

Information delivery strategies

Context of information delivery:

– Information for visitors should exist in various locations throughout the museum, however some information is not needed everywhere, and is more contextual. (Booth, 1998)

In the Science Museum most visitors required some information at the start of their tour on what there is to see and do. Once in the Museum they need assistance to find their way around, and more detailed information to support exhibits. (Booth 1999)

- Information delivery related to location in Booth's study:
Noticeboard:
- Operating hours, ticketing, arrangements, events and special exhibitions (located at entrance)

Orientation Kiosk:

- List of facilities, galleries, and major exhibits, a programme of events for the day, bespoke tours
- plan view
- "what do you want to see and do today?"
- Provide printed output, and interaction time limited to prevent bottlenecks

Information Kiosk:

- provide info to visitor as they tour museum
- limited object information
- plan view and list of facilities
- located in museum gallery

Exhibit Kiosk:

- supporting information to the items on display
- scripted information, multimedia and explanations of artifacts
- located in museum gallery

Information Centre Kiosk:

- These are separate information centres for specialists and educationalists
- A supervised facility with keyboard input
- types of info: detailed object, educational and bibliographic info

Detailed Collections Kiosk:

- detailed information on a large number of artifacts available
- information be of interest to general and specialist

Remote visit planning:

- supports queries in advance of visiting museum
- opening hours, ticketing, what's on, main attractions and how to get to museum

Remote Technical inquiries:

- similar to the information centre kiosk, but done remotely
- bibliographic information

Remote access for schools

- provide a range of subject related info
- info for teachers to help them plan visits
- A growing number of museums are allowing visitors to create personal digital collections within the museum to view them whenever they like (Marty 2008) – see Bowen and Filippini-Fantoni 2004 for examples.
 - A museum's remote information should help to bridge the visitor's pre & post visit activities, through helping the visitor learn more about the museum and its collections (Marty 2008)
- Thomas and Carey (2005) found that 70% of museum visitors specifically looked for online information prior to a museum visit, and that 57% said the information they found online increased their desire to visit the museum in person
- According to the survey results, online museum visitors generally visit museum websites before they visit museums, with the vast majority (81.9%) of the survey respondents saying that they were either likely or very likely to do so. Online museum visitors who are visiting a museum's website prior to a museum visit are more likely to use basic information such as hours of operation, driving directions, or information about current exhibits, than they are to use online images of artifacts, online gallery tours, or online educational activities (Marty 2008)
- online museum visitors who are visiting a museum's website after visiting a museum are less likely to use basic information such as hours of operation and admission fees, and more likely to use online images of artifacts, collections data, and research materials. (Marty 2008)

• It is no longer sufficient to handle the applications on a case by case basis, instead it is essential to identify areas of overlap or interdependence, to have a constant overall vision and hence to create a synergy between the various projects in order to ensure consistency of purpose. (Le Coz and Lemessier, 1993)

Quality of information:

Quality of Information:

- the results of the survey indicate that for many online museum visitors, the ability to search the museum's collections (an area of great effort for many museum professionals) is not necessarily as important as the overall quality of the available information. Efforts to improve information quality throughout the entire site, therefore, may more positively influence online museum visitors than efforts to increase the amount of collections data available online. (Marty 2008)
- visitors may lack the skills to understand complex written material, or their first language may not be English. Furthermore, Roles argues that museums should play a more active part in communicating, informing, entertaining and inspiring. Direct public access to raw data poses technical problems in the design of access and interface software, while the data itself may in part be unsuitable for public access if its primary purpose has been to aid collections management or if it has been compiled as a specialist resource rather than for the general user (Booth 1999)
- As in most curatorial databases it contains fields for classification, description, placement and any other information which was registered at the time of acquisition. The problem is that this information was never intended to be used "raw" for public interpretation, and there is not much sense in providing access to the database in an un-adapted form. The problem is however, that this knowledge does not exist in a formalised form, but primarily in the minds of the curators. The work in transforming records into interesting, engaging content should not be underestimated (Wanning 1993)
- The success of the Micro-Gallery project in the London National Gallery was in part due to the highly refined content that was made available to visitors, which was aided by pre-existing stories about many of the works. (Rubenstein 1992)

Structuring of information:

- Useful to explore connections through temporal, cultural and thematic lines (Marty 2008)
- One kiosk applications approached interactions as providing questions to the visitor that they can investigate, such as " How did this artefact arrive at the museum?", or "what was this artefact used for?" (Wanning 1993)
- The key-object-based information for visitors are the age of the object, it's purpose, general factual information, and it's construction and mode of operation. (little interest in the physical dimensions of the objects on display, information about other objects in storage, or how they came into the museum, and their former ownership) (Booth 1999)
- Within a kiosk design that presents visitors with info on objects, several points appear to require particular thought : the type of information provided according to the user, the quality of the viewing interface and the link between the subjects proposed and the museum visit. Making it more user-friendly by simplifying the style of the text (no complicated expressions or esoteric language) and by avoiding the use of references. Surveys have indicated that half the readers prefer to look at brief summaries before choosing whether to read more in-depth presentations (Le Coz and Lemessier, 1993)
- The Micro-Gallery Kiosk that was developed for the London National Gallery provided different ways to access / browse work. a) Through biographies, b) through paintings arranged in chronological order, c) through paintings arranged in geographic order (accessible through a map). d) Through picture type (Rubenstein 1992)

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