and dying in a war to save humanity. He expresses the anxiety he feels as he sits in classrooms and his feelings of insignificance that he was not doing more. He ends his letter by telling his dad that he cannot do it anymore and he is going to enlist. Reading this letter inspired me and taught me more about the “greatest” generation than any textbook or documentary ever has and the emotions expressed in it have stayed with me throughout the years. This story exemplifies the educational impact that a museum can have on a person’s life.

The earliest forms of museums were founded in ancient Greece and were more similar to the libraries of today than museums. Museums got their name in 290 B.C. when Ptolemy I established one of these centers of learning and dedicated it to the muses.\(^1\) The muses were goddesses whose sole purpose was to inspire people and these early museums sought to do just that. This lofty purpose for museums, however, did not last long and through most of history,
museums have been seen as private places where the wealthy could horde the possessions they had acquired through purchase and plunder. These museums were only available to a select few and were hardly concerned with inspiring or teaching people. It was not until the late eighteenth century in Europe and the nineteenth century in the United States that museums transformed into public institutions with goals, such as education, that went beyond showcasing wealth.² Museums were seen this way because they were part of a larger movement that embraced social progress for all as a necessary tool for a strong vibrant nation.

The hope of museum educators is that visitors to their museum leave having learned something new or re-evaluated knowledge that they already have. In theory, this is a simple straightforward hope but the practice of education in museums is a little more difficult. Since the inception of the modern museum in the United States the role of education in museums has constantly evolved. Education has gone from a very limited role to becoming a central component of most museums’ mission. This transition did not happen over night, but was a long process where both traditional education and museum education went through numerous changes. These changes stemmed in large part from the belief that first emerged in the early twentieth century that education can be about more than memorization and that museums are an ideal place for educational opportunities that children cannot get in the classroom; where the ideas of traditional learning are shrugged off and new stimulating ways to learn are implemented. Museums are places where learning is not stagnant but where it can be seen, heard, or touched. This unique educational role that museums fill, however, is being tested by recent educational policies that have stifled creativity in learning and placed increased importance on strict adherence to curriculum and scores on standardized tests.³
These severe educational policies have caused a shift in museum education in recent years and highlights the fact that museum educators have to cater to educational trends in order to attract school groups to their museums.

Looking at the history of education in museums, especially with a special focus on the relationship between the museum learning and classroom learning, has rarely been the focal point of any historian’s analysis of museums. Many historians have chosen instead to look at the general history of museums, and in doing so pay cursory attention to education in museums.⁴ The most famous of these general studies is Laurence Vail Coleman’s three volume history entitled, *The Museum in America*. Coleman’s study is influential because it looked at every aspect of the museum, from the exhibits to the staff and painted a vivid picture of where museums had been and provided clues and suggestions for how museums should evolve. Coleman, along with the other authors of general museum studies, was instrumental in providing a cornerstone for more in-depth examinations, upon which the next generation of museum writers built. Writers, such as Grace Fisher Ramsey and Alma Wittlin, chose to look at the specific functions of museums, including education in the public museums of the United States.⁵ These historians attempted to look at the history of education in museums to see how it developed. They examined both the success and failures in museum education programs, using specific examples from different museums, and sought to answer the question, “Why have some museums been so eager to incorporate a unique educational mission into the overall goals of the museum and others have not?” These historians have done an incredible job in the areas they chose to focus on, but have neglected an integral part of the history of education in museums. They have neglected to look at how education in museums has evolved in combination with the general theories of
education popular during a certain period in the history of the United States. This is an important aspect when looking at the history of museum education as it provides insight into how each has shaped the other, and why museums of each period chose the educational path they did.

There has been and is an unmistakable link between what is going on in the classroom and what is going on in museum education and in this study, I argue that education in museums has evolved and adapted as new educational theories have emerged and dominated traditional education in the United States. This topic is important because it provides museum educators with a history of their relationship with schools in the past and hopefully gives them insight into how to proceed in the future. A look at the history of education in museums is especially useful for museums in an era where they have lost their lofty status as ivory tower institutions of unquestionable knowledge. While it seems like museums have taken the brunt of the blame for their loss of status; changes that occurred outside of museums in both education and American society have had an impact. New technological innovations have provided Americans with ever-expanding options for entertainment and learning. These innovations have led to a fast-paced society where the nuisances of museums are easily overlooked, which has caused museums to react in two distinctly contradictory ways. On the one hand, some museums chose to remove themselves from new developments and instead decided to slink back into their comfortable role as institutions primarily for the intellectual and cultural elite. This development hurts both the museum, which loses the opportunity to become a more dynamic institution and the general public, who feels isolated from and unwelcome in the great museums of America. The public, therefore, often miss out on a fun, educational, family-oriented, and inexpensive form of leisure activity. On the other hand, museum professionals chose to incorporate new technological,
cultural, or philosophical developments in such a way that museums lose their capacity to serve as unique places of education and substance. They then begin to be just another entertainment center. It is the museums’ challenge in the twenty-first century to balance these two extremes in order to ensure that museums continue to be seen as a place for the general public to go to, “understand the complex and wonderful civilization they have inherited and to understand the world around them.”

In this study, I will examine how both museums and education have changed in the last one hundred and thirty years with a particular emphasis on how transformations in education, including legislation and educational theory, have affected the role museum’s play in educating youth.7 When doing this research, I decided to break the history of museums into four time periods. I chose the start and end dates of these periods based on either a trend that emerged in museum or one that emerged in the classroom that had a profound impact on museum education. The first chapter will discuss the early history of museums in the United States dating from 1870 to 1910. While museums were in existence in the United States before 1870, I chose 1870 as the start date because the first modern public museums emerged in the United States during the 1870s. Examples from this decade include the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City which opened in 1870 and 1872 respectively.8 I also chose this date because it is during this period when public education in the United States was being formed into the institution we know it as today. In this chapter, I will look at both the growth of museums and formal education in the United States and how this growth affected children’s education in museums. Both museums and schools of this period were struggling to define themselves and garner value. For schools, this meant stressing organization and a very simple mode of educating that focused on memorization and repetition. For museums, this
meant catering to the elite and building up a collection that would garner them prestige in the cultural world. Neither institution felt strong enough nor had the desire to try new initiatives, which meant that there was very little museum education programs that were geared toward children.

The second chapter looks at the period from 1910 to 1960. It begins in 1910 because it was during that decade where museums became vital institutions that now had the ability to instead of just collecting artifact or worrying about establishing themselves in the community could improve themselves from within. I also chose 1910 because it was the beginning of the Progressive Education movement, which had a profound impact on museum education. During this fifty year period museums grew in large numbers and the museum profession developed into a unique vocation with its own guidelines and modes of thinking. Occurring at the same time, was the Progressive Movement in education which focused on teaching that went beyond rote methods and embraced creative learning. These adjustments helped foster a spirit of change in museums that can be seen clearly through new ideas about the role of education in museums and the development of departments of education in museums. Museums began to expand their educational mission for children and develop programs that were conducive to the visual learning that takes place in museums. However, museum education for children still had a long way to go as illustrated by the conformity and inflexibility of the 1950s and it would not be until the 3rd period in the history of museum education that education for children in museums fully came into its own.

The third chapter examines education in museums from 1960 to 1990. The third period begins in 1960 because the decade of the 1960s ushered in dramatic changes in American society including in schools and museums that would continue throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This
chapter highlights the desire by the public to make society in the United States more inclusive. During the third period both schools and museums were working towards providing equality in education. Schools did this through government legislation that focused on among other things making poorer schools better and ensuring that handicapped children received a quality education. Museums did this through creating diverse programs that employed many different techniques, such as new technology and hands-on activities. These changes had a positive impact on museum education for children as the number of field trips increased when educators realized that learning in the museum could be beneficial. This period ends, however, with an educational climate in the 1980s that was alarmist and stressed accountability. This change would ultimately haunt education in both museums and schools in the years to come as schools adopted rigid standard and as museums once again struggled to prove their educational worth.

The final chapter looks at both the museum boom that occurred in the 1990s and the emergence of home schooling as a popular educational option and the passage of the No Child Left Behind legislation in 2001. The conclusions that I make about the current period of museum education for children is that it is filled with frustration. On the one hand education in museums has flourished with museums attempting to create educational programs that will bring in non-traditional education groups, such as home-schoolers, and incorporate many different learning techniques. The other side of this period, however, is that both the schools and museums are frustrated by NCLB and the increased focus on accountability and it has left museums educators in a position where instead of being creative outlets for new educational techniques they are forced to ensure that their methods and content conform to standards that leave very little room for creativity in learning.
One author described the act of educating children as “a process of helping children to understand that growing up means challenging, confronting, comprehending and if required changing objects and situations as they are experienced in order that the world – around them makes a very personal sense to them.” This statement epitomizes the educational role of the museum. Whether it be through a program put on by the education staff or a letter on display from a brave young man to his father; the museum has the power to educate. Most museum professional’s hope is that every visitor walks out of their museum with some new knowledge and museum education staffs are constantly looking for new and exciting ways to impart knowledge. As public institutions, however, museums are forced to restrain their ideas to fit the needs of society. In museum education programs for children these restraints are often tied to changes in theories and practices in traditional education. This tie to traditional education has enabled museums to evolve and remain relevant, but it has also caused some museums to abandon the vision that makes them unique informal learning centers.
CHAPTER II
THE FIRST STAGE OF PUBLIC MUSEUMS: 1870-1910

“As the Middle Ages were the period of cathedrals, so the present age is one of colossal museums, and of an extensive development of knowledge of the sensible creation.”
Edward Drinker Cope “The Academy of Natural Science” (1876)

The period after Reconstruction in U.S. history has been saddled with – for better or worse – the name the Gilded Age. Historians named the period after the novel, The Gilded Age, written by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner. Both the novel and historians used this title to suggest that this was a period of extravagant wealth, but that the wealth often covered the greed and corruption that was equally typical during that time. Whether that pessimistic view of the period is accurate or not, there is no denying that it was an era of profound change in all areas of American life. The United States had just emerged out of a dark period filled with war and sectional discord and while its problems had been far from solved, many in the United States were eager to turn their attentions away from old problems and create a new nation. Economically, the United States became an industrialized nation during this period, and by 1900 industrial production accounted for $13.4 billion compared with only $4.7 billion from agriculture. Industrialization was turning a nation of small farmers into a country of factories, workers, urban dwellers, large cities, and excessive consumers. Industrialization also brought a wave of immigrants pouring into the United States with the hope of a better life and the guarantee that they would get a job in one of the new industrial factories. These immigrants forever changed the demographics of the United States. Politically, the United States took its first tentative steps toward becoming a world power with territories around the world and a voice in international affairs. Socially, Americans developed new ideas about the United States and
modified old institutions, such as schools, to meet the challenges of a shifting world. Culturally, Americans desperately strove to create and define a way of life that was uniquely American, while at the same time continuing in part to emulate the culture of the old powers of Europe who many in the United States still regarded as the only true source of sophistication. All of these changes formed the basis of the museum movement that occurred in the late nineteenth century and allowed for the creation of many of the prominent museums of the United States.

**American Society and Museums in the Gilded Age**

Walt Whitman, in his 1871 essay *Democratic Vistas* remarked,

> Did you, too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men, and their beliefs -- in religion, literature, colleges, and schools -- democracy in all public and private life.12

This statement could easily be modified to include public museums during the late nineteenth century as they were seen by those creating them as places where the “highest forms of interaction” occurred. Whether they were places of democracy, however, was not as clear. For many communities the museum served as the focus of the area and was designed to be a source of pride. The first museums established in the United States had a few key features that need to be looked at when discussing the history of education in museums. First, museums filled a new desire to show the culture and power of the United States. During this time period the United States emerged as a force on the world stage and many of the wealthy elite and leaders of the United States realized that to be successful and competitive they needed educated, cultured citizens. This new dominant role for the United States – along with increased industrialization – fueled a sense of satisfaction and pride in the nation that had been lacking during the turbulent middle part of the nineteenth century. This new power on the world stage, however, forced Americans to take a more in-depth look at their culture.
For some museum founders during the late nineteenth century, culture was viewed as “a hopeful social and political force” and intellectuals furthered this idea by defining culture as the, “definite aspirations to rise above the mundane, to enrich one’s life by cultivation of nonmaterial enjoyments.” This desire sprung from an increase in free time, new forms of sports and entertainment to fill that free time, and more access to educational opportunities. All these desires provided a niche that American museums were eager to fill. These desires were felt especially in the larger cities in the United States that were struggling to create a unique identity and were trying fervently to compete with older European cities that for centuries were seen as the guardians of true culture. A newspaper in San Francisco in 1872 expressed this sentiment while at the same time speaking to the economic gains that a museum of distinction would bring to the city when it printed:

A great city does right to provide thus for the highest intellectual culture and enjoyment of its citizens, and is sure to be compensated for the outing, many times over, in the aesthetic, moral and sanitary gain to the people, saying nothing of the grosser profit it makes by attracting and detaining constant crowds of money-spending visitors from every part of the world.

For American cities during the late nineteenth century the establishment of a museum offered them a guaranteed way to claim culture relevance. It is not surprising then that many boosters in cities, such as Boston, New York, and Chicago, were enthusiastic about museums and adamantly lobbied for the creation of one in their city.

Another feature of these early museums is that the wealthy often used them primarily as an opportunity to display the objects they collected. The late nineteenth century was the first time in the history of the United States where there was a significant group of people that had a large amount of disposable income, and since “money was a prerequisite for museum foundations;” museums became popular philanthropic ventures for the rich. The wealthy liked
donating money to museums in part because it gave them the opportunity to display their wealth and distinguish themselves intellectually from the masses – typically all in the hopes of advancing their status in society.\textsuperscript{17}

Museums also became popular with the affluent because they served the function of providing the wealthy and intellectual elites with an exclusive cultural haven. Some of these early museum institutions went so far as to bar the general public from entering. For example, the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, which was opened in 1872, initially housed its collection in a former residence on 5\textsuperscript{th} Avenue, and was only open to those, “provided with tickets which can only be procured through friendship.”\textsuperscript{18} Another way the wealthy founders kept other members of society out was by locating museums far from the center of cities, which made it difficult for most average citizens to get to them.\textsuperscript{19} Making it difficult for the average citizen to visit the museum also created the added bonus of enabling elites to physically separate themselves from those they considered their inferior. The rich then were able to put another boundary between themselves and the general public – to show that they were superior because of their access to museums.

Museums were meant to be the preservers and protectors of the rare, the exceptional, and the beautiful in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Therefore, another feature of these early museums was that they saw collecting as their primary role. This emphasis on collecting was due in part to the simple fact that most nineteenth century museums were new institutions and they were trying to build up a large collection. Yet, this emphasis on collecting was also part of the mission of museums in large part because of the obsession in American society in the late nineteenth century with objects. All levels of American society during this time were obsessed with stuff and had as one author described it as a, “squirrel instinct” to accumulate possessions.\textsuperscript{20}
This obsession was part of the change to a consumer-driven society in the United States and cannot only be seen in the museums of that era, but also in other popular institutions of the day such as department stores and mail-order catalogs. It was even manifested in the Victorian home, which was often crammed with knick-knacks, heirlooms, and tapestries. All these trends were due to the sentiment that was frequently expressed during this time that, “objects could tell stories to the untrained observer,” and be used to, “order and understand their world.” Many museum professionals of the nineteenth century held a belief that objects inherently held educational value and that objects ‘spoke for themselves.’ This led to the fairy-tale like belief that museums simply needed to display objects and people just by merely gazing upon the object would walk away with a sense of wonder and a new understanding of the world around them. John Walker of the National Gallery of Art exemplified that idea when he said, “The main purpose of the Gallery is to allow each painting, piece of sculpture, or other object of art to communicate to the spectator, with as little interference as possible, the enjoyment it was designed to give.” These ideas about objects allowed museum to amass and exhibit huge collections but they also left most museums lacking in other areas most notably a coherent policy on education in the museum.

Education in Museums

Education has always been in theory an integral part of museums, even if education programs were limited by early museum professionals’ ideas about museum objects being so obviously educational that no further information was needed. From the beginning of public museums in the United States, education had at least been touted as one of the missions of the museum. For example, when the Boston Museum of Art was dedicated in 1876, Mayor Cobb of Boston proclaimed the museum to be, “the crown of our educational system.” The reality of
education in museums during this period was not met, however, with as much enthusiasm. Museums during this period were consumed with building their collection, which left little time or money for education. Education policy in the public museums of the nineteenth century was undisciplined and often occupied a minor role in museums. The majority of the museums did not have public education programs or staff members specifically trained in education. The education that was offered was limited to certain groups, particularly scholars, and focused on conventional education methods, such as lectures. Children were most certainly not the focus of education in these early museums. G. Brown Goode, who served as assistant secretary of the Smithsonian Institution throughout some of this first period, summarized this point: “I should not organize the museum primarily for the use of people in their larval or school-going stage of existence. The public school teacher...has in these days a professional outfit which is usually quite sufficient to enable him to teach his pupils.” For Goode and others, museums should focus on more important goals than creating programs that educate children.

It is telling to the history of education in museums that museums in the nineteenth century were seen as infallible institutions where visitor could encounter the refined and civilized of society. Museums were seen this way because in order to garner prestige museum developers advertised them as absolute sources of information. Museums, however, also were given this label because often they were equated with housing ancient things that were expensive and priceless and for lots of Americans at that time (and probably today) that was reason enough for museums to be seen as places of unquestionable authority. As one author explains it:

Open to the public, such institutions [art museums] seemed to their advocates and supporters democratic enterprises, serving to diffuse knowledge, taste, and refinement. What they in fact diffused, however, was a set of corollaries to the idea of culture... the museum subliminally associated art with wealth, and power to donate and administer with social station and training... The splendor of the museums conveyed an idea of art as public magnificence, available in hushed corridors through a corresponding act of
munificence by private wealth. European and classical masterpieces epitomized the highest, purest art. Thus, museums established as a physical fact the notion that culture filtered downward for the distant past, from overseas, from the sacred founts of wealth and private power.26

These ideas also made museums inaccessible for most of the public that had not had the same educational opportunities as the wealthy. For the general public both the content and the structure of museums were intimidating. For example, some of the first exhibitions of the Metropolitan Museum of Art were crammed in ornate rooms that were filled with objects.27 These types of displays could make it difficult for the average visitor, let alone children, to understand and relate to what they were seeing. Education was also severely limited by these types of exhibitions because they perpetuated the idea that museums were a cultural institution where the objects housed in them were so blatantly educational that there was no need to provide further instructions or present information to compliment the museum’s objects.

Another aspect of education in museums during the late nineteenth century was the museum’s focus on higher learning. In the nineteenth century, universities had not taken their position as the unequivocal place for higher education and many people believed that museums just as easily as universities could fill that niche. In fact during this time, many museum founders, such as Henry Mercer, founder of the Mercer Museum in Pennsylvania, thought that objects often yielded more opportunities for knowledge then books and that it was only through the study of objects that people would be able to cultivate an understanding of their world.28 Therefore, these founders believed that their museums were better suited then universities for scholarship because of the collections they had amassed and the research opportunities that went with those collections. An example of this sentiment can be seen when reading a quote from a Professor Marsh about the New York Museum, he writes,
If this institution is to hold high rank in science, as we hope, it will not be in consequence of the spacious halls before us, crowded though they be with the rarest of Nature’s products; but, rather, it will come through the small work-rooms in the attic, where the naturalist, with microscope or scalpel, has patiently worked out discoveries that add to the sum of human knowledge. This museum will fail of its highest good, fail even to achieve more than a legal influence, unless the work-room above are made the important feature of the whole. These vast collections will spread the elements of natural science among the people of New York and the surrounding region; but the quiet workers in the attic, who pursue sciences for its own sake, will bring the museum renown throughout the world.  

This notion of a museum might seem foreign to modern museum visitors but to nineteenth-century intellectuals whose universities were structured very differently and who placed much more emphasis on examining objects than on information in books this logic made absolute sense. This idea also appealed to many museum contributors and staff because it gave their institutions educational prestige and value, which was extremely important to many museums that were trying to define their mission and become an integral part of their community. With this belief prevalent in museums using the museum as an educational tool for children took a backburner during this era.

If prestige and value were what museum staff were trying to accomplish one thing they believed was that they would not achieve this goal through catering to children. Museums in general during this period were not child-friendly, instead gearing themselves toward adults – typically well-educated adults. This concept can be seen in physical realities of the museum. Most museums were jam-packed with cases filled with artifacts that usually remained unlabeled. If they were labeled it was done in such a way that only the expert could glean any sort of knowledge from them and often these cases and labels were not accessible to children in such obvious ways as height and word choice. A Professor Henry exemplified this position when he addressed the crowd at the ceremony celebrating the new building of the American Museum of Natural History in 1876, he said, “How incomparably greater would be the importance of the
Museum, were there connected with it a professor, who at stated periods of the year, would give courses of free lectures on the subjects it contains.” One reason for museums aversion to providing children with educational opportunities was the stigma associated with working with children. One historian of the late nineteenth century commented on this idea when he wrote:

But the intellectual implication of the assumption that the primary educational role of museums is to work with third graders are enormous. This assumption underscores the perception that the knowledge available at museums is outdated and suitable only for children. It also suggests that we are content to offer our children knowledge which as adults we no longer trust. Either way, this shift to cultivating an audience of children is symptom of the museum’s loss of intellectual primacy.

It is evident that many of these first American public museums the idea of preparing educational opportunities for children carried with it a lot of implications that might be disastrous for the prestige of these early museums.

The one type of museum that seemed to be immune to the implications of providing education for children was the art museums. The art museums in the United States were much more willing during this period to create programs geared towards children. For example as early as 1901, the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts was holding talks for teachers and students and other art museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Carnegie Institute of Art, soon followed. The willingness of art museums to create educational programs for children early on stems from the unique aspects of art museums. For example, art museums during this period were more easily able to create education programs for children because these museums were seen as “civilizer” and it was felt that they would “elevate the taste and moral condition,” of society. The idea of art museums as teachers of sophistication goes back to the overall goal of museums during the late nineteenth century as being creators of American culture and serving as a means of socializing the general public.

The lack of importance placed on education, especially education of children, in museums during this first period in their history was not only because of elitist attitudes toward
A Brief History of Education in the United States

Education has always been part of the American ideal. During the Revolutionary period people, such as Abigail Adams and Benjamin Rush, advocated the need for a learned population if Americans wanted their noble experiment in democracy to succeed. Thomas Jefferson thought education was necessary to, “instruct the mass of our citizens in these their rights, interests and duties, as men and citizens.” 35 These early forms of education, however, often simply consisted of the family educating their own children. Mothers, in particular, were charged with the duty of educating their children as part of the idea of Republican Motherhood that was popular at the time. Proponents of the notion of Republican Motherhood argued that one of the most important duties of a good wife and mother was to ensure that their children received an education that enabled them to be virtuous citizens. Abigail Adams, wife of President John Adams, promoted this idea – in part to see women gain more educational opportunities – when she wrote, “If we mean to have heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, we should have learned women. If as much depends as it is allowed upon the early education of youth…” 36

After the revolutionary period, education in the United States entered into a period of reform. One of the biggest reformers during this time was Horace Mann. Mann, who served as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, was a masterful administrator and
worked diligently to create an education system that produced good citizens and that provided opportunities for all to learn. He did this by stressing the importance of teachers, the role of recitation in schools, and arguing that "education must prepare our citizens to become municipal officers, intelligent jurors, honest witnesses, legislators, or competent judges of legislation, to fill all the manifold relations of life." One change that Mann and others advocated was taking teaching out of the hands of parents and put into a more standard setting. This change is seen through the birth of the common school. The common school of the early and mid-nineteenth century was distinct from earlier education in the United States for a number of features. First, all children were to be educated in a common school house, a situation that many proponents argued would lead to a decrease in hostility between social groups. Second, common schools were an instrument of government policy. They could help facilitate an end to social and political problems facing the nation while at the same time instituting values that ensured the continuation of nationalistic ideas in future generations. Third, the common schools brought with them the creation of state agencies, which would be in charge of local schools and hopefully help create uniformity in education. This experience was especially important because it made education a government-sponsored institution and laid the framework for the development of an even more standardized educational system that emerged in conjunction with the first era of public museums.

Education in the Late 19th Century

As one author keenly wrote education is, “man’s efforts to perpetuate and extend the values which the society of his time has acquired.” This idea was readily seen in the United States in the latter half of the nineteenth century as universal public education spread. Education during the late nineteenth century was coming into its own and by 1900, seventy-four percent of
children attended school with school enrollment increasing one-hundred and fifty percent between 1870 and 1900.\textsuperscript{41} Steps had been taken to ensure that school systems in the United States were more standardized compared to their earlier counterparts, which often had no uniformed curriculum.\textsuperscript{42} Schools also served an even broader function, due to a large influx in immigrants, of “Americanizing” children. These new purposes, coupled with the prevailing ideas about education and a strong desire to make the school into a social setting, led to the birth of the modern school system in the United States. The first important aspect of education during this time was the increased standardization of schools. Previously many schools had been largely in the hands of the teachers and administrators who ran each individual school and there was little cooperation among schools, especially schools located in remote areas, which resulted in inconsistence in education. This mode of education was not conducive to the late nineteenth century as school enrollment in all areas of the United States increased and forced school officials to take a new look at how schools were organized and modify them. These changes occurred in the hierarchy of administration in schools with superintendents on top and clearly defined roles for all members of a school’s faculty.\textsuperscript{43} It also took place in the development of courses and a grading system, which were designed to ensure uniformity and a natural progression.\textsuperscript{44} These changes were all part of the broader trend of emphasizing order and rational planning in schools. As William T. Harris, U.S. commissioner of education remarked in 1871, “The first requisite of the school is order: each pupil must be taught first and foremost to conform his behavior to a general standard.”\textsuperscript{45} This new found order in American schools allowed them to be more efficient while at the same time providing a setting that was conducive to another big component of education in the late nineteenth century – teaching the morals and values that were important in American society at the time.
For most immigrants who came to the United States in the late nineteenth century, the
country was their golden opportunity and a big part of that opportunity was the idea that anyone
could rise from his or her place in society through education to be something better. Mary Antin,
an immigrant during that time explained her feelings about education in America when she
wrote: “Education was free. That subject my father had written about repeatedly, as
compromising his chief hope for us children, the essence of American opportunity.”
This belief was shared by most immigrants, but citizens of the United States had different views on
education when it came to immigrants. For American leaders, they viewed schools like they
viewed museums – as a way to “Americanize” all these hundreds of thousands of new
immigrants. Many government leaders knew that public schools would be a great institution for
instilling American “values” into these new citizens and potential leaders of the next generation.
The use of schools as socializing instruments for immigrants was particularly true in the large
eastern cities that were inundated with immigrant children. For example in 1908, an
investigation by the U.S. Senate Immigration Commission found that in New York City seventy-
two percent of its students had foreign born parents while other large cities such as Boston and
Chicago had over sixty percent. These cities used their school system as a tool to teach
immigrant students American ideals while simultaneously ridding them of cultural traditions
from their parents’ home countries. Many immigrant children were given more Anglicized
names in school and were forbidden from speaking the language of their parents in the
classroom. Using the schools for the “Americanization” of certain groups did not stop with
immigrants but was used frequently in the interior of the country as a tool to assimilate Native
Americans. Schools, such as the Carlisle Institute, were places where Indian children were sent
to rid them of their native customs, names, and dress and force them to adopt American values and traditions.\textsuperscript{49}

Another major trend in education during this period in America history was the development of the school as a social setting. The emergence of kindergartens, playgrounds, and summer schools are examples of this trend. All these developments were supposed to help socialize children in an era where many felt the traditional modes of socializing were faltering. Typically before this time, Americans developed socially through their families, churches and communities but during the late nineteenth century as industrialization and factory work became the norm these institutions were collapsing as socializing agencies. Parents, who previously had spent hours working with their children in the house or on the farm, now spent the majority of their days in a factory. This left the children to their own devices without the parental guidance that had been so stabilizing in years past and as one superintendent preached, “Idleness is an opportunity for evil-doing.”\textsuperscript{50} This was especially true in crowded urban ghettos, and schools in these areas became a sanctuary for children – providing them not only with education but also such basic services, that would come to be a staple in schools around the country in the years to come, such as free lunches and school nurses.\textsuperscript{51} Many reformers also saw the schools as the ideal place to not only get these children out of “living in narrow, filthy alleys, poorly clad, and without habits of cleanliness… in the misery of the crowded tenement house or alley” but also as an opportunity to provide them with skills and morals that would enable them to be valuable and competent American adults.\textsuperscript{52} This meant using the schools, “the most obvious centers of national unity” to impart American nationalism – a concept that had certainly been in existence before the late nineteenth century but came to be even more important during that time as
millions of immigrants crowded into America and as the United States emerged as a dominant force on the world stage.\textsuperscript{53}

Museums, like schools during the late nineteenth century also were used to socializing institutions for immigrants. Museums provided native-born trustees with the opportunity to become guardians of culture as many of these museum contributors played a significant role in dictating what was exhibited in the museum. As historian, Lewis Mumford points out, “by the patronage of the museums the ruling metropolitan oligarchy of financiers and officeholders establish their own claims to culture: more than that they fix their own standards of taste, morals and learning as that of their civilization.”\textsuperscript{54} Creating an American idea about culture was very important during this period as twenty-five million immigrants entered the United States.\textsuperscript{55} These new immigrants brought with them their own cultures and that worried many “native” Americans. Some native-born citizens felt that these new immigrants would destroy the culture that they and their ancestors had struggled to create. This feeling caused an immigration backlash movement in the United States known primarily as “Nativism,” and illustrated by such organizations as the American Protective Association, that quickly sought to preserve institutions and traditions that they considered uniquely American and keep out culture that they did not feel was “American” culture.\textsuperscript{56}

While schools experienced many changes during the late nineteenth century, one thing remained rigid when it came to education; how learning should be facilitated. Schools during this period continued to labor under the principal that the most effective way to teach and learn was through activities that stressed discipline and repetition. Discipline and repetition in schools was so popular during this time in part because of new ideas about industrialization. Men such as Fredrick Taylor were preaching the idea of “scientific
management” and the emergence of the factories and the assembly line stressed uniformity and time management in all aspects of life. As one educator of the time explained, “The pupil must have his lesson ready at the appointed time, must rise at the tap of the bell, move to the line, return; in short, go through all the evolutions with equal precision.” This belief corresponded with the prevailing educational theory of the time, which was known as the Herbartian movement, named after its originator Johann Herbart. Herbartians stressed a formally organized lesson plans and gave five steps that should be incorporated into every plan; they were: (1) preparation, (2) presentation (3) comparison and abstraction, (4) generalization or definition, and (5) application. Classes that employed the Herbartian methods tended to be highly uniformed but it left little room for creativity. It also led to the belief among educators of the time that their students were vessels and that it was their job to provide them piece by piece with information which the student in turn absorbed into their memory. This belief can be seen when looking at the textbooks for the early twentieth century, as one author did. He noted:

Traditionally texts were organized (and still are to a large extent) around the nature of the subject. The simplest and most fundamental ideas are presented first, and then the subject is built up, bit by bit, until the highest or most advanced elements are reached in the later chapters. The subject is analyzed in terms of its logical structure.

This method was very simple and straightforward and its most potent weapon was memorization. It did not account for different styles of learning and did not encourage students to think in new or imaginative ways. While this method is not entirely deficient, indeed, parts of education are still based on some of these ideas; it does stifle students who did not respond to that way of learning. It also restricted learning to inside the classroom; leaving museums with very few opportunities to showcase their educational prowess.
Chapter Summary

By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had changed in fundamental ways. The frontier was closed and industrialization was now the economic focus of the nation, the largest ten cities in the nation claimed over ten million residents, the concept of an American citizen had changed with the millions of immigrants who now called the United States home, and America had become an international power complete with imperialist dreams. These changes gave Americans a new sense of pride and a desire to showcase their new wealth and prestige. This desire manifested itself in the emergence of the great museums of the nineteenth century. Designed to be imposing displays of wealth, intellectual, and culture these museums were supposed to be a signal to the old European countries that America had arrived. And while they certainly accomplished that to an extent that mindset also left a lot of museums lacking in other areas including education plans and initiatives.

The emphasis on education in museums during the late nineteenth century was different then the educational goals of most museums today. First, museums were focused on the intellectual prestige they could garner and they felt that the best way to do this was through scholarly research and lectures geared towards adults. In that sense education in museums of the late nineteenth century was much more like universities of today. Second, there was a lack of education for children in museums and a belief that education in museums should not be geared towards children. These facts were not solely the fault of the museum, however, but also were indicative of the place of formal education for children during that period. Education was experiencing many changes – groups who had previously been denied educational opportunities were finally given a chance, standardized education in America was emerging, and the role of the school as a social setting was becoming a prominent idea. These new developments led to
schools being highly disciplined and relying on educational theories that stressed order and management. These educational ideas were not conducive to learning in museums and hindered the museums’ ability to create quality educational opportunities for children.

To look at both American museums and the American educational system of the late nineteenth century, they appear to be very similar. Both were institutions either new or struggling to re-identify themselves, both were seen as a tool in the fight to create a national identity and spread American nationalism to new citizens, and both adopted sometimes rigid methods to ensure their survival. These similarities make it seem like these two establishments could have worked together to be mutually beneficial to both. In actuality, these similarities did exactly the opposite and made it virtually impossible for the two to work together. Museums were struggling to be recognized and wanted to establish prestige and that could not be done by catering to children. Schools in the United States were trying to become more standardized and disciplined and they could not do that through frittering away their time at museum. These opposing goals, however, would soon be replaced as new educational theories emerged in the United States and as museums began looking at the teaching of children as essential components to their educational mission.
“It can be stated confidently that the educational and extension work of museums is a permanent addition to education and in no sense a fad.” Paul M Rea, Secretary of the American Association of Museums (1915)

A story appeared in an American newspaper in 1910 about a wealthy family visiting Europe. It read:

It came about that the Lindsays found themselves settled in Paris for the month of May.

Now and then, when Mr. Lindsay had a day to spare, all three went for an excursion outside of the city to see the wonderful palaces of Versailles, of Fontainebleau, or to picnic in the woods at St. Cloud. On other days Margaret and her mother visited the museums.

But sometimes she found the museums just a bit dull for a little girl of eight, and one day as they sat resting in one of the long picture galleries of the Louvre, she asked a little wistfully, “Are museums always made just for grown-up people, mother? There are so many I should think there might be one for children.”

The sentiment expressed by Margaret in the article was indicative of the state of museums in regard to children in 1910. At that time, public museums were just emerging out of their first stage of growth, which had been concerned primarily with creating a unique valuable collection and displaying it to the wealthy and intellectual elite. Typically during the late nineteenth century, museum staff did not see children as important museum patrons. All that was about to change, however, as society, education and museums experienced dramatic transformations in the first half of the twentieth century.

Public institutions, such as museums, typically have very little choice but to follow the economic and political trends in society. The public museum became a modern institution during the first half of the twentieth century and that meant adjustments had to be made. These adjustments can be looked at through four big trends that emerged during this period in the
history of museums and how these trends highlighted the new ideas in educational programs for children in museums. The first major development in the museum industry was the rapid growth of museums, which was fueled by an increase in tourism and the rise of the automobile. Second, work in the museum became more professionalized, which led to increased specialization and more opportunity. This was especially important for education in museums and it was during this period that many museums began creating separate education departments. The third trend was more government involvement in museums. This involvement was typically through funds, which enabled museums to expand their programs, including education. The final trend was a decreased emphasis on collecting in museums, which led to a shift in museums towards emphasizing education. This new emphasis had a profound impact on education in museums because for the first time many museums allowed education programs to take its rightful place as an important part of the museum’s mission. At the same time, the educational movement during this period, known as progressive education, served as an important outside influence on education in museums and was one reason that education for children in museums flourished during the second period of the history of museums.

Growth of the Museum

Society in the United States changed in rapid ways during the first decades of the twentieth century. The problems in American society, such as poor living and working conditions in cities, were exposed and different groups, such as the Progressives and the muckraking journalists, worked toward ending those problems. At the same time industry thrived and by the 1920s new technologies were more accessible and made life easier for Americans. The car, coupled with an increase in leisure time, had a profound influence on American life including helping to fuel a rise in museum attendance. For affluent Americans during this golden economic time it seemed as if there was no ceiling to the United States’ prosperity.62
Museums during their second period experienced tremendous growth. In 1913, one expert reported that there were approximately 600 museums in the United States; by 1938 another source reported that the number had climbed to 2,489 museums. The fact that the number of museums more than quadrupled in a period of less than thirty years indicates their ever-expanding place in American society. In addition to just sheer numbers, museums grew in other ways as well. The amount of people visiting museums, the money spent on museums, and the active role government took in museums were all part of the tremendous growth of museums in the United States. For example, the American Association of Museums reported that in 1928, thirty-two million people had visited American museums and many of the largest museums in the nation, such as the Field Museum in Chicago reported attendance of over one million. By 1944, the attendance in American museums reached fifty million for the year. The rise in attendance forced museums to re-evaluate many of their former programs. Museums began to embrace the notion, “the museum is good only in so far as it is of use,” which caused them to adopt fresh styles that appealed to people that were visiting the museum for the first time. For example, art museums began offering classes for children and other museums began providing hands-on lectures in an attempt to attract kids.

The increase in the number of museums and museum attendance during these decades was due in part to a couple of key changes in American society. The first was the rise of the automobile in the United States in the 1920s. In 1929, five million cars were sold; up from 1.5 million in 1921 and by the end of the decade there was an average of one car for every five people in the United States. The automobile completely changed life in the United States. It altered how people spent their free time and their money. It also allowed once isolated rural areas to experience the cultural life in cities that before had been denied them. For museums, the automobile helped by expanding their visitor reach; quite simply the automobile allowed more people to have access to museums.
Another key change in society during this period was directly related to the rise of the automobile and that was an increase in tourism. The availability of cars coupled with higher wages and legislation, such as the Federal Highway Act of 1921 and the Interstate Highway Act of 1956, which provided easier access to previously remote areas, made the idea of a vacation available to more Americans. The increase in tourism was very important to the development of museums. Lawrence Vail Coleman remarked about the impact on the rise of the tourist trade on museums when he wrote, “No longer is it true that a public museum’s visitors are drawn mostly from the population near at hand. More than half of them are strangers – sightseers who are looking around in the place where they find themselves.” With this rise of vacations came a need for things to do during these trips so more American communities began creating their own museums. These new museums were not just in big cities, but smaller communities all over the United States began creating their own museums. These museums were different than their big city counterparts. Often they did not have the funds or the inclination to establish the prestige of the museums through expensive large collections. They were more concerned with trying different ways to entice the public to visit their museums including creating new educational opportunities and developing new varieties of museums, such as trailside museums or living-history museums.

A prime example of these new museums was the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan. This museum was created by Henry Ford and at the beginning primarily housed objects that he had collected. Ford meant it to tell the story of the history of the United States through the objects and buildings he displayed in a fictional American village. This museum and other living history museums like it, such as Colonial Williamsburg, displayed museum objects in a way that was more conducive to education. Instead of just looking at the
objects on display, guests were able to see them in a context that was at least similar to their original purpose, which provided a more interactive learning experience for their visitors. For Ford that was the only way in which to truly study the history of the United States and he proclaimed:

"When we are through we shall have reproduced American life, and that is, I think, the best way of preserving at least part of our history and our tradition. For by looking at the things that people used and the way they lived, a better and truer impression can be gained in an hour than could be had from a month of reading."

In this respect Ford and his museum were part of a broader movement in the United States to preserve American heritage. As the United States became a nation of industry and cities, Ford and others like him felt the traditional American way of life was being left behind. One author described Ford’s vision for his museum in this manner, “Doubtless aware of his role in creating the modern industrial world, Ford reached back to retrieve his own past… Through the buildings he accumulated for the village, Ford joined his own history to that of the Americans he most admired.” Whatever his motives, Ford was not alone in wanting to revel in American nostalgia and countless roadside local museum highlighting their community’s place in American history opened during the early decades of the 1900s.

Professionalization

From the onset museums had to employ a variety of people with different skills sets. Staff members knowledgeable in things such as business, management, history, preservation, and art were and still are all necessary to make a museum run smoothly. Because of the variety of skills needed to ensure a museum functions efficiently many museums employed people from all sorts of backgrounds. As museums moved into a new phase in their history in the 1910s, however, many in the field, including such well-known figures as John Cotton Dana and Grace
Fisher Ramsey, realized that having staff trained specially for museum work would be beneficial to the field. This way of thinking had many outcomes. First it took museums out of the hands of the original operators who often had not intended to work in a museum but had fallen into the job. These first museum workers were unable or unwilling to understand the changes that were going on in museums in the United States. In their place stepped the newly-trained professionals who brought with them unique beliefs about what a museum could be. Second, the shift allowed for new forms of specialization in the museums which enabled museums to broaden their scope of activities. The final outcome was that it allowed for opportunities to open up in museums and many groups, most notably women, took advantage of them. For example, throughout the 1920s women held a number of ranking positions in various museums.\(^7^2\) In addition, women were also willing students in the burgeoning museums studies programs at universities and museums. In fact, the first class to graduate from the Newark Museum’s education program in 1926 was made up entirely of females.\(^7^3\)

The professionalization of jobs in museums began in 1908 when the University of Iowa began teaching exhibition techniques at its Museum of Natural History.\(^7^4\) From there, more universities began offering museum training classes and the profession took off. By the 1920s, there were seventeen universities or museums where students were trained in museum work.\(^7^5\) These institutions taught a new generation of museum professionals who sought to distance their museums from the boring cathedral-like museums of old. These museums professionals sought to create museums that John Cotton Dana described as, “museums properly so-called – homes and workshops of the Muses. They are not to be storage warehouses, or community attics, or temples of dead gods…or grand and elaborate structures which are of service only as evidence of conspicuous waste by the rich.”\(^7^6\) Dana, himself advanced this idea through the professional
museum training program he started at the Newark Museum in the 1920s and through his extensive writings about the challenges that museums faced and the possibilities for future museum achievements. He believed that museums benefited the people and were a unique educational opportunity. For Dana, it was up to the new museums professionals to ensure that these opportunities were fully realized.

In addition to these training institutions and the work of advocates, such as Dana, the museum field also began to professionalize in other ways. In 1906, the American Association of Museums was established and by the 1920s they began setting standards for the academic training of the museum profession. This standardization provided museums workers with the opportunity to work together in exchanging information, creating uniform classification schemes, and influencing legislation concerning museums. It also allowed museums the opportunity to move away from the old practices, such as concentrating on collecting, that had hindered advancement since the inception of museums. The creation of a set of principles helped the museum industry become a unified profession with a vision for the future that was both focused and flexible.

This focused vision allowed for different forms of specialization to occur and new opportunities were opened up in the museum profession. The biggest change and the one that had the most dramatic impact on this study was the rise of education departments in museums. Many institutions had come to the realization that a major part of their mission should be education and with the knowledge:

Obviously the first step in increasing the efficiency of museum service must inevitably be to make the department of education the proper size to cope with the problem and give it the amount of power commensurate with its duty…If education is the primary function of all museums activities it must be treated accordingly and not as subordinate either to acquisition and preservation or to exposition and scholarly study.
These ideas led to the hiring of museum personnel trained specifically in a certain area. Some museums, such as the Davenport Academy of Natural Science in Iowa, began to hire teacher and others in the education field to run their educational resources. The hiring of personnel trained in education was a huge change from earlier periods where curators or directors had taken the educational helm and it had a dramatic impact on education in museums. Unlike curators that had specialized knowledge in the collection; these new museum educators had a broader understanding of the collection itself but had specialized knowledge on how to disseminate information in a museum to the general public. This was a big step for museums because it made the museums of this period more accessible to everyone.

When museums began to hire personnel trained specifically with knowledge in education, these professionals started to define their job and how they should go about doing it effectively. During this process early museum educators were quick to point out the differences between their job and those of a classroom teacher. A classroom teacher works with the same students day in and day out and gets to know their personalities and learning styles extensively. What constantly changes for them is the curriculum they are teaching. For museum educators, it is exactly opposite; they deal with the same information everyday but a constantly revolving door of students. Dealing with the same information all the time can serve as a challenge for museum educators who constantly run the risk of becoming, “inured to the children, and to develop an academic interest in the subject or the specimens, which leads to repetitive pointing out and lecturing by the teacher and to listening by the pupils.” Museum educators did not want that to happen. They wanted the museum to be a learning center where educators dealt, “first of all with the people and secondarily with a subject.”
Like the other areas of the museum, many of the newly-created education departments were severely understaffed. To supplement the lack of staff museum education departments began utilizing volunteers and interns. Volunteering in museums was an intellectual outlet for the volunteers as most of them were well-educated middle and upper-class women who, especially after World War II, were not welcome in the job market. Interns were used in a similar fashion as volunteers but their motives for doing it and the museums motives for having them there were different. The creation of internship programs was an extension of the professionalization of museum work and allowed the next generation of museum professionals the opportunity to get hands-on training. Some universities arranged internship opportunities that supplemented the teaching students were receiving at the newly created museum studies programs that were emerging around the United States. Regardless of the motives that brought these unpaid workers to the museum their value became readily apparent and interns and volunteers soon became a vital part of education staffs in museums.

Cooperation between Schools and Museums

When museums started hiring museum education staffs these professionals began the important task of cultivating a more cooperate relationship with schools. Paul Rhea, secretary of the American Association of Museums, understood the value of this relationship when he said in The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, “The most distinctively modern educational activity of museums is to be found in cooperation with the public schools.” Museum education professionals realized that without the support of schools they would never be able to reach their full potential. They also came to recognize that they could not compete with schools since, “by its own unaided powers it [museums] can do little educational work of the formal kind.” Schools for their part started to realize that museums could be a valuable resource for learning.
These realizations led to a more cooperative relationship between the two institutions beginning in the 1920s and 1930s that included such things as more field trips, museums lending objects to schools, and more communication between educators in schools and museums.

An increase in school field trips to museums was one indicator that cooperation had begun to increase between schools and museums. This increase stemmed in part because logistical reasons, such as transportation to and from the museum, were resolved during this period as school busing systems became more common.87 Museums also did a lot to encourage these trips. They promoted the unique educational opportunities in the museum and created programs, which highlighted the fact that museums provided a learning environment that was different and effective. In addition some school districts helped raise the number of field trips by making classroom trips to the museum compulsory. For example, in Buffalo, New York a schedule was sent to every grade school principal notifying him of the day and hour at which each of the grades in his school was to come to the city’s Society of Natural Sciences Museum.88 More frequent trips to the museum not only benefited the students but also forced museum educators to come up with new and creative ways to relay the information in the museum.

Another development that emerged during this time was the use of museums objects in schools. This trend included the obvious lending of objects to schools, but also encompassed the creation of school museums that served as satellites for the larger museum and traveling exhibits. Museums, including such places as the Field Museum in Chicago, adopted these policies and began allowing their exhibits to travel from school to school.89 This development was unique because it signaled a shift away from the notion that all museum objects should be viewed in the hallowed halls of museums surrounded by glass cases and velvet ropes. It also allowed for the reach of museums to expand. Students who would not normally have access to the museum
were able to see some of the collection and perhaps peak their interest enough to make a trip to the museum itself. For education departments in museums the lending of objects allowed them to create educational programs that were different because of the change in environment from what they typically did in museums.

The cooperation between museum education staff and teachers was a significant component of the expanding relationship between schools and museums. By the 1920s, teachers were coming to realize that, “museums’ collections might illustrate and enliven the subjects about which their pupils had previously learned only through the printed word.”90 This realization led many teachers to seek out the educational opportunities available in museums. In return, museums through a number of different ways began to actively foster better relationships with teachers. One way museum educators did created these relationships was through seeking out the expertise of teachers. This method enabled museum staff to find out the particular needs of teachers and develop programs that catered to those needs. Museum education professionals also sought a better relationship with school teachers by provided opportunities for teachers to come to the museum and learn about the education programs. One example of museums developing programs for teachers was the American Museum of Natural History that, under the educational leadership of Dr. Grace Fisher Ramsey, offered a course to teachers about the use of museum materials.91 This method had the double effect of publicizing the museum and acquainting the teacher with the information available at the museum. These developments fit in perfectly with what many saw as the function of museum education, which was mainly as a supplement to the school curriculum. As one museum professional described it, “Museums have no desire to add new frills to the curriculum. They are actuated merely by a desire to be helpful in illustrating whatever curriculum is adopted by the school.”92
Government Involvement in Museums during the Great Depression

Another reason museums and museum education departments grew during this period was because they received a big boost from the government. Local, state, and federal governments began to look in earnest at museums as public institutions and provide funding and protective legislation for them. The trend of government involvement really culminated in this period during the Great Depression. By the mid-1930s Americans were in the midst of an economic depression unlike any previous one. Millions were out of work, dust storms were creating havoc for Midwestern farmers, and for the first time in a long time the future looked bleak. It was not until Franklin Roosevelt was inaugurated in March of 1933 and he began pushing his reform programs through Congress that Americans began to hope again. These New Deal programs helped revive the economy and industries, including museums, were able to flourish again. Two government documents in the 1930s highlighted the new role of the federal government in public museums. The first was the executive order signed by Franklin Roosevelt in 1933 that transferred all historic sites under federal jurisdiction to the National Park Service. The second was the Historic Sites Act of 1935, which gave “authority to the National Park Service for the study, ownership, and management of historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance.” These actions illustrated that the federal government was finally realizing the significance of preserving the nation’s heritage. It also signaled a shift toward making museums more of an instrument of the people. In 1941, Robert Moses, the New York City Park Commissioner, explained this idea when he said,

Along with this realization of their financial dependence on the city treasury has come the understanding that the museums must be made to mean more to the public, that they cannot represent merely the taste of the founders and their successors, that the exhibits must be fresh and continually present something new, arresting and significant in our own time. Museums finally recognized that their success was tied directly to the public and catering to the average citizen instead of the wealthy or intellectually elite was not in and of itself a bad thing.
In addition, to the executive order and the Historic Sites Act, the Roosevelt administration gave money and resources to museums through New Deal programs. The first program to do so was the Civilian Works Administration, which provided funding for museums to carry out projects such as cataloguing materials and creating new exhibits. Another was the Public Works Administration created during the New Deal, which constructed many new museum buildings including the Wichita Art Museum. Other programs such as the Works Progress Administration helped the growth and development of museums through more indirect ways. The WPA provided funds for artists to create works of art, which encouraged interest in art and led to a new source of collections for many art museums. The WPA also had authors writing travel books about all the states, which often highlighted noteworthy museums. This government assistance, along with the growth of museums and tourism, created museums that were unique and needed a new mission more focused on visitors than on the museum’s collection.

Decrease in the Importance of Collecting and Research

The final big trend that emerged throughout this period in American museums was a decrease in the importance of acquiring collections. This decrease does not mean, however, that museums were not looking for rare and valuable objects to supplement their collection, but instead it meant that collecting stopped being the museum’s all-consuming goal. The shift away from collecting may be attributable to the fact that many of the top museums in the United States had already established an impressive collection that had given them the legitimacy they previously felt they lacked. This shift was also connected to the professionalization of the museum industry and its commitment to new goals for itself, such as museum education, that could be achieved through the objects that the museum already had. In addition many museums
were becoming public institutions with public funding and that meant, “the expenditure of public funds is justified only by making the institutions of practical benefit to the general public for recreation and instruction.”

Many local and state governments and tax-paying citizens did not want their money to go to areas of the museums where they could not see it at work.

Another component of this trend was a move away from the importance of scholarly research in museums. The decrease of scholarly research done in museums was due in large part because of the rise of universities and their emergence as the sole proprietors of higher learning and the main institutions of academia. This trend signaled a shift away from museums as a place for scholarly research and left museums with little choice but to take a different direction. Most museum professionals, such as John Cotton Dana, embraced the opportunity to explore new opportunities for museums. Again this trend goes back to museums becoming public institutions and what that meant for museums. One museum professional described the public museum in this manner:

The idea was simple enough. It was to assemble collections of many different kinds and interpret them to the general public for the furtherance of its education, for its enlightenment, and for its recreation. In declaring these collections to be public in the sense of being publicly owned, however, it was no longer being said that this was someone else’s collection that you, the visitor, could look at. Rather, it was being said that this was your collection and therefore it should be meaningful to you the visitor.

Museums finally understood the importance of making the museums meaningful to every visitor. This notion, along with educational trends occurring in the classroom, opened up the door for the education of children in museums to take a much bigger role then it ever had before.

Progressive Education

Education had been a rather stagnant institution and the rote methods employed in the United States had not changed much throughout the nineteenth century. This all changed, however, with the Progressive Movement in education, which started in the 1910s but was an
important part of education up until the 1940s. The progressive educators challenged old ideas about education, stressed individual growth and development, championed the idea of learning through experiences and further emphasized the school’s role in democracy and helping institute social change. The most notable proponent of progressive education and the man who ultimately became the symbol for the movement was John Dewey. Dewey challenged existing ideas and argued that, “Progressive schools set store by individuality,” – a radical concept in education and one that would forever alter American schools while at the same time and rather unknowingly allowed museum education to become a more dynamic part of museums.\textsuperscript{103}

Many of the ideas associated with progressive education grew out of its supporters revolting against the current methods of learning in classrooms. Before the emergence of progressive education, the majority of schools adopted the belief that memorization and recitation were the only valuable ways of learning and that strict discipline in the classroom was necessary in order to ensure that students were getting the most out of their educational opportunities. These beliefs forced teachers to “follow the same groove day after day as though initiative were of no value and originality were a crime,” and often served to stiffly the creativity of the students.\textsuperscript{104} Progressives began questioning these methods by asserting, “The pupils learn symbols without having back of them meaningful experiences. They learn glibly to recite definitions from the textbook without having the slightest notion of their real meaning. Education becomes formal and dead.”\textsuperscript{105} This type of education produced surface learning and created an environment where in-depth analysis was not encouraged. To some, this style of learning was reflective of the mechanization that was going on in the United States’ increasingly industrial society and many began to ask the question, “Did Americans want their children to grow and develop intellectually in this environment and if not what was the alternative?”
The alternative that emerged for some reformers was an educational system that paid particular attention to children’s individual growth and development. People began believing education could be more than facts and memorization, but instead it could be an active endeavor. Supporters of this idea believed:

The creative impulse is within the child himself. No educational discovery of our generation has had such far-reaching implications. It has a twofold significance: first, that every child is born with the power to create; second, that the task of the school is to surround the child with an environment which will draw out his creative power.\textsuperscript{106}

In order to draw out the creative power of students, schools began adopting new philosophies that were centered more on the child. For example, many progressive schools began creating programs known as “centers of interest” where students where encouraged to focus on subjects that were of particular interest to them.\textsuperscript{107} This technique made learning a personal experience and provided students with the opportunity to explore their own creative outlets. In addition, to these new program some progressives also advocated a new type of classroom, where the rigid desks lined in neat rows was replaced with a more informal room filled with tables and comfortable chairs.\textsuperscript{108} Supporters of these new classrooms believed an informal space provided an environment free from restraint and more conducive to creativity and free learning.\textsuperscript{109} Museums benefited from the popularity of the idea of informal learning environments because in many museums education took place in a very informal setting either in the galleries or in rooms set aside for education.

The component of progressive education that had the most direct effect on museum education was the idea of learning by doing. For these progressives, experiences were the best teachers. Progressive educators emphasized:

the active participation of the mind in learning, and recognition and that the process of learning is not a simple addition of items into some sort of mental data bank but a transformation of schemas in which the learner plays an active role and which involves making sense out of a range of phenomena presented to the mind.\textsuperscript{110}
By attaching meaning to experience these progressive educators were emphasizing the idea that education springs from every activity a child participates in and that all these activities add up to serve as the intellectual basis for a child. This idea was important because it made education responsive to the needs of children, something that early educational models had not sought to do. It also placed an emphasis on object learning and group activities. Object learning allowed students to become more aware of the subject they were learning and served to make the classroom a place where learning was translated from “logically organized experience into vital personal experience.”

Group activities were also used and not only taught children about the subject at hand, but also provided them with opportunities to learn how to conduct themselves in social situations. This was an important aspect of progressive education because it was essential for children to learn how to behave in group settings since much of modern society was organized in this way.

Increased Emphasis on Education in Museums

With the focus of museums shifting away from collecting and the rise of progressive education stressing new ways of learning, museums professionals, such as John Cotton Dana, began lobbying for a new type of museum where education would play a prominent role. Dana argued:

The coming museum, being entitled to the ancient name by virtue of its activities, will ultimately be called The Museum, though it will be for a time quite properly conceived of by many as an Institution of Visual Instruction. Museums of the old kind, we contend, are truly not museums at all. They are “collections” of variable extent and cost, and of slight definite utility. They will become each year a little less considered, less esteemed, and less used; or they will, as is the case with some of them already, transform themselves slowly into living organisms, with an abundance of teachers, with ample workshops, classrooms, and spaces for handling the outgoing and incoming of objects which they lend.
Ideas, such as what Dana advocated quickly took hold in the museum community and throughout this second period museums struggled to institute vibrant education programs and it paid off. By 1960, seventy-nine percent of museums reportedly offered some kind of organized educational program – up from fifteen percent in 1932. That was a tremendous gain and caused one contemporary museum professional to note, “the introduction of the educational function into museums is the keynote of the phenomenal development in the past quarter century.”

The emergence of a more active educational program in museums was a watershed moment for public museums in the United States. It enabled museums to expand their reach and it allowed education in museums to emphasize the importance of real materials, new technology, the role of museum educators, and to create a better relationship with schools then it had in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

One reason that education in museums was able to take a more prominent role in this period was because museums educators, inspired by education theorist, such as John Dewey and William Heard Kilpatrick, began using objects as tools in education. Museums were ready made for this time of learning and it led to the idea of “visual learning” becoming an important part of the museum educator’s way of thinking during this period. Museum professionals began publicizing the benefits of learning by seeing and examining objects. One such person was T.R. Adam, who wrote numerous books in the 1930s about museums, he believed, “The power to synthesize basic facts into a dramatic unity is perhaps the strongest feature of the visual method.”

This idea lent itself to museums that had the resources through their collections to facilitate this kind of learning and allowed museums to have a unique place in education that neither schools nor other educational institutions could fulfill.
Museums, such as the American Museum of Natural History, took advantage of the idea of visual learning by offering opportunities for students to examine certain objects that were used solely for education. Students were able to touch, see, and handle objects that they would not normally be allowed to examine. This method proved effective because it enhanced “the children’s consciousness of their experience and their faculties for purposeful thought and action.” These opportunities also allowed students to become active participants in their education; in essence it enabled the student to be a scholar and learn by making their own conclusions. The revelation that students benefited from this type of learning helped legitimize museum education and museum professionals began lobbying to have rooms set aside for school groups and for the creation of a separate educational collection for these types of programs. It also served as a catalyst for the development of other museum education programs.

After the success of object based learning in museums, museum education professionals looked for other ways that they could present the museum’s unique information to children. One such way was through give-and-take discussions. This development emerged from the belief:

It is only by participation in informal discussion that one can expect the most favorable reaction to take place. Much good can come from mere exposure, but if it is possible to draw a person into a verbal give and take, the psychological effect of having a part in the proceedings will make him feel much more at ease and also will arouse interest to a degree not to be accomplished in any other manner.

The idea was the advancement of the gallery talks that were the most prevalent forms of education in early museums. Unlike the gallery talks where a museums’ staff member or volunteer relayed facts to the visitors in a one-sided lecture; the discussion allowed a break down in the formality between the speaker and the audience. It provided an opportunity for
the visitors to input their own ideas and experiences into their learning at the museum. Museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, experimented with this type of museum education during this period and discovered, “the public like to have a chance to air their own ideas.”

The learning-by-doing method was another museum education development that emerged out of the notion that objects affect people’s lives and that interaction is key to education in museums. This method was most easily instituted in the new living history and outdoor museums, such as the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, but it also gained recognition through the entire museum community. This technique allowed the children to experience the objects and the exhibit through direct interaction with them. For example, a historical museum at Tioga Point in Athens, Pennsylvania created a colonial room in their museum where students were allowed to see and participate in some of the daily activities of colonial life. This educational program was well received by the students and the education staff at the museum discovered, “the children were so dead earnest about the play, so full of keen questions, that it was almost as if they had been really living a page of pioneer history. They will remember the real “play” day at the museum after many a hard-conned history lesson is forgotten.” This example illustrates the dramatic effect participation and personal experience can have on education and shows the unique opportunities that museums were beginning by the end of the 1930s to offer in education for children.

Museums & Education in the 1940s and 1950s

When the United States plunged into world events, namely WWII and the start of the Cold War, an atmosphere emerged in the country that re-instilled long established values about American society. For museums of the United States during the 1940s this meant highlighting
American democratic beliefs even more than they had done in the past. For example during World War II the Association of Art Museum Directors proclaimed:

If, in time of peace, our museums and art galleries are important to the community, in time of war they are doubly valuable. For then, when the petty and the trivial falls away and we are face to face with final and lasting values, we as Americans must summon to our defense all our intellectual and spiritual resources. We must guard jealously all we have inherited from a long past, all we are capable of creating in a trying present, and all we are determined to preserve in an unseeable future.124

To the museums represented by this statement, it was their duty as public institutions to depict “traditional” American culture and history while de-emphasizing new or unconventional ideas.1 This mindset can be seen most easily during World War II as museums along with the rest of the nation sought to help the war effort in any way possible. For museums this meant serving as sources of inspiration and energizing the American spirit in its visitors. For example, the Rochester Museum of Art and Science did exhibits on different aspects of the war effort, while the Toledo Museum of Art offered exhibitions highlighting the art of America’s allies.125 For other war-time museums, helping the war effort meant making larger sacrifices even to the point of closing their doors, which was what three museums in San Diego did so that their buildings could be used for Navy hospitals.126

In the 1950s, the nationalism that had characterized museums in the 1940s was still there, but other factors had emerged that had a profound and some might argue detrimental impact on American museums. The United States of the 1950s was a place where conformity was prized and where the threat of nuclear war and Communist takeovers around the world seemed like a realistic notion. Because of these realities, the 1950s was not a period of innovation in museums instead most museum sought to depict traditional views, avoid controversy, and “export democratic values.”127 For museums that were now beholden to the public this was a survival method and when museums who tried to break away from this uniformity to display divisive
exhibits were subsequently challenged a lot of museums concluded “that it was better to support the status quo than to challenge it, wiser to mount safe exhibits than ones that might spark controversy.”

Patriotism was also visible in American school systems during the 1940s and 1950s. During World War II schools like all other institutions were expected to advance the war effort and FDR asked the schools to:

First, he wanted teachers to mold men and women who would fight through to victory. Second, he asked that every schoolhouse become a service center for the home front. And finally, he hoped that young people would acquire the wisdom and the patience to bring about a lasting peace.

Most schools reacted enthusiastically to Roosevelt’s suggestions. For example, students in elementary schools held drives to buy War Stamps and high schools began offering programs aimed specifically to train student for work in war-plant production. After World War II in the Cold War dominated 1950s, progressive education lost some of its popularity and schools once again focused more on traditional methods of teaching. After the launch of Sputnik by the Russians, legislation such as the National Defense Education Act, called for more study in science, math, and foreign language so that the United States could compete with the Soviet Union in the space and arms races. The legislation focus on these core subjects took the focus in schools away from non-traditional modes of learning and instead highlighted the increased importance Americans put in the school system’s ability to further national needs. This legislation was revolutionary because throughout the history of education in the United States, the federal government had a minor role in school systems, instead leaving most educational decisions to states and local governments. The increased federal involvement in schools that this legislation established created a precedence that would be expanded in the coming decades to serve a more egalitarian purpose.
Along with societal influences, museum education during the 1940s and 1950s also was affected by advancements in technology. In the early period of museum education, most museums had to rely solely on lectures or illustrations as the means of relaying educational information. As technology expanded, however, museums began taking advantage of these advancements. Radio, for example, became a part of museum education programs as some museums created radio programs that were broadcast into school classrooms.Radio programs were beneficial to the museum in two ways. First, it allowed school children that were taking a field trip to the museum a chance to get acquainted with some of the information they would be receiving on their tour of the museum. Second, it gave school groups that could not go to the museum an opportunity to still receive some of the educational benefits that a museum offered. The use of radio also extended into the museum where staffs began experimenting with individual listening devices that could be used throughout the museum. These sorts of device were used in lieu of a staff led tour and provided information to students that could not be obtained through exploring the exhibits on their own.

Another new technology that was having an impact on museums was television. In the 1950s, television had become an important part of American culture, but many museums were hesitant to adopt this new form of technology, mainly because they were unsure of how to best utilize it. Other museums were tentatively experimenting with the new medium, however, and finding that, even more than radio, television could be an outlet for reaching people who normally did not have the access or the inclination to take advantage of museum education. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City experimented with television as early as 1941 broadcasting a program entitled “The Arts in America” on CBS. It would not be until later in the history of education in museums, however, that television began to be fully utilized by a lot of museums as an educational tool.


Chapter Summary

Between 1870 and 1910, museums struggled to conform to the ideas of what a museum should be, which were created by their European counterparts. This struggle led to museum founders in the United States trying to create museums that were reminiscent of the palace museums of Europe that were filled with valuables collected over hundreds of years and that were supposed to be admired with reverence and from a distance. By 1910, however, public museums in the United States were finally realizing that they could and should be something different, something uniquely American. Francis Henry Taylor articulated this idea when he wrote, “The American museum is, after all, not an abandoned European palace, a solution for storing and classifying the accumulated national wealth of the past, but an American phenomenon, developed by the people, for the people, of the people.”

In order to create uniquely American museums change had to occur. The first adjustment that occurred was that the museum industry in the United States grew in several significant ways. First, it grew in sheer numbers with more museums being established in communities all over the United States and more people going to those museums. This growth allowed for the creation of new types of museums, such as the living history museums, and created opportunities for museums to expand their reach, including appealing to children. Second, museums grew through an increase in government involvement both through legislation and additional government funding. An enlarged government presence, especially a financial presence, enabled museums to become more responsive to the needs and the atmosphere of the general public; which is illustrated in the increased patriotism and conformity that occurred in museums in the 1940s and 1950s. Another transformation that occurred in museums during this period was the rise of the profession of museum work,
which led to increased specialization and was directly responsible for the creation of education departments in museums in the United States. The creation of education departments was important because it enabled education to take a more active role in the museum and brought about more efficient museum services. The final change during this period was the move away from collecting and research as the most important functions of a museum. The shift from collecting and research made it possible for the museum to focus more on the visitor-centered objectives of the museum.

These changes coupled with the rise of progressive education enabled education for children to take a more prominent role in museums. The rise of progressive education was important to museums because it revolted against academic formalism and advocated, “The notion that each individual has uniquely creative potentialities, and that a school in, which children are encouraged freely to develop these potentials is the best guarantee of a larger society truly devoted to human worth and excellence.” Supporters of progressive education, such as John Dewey, championed originality, individuality, the socialization aspect of schools, and learning-by-doing, which were all part of the new ideas about museum education that emerged during this period. The new museum education professionals stressed that the museum was the logical place for object-based and active learning. Museum staff highlighted this idea by creating new educational programs in museums that incorporated new technologies and involved participation by the students. Staff in museums also cultivated better relationships with schools to ensure that first, the schools were aware of the educational programs that existed in the museum and second, that the museum was creating educational programs congruent with the learning that was taking place in the schools.
John Cotton Dana wrote, “To make itself a live, a museum must do two things: It must teach and it must advertise.”\cite{138} During the second period in the history of public museums in the United States museums finally came to realize this fact, especially when it came to teaching. Museum professionals recognized that they needed to transform museums from stagnant institutions that were overwhelming to the common visitor to active places where communities could gather to be entertained and more importantly to learn. At last, museums were becoming public institutions and this development served museums well and would continue to throughout the next decades.
CHAPTER IV
HANDS-ON: CHANGES IN EDUCATION AND MUSEUMS FROM 1960 – 1990

“Museums are coming to life as vital institutions with a story to tell, a service to perform.”
Robert Dierbeck (1958)

When the French poet, Edmond de Goncourt died in 1896, he made arrangements for his art collection to be sold at public auction with one stipulation: “It is my will that the objects of art which have contributed to my happiness should not be buried in the cold grave of a museum.”\(139\) This statement highlights the state of museums in the late nineteenth century, and puts in perspective the tremendous growth that occurred in museums in the first fifty years of the twentieth century. By the 1960s, the museum had transformed from a “cold grave” to a “vital institution,” with education departments, new exhibit ideas, and often a new mission that was much more focused on education. But even with all these changes, there was still more progress to make. Museums made this progress in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s through expanding their reach and creating new opportunities for learning in museums.

During this period in the history of public museums in the United States, many changes occurred in society as well. By the 1960s, the United States had emerged out of the conformity-driven 1950s into a new cultural era. Groups, such as African Americans and women, sought to claim the civil rights they had long been denied. As the Vietnam War continued to escalate, increasing numbers of Americans began to question U.S. foreign policy and faith in the ideals of American society wavered. The civil rights revolution and disillusionment with American society encouraged some Americans to work towards change – changes that included making art and culture available in the United States that highlighted all aspects and groups of American society. Since the inception of the United States, a few groups, namely the white and wealthy,
have dictated its culture, and the story and the art of other groups were largely ignored. When minority groups, however, began claiming their civil rights they also fought for larger recognition in American culture. For example, universities around the country established women’s studies and African American studies departments. The desire of the minorities’ rights revolutions was to create an American society that was accepting of all groups and their culture and to ensure that equality for all was a reality in the United States.

In order to secure equality one institution that needed to be changed was the American school system. For too long, minorities in the United States were not given the same education opportunities as whites but that began to change in the 1950s. In *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* (1954), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that “separate but equal” was unconstitutional. This case was part of the beginning of the African American civil rights movement and signaled to the nation that in order to be a truly equal society, the United States needed equality in education. This case and the subsequent struggle for equality in all areas of American life were the catalyst for what was the biggest trend in the educational system during this period – more federal government legislation and involvement in the school system to ensure that everyone was receiving an adequate education regardless of race, physical or mental capacity, or gender. This educational movement was similar to changes taking place in museums, especially in their education departments.

Museums during this period were not immune to the desire to make society more inclusive, and museum professionals sought to make museums more receptive to the American public by implementing three major changes. First, they attempted to broaden their appeal to reach groups that previously had little contact with the museum. Second, they sought more government involvement and oversaw the emergence of the field of museum research. This
change enabled museums to be better funded. It also made it possible for museum professionals to have a better understanding of why people visit museums and what they could improve to ensure that people got the most out of their visit. Third, museums created blockbuster exhibits that were grand spectacles to satisfy an American public that by the 1980s was living in a fast-paced world where people’s attention span remained short.

Immersed in all these changes was education in the museum, which through interactive-learning sought to create an educational environment in museums that was innovative, and encouraged all visitors to actively seek out their own personal learning in the museum. Museum professionals embraced the idea, “the museum’s task is to arrange things so that selective attending to, interacting with, and learning from, exhibits is distinctively more rewarding than not doing so.” These professionals created this interactive-learning space through the use of technologies, such as television and personal audio recorders, in museums and creating exhibits that were not stagnant but object-oriented and hands-on, which encouraged people to stay curious about what they were seeing. All of these developments enabled the field trip to the museum to be a more successful learning experience for all school-aged children.

Museums Broaden their Appeal

In the struggle for equality in the 1960, many ethnic groups demanded their story and the stories of their ancestors be given its fair place in the United States, including in the museum. The most striking example of the pressure put on museums to change their behavior occurred in 1970, when a group called the New York Art Strike and Art Workers’ Coalition, protested the American Association of Museums annual meeting in New York City. This group claimed, “the mission of mainstream museums…was thought to be a manifestation of the social agenda of the dominant culture,” and demanded that museums confront, “the most pressing social issues of the
day.”142 This example highlights the alienation that some American groups felt when looking at museum exhibits, which they felt were under “the control of the few, the wealthy, and the Establishment.”143 In the 1960s, a wider audience than ever was going to museums, for example, in 1958 Chicago’s Field Museum reported 1,049,000 visitors for the year; in 1966 that number had rose to 1,787,000 and they were demanding that their story and issues be shown at museums.144 These demands were not lost on museum professionals and it was during this time that many museums expanded their focus in an attempt to broaden their appeal.

Some large cities tried to accommodate their wider audience through exhibitions that highlighted certain minority groups or through the development of neighborhood museums.145 These museums were often branches of the larger museums of the city and tended to highlight information that was of particular interest to the dominant culture of that neighborhood. One example of this was the Anacostia Museum in Washington, D.C. This museum, located in a predominately black neighborhood, was a branch of the Smithsonian Museum and sought to provide, “its constituents with an array of exhibits, classes, workshops, and performances related to African-American heritage and contemporary social issues.”146 The Anacostia Museum and others like it were as much a community center as they were a traditional museum. Robert W. Ott, an art museum professional, called these types of museums, “museums without walls,” because these museums were a place where communities came together for recreation, education, and fellowship and were used as centers to teach people about community issues.147 The growth of these community-center museums coincided with an increased desire by citizens to be more involved in their community and to work to end some of the problems, such as racial discrimination, that had plagued many communities in the United States for decades.
In addition to the neighborhood museums and the transformation of museums into community centers, museums also expanded through the creation of science centers. These science centers were part of a wider trend in the United States of placing a higher value than previously given on science education. The increased emphasis on science was due in large part to the Cold War and the United States’ desire to maintain their pre-eminence on the world stage; particularly in the case of technology. These centers were designed to foster scientific reasoning while simultaneously making the experience of learning science more interactive and fun. Don Beardsley, education supervisor at the museum of Science and Industry during the 1970s, described science centers like this:

Learning science principles in a museum environment can actually be enjoyable, especially at museums of science and technology. Many of these institutions are not “museums” in the traditional sense of the word. They are places alive with multimedia, three dimensional, exhibits concerned with the basic and applied sciences. Learning is accomplished by the participation of the observer – pressing buttons, turning cranks, manipulating levers or even part of the exhibit itself, watching video displays, or listening on telephones. The learning process involves a dynamic approach rather than the static one associated with museums that display artifacts and materials behind glass.

Science centers more than any other type of museum quickly recognized the value of interactive learning in part because research, such as the Science Curriculum Improvement Study, showed, “experimental science programs are better than traditional book-oriented programs at fostering scientific reasoning and logical thinking.” For children, the science centers, along with children’s museums that also proliferated during this period, served as an introduction to the museum in a way that made museums more accessible to them. Most children felt more at ease in the halls of the science centers filled with gadgets and buttons than in a traditional museum, which are often permeated with a hands-off atmosphere. For both children and their teachers the opportunity to experience science was a huge pull and by 1980 the Association of Science and Technology Centers reported that school groups made up more than twenty-five percent of the
total attendance at science center, which made them the largest single group using science centers.\textsuperscript{151} The success of science centers had a dramatic effect on education in other types of “traditional” museums, such as art and history museums, and many of these museums began using techniques such as interactive learning, developing hands-on exhibits, and encouraging visitors to use the exhibitions to come up with their own answers as a tool to strengthen their educational programs.

The second trend in museums during the mid to late twentieth century was increased government involvement. This trend is exemplified by an increased desire to make museum professionals more accountable, and the emergence of oversight research in the museum to ensure that museums were living up to their missions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, government involvement in museum, especially financially, began in the 1930s, but the involvement and the funding remained meager. The first clue that more governmental involvement in museum might occur happened in 1967, when President Lyndon Johnson asked the Federal Council on the Arts and Humanities to issue a study on the status of American museums. In this study, known as \textit{The Belmont Report}, a special committee of the American Association of Museums made the case for more federal support of museums, most importantly through funding.\textsuperscript{152} The committee asserted that the federal government has a duty to support museums in the United States because:

(1) Museums contribute educational and cultural services to the nation which no other institutions either do or can.
(2) The service provided by a number of museums is nationwide, but the funds which make this possible are disproportionately local.
(3) Though museums cooperate with Federal agencies in furthering Federal programs – anti-poverty programs, for example – they do not receive appropriate Federal reimbursement for this service.
(4) Museums regularly make their resource available to schools, colleges, universities and individual scholars for research financed by the Federal Government. No Federal
support is available, however, to help museums meet the costs incidental to such services.

(5) The collections, facilities and staffs of museums produce research of unquestioned value to the nation. Increased Federal support for this research is in the national interest.

(6) Taken as a whole, the works of art, historic objects and scientific specimens in America’s museums constitute a treasure of incalculable value to the people of the United States and to their posterity. The Federal Government has a responsibility to assist in preserving, maintaining and wisely utilizing this treasure on behalf of all the American people. Once lost, the treasure can never be replaced.153

These arguments convinced the federal government that museums needed more federal funding and throughout the 1970s, the government responded by developing grant categories through organizations, such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute for Museum Services, that met museum needs.154 These grants gave museums that received them the opportunity to develop new programs and alleviate some of the financial worries associated with most all museums. In addition to these grant opportunities, the federal government also took steps through legislation, such as the 1970 Environmental Quality Education Act, to define museums as educational. This act was the first to include the museum in the government’s definition of an educational institution, and gave federal funds to institutions, including museums that presented information to the public about preserving the environment.155 Defining museums as educational institutions was very important as it enabled museums to be eligible for more federal funding and encouraged museum professionals to continue to expand the museum’s educational role.

Throughout this period, museum workers also continued creating a profession out of what had previously been a mix of disciplines. These museum workers shaped a new profession by creating a structure that held museums accountable to a set of standards. The most visible structure that emerged out of this desire for accountability was the accreditation
process, instituted by the American Association of Museums in 1971. Accreditation allowed museum professionals to monitor each other and ensured that accredited museums had a clear mission and conformed to standard museum practices as set forth by the American Association of Museums.

Besides accreditation, the profession also benefited from increases in education opportunities for those that wanted to pursue a career in the museum profession. By the 1970s, public history was emerging as a discipline separate from traditional history as students of public history focused on ways to better communicate history to the public, including in the museum setting. By 1980, museum studies programs were also expanding and becoming specialized. For example, universities such as Pennsylvania State, George Washington, and North Texas State were offering graduate programs specifically in museum education. In addition in 1978, the J. Paul Getty Trust created its Museum Management Institution, a four-week summer institute that taught museum leaders about the management of museums and how to confront some of the unique problems associated with museum management. These new educational opportunities provided the museum professional with chances to expand their knowledge of museums and in the process to make museums better.

One of the most important trends to emerge during this period, however, was the development of museum research. While museum professionals, such as Grace Fisher Ramsey, began to study museums in the first half of the twentieth century; it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that museum professionals began in earnest to develop these studies and use them to make their institutions better. Studies emerged during this period, in part, because of the increased public nature of museums and because of the past, “failure of the museum to prove that it is indeed communicating knowledge,” which, “cast doubt on its usefulness to society.” These
studies, which focused mainly on visitors’ response to the museum, enabled museum professionals to better serve the needs of the museum visitors. Through this research museum professionals developed concrete goals for exhibits and changed exhibitions or programs that were not meeting these goals. One of the most recognized museum researchers of this period was C.G. Screven. Screven did research at the Milwaukee Public Museum to find out what educational techniques worked best in the museum. Screven found that students responded well and were more likely to retain knowledge from exhibits with which they could interact. He, therefore, concluded that in order for museums to be effective educational institutions they needed to be “a responsive learning environment designed around specified, testable educational goals.” Other, researchers, such as Eve C. Van Rennes, came to the same conclusions – that interactive experiences in the museum were the most conducive to long-term learning from the museum – when they conducted similar studies about education in museums.

Along with studying the educational effectiveness of museums, general visitor studies were also popular in museums during this time. One of these studies was conducted at the Toledo Museum of Art in 1980 and 1981. Instead of looking at why people visit a museum, this study examined the reasons why people do not go to museums. It looked at some of the underlying factors people use when choosing how to spend their free time and then examined how those factors determined whether people went to museums or not. What the researchers found was that people who are occasional museum visitors or those who never visit a museum value social interaction, active participation, and familiarity with their surroundings when picking a leisure activity. People who are frequent visitors to the museum value the opportunity to learn, having a challenge, and doing something worthwhile. The existence of this study highlighted the fact that museum professionals realized that to compete with other leisure activities, museums had to cater more to the general public.
During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, museums in the United States had to compete with more and increasingly diverse leisure activities. The average American had more options then ever before in ways to spend their free time. During the 1960s, the suburbs in the United States grew and brought new forms of entertainment. For example, leisure activities were often centered in the house with pools, backyard barbecues, and television replacing an outing to the center of the city to visit the museum.\textsuperscript{164} These forms of entertainment were hard to ignore and museums needed to do something to appeal to Americans that were unimpressed with the value of museums as a leisure activity. It was because of competition from new forms of entertainment that many museums tried different ways to keep people coming through their doors. One such way was to have temporary exhibits throughout the year. For example, the Addison Gallery of Art in Andover, Massachusetts with its connection to a boarding school in the area identified seasonal audiences, such as alumni and family who were coming to the area in late spring to celebrate graduation, and tried to accommodate their interest through various exhibitions.\textsuperscript{165}

Another way to appeal to new visitors was through visiting exhibitions. Visiting exhibitions were not a novel idea in the history of museums in the United States, but during this period they emerged as a new and unique part of museums.\textsuperscript{166} The traveling exhibits of this period, however, tended to be huge eye-catching extravagances that were heavily publicized and often highlighted a topic that fascinated people, such as the treasure of King Tutankhamen’s tomb. These exhibits are worthwhile for museums for a number of reasons; the most obvious being that they attract a lot of visitors, including school groups, and garner a lot of publicity for the museum. For example, the 1978 exhibition entitled, “Treasures of Tutankhamen” drew over 1,250,000 visitors to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which still ranks as the highest
attendance the museum has ever had for one exhibition.167 In part because of the higher attendance, blockbuster exhibitions also have the added bonus of attracting larger profits. Often museums raise their admission price or charge admission for the first time for these exhibits. In addition, sales from merchandise also go up during these exhibitions. For example, in 1979 out of the $4.5 million that the Metropolitan Museum of Art took in for admission, $2.8 million was attributed to the same “Treasures of Tutankhamen” exhibit that had increased the number of visitors at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.168 The larger profits that these exhibitions generate can potentially enable museums to upgrade their permanent features, including their education departments. Even with all these benefits, some museum professionals were less than thrilled with the creation of these blockbuster exhibits. For one thing, blockbusters are expensive so, “only a small number of museums have the resources for a steady diet of big loan exhibitions.”169 This reality leaves smaller museums with less money in a difficult position to compete. Some museum professionals also felt like these exhibits were taking money and museum staff away from the care and preservation of their own collections, and that marketing and attendance goals were replacing historical value or educational importance as the main factor in exhibitions in museums.170 Proponents of these blockbuster exhibits countered this argument by saying that these exhibits generate attention and attendance that typically would not occur, with the possible longer-term benefit of creating more regular museum-goers and attracting new donors.171 For museum educators, blockbuster exhibits have both positives and negatives. These exhibitions typically bring in more school groups, which means that more children are being exposed to the museums and might make teachers more eager to bring their classes back to the museum for other traveling exhibitions or to view the permanent collection. Blockbuster exhibitions also allow museum educators the opportunity to create programs or administer
programs that normally they would not get it do, which helps them expand their creativity. The negative of blockbuster exhibitions for museum educators is that these exhibitions can be so time consuming for the entire staff that the development and execution of the permanent education programs in the museum might suffer. In the end, regardless of the positives and negatives associated with blockbuster exhibitions there is no doubt that they raised the profile and the profits of many museums and helped museums carve a new niche in a world of increasing leisure-time activities.

Creativity in Education in Museums

By the 1960s, most museums had realized that just claiming that education was a component of their mission was not enough, and they began to actively establish education goals. In fact, in 1969 The Belmont Report stated that over ninety percent of all museums offered at least one educational program. The increased focus on education allowed museum educators for the first time to create strong educational programs in their museums. A major component of these programs became differentiating museum learning from the learning that took place in the schools. To differentiate, museum educators adopted techniques unique to the learning that went on in museums and walked a fine line between creating an atmosphere of fun while simultaneously trying to educate children in such a way that the knowledge they acquired at a museum would be long-term. One museum educator described the balance like this, “What appears to the casual observer as just fun and games and a day off from school is fun and games, accompanied by important educational, motivational, and social benefits for children.” Learning in this type of atmosphere is not easily achieved, so museum educators used innovative techniques, such as hands-on exhibitions and new technology, to create an educational and stimulating environment. They also broadened their reach by developing field trips that were more effective and creating programs for disadvantaged and handicapped children.
Ensuring that museums peak people’s curiosity remains one of the most important aspects of museum learning. Curiosity sparks interest and interest sparks learning and because of this fact, museums must ensure that objects are arranged and programs are developed in ways that spark the visitor’s curiosity. Eliciting enough interest so that learning takes place was and is especially difficult in museums where people are free to wander and look at their leisure. In order to combat this natural tendency, museum educators began frequently using hands-on exhibits, a practice that as early as the 1930s had been studied as an effective way to at the least keep visitors at museum exhibits longer.174 As previously discussed, science centers were particularly good at using these types of exhibits, but it did not take long for other types of museums to also recognize the value of hands-on exhibitions.

Hands-on exhibits are effective for a number of reasons. First, people, particularly in a fast-paced world where they are inundated with information, often have problems focusing. This lack of focus can be extremely difficult for museum educators to conquer especially when it comes to children who are naturally prone to look but not see or to touch (often times when they should not) but not understand. Hands-on exhibits allowed students to stop and really examine what they see and interact with the exhibition, which can led to more long-term learning. A study of children who went on a field trip to the Lawrence Hall of Science’s Biolab in Berkeley, California highlighted the long-term learning benefits of hands-on exhibitions at the museum. The study asked students to fill in a blank map of the Biolab two weeks after the initial visit; sixty-six percent of the maps included the interactive exhibits while the static exhibits behind glass were only included in twenty-two percent of the maps. It also found that most students were able to, even after a few weeks, relate the information they had learned at the interactive exhibits to groups of other students.175
The second reason hands-on learning was so effective was that it encouraged visitors to be responsible for their own learning. Using hands-on techniques in exhibits enabled museums to help students, “to understand that they have a right to react to things and situations in their own personal way and that their responses are worthwhile.” Allowing the visitor to be responsible for their own learning was important to education in the museum because as much as museum educators can try to control the learning atmosphere in a museum ultimately it is the visitor who determines what knowledge they retain during a trip to the museum. Hands-on learning situations force students to put the knowledge they get from other aspects of the museum, such as the artifacts and the text, to use quickly and helps further facilitate lasting learning. It was because of this idea that museums during this period began setting up hands-on learning stations where students could research or experiment based on facts acquired from the museum. For example, one exhibit in the Physics Hall at the Cranbrook Institute of Science in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan taught students about images reflected on concave mirrors. The exhibit provided students with information about images seen through a concave mirror and then instructed them to stand in front of the mirror and reach for the image of their hand in it. Once they did, these students were then verbally questioned by either their teacher or museum educators in order to elicit a learning response to the information they had been given and what they had seen in the mirror. In research done about this exhibit, students who experienced the exhibit through this manner were more likely to get all the questions about the exhibit right.

The final reason hands-on learning was effective was that it allowed museum educators to focus visitors on an area that they wanted to emphasize, which led to more concentrated learning. Museums can be difficult learning environments for many of the same reasons that they are such unique learning centers – they are filled with lots of eye-catching exhibitions and
are less structured than most other education centers. Hands-on learning allows the museum educator to use these aspects of the museum to their advantage. For example museums, such as the Milwaukee Public Museum and the Boston Children’s Museum, began employing machines where visitors could through pushing a button answer questions about an exhibits in the museum with the machine letting them know whether they were correct or not. This type of question and answer method enabled museum educators to accentuate certain aspects of an exhibition and guided visitors to look and examine those highlighted facts.

These new hands-on exhibits flourished in large part because of the increased use of technology in museums. In particular audio technology, television, and computers all had tremendous effects on learning in the museum. The first technological advancement that was used with frequency in the museum was audio technology. Museum professionals began placing audio devices throughout exhibitions with the devices starting when visitors pushed a button or walked past a sensor. This technique was part of the desire of museums to make exhibitions less static and to communicate the museum’s message through different techniques. Audio technology was also utilized through the increased use of personal listening devices. Personal audio devices were used and studied at the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian Institution with significant results. Both adults and older children received audio devices that guided them to different exhibition elements in the Gallery, pointed out important information, and asked questions and provided feedback and encouragement following the questions. Experts then questioned visitors and found that when tested about the exhibits they had seen, those that used the audio tour were able to answer seventy-six percent of questions correctly compared to only twenty-seven percent for those that had not used the audio tours. This study also found that visitors liked using the audio tours more than
booklets, because audio tours produced more effective learning than just labels. Finally the study found that ninety-three percent of visitors said they would use the audio tours again.\textsuperscript{180}

Audiovisual technology also gained a foothold in museums during this period. Some museum professionals quickly realized the enormous impact that this medium could have on the learning that takes place in a museum. As one museum professional argued,

\begin{quote}
I believe the museum’s role in education can be better served by lectures, kinescopes, and films than by passive exhibits… The implication of this belief…assuming that the museum is attempting to educate its audience, are that a diminished proportion of museum space, effort, and funds should be allocated to conventional exhibits, and a greater proportion to the means by which the museum’s message is communicated – the spoken word and the moving image.\textsuperscript{181}
\end{quote}

This sentiment was shared by other museum professionals who prompted the American Association of Museums to suggest in \textit{The Belmont Report} that the government allocate one million dollars for experimentation of mass media techniques in museums.\textsuperscript{182} The increase in the appeal of these systems was in part because of the development of new technology, such as video cassette recording, that enabled museums to use audiovisual components more frequently and more effectively in exhibitions. In addition to the increased use of audiovisual technology in the museum, more museums also began developing programs for television. For museums that used television, such as the American Museum of Natural History, the goals were twofold – first, to entice people to visit the museum and second, by emphasizing an object or exhibition from their museum, workers at the museum hoped to stimulate interest in the subject area.\textsuperscript{183} In relation to these goals was the fact that television enabled the museum to enlarge its visitor reach. For example, in 1956 the Milwaukee Public Museum reached a cumulative television audience of over nineteen million.\textsuperscript{184} Even in 1956, it was obvious that television and audiovisual technology could have an enormous impact on education in museums and as the United States increasingly became more reliant on these mediums of communication so did museums.
Another technological development that had a profound impact on museums was the emergence of the computer. The computer benefited many aspects of the museum from collections management to marketing and it had a significant effect on education in museums. The technology associated with the computer enabled many of the interactive techniques that museums use so frequently today. For example during this period, the Philadelphia Franklin Institute Science Museum created an entire room devoted to teaching science lessons through computer games, such as “Rocket Mail,” that asked students to launch a rocket with the student dictating the angle of the ascent, the amount of fuel required, and factoring in wind velocity and the rocket’s weight. This type of interactive exhibition was not possible before the computer and created another opportunity for students to be responsible for their own learning. Another example of the use of computer in museums was the Brooklyn Museums use of computer simulation in an exhibit commemorating the centennial of the Brooklyn Bridge in 1983. In this exhibit, museum professionals with the help of a computer design firm, developed computer programs using the original drawings from the engineer who designed the bridge that focused on different aspects of the bridge’s construction. Simulation programs such as this one facilitated a greater understanding of the exhibition then mere photographs ever could have. These examples highlight the fact that computers are another way to increase the effectiveness of visual communication in the museum and as computer technology continues to develop and evolve it seems as if the possibilities for the use of computers in museums is limitless.

Education Equality and its Affect on Museums

In 1964, the Economic Report of the President stated, “Equality of opportunity is the American dream, and universal education our noblest pledge to realize it.” This belief was not new in the history of the United States but for the first time the federal government took steps to
ensure that it was being fulfilled. Like museums, schools struggled to become institutions of equality where everyone received an equal chance to succeed. Also like museums, schools received more aid and attention from the federal government than ever before during this period. These two facts, coupled with the general movement in the United States to reorganize society to benefit the previously marginalized, merged during the 1960s and 1970s and enabled the federal government to enact legislation in the hopes of bringing about equality of education. Two examples of this legislation were the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975. Both highlighted the idea that permeated both traditional education and museums during this period – that all children can benefit from learning and should get the opportunity to do so. In addition to this legislation, I will also look at the Education Department’s 1983 report entitled, A Nation at Risk, which signaled the beginning of the focus on accountability and standardization that has characterized the federal government’s policy on education since then. I will discuss this point in greater detail in the next chapter.

When President Lyndon Johnson gave his State of the Union address to Congress in 1964, he said, “Unfortunately, many Americans live on the outskirts of hope--some because of their poverty… Our task is to help replace their despair with opportunity. This administration today, here and now, declares unconditional war on poverty in America.” This clarion call for a War on Poverty was the cornerstone of Johnson’s domestic agenda, known as the Great Society, and helped him enact one of the most comprehensive pieces of legislation on education, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA.) The ESEA had five components to it. Four of the five were relatively unexciting; they provided funding for things such as library resources and textbooks, the establishment of supplementary educational centers, educational
research, and the strengthening of state education departments. The final component and the one that was the most groundbreaking was Title I, which allocated funds to school districts based on a formula linked to the number of families in the district below the poverty line. This component of the ESEA was a direct attempt by the federal government to ensure that all school children were at the very least getting equal educational opportunities. The U.S. Commissioner of Education Francis Keppel described it to members of the House of Representatives by saying, “It gives special and long needed attention to the education of the children of the poor who need the best our schools can give and who usually have received the worst, [and] ... it commits education to end the paralysis that poverty breeds, a paralysis that is chronic and contagious and runs on from generation to generation.” By focusing on poor students the administration hoped to destroy poverty at its base and it seemed to work to an extent. By providing more money to these impoverished school districts a new educational atmosphere with smaller class sizes, more individual help, and more technology emerged and led to significant educational gains, such as better reading and math skills, for disadvantaged students.

The ESEA was a watershed moment in the history of education in the United States because it ushered in a new era of federal government involvement in education. For example, in 1964 the federal share of money spent on elementary and secondary schools in the United States was 4.4%, in 1965 – the year ESEA was passed – that number jumped to 7.9% and by 1980 it would be at 9.8%. This was a dramatic increase and a huge step for a nation, which had traditionally viewed education as being solely the responsibility of local and state government. One scholar stressed the importance of the new role the federal government was assuming in education by writing:

This expansion of federal involvement in education was one of the most striking developments in the history of education in the 1960s. What most distinguished the new
federal role… was the purpose of the new federal programs and the regulatory efforts to ensure they were fulfilled. Whereas earlier federal efforts had focused on issues (such as preparation for the workplace or the improvement of teacher training in science, math, and foreign languages) that did not threaten local interests and required minimal federal regulation, the new federal commitment to equalize opportunity… extended federal involvement much more directly into aspects of educational decision making once considered the exclusive domain of local educators. 195

The ESEA, however, was able to overcome these traditional notions about who should be in charge of education because of its connection to President Johnson’s War on Poverty. In connecting the ESEA to poverty, proponents of the bill were able to claim that inadequate educational opportunities had a federal impact. Stewart McClure, who worked on the bill in Congress, illustrated that idea by arguing, “a child going to a poor school in a poor district should be considered suffering a national impact caused by the failure of the whole society to upgrade his disadvantaged area.” 196

The ESEA was important to museums because, along with broader societal trends, it encouraged museums to work towards embracing equality in their educational programs. For museum educators this meant creating a variety of programs that would appealed to the range of learning styles present in most school classes. Museum educators did this through developing field trip that had many different aspects to them; which they did through incorporating the previously mentioned museum learning tools, such as hands-on exhibits and audio tours. The variety in programs allowed for museums to develop better field trip programs that incorporated a range of theories of learning. 197 Teachers during this period also became more active in informing museums about what they wanted out of their field trips. For example, in the previously mentioned study from the Lawrence Hall of Science’s Biolab, sixty-two percent of the teachers said that they “viewed the science center as an enrichment activity,” while thirty-eight percent of the teachers, “used the field trip as an introduction to a course of study.” 198 This kind of feedback enabled museums to create better field trip education programs geared toward these specific goals.
Another way museum professionals made field trips more effective for a variety of learning styles was through the creation of pre or post-visit activities for the teachers’ use; which have been shown to increase learning from a museum visit. Pre-activities were done in the classroom and often employed “traditional” teaching methods, such as worksheets, books, and lists of vocabulary terms, which made students more comfortable in the museum. The post-visit activity enabled teachers to build upon what their classes learned at the museum often through projects and more hands-on learning techniques. These activities also helped the field trip become more effective in the sense that they imbued field trips with a sense of purpose to them which, “must be shared with the children and understood by them – which it will be if it follows some event, some interest, some job which has arisen in the classroom.” Instilling museum field trips with this sense of purpose and ensuring that programs addressed different learning styles helped museums become more legitimate educational institutions in the eyes of schools and by the 1980s studies, such as the one done at the Smithsonian Institution’s Chesapeake Bay Center, showed that students were able to retain information gathered on a museum field trip for long periods of time. By the close of the 1980s, it was clear that field trips to the museum had moved beyond their characterization as a “break” or a “day off” from learning and were, like the federal government with ESEA, trying to ensure that their educational opportunities were available and beneficial to everyone.

When President Johnson signed the ESEA, he commented, “I believe deeply that no law I have signed or will ever sign means more the future of our nations.” This statement is debatable, but as far as the federal government’s role in education the ESEA was only the beginning. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the federal government worked to create educational legislation that helped previously discriminated against groups, such as Native
Americans and African Americans, receive at the very least the opportunity for a better education. One group that also saw benefits from the federal government’s quest to create equal educational opportunities were the handicapped or students with special needs. Throughout most of American history, these students were deemed as unworthy of education and little consideration was given to them. In fact in 1974, congressional findings reported that 1.75 million students with disabilities did not receive educational services and more than 3 million children with disabilities who did go to school did not receive an education that was suitable to their needs. One educator described the educational climate of this time by saying, “The educational services were almost non-existent at Camarillo State Hospital and Developmental Center…Any type of educational classes that were done before 94-142 were done pretty much by the nursing staff…without really knowing what they were providing.” This all changed, however, in 1975 when Congress passed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act or what is sometimes referred to as PL 94-142. This piece of legislation set out:

To assure that all handicapped children have available to them…a free appropriate public education which emphasizes special education and related services designed to meet their unique needs, to assure that the rights of handicapped children and their parents or guardians are protected, to assist States and localities to provide for the education of all handicapped children and to assess and assure the effectiveness of efforts to educate handicapped children.

PL 94-142 was revolutionary not only because it provided the mechanisms for handicapped students to receive better education but also because it set a precedence of the federal government telling the states what to do when it came to education. Unlike, previous legislation, like the ESEA, which provided funding and let the school district do with it what it pleased, PL 94-142 dictated what the schools had to do to ensure that they were providing “free appropriate public education” for all students with disabilities. This mandate worked and by the year 2000 there were 6.3 million children with disabilities enrolled in public schools – up from 3.7 million in 1975.
For their part, museums tried to incorporate the spirit of PL 94-142 into their education programs. Museum educators began creating exhibitions and education opportunities for the handicapped. For museums, it was another step in shrugging off old notions about who could or could not take advantage of museums. Molly Harrison, a curator at the Geoffrey Museum, described museums responsibility toward the handicapped like this:

Curiosity in human beings is not confined to any one sense, and those who have not eyes to see, or ears to hear with, or whose bodies or minds are but partially equipped for understanding, can nevertheless experience something of wonder and excitement, of novelty and of awakening. Indeed, those less completely endowed seem often to respond more easily to tangible objects than to words and books…Where one sense is absent or atrophied, others seem to be heightened to offset the loss so that, given imagination, goodwill and a willingness to adapt and to experiment, museum visits for all kinds of handicapped children may supply a real need.209

Many museum professionals agreed with her assessment and designed programs specifically for certain handicapped groups. For instance, the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh created a program in the 1960s that taught blind children to appreciate art through a sense of touch.210 Another example was the use of a collection on loan from the Carnegie Museum by a teacher of the deaf who used a hands-on technique so that her students concentrated on “speech and vocabulary enrichment.”211 These examples highlight the fact that museum educators during this period were working towards and often succeeding in creating a comprehensive education program.

The ESEA and PL 94-142 are great examples of the increased role of the federal government in education. They also highlight the larger trend that emerged during this period of working towards equality in American society. People seemed willing to embrace change and the liberal state of this period used that willingness to enact legislation that would have been difficult to pass twenty years earlier. This mandate from the people for sweeping reforms, however, was not to last and by the 1980s, conservative Americans, supported by studies, which
suggested that legislation, such as the ESEA, did not have the educational benefits it claimed, were calling for new ideas in education that would make the United States more competitive and make education more accountable.212

In 1983, in an attempt to explain the current status of the United States educational system and what was needed to fix it, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published a report entitled, *A Nation at Risk*.213 For decades, Americans had believed that their educational system was the best in the world and that it would continue to be that way forever. This report, however, described the educational system in the United States in a completely different fashion. It depicted a system that was lagging behind many other industrial countries and that was churning out students who were ill-equipped to compete in the technological world that was emerging and it warned:

Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world... We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people.214

While the ominous tone of the above section of the report does seem overdramatic; the ideas presented were based on concrete facts. For example, in 1972, 1.7% and 3.5% of test takers scored above 700 on the verbal and mathematical SAT respectively and were therefore categorized as high-achieving students; in 1982, those numbers had dropped to 0.8% and 2.9%.215 In addition, the report stated that some 13% of all seventeen year olds in the United States were functionally illiterate and only one-third of them could solve a mathematics problem requiring several steps.216 Numbers like these were startling to the nation and helped to ignite a national conversation about education. The report itself called for five recommendations, which
included the need for increased fiscal support both from local and federal government, improving
teacher preparation, increasing the school day and year, and strengthening the high school
graduation requirements.217

The final recommendation dealt with standards and expectations and called for schools
to, “adopt more rigorous and measurable standards,” and the administering of standardized tests
of achievement “at major transition points from one level of schooling to another.”218 This
recommendation would prove to have the most lasting effect on education in the United States as
“accountability” and “standardization” emerged as the dominant educational ideas in the decades
following the publication of A Nation at Risk. This report is important to the history of education
in museums because the idea of educational accountability set a precedence for future
government policies. These future educational policies, which will be looked in the next chapter,
took prestige away from places of informal learning and forced museums into a position that
often suppresses their educational creativity and belittles their educational importance.

Chapter Summary

In 1980, Ellie Caston, a museum education consultant, described her vision of the
museum like this,

Maybe museums can become the object of your affection, for they can be more than you
ever dreamed. They are peaceful in a not-so-peaceful world. They are permanent in a
highly transient world. They are authentic in a sometimes less-than-truthful world. But,
most of all, they hold out to you an unlimited source of awe and wonder.219

This statement is a great example of the ideas that permeated American society during this
period. During the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, the United States was in the mist of changing ideas
about society and liberal reforms. A large segment of the American population believed that
change could happen and that the United States could truly be an integrated nation. This belief
led to revolution in educational policy that enabled the federal government to ensure that all students received equal educational opportunities. It also created an atmosphere where museum professionals were able to broaden the museum’s appeal and construct education programs, using new technology and hands-on exhibits, which were innovative and encouraged learning from all types of students.

This sense of exuberance and belief in change, however, were not the only development that characterized this period. Business emerged bigger than ever during this period, and frequently museums were turning to things such as blockbuster exhibitions in order to ensure that they were bringing in revenue. In education, the government by the early 1980s began questioning the state of education and began demanding measurable results for the billions they were spending. In the end, these developments and the ideas behind them would be more influential to the current period in museum education than the ideas behind Ellie Caston’s utopian description of what a museum in the United States could be.
CHAPTER V

WHAT WE’VE LEFT BEHIND: EDUCATION IN MUSEUMS FROM 1990 TO THE PRESENT

“Now is the time for the next great agenda of museum development in America. This agenda needs to take as its mission nothing less than to engage actively in the design and delivery of experiences that have the power to inspire and change the way people see the world and the possibility of their own lives.” Emyln Koster (2006)

My interest in education in museums stems from an internship at the Toy and Miniature Museum of Kansas City, Missouri. I spent a summer at this delightful museum where my main duty was creating an education program for the museum designed for elementary students on school field trips. This was a daunting task to a student with no experience in museum education and one that I took on with much trepidation. Once I started the project, however, I plunged headfirst into the world of education in museums. Creating the education program started, appropriately enough, with me getting an education, I learned both about the museum and its collection and also researched the steps involved in creating an education program for a museum. In doing this research, it became readily apparent that if I was going to create an effective field trip education program for the museum I would need to start by looking at the state education standards for Missouri and then determine, which standards worked best with the mission of the museum. This was an important revelation for me as I had always assumed museum professionals created programs based on what they found educational and interesting about the museum with little thought given to outside influences or perceptions. I believed, and assumed that everyone did, that museums were inherently educational. My assumptions, however, could not have been further from the truth. I quickly learned that, in the age of accountability and testing, museums must create programs designed to coincide specifically with the curriculum children are learning at school in order to attract school groups.
In the past twenty years, American society has changed in ways that were unimaginable to the museum founders of the late nineteenth century. The world has become more connected and people are spending more time and money on leisure activities.\footnote{These two developments have served as the catalyst for the three major trends in American museums in the last twenty years. The first trend is that museums have seen a dramatic boom in donations, and audiences that allows museums to expand not only their programs but also build new facilities. The second trend is an increased focus on multiculturalism in the museum. People have begun to accept the idea that the United States consists of a variety of cultures, and that all these cultures should be incorporated into museums. This acceptance was helped in the United States by expanding minority groups. For example, by 2000 Latinos made up eleven percent, African Americans just under eleven percent, and Asian Americans four percent of the United States population.\footnote{As these minority groups increased in number, they demanded more recognition for their culture and contributions to the history of the United States. For museums, this meant becoming institutions that are much more focused on serving all of their constituents. Museums moved away from past homogenous themes and showcased exhibits and programs that highlighted the different cultures that have made up or make up the United States. As museums began to celebrate diversity, they also became places where debate and often a reassessment of values occur. The final significant trend in museums in the past twenty years was museum professionals’ willingness to embrace controversial topics in exhibitions. These exhibitions allowed museums to be relevant while attracting new visitors to museums and also had the added bonus of higher revenue. This change occurred as museums attempted to become vital institutions, and have led to museums often being in the center of debates that question core ideas about American society.}
As the world became more connected through technology, there was a tendency to compare the United States’ success to other countries. These comparisons, however, did not show the results that Americans had anticipated. The United States learned that it was lagging behind other developed countries in education. For the United States, which had been considered a world leader since World War II, this drop was unacceptable and legislators and parents alike quickly scrambled to try to raise the quality of education in the United States. For legislators, the desire to raise the quality of education led to the passage of legislation known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This legislation increased the role of the federal government in education and put a higher emphasis on testing in certain core subjects, namely math and reading, to ensure that students were performing at expected levels and continually improving. For an increasing number of parents, raising the quality of education meant removing their children from the government run public school system and teaching them from home. Both NCLB and the increase in home schooling are reactionary and controversial solutions to the problems facing education and have had a profound impact on education in museums in the United States.

The Museum Boom

Throughout the history of museums in the United States, museums have steadily grown. In the 1990s, however, museums experienced a period of sudden unprecedented growth, both in attendance and the number of museums. For example, in 1998 it was estimated that there were 865 million visits to museums. In addition, between 1998 and 2000, 150 museums were built or expanded. These numbers signaled a huge growth in museums and were due in part because museums worked hard to attract new visitors and raise revenue. Museums, however, were also able to experience this increase in part because of factors occurring outside their walls. During
the early and mid 1990s, the U.S. economy was extremely healthy. Unemployment dropped from just over seven percent in 1992 to four percent in 2000, personal income for most Americans increased and tourism grew – up eighty-nine percent between 1989 and 1997. All of these factors combined to equal good times for the museum community. Most museums capitalized on this prosperity by expanding their facilities, and their programs. Museums, such as the Chicago Museum of Contemporary Art, went through major renovations during this period while other museums, such as the Getty Center in Los Angeles, moved into multi-million dollar facilities. Many of these new museums, such as the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, were founded in grand buildings that were designed, just as much as the collections housed inside, to serve as a catalyst to get people interested in the museums. All this expansion allowed museums to become a more integral part of many cities in the United States and dynamic contributors to the cultural expression of the nation.

Multiculturalism

In addition, to enabling the expansion of the physical space of museums; the boom that American museums experienced in the 1990s also contributed significantly to the ability of museums to facilitate the second big trend in museums during this period – the desire to create a multicultural atmosphere in museums in the United States. Museums have typically been given a lofty position in American society. Museum visitors often assume that if something is displayed in the temperature controlled, light sensitive, alarm-filled rooms of a museum then it is something of value and prestige to their culture. It is through this assumption that historically museums have been able to serve as, “ritual places in which societies make visible what they value,” and, “define for their societies what is consequential, valuable, and suitable as evidence of the past.” Throughout most of their history in the United States, however, museums have
traditionally showcased the dominant culture with little regard for minority groups or if they have shown them, it was done in such a manner as to either implicitly or explicitly demean the minority culture. As one Latina artist described it, “We’ve all been into museums where the sheer placement of our work – near lobbies, or bathrooms, in rotundas or small rooms – has indicated the inferior value the institution attaches to the work.” This kind of atmosphere made many minorities uncomfortable in museums and also narrowed museums’ focus. As discussed in chapter three, the story of minority’s place in museums began to change in the 1960s and 1970s when the minorities’ rights revolution was in full swing, but it did not really reach its fruition until the 1980s and 1990s in museums. For example, in 1992 a task force created by the American Association of Museums, published a report titled, *Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension*, where the members of the task force asserted:

> We believe in the potential for museums to be enriched and enlivened by the nation’s diversity. As public institutions in a democratic society, museums must achieve greater inclusiveness. Trustees and staff must acknowledge and respect our nation’s diversity in race, ethnic origin, age, gender, economic status, and education, and they must attempt to reflect that pluralism in every aspect of museum operations and programs.

The findings of the task force were not revolutionary to any of the minority groups that had been working for equality for decades, but instead helped confirm many of their arguments.

In addition to the task force and its report, the acceptance of multiculturalism in museums during this period can also be seen by the increase in specific cultural museums. For instance, as of 1990 Philadelphia was home to an African-American museum, a Swedish-American museum, a Jewish-American history museum, a Holocaust museum, and a Puerto Rican arts center. The proliferation of museums that highlight a specific culture are an example of the cultural diversity in large cities across the nation and the need for these groups to express their culture and its role in American society in a meaningful way. The emergence of different cultures in
museums, however, was not just relegated to their own museums, many traditional museums also attempted to ensure that all the cultures of the United States were being exhibited in their museums. For example, the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art has in recent years attempted to reach out to the large Hispanic community in the area by exhibiting more works from Latino artists and by providing printed text in Spanish as well as English.\textsuperscript{231} The efforts of the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art are part of the process of creating a new culturally-inclusive understanding of the American experience.

Controversial Exhibitions

The desire in museums to be inclusive institutions did not stop at specific culture groups, but extended to ideas as well. By the 1990s, many museums were willing and maybe even a little eager to showcase controversial exhibitions. The desire to host these types of exhibitions stemmed in part from the rapid changes occurring throughout the world. The spread of disease, racial tension, and the battle over morality are just a few examples of topics that spurned controversy during the past twenty years and as the world “filled with emotional minefields of controversy,” many in the museum profession realized that, “museums can’t always take the safe road in what they present to the public.”\textsuperscript{232} Museum professionals, spurred by calls for cultural pluralism in museums from both the public and the American Association of Museums, recognized that controversial exhibits could bring about positive benefits for their museums. These benefits include: enabling museums to serve as the makers of culture not just the keepers, creating an atmosphere were museums can stay relevant and increasing revenue and visitors to museums.

In the last twenty years, through controversial exhibitions and the creation of new institutions, museums began embracing the idea that subjectivity and becoming the creators of culture can be part of the mission of the museum. An example of this trend is the Creation
Museum in Petersburg, Kentucky. This museum, which opened in 2007, has stirred the most controversy because it seeks to tell the story of the Earth’s history using traditional museum methodology and what the museum creators believe is scientific reasoning, but through the lens of religion and the literal truth of the Bible. As can be expected, this museum has garnered much criticism, especially from the scientific community. One such critic is Lawrence Krauss, a physics professor, who, like other scientists, worries that museums, such as the Creation Museum, undermine science education. Kraus argued, “When they [the Creation Museum] try to confuse kids about what is science and what isn’t science, scientists have an obligation to speak out. There is no doubt that these are documented lies.” In addition to the controversy, this museum has also forced museums to take an in-depth look at what a museum is and what it can do. One question that museums driven by a certain agenda, like the Creation Museum, have raised concerns the level of trust associated with museums. Right now, almost nine out of ten Americans find museums to be one of the most trustworthy sources of information. If museums such as the Creation Museum continue to be built, will that number continue to be high? As of now the museum community has not come up with any definite answer to that question, but there is little doubt that if museums want to maintain the level of trust the public gives them, they will have to answer that tough question and soon.

Throughout their evolution, museums in the United States have strived primarily for one thing: relevancy. For a museum to be relevant it must be an active part of the community and it must understand its role in the community. Being relevant is so important to museums because the public equates relevancy with value. A museum cannot prove its value if it is espousing a subject or an idea that is no longer significant to society. As Emlyn Koster, president and CEO of Liberty Science Center, noted controversy and being relevant go hand in hand; he said,
“Relevancy entails a comfort with controversy that, in turn, involves fostering an atmosphere where difficult questions can be broached and a variety of opinions expressed.” The desire to stay relevant was apparent when looking at the controversial exhibitions that became popular in museums in the 1990s.

One example of a controversial exhibition was an exhibit entitled *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier 1820-1920*, shown at the National Museum of American Art in Washington, D.C. This exhibition showed art from or about the period while simultaneously providing information through text panels and books explaining that the images were products of a particular vision of American history and providing alternative interpretations of the history depicted in the art. The controversy surrounding this exhibition stems from the fact that some people feel like history is filled with static facts and that the creators of this exhibition were taking creative license with what they consider historical absolutes. An article in *The New York Times* called the exhibit a “frustrating, even infuriating show” that often used, “interpretive contortion,” in order to fit some art into the ideas they were trying to show. Others applauded the exhibition designers for their attempt at focusing on a period in history seeped in folklore in a new way. For example an article, in *The Public Historian*, embraced the goals of the exhibitions stating:

Museums and curators must have the courage and vision needed to embrace controversy… As safe havens, museum exhibits can be forums that stimulate debate and understanding, arenas that allow audiences to better comprehend the complexity and ambiguity of the past and help them wrestle with difficult issues of race, class and gender. This is an important and worthwhile endeavor for the museum profession.

All of the reasons for embracing controversial exhibitions, however, were not altruistic. Museums also embraced these exhibitions because they typically ended up being highly lucrative. For example, one of the most controversial exhibitions of the recent past has been the
Body Worlds exhibition and others similar to it. These exhibitions, which show plasticized human bodies posed doing everyday activities or highlighting particular organs, have garnered a lot of criticism from some people. Critics feel that the exhibition is disrespectful to the dead and others question whether the people whose bodies were used actually gave their consent before they died. Regardless of these concerns the exhibitions have increased attendance in almost all the museums in which they have been shown. For example in 2004, the Body Worlds exhibit had been seen by over sixteen million people in more than a dozen countries and when it was shown at the California Science Center for nine month during that year it attracted over 930,000 visitors. These high attendance figures are not isolated to the Body Worlds exhibitions, however, and museums quickly realized that controversy often brings more people through their doors; a revelation that has caused some critics to questions museums motives when bringing in a controversial exhibition. For instance, one critic of the Body Worlds exhibitions argues that the, “Spirit [of the exhibition] is not really about science. If is not about art. It is not about education. All these things are pretexts. This cadaver-fest is about bucks.” While this comment was meant to be a scathing criticism of the museums that bring in these controversial exhibitions; it also highlights what those in the museum field already know – that to be a museum of value to the community the first and most important step is getting people through the doors. Controversial exhibitions do just that.

Educational Trends and their Effect on Education in Museums

As touched upon in the last chapter, the 1980s marked an increase in the open criticism of the education system in the United States. Americans were disillusioned with the fact that when compared, students in the United States were often rated lower then students in other industrial countries. This development caused Americans to take a hard look at the educational system in
the United States and try to figure out ways to improve it. Some educators and politicians argued for more testing and more of an emphasis placed on reading and math. Others called for school vouchers or charter schools, which proponents believed would give parents more options in their children’s education. An increase in home schooling and the landmark legislation, No Child Left Behind were solutions that emerged to improve the quality of education for children in the United States. Both these solutions are pertinent to education in museums during this period because while they essentially occupied two different sides of the educational spectrum; they both have forced museum educators to alter their programs and both will more than likely be dynamic factors in dictating education in museums for the foreseeable future.

The emergence of the home-school movement and its rapid growth is something that few could have predicted. For example, in the early 1970s it was estimated that some 10,000 to 15,000 children were home-schooled, by 1988 that number had risen to somewhere between 150,000 and 300,000, and by 1999 that number had risen to 850,000 with some suggesting that the number of home schoolers in the next few years will grow by as much as fifteen to twenty percent per year. This extraordinary growth showcases that home schooling has moved beyond fringe groups into the larger population. There are some characteristics, however, that tend to be shared by most home-school families. For instance, seventy-five percent of home-school families are white, almost eighty percent live in a two-parent household, and sixty percent of home schooled children’s parents have some college education or higher. The majority of families who chose home schooling do so because they believe that they can give their children a better education at home. Parents’ desire to create a meaningful educational experience for their children is the primary reason home
schooling has grown so quickly in the United States. With this growth has come the realization by many public institutions linked to education, such as museums, that the needs of home-schooled groups must be considered when creating programs.

In the report, *Excellence and Equity*, the American Association of Museums recommend that museums, “should be a more welcoming places for all people regardless of their age, ability, education, class, race, or ethnic origin,” and encouraged the museum community to, “make a concerted long-term effort to become involved with our communities and to inaugurate programs that are responsive to the needs and wishes of our potential constituents.”247 One of these potential constituent groups is the home-school community. Home schoolers are avid consumers of educational resources in the community, in part because they have the freedom when it comes to their time and their curriculum that public schools do not. Therefore, museums educators have found it necessary to recognize this freedom and create opportunities within their museums with the home-school community in mind. For example at Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts, educators made an extra classroom available as a home-school lounge, where home schoolers can congregate and do lessons. The museum also started offering an annual “Home School Open House” where home schoolers can visit the museum at a discounted admission rate.248 For museums, these programs were a good way of increasing the visibility of the museum within the home-school community. In addition to creating programs, museums are also becoming more sensitive to home schoolers by attempting to understand the way home schoolers learn. In a traditional school, students are taught conventional classroom behavior, such as raising your hand. The atmosphere, however, at most home schools is much freer, and museums are taking special care to train their docents and staff to recognize the way that home schoolers learn and then
adapt their programs to it. The adjustments made by museum educators in order to accommodate home-school groups illustrates the type of changes that museums had to make in the 1990s in order to be of service in a changing educational environment.

Unlike the growth of the home-school movement, which was a grass-roots movement initiated by parents with little to no government support, the increased standardization and the belief in accountability through testing have been widely advanced through the government, especially with the legislation known as No Child Left Behind. This legislation, which was spearheaded by the George W. Bush administration, was signed into law in 2002 and served as the apex of the accountability and standardization movement. Unlike earlier legislation, which sought to provide all students with equal opportunities, NCLB seeks to provide equality of outcomes. No Child Left Behind has many different components but the ones that caused the most debate are: closing the achievement gap, rewarding success and sanctioning the failure of schools, and the promoting of informed parental choice. In the government’s attempts to close the achievement gap, states are forced to administer standardized test to all children in third through eight grade with the idea that, “Schools must have clear, measurable goals focused on basic skills and essential knowledge” and that “annual testing in every grade gives teachers, parents and policymakers the information they need to ensure that children will reach academic success.” These tests serve as the measurable basis for ensuring that the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers is shrinking. In addition, the scores from the test serve as the indicator for whether schools are performing at optimal levels. Schools, through their students’ test score that are seen as making progress in narrowing the achievement gap receive increased funding and those that do not could potentially lose a portion of their administrative funds. Another consequence for schools that performed poorly on the test is
that parents have the option of transferring their child to a higher performing public school with
the thinking being that competition ensures schools stayed motivated to continue trying to
narrow the achievement gap and that parents are “the best forces of accountability in
education.” These components of NCLB have been at the center of the ongoing debate about
whether the legislation actually helps or hurts the educational system in the United States.

Few education initiatives have sparked as heated debates as NCLB. Supporters of the bill
argue that while it might not be perfect, it is working. In 2004, the Alphonso Jackson, Secretary
of Housing and Urban Development, and Rod Paige, the Secretary of Education, proclaimed in
an article:

Each day our nation moves closer to an educational system in which every student has an
opportunity to excel, we better serve our children. And by better serving our children, we
better prepare them for the leadership and responsibility upon which our future success as
a nation depends. The two of us have witnessed the potential and the promise of the
American dream. By providing every American child with a quality education, No Child
Left Behind makes sure that dream will be available to everyone.

These enthusiastic comments about the success of NCLB are supported by evidence from school
districts, which show improvements in the students’ performances. For example, since the law
passed the achievement gap between blacks and whites in Minnesota has declined by ten points
and in Illinois the Latino-white achievement gap has been cut in half. For proponents of the
bill statistics like these are the backbone of their argument that the legislation is working.

Opponents of the act, however, see these numbers in a different way. Detractors of
NCLB argue that these numbers were acquired when the administration lowered standards,
suspiciously right before the 2004 presidential election. Critics also point out that the bill,
which financially penalizes schools that do not perform has the negative effect of potentially
hurting the schools, namely poor schools, which proponents claim are the bills primary targets
for help. In addition, the emphasis that NCLB puts on test scores has also caused controversy
by forcing many teachers to “teach to the test.” One teacher commented on this reality by explaining, “We feel so much pressure that we spend most of the day teaching reading and math. Standardized testing is taking the fun out of teaching and learning. We drill and drill…” The sentiment expressed by this teacher highlights what many see as the problem with NCLB – it seeks to co-opt learning with memorization.

Other detractors have criticized NCLB’s heavy focus on specific subjects, such as reading and math. The problem with NCLB having such a strong focus on a few subjects is that it has caused other subjects, like history and the arts, to be pushed to the backburner. For example in Warren Township, Indiana, Raymond Park Middle School cut both its art and home economics departments and had to eliminate most foreign-language classes in 2004. Curriculum cuts like those at Raymond Park Middle School are taking place all over the country and critics argue that by cutting such classes, schools are hurting students overall educational experience and leading children down narrow intellectual paths. Both the focus on a few subjects and the pressure put on teachers to make sure test scores continually improve has hurt creativity in learning. Some educational specialist have stressed that education should be fundamentally about creating meaningful experiences, which can be done more easily through creative methods, such as the play experienced at recess or an art class, as through the rote memorization that goes on when teachers are forced to teach the test and students are only taught reading and math.

No Child Left Behind has become a problem for museum education departments because classes who are busy preparing for standardized test have less time for outside educational opportunities and NCLB’s focus on just a few subjects has devalued the wonderful educational opportunities at museums, such as art and history museums. These realities of NCLB have
caused museums to lose a foothold in the educational market that took years to achieve. Schools, such as Bradley Hills Elementary in Bethesda, Maryland were busy preparing their students for standardized test, and therefore dropped the number of field trips taken every year.\textsuperscript{262} Many museum professionals saw a decrease in the number of field trips to their museum. For example, the Chicago Children’s Museum has lost more than a tenth of its field-trips since 2005 and the New England Aquarium has lost a quarter of its school traffic since 2003.\textsuperscript{263} Elizabeth Babcock, head of the Field Museum’s education department, verbalized the problem museums are facing when trying to get school field trips to come to the museum in the age of NCLB when she explained,

They [teachers] say, you know, I would love to come see your exhibition, but we have to show a certain percentage of improvement on our standardized tests, and that means we need to drill and practice in our classroom, and I’m not sure I can take a day out of school to come on a field trip.\textsuperscript{264}

The only solution for museum educators in this sort of educational environment is to, like the previously mentioned Toy and Miniature Museum of Kansas City, create educational programs designed specifically using state standards in the hopes of luring school groups back to the museum. An example of this process can be found at the Children Museum of Indianapolis, which in 2004 created an exhibit called \textit{Dinosphere}. Leslie Powers and Jennifer Pace Robinson, educators from that museum, described the process their museum took to ensure the exhibit would be relevant for schools:

To maintain and increase a school audience, exhibit development must make meaningful connections between academic standards and content. Therefore, before developing gallery content, the exhibit team reviewed Indiana’s Academic Standards as well as national curriculum standards in science and social studies. The team extrapolated standards that could have direct application to a dinosaur environment. We used the exhibition content to produce two units of study, one focusing on kindergarten through second grade and the other focusing on third through fifth grade. Educators can use the gallery experience and extend it through lessons and resources offered in the units of study.\textsuperscript{265}
This type of procedure has become standard for museums and while most museum professionals realize it is necessary in order to ensure that schools continue to visit their museum, others are concerned about the dangers associated with museum educators catering to state standards.

As early as 1949, Dr. Alma Wittlin was proclaiming that education in museums was unique because it was “unfettered by traditional curricula and examinations,” which enabled the museum to have, “access to human spontaneity, that spring of goodness, inventiveness and skill.” For some museum educators, the joy and benefit of education in museums is that they do not have to conform to the boundaries that are instituted in schools. No Child Left Behind, however, forces museum educators to work within these bounds and some museum educators are not happy about it. In a recent survey, sixty percent of museum educators said that they either had a somewhat negative or very negative attitude towards NCLB, and over fifty percent of respondents said that NCLB had a negative impact on their museum’s visitation. These numbers highlight the bitterness and anxiety museum educators feel as they begin to lose their status as a place where old educational ideas can be modified and where new educational ideas can be adopted.

Chapter Summary

Since 1990 the word that most accurately described the trends in museums of the United States is growth. During this period, museums grew in size, attendance, and scope and all this growth had a dramatic affect on education in museums. The creation of more museums and the emergence of multicultural museums enabled museums to focus on educational topics that had previously been ignored. Controversial exhibits also became an integral part of most museums during this period and with them they brought both people and a relevancy to museums that had
been lacking in other periods. All of these trends were united under the idea that museums as places of education are makers of culture and as such they are, “Necessarily agents of change, not only changing the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings of our individual visitors but also affecting the moral ecology of the communities that we serve.”

Outside factors also contributed to the growth of museums during this period, especially trends in education. The increase of home-schooled children and the passage of No Child Left Behind both had a dramatic impact on education in museums. They forced museums to create new education programs or alter existing programs to make them available to visitors that were looking for specific educational outcomes when they came to the museum. No Child Left Behind, particularly, has had a negative impact both on the schools and the museum education community. It forced many teachers to begin limiting their teaching to activities and subjects that garner their students’ higher scores on the standardized test. It has forced museum education to conform their programs around strict state and national standards as a means of enticing harried teachers to bring their students to museums. No Child Left Behind has also been a frustrating reality for most museum educators who realize far more than legislators and government officials that, “The teaching that museums do through their collections and programs is in nearly every respect far less structured, less controllable, more open to individual nuance, and harder to assess than teaching in a school can ever be.” It is too early to judge whether No Child Left Behind will cause permanent damage to the creativity of museum education, but it does seem like this policy has moved into a dangerous realm in education where the government is trying “to force students to accept their model, example, and organizational scheme as the only possible one.” This move is not good for education and it is definitely not good for museums.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

“We have enough educational institutions that focus on training us to master the skills we need to graduate from school and get a job. Yet we have too few institutions that have as their goal to inspire and change us. American museums need to take this up as their new challenge.” – Harold Skramstad (1999)

In 2006, the Guggenheim Museum released a study, which found that students who were part of their “Learning through Art” program performed better in literacy and critical thinking skills than those students who were not part of the program.\textsuperscript{271} This study highlighted what professionals in the museum field have known for a long time – that learning in museums helps students in all areas of their studies. Museum professionals came to this realization after working for years to ensure that education got its rightful place in the museum. When the majority of public museums were first created in the latter half of the nineteenth century, education was put on the backburner so that collections could be the focal point of museums.

It was not long, however, before museum professionals, such as John Cotton Dana, began lobbying for education to take a loftier position in museums and these early pioneers succeeded in creating education departments and shifting the focus away from collecting. This trend continued and by the 1960s and 1970s museum educators took advantage of the unique place that museums occupied on the educational spectrum and began differentiating learning in the museum from learning in the schools. Hands-on activities, technology, and object-orientated learning became staples of the education departments of museums and both teachers and students responded positively to these developments. Field trip numbers soared during this period and research showed that students were receiving long-term learning benefits from museums.\textsuperscript{272} All of these trends seemed at least partly to mirror both the theoretical and practical developments in
schools in the United States. As the public school system evolved from a new institution in the late nineteenth century that stressed memorization, to accepting more progressive education tools in the 1920s, to more government involvement through legislation that ensured equality for all in the 1960s; museums also embraced these goals. Recently, however, both museums and the schools have seem to come full circle and with the rise of standardization and accountability, museums have been put in a situation that forces them to lose the educational ground that they have won in the last one hundred years. This is not a good position for museums and therefore, it is imperative in the years to come that museums continue to be the unique educational institutions that they have fought to become.

Museums are distinct learning environments for a number of different reasons and to stifle that component of the museums is to disregard the progress that museums educators have made since the inception of the public museum in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century. The first reason why museums are unique learning institutions is the environment of the museums. Learning is often associated with strict regimented classrooms where pupils sit at assigned desk arranged in neat rows. Progressive educators, however, beginning in the 1910s began arguing that a restrictive atmosphere is not necessary for learning to take place. These educators encouraged a learning setting that was relaxed with the belief that this type of environment helped stimulate learning. The recognition of the benefits of an informal learning environment helped early museum professionals promote the advantages of learning at the museum. Learning that takes place in museums often happens in an informal atmosphere where students are standing up, looking at an object, or experiencing some hands-on activity. This type of learning appeals to some children and enables them to understand a subject more fully then if they were at their desk in their classroom.
Another reason museums developed as a unique learning environment is that they primarily use object-based learning. Object-based learning, which was also encouraged by progressive educators, allows the students a visual representation of the thing or topic that they are studying and enables museums to employ educational techniques that schools cannot use on a frequent basis. Schools primarily use textbooks, which offers facts about a subject but does not help the learner gain an understanding of the nature and process of it. In contrast, museum educators use objects to illustrate the ideas they are trying to convey. The use of objects allows the learning to be interactive and gives the student a chance for exploration. This interaction enables students to have a more personal connection to the subject and has been shown to help students retain the information longer.

Museums are also distinctive learning environments because of their ability to offer educational programs that appeal to a variety of groups and learning styles. In the past forty years, Americans sought to create a society where equality of opportunity was given to everyone. In schools this desire manifested itself in government legislation, such as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, which sought to make all schools better for all groups; and the emergence of the home-school movement in the 1990s, which allowed families choice when it came to their children’s learning. In museums the desire for equality of opportunity led to the creation of a range of education programs. Technology, hands-on activities, and pre and post-visit activities were incorporated into many education programs and ensured that all types of learners could be stimulated by the museum. In addition, museums also created programs specifically for non-traditional students such as home-school children; recognizing the fact that these students were often used to a type of learning that was different than their peers.
The final reason that museums are unique learning environments is less tangible than the previous but equally important. Museums are irreplaceable learning environments because they can inspire life-long passions. Schools, on the other hand, have a much more difficult time inspiring passion, especially since the 1980s. In the 1980s, some Americans began worrying that education in the United States was lagging behind other industrial countries. These educational critics began lobbying for increased accountability and more of a focus on “core” subjects, such as math and reading. The desires of these critics reached fruition in 2001 with the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act, which laid out strict government standards and hampered teachers with the burden of improving test scores. This type of learning environment left little time for the schools to focus on non-core subjects and made it difficult for classroom teachers to employ methods that stimulated enthusiasm for learning in children. Museums, however, since they are not held back by these restrictive conditions can, “inspire a visitor to ask questions and pursue a newfound interest independently.”273 The museum allows people to see something in a new way or look at something they had never thought of before. This type of discovery can stimulate passionate life-long learning and is an extremely important part of the museum’s role in a society that champions freedom and progress.

Today museums are learning to work within the educational framework that has been either embraced or forced on the American school system. In order to comply with the restrictive measures of No Child Left Behind, current museum educators are creating programs that incorporate state standards in order so that teachers can justify a field trip to the museum. Catering to these limiting educational measures, hopefully, will not last forever in museums. Ultimately, all museums strive to achieve an atmosphere where unique learning can take place and where visitors can fuel both old and new passions and this goal has often led to the

99
constantly changing role of education in modern museums. In the future, museums must continue to embrace this goal. Museum educators of tomorrow must ensure that museums, regardless of the educational theories and government policies dominating the day, are constantly striving for diverse and exciting ways to educate. One museum educator stressed both the importance of this role for museum and the difficulty associated with it when he said:

We must continue to ask difficult questions, even though we may never agree on the answers. As museums move into an ever more complex, option-filled future, we can serve society by providing a place to explore these questions. The future will not be a simple place to live. Yet we will spend the rest of our lives there. No matter how complicated the world becomes, there will always be a place for museums and for the special kind of learning that takes place in them. Museums can light a spark that burns for a lifetime. This is the unique role we can play in meeting the educational demands of the future.
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CHAPTER I


2 It is widely accepted that the first public museum was the Louvre in Paris, which was open to the public for the first time during the French Revolution. Ibid., 27.


4 Some of these historians include, Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics*, (New York: Routledge, 1995,) and David Murray, *Museums: Their History and Their Use*, (Glasgow: James MacLehose and Sons: 1904.)


7 It is important to note that for the purposes of this thesis when I discuss education in museums I am talking primarily about children and in particular the museums relationship to primary schools and while education departments in museums have made significant strides in the development of educational opportunities for college students, the elderly, adults, and other unique groups these developments do not factor into the overall conclusions of this thesis.


CHAPTER II


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16 Ibid., 546.


23 Proceedings at the Opening of the Museum of Fine Arts (Boston, 1876), 6; quoted in Harris, “The Gilded Age Revisited, 557.


25 Harris, “The Gilded Age Revisited.”

26 Tractenberg, The Incorporation of America, 144-145.

27 “Attractions in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Opened March 30th”, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper (New York City), 10 April 1880, p. 88.

28 Conn, Museums and American Intellectual Life, 1876 – 1926, 15, 159-163.

29 “Museums as Workshops,” San Francisco Bulletin (San Francisco), 19 February 1878, p.3.

30 Professor Henry quoted in Ramsey, Educational Work in Museums of the United States, 8.


32 Ramsey, Educational Work in Museums of the United States, 13.


35 Ellen Carol Dubois and Lynn Dumenil, Through Women’s Eyes: An American History with Documents, (New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2005), 95.
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38 Horace Mann, *The Life and Works of Horace Mann*, vol. 4 (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1891), 83-84.


43 Ibid., 149-150.

44 Ibid., 149.


47 Tyack, *The One Best System*, 230.


57 William T. Harris quoted in Tyack, *The One Best System*, 43.
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69 Ibid., 35.


72 Ibid., 41.

73 Ibid., 41.


75 Ibid., 417.


77 Spiess II, “Towards a New Professionalism:”, 49.

78 Ibid., 40-41.
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85 Paul Rhea quoted in “The Educational Work of Museums,” 188.


87 Ramsey, *Educational Work in Museums of the United States*.

88 Ibid., 79.

89 “Traveling Museums for Public Schools,” *The Duluth News Tribune* (Iowa), 30 December 1911.

90 Ibid., 79.


95 Ibid., 45.

96 Ibid., 45.


99 “The Educational Work of Museums,” 188.

100 All museums during this period experienced a decrease in scholarly research, even university museums were disconnected from the scholarly research taking place on campuses. Coleman, *The Museum in America: A Critical Study*, 2: 369.
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Dana was a strong proponent of creating a new type of museum that was more responsive to the public. Other professionals, such as Lawrence Vail Coleman embraced these new ideas about museums but also felt that museums should not completely abandon scholarly research. John Cotton Dana, *Museums and Community* in *The New Museum: Selected Writings by John Cotton Dana*, ed. William A Peniston (Washington D.C. : American Association of Museums, 1999), 100-102; and Coleman, *The Museum in America: A Critical Study*, 2: 369-373.


“John Dewey on Experimental School,” *San Jose Mercury Herald* (San Jose), 12 February 1917.


Ibid., 166.

It is important to note that the adoption of these new techniques by progressive educators did not mean that there was no structure whatsoever in these “centers of interests” programs or in these new classrooms. That was not the case at all; in fact the majority of the proponents of progressive education, including John Dewey, still stressed the importance of some sort of curriculum in schools and the importance of the teacher in directing the individual educational goals of students. These progressives argued, “Far from being hostile to the principles of individuality, some systematic organization of activities and subject matter is the only means for actually achieving individuality.” Lawrence Cremin, “John Dewey and the Progressive-Education Movement: 1915-1952,” *The School Review* vol 67 (Summer, 1959): 166.


Paul M Rea quoted in “The Educational Work of Museums,” 188.


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121 Ibid., 52.

122 Ibid., 53.


125 Ibid., 50.

126 Ibid., 50.


130 Ibid., 136-137.


132 The ability of the United States to compete with the Soviet Union was especially important after Russia launched *Sputnik* into outer space in 1958. Dickson A. Mungazi, *The Evolution of Educational Theory in the United States* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1999), 168-169.


135 Ibid., 59.


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143 Ibid., 56.


145 The Metropolitan Museum of Art was one of the first museums to highlight an area of their city dominated by a particular group in the exhibition “Harlem on my Mind” in 1969 and while this exhibition was criticized it did pave the way for other such exhibitions. Zeller, “From National Service to Social Protest,” 55.

146 Ibid., 55.


152 *The Belmont Report*.

153 Ibid., 37-38.


155 Ibid., 58.

156 Ibid., 58.

157 Ott, “Museums and Schools as Universal Partners in Art Education,” 7.


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185 Museums for a New Century, 62.

186 Ibid., 62.


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196 Davis, See Government Grow, 37.

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198 Gottfried, “Do Children Learn on School Field Trips?,” 168.


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210 The Belmont Report, 10.

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CHAPTER VI


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## APPENDIX

### COMPARING MUSEUM EDUCATION TRENDS AND PUBLIC EDUCATION TRENDS DURING VARIOUS ERAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>MUSEUM EDUCATION</th>
<th>PUBLIC EDUCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870-1910</td>
<td>- very few programs designed specifically for children</td>
<td>- growth of universal education for children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- focused on scholarly learning</td>
<td>- use of rote methods of learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- museum professionals believed museums were inherently educational</td>
<td>- schools used as an agent of socialization for immigrants and other groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>1910-1940</td>
<td>- increase in field trips</td>
<td>- Progressive educators stressed:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- more museum education departments</td>
<td>• education should be responsive to the child</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- object-based learning in museums</td>
<td>• informal classrooms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- the learning-by-doing educational method was adopted in museums</td>
<td>• emphasis on group activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>1940-1960</td>
<td>- use of radio and television in museums</td>
<td>- progressive education lost popularity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- emphasis on American nationalism</td>
<td>- a return to the use of rote methods of educating</td>
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<td>- exhibitions that sparked controversy were avoided</td>
<td>- <em>National Defense Educate Act</em> (1958)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• called for more study in science, math and foreign language</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- use of hands-on activities</td>
<td>• a desire to give all children equality of opportunity in education</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- increased use of new technologies, such as listening devices and computers</td>
<td>- more government involvement through legislation and increased federal government funding</td>
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### APPENDIX (continued)

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<tr>
<th>ERA</th>
<th>MUSEUM EDUCATION</th>
<th>PUBLIC EDUCATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990-present</td>
<td>- creating education programs around state standards</td>
<td>- <em>No Child Left Behind</em> (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- a loss of field trip attendance in most museums</td>
<td>• a focus on a few core subjects, particularly reading and math</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- developing education programs for non-traditional educational groups</td>
<td>• more testing led to a return to rote methods of teaching</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- the growth of the home-school movement</td>
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