

ENRICHING THE PUBLIC HISTORY DIALOGUE:
EFFECTIVE MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR AUDIENCES WITH SPECIAL
NEEDS

by

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This work is dedicated to my parents. Thank you for always supporting my dreams and believing that they could come true.

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ABSTRACT

ENRICHING THE PUBLIC HISTORY DIALOGUE: EFFECTIVE MUSEUM EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR AUDIENCES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Effective public history dialogue depends on all voices having adequate access to interpretation and experience set in historical and/or cultural environments. The dissertation explores programming developed specifically for secondary education students who have intellectual disabilities and other related cognitive and developmental disabilities. This study focuses on cultural institutions in the United States, ranging from a historic house museum in Smyrna, Tennessee, to such major institutions as the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. This dissertation investigates sensitivity and awareness training for museum staff. Central to the research is a case study at a local historic site with a special education class. From this case study, the author presents a model of best practices for museums to use in developing programming and welcoming an under-served population to their organization.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

People value history in different ways and for different reasons. They engage with history writing, either as authors, consumers, or students to understand their own past and heritage, to learn about other cultures and populations, or sometimes to try to learn from the past to inform the future. The twenty-first century is a world of instant communication yet personal disconnections; people find that history, presented in either film, print, and recreated production may allow them to see connections and themes among seemingly disparate groups of people, nations, and cultures.

This search for connections and audience is familiar territory for public historians. They bring context to the particular and connect what is local to broader regional, national, or even international themes. In the best situations they make sense out of what can be the nonsense of local heritage. In return, public historians benefit immensely from the larger dialogue over the past with public, often discovering sources that otherwise they would have never known.

Museums are key parts of the public history world. Museums as forums for dialogue means that even small professional institutions have education programs. Many museums offer programs that are specifically catered to certain groups or they have specialized lectures and hands-on programs for students to learn more about a specific aspect of history that the historic site or museum provides.

Children of course are a challenging audience for any educator. The ways that school children understand and learn about the past are variable. Elaine Davis, in *How Students Understand the Past*, explains that to understand how to teach history one must

also know how the past is constructed in the minds of individuals who are shaped in turn by their age, culture, ethnicity, and other factors.¹ Davis argues that historical knowledge is constructed in two ways: narrative understanding and logical-scientific understanding. The former is perhaps the most important to the processing of this new information in students' minds, while the latter is generally the kind of learning that takes place in the classroom.

To stimulate informal learning, Davis argues for active engagement, and objects such as artifacts or replicas help a learner connect to the past on a personal level. By using interactive and object-based learning, students are more engaged and connected in studies of the past.²

Museums as forums for dialogue and engagement fail when they are designed and structured to keep groups at arm's length due to race, class, ethnicity, or disability. There has been a marked exclusion of people with intellectual disability in museums, even today. Special education classes are rarely part of the audience of history museums or historical sites.

Historic sites have the actual challenge of accessibility; rarely in the past were structures or spaces designed with special needs and accessibility in mind. Yet, to allow difficulty in movement to be the factor separating museum educators from potential audiences undercuts the museum role in public dialogue, and it is not legal to do so. With the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990, museums and all

¹ Elaine Davis, *How Students Understand the Past: From Theory to Practice* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2005), 17.

² Ibid., 119.

public spaces were required to become accessible to all populations. ADA guidelines state: “The following private entities are considered public accommodations for purposes of this subchapter, if the operations of such entities affect commerce ... (H) a museum, library, gallery, or other place of public display or collection.” Additionally, Section 12182 explains that:

No individual shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation.³

ADA has opened the door to new audiences who may not otherwise have had the opportunity to visit these museums or historic sites.

Here is where this dissertation dialogues with both the public historian’s desire to address as broad of an audience as possible⁴ and the historical legacy of past discrimination, with a particular focus on people with intellectual disabilities and other related cognitive and developmental disabilities.⁵ This study uses the term “intellectual

³ *Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*, Public Law 101-336, 101st Cong., 2d sess. (26 July 1990), 104 Stat. 327.

⁴ International Council of Museums, *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook* (Paris: ICOM, 2010), 105; Harpers Ferry Center Accessibility Task Force, *Special Populations: Programmatic Accessibility Guidelines* (Harpers Ferry, WV: National Park Service, June 1999), 1.

⁵ The terminology and definitions related to medical conditions and special education vary throughout time and across disciplines. The terms mental retardation, intellectual disability, cognitive delay, and developmental disability can refer to the same medical terms. “Learning disability” is used to refer to impairments, such as dyslexia, in which a person may have a high IQ but not the ability to perform certain tasks such as reading or math. Sources for further reading about terminology are available at Peter Wright and Pamela Wright, *Wrightslaw: From Emotions to Advocacy*, 2d ed. (Hartsfield, VA: Harbor House Law Press, 2006), 351-60, also available at <http://www.wrightslaw.com/links/glossary.sped.legal.htm> (accessed 2 April 2013); Center

disability” to refer to mental disability, such as mental retardation or cognitive delay, in accord with Public Law 111-256, also known as “Rosa’s Law.” President Barack Obama signed “Rosa’s Law” on October 5, 2010. The law serves to “change references in Federal law to mental retardation to references to an intellectual disability, and change references to a mentally retarded individual to references to an individual with an intellectual disability.”⁶

This dissertation aims to create effective examples and guidelines for creating programming for this targeted group. The dissertation then explores how the potential of universal design concepts may combine with object-centered learning to create museum education initiatives.

Creating these programs will help students see the world as an interconnected, diverse place where all are welcomed to interact and engage with various populations within their community. It is of utmost importance to develop these programs in league with the community the curriculum will serve and with educators in the special education field.

The dissertation not only analyzes these issues but it also offers potential solutions in a close study of educational programming, and the resultant public dialogue, from field visits and interviews at two very different places, the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City and the Sam Davis Home in Smyrna, Tennessee. MOMA is one of the

for Inclusive Child Care, “Special Education Terminology Glossary,” at http://www.inclusivechildcare.org/inclusion_glossary.cfm (2 April 2013); and Joy J. Rogers, “Glossary of Special Education Terms,” Council for Disability Rights, <http://www.disabilityrights.org/glossary.htm> (accessed 2 April 2013).

⁶ Public Law 111-256, 111th Cong., 2d sess. (October 5, 2010).

best known cultural institutions in the western world. The Sam Davis Home is another matter. When the home was first opened to the public in the early 1920s, it was as a shrine to the “Confederate Boy Hero” who lived at the site before the Civil War. Throughout the twentieth century the focus of the site began to shift to focus more on family life during the mid-nineteenth century, as well as farm life, in addition to the traditional focus on the Civil War.

The Sam Davis Home and Museum includes an historic home, several outbuildings, a family cemetery, hundreds of acres of farm land, and a museum with semi-permanent exhibits and visitor center. The site generally hosts students from Rutherford County schools and the areas surrounding Smyrna, and offers a variety of programs, such as “Life Under the Gun,” which is about life during the Civil War for soldiers and civilians, scavenger hunts, museum tours, and tours of the historic home to these groups. The dissertation will include a study of experiences of special education students and their teachers on a visit to the Sam Davis Home.

The study ends with a conclusion that addresses the success and failures that went along with the process of creating a model. The chapter will ask how the program is different, how does it succeed and where does it fail, along with measurements for those assessments. Future adaptations to this model will also be offered, including information on how to create a model at various types of historical museums and organizations. The public historian’s discussion of special needs and museum education is only beginning.

CHAPTER II: PATTERNS OF EXCLUSION AND THE RISE OF THE FREAKSHOW

For centuries, human beings have created words and categories to exclude what they saw as “the other” from the cultural mainstream. The Greek philosopher Aristotle argued in *Politics*, Book VII: “As to the exposure and rearing of children, let there be a law that no deformed child shall live.”¹ Scholars such as Robert Garland remind us that modern society still has not moved much from the classical world’s assumption: “Inasmuch as we still equate Truth with Beauty and Beauty with Truth, we lie in direct descent from our classical forebears.”²

In the United States, scholars for a generation have recognized the patterns of exclusion for people with intellectual disabilities and other related cognitive and developmental disabilities. David Rothman’s *The Discovery of the Asylum* (1971) opened historians’ eyes to the process of change in the history of education of people with disabilities as it moved from instruction in the home, to specialized schools and institutions, to asylums, and most recently, to classroom inclusion in public schools.³

Gerald A. Grob became the generation’s foremost historian of the treatment of those with mental illness in the United States. He authored *Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875* (1973), *Mental Illness and American Society 1875-1940* (1983), and, *From*

¹ Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Colonial Press, 1900), Book VIII.

² Ibid., 182.

³ David J. Rothman *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1971).

Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in America (1991). Grob capped his career with the overview, *The Mad In America: A History of Their Care and Treatment* (1994).⁴

Grob recently summarized his achievement in a contribution to the H-Madness website. He emphasized that his work:

has always been on those elements that shaped and modified mental health policy: the changing composition of the population with severe mental; concepts of the etiology and nature of mental illnesses; the organization and ideology of psychiatry; funding mechanisms; and existing popular, political, social, and professional attitudes and values.⁵

The story told by Grob and the others has created an accepted context for disability history. During colonial and early republic eras, families kept people with disabilities at home, or they sent them away to custodial institutions.⁶ In the 1840s, reformers urged that

⁴ Gerald Grob, *Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Gerald Grob, *Mental Illness and American Society 1875-1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983); Gerald Grob, *From Asylum to Community: Mental Health Policy in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); and Gerald Grob, *The Mad In America: A History of Their Care and Treatment* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

⁵Gerald Grob, "How I Became a Historian of Psychiatry," H-Madness, accessed April 4, 2013. Other key literature includes: James W. Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind: A History of Mental Retardation in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); James M. Kaufman and Daniel P. Hallahan, *Special Education: What It Is and Why We Need It* (Boston: Pearson, 2005); Michael Rosenberg, et al., *Special Education for Today's Teachers: An Introduction* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2008); Robert L. Osgood, *The History of Special Education: A Struggle for Equality in American Public Schools* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008); Kim E. Nielson, *A Disability History of the United States* (New York: Beacon Press, 2012); M. A. Winzer, *The History of Special Education: From Isolation to Integration* (Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 1993); and Paul K. Longmore and Lauri Umansky, *The New Disability History: American Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

⁶ Osgood, *History of Special Education*, 7.

those with mental retardation or disabilities were a social and state problem.⁷ Institutions expanded to serve as places to relieve families from the “grievous burden” of taking care of a child or adult with a disability. Prior to the establishment of such places to care for people with disabilities, many “feeble-minded” persons were sent to county workhouses for the poor or insane asylums.⁸

The institutionalization phase of United States policy toward the disabled reached its peak influence from 1870 to 1950 when state and local governments funded the construction of often massive state asylums and supported them with annual but typically meager appropriations. Intellectual disabilities and cognitive disorders of all types were present in these institutions, but children who had strange behavior in particular ended up in what were called insane asylums. Institutions all claimed to provide individual attention to people previously ignored or marginalized by society.⁹

Institutions for “idiots” or “the feeble-minded” claimed to be in place to provide education as well as care and protection for the individuals housed there. In the mid-nineteenth century, many social reformers such as Dorothea Dix and Charles Sumner wanted to create places to instruct children with intellectual disabilities and other related cognitive and developmental disabilities in general education. Reformers and public officials began to realize that workhouses, jails, and lunatic asylums were not appropriate places for children to receive proper education and treatment. The fact remains that while they were trying to provide better care and education for children with disabilities, they

⁷ Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 18.

⁸ Osgood, *History of Special Education*, 14.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

were still holding them as separate to the rest of the world and as a burden; rather than providing hope for individuals they were simply maintaining custodial care.

In the early years of institution life for children with intellectual disabilities, education was the primary focal point of their daily lives. Eduoard Seguin, a mid-nineteenth century educational and social philosopher, developed a method of therapy called “physiological education” for people with “defective brains.” In 1870 Seguin wrote:

A little more than twenty years ago, there was no educational establishment for idiots in the United States; now there are two in New York, two in Massachusetts, one in Connecticut (recently liberally endowed by the late Philip Maret), one in Pennsylvania, one in Ohio, one in Kentucky, one in Illinois -- at least nine in all, where above one thousand children are under instruction.¹⁰

Seguin’s method used all five senses and taught children about their daily responsibilities such as bathing, eating, and dressing in an effort to help the child’s motor skills.

Institutions in general had a daily schedule that included formal instruction as well as social interaction, hygiene and physical activity.¹¹ Seguin developed many methods for education, but the implementation of his ideas fell short; many institutions did little for the disabled inmates’ productivity or education.¹²

One Indiana educator described her feelings about the way those with disabilities were treated:

This class of unfortunates thrill us with horror and disgust us with their repulsive looks and loathsome manners. They are shunned by men, kept in the dark corners of the world, and looked upon with shame and loathing by their natural protectors.

¹⁰ Edward Seguin, “Institutions for Idiots,” *Appleton’s Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Art* (October 12, 1870): 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 3.

She went on to explain that if children were not taken into state care that “the burden of such a being has reduced entire families to pauperism.”¹³

By the mid-nineteenth century, most educational facilities for those with intellectual disabilities were custodial rather than educational. During this time, mental retardation became a “problem,” which insured the endurance of the institution as a necessary place for all communities. After the Civil War, Trent argues that a new view of mental retardation emerged, which he called the ‘burden of the feeble-minded.’¹⁴ In Fort Wayne, Indiana, the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth during the 1880s divided children into three “grades” based on their level of ability; the three grades consisted of one that used academic instruction, another used a more basic instruction, and the third was merely physiological training and drill. In addition to this instruction, children had play time, physical education, and work in the institution’s farm, dining room, or laundry. Children learned together, but lived and slept in separate dormitories based on gender, and were not left alone by teachers or protectors.¹⁵

The head physician said that for a child with intellectual disability to become mentally, morally, and physically acceptable would be “as difficult as it is for the leopard to change his spots.”¹⁶ For the next several years, the institution was transformed into a custodial institution rather than one that educated children. By end of the nineteenth

¹³ Harriet McIntyre Foster, *The Education of Idiots and Imbeciles* (Indianapolis, IN: Social Science Association of Indiana, 1879), 11-12.

¹⁴ Trent, *Inventing the Feeble Mind*, 3.

¹⁵ State of Indiana, *34th Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1885/1886), 129-30.

¹⁶ State of Indiana, *14th Annual Report of the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1892), 13.

century, most administrators only allowed the most capable of students to participate in schoolwork while the rest were provided with custodial care and instruction.¹⁷

In 1898, a visitor at the Indiana University made almost no mention of academic work and instead focused on physical training, games, and activities that were in place to train students in their habits and attitudes rather than academic education.¹⁸ As the twentieth century dawned, institutions for people with mental disabilities continued to move from improvement and education to protective care; academic instruction was a small part of daily life in these overcrowded institutions.

The overcrowded nature of these institutions is apparent in an 1899 article in the *New York Times*. The author explains that notices of overcrowding in state asylums for feeble-minded children gained attention from reformers and the community, and a new asylum was proposed for the state. When the Attorney General was asked what to do with feeble-minded children, he replied, "such children must find shelter in other state institutions of similar nature." The Attorney General believed this; the author noted:

It ought to be remembered that the state takes care of these children not merely out of humanity, but for the protection of the community against such evils as would result if such children were permitted to grow up without any effort to develop their latent good qualities and suppress their evil tendencies.¹⁹

The article reflects the popular opinion of the time that many people thought the "feeble-minded" were inherently bad and a menace to society without reform in institutions.

¹⁷ Osgood, *History of Special Education*, 31.

¹⁸ State of Indiana, *20th Annual Report of the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Department of Public Welfare, 1898), 18.

¹⁹ "The Proposed Craig Colony: To Treat Feeble-Mindedness and Psychopathic Defects," *New York Times*, August 10, 1899, 4.

The treatment of children with special needs in public classrooms became more scientific and meaningful in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1896 Providence, Rhode Island opened the first classroom for children with intellectual disabilities and other related cognitive and developmental disabilities. By 1927, over 500 cities in the United States had 4,000 classes with more than 78,000 students with special needs.²⁰

Boston was a key trendsetter; in 1899 the city opened a class for students identified as “mentally deficient” in public schools. By the 1920s special education was a fundamental aspect of Boston’s public schools, and over five percent of the students were in a designated special setting. By this time, Chicago, New York, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and other cities had classes devoted to students with disabilities; special classes for children with mental retardation were standard in large school systems in the 1920s.²¹

While educators in large urban areas developed new programs and opportunities for the intellectually disabled, sideshows still dominated popular culture. Sideshows as a form of mass entertainment shaped attitudes and behaviors from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century. That history must also be considered as part of the historical context for today’s museum programming for those with intellectual disabilities and other cognitive and developmental disabilities.

From the popular Coney Island amusement area in New York City to traveling circuses and sideshows, exhibits that featured people with physical differences were some

²⁰ Osgood, *History of Special Education*, 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

of the most prevalent attractions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Dime museums and national exhibitions up to the mid-twentieth century often featured humans who were considered different for the public to view and experience. The exhibition of people in these shows was sometimes voluntary, but most often were acts of desperation from people the mass culture considered to be “freaks.” The place of those individuals with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities, is an important piece of the past that informs present displays and exhibits, museum policies, and popular attitudes. Even today, modern sideshows are available to the public in various forums. To understand the impact that the past had on the present, it is important to first understand what a freak show is or was, and what defines a “freak.”

From 1840 until 1940 freak shows were at their height. Historians typically mark 1840 as the year for the beginning of the freak show era, because in that year P.T. Barnum began the American Museum, a New York City attractions that cost a dime to enter. The museum contained many exhibits of historic artifacts and gaffes, which were faked items made to trick the viewer. The museum also housed many people who were considered to be rarities worthy of exhibition. These people included: General Tom Thumb, a person with dwarfism; “the Aztec Twins;” albinos; the “what is it,” who was also a person with microcephaly; and many other “living curiosities.”²² In 1865 a fire destroyed P. T. Barnum’s original American Museum (Figure 1).

²² Phineas T. Barnum, *An Illustrated Catalogue and Guide Book to Barnum's American Museum* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, circa 1860).



Figure 1: C. P. Cranch, *Burning of Barnum's Museum, July 13, 1865*, New York Public Library, <http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/id?1659268> (accessed January 17, 2013).

The *New York Times* listed many of the items of interest that had been lost in the fire, though none of the people who were exhibited died.²³ A newspaper article published in 1865 claimed that Barnum was constructing a new museum to replace the old. The author claimed that, “the fact is, that the loss of the museum was a national calamity.”²⁴ However, the museum yet again burned to the ground in 1868 and was not rebuilt again.²⁵ Instead, Barnum took his show on the road and became one of the most famous traveling circuses.

²³ “Disastrous Fire: Total Destruction of Barnum's American Museum,” *New York Times*, July 14, 1865.

²⁴ “Barnum's New Museum Project: Museum Will Contain,” *New York Times*, July 18, 1865.

²⁵ “Burning of Barnum's Museum: List of Losses and Insurances,” *New York Times*, March 4, 1868.

For over 100 years, entrepreneurs organized exhibitions of people with physical, mental, and behavioral disabilities or impairments to attract the public and generate a profit.²⁶ Many times they advertised exhibitions as educational and scientific activities.²⁷ Barnum's museum and others like it became known as dime museums. Many times they housed gaffes or fake objects and people, and were little more than a circus or carnival sideshow exhibit. While people likely did not conflate museums with sideshows, the sideshows were generally billed as educational events and opportunities, and the sideshow did grow out of the dime museum tradition.

The dime museum of nineteenth century America allowed the general population to see "dioramas, panoramas, georamas, cosmoramas, paintings, relics, freaks, stuffed animals, menageries, waxworks, and theatrical performance."²⁸ The museums served as

²⁶ People with physical disabilities or anomalies are generally called "born different" peoples, unlike those who are "made freaks" by swallowing swords or nailing objects into their heads. Today's freak shows consist mainly of people who are "made freaks" who do dangerous tricks or have a rare talents, though there are some instances of "born different" still today.

²⁷ Edwin L. Godkin, "A Word About Museums," *The Nation* (July 27, 1865): 113-14.

²⁸ Andrea Stulman Dennett, *Weird and Wonderful: The Dime Museum in America* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 5.

escapes for Victorian Americans.²⁹ For many, the word museum thus became irrevocably associated with the weird, strange, and unknown.³⁰

The word “unknown” for many Americans, historian Robert Bogdan emphasized, also meant “freak,” a word that became a metaphor for separation, marginality, and an aspect of the dark side of human experience. To Bogdan, “freak” may be a frame of mind for the person called a freak, a set of practices that person employs, or a way of thinking about and presenting people. To be a freak is to enact a tradition of stylized presentation.³¹ *Sideshow U.S.A.* by Rachel Adams defines freakishness as “a historically variable quality, derived less from particular physical attributes than the spectacle of the extraordinary body swathed in theatrical props.”³² Rather than a medical or standardized term, freak serves as a classification for those who performed or displayed themselves for the public. Adams also claims that those who are called freaks announce themselves as the antithesis of normality by participating in exhibitions.³³

²⁹ Ibid., 7.

³⁰ More information about the rise and impact of dime museums and entertainment industry as a whole is available in Dennett’s *Weird and Wonderful*; John Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978); Hugh H. Genoways and Mary Anne Andrei, *Museum Origins: Readings in Early Museum History and Philosophy* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2008); Charles C. Sellers, *Mr. Peale’s Museum: Charles Wilson Peale and the First Popular Museum of Natural Science and Art* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1980); and Gary Kulik, “Designing the Past: History-Museum Exhibitions from Peale to the Present,” in *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, ed., Warren Leon and Roy Rosenweig (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 3-37.

³¹ Robert Bogdan, *Freak Show: Presenting Human Oddities for Amusement and Profit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 2-3.

³² Rachel Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A: Freaks and the American Cultural Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 6.

³³ Ibid., 9.

Rosemarie Garland-Thomson is a disability historian who analyzes disability and the freak show; she claims instead of self-naming that the road to “enfreakment” comes from the normal people with more social or cultural power who need to validate their own normality by calling attention to differences in others. Garland-Thomas says:

Freaks are above all products of perception: they are the consequences of a comparative relationship in which those who control the social discourse and the means of representation recruit the seeming truth of the body to claim the center for themselves and banish others to the margins.”³⁴

Humans have created the aspects of freakishness as a cultural construct, and the attributes of “freakishness” are not intrinsic to a person with any certain disability or ability.

By creating this separate cultural category, society takes away the humanity of the people who are considered to be freaks. Bogdan warns viewers not to conflate the performance with the person behind his or her role in the sideshow.³⁵

Garland-Thomson agrees:

the body envelops and obliterates the freak’s potential humanity. When the body becomes pure text, a freak has been produced from a physically disabled human being. Such accumulation and exaggeration of bodily details distinguishes the freak from the unmarked and unremarked ordinary body that claims through its very obscurity to be universal and normative.³⁶

By labeling a person a freak, the sideshow takes away the humanity of the performer because he or she might not have the same physical characteristics of the “normal” person, and authorizing the paying customer to approach the person as an object of curiosity and

³⁴ Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 63.

³⁵ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 10.

³⁶ Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 60.

entertainment.³⁷ To reconcile the exploitation of people who were different as curiosities worthy of admission price, society had only to take away the humanity of those individuals.

Some of the most popular performers at sideshows had both physical and intellectual impairments. P.T. Barnum's most exhibitions often highlighted those performers known by the derogatory term of "pinheads." The term pinhead was used to label sideshow performers who had small heads throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. Many pinheads had microcephaly (Figure 2), which is a medical condition present at birth in which the patient has a small skull, and thus, a smaller brain than the average person.

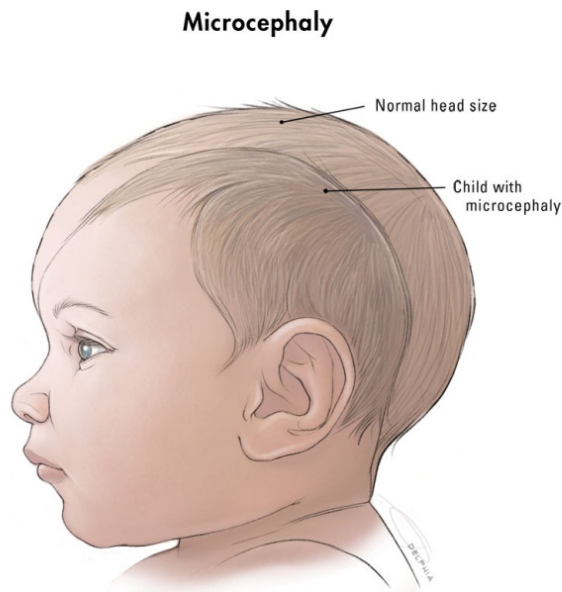


Figure 2: Boston's Children Hospital, "Microcephaly,"
<http://www.childrenshospital.org/az/Site1296/mainpageS1296P0.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

³⁷ Adams, *Sideshow U.S.A.*, 10.

Some people with microcephaly have normal intelligence, but most experience some level of mental retardation or intellectual disability. Additionally, many people with microcephaly also have characteristics of dwarfism and seizures.³⁸ Though many performers who were labeled pinheads had microcephaly, not all did. Some, as discussed below, had other types of disabilities or simply had smaller heads that were accentuated by hairstyle.

P. T. Barnum created some of the most popular exhibits of people known as pinheads. The first act, premiered in 1850, was of The Aztec Children; the Wildmen of Borneo came in 1852, and in 1860, the Wild Australian Children premiered. In the nineteenth century, Zip – also known as the What Is It? – and many others gained national fame through the sideshows and other media. All of these acts had smaller heads than the average person, and all except the Wildmen of Borneo had sloping foreheads common among individuals with microcephaly. The individuals categorized as pinheads were also all purported to have been captured in wild lands outside of the United States. This description stripped the humanity from people who were presented as unintelligent creatures that needed care from a “keeper,” much like animals at a zoo.³⁹

Barnum took the idea of pinhead exhibition from the South American “Aztec Twins.” While traveling in Central America in 1849, a Spanish trader named Ramon Selva discovered two small children in San Miguel, St. Salvador, named Maximo and Bartola. The children were described as dwarfish and idiotic, and Selva convinced their

³⁸ National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, “NINDS Microcephaly Information Page,” <http://www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/microcephaly/microcephaly.htm> (accessed November 23, 2012).

³⁹ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 119-46.

mother that he would be able to cure the children if he was able to take them to the United States.⁴⁰ When Selva returned to New York, he sold the children to the man that became their manager and owner and displayed them in freak shows for years.⁴¹

Publicity reports called Maximo and Bartola the “Last of the Ancient Aztecs” in an attempt to gain popularity for their mysterious backgrounds and heritage. To validate their history, their manager sold a booklet called *Life of the Living Aztec Children*, which told the fabricated story of how he obtained the children for the sideshow. The booklet claimed that three adventurers came across the children as they were sitting as idols on an altar in an ancient Aztec city.⁴² When the manager first exhibited them in Boston, Massachusetts in 1850, they were dressed in outfits with Aztec designs and feathers (Figure 3), they were an immediate success not only among the public but also with the scientific community.⁴³

⁴⁰ Pedro Valasquez and Barnum’s American Museum, *Illustrated Memoir of an Eventful Expedition into Central America* (New York: Wynkoop, Hallenbeck & Thomas, 1860).

⁴¹ “The Aztecs,” *The Courier*, December 16, 1853, <http://www.sideshowworld.com/81-SSPAlbumcover/SS-13-PH/Aztec-1/PH-MB-The-Aztecs-1.html> (accessed 2 April 2013).

⁴² Valasquez and Barnum’s American Museum, *Illustrated Memoir*.

⁴³ “The Aztecs,” *The Courier*.



Figure 3: “Maximo and Bartola: Aztecs of Ancient Mexico,” Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann Photographs, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.

In the 1860 catalogue of Barnum’s Museum, the author described the Aztec Twins:

“ their form and features unlike any other human being, their heads smaller than an infant's a week old, measuring only thirteen inches in circumference, while that of an ordinary adult measures 22 to 23 inches.”⁴⁴ The description created the impression that the twins were from another species altogether rather than people with disability.

⁴⁴ Barnum, *An Illustrated Catalogue*.

One observer claimed that to everyone the children were “subjects deserving of careful scrutiny and thoughtful observation... they must be objects of vivid interest.”⁴⁵ Their intelligence level, race, size, and other child-like aspects served as a way to dehumanize Maximo and Bartola. An article from 1860 in the *New York Journal of Commerce* called them “the greatest curiosities of the human race ever seen in this country.” The author added that “they are human beings there can be no doubt; and they are not freaks of nature, but specimens of a dwindled, manikin race.”⁴⁶ Though this author did recognize their humanity, he continued to diminish them because of their race. Rather than recognizing the children’s impairment, the public saw them as from a previously undiscovered race of people.

Maximo and Bartola were the first people with microcephaly to be exhibited as curiosities or freaks in America, but they were certainly not the last. The claim that such people were from a race in the Yucatan descended from Aztec culture persisted with many of the acts that followed the original Aztec Twins. By displaying people with microcephaly in groups or pairs, the argument that they were from a different race seemed more plausible than the reality of a congenital birth defect.

Barnum next made famous a set of twins made famous known as the Wild Men of Borneo (Figure 4); the men were, however, neither from Borneo nor wild. Born Hiram and Barney Davis in Long Island and Ohio, respectively, the men grew up on a farm in Ohio until a showman visited them in 1852. The men were around three feet and six

⁴⁵ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 130.

⁴⁶ From the *New York Journal of Commerce* as quoted in *Life of the Living Aztec Children*.

inches tall, and they were called dwarfs and imbeciles. Accounts from people who met the boys described them as mentally deficient and mentally defective.⁴⁷

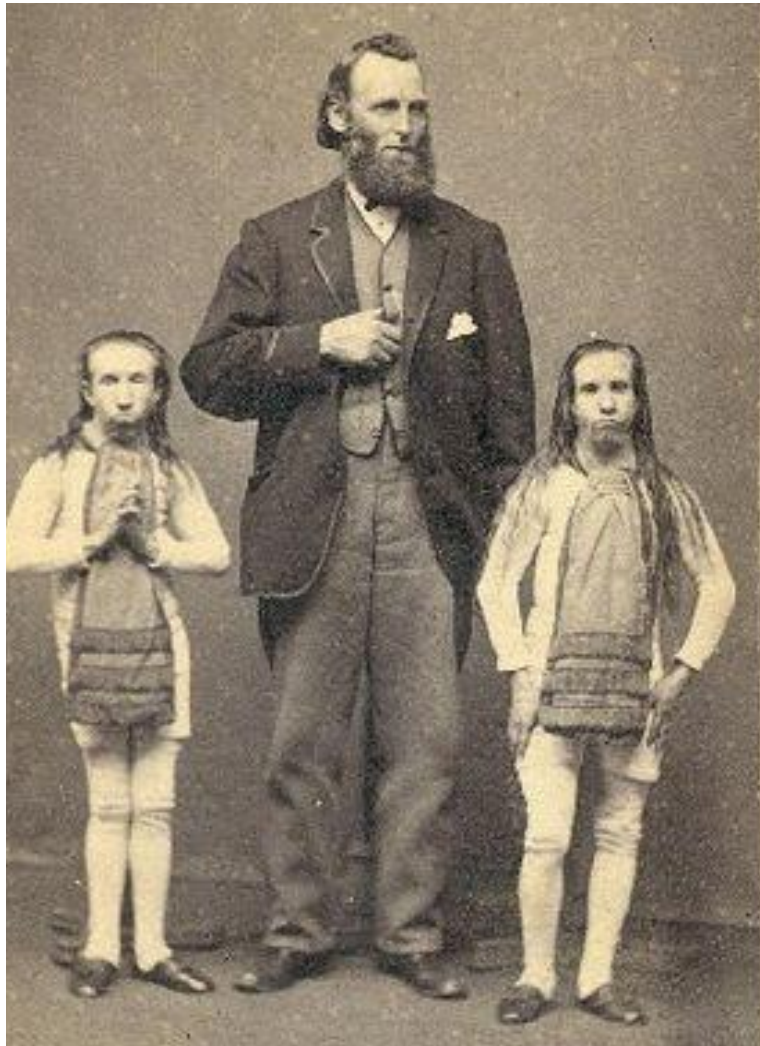


Figure 4: Disability History Museum, "Waino and Plutanor," shown with their manager Hanford Lyman, c. 1876, Syracuse University collections, <http://www.disabilitymuseum.org/thumbs/thumb100-926.jpg> (accessed October 25, 2013).

⁴⁷ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 122.

When Lyman Warner appeared at the Davis home and offered to exhibit the boys in a freak show, the family initially refused to let them go; when he returned with a wash basin full of money, the boys' mother decided that there would be more money and opportunities for Hiram and Barney. Warner changed their names to Waino and Plutano and exhibited them in halls, dime museums, and sideshows.⁴⁸ As with the Aztec twins, the Davis brothers had an elaborate origins story attached to their exhibition. To create the façade of the wild aspect of people in Borneo, Hiram and Barney were told to speak in gibberish and snarl while wearing chains, and they were exhibited in front of painted jungle scenes.⁴⁹

Around the same time as the Wild Men of Borneo, Barnum also exhibited the Wild Australian Children (Figure 5). Again, there was an elaborate story of the capture of the children from a near-extinct and as-yet undiscovered race of people from an exotic land. Tom and Hettie were actually microcephalic siblings who were severely mentally retarded, and they were also born in Ohio.⁵⁰ A pamphlet that accompanied them claimed that an adventurer and explorer named Captain Reid captured them in Australia.⁵¹ The pamphlet did not address their cognitive abilities, but instead said that the children were, “neither idiots, *lusus naturae* [meaning monsters or freaks of nature] , nor any other abortion of humanity. But belonged to a distinct race hitherto unknown to civilization.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ “Exhibition of Wild Men,” *New York Daily Times*, August 7, 1854.

⁵⁰ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 120.

⁵¹ *The Adventures of an Australian Traveler (Captain J. Reid) in Search of the Marvelous* (Buffalo, NY: Courier Co., 1872).

⁵² Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 120.



Figure 5: National Library of Australia, “Wild Australian Children, c.1869,”
<http://nla.gov.au/nla.pic-vn4273119> (accessed January 17, 2013).

The two individuals traveled with sideshows for at least thirty years, and were therefore not children for most of, if any, of their exhibited time. Their mental abilities and the characteristics of their exhibition instead categorized them as children.

Perhaps the most well-documented and popular exhibits of P. T. Barnum was Zip the Pinhead, also sometimes called the “What Is It?” His real name was William Henry

Johnson, and he was born around 1840 in New Jersey.⁵³ His condition, both physically and mentally, is still disputed, but it is known that Johnson was small in stature, standing between four and five feet tall. Bogdan argues that today Johnson would surely be diagnosed as mentally retarded and microcephalic;⁵⁴ others argue that the shape of his head and his behavior are contrary to this diagnosis. Regardless, he was one of the most popular “freaks”, and he was exhibited during the peak of sideshow popularity from 1840 until his death in 1926.⁵⁵

A person who claimed to be his sister wrote an article that said Johnson was recruited to the sideshow at the age of four. Johnson never spoke extensively about his past, and many times he was described as being incoherent when he did speak. However, one person who knew him in the circus life described him as, “a pinhead, but fairly intelligent.”⁵⁶ The publicized story about Johnson claimed that he was captured along the River Gambia in Africa and brought to the United States. Johnson was an African-American with a dramatically pointed head, which when shaved was accentuated. He was often dressed in a monkey-suit to his neck and exhibited as a missing link between apes and humans (Figure 6).⁵⁷

⁵³ “Zip, ‘The What Is It?’ To Quit the Circus: He’s 83 Now,” *New York Times*, April 11, 1926, p. E19.

⁵⁴ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 134.

⁵⁵ “Many Circus Folk at Zip’s Funeral: Aged Freak Buried Simply,” *New York Times*, April 29, 1926, p. 48.

⁵⁶ “An Old Barnum Barker,” *New York Times*, November 12, 1933, p. X5.

⁵⁷ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 132.



Figure 6: “William Henry Johnson posing as Zip the What Is It?” Ronald G. Becker Collection of Charles Eisenmann Photographs, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library.

Zip’s character went beyond the wild aspects of his past, as exhibitors presented him as a clownish character who took part in many staged displays for publicity including boxing, playing the violin, and even a simulated marriage to a dwarf.⁵⁸

At his death, his sister claimed that Johnson could speak like an average person. She also claimed that his dying words were, “Well, we fooled ‘em for a long time, didn’t

⁵⁸ “Giant the Best Man at Midget Wedding,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1916, p. 9.

we?”⁵⁹ Many people of all backgrounds attended this funeral, and the story of his death was published in twenty newspapers.⁶⁰

Many other performers with microcephaly and some degree of mental impairment appeared in sideshows. In 1910, two children called Aurora and Natali were also exhibited as ancient Aztec children, though photographs show that they were likely people with microcephaly as well. At Coney Island in the early twentieth century, Pip and Flip were exhibited as both Twins from the Yucatan and Wild Australian Children interchangeably; in reality they were unrelated women with microcephaly. Their real names were Elvira Snow and Jennie Lee, and they were born in Georgia. Schlitzie the Pinhead, real name Simon Metz, was another of Barnum’s exhibits, and his fame extended to film after his appearance in Tod Browning’s film *Freaks* (1932). Once sideshows began to decline in popularity around 1940, however, Simon Metz was placed in custodial institutional care.⁶¹

There is little evidence that the medical profession criticized the exhibition of people with intellectual disability. Instead, many scientists and doctors accepted and assisted such displays as educational experiences, and they attended the exhibits along with the general public to examine and comment. Scientists studied the people in the exhibits and wrote articles about them, but none of the articles critique the study of people with disabilities.⁶² The impact of the sideshow is visible in an 1887 medical text where J.

⁵⁹ Marc Hartzman, *American Sideshow* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 50.

⁶⁰ “Zip, Barnum's Famous 'What Is It' Freak, Dies of Bronchitis in Bellevue; His Age Put at 84,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1926, p. 1.

⁶¹ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 133, 136, 146.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 121.

Langdon Down described microcephaly as “the Aztec type.”⁶³ As late as the 1930s, “Aztec-like” remained a medical term for microcephaly.⁶⁴ By the 1930s, mental retardation became more accepted as a medical condition, and the display of people with microcephaly was reduced. Rather than being amazed or intrigued by such freaks, people were offended by the exhibitions and pitied those individuals on display.

In 1985, complaints voiced by concerned citizens prompted the New York State Fair’s Sutton Sideshow attraction to be moved away from the midway of the park, and the term freak was no longer an acceptable term for people with disabilities in the amusement industry.⁶⁵ This reaction recognized the reality that freak shows were crude, exploitative, and somewhat embarrassing to society; it has even been called the “pornography of disability.”⁶⁶

In 1988, historian Robert Bogdan argued that the freakshow was a dying exhibition style that would not be around for much longer for financial reasons and propriety’s sake. Four years later, Congress approved the Americans with Disabilities Act in response to the discrimination often directed at those with intellectual disabilities. This congressional act represented a new world, but also a time that by the twenty-first century accepted the need for “pinheads” once again.

⁶³ J. Langdon Down, *Mental Affections of Childhood and Youth* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1887), 18, 19, 72.

⁶⁴ Charles Bernstein, “Microcephalic People Sometimes Called Pinheads,” *Journal of Heredity* 13 (1922): 31.

⁶⁵ “Sideshow Freaks a Vanishing Act,” *Bangor (Maine) Daily News*, August 26, 1985, p. 16.

⁶⁶ Bogdan, *Freak Show*, 2.

CHAPTER III: REFORMERS, EDUCATORS, AND THE REBIRTH OF THE FREAKSHOW

In the twentieth century, sideshows as a popular way of categorizing those with intellectual disabilities eventually collided with professional medical and educational determinations. Educators in the middle decades of the twentieth century were of two minds. Those influenced by the eugenics movement believed that those with intellectual disabilities were not just a burden--they were a menace because their “bad” genes would eventually infect all Americans.¹ One writer in the *Journal of Education* in 1921 claimed that “no defectives under any conditions should be allowed in public schools, in country or city.”² Dr. George Bliss of the Indiana School for Feeble-minded Youth agreed that, “we need a social conscience that will not tolerate feeble-minded children in the public schools, but will demand either their segregation in special classes, or their removal to a suitable institution

¹ The move to view those with intellectual disability as a menace has its roots in the eugenics movement. More detailed information about eugenics in America and the movement’s impact on special education and disability rights is available in Christine Rosen, *Preaching Eugenics: Religious Leaders and the American Eugenics Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Carl J. Bajema, *Eugenics: Then and Now* (New York: Halsted Press, 1976); Edwin Black, *War against the Weak: Eugenics and America’s Campaign to Create the Master Race* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2003); Ruth C. Engs, *The Eugenics Movement: An Encyclopedia* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2005); Donald Pickens, *Eugenics and the Progressives* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1968); Anna Stubblefield, “‘Beyond the Pale’: Tainted Whiteness, Cognitive Disability, and Eugenic Sterilization,” *Hypatia* 22 (Spring 2007): 163-89; and Ian Dowbiggin, *Keeping America Sane: Psychiatry and Eugenics in America and Canada, 1880-1940* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997).

² “Defectives,” *Journal of Education* 93, (February 1921): 212.

for their education and care. Defective children in the public schools are not only a burden... but may be a positive menace to the discipline and morals of any schoolroom.”³

But other mid-twentieth century educators strongly disagreed. Educators increasingly placed students with special needs in vocational training, in what became known as special education classes. Surveys during this time noted the value of small class size, well-trained teachers, and facilities segregated for those with disabilities; these environments were helpful to the education of children with special needs.⁴

As special education became more modern and accepted in public schools after World War II, people began to look at specializations within the discipline. Some looked at specific categories of disability to better serve those populations with that disability; others used subjects such as art, drama, music, and projects to educate children. Field trips also became integral parts of special education in the early to mid-years of the twentieth century. The teacher of a class from New York City that experienced field trips said the students “live through an experience that would develop them mentally, physically, socially, and emotionally. They learn to adjust to classmates, strange but official adults, new situations... they learn to meet defeat and success.”⁵

From 1940 to the 1960s, disability awareness and education increased in the public arenas and in schools. Harrison Allen Dobbs, a professor at Louisiana State University and advocate for children with disabilities, asserted that: “all children whatever their

³ George Bliss, “President’s Address,” *Indiana Bulletin* 120 (March 1920): 26.

⁴ Osgood, *History of Special Education*, 67; see Grob, *Mental Illness and American Society 1875-1940* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁵ Katherine D. Lynch, “Enrichment of the Program for Subnormal Children,” *Journal of Exceptional Children* 5 (November 1938): 49-53.

characteristics, should command societies fullest respect and aid.”⁶ He also believed that all disciplines, including sociology, psychology, education, medicine, and social work could be helpful to families and children with disabilities. In schools, there was little change in education during this time; students remained in segregated classrooms, and the teachers relied on the arts with children with any disability.⁷ Residential institutions for children with disabilities lost public support throughout the mid-twentieth century due to the over-crowding and poor treatment of those who lived there. In the early 1960s, 738 public and private institutions existed for people with disabilities, serving some 112,000 children and adults.⁸

The 1960 election of John F. Kennedy as President of the United States elevated disability rights to the forefront of the government. Kennedy’s sister Rosemary was born with an intellectual disability, and the Kennedy administration actively worked to support those with disabilities. In 1961, Kennedy created a President’s Panel on Mental Retardation to set goals, planning services, and funding for research and developmental projects.

In 1962, educator Samuel Kirk created the term “learning disabilities” which helped special educators to target those students whose disabilities had not previously been classified as a disability. In his book, *Educating Exceptional Children* (1962), he claimed that the term:

⁶ Harrison Allen Dobbs, “Children with Defects: Steps Forward,” *Peabody Journal of Education* 29 (November 1951): 157.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Osgood, *History of Special Education*, 90.

refers to a retardation, disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, writing, arithmetic, or other school subject resulting from a psychological handicap caused by a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioral disturbances. It is not the result of mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural and instructional factors.⁹

This definition separated those with learning difficulties from those with mental retardation, which influenced the way that children were taught in special education classes and in their mainstream counterparts.

In a message to Congress in 1962 Kennedy emphasized the importance of education of those with disabilities:

Another long-standing national concern has been the provision of specially trained teachers to meet the educational needs of children afflicted with physical and mental disabilities... recommend broadening the basic program to include assistance for the special training needed to help all our children afflicted with the entire range of physical and mental handicaps.¹⁰

The President's Panel on Mental Retardation presented over 100 recommendations to Kennedy to create a better educational environment for people with disabilities in the year after their formation.¹¹ One year after the address to Congress on education, on February 5, 1963, in a "Special Message to the Congress on Mental Illness and Mental Retardation," Kennedy outlined his plan for the education of individuals with mental

⁹ Samuel Kirk, *Educating Exceptional Children* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), 263.

¹⁰ John F. Kennedy: "Special Message to the Congress on Education," February 6, 1962, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, eds., The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=8858> (accessed 2 April 2013). Also see Edward Shorter, *The Kennedy Family and the Story of Mental Retardation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

¹¹ John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, "JFK and People with Intellectual Disabilities," <http://www.jfklibrary.org/JFK/JFK-in-History/JFK-and-People-with-Intellectual-Disabilities.aspx> (accessed 2 April 2013).

retardation. The plan included new programs for maternity and prenatal care, a move away from institutions that had become custodial to instructional agencies, as well as increasing special education, training, and rehabilitation.¹² The lasting effect of this committee was President Lyndon B. Johnson's creation in 1966 of the President's Committee for People with Intellectual Disabilities, which is still in existence today.

In November of 1975, President Gerald Ford signed Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act. This law made it possible for all children with disabilities to integrate more effectively into public schools and society. PL 94-142 guaranteed a free, appropriate public education to each child with a disability in every state and locality across the country. Today, PL 94-142 is still in existence and is known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and it serves children from birth to age 21.¹³

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 was the first major legislation that provided a promise of equality to all people with disabilities. However, Arelene Mayerson observed in her 1992 article, "The History of the ADA: A Movement Perspective", that the ADA did not begin with the congressional legislation of 1990; it

¹² John F. Kennedy: "Special Message to the Congress on Mental Illness and Mental Retardation," February 5, 1963, Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, eds., The American Presidency Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9546> (accessed 2 April 2013).

¹³ Office of Special Education Programs, *Twenty-Five Years of Progress in Educating Children with Disabilities Through IDEA* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

began much earlier with the people and communities that fought against discrimination.¹⁴ Legally, the shift towards disability equality began in 1973 when Congress passed Section 504: the Rehabilitation Act, which banned discrimination based on disability for the receiving of federal funds. Following this action, the disability civil rights movement gained momentum, and 1988, the Americans with Disabilities Act was first brought forward to Congress for consideration. In 1990, the act was passed which gave rights to people with disabilities that had previously not been guaranteed by federal law. Essentially, the law protected against disability discrimination in employment, public services, public accommodation and services operated by private entities, transportation and telecommunications.

A new pattern that called for inclusion rather than exclusion had begun in American education policy. Ironically, as institutions and citizens grew accustomed to compliance with ADA requirements, the “freakshow,” albeit in a different format, reappeared in American popular culture, especially at Coney Island, Brooklyn.

The shift from “born different” to “self-made” freaks in sideshows and other displays is shown in the sideshows of Coney Island today, television shows and movies. Writing in *Disability Quarterly Studies* in 2005, Author Elizabeth Stephens details the differences between those born with a disability and those who are “made freaks.” She adds:

the contemporary freak body is in this way just like the normative model of the body found in 21st-century culture, a plastic and self-made construct,

¹⁴ Arlene Mayerson, “The History of the ADA: A Movement Perspective,” Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, 1992, http://dredf.org/publications/ada_history.shtml (accessed January 10, 2013).

constantly transforming and re-inventing itself. The wonder and anxiety generated by the body of the self-made freak arises not from the randomness of its physical difference, as responses to the "born" freak did, but at its celebration of different capabilities and aesthetics.¹⁵

The freakshow revival is not just at Coney Island. A promotional video for a new television program called *Freakshow* premiered on the American Movie Channel in the fall of 2012. The show follows the Venice Beach Freakshow performers in a reality show format. The promo features several individuals with physical disabilities. The main character, owner and performer Todd Ray, states in the promo, "freak is one of the most positive words I can think of; for us freak means normal."¹⁶

Coney Island is banking on the freakshow, in part, to continue to fuel a resurgence of popularity among locals and tourists. Coney Island USA has been working to revitalize the area for many years. On the boardwalk, the organization houses a museum, a sideshow, and a freak bar for visitors to experience aspects of Coney Island at its prime. A board of directors operates Coney Island U.S.A, and the chair of the Board in 2012 was Dr. Jeffery Birnbaum, who is also a physician who has been studying sideshow performers with physical disabilities. Additionally, he is a Pediatrician with HEAT (Health and Education Alternatives for Teens) of which he is the founder, director, and physician. Dr.

¹⁵ Elizabeth Stephens, "Twenty-First Century Freak Show: Recent Transformations in the Exhibition of Non-Normative Bodies," *Disability Quarterly Studies* 25 (Summer 2005): 1.

¹⁶ AMC Network Entertainment, *Freakshow*, <http://www.amctv.com/shows/freakshow> (accessed November 28, 2012).

Birnbaum has also studied Sideshow Performers, Congenital Malformations, Disabilities and the Medical Community.¹⁷



Figure 7: Coney Island U.S.A.'s Museum and Sideshows by the Seashore. Photo by the author, May 10, 2012.

Today, Coney Island still operates one of the only sideshows in the country (Figure 7). Their website proclaims, “SIDESHOWS BY THE SEASHORE is the last permanently housed place in the USA where you can experience the thrill of a traditional ten-in-one circus sideshow. They’re here, they’re real and they’re alive! Freaks, wonders

¹⁷ Dr. Jeffery Birnbaum, interview by author, Coney Island, NY, May 10, 2012.

and human curiosities!”¹⁸ In an age of ADA, disability rights, and varying degrees of political correctness, it can be hard to see how a sideshow can fit in to the modern world. In May 2012, Coney Island U.S.A had just completed its annual “Congress of Curious Peoples,” at which there are exhibitions of people, speeches and parties, and inductions into the Sideshow Hall of Fame for such categories as “Born Differents” and “Self Inflicted.”¹⁹

Dr. Birnbaum shared information about several people he knows who do participate in sideshows or other types of shows to raise awareness about disability issues. Matt Fraser is a “seal boy” or person with phocomalia who is a disability rights activist who uses his disability in his act.²⁰ He uses his impairment to make the audience uncomfortable for laughing and having fun, since almost all people are conditioned to ignore or remain sympathetic towards people with disabilities.²¹

Another modern sideshow performer with physical disability is Nati Amos, who is a little person with a cleft palette and deformed hands; though she has a degree in biochemistry, she works at a sideshow throwing flaming batons. Whether this is a

¹⁸ Coney Island U.S.A., “Coney Island Circus Sideshow,” <http://www.coneyisland.com/sideshow.shtml> (accessed April 4, 2013).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) describes phocomalia as “a rare birth defect that causes severe birth defects, especially of the upper limbs. The bones of the arms, and in some cases other appendages, may be extremely shortened and even absent. The fingers of the hands may be fused. An extreme case results in the absence of the upper bones of both the arms and legs so that the hands and feet appear attached directly to the body.” <http://www.rarediseases.org/rare-disease-information/rare-diseases> (accessed November 28, 2012). In sideshows and freakshows, people with phocomalia are called “seal boys” or “lobster children” because of the physical characteristics of their disorder.

²¹ Birnbaum interview.

personal choice because she enjoys the act or if she is unable to find a job as a biochemist because of prejudice was unclear from the interview, but it is clear that people with physical disabilities are still performing in sideshows.

An interview with Jason Black from Austin, Texas addressed key questions about disability and the sideshow in today's world.²² Black is known in the sideshow and entertainment world as The Black Scorpion, and in the past he may have been known as a human lobster because of his impairment (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Jason Black, the Black Scorpion, giving a performance and exhibiting his ectrodactyly. Photograph courtesy of Jason Black.

²² Jason Black, email interview by author, in author's possession, August 28, 2012.

Black is affected by ectrodactyly, which is an attribute present at birth in which one or more digits from the hand or foot is missing, and the effect is a claw-like appearance.²³

Black commented in an email to the author:

I am the Black Scorpion. I do participate in freak show/sideshow performances... The world I've grown up in is one that can be, at times, hard headed and difficult to communicate with, because of preconceived notions or thoughts, if you will, as to who someone with different "fill in the blank ... is supposed to be... What I do on stage is magic, not because of illusions or tricks but because of soul. I try to change preconceived negatives into positives and at times fail miserably when agendas have already put blinders along someone's path through our world."²⁴

The world in which Black grew up in is very different from that of his predecessors in the sideshow experienced. Rather than displaying himself simply as a freak, Black tries to change people's impressions of freaks.

When asked how things might have been different if he had lived during the peak of sideshows, Black remarked: "I probably would have made more money, owned a show and my act would have been slightly different.... or I may have been chased by an angry mob of villager with pitchforks and torches into a barn only to be silently killed by my creator."²⁵ Though this may be an exaggeration, the changes from the past to today remain evident.

²³ National Organization for Rare Disorders, "Rare Disease Information," <http://www.rarediseases.org/rare-disease-information/rare-diseases> (accessed November 27, 2012).

²⁴ Black email interview.

²⁵ Ibid.

Black replied to a question about exploitation of himself and his disability in his show:

I think when folks see my act the word “exploit” doesn’t really cross their minds, though I could be wrong... Negative feedback I’ve received has always been of the political nature, usually geriatric white men upset over something I’ve said. I mostly teach about and share experiences of life with ectrodactyly. But really all performers are exploiting themselves.²⁶

Dr. Birnbaum explained that in the past, the disability community often viewed people who performed to be taking place in something equal to pornography. Today, however, many in this population see it as a “rock’n’roll career.”²⁷ Rather than the negative stigma that was originally associated with the term freak, today many people in the sideshow community embrace the term. In New York City and along the east coast, many people seek out the unofficial mayor of Coney Island, Dick Zigun, in hopes that they will be chosen to appear at Sideshows by the Seashore at Coney Island.

Though Coney Island does not employ any people with intellectual disabilities as performers,²⁸ Dr. Birnbaum divulged a story about a child with microcephaly born in New York City but abandoned at a local hospital. A hospital worker knew of Birnbaum’s interest in sideshows and his work with Coney Island, and the hospital employee asked if he would adopt the child to give him a career at Coney Island.²⁹ Though this is a second-

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Birnbaum interview.

²⁸ Coney Island does not employ those with intellectual disability as performers; however, it is interesting to note that radio host Howard Stern has employed a person with microcephaly and severe intellectual disability. Lester Green, called Beetlejuice, attends functions and performances with Stern and is generally seen as a comedian.

²⁹ Birnbaum interview.

hand tale from an interview, it does show that people still associate some disabilities with the sideshow and the exhibition of curiosities.

In addition to the live sideshows of Coney Island and Venice Beach and the new program *Freakshow* on the cable network AMC, many television programs take on the circus midway sideshow. As technologies and interests grow and change, perhaps this is simply the next evolution in the presentation of “the other” for entertainment at home. Perhaps today society is more comfortable watching, asking questions, and gawking at the different people with disabilities or different proclivities than they would be in a public forum.

Producers of programs on the TLC channel seem to have fully embraced the sideshow tradition. One of the channel’s most popular programs is *Abby and Brittany*, which follows conjoined twins Abigail and Brittany Hensel. The women were born in 1990s with a condition called dicephalic parapagus, which causes the women to appear as though they have one body with two heads.³⁰ The women have been thoroughly followed by the media and medical community since their birth, and curiosity continues today with the TLC reality show.

The popularity of the Hensels has nineteenth century roots in the “Siamese Twins,” Cheng and Eng Bunker, who were born in 1811 in what was then Siam. Robert Hunter, a British merchant, “discovered” the twins and paid their family to allow the boys to be exhibited as a curiosity during a world tour. The men gave demonstrations and lectures,

³⁰ Helen Weathers, “Abigail and Brittany Hensel: An Extraordinary Bond,” *The Daily Mail*, December 31, 2006, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-425736/Abigail-Brittany-Hensel-extraordinary-bond.html> (accessed November 28, 2012).

and they were among P. T. Barnum's famous "curiosities." After a successful career of traveling, the men settled in North Carolina, bought a farm, and married sisters Adelaide and Sarah Yates; the men also had twenty-one children between them. The Bunkers died in 1874 within 3 hours of each other.³¹ It is unclear whether or not the Bunker twins were presented as and appreciated as actual people with feelings and lives, or if they were simply curiosities. While many people might be attracted to TLC's *Abby and Brittany* initially because of their condition, if one watches the show he or she will get an insight into the girls' lives and their daily experiences.

One important difference between *Abby and Brittany* and the sideshows of the past, is that the women are presented as individuals who live seemingly normal lives in spite of their perceived differences. Rather than portraying the women as freaks without humanity the show instead follows the women in their daily activities and regular milestones such as graduating from college and interviewing for jobs. The TLC show does manage to show that the women are real people, with feelings, and lives, and success, rather than just displaying them for their differences.

The exploitation of disability in the modern world continues in many ways.³²

While some programs on television may appear to recognize the humanity of the people

³¹ Hartzman, *American Sideshow*, 23-25.

³² The question of exploitation in the modern world is addressed by Annie Delin, who states, in reference to exhibits and portrayals, "In modern society, we no longer actively condone the showing of 'different' people as freaks. . . . Yet we do perpetuate the acceptability of staring and pointing whenever we allow a picture of a small person or someone with a disfiguring condition to be displayed without identity and context." From Annie Delin, "Buried in the Footnotes: The Absence of Disabled People in the Collective Imagery of Our Past," in *Museums, Society, and Inequality*, edited by Richard Sandell (New York: Routledge, 2002), 89.

with disabilities, the pointing and staring aspects seem to still pervade society; the sensational promotional commercials may be the only view that a person has of the people portrayed on any of the shows mentioned above. If that is the case, those people may only see the characters as freaks without humanity.

CHAPTER IV: MUSEUMS AND THE RISE OF OBJECT-CENTERED EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

Museums have long been considered places of public education. Early institutions, however, served a limited public. Considered to be the first “modern” museum, the Ashmolean Museum in England opened at Oxford University in 1683; it is generally thought to be the first museum established by a public body for the public benefit. The Tradescant family developed the collections from various parts of the world and displayed them in their London home, prior to Elias Ashmole’s creation of a purpose-built museum.¹

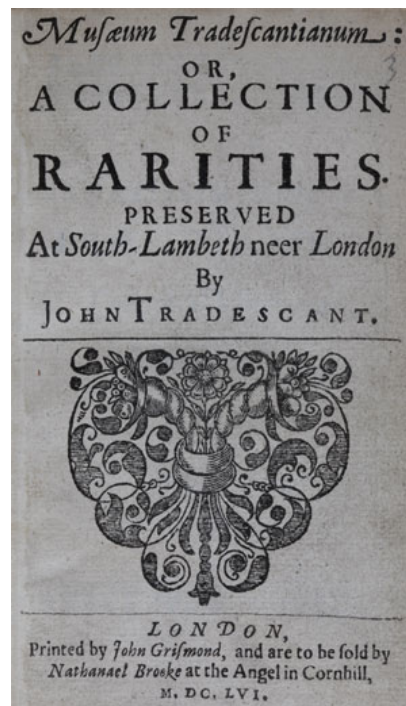


Figure 9: Front page of the *Musaeum Tradescantianum*, a catalogue of the Tradescant collection, dated 1656, <http://britisharchaeology.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/collections/history-17thcentury.html>, (accessed November 29, 2012).

¹ Geoffrey Lewis, “The Role of Museums and the Professional Code of Ethics,” in *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook*, ed. International Council of Museums (Paris: ICOM, 2010), 2.

Elias Ashmole donated his collections to the university in 1677. The collection contained natural history specimens, coins, books, and art and was essentially a “cabinet of curiosities.” Anthony Wood described the Ashmolean Museum as a building, “necessary in order to the promoting and carrying on with greater ease and success severall parts of usefull and curious learning.” The museum had ten rooms and three of those were open to the public. Collections included the “hieroglyphicks [sic] and other Egyptian antiquities” donated by Dr. Robert Huntingdon, an “intire [sic] mummy,” and “Romane [sic] antiquities.”² These collections represent those things that were foreign and intriguing to Oxford students, faculty, and residents, and thus could be classified as one of the most well known cabinets of curiosities.

Less than a century after the establishment of the Ashmolean Museum the British Museum opened in London in 1759, and a generation later, the Louvre opened in Paris. The audience of both institutions was much broader than their predecessors, and their respective governments opened the museums and used them to display private and royal collections.³

Developers of museums in early America could not depend on government patronage; rather they marketed their institutions to a much larger public by the scope and nature of their collections. Artist, inventor, and entrepreneur Charles Willson Peale opened the first major “museum” in Philadelphia in 1794. In a broadside distributed to the American Philosophical Society and other prominent social figures of Philadelphia, Peale

² Genoways and Andrei, *Museum Origins*, 19, 21.

³ Lewis, “Role of Museums,” 3.

emphasized that his museum would both collect and exhibit publicly a wide range of artifacts, focusing on natural history and art, but including historical items as well. His museum was a for-profit enterprise. To keep the doors open he depended on attractions that ensured repeat customers.⁴

Peale's Museum struggled, and eventually entertainment broker P.T. Barnum bought most of the collection.⁵ When that museum burned in 1865, few complained. In *The Nation*, Edwin Lawrence Godkin exclaimed, "the worst and most corrupt classes of our people must seek some new place of resort." He then questioned whether visitors were more upset by the fire that destroyed the museum or the state of the artifacts in the museum when it stood. Godkin asserted that the "insufficiency, disorder, neglected condition" of the museum should have insulted visitors. To Godkin, museums had to be more professional, educational, and limited in the audience they sought to attract. He concluded:

The profoundly scientific are not those who care for public museums, unless containing this or that unique treasure. The frequenters of museums are those who cannot themselves give much time or means to the collection, classification, and study of specimens, but who read in the evenings and would gladly see by day a larger number and greater variety of helps to understand than their own limited time has sufficed to discover.

Godkin called for a new museum that would do justice to that title. He says that "it is in behalf of all classes of the community, except that vicious and degraded one by which the

⁴ Genoways and Andrei, *Museum Origins*, 23.

⁵ A more comprehensive study of Peale's museum is available in Sarah Lynn Davis, "What Happened to Baltimore's Peale Museum?: An Examination into Urban History Museums" (master's thesis: University of Maryland, Baltimore County, 2008); Edward P. Alexander, *Museum Masters: Their Museums and Their Influence* (Nashville, TN: AASLH, 1983), 43-78; Sellers, *Mr. Peale's Museum*; and Kulik, "Designing the Past."

late ‘American Museum’ was largely monopolized, that we ask the community for a building and for collections that shall be worthy of the name so sadly misapplied.”⁶ He wished that the new great New York City museum would be worthy of the name. With the creation of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1870, Godkin and other New York elites got their wish.⁷

Museums became recognized as places of research and higher education. Herman August Hagen, a professor at the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard University, called for separating exhibit and research collections, which led to the establishment of modern museum practices.⁸ Hagen brought an academic rigor to the Victorian debate about museums in the United States. He wanted museums to serve as institutions for public learning, rather than repositories for scholars and the elite. He insisted that museums should “show how museums intended to advance knowledge, namely, collections for public instruction, can be made and arranged so as to be best fitted for their purpose.”⁹

In 1883, British reformer Stanley W. Jevons echoed Hagen’s call for museums to embrace an educational mission. But Jevons also wondered if the public could accept the

⁶ Godkin, “A Word About Museums,” 113-14.

⁷ Edward Porter Alexander and Mary Alexander, *Museums in Motion: An Introduction to the History and Functions of Museums* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2008), 31-32.

⁸ Genoways and Andrei, *Museum Origins*, 39.

⁹ Herman August Hagen, “The History of the Origin and Development of Museums,” *American Naturalist* 10 (1876): 80-89.

diversity, chronological range, and ancient meanings of most museum collections.

Museum guides or interpreters became one of Jevons' solutions.¹⁰

Luigi Palma di Cesnola was the first director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, New York. In 1887 he asserted that all museums had public value, "whether it be one to display the products of art and industry, the relics of human antiquity, the remnants of palaeozoic life, the crystallized beauties of the mineral kingdom, or the gathered specimens from the realm of organized nature." He asserted that museums should not be seen as "an index of the money-spending power of this or that individual or association," but as an "object-library" where visitors can observe and study but cannot remove or check-out the items. This object-library would educate the general public through objects in such a way that the visitors would leave with new ideas and knowledge. By visiting a museum, the visitor would "no longer be left to the haziness and impracticability that too often cling to mere book learning."¹¹

John Edward Gray of the British Museum popularized the concept of the "New Museum" in the late nineteenth century. This new concept of museums focuses on education of the public in exhibition spaces that are separate from research collections.¹² In 1881 the Smithsonian opened a new building under the direction of George Brown Goode that had several spaces open to the public.¹³ Through essays and speeches, Goode

¹⁰ Stanley W. Jevons, "The Use and Abuse of Museums," in *Methods of Social Reform and Other Papers* (London: Macmillan Co., 1883), <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/316/9815> (accessed 2 April 2013).

¹¹ Luigi Palma di Cesnola, *An Address on the Practical Value of the American Museum* (Troy, NY: Stowell Printing House, 1887), 1.

¹² Genoways and Andrei, *Museum Origins*, 97.

¹³ More information in Alexander, *Museum Masters*, 277-310.

disseminated the message of the museum as an institution to collect, preserve, research, exhibit, and educate.¹⁴ In 1895, Goode presented a paper to the British Museums Association that defined a museum as “an institution for the preservation of those objects which best illustrate the phenomena of nature and the works of man, and the utilization of these for the increase of knowledge and for the culture and enlightenment of the people.” He particularly emphasized, with all capital letters, “THE PUBLIC MUSUEM IS A NECESSITY IN EVERY HIGHLY CIVILIZED COMMUNITY.” Goode also wanted a dynamic institution: “A FINISHED MUSEUM IS A DEAD MUSEUM, AND A DEAD MUSEUM IS A USELESS MUSEUM.”¹⁵

In 1908, Frederic A. Lucas, the director of the Brooklyn Museum and later the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, reaffirmed the importance of education in an address to the Staten Island Association of Arts and Sciences. His essay, “Purpose and Aims of Modern Museums,” pointed to a range of museum directors and curators who believed that education was a museum’s primary mission. Lucas believed that the “museum of today is a great deal more than a place where objects are merely preserved, it is an educational institution on a large scale, whose language may be understood by all, an ever open book whose pages appeal not only to the scholar but even to the man who cannot read.” Lucas believed that museums must involve the visitors in the work, methods, and results to gain their interest and support. He concluded, “Over and beyond these things are the educational opportunities offered to everyone and, after all,

¹⁴ Genoways and Andrei, *Museum Origins*, 57.

¹⁵ George Brown Goode, “The Relationships and Responsibilities of Museums.” *Science* 2 (1895): 201.

love of knowledge is the supreme test of civilization.”¹⁶

Director of the University of Nebraska State Museum from 1891 through 1941, Erwin Barbour wrote about the connections museums should have with their publics. He argued that each state should have at least one museum and that museums are not “luxuries and extravagances designed for the few, but are necessities demanded by all.” He then explains that state museums can boost morale of citizens within that state, serve as a source of publicity, and also have an effect on morals throughout the community in which the museum is based.¹⁷

John Cotton Dana built upon the insistence for museum education. The founder and first director of the Newark Museum in New Jersey, Dana was a prolific writer who focused on museum philosophy and purpose. As historian Edward P. Alexander argues, Dana merged the concept of museum with community service. He built a tradition, adopted by many, that a museum was “conducted for the good of the whole community.”¹⁸ Dana was a revolutionary in the field of public education and the institutions that supplement general education. For instance, he encouraged the opening of stacks in the library so scholars could search the books themselves rather than being restricted by the librarian. He also included objects in his library for the public to view as they would in a

¹⁶ Frederic A. Lucas, “Purpose and Aims of Modern Museums,” in *Proceedings - Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences*, vol. II, edited by Philip Dowell, Arthur Hollick, and William T. Davis (Lancaster, PA: New Era Printing Company, 1910), 119.

¹⁷ Erwin H. Barbour, “Museums and the People,” *Publications of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences* 8 (1912): 3.

¹⁸ Alexander, *Museum Masters*, 405.

museum. Dana wanted to re-energize American museums, which he saw as isolated and distant repositories, with what is now called object-centered education programming.

Dana insisted, “as soon as it begins to teach, it will of necessity begin to form an alliance with present teaching agencies, the public schools, the colleges and universities, and the art institutions of all kinds.”¹⁹ Dana’s shift of museums from repositories to places of education was one of the most influential shifts in museum history.

Theodore Low, in 1942, also addressed the change of museums in his article, “What is a museum?” Low asserted that museums must recognize their responsibility as a place for communities to gather.²⁰ Low asserted that museums needed to focus less of their attentions on acquisition and preservation and more on education. He encouraged active education and the encouragement of curiosity: “education, however, must be active not passive, and it must always be intimately connected with the life of the people.”²¹

Object-centered education is at the forefront of most modern museum education initiatives. The American Association of Museums’s *Riches, Rivals, and Radicals: 100 Years of Museums* (2006) pinpointed education as a primary museum goal. The study’s author, Marjorie Schwartz, concluded that museums today are places of “exchange, encounter, and education,” though in the past they were little more than repositories for objects of wealthy donors. Schwartz insists that museums “collect, preserve, display,

¹⁹ John Cotton Dana, *The New Museum: Selected Writings* (Newark: Newark Museum Association, 1999), 57.

²⁰ Theodore Low, “What is a museum?” in *Reinventing the Museum*, ed. Gail Anderson (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2004), 31.

²¹ *Ibid*, 32.

interpret, and educate for the public good” and offer the opportunity to learn and be informed.²²

The International Council of Museums agrees with this approach. It defined a museum as a:

non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.²³

The definition includes society, the public, and education in addition to collections and conservation, a significant shift in attitude and practice.

An effective way to analyze contemporary practice of object-centered education is through a close look at *The Manual of Museum Learning* (2007), edited by Barry Lord. He claims that a learning or education policy is central to museum learning, and should be treated almost as the mission statement for the education department. Lord explains that a successful policy would include features such as a commitment to learning service for the visitors and a link to the overall museum mission. A commitment to maintain research and practices of topics related to the education department is also one of the most important though over-looked duties of most departments in modern museums. The last, but perhaps most significant, segment of the education policy is the need for hands-on collections to be used for learning purposes.²⁴

²² Marjorie Schwartz, *Riches, Rivals, and Radicals: 100 Years of Museums* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2006), 2, 3.

²³ ICOM, “Museum Definition.”

²⁴ Barry Lord, “Introduction to Part III,” in *The Manual of Museum Learning*, edited by Barry Lord (Lanham, MD: Altamira Press, 2007), 139.

Lord's manual begins with Gail Dexter Lord's "Museums, Lifelong Learning, and Civil Society." She argues that museums are powerful public spaces of representation of the leading ideas of their times – based on the study of the objects they collect and prepare. Museums are cultural accelerators that speed cultural awareness. Therefore, it makes little sense to Lord for museums to place classrooms and educational departments in the basement. Do places of learning, she asks, not also deserve a beautiful space? Among museum professionals, Lord argues that museums typically employ people with a higher education and attract a well-educated audience, primed for lifelong learning experiences.²⁵

In the distant past, museums were hostile territory for more than the working-class. They were hostile environments for children, too.²⁶ Museums today, especially historic sites and historic house museums, today focus heavily on school and family audiences for revenue and high visitor numbers. Claudia Haas observes that today "nobody questions any more the right of children to be welcomed as individual visitors with special needs and expectations" at a museum.²⁷ Museums are considered important sites for students' learning experiences. According to Howard Gardner, an education

²⁵ Gail Dexter Lord, "Museums, Lifelong Learning, and Civil Society" in *ibid.*, 5, 7.

²⁶ By 1907, Carolyn Morse Rea wrote that the museum had a room set aside for students in a school group, but that room was not in the exhibit space. Carolyn Morse Rea, "The Relations of the Museum to the Schools." *Bulletin of the Charleston Museum* 3 (1907): 21-32.

²⁷ Claudia Haas, "Families and Children Challenging Museums" in *Manual of Museum Learning*, ed. Lord, 49.

specialist, the object-centered learning that takes place in museums is more effective than learning in school for many children.²⁸

Despite their significance, museum education departments still struggle to gain respect and are often isolated, do not have high esteem in the museum hierarchy, and lead a frustrating battle for the rights of their visitors.²⁹ The transformation from a place of research and knowledge for elite scholars to a place of learning for all audiences will require the assistance of the entire museum, not just the educational department.

Today, museum educators find that a reliance on Common Core Standards programs help their fight to stay relevant and funded.³⁰ In part, Common Core Standards call for more teaching with primary sources, and artifacts and art works are certainly primary sources. Common Core Standards also calls for educators to rely in inquiry method, a tool of investigation used by many museum education curators.

Educators also have recently combatted the fad of standard-based curriculum by linking programs to the specific state curriculum of each grade level.³¹ If a program can be marketed to teachers as comprising several of the checkmarks required for students in their tests, teachers will be more inclined to bring the students, which increases visitor numbers and revenue at the museum. They hope a similar strategy will drive teachers in Common Core Standards programs to visit museums since the collection are primary sources.

²⁸ Howard Gardner, *The Unschooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 202.

²⁹ Haas, "Families and Children," 50.

³⁰ See the extensive discussion and materials at Common Core State Standards Initiative, www.corestandards.org (accessed 2 April 2013).

³¹ Haas, "Families and Children," 79.

Compared to the mind-numbing standardization of tests and test preparation, museum learning in galleries and exhibits is informal and creative. Educators emphasize that this casual style of teaching and learning could attract students and teachers to the museum as a release from the standardized test atmosphere of schools.³² Museum educational programs are ideally experimental and involve hands-on aspects, which encourages creativity.³³ This latter trait underscores the museum's potential for audiences with intellectual disabilities and other cognitive and developmental disabilities.

But the adoption of object-centered curricula at museums really will not make a significant difference unless those same museums address the reality that the targeted audience cannot see themselves at the institution and/or the targeted audience cannot physically access the museum. In many museums, there are few traces of images or displays of people with disabilities in regular permanent exhibits or art. Annie Delin explains that this absence reinforces cultural stereotypes against people with disabilities and conspires to “present a narrow perspective of the existence of disability in history.” Museums that exclude people with disabilities from exhibits, whether they are exhibits themselves or represented in general exhibits, discount an entire segment of visitor population. Because of this exclusion, people with disabilities might feel as if they are not a part of the culture because they are not shown historically or in artistic representations. Delin also argues that the population with disabilities might have lower expectations of their own possibilities because of a lack of role models. In most history museums there are no images of people living, working, making art, or anything else in the past; if they

³² Haas, “Families and Children,” 97.

³³ Ibid.

are present they are called marvels of nature.³⁴ Additionally, work *by* people with disabilities might be on display, but it may not be clear that a person with a disability created the piece.

Delin argues that when people with disability are shown in museums, it is only as freaks or beggars, making it possible to ridicule and dehumanize. Museums have a responsibility, she argues, to create cultural inclusion for people with disabilities. Delin explains that Displaying and interpreting individuals with disabilities as people would be a start towards realizing that responsibility.³⁵

Yet, to disassociate themselves from the sideshow and the dime museum, many institutions today have no mention of people with disability at all. In 2005 several museum professionals tracked the ways that people, including museum curators, feel about disability in museums. Their study found that curators are “anxious not to be seen as promoting freakshow approaches.” Rather than ignoring an entire population, museums need to find a way to incorporate disability history and disabled populations into their exhibits.³⁶

In addition to properly representing people with disabilities at museums, sites must also welcome visitors to become more inclusive of all peoples. Barry Lord believes that to create museums for everyone:

³⁴ Delin, “Buried in the Footnotes,” in *Museums, Society, and Inequality*, ed. Sandell, 84.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 86-89, 96.

³⁶ Richard Sandell, et al., “In the Shadow of the Freakshow: The Impact of Freakshow Tradition on the Display and Understanding of Disability History in Museums” in *Disability Studies Quarterly* 25 (Fall 2005): <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/614/791>.

we must change our basic mindset and emulate aspects of those institutions deemed essential ... These include libraries and shopping malls. In order to be regarded as essential, museums would have to understand, respect, and facilitate each visitor's individual quest and accommodate a broad motivation for entering.³⁷

The history museum and historic sites have unique challenges to meet in the quest to include all people, especially in including people with disabilities and cognitive impairments.

Museums and historic sites were also included under ADA as public places. The Department of Justice ADA website contains a section on museum access that is informational and important for all museums. Approximately 17,500 museums across the United States operated at the time the department published the article, and all of those museums had legal obligations to provide accessibility. Private museums are covered under ADA Title III, and public institutions are covered under the ADA Title II; museums that receive federal funding are covered by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. For compliance, the U.S. Department of Justice provides many tips for museums on its website, including information about accessible entrances, routes throughout the museum, and accessibility in program offerings by the museum. Many of these accommodations apply to people who use mobility devices or are sight and/or hearing impaired.³⁸

Benefits to creating barrier free and accessible programs are myriad; according to the Department of Justice, accessibility can include over 50 million people with disabilities in America, more than 20 million families who have a member with a

³⁷ Lord, ed., *Manual of Museum Learning*, 40.

³⁸ Department of Justice, Disability Rights Section, "Maintaining Accessibility in Museums," http://www.ada.gov/business/museum_access.htm (accessed November 29, 2012).

disability, and millions of Baby Boomers who are becoming disabled with age. The department suggests entrances without stairs, exhibit labels that can be read by visitors who are seated or standing, large-print exhibition brochures, and captioned multimedia programs.³⁹ Promoters of universal design principles for public spaces typically champion these types of accommodations for those with intellectual and physical disabilities.⁴⁰ The Museum section of the Department of Justice website includes many guidelines including: elevators serving public spaces must remain operable; staff and volunteers working at the front desk should know what accessibility services are available and how to request them; and, signage and information in brochures about accessibility must be kept current and available upon request.

The Association of Science-Technology Centers also provides a useful resource for museums' legal obligations for accessible practices.⁴¹ The guide mentions accommodations for barrier-free education and access, but it does not address accessibility for people with intellectual disabilities or learning disabilities as much. Museum officials wonder what they should do in the post-ADA world to go beyond the legal obligations to serve their entire community. There are many museums in the United States and abroad that are working towards inclusion of all people with disabilities at their museum or historic site. One of the best examples of progression is the Museum Access Consortium (MAC) in New York City, New York. The MAC consists of representatives from various

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ "Expanding the Concept of Universal Design," universaldesign.com (accessed April 4, 2013).

⁴¹ Association of Science-Technology Centers, "Resource Center: Accessible Practices: Museums' Legal Obligations," <http://www.astc.org/resource/access/obligations.htm> (accessed January 10, 2013).

museum departments throughout the metropolitan area and members and representatives of the disability community. Members of MAC exchange information, ideas and resources and provide a network of mutual support. The MAC includes among its members persons with personal and professional experience with disabilities and accessibility.⁴²

Accessibility at historic house museums creates individual issues that are recognized by the Department of Justice on the webpage, “ADA Requirements for Small Towns.” The document provides an example of a historic house museum, its challenges, and how those challenges were overcome. The example is of an actual two-story historic house museum, from 1885, that provides exhibition and instructional programs for the public. An evaluation determines that the house is not accessible, but the town decides that moving museum programs to other accessible locations would not be possible because the historic house is a critical part of the programs. Managers of the house museum instead provided access to the first floor of the historic house in compliance with ADA Standards and historic preservation requirements. The state’s historic preservation office determined that creating accessible features for the second floor of the house would threaten the features and historic significance of the house. Rather than destroying the historical integrity of the house, the museum managers located all programs on the first floor of the house, and experiences of the second floor were made available through photos and video.⁴³ These approaches are typical, but as the following chapters will demonstrate, there are more options for historic house museums. Over the last 20 years, studies by

⁴² Museum Access Consortium, “What is the Museum Access Consortium (MAC)?” <http://www.cityaccessny.org/mac.php> (accessed April 4, 2013).

⁴³ Department of Justice, “ADA Requirements for Small Towns,” March 2000, <http://www.ada.gov/smtown.htm#anchor15334> (accessed January 13, 2013).

Doug Blandy, Graham Black, and Vicky Woollard have explored the question, “what is access?” and what it means for museums.

An article that praises art museum programs for adults with mental retardation was published in *Studies in Art Education* in 1993. In the article, author Doug Blandy explains that people with mental retardation and their supporters insist that services such as work and leisure activities should be available to those with disabilities, and such activities should include recreation, learning, and art. The author details the experiences of one education program at the Minnesota Museum of Art, which involved the integration of nine children with moderate to severe mental retardation into a museum education class with 27 second-graders without disability. In the study, the children interacted and were social among each other, and all the children were able to learn together in a way that was appropriate for all.⁴⁴ Blandy provides several methods that were helpful in creating and administering the educational programs:

It was determined beforehand that those spaces to be used in the Minnesota Museum of Art would be accessible to participants with mental retardation and physical disabilities. Presentation strategies and the art materials to be used were appropriate and accessible to all participants. The larger group was broken down into cooperative groups of four. Each cooperative group contained one participant with moderate to severe mental retardation. The cooperative groups engaged in various tasks including making art. Students without disabilities, teachers, and museum staff (interns, guards, art educators) participated in formal and informal on-going education on the character and ramifications of cognitive deficits, the use of instructional methods.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Doug Blandy, “Community-Based Lifelong Learning in Art for Adults with Mental Retardation: A Rationale, Conceptual Foundation, and Supportive Environments,” *Studies in Art Education* 34 (Spring 1993): 167-75.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Though these tips were intended for an audience of art educators and art museum administrators, the information contained within this article is applicable to historic museums and sites. Museum education programs should be inherently hands-on and inquiry-based. By including the tips listed by Blandy above, historic sites and museums could better serve an entire population of the community.

By 2005, museum professionals began to recognize their obligation to serving people with disabilities and creating options for their museum experience. Graham Black's *The Engaging Museum* addresses developing programs and museums that are inclusive of visitor involvement. Black praises the developmental role that museums play through supporting lifelong learning, structured education program, access enhancements, and diverse audiences. Today, Black argues, museums are expected to be *accessible* to all intellectually, physically, socially, culturally, and economically.⁴⁶

To become accessible to all people, Black suggests abiding by the USA Visitor Services Association's "visitor Bill of Rights" of 2001. The association argues that visitors have a right to: comfort, orientation, welcome, enjoyment, respect, communication, learning, choice and control, challenge and confidence, and revitalization.⁴⁷ Museums should strive to meet these standards so that all visitors feel they have rights and an enjoyable experience. Black endorses the association's suggestions for museums to create a more welcoming environment.

⁴⁶ Graham Black, *The Engaging Museum: Developing Museums for Visitor Involvement* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 1, 4.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 32.

People with physiological disabilities need to be able to get into and around the galleries and grounds at a museum, and they should have the opportunity to follow the same route as everyone else. Their safety needs must also be considered; for instance, museums need to be sure that any person will not fall over or walk into unseen obstructions. Fire alarms must also have a visual signal or alternate arrangements must be made to be sure that people with hearing impairments would be safe in a fire. Aside from physical safety, visitors with disabilities must be welcomed and treated the same as everyone else to give them a sense of belonging.⁴⁸

Black also offers suggestions on developing displays for various levels of intellectual access. He recommends asking the following questions to ensure that the exhibit is accessible, “can the material be understood? Does it cater to different learning styles? Does it use simple, active language supported by a layered approach to ensure that the needs of the full audience are catered for? Does it reflect the reality of various lives, and include examples of disabled people?”⁴⁹ While this information is helpful and should be taken under consideration, it is one of the only examples of intellectual access in the entire book.

Five years later, The International Council of Museums published *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook*, which included a section by Vicky Woollard of the City University in London called “Caring for the Visitor.” She explained that visitor services are the “provisions that the museum makes in the physical, intellectual and social sense to enable the visitor to have an informative, pleasant and comfortable visit.” Without good

⁴⁸ Ibid., 35.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 60.

service, learning can be reduced, and visitation will decrease. Woollard also asks, “what is access?” She defines museum access as:

giving the visitor the opportunity to use facilities and services, view displays, attend lectures, research and study the collections, and to meet staff. This does not only mean physical access, but also includes access at the appropriate intellectual level that is free from social and cultural prejudice.⁵⁰

Woollard cites Article 27 of the United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, which states, “Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.”⁵¹ Then she asserts that museums and the programs and exhibits that they offer fall under the right to participation in cultural life, and therefore, there should be no discrimination against age, sex, religious or cultural beliefs, disabilities or sexual orientation at these places.⁵²

To better serve those with disabilities, Woollard suggest that all relevant staff should have training sessions to better serve all visitors; many museums that are already under-staffed and/or over-tasked may find this to be an unimportant aspect and often-times it is overlooked. Woollard also lists some of the benefits to creating more accessible museums and sites; for example, a ramp that is placed in the same area as stairs might be used by not only people in wheelchairs but also parents with strollers, people who have difficulty walking or joint pain, and someone carrying a heavy load. Additionally,

⁵⁰ Vicky Woollard, “Caring for the Visitor,” in *Running a Museum: A Practical Handbook* (Paris: International Council Of Museums, 2010), 105.

⁵¹ United Nations, “United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948,” <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml> (accessed January 27, 2013).

⁵² Woollard, “Caring for the Visitor,” 107.

creating exhibits that are viewable from a seated position helps not only those in wheelchairs, but also children or people of short-stature.⁵³

Woollard devotes a small section of the chapter to people with learning difficulties or intellectual disability. She says that people with these issues require “special material to help engage their interest and require sensitive support from gallery staff.” The only advice that she has to offer is that, “museum staff work closely with specialists in these areas who can give professional advice as to what would be the most appropriate material and activities, as well as provide staff training.”⁵⁴

The scholarship on “what is access” over the past twenty years emphasized the challenge to public historians at museums and historic sites. All audiences must be served, and all audiences may benefit from well-crafted, inclusive narratives, be they the guided site tour of exhibit hall. To become truly inclusive museums, administrators must devise ways to reach all audiences. Removing physical barriers to access through universal design principles would meet ADA requirements. Just as important is to create a greater reliance on direct experience and hands-on learning to engage those with intellectual disabilities with the museum collections and setting

⁵³ Ibid., 112-13.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 113; “Expanding the Concept of Universal Design,” universaldesign.com (accessed April 4, 2013).

CHAPTER V: PROGRAMMING FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AT TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY MUSEUMS

Multiple museums in the United States are working to better serve people with disabilities. New York City with its myriad of museums and population of diverse people is at the forefront of this movement. The Museum Access Consortium of New York City (MAC) “consists of representatives from various museum departments throughout the New York City Metropolitan area and members and representatives of the disability community.” MAC’s mission is “to enable people with disabilities to access cultural facilities of all types . . . We take as a basic tenet that increasing accessibility for people with disabilities increases accessibility for everyone.”¹ Institutional members meet regularly to share information and ideas and provide support. The 170 members come from cultural organizations, consultants, disability advocates, and other sites and organizations in the city. In May 2012, the author met with several MAC members to talk about their experiences with access and disability.² The invaluable interviews and discussions contributed to the creation of a disability access model for historic sites.

¹ Museum Access Consortium, <http://www.cityaccessny.org/mac.php>.

² One of the main reasons I chose New York City as my research hub was the concentration of museums, and the citizens of the metro area value and support museums to a greater extent than many other areas of the country. The MAC website led me to several different museum websites where I was able to learn about programs available to people with special needs. Employees came from the Museum of Modern Art, the Jewish Museum, New York City Metro Transit Museum, *USS Intrepid*, and Lower East-side Tenement Museum. It is important to note that of the museums visited, the Museum of Modern Art and the Jewish Museum are both institutes dedicated to art, and the Transit Museum, *Intrepid*, and Tenement Museum are museums centered on history.

The accessibility program the author attended at The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) is called “Meet Me at MOMA.” Through this program, attendees will “look at art in the galleries with your family and friends. . . . Discuss art with specially trained MoMA educators who discuss themes, artists, and exhibitions.”³ The museum offers the event monthly to all people with dementia and their families and/or care partners. Attendees have the opportunity to look at art in the galleries and engage in discussion about the art they view.

The gallery talk attended had mostly elderly people with some younger caretakers and family members. As we went through the galleries, the guide Paula stopped at four important pieces throughout the hour to ask questions and get responses. The four artworks were *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh, *Les Femmes d'Alger* by Pablo Picasso, *Bicycle Wheel* by Marcel Duchamp, and *Christina's World* by Andrew Wyeth.⁴

The first piece visited was Van Gogh's *Starry Night* (Figure 10). The museum was closed for this program, and being in a small group, the discussions were uninhibited and illuminating. The guide asked such questions as, what are we looking at? What are your observations?” Participants had insightful answers such as, “it looks like lights when you take your glasses off” and that looking at this painting made an individual feel that there was, “nothing little about twinkle twinkle little star.” Others thought that the sky seemed to overwhelm the village, the artist used “blobs of paint,” and that the painting conveyed the feeling of a cold night by using cool colors. The guide also asked,

³ Museum of Modern Art, “Meet Me at MOMA,” <http://www.moma.org/meetme/index> (accessed April 4, 2013).

⁴ All comments are from participants in the Meet Me at MOMA program from May 8, 2012.

“What feelings would you say describe the work?” Answers included: overwhelming, peaceful but the sky is exciting.⁵



Figure 10: Meet Me at MOMA participants at *Starry Night* by Vincent Van Gogh, photo by the author, May 8, 2012.

Next, participants ventured into another gallery to view *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907) by Picasso from 1907 (Figure 11). Paula invited participants to study the piece and make observations and comments.

⁵ For more information about this piece and its use in the Meet Me at MOMA program, see http://www.moma.org/meetme/modules/module_one#module_1_1 (accessed April 4, 2013).



Figure 11: Participants discussing *Les Femmes d'Alger* by Pablo Picasso with the facilitation of docent Paula, photo by the author, May 8, 2012.

Most agreed that the painting showed lots of women, but that they were not *real* women. They found the general shape, eyes, and bodies to be strange, not soft bodies but hard and square; the eyes were crooked. When the guide asked, “*where are they?*” answers included: Hell, a scary place, and a studio with drapes. People described this painting as: an image of despair, being of women, but the women on the right side are not human, they are staring at us, but there is no life; the image is nightmarish, aggressive, and though it was painted by a man the women are masculine. A particularly insightful participant pointed out that perhaps the women were hiding their identity

behind a mask and the African style masks are one step further to hiding their true selves.⁶

The intriguing sculpture *Bicycle Wheel* by Marcel Duchamp was the next piece the group visited (Figure 12).



Figure 12: Participants discuss *Bicycle Wheel* by Marcel Duchamp at the Meet Me at MOMA program, photo by the author, May 8, 2012.

⁶ For more information about the painting and its use in the program, see MOMA, “Meet Me at MOMA,” http://www.moma.org/meetme/modules/module_one#module_1_3 (accessed April 4, 2013).

The comments on this piece were some of the most insightful and thoughtful. Participants said that this piece presented both a challenge and a possibility. Another person claimed the piece was simply absurd; there are no possibilities with this piece of art! Someone else asked the question, “What makes this art? Because it is in a museum?” This led to the every-important discussion of what art is, and how something can “become” art. The point was made that if this piece stood in your basement it would be seen as trash, or as something in need of repair. Another person said that this sculpture was “not enough to be art in a museum.” The guide asked what it needed to become worthy of being in an art museum. The honest answer was, “It just doesn’t turn me on.” It was then discussed that the artist intended the piece to be considered art, and that anything can be art, but that does not mean everyone will like it. Another participant said that the piece represents art on a pedestal by putting a bicycle wheel on a stool. One man, who said he was a painter, said he feels that his art, and any art really, is not art unless someone looks at it and reacts to it.

The last piece visited was Andrew Wyeth’s *Christina’s World* from 1948 (Figure 13). This is an example of artwork that shows a person with a disability, and discussion surrounding the artwork led to this revelation. The label that accompanies the painting did not mention the aspects of disability surrounding the art, but the guide did explain that the artist’s neighbor had polio, and she is likely the person depicted in the painting. Without the guide’s assistance, it seems unlikely that the typical visitor would understand the significance of the painting as related to disability.



Figure 13: Andrew Wyeth, Christina's World, tempera on panel, 1948, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

Once the circumstances surrounding the painting were revealed, the participants added their own thoughts and ideas to interpret the painting. They said that the subject of the painting is an attractive woman, and graceful, but it seems that something is wrong with her. She is desperate, disabled, yearning to walk, has no muscle tone and chafed elbows, and she resides in a bleak and barren landscape. The painting is spare and realistic, while the colors reflect a grim mood. Others pointed out that while she is struggling, her pink dress is not desolate. She has a hard life, but she is pushing and determined.⁷

One person said that the landscape in the painting looks like western Kansas where she grew up. The group agreed that the subject seems to be seeking something;

⁷ These statements were made by participants in the “Meet me at MOMA” group.

the house is her goal. She is an attractive woman, graceful, but it seems that something is wrong with her. She is desperate, disabled, yearning to walk, has no muscle tone and chafed elbows, and she resides in a bleak and barren landscape. The painting is spare and realistic, while the colors reflect a grim mood. Others pointed out that while she is struggling, her pink dress is not desolate. The subject of the painting has a hard life, but she is pushing and determined to make it back to her home.⁸



Figure 14: Discussion of Andrew Wyeth's *Christina's World* at Meet Me at MOMA program; photo by the author, May 8, 2012.

⁸ See MOMA, "Meet Me at MOMA," http://www.moma.org/meetme/modules/module_two#module_2_4 (accessed April 4, 2013).

Throughout the session, the gallery guide would often repeat questions, comments, and answers more loudly so everyone could hear them. She was also very patient with the audience and made sure that everyone was comfortable and understood what was going on. The participants seemed to have a great time and be involved in an engaging exercise that helped their cognitive powers. The question and answer system seemed to work well in engaging the participants, and it seems that this would be a great way to engage any audience. The inquiry-based discussion also seemed to engage the minds of the participants and give them the opportunity to view and discuss the art in a way that they may not have otherwise been able to do.

Another New York City art museum that is engaging people with disabilities in innovative and exciting ways is the Jewish Museum off 5th Avenue and 92nd Street in Manhattan.⁹ When the author first began to research museums that are working extensively with accessibility, especially accessibility for people with cognitive, developmental, or learning disabilities the MAC pointed me towards the Jewish Museum.

At the Jewish Museum the author met with Dara Cohen, the School Programs Coordinator.¹⁰ The museum offers several types of programs for people with special needs including access school programs as well as special programs for visitors with sight impairments, hearing impairments, dementia, and learning or developmental disabilities. The museum also works with all general access groups including groups with autism, emotional disturbances, and more.

⁹ The Jewish Museum, www.thejewishmuseum.org/ (accessed April 4, 2013).

¹⁰ Dara Cohen, interview by author, New York, NY, May 8, 2012, notes in author's possession.



Figure 15: Accessible entrance, which is separate from the main entrance, at the Jewish Museum, photo by the author, May 8, 2012.

Cohen focused primarily on the museum's programs for learning and developmental disabilities. The Jewish Museum adapted its current programs for special needs groups that cater to groups with fewer children. The museum has educators who specialize in access education, and it hopes to train all educators sometime soon. Educators contact the schoolteacher in advance and talk with the teacher to adapt the programming; this planning provides more avenues for participation by the students. Cohen made it clear that even with extensive planning and preparation, there is still a lot of "on your feet" teaching and critical thinking involved with presenting programs to children with special needs.

Being an art museum, the educational programs are very visual; they have a studio art component for all elementary age groups and access groups of all ages. For

participation students might pick out a shape from the art piece and hold it, look at it, make the shape with their body, count the times the shape appears, and more.

The museum also holds weekly Sunday Workshops that are open to the whole family, not just students on field trips.¹¹ The audience is generally people with learning and development disabilities. This program was adapted from MOMA and the Metropolitan Museum of Art offerings that were changed to fit the Jewish Museum. Cohen estimated that 95% of students who attended these workshops have autism, a small percentage has Down Syndrome, and the rest have other disabilities or multiple disabilities. In the morning, the workshop is designed for children ages 5-17, which generally seems to skew to the 5-12 age group. The afternoon is for 18+ adults. An access educator leads tours, and they have gallery and studio time for a total time of 1-1.5 hours.¹²

A recent example of a Sunday workshop activity happened in conjunction with the Kehinde Wiley exhibit. The group spends half an hour in the gallery with the works of art, and the gallery guide engages all members of the family with the art and subject. Wiley's art is generally an African American male subject in traditional portrait form with elaborate backgrounds, which are inspired by Jewish paper cut-outs. In the studio, the family has a photocopy of one of the subjects that they can place on different backgrounds to explore how background, color, and shape can change the mood and expression of the art. In the studio, the family creates a paper cut out from butcher paper

¹¹ The Jewish Museum, "Access Family Workshops," <http://www.thejewishmuseum.org/specialneedsfam> (accessed April 4, 2013).

¹² The Jewish Museum, "Access Programs," <http://www.thejewishmuseum.org/AccessPrograms> (accessed April 4, 2013).

that they can use as their own background for a family portrait taken in the studio. Parental involvement is important at these workshops, and the museum wants to expand into a family day event with school partnerships. Attendance at the workshops varies, but including the family (siblings and parents of the child with special needs) there are usually 15-20 people in attendance, with 7-8 of the attendees being the child or adult with special needs. These programs are fully funded through public and private grants, and they are free for the families.

One of the reasons that the Jewish Museum started creating these programs was to expand and diversify their audiences. They looked at who was coming to visit the museum, and then explored how they could better serve them. Art museums may have an easier time at adapting programs for the special needs audience because of their comfort in addressing the visual.

Cohen shared the following tips as essential elements to consider when creating programs and teaching children with special needs. She contradicted one of the most often touted museum education principles saying that open-ended questions can be difficult for children with special needs. Rather than following what most museum education scholars are told, Cohen suggested that yes or no questions worked better in her experience with special education groups. In addition to using simple questions, Cohen also suggested giving the students language to use to help them communicate their thoughts. For instance, if holding a cloth or a canvas, the educator could ask, “is this hard or soft?”

One of the best suggestions that Cohen shared was the importance of sensitivity and awareness training. At most museums, educators are not the only ones who need to be trained because most workers at the museum come in contact with education groups. From the front desk to security guards and janitorial staff, all staff needs to have some sort of training or workshop to understand how to interact with diverse visitors. Cohen is responsible for all access educator training, and the group of educators meet 4-5 times a year to discuss teaching strategies about specific art pieces, and listen to talks by consultants to help on certain things such as dementia, general management, strategies, and different disabilities. Cohen stressed the importance of staff training for all museum staff members who come in contact with students with disabilities.

An effective example of a history museum that is incorporating accessibility and particularly programs for children with special needs is the New York City Transit Museum in Brooklyn, New York. The Metro Transit Authority operates and houses the museum in an unused but formerly operable subway tunnel. The museum contains many trains from throughout the city's subway history that visitors can explore as well as exhibits related to transportation, science, energy, and history (Figure 16). Lynnette Morse is an educator at The Transit Museum, and she met with the author to discuss the various programs the museum offers to children with special needs.¹³

¹³ Lynnette Morse, interview by author, New York, NY, May 10, 2012.



Figure 16: The New York City Transit Museum subway display, photo by the author, May 10, 2012.

The programs first began because of a museum goal to focus on better programming for museum audiences. Many groups of students with disabilities visited, but there was not any special programming in place. School groups visited often to study New York history and compare the past to the present. This museum is perfect for the students to be immersed in history, since it is an actual historical site that contains historical objects and artifacts.

Older student groups at the museum often had more severe disabilities, and they were there to learn life skills such as how to ride the subway. To welcome and assist this

population, the museum began to offer classes where students could come to learn in a safe environment. Since the museums' trains and turnstiles are in a safe location and are similar to the "real" trains in the city, but do not move or have masses of New Yorkers passing through, the museum setting is the perfect place for these students (Figure 17). The life-skills programs have received great reviews from parents and educators in the community.



Figure 17: Interactive turnstiles and ticket booths at The Transit Museum, photo by the author, May 10, 2012.

Visitors to the independent living program have come to the museum multiple times per year to learn about safety and proper behavior on a train. For instance, students

were taught not to stare at people; how to sit or stand depending on the other people on the train; where to sit; how to interact with other people; and other needed skills. Staff members from all museum departments have been involved, and some have even acted as “angry New Yorker subway riders.” They even have staff act as panhandlers to teach the participants how to interact with the various people they might encounter through the transit system. This museum really engages with its community not only to tell the history of the site, but to also help the visitors with their needs.

The museum also offers an after-school program called Subway Sleuths. This program meets once a week for ten weeks and is offered to students on the autism spectrum. The program helps to build social and communication skills while also teaching some history. Subway Sleuths teaches the history of transit, electricity and science, in addition to life skills. Through this program, students have the opportunity, in the safe subway station environment, to put their hands on history. They also learn social skills by using historical objects and situations.

The museum is also not just modifying existing programs for special needs students but creating new programming opportunities. One program uses a visual magnetic board with images. This technique can help students to build on what they already know by bringing that knowledge to the forefront using images and photographs. In the train cars, students look for five things such as lights, seats, doors, advertisements, holds, or other features. They then compare and contrast these characteristics in trains from various time periods. If they start at the newest train and work their way back in

time, they will realize that as they go back in time there is no longer air conditioning, plastic, or other modern attributes.

In structuring tours for children with special needs, the museum educators saw that *language* was important. Educators use the inquiry method: “is this train newer or older than the last train we were in?” Thinking about using language in a particular way can be over-whelming. Using declarative language can also be helpful in getting students to talk. Educators might say, “This train looks really old to me!” to illicit responses from students telling what it is that they notice about the train. This approach is similar to Cohen’s suggestion at the Jewish Museum to give students the language they need while still letting them think for themselves.

Teachers and parents evaluate programs, and the programs are always evolving to meet the needs of their audience. In the past, teachers were given a one-page evaluation with a postage-paid envelope. There was about a 29% return rate of these evaluations. To increase the responses, the museum now asks teachers to write bullet points after the visits to evaluate how children are doing and progressing. They also ask parents for feedback, and the museum makes sure they are able to set different goals for each child based on the child’s needs.

To create specialized programming and to provide educators with meaningful programs, The Transit Museum works with special education teachers and speech and language pathologists in addition to its museum educators. The museum programs are very popular, and they can expect around eight classes to come to the museum in an average week. The museum employs one educator to work with students in the fourth

grade and above and another to teach pre-Kindergarten to third grade. The museum educators generally have degrees in Special Education as well as museum education backgrounds.

One of the strengths of the Transit Museum for all audiences, but especially children, is that the entire site is interactive; there are things to touch and climb on, and visitors can pretend to drive a bus, hand out subway tickets, and go through turnstiles. The museum even incorporates science and technology into the history through discussions of electricity and production. Through immersion in a historical environment, The Transit Museum truly teaches history and its meaning to visitors of all ages.

Lori Stratton, private consultant for It Takes a Village and educator at the U.S.S. Intrepid Sea, Air, and Space Museum, met with the author on May 9, 2012, to discuss her work with children with disabilities at museums and as a museum educator. Stratton has a degree in Recreational Therapy, which provides a fresh look on museum program development, and she has worked in museum education at several places around New York City, including the New York City Transit Museum where she has focused on bringing recreation therapy and history to students with special needs. Stratton's observations were particularly meaningful because of the focus on history museums and historic sites and how they can reach out to students with special needs.

Objects and artifacts are extremely powerful for telling stories; an exhibit can contain something as simple as an everyday serving platter, and from that piece, interpreters can tell stories about that time period, the people who used it, how it was

made, who made it and where, how it got where it was when it was found, and countless more stories that help people build a connection with the past. As in any museum education program, Stratton thus stressed that having a tactile component is very important in history museums. Having objects, whether they are authentic or reproductions, is important to the learning process. Holding, seeing, touching these objects helps to build connections to the past and the curriculum at hand.

Stratton also discussed the power of using popular culture in the education of children of any age; connecting to students can be as easy as finding something to connect with them, whether it is Captain America or the movie *300*. Popular culture can be a key to education with any historic site; through brainstorming, it is possible find educational connections with super heroes, songs, video games, television shows, or other examples relevant to particular historic sites. History museums and exhibits can also relate history to everyday life; making connections between the past and present is one of the best ways that students learn in informal settings.

In her time at the Transit Museum, Stratton helped to develop and present several programs for children with special needs, especially those with autism. One program gave students paper to draw their observations; they could draw the different types of lighting fixtures, advertisements, and seats, giving students who are non-verbal a chance to communicate or ask questions. Another activity used photographs of the trains and a timeline. The educator used the photos to match the old and the new and put them into order. This activity also gave students who are non-verbal the chance to express themselves and what they learned on the tour as a type of evaluative process.

Additionally, museum educators gave teachers a checklist to evaluate what the students were learning.

When working with students with special needs at any museum Stratton suggested several guidelines. If a museum has eight exhibits, for example, educators should pick only three or four to talk about and adapt the program that day to the student attention spans and interest. She also said that rather than discussing specifics, educators should instead keep the students moving and pay attention to their needs. In Stratton's experience, a thirty minute program is generally too long for a special needs audience. There can be many distractions and struggles during these programs, so educators should always remember to stay flexible and tuned in to the audience. Museums should use spaces that are quiet and contain few visual distractions to decrease external stimulus when speaking with a group. Ensuring that students feel as if they are in a safe, comfortable environment will also help create a better learning experience.

Lastly, Stratton spoke about the importance of training all staff members at a museum, not just the educators. Security and janitorial staff must know not to try to diagnose the children themselves and not to judge the students in any way. All staff should know general basics of teaching children with special needs, especially to keep calm and flexible when working with children.

Stratton provided invaluable information that the author used in creating education programs for the Sam Davis Home and in the creation of sensitivity and awareness training for museum staff. She suggested that educators should always remember that students with special needs might be physically older but at a younger

learning level; she cautions educators about using programs created for younger children with older students in secondary classes. Additionally, special education classrooms can have various levels of learners. Museum programs should scale down the information intellectually but still keep the program and interactions socially acceptable for any group at that age.

When educators present educational programs to children with special needs, Stratton suggested using questions that include comparison and contrast with concrete facts; an example of a question using compare and contrast could be, “is this artifact from the past or present; why do you think that?” When working with children with special needs, educators in this field must be flexible, willing to adapt to the students’ needs, and allow students the opportunity to speak for themselves.

The last historical site the author visited in New York City was the Lower East-Side Tenement Museum on Orchard Street. Sarah Litvin shared many of her experiences working as an educator at the historic site through email and in person. The physical site of New York’s famous tenements poses many challenges to people with physical or multiple disabilities, and the claustrophobic atmosphere within the building can also be problematic for some visitors. These challenges are typical to historic sites, and the Tenement Museum has implemented several creative alternatives to overcome these issues for their visitors with disabilities.

The Lower East-Side Tenement Museum offers first-person guided tours of the historic tenement building, costumed interpretation, and walking tours for school field trips. To make the site and programs more accessible, the visitor center is much more

accessible than the historic building, which is accessed via several steep stairs. Information is also shared in many different ways including signage, audio cues, and tactile guides. They offer tours in American Sign Language and no voice interpretation during regularly scheduled public tours and school groups. For visitors with low vision, the site offers “touch-tours” for groups of five or more people with advance notice. The museum does not offer specific programming for students with special needs, but they do offer modifications and flexibility for these groups. While the museum is primarily concerned with assisting visitors with low vision, hearing loss, and mobility impairments, they are working to provide more resources for visitors with autism.

The Lower East-Side Tenement Museum has been a beacon within the museum world for community involvement and innovative programming. It continues to be a pioneer for history museums in reaching out to populations with disabilities. The museum tells the stories of the people who lived in the tenement building on Orchard Street in the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The museum:

preserves and interprets the history of immigration through the personal experiences of the generations of newcomers who settled in and built lives on Manhattan's Lower East Side, America's iconic immigrant neighborhood; forges emotional connections between visitors and immigrants past and present; and enhances appreciation for the profound role immigration has played and continues to play in shaping America's evolving national identity.¹⁴

The museum takes a narrative approach of interpretation for daily tours and educational groups; for instance, staff can take an object like a sewing machine and construct the stories of many people through that one artifact. In addition to other

¹⁴ Tenement Museum, “About Us: Our Story,” <http://www.tenement.org/about.html> (accessed April 4, 2013).

accessibility programs, the Tenement Museum offers offsite and distance learning for adults who find the museum uncomfortable or inaccessible.

Visitors may only visit the museum and historic building by taking a guided tour of the building. The museum offers many specialized tours including, Hard Times, Sweatshop Workers, Irish Outsiders, and Exploring 97 Orchard Street. It also offers school group tours, and community involvement opportunities.¹⁵ Tours generally begin with the group walking up the steps of the tenement at 97 Orchard Street into a dark hall. The tour group then climbs the steps, holding on to the original banister that so many people in the past had held before. Many apartments were used not only for living, but also for operating the family's garment industry shops and other businesses. Visitors view primary documents related to the neighborhood, garment industry, and reforms, and also look at the artifacts and furnishing that were typical to tenement family rooms.

Standing in the same building where people lived and worked in the past, looking at the artifacts they used each day, and hearing the sounds outside the tenement has the ability to evoke feelings that would not be possible in another location. Without getting people with mobility or other impairments into the physical space, how can museums provide the same experience?

The accessibility section of the museum website offers touch tours for people with sight impairments and sign language tours for people with hearing impairments. The orientation film is captioned for those with hearing impairments, and braille and large

¹⁵ Tenement Museum, "Visit: Tours and Tickets," <http://www.tenement.org/tours.php> (accessed April 4, 2013).

print versions of primary sources, which are shown throughout the tour, are also available upon request.¹⁶

Additionally, in the Visitor Center, there is an “Accessible Learning Center” which includes a talking tablet and a tablet with a raised façade of the main building and floor plans for people with sight impairments to “see” the layout and size of the rooms within the tenement building (Figure 18).

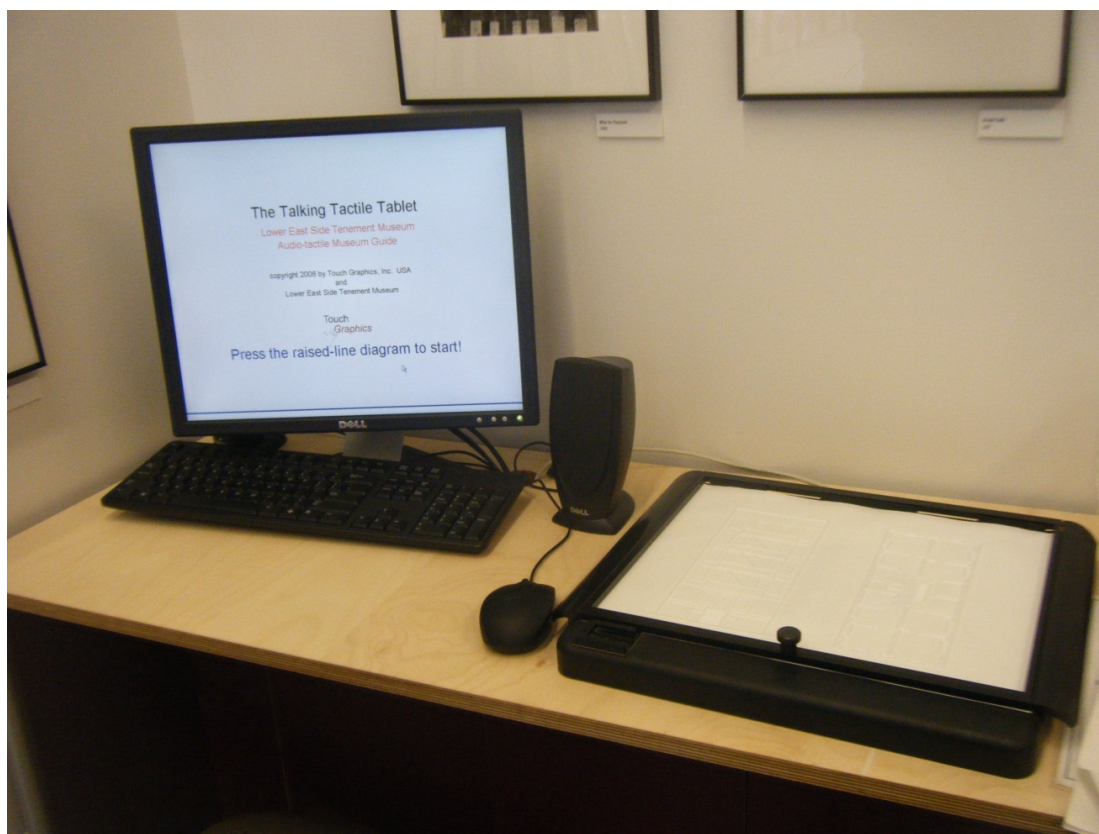


Figure 18: The Lower East-Side Tenement Museum Talking Tactile Tablet for visitors with low vision, photo by the author, May 11, 2012.

¹⁶ Tenement Museum, “Visit: Accessibility,” http://www.tenement.org/vizinfo_ada.html (accessed April 4, 2013).

The historic building offers many challenges to people with disabilities, especially those with physical disabilities or difficulties. As mentioned above, several steep steps to the door offer the only entrance to the tenement building, and once inside the building, visitors encounter the original, old wooden staircase, which must be traversed to experience the guided tour (Figure 19).



Figure 19: The Lower-East Side Tenement Museum, 97 Orchard Street historic tenement building. On the left side of the picture, the front stoop staircase and inaccessible entrance is visible. Photo by the author, May 10, 2012.

The website offers other opportunities for those using wheelchairs or other implements, including a new exhibit which opened in 2012 called, "Shop Life" that explores the many businesses housed at 97 Orchard Street. It is the Museum's first-ever wheelchair-accessible exhibit at the site. The event called, "Tour the Neighborhood" is wheelchair accessible, and during the winter, the "Foods of the Lower East Side" is held in an accessible room. Additionally, the Visitors Center has universally designed elevators and restrooms on the ground level. There is also a "virtual tour" which benefits not only people with disabilities who cannot visit the historic building, but really anyone who wants to experience the site without a visit to New York City.¹⁷

Litvin shared some examples of success and failure in the development of programs for children with special needs, the most important being to create object-based programs. When working with many special needs groups, but especially children with autism, setting an agenda or schedule of the program's events can help ease discomfort among students. One way the museum attempted to provide stress-relief and focus for students was through the use of stress balls on which students could concentrate their energy. The objects were printed with an object from the collections to focus questions and ideas while touring the historic site. There were some logistical problems with the stress balls, but the museum staff members are working on preparing more options. Museum educators also provide notebooks or sketchbooks as a visual option for students to communicate. The children can use the notebook to sketch things that they think are important to focus their questions and energies. Educators try to talk to the teacher

¹⁷ Lower East Side Tenement Museum, "Virtual Tour," http://www.tenement.org/Virtual-Tour/index_virtual.html (accessed April 4, 2013).

before the visit to evaluate the students' needs. Museum educators also have a checklist of behaviors that they review before visits to know what tactics might work with the scheduled student groups (Appendix A and Appendix B).

As with every other site, training of sensitivity and awareness of all staff members is imperative to the staff at the Lower East-Side Tenement Museum. Litvin shared that “every new staff member has Access Awareness training as part of their initial Museum orientation. Follow-up and additional training is available for staff as well.”¹⁸ In addition, at least two access workshop are held at the museum for all staff to learn more about specific issues.

Creating these programs and opportunities for those with disabilities at history museums and historic sites is particularly important. The status of history within schools, curriculum standards, and standardized testing is usually precarious, but it remains imperative that students receive history education for a myriad of reasons. Sam Wineburg's *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (2001) addresses many reasons about why people study history, what history can teach us not just about the past but about humanity and ourselves, how history should be taught, and what exactly history's place is outside of the classroom.¹⁹

Through a study of history, students come to realize that the “strangeness” of the past is perhaps not so strange at all. Wineburg argues that historical study and thinking students can create a development of feelings of kinship and relationship to people in the

¹⁸ Sarah Litvin, email interview by author, April 2013.

¹⁹ Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

past that we study.²⁰ A movement towards learning about humanity and social history is evident in the past several years, and even museums are moving towards this model. A session at the Tennessee Association for Museums in March 2011 focused completely on telling the stories of people who lived in the past and their personal documents and pictures; using these primary sources, curators told the history of Tennessee through people rather than “facts and dates.”

Wineburg also claims that in many classrooms knowledge is detached from experience; he asks how can we incorporate more experiential learning into secondary education courses? Many students do not come to school with a motivation to learn. The concept of “edutainment” that has been discussed in museum classes and conferences in the past five years is an answer to motivating students to learn.²¹ Creating educational and entertaining programs is still somewhat controversial; are we entertaining or educating our students? The counter argument to that question is that as long as students are engaged and learning something, does it matter how those means were met? If edutainment can happen in museums and institutions of informal learning, perhaps more students, even those in special education classes, can be motivated to learn about history and critical thinking.

²⁰ Ibid., 3-27.

²¹ George Lepouras and Costas Vassilakis, “Virtual museums for all: employing game technology for edutainment” *Virtual Reality* 8, (2005): 96–106; M. Zancanaro, O. Stock, and I. Alfaro, “Using Cinematic Techniques in a Multimedia Museum Guide,” paper presented at 2003 Museums and the Web conference, <http://www.archimuse.com/mw2003/papers/zancanaro/zancanaro.html/> (accessed April 4, 2013); Michela Addis, “New technologies and cultural consumption – edutainment is born!” *European Journal of Marketing* 39 (2005): 729-36.

Since learning history is such an important part of a well-rounded educational career for all people, understanding how children comprehend and interpret the past is also significant. Elaine Davis' *How Students Understand the Past: From Theory to Practice* (2005) is one of the most comprehensive and helpful books on the subject.

“Understanding how the past is constructed in the minds of individuals and how constructions are influenced by variable such as age, culture, ethnicity, and instruction is essential to the improvement of history and archaeology education,” Davis emphasizes.²² Each person creates his or her own history and interpretation based on his or her own life experiences, and people with disabilities are no different. Creating an environment where people with disabilities feel comfortable with interpreting their own history and where they have examples of their own history is essential to welcoming those with disabilities to informal learning environments.

²² Davis, *How Students Understand the Past*, 17.

CHAPTER VI: SENSITIVITY AND AWARENESS: PREPARING THE MUSEUM AND STAFF

From 2009 to 2010, the percentage of the total United States population with a disability grew by 2.0 percentage points, according to a study from the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) study. The AAPD counted 304,287,836 people living in the United States with 36,354,712 of them having some kind of disability.¹ Thirty-six million Americans with disabilities offer a challenge and opportunity for educational professionals at museums and historic sites.

At the 2012 Tennessee Association of Museums conference in Memphis, Tennessee, the author chaired a panel titled “Your Museum: Compliance, Awareness, Sensitivity, and Outreach.” The panelists intended their session to reach professionals at small museums, and give them the tools necessary to engage visitors with disabilities. The session explored ways museum professionals have adapted their sites and exhibits to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The panelists offered sensitivity and awareness techniques, as well as options for professionals at small and/or low budget museums to assist with people with disabilities. The session also offered ideas about community stewardship and ways that regional museums can reach and involve local nonprofits that serve populations with disabilities.

¹ American Association of People with Disabilities and the Employment Practices and Measurement Rehabilitation Research Training Center at the University of New Hampshire, *2011 Annual Disability Statistics Compendium* (Durham: University of New Hampshire Institute on Disability, 2011).

The author's contribution to the session focused on sensitivity and awareness techniques that museums and museum professionals can use in their daily and professional lives. Every museum education professional that the author met in New York City had emphasized the need and value of this training.

The session's origin stemmed from a discussion with colleagues of the Spring 2005 special issue of the *Public Historian*, that addressed disability and museums.² The articles range in subject matter from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the experiences of visitors who are visually impaired at a museum to reviews of websites and books. Striking in this selection of readings were the first-hand accounts of people with disabilities and their experiences at museums. Their stories spoke of a lack of compassion, sensitivity, and even awareness. Their stories of limited experiences led to discussions about what museums can do to welcome more people.

Another goal of the session was to address the limited museum literature about the inclusion of those who have learning, cognitive, or developmental disabilities. Since the implementation of ADA, so much of the focus has been on wheelchair accessibility, and assistance for the sight and hearing impaired, but in many cases those with learning disabilities are forgotten. In the real world of limited resources and personnel at most of the nation's museums, finding the time and funding to conduct training is nearly

² Susan Burch and Katherine Ott, eds., "Disability and the Practice of Public History," special issue, *Public Historian* 27 (Spring 2005).

impossible. The author hoped that the session would give some ideas, discussion, and thinking points for staff members at small museums.³

In general, people with disabilities are like everyone else and desire to be treated the same as any visitor at a museum or historic site. An important definition that people should remember is that, “A disability is a condition that limits a person’s ability to walk, talk, see, hear, or reason. A handicap is an imposed barrier that restricts a person. People with disabilities are handicapped by society’s mistaken beliefs about their disabilities.”⁴ Professionals in museums should consider disabilities as challenges not burdens.

The first goal is to create a more welcoming environment and to provide an atmosphere of acceptance. Language is a first step. One should always remember to put the person before the disability. For example, the phrase, “the person with low vision” should be used in place of “the blind person.” This person-first language shows respect by putting the person before the disability. Additionally, one should always emphasize abilities rather than point out what a person cannot do. Another suggestion is to always

³ The author originally compiled this information for the presentation, “Sensitivity and Awareness: Steps to Take for Successful Connections,” at the Tennessee Association of Museums Conference, March 2012. She gathered information from several sources, including Judith Cohen, “Etiquette,” Community Resources for Independence, <http://www.crinet.org/education/independent%20Living/etiquette> (accessed March 4, 2012); Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living, “Disability Awareness Sensitivity Training presentation” website: www.cflic.org/disability%20Awareness%20Sensitivity%20; and Tennessee Disability Coalition, “Disability Etiquette: Engaging People with Disabilities,” http://www.tndisability.org/system/files/ul/Disability_Etiquette.pdf (accessed March 4, 2012).

⁴ Paraphrased from the Disability Resource Agency for Independent Living “Disability Awareness Sensitivity Training presentation” website: www.cflic.org/.../Disability%20Awareness%20Sensitivity%20 (accessed March 4, 2012).

avoid labels and never refer to a person by his or her disability. For example, do not say “the handicapped, the crippled, the blind.” The presentation emphasized that many times people use negative language without realizing it; a conscious effort to humanize the person rather than focusing on the disability will help curb this practice. Professionals should always listen to themselves and make changes as necessary when interacting with people with disabilities.

Another basic is body language, since it offers important clues about what you are saying. When interacting with people with low vision or hearing difficulty in particular, one should always face the person and keep their face in full light. Just as important is attitude. A patronizing attitude such as patting people who use wheelchairs on the head never helps. While one hopes that such behavior is not something that happens on a regular basis, it does. Additionally, one should not lean or hang on someone’s wheelchair; people should always remember that people with physical disabilities treat their wheelchairs as extensions of their bodies.

After discussing guidelines for how to interact with people with disabilities, the panel emphasized that access is not just a moral obligation, it is also a legal obligation under ADA. The panel reviewed ADA requirements and provided resources through a handout which provided links to the Department of Justice website for ADA at museums, articles, training exercises, and access books. At the end of the session, the author invited all participants to attend a more in-depth sensitivity and awareness workshop later in the year.

That workshop took place in November 2012 at Middle Tennessee State University (“Disability and Your Cultural Organization: Sensitivity and Strategies for Going Beyond ADA). It included professionals from across the United States to address disability topics as they relate to museums and other historical organizations and sites. The workshop served as a symposium to provide resources and support to public organizations to develop and improve program offerings to the under-served community of students and adults with disabilities. The program also provided an opportunity for professionals to learn best practices to help small museums with limited resources to be more inclusive in their programs and exhibits.



Figure 20: Disability Workshop Program Cover.

Fifteen professionals from Tennessee museums, historic sites, and universities from Memphis to Sevierville attended the workshop. The speakers at this event included keynote Krista Flores from the Smithsonian Institute Accessibility Program who addressed the major issues of accessibility in museums; Karen Wade, director of the Homestead Museum in Los Angeles County, California who shared her experiences with welcoming diverse audiences; and Dr. Pruitt of the Middle Tennessee State University History Department, who spoke about disability history in the context of the workshop.



Figure 21: Lisa Pruitt, Katie Stringer, Krista Flores (seated), and Karen Wade at the Disability Workshop, photo by Rebecca Conard, November 3, 2012.

A panel discussion followed the speakers, and it proved to be a lively discussion about museums and accessibility. The panel consisted of Dr. Bill Norwood from the Tennessee Rehabilitation Center, Andi Halbert who is a therapist; and Dr. Brenden Martin from the MTSU History Department. Following lunch, participants joined four work sessions to discuss specific ideas and challenges on the topics of museum and exhibit design, sensory impairments, strategies for the physically impaired, and cognitive and developmental delay.

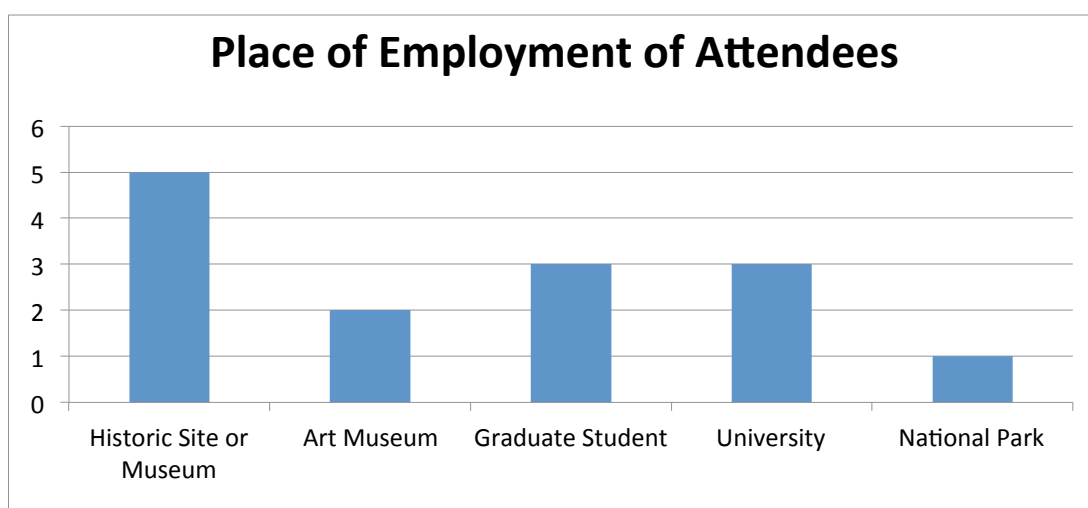


Figure 22: Results of the November 3, 2012 survey, based on eleven completed surveys. Some participants checked more than one place of employment.

Krista Flores works in an office with three other accessibility associates, and their main tasks include increasing tactile components of exhibits and programs, increasing universal design, and working with various disabilities individually to create more effective programs. For instance, through the efforts of the accessibility program, the Smithsonian family of museums now offers tours with a docent who offers basic verbal description and label reading for those with visual impairments. Flores also emphasized integrating people with disabilities into programs so that they can experience the museum as anyone else would.

Flores indicated that three key components for creating accessible spaces: effective communication, readily achievable barrier removal, and integration. Effective communication is essential in conveying the main themes of any exhibit to people with

disabilities. Barrier removal for exhibits is also essential for mobility throughout the exhibit space or museum. Flores suggested doing what is possible in the best way that the museum is capable, but she also recognized that sometimes this is not possible with historic structures or large museum spaces. Integration of people with disabilities into the displays and as visitors is also important, as is the ability to make choices; as with any other visitor, those with disabilities may want to skip a gallery or exhibit, so this should be an option when designing accessible features or programs.

Flores also discussed how the Smithsonian is creating special events for families with children on the autism spectrum. "Mornings at the Museum" is available for this population to visit the museum a half hour before it is open to the general public; this special time eliminates many distractions that children may face during the busiest part of the day at the museum. The staff lowers the light level for the children and starts with only one exhibit at a time to create a more soothing environment. Pre-visit materials called "social stories" are also available for the parents of children on the autism spectrum to share with their children before they visit the museum.⁵

Carol Gray, author of "Social Stories" for the Smithsonian Institute, explains that the materials describe a situation, skill or concept in terms of relevant social cues, perspectives and common responses, in a patient and reassuring manner that the audience easily understands.⁶ These web-based materials include information about crowd control, what to expect in the galleries, acceptable behaviors at a museum, and sensory maps to

⁵ More information about "social stories" and examples are available at Smithsonian Institution, "Morning at the Museum: Social Stories," <http://accessible.si.edu/MATM/social-stories.html> (accessed April 4, 2013).

⁶ Ibid.

explain where in the exhibit there are interactive elements or displays that light up or make sounds. These materials have made it possible for parents to feel more comfortable bringing their children to the museum, and also provided the children with an agenda of what to expect to keep their stimulation at a lower level.

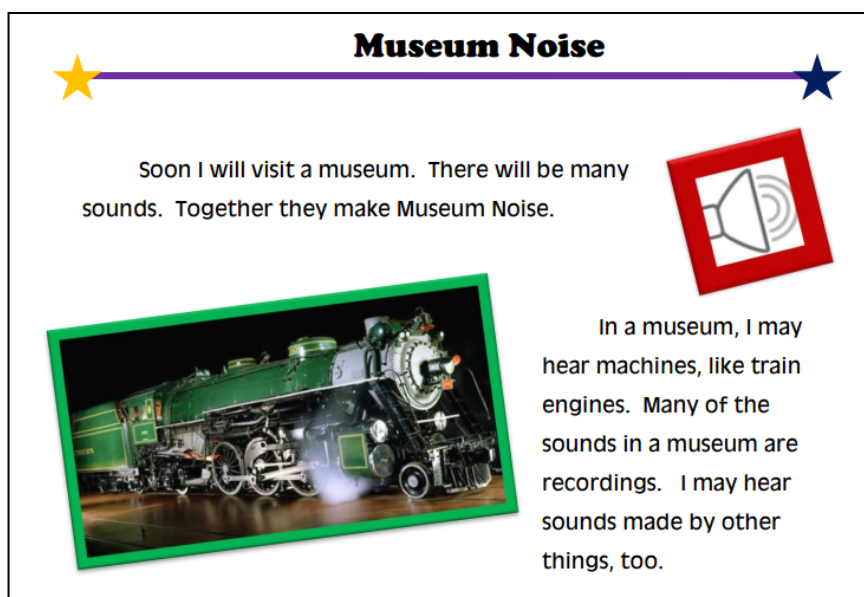


Figure 23: Excerpt from the Smithsonian Institute Social Story, "Museum Noise" developed for 9-12 year old visitors to the museum. The full PDF is available at <http://accessible.si.edu/Web-Materials/museum-noise.pdf>

In her overview of disability history, Dr. Lisa Pruitt spoke on how historians view disability, and how the past has informed the present. Her talk began with the treatment of people with disabilities as the result of in or violation before the eighteenth century. She then spoke of the institutions and hospitals of the nineteenth century and the changes made during the Progressive Era. Again, Pruitt reinforced that barriers are the cause of disability, not the impairment of the person.

Next, Karen Wade presented a case study from the Homestead Museum in California. Wade focused on the future of museums and disability, as well the aging population in the United States. According to Wade, by 2030, 20 % of the population in the United States will be over the age of 65, which presents many challenges for museums to create an atmosphere that is welcoming to that demographic. The Homestead Museum has implemented integration and universal design elements, but some of its biggest success has come from specialized programs for senior citizens. Specialized programs could be beneficial for all disabilities; while integration and universal design are wonderful, specialized programs for various populations can be accommodating if resources are available to create those programs.



Figure 24: Wade from the Homestead Museum presents a case study. Photo by the author, November 3, 2012.

The panel discussion and presentation gave participants the chance to ask questions and discuss various techniques available for historic sites and museums. Andi Halbert, Brenden Martin, and Bill Norwood facilitated the discussion. Halbert discussed what recreation therapy is, and how it can be utilized at various sites. Martin supported a conversation about challenges that museums face; participants opened up in this discussion about the challenges and barriers at their respective sites. Norwood, who specializes in work services for people with disabilities, also offered museums the chance to employ people with disabilities at their site as docents or volunteers.



Figure 25: Bill Norwood, Brenden Martin, and Andi Halbert discussing techniques in the panel discussion, photo by Rebecca Conard, November 3, 2012.

Of the fifteen individuals at the event, eleven took a survey immediately after the event, and five of those participants completed a follow-up survey in February 2013. The participants indicated that all were satisfied with the workshop; results show that five of

the eleven rated the workshop as “excellent,” five rated it as “very good,” and one indicated that it was “good.”

The survey identified the audience’s range of interest. Comments to the question, “What did you like most?” included: “The breakout sessions were helpful for answers to practical questions”; “the variety of speakers and their different strengths, great great information!”; and “I received a lot of information I could apply to my own site – especially in regards to working with visitors with autism.”

The survey sent in February 2013 to follow up with participants and their use of the information from the workshop in their professional lives included the question, “which part of the workshop was most meaningful to you?” Though only five participants submitted a completed survey, it was clear that Flores’ keynote speech had the biggest impact. Her enthusiasm and knowledge on the subject likely contributed to the popularity of the talk.

Participants were asked immediately following the workshop what was the least meaningful to them from the workshop. Constructive criticisms included, “The hair that I found on my sandwich!;” “The Homestead case study”; “Too much sitting – a couple smaller breaks would have been helpful, or rooms with more mingling capabilities”; “nothing I can think of”; and “exhibit design, just because it was somewhat redundant to information I was already aware of.” The follow up survey was a bit more detailed, and the answers gave more information as to what people found least meaningful at the workshop.

Suggestions for improvement of the workshop from the November 3, 2012 survey included: “Break out sessions could be more focused. Nice to return as a group to share ideas that emerged in sessions”; “More time for questions/interactive time; a discussion on grants available for improvements”; “Longer sessions”; and “more time for breakout sessions – I wish I could have done all 4.” Because of the time limitations of only six hours for the workshop, the requests for longer sessions are understandable, and in the future, it would be ideal to offer a longer or even two-day version of this workshop.

In the follow-up survey, suggestions for change included similar responses. One participant offered that, “The group should have come back together at the end to share results of break out sessions.” Another indicated that, “more time so that I could have been to the other sessions” would have been helpful. Again, time restraints made this impossible at this event, but in the future, the suggestions should be taken into consideration.

Answers to the question, “What did you learn that you plan to implement in your job/life?” from the survey immediately following the workshop included:

- “Just to be more cognizant of universal design. Also, implement etiquette training.”
- “the whole attitude that the disability comes from people and building that do not properly accommodate impaired people”

- “I will be presenting ideas to my boss for better accessibility for blind and deaf audiences – this has been a great opportunity to learn about the methods of implementing even small things to better our organization”
- “more implementation of accommodations for the deaf and sight impaired. Tips to make exhibits more accessible”
- “I would like to introduce some students with physical disabilities to the idea of assisting museums in becoming more accessible”
- “pre-visit guides for parents for groups with autism in regards to identifying potential problems in our building and preparing them for what they will see”
- “universal design = integration vs segregation”

In the follow-up survey on February 2013, three answers indicated that the participants had used ideas of techniques presented at the workshop in their professional life, while two were unsure.

Those individuals who did use something from the workshop in their professional life said that they had used it in drafting interpretation plans and in academic research. One museum put the techniques discussed at the workshop to practical use. Based on the “social stories” from the Smithsonian Institute, one participating museum “added an on-line description to our web page to assist teachers and parents of museum visitors with Autism as they plan a visit.” The participant went on to explain that:

because of spatial, lighting and sound changes throughout our building, ceiling and flooring variations, and frequent encounters with the 42-foot statue, 24-foot doors and enormous columns, any awareness and advance preparation for these adjustments can help to alleviate stress and create a

more enjoyable museum experience. We had not thought of offering this service before attending the workshop.⁷

Another response indicated that the museum is working to develop a video tour, photo book, and tactile objects for anyone who visits the site, which displays the use of universal design and barrier-free exhibits which were discussed in the workshop. Such results were the intended result of the workshop, and it is very rewarding to know that, even if they are small or incremental, changes are being made in the region to accommodate people with disabilities.

The follow-up survey also asked participants to share anything from the workshop that continues to “stick out in” their minds still today. Knowing that participants continue to think about disability issues that were discussed several months prior is also rewarding and encouraging for the future of accessibility in museums and historic sites. One participant mentioned that he or she remembers that “cultural landscapes must also be considered when discussing disability accessibility,” while another indicated that he or she still continues, “rethinking access as a civil rights issue.” One participant shared that “I like the history of disability in general. Dr. Pruitt's presentation about the overall history of disability was fascinating. It is something that has stuck with me since.” Another said that, “although the [site] has offered an enormous program for the blind and visually impaired for a number of years, we discovered a number of ways to extend programming to better serve visitors who face a number of physical and mental challenges.” Another survey remembered that, “historic homes are not grandfathered in

⁷ From the results of the February 2013 workshop survey, in author's possession.

under ADA. Compliance is still necessary.” This is a common misconception among historic house museums, which was clarified during the workshop.

The results of the five follow-up surveys indicate that all five would attend another workshop similar to the one they attended in November 2013 with expanded or different topics. Four of the five survey participants shared experiences from the workshop with co-workers, staff members, or others at their organization. Overall, such comments as, “it was a valuable and meaningful workshop, and I intend to keep disability access issues in mind as a public history professional,” “thank you very much for offering the workshop. It was amazing,” and “it was a great workshop, and I'm so glad that I attended” indicate that those who did attend the workshop believed that it was a valuable use of their time and resources.

The workshop did take considerable time and resources to plan, especially with the inclusion of speakers from across the United States. However, the results indicate that it was a valuable use of time and resources that were used. Regional workshops can result in the inclusion of more people with disabilities at historic sites and museums. The growing inclusion will help not only those with disabilities, but also could improve attendance at the sites as well as the overall satisfaction that other visitors, such as the elderly or parents with small children.

CHAPTER VII: SERVING THE UNDERSERVED THROUGH PROGRAMMING: AS A CASE STUDY FOR THE SAM DAVIS HOME AND MUSEUM

This chapter explores the author's process of creating programming for children with special needs at the Sam Davis Home and Museum, a Civil War-era historic site in Rutherford County. When the author first proposed the idea to bring special education classes to a historic site, the author contacted schools, districts, and online communities for ideas and assistance. The process began with an online survey; next came distributing the survey through email list-servs, online forums, college class lists, and through social media.¹

The survey first asked where the educator teaches or taught. Of the 18 people surveyed, 17 responded to the question of location. Seven responses were from Tennessee; 2 of those from Rutherford County, 2 from Metro Nashville schools, and individual responses from Dekalb County, Greene County, and Bedford County. Two responses came from the state of Illinois, along with one each from Cleveland, Ohio; Chesapeake, Virginia; Greenville County, South Carolina; Hondo, Texas; DeSoto

¹ The survey was distributed through the special-education@lists.teachers.net, teach-talk@lists.teachers.net, and tn-teachers@lists.teachers.net list-servs. It was also posted on Facebook in the groups Tennessee Council for Exceptional Children, National Association of Special Education Teachers, and Special Education Resources for Kids; on Linked-In in the groups: Museum-Ed Group, and through twitter. Postings to teacher discussion boards included History Teachers Discussion Board at <http://www.schoolhistory.co.uk/forum/index.php>, and Teacher Forums – Teacher Chat at <http://forums.theteacherscorner.net>.

County, Mississippi; Hopkins County, Kentucky; and Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. One response was from Ontario, Canada.

The teachers surveyed work with a variety of age ranges in the classroom, from Pre-K to adults. The ages of children could determine the field trips and the sites visited on field trips. Pre-K students would be less likely to visit historic sites, as that age-range is rarely served at many museums, with children's museums as an exception.

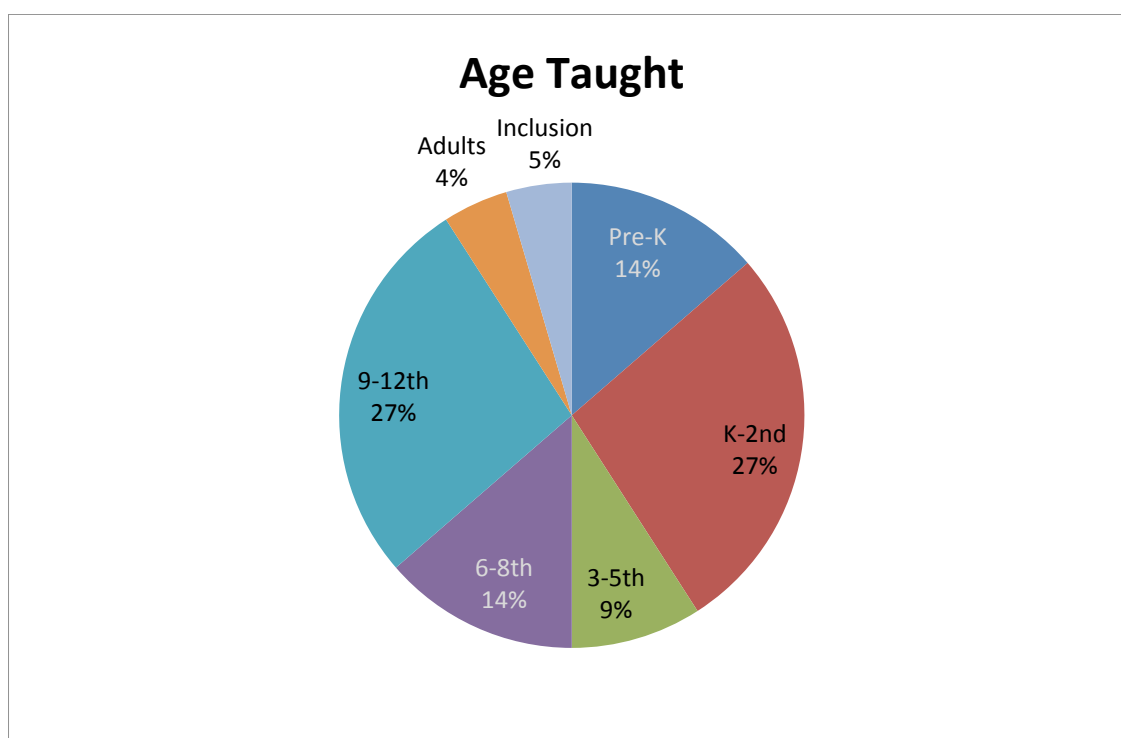


Figure 26: General Special Education, Preliminary Survey: ages that surveyed educators instruct in the classroom.

Of those surveyed, 12 teachers, or 66.7%, responded that they do take their students on a field trip each year. Two teachers, 11.1%, do not take students on field trips, and 27.8%, 5 teachers, sometimes take students on a field trip in the academic year.

The types of field trips that teachers take their students on was also explored, and the survey results showed that parks were the most popular destination among those surveyed. Science museums and none of the above were tied for second, as 15% of teachers either visit science museums or take no field trips. Historical sites garnered 14% of the teachers surveyed, and art museums were selected by 12%. Children's museums, history museums, aquariums, and live theater were also among those listed as field trip destinations.

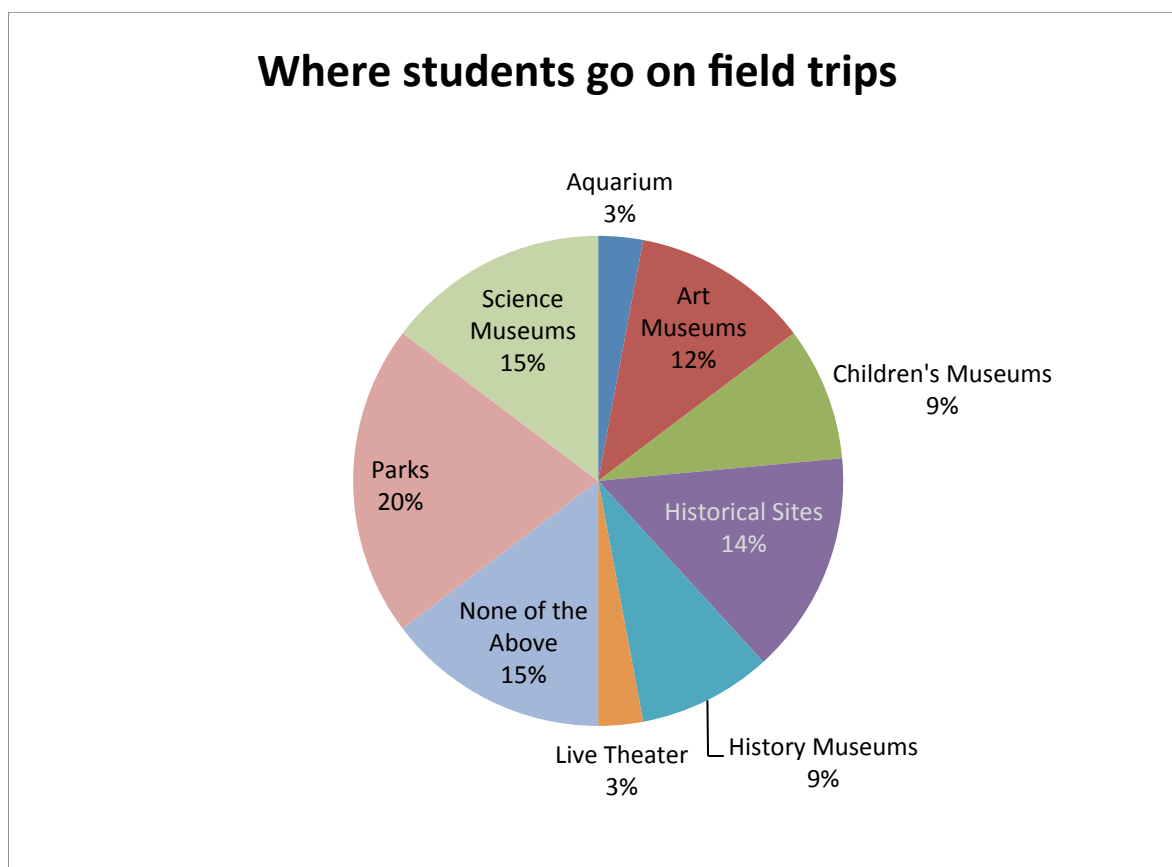


Figure 27: General Special Education, Preliminary Survey: Where teachers are taking their students on field trips.

Each teacher answered what kinds of disabilities they see in their classrooms. Teachers could list as many disabilities as they wanted. Some listed specific disabilities while others gave general answers. The spectrum of disabilities was varied, with some listing physical disabilities and others behavioral, emotional, or learning disabilities. This variation is representative of many classrooms for children with special needs. Almost any classroom from any age group will contain a variety of children with different needs, so the variety of disabilities should come as no surprise.

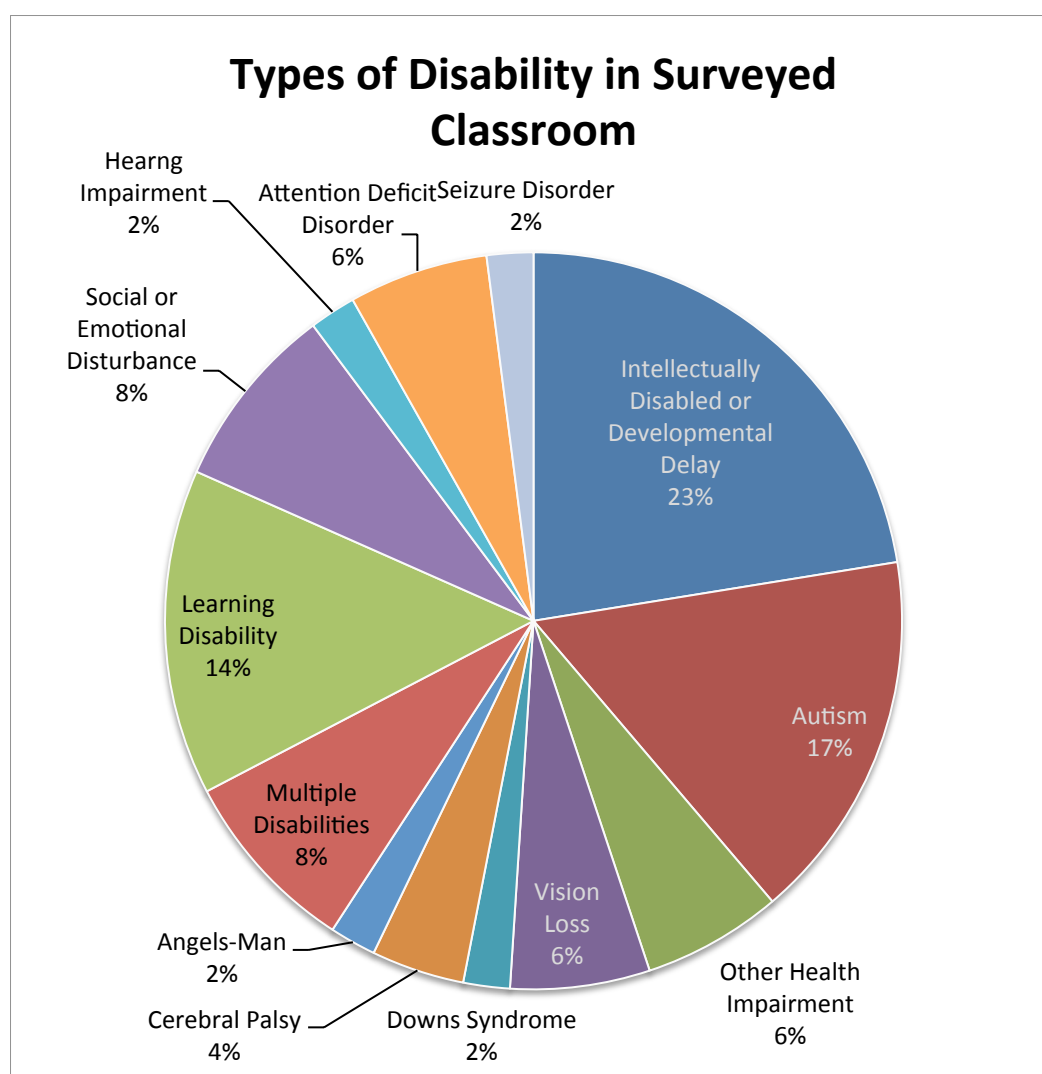


Figure 28: General Special Education, Preliminary Survey Results: Types of Disability in the Classroom

Teachers expressed that they want their students to gain social, educational, and life skills from field trips. One teacher commented, “I believe real life experiences are highly important. They need to know how to survive. Someone may not always be there for them. They need to know other things outside of the home.” A smaller number of teachers also included behavioral skills and responsibility as attributes they like their students to gain on field trips, along with enjoyment and experiences equal to other student.

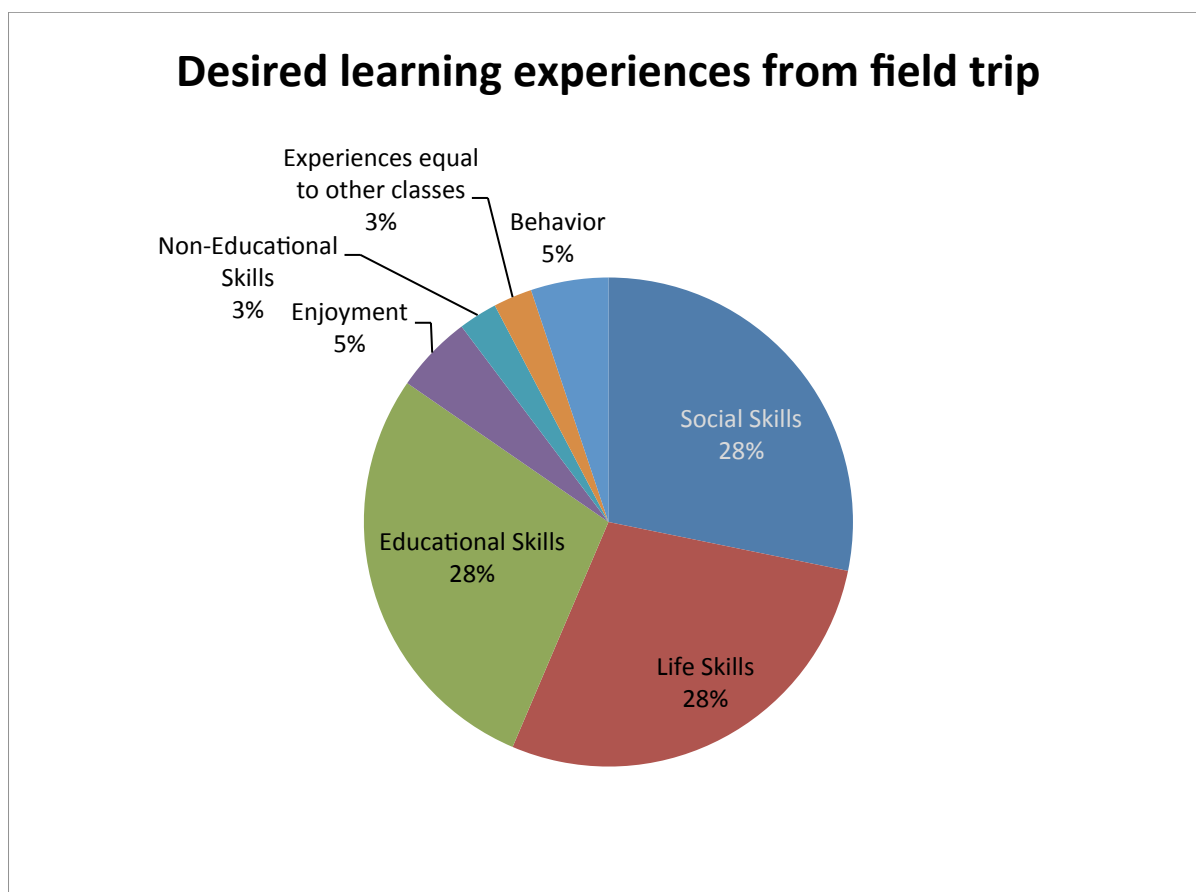


Figure 29: General Special Education, Preliminary Survey: Desired learning experiences of teachers for students.

Because education outside of the classroom is not always included in standardized testing, teachers expressed that they evaluate the learning that takes place in separate environments in a variety of ways. Observation was the evaluative tool for 40 percent while, and 25 percent use discussion with their students to determine what students learned on a field trip. Enthusiasm was selected by 20 percent, while student behavior, written evaluation, and student performance was chosen by 5 percent for each.

One of the most important questions asked in the survey was, “what kinds of museum programs would you like for your students to participate in?” Teachers want to experience programs with educational content, hands-on activities, and entertaining approaches. Tactile and hands-on programs are among the most successful and popular programs at most museums, so this trend should come as no surprise.

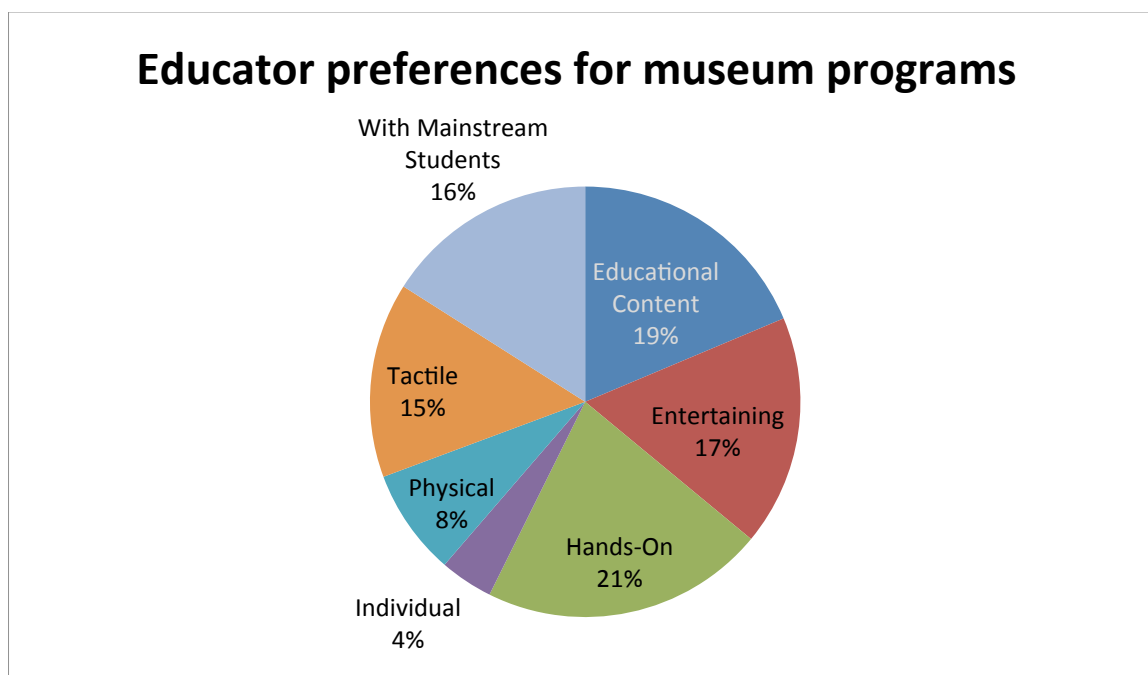


Figure 30: General Special Education, Preliminary Survey: Special Education teacher preferences for museum program content.

One of the most important questions to this study was, “What would you need, as a teacher, to feel comfortable taking your students on a field trip to a museum? What would your students need, and would a field trip to a museum be something you consider worth your and the students’ time?” These answers helped to shape programs that would be desirable to both the students and the teachers.

Answers included:

- Proper transportation with chair lifts, etc., funding for the trips since a lot of our kids cannot afford them, administrative support
- The Centennial Park and Parthenon building staff do a very nice job when they work in connection with the Tennessee School for the Blind (TSB). They have incorporated a few hands on art works and they encourage the students to touch the statues. Unfortunately the statues are way to tall but you can caress a toe or two.
- One on one adult with my particular students. I would love to take them anywhere and let them experience anything I could.
- Knowing that there is at least one thing every student can participate in.
- The trouble is financing... busing, costs etc.
- Yes. They may need a teacher assistant to go with them.
- Access for wheelchairs, a place to change incontinent students if needed
- Yes, but financial considerations usually prohibit this type of field trips

- Hands on exhibits very important
- As long as I had one other person to help me make sure the kids are acting appropriately, I would feel comfortable. I think my students would only need a familiar teacher with them.
- Accommodations for children with motor impairments, access to info beforehand
- We need to bring enough chaperones, lunch and sometimes books to read while on the bus
- More parental involvement, museums might be ok to go to, but children are a little young (unless it's the children's museum especially for preschoolers)
- I would need to feel that my students were trustworthy enough. Students would need to be in groups and, maybe, museum personal lead
- I would want the museum to be child friendly and interactive. I would want bathroom facilities to be available to children who need assistance with them or other occupants of the restroom feeling uncomfortable. It would be helpful to have the exits to the building supervised so that if a child gets away the exits are protected.
- Yes, field trips to local and more metropolitan areas to take in museums would be beneficial. Adequate chaperones and pre-visits would be beneficial for staff. Students would benefit from pre-taught background info/layouts/ expectations.

- One capable and able adult per child. My students would need an accessible bathroom with a changing area as all but one are in diapers. We would also need a quiet area for students, some with severe autism, to have if they are having difficulty with sensory overload. I would love to take my students to a small local museum to see the dinosaur exhibit or to the children's museum.

A troubling answer to this question stated: “ I don't think I'd consider anything other than a natural history museum... A docent with ability/willingness to depart from usual "canned" speech and interact.” This statement shows the notion that many people still have of the history museum as a quiet, boring place with docents who have no flexibility or willingness to participate with students.

Most teachers express that financial constraints prevent them from taking field trips, and that physical access for students is a concern in many places. The lack of parents and chaperones to accompany the group is also a problem. Again the need for hands-on opportunities for students is mentioned, as well as a friendly environment for the students. Some teachers worry that students will misbehave on the field trip, or that students will not be safe as there may be several exits for students to leave from. Pre-visit information such as schedules, maps, or handouts of what students can expect would be a great addition to any museum information packet, as some teachers mentioned.

SAM DAVIS HOME AND MUSEUM SITE VISITS

Several teachers expressed interest in bringing students with specials on field trips to the Sam Davis Home in Smyrna, but only one group took a trip to the museum. Christa

Morgan from the Rutherford County school system brought her class of high school students from the Transition Academy, which helps students from Special Education classes prepare for the workforce.

Morgan received a pre-visit survey to assess the needs of the teachers and students when they were on the site. Morgan observed: “Most of my students have previously been to the Sam Davis Home. We talk about what they already know about Sam Davis & the tour, the sequence of events for the day, when & how to ask appropriate questions, & appropriate attire for the day.”² Morgan said her students were most looking forward to doing “things out of their routine & to be outside.” Students who had previously visited the site were excited to visit the historic house again. Morgan shared that she hoped her students “gain knowledge about the history of the area they live in, be aware of how things have changed, ask appropriate questions when necessary, & learn to respect artifacts, presenters, buildings, etc.”

The only thing Morgan mentioned that she was apprehensive about was “some of the students have been to the Sam Davis Home as a job site. Sometimes it is difficult for them to differentiate between guest & worker.” Through the Transition Academy, many students worked at the Sam Davis Home in the past to get experience working in a public environment.

With this information from Morgan, and the knowledge that twelve students would be at the site along with four teachers, the author worked with the staff at the Sam Davis Home to plan the visit. The education coordinator, Rebecca Duke, and the author

² Result of November 2, 2012 Pre-Visit Survey sent to Christa Morgan.

decided that the Sam Davis Home would plan for this visit independently to provide an experience for the school group that would be typical for any field trip to the site. Most groups that visit the Sam Davis Home go on a basic tour of the historic house, watch the orientation video to the site, walk through the museum, and participate in one or two educational programs, such as Life Under the Gun or Seasons on the Farm, that the teachers choose. Tour guides are responsible for the content of these activities, but the educational coordinator works with the teacher to find out the students' needs and the educators' wants from the field trip.

On November 2, 2012, a group of twelve students, four teachers and aides, and one classroom intern arrived at the Sam Davis Home. The field trip began with a welcome from Duke, and an introductory film about the historic site and the family that lived there.

After the approximately fifteen minute video, the students began a scavenger hunt around the museum. Duke explained the instructions, and the students were divided into three groups with four students and a teacher in each group. In addition to explaining the instructions to the worksheet, Duke also made sure that the students knew that in a museum there is no handling of the artifacts. The scavenger hunt consisted of ten questions about the museum hall exhibits. A copy of this scavenger hunt has been included in Appendix C. Duke then stepped back, as with all school groups, to allow the teachers and students to complete the scavenger hunt independently. If a teacher or student had a question, they could certainly ask, but this is largely an autonomous activity.

Observation of this activity noted that many of the students did have the ability to read, though in many cases the teachers would help the students to find the answers by helping to read the questions on the worksheet and guide students to the proper exhibit in which to find the answer. For example, a question involved the name “Gracey”; the teacher helped the students by saying, “Look for Gracey; it starts with a G.”

As students finished the scavenger hunt at different times, other students gathered in the museum theater. Observations indicated that the students are typical high schoolers; conversations among the student centered around weekend plans and the upcoming high school football games. The students were all verbal, and none used mobility devices.

Once all students were finished, Duke went through the answers to make sure all the groups successfully completed the hunt. She then asked students about their favorite and least favorite things at the museum, and what they learned in the exhibits. Morgan explained that even though many students had been through the museum before, they had not learned as much as they did with the scavenger hunt because this time they were engaged in an activity that required them to read and investigate the exhibits.

Next the students went into the conference room in the visitor center to take part in the educational program, “Life Under the Gun” (Appendix D). Interpreter Lee Lankford presented the program which provides a lecture and observation of artifacts that relate to students what it would have been like to be a soldier during the Civil War. The Sam Davis Home website describes the program:

Did Civil War soldiers have toothbrushes? What did the soldiers do when they weren't fighting? Students will discover through common items

carried by the soldiers on both sides what life was like in a Civil War camp. Uniforms and equipment from both armies are presented for examination in this hands on program.³

Observations suggested that while many of the students were engaged in the program, more engagement and hands-on opportunities would have been beneficial. When objects from the program were passed around, the students were able to see, touch, and feel the historical artifacts, which sparked questions and conversation; if more objects were passed around rather than just shown from the front of the room, perhaps students would be more engaged and retain more information from the program. Rather than a simple lecture while showing objects, more questions could also provide more engagement and thoughtfulness among the students. For instance, one of the objects used in the program is a haversack that is filled with items that a soldier may have carried while marching, including a potato, apple, peanuts, a mending kit, corn cob, and a pipe. These items could easily have been passed among students to engage them and provide a chance for conversation about why soldiers would carry those items, what they were used for, and how that compares with current soldiers.

After the program, the teachers and students requested a bathroom break that had not been planned into the day's activities. In the future, bathroom breaks should be included in the planning process, not just for groups with special needs, but for all groups. Following the program, the group went to the historic house, outbuildings, and grounds for a tour by Rebecca Duke (Appendix E – Script of the house tour). Students

³ Sam Davis Home and Museum, "Educational Programs," <http://www.samdavishome.org/education.php> (accessed April 4, 2013).

seemed to enjoy themselves, but again could have been more engaged with questions and conversation throughout.

Immediately after the visit, all teachers present were sent a survey to evaluate their experiences at the Sam Davis Home and Museum. All four educators participated in the survey. Results show that three participants were “very satisfied” with the “Life Under the Gun” program, while one was “somewhat satisfied.” When asked how the program could be improved, there were no suggestions from the survey results. All were “very satisfied” with their instructor from the Sam Davis Home for the program. One educator commented, “It was great to have the artifacts passed around. I also loved the questions asked of the group it really got them involved & required them to focus. Lots of these kids have no idea about history. Maybe start off by asking what they would pack for a long trip or journey.”

Three teachers rated the house tour as “somewhat satisfied” while one added “very satisfied.” To improve the house tour, educators suggested that the guide could have told more stories, visited more of the outbuildings, explained in more detail, and asked engaging questions to the students. For example, one educator gave examples of such questions: “if you had to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night what would you do? What kinds of things are in your bedroom? Do you have to share a room?” The teachers rated the interpreter as “somewhat satisfied” while two other marked “very satisfied.” Suggestions for improvements to the house tour included: no rushing through, giving more information, and again, asking more questions. Another participant praised the interpreter for giving a good amount of information.

Each educator gave a different answer to the question, “What did your students enjoy the most about the field trip?” Answers included: the scavenger hunt; tour of the home; everything; and “the girls seemed to like the house tour & the boys liked Mr. Lee.” When asked what the students least enjoyed, the answers were: nothing; “maybe the scavenger hunt could of had a reward”; “none none”; and “They were hungry at the end. (not much you can do about that).”

An important question to this study was, “What challenges did you face, as a teacher and chaperone, on this field trip and at the Sam Davis Home?” Three teachers answered, “none,” and another teacher had a more descriptive answer. She wrote:

Helping the students to find the answers to the scavenger hunt was difficult. I LOVE the scavenger hunt. The non-readers had a very difficult time locating & recognizing the answers. It would have helped me to know ahead of time that they were going to be in groups so I could have assigned the non-readers to be with 1 or 2 readers.

A question about what students learned on their trip also provided answers helpful to the evaluation of the study. Two answered that the students learned about history and the site, and another answered that students learned about Sam Davis and his family. The other participant said that students were impacted by the ways life was different in the past, and how war can affect a family.

To improve the tour for the next time, teachers were asked, “What tips do you have for making your students' next trip to the Sam Davis Home a more successful and enjoyable experience?” Two had no suggestions. One answered, “More history on the home maybe folk tales of things that have happened. Something to keep them more entertained and focused.” Another said, “scavenger hunt was a good ideal but not if the

students can't read a modified scavenger hunt." Three educators rated their trip "very satisfied" while one was "somewhat satisfied."

These suggestions were considered in the preparation for the second visit to the site, and the input from the teachers was invaluable. Students on the second field trip to the Sam Davis Home participated in the Seasons on the Farm educational program (Appendix F), which is an outdoor scavenger hunt, a re-visit to the museum with a modified scavenger hunt, and a house tour. Many of the students were on the same field trip as the last group, but there were some new students.

Executive Director of the Sam Davis Home, Meredith Baughman, received training related to sensitivity and awareness before providing the interpretation. The training was similar to the information that was presented at the Disability Workshop in November 2012 at MTSU. Baughman worked from a compilation of comments from the survey after the November visit, and the author also shared ideas and tips from the national survey with her. Baughman has previously worked with special needs children, which was useful experience for this program.

The students arrived on March 8, 2012, and Baughman welcomed the students in the museum theater. A time for bathroom breaks was scheduled for this time, so while waiting for all students to arrive, Baughman asked students what they remembered from their last visit and what they enjoyed the most. Once all students were present, Baughman went through the schedule of the morning with them and then gave instructions for their first activity, a modified museum scavenger hunt.

Because the students had already visited the museum, Sam Davis Home and Museum staff changed the scavenger hunt to accommodate their learning needs. Students were divided into four groups of three students, with one teacher per group. The students were asked to go through the museum, with each group starting in a different gallery. Baughman asked the students to explore the museum, and each group was tasked with finding three things in the museum that they did not see on their previous visit. This activity required the use of cognitive recall and creativity as well. The museum scavenger focused on such specific artifacts, so this activity allowed the students to choose items in the museum that caught their attention.

A major difference from the students' last visit was a new exhibit, "Women's History," focused on the women of the Davis Plantation, including sisters, the mother, and grandmother of Sam Davis in addition to the enslaved workers from the 1860 census. Many students were enthralled with items in this display, but the item that acquired the most appreciation was the braided hair specimen from one of the women, Andromedia Davis Matthews, who lived on the plantation in the nineteenth century.



Figure 31: Women's History Month Special Exhibit, Sam Davis Home and Museum. Photo by the author, February 27, 2013.

While students went throughout the museum in search of intriguing artifacts, Baughman circulated throughout the galleries to answer questions and engage students by calling attention to specific things that are of interest to her and many other visitors.

While students on one group explored the Women's History exhibit, Baughman asked who among the students had the longest hair. They then made a comparison of the length and discussed the differences of hairstyles between the mid-nineteenth century and today.

Once the students had a chance to tour the exhibits and find something new, they all gathered in the museum theater to discuss their answers. Many students said that they were impressed with Andromedia's hair, and a discussion with the entire class about the

similarities and differences occurred. Another student mentioned that he was impressed with the blacksmith artifacts. He then explained to the class how the items were used in the past, and the class discussed how different manufacturing is today.

Students were very curious about the temporary exhibit, and Baughman took the opportunity to explain why some items are kept in curatorial storage while others remain in the museum or in the historic house on display. Baughman told the class about light, humidity, and temperature, and how they can damage artifacts if they are not properly controlled. Students commented that the theater was brighter than the exhibit galleries, because the artifacts are not housed there. The students also learned how oils from their hands could damage certain artifacts, which is why they are kept behind protective glass. This portion of the lesson was an addition from the last time, and it helped the students to understand why the museum is constructed that way and gave context to the rules that are inherent within museums.

Before leaving the museum, Baughman again reinforced the schedule so that students would be prepared for the rest of the morning and feel more comfortable. Following the museum, students went on a tour of the property and historic buildings. The tour route was different this time; instead of focusing mainly on the house, Baughman took the students by the barn, fields, and slave cabins before touring the historic house.

This path gave Baughman the opportunity to ask more questions about farm life, animals that would be on the farm in the past, and the slaves who lived on the site. Baughman used inquiry throughout the tour, asking such questions as, “how did people

farm in the past, and how is that different than today?” and “where did the Davis family get their food?” She was able to relate the history to modern students’ lives by comparing and contrasting to the Davis family.



Figure 32: Baughman leading the class past the slave cabins on a modified tour route. Photo by the author, March 8, 2013.

The tour Baughman presented was more in-depth than on the previous field trip, and the students had more opportunity for questions. Relying on the results of the teacher survey from the last visit, Baughman also told more stories about specific people and objects, which engaged the students. For instance, Baughman pointed out that the bricks the students walked on were made on the site, and she showed them a certain brick in the

chimney that had a toe-print on it. This example humanized the people who made the bricks and lived 150 years ago, and the students seemed impressed that a permanent record of the person who made the brick was present still today.



Figure 33: Baughman shows students a toe print left in a brick by the person who manufactured the bricks at the Sam Davis Home in the nineteenth century. Photo by the author, March 8, 2013.

Baughman continued her inquiry and narrative-based tour throughout the historic house, and she made a comparison of the main house to the Boyhood Home cabin and the slave cabins. Once inside the house, the guide attracted attention to the fact that it was cold in the house, and students commented that it was very different from the museum. They also expressed concern for the artifacts in the house, since they were not in a controlled environment, which showed their understanding of the short lesson in the museum earlier in the morning. Though the house is cold today, Baughman pointed out, when the Davis family lived there, they would have used fire for heat and light.

Students first looked in the formal parlor, and Baughman asked them how it was different from rooms in their house. Students answered that there was no television, no outlets or electricity, and no radio systems. The student explained to Baughman, rather than the guide telling the students, that the Davis family used candles instead of electricity. The inquiry-based tour continued, and Baughman told stories and related the history back to the students' lives.



Figure 34: Baughman explains how an iron was used during the nineteenth century and shows students how the iron worked without electricity. Photo by the author, March 8, 2013.

One of the students' favorite stories was the explanation of the saying "sleep tight, don't let the bed bugs bite," which comes from tightening of rope beds and the plethora of insects that lived in mattress stuffing in the past. Teachers commented that the tour guide on the house tour was doing a great job, and that the students seemed engaged.

Outside once again, the students visited the kitchen and the smokehouse. One of the students was invited to ring the kitchen bell, and they discussed what the bell was used for and how loud it was. Baughman explained the use of many contraptions exhibited in the kitchen, and told students that the meat of over 200 hogs would fit in the

smokehouse. The tour continued by the herb garden and the cemetery, which students remembered from the last visit, and finally the students were led back to the museum for a bathroom break and to begin their outdoor scavenger hunt, Seasons on the Farm.



Figure 35: A student rings the kitchen bell while everyone covers their ears. Photo by the author, March 8, 2013.

For the Seasons on the Farm scavenger hunt, students were again placed in four groups of three students with one teacher per group. The program focuses on the different seasons and the chores and work that happened on a plantation during each season. The scavenger hunt takes groups across the grounds from fields and slave cabins

to the herb garden and in view of Stewart's Creek. Each station represents a season and the chores that took place on that site; for example, the cotton fields represent winter when the crop was harvested. Upon completing the scavenger hunt, the groups came together again and discussed their findings. Baughman also asked the students which season they thought would be the hardest one, and most replied that the harvest, fall and winter, was the most difficult. They then related chores in the past to those that they are responsible for at their own homes.

To accommodate the teachers' requests in the survey form the November visit, Baughman added a hands-on activity to the field trip schedule. The visitor center houses an object table, which includes many artifacts that date from the nineteenth century including a cannon ball, curling iron, candle mold, and lye soap. Baughman presented each object to the students and rather than telling students what the artifact was, she asked the students to think about the item and come to their own conclusions.



Figure 36: Baughman demonstrating a nineteenth century curling iron during the object table activity. Photo by the author, March 8, 2013.

After the item was discussed, students passed the object around and were able to touch and see it first-hand. Because in the past the plantation grew cotton primarily, each student was given a piece of cotton to see how difficult it is to get the seeds and dirt out of the fiber, and the students each took home a cotton bole. This activity, as well as the entire visit, seemed to be a great success. At the end of the activities, one student exclaimed, “I learned so much my brain is turning to mush!”

After the visit, teachers submitted their comments and rated the trip through an online survey. All three participating teachers rated the Seasons on the Farm program as

“very satisfied.” One teacher mentioned that the students and teachers enjoyed it more than the scavenger hunt students participated in on their last trip, and no teachers had any suggestions for improvement of the program for their students. Similarly, all three teachers rated the grounds and house tour as “very satisfied” with no suggestions for improvements of the interpretation. The interpreter, Baughman, was also rated highly, and she was described as informative and enthusiastic; one teacher wrote that she “couldn’t have been better.”⁴

Each teacher responded differently to the question “What did your students enjoy the most about the field trip?” One teacher said Seasons on the Farm was the most popular, while another answered that the tour of the grounds and historic house were the most enjoyable to students. Another teacher claimed that students loved everything. When asked what students enjoyed the least, all three teachers agreed that the students liked the entire trip and that they did not complain about any aspect. The survey also asked about any challenges the teachers faced on the trip, and all responded that they were satisfied and had no problems.

The teachers also responded that based on their observations and from talking to the students, they believed that the students learned more from this field trip than the previous one. In particular, they learned more about the house, slaves, and specific artifacts. One teacher said that “It was interesting which facts different students absorbed... [those facts] varied from realizing that Sam Davis was hung to what cotton

⁴ From the March 2013 survey of the Sam Davis Home visit, in author’s possession.

looks like.”⁵ Another teacher said that the Seasons on the Farm scavenger hunt helped students retain knowledge through recall during the program. Overall, all three teachers rated their overall satisfaction with the trip as “very satisfied.” The level of detail and tactile components were mentioned as positives in comparison to the last trip.

Baughman was excited to share her experiences with the students. She commented that it was very encouraging to see that the students were excited about the property and the history. She enjoyed answering the students’ questions, and even looked in the archives to answer some more specific questions before the students left. She said there were some differences between this group and other tours that she has led, mostly because it was a new way of interpreting the past to the public. The tour Baughman gave to the group provided more interaction and inquiry between the guide and the visitors. She felt that this led to better interpretation because the visitors thought for themselves instead of listening to a lecture. They were provided with the opportunity to formulate questions that they would not been told the answers to otherwise.

Baughman said, “I didn’t know what to expect, so I was nervous in the beginning, but they were excited and receptive.” She said her favorite part of the whole experience was talking about slavery and how hard the slaves’ lives were; the students were interested, and you could see that they understood something new that they had not learned on the last trip. She particularly enjoyed this because she “could visibly see acknowledgement of a history they hadn’t understood before.” Because the historic site has historic slave cabins on the site, students could see where the slaves lived in small

⁵ Ibid.

cabins and the inside of those homes. Baughman said, “When I explained that there were 51 slaves and 14 cabins, you could see the students doing the math in their heads that so many people lived in a room the size of their bedroom at home.”

The Sam Davis Home and Museum staff hopes to continue to offer this type of hands-on, object-centered, and inquiry-based programming to school groups that visit the site. The staff has not yet implemented a way to reach out to students and their teachers; however, students with special needs already participate in a work-study program there, so networking with teachers would not be difficult. Advertising programs could also be done through newsletters, social media, and email lists of teachers and area schools.

CONCLUSIONS

As the case studies from the New York City Transit Museum, Museum of Modern Art, and The Sam Davis Home and Museum clearly indicated, visitors with intellectual disabilities can have an enriching experience at museums when educators combine effective exhibits and universal design environments with object-centered education techniques and inquiry methods of teaching. The model for programming at historic sites and museums meets the needs of people with intellectual disabilities and other cognitive or developmental delay.

Programs for all audiences with disabilities can be implemented at historic sites and museums by following several key steps. As the surveys, discussions with museum professionals, and practical experience show, sensitivity and awareness training for all staff members are one of the most important and universal elements when addressing the needs of people with disabilities. This training is one of the first steps in creating programs and welcoming populations with disabilities. Staff education should be incorporated into the training programs of all museums and historic sites, when feasible, to provide a safe and welcoming environment for students and teachers.

Another key element is effective planning. To ensure that a site is serving the teachers and students successfully, communication with teachers is essential both before and after field trips. Contacting teachers before the visit prepares the staff, museum educators, as well as the teachers and students, to know what to expect. By communicating effectively, the museum staff can learn what student and teacher needs while on the site are; additionally, the staff can inform the teacher of any important

information related to the field trip. Reaching out to teachers after a visit will ensure that any comments or suggestions the teachers had after the visit can be expressed. Teacher surveys will show what students learned, enjoyed, or found challenging. The results of the survey can help with future groups, and will also serve as a training tool for museum staff.

Effective timing is a third key component. Generally, each segment of the field trip should be no longer than 30 minutes per section. For example, at the Sam Davis Home and Museum, the class experienced 30 minutes per session in the museum, on the property and outbuildings of the site, in the historic house, doing the Seasons on the Farm scavenger hunt, and working through the object table. This amount of time gives students the opportunity to ask questions and learn about a certain topic, but it is not so prolonged that students lose interest.

A fourth key component involves strategies of engagement, meeting multiple needs of the audience. The nationwide survey of special education teachers showed that while educational aspects are integral to museum field trips, social and life skills are also important. Interacting with tour guides and docents and also other visitors at museums can help with these benchmarks for students.

Moreover, allowing the audience to “touch” the past through object-centered instruction becomes a fifth key component, especially when used in tandem with inquiry-based interpretations, like Baughman did at the Sam Davis Home and Museum. Relating to students through physical connections to the past engages the student more than a general lecture or demonstration.

A general structure or agenda of the trip events is important for the staff and students to stay on task and accomplish all educational goals. However, perhaps the most important characteristic that museum staff should have is flexibility to adapt to the needs of the students. As the interpreters or educators move throughout the activities, they should be able to adapt to the group's interests and abilities.

Seven Key Components to Create Programs for Audiences with Disabilities at Historic Sites and Museums	
Key Concept:	Purpose:
1 Sensitivity and Awareness training	Training is essential for museum staff to be aware of techniques to provide a safe and welcoming environment
2 Planning and communication	Planning and communication is essential to prepare the staff, educators, and visitors so they to know what to expect on at the site.
3 Timing	Each segment of the visit should be no longer than 30 minutes. This provides the opportunity to ask questions and learn about a certain topic, but it is not so prolonged that visitors lose interest.
4 Engagement	Interacting with docents and also other visitors at the museums can help with social and life skills
5 Object-centered and Inquiry-Based	Physical connections to the past and asking questions engages visitors more than a general lecture or demonstration.
6 Structure	An agenda or schedule is important for the staff and visitors to stay on task and accomplish all educational goals.
7 Flexibility	Interpreters should be able to adapt to the needs of the visitor and their interests and abilities

Figure 37: Seven Key Components to Create Programs for Audiences with Disabilities at Historic Sites and Museums.

Rather than creating an entire new curriculum to serve students with special needs at museums and historic sites, staff can adapt existing programs and tours incorporating more inquiry and engagement, and modifying language and content to the learning level of the classes. Communication with the teachers to determine appropriate subjects and

student learning levels related to the material is essential to meeting the students' needs. The staff should use observation and evaluation of successes and failures to know what works and does not work at individual sites.

Essentially, as proponents of universal design have taught us, all of these best practices for working with students should be used with any school group. All ages and learning levels seem to learn more from engagement and inquiry-based learning, and people enjoy this technique more than listening to a lecture as in a classroom.

Many obstacles still exist for educators to create inclusive museums and historic sites. Historic sites have many specific difficulties because they are tangibly inaccessible to many people with physical or multiple disabilities. The inclusion of people with disabilities in exhibits or interpretation is still an area that many museums and historic sites could address. As the survey results from special education teachers indicate, some people still believe that museums are not places where all students are welcome, because of noise or behavioral problems that students may cause.

Museums have changed exponentially throughout the years. Public historians today have the opportunity to enlarge and enhance museum audiences by creating effective, dynamic environments and programs such as the ones reviewed in this dissertation. Simply inviting groups of students with special needs to a historic site is not enough. Once the group is at the site, public historians must use their skills of engagement and shared authority to help then teach social and life skills as well as educational. The historic sites also offer the unique opportunity, in many cases, for students to see the historic structures and artifacts that people actually lived in or used in

the past that they usually see through history books. First-hand experiences with the historic items can help students make those connections that make history and people from the past matter to them.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Tenement Museum Language Processing Disorder Strategies

APPENDIX B: Tenement Museum Asperger's Syndrome Strategies

APPENDIX C: Sam Davis Home Museum Scavenger Hunt

APPENDIX D: Sam Davis Home "Life Under the Gun" Script

APPENDIX E: Sam Davis Home House Script

APPENDIX F: "Seasons on the Farm Script"

APPENDIX A: Tenement Museum Language Processing Disorder Strategies

Language Processing Disorder

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

These Students Might:	Teaching tools:	At the Tenement:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have trouble distinguishing between words; hear "listen here all of you, settle down quietly and stand in line" as "histen ear olive you sit on down quietly nstandwin line." • Tune out quickly from a lecture-type presentation • Have difficulty listening when there is background noise, • Need extra time to answer questions, need to rehearse statements, or need frequent reviews while learning new information. • Have difficulties understanding language concepts which make it difficult for them to integrate new ideas with prior knowledge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Familiarize student with any new vocabulary before the lesson • Give written/pictorial directions to supplement verbal directions and underline the important terms • Slow the rate of presentation and allow extra time for students to listen to, think about, and form their own thoughts • Omit non-essential details and double negatives • Avoid use of abstract language (metaphors, idioms, puns, etc.) • Utilize visual aids to supplement verbal information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce "Tenement" and "immigrant before delving into the context • Write a timetable for the day's plans • Use Venn diagrams/spider webs to organize ideas • Make sure to include "buddy time" to allow time to "rehearse" answers • Focus on the stories of the people to keep it very concrete • "What can Natalie do" as opposed to "if you were Nathalie, what would you do?" • Use the settings and photos in each apartment to tell the story through what kids see

APPENDIX B: Tenement Museum Asperger's Syndrome Strategies

Asperger's Syndrome

STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

These Students Might:	Teaching tools:	At the Tenement:
Have difficulty reading social cues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear expectations and rules for behavior, don't expect them to know how to act. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "At the Tenement Museum, we ask you to walk, not run, to listen when your classmates are talking, and to raise your hand if you have a question."
Have difficulty maintaining eye contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid "buddy time" when students must interact one-on-one 	
Have difficulty feeling empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't ask questions about "how would it feel?" Tell students how it would feel, and focus questions around what students see, logical rather than emotional connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than ask "how would it feel to be on this boat?" ask "What would have been hard about the boat ride I just described?"
Experience difficulty with transitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a timetable for the day's plans • Use Venn diagrams/spider webs to organize ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write an outline on the board at the beginning of each program, and show students where in the program you are.
Be affected by sensory stimuli	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay focused on the students in the room and the story at hand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sure to close doors. Wait until after the Baldizzi recording ends to point out the elements of the room Josephine describes.
May have stare off into space or doodle to help concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't be offended if the students aren't looking at you. It doesn't mean they aren't listening! 	

APPENDIX C: Sam Davis Home Museum Scavenger Hunt

Museum Scavenger Hunt

Memorial and Remembrance Gallery

1. How did some of the artists decide what Sam looked like?
2. What vegetable was canned in Pulaski with the Sam Davis name on the label?

Farm and Family Gallery

3. What plant is pictured on the walls? (major cash crop for the farm)
4. Name a toy that belonged to the Davis children. (Look in the case!)

Recovering Their Story Gallery

5. What is special about the tiny blue bead in the cabin window?
6. What job did Gracey Davis do?

Beyond the War Gallery

7. What is the name of the type of carriage on display?

Civil War in Middle Tennessee Gallery

8. How many amputations took place on Federal Troops during the Civil War?
9. Name three battles in which the 1st TN Volunteers took part.

Sam Davis Gallery

10. What made the Spencer rifle more effective than those in the first gallery?

APPENDIX D: Sam Davis Home “Life Under the Gun” Script

Life of a Soldier

- I. Introduction
 - a. Ask if students have seen CW movie or battle flick or read books
 - b. Soldiers from both the North and South shared many things in common
 - c. Reasons soldiers joined the Army
 - i. Excitement
 - ii. Patriotism (States Rights/ Save the Union)
 - iii. Peer Pressure
 - iv. Protect home and family
- II. Describe uniforms
 - a. Shell jacket/ sack coat
 - b. Pants
 - c. Shoes
 - d. Shirts
 - e. Hat/ Kepi
- III. Describe Equipment
 - a. Rifle
 - b. Cartridge Box
 - c. Cap Pouch
 - d. Canteen
 - e. Haversack
 - f. Blanket roll
- IV. Weapons and their usage
 - a. Rifle
 - b. Bayonet
 - c. Revolver
 - d. Bowie Knife
 - e. Sword
 - f. Derringer
- V. Contents of Haversacks
 - a. Food
 - i. Pork
 - ii. Beef
 - iii. Vegetables (fresh and dessicated)
 - iv. Bread
 - b. Utensils

- i. Cup, Mug, and musket
 - ii. Skillet
 - iii. Plate
 - iv. Canteen (mess kit)
 - v. Knife, fork, and spoon
- c. Personal hygiene
 - i. Toothbrush
 - ii. Comb
 - iii. Razor
 - iv. Soap
- d. Entertainment
 - i. Cards
 - ii. Dominos
 - iii. Books/ papers/ letters
 - 1. Bible (prayer books)
 - 2. Pencil and paper
 - iv. Games
 - 1. Baseball
 - 2. Wrestling
 - 3. Racing
 - 4. Poppin' Lice
 - 5. Snow (snowmen, ramparts, snowball fights, etc.)

APPENDIX E: Sam Davis Home House Script

Sam Davis Home and Museum
Home Tour
Revised April 2009

Introduction:

“Hello, my name is _____ and I will be your tour guide today.” To ‘break the ice’ ask your guest if they have been to the Sam Davis Home before and/or where they are visiting from. Be polite, courteous, and do your best to answer their questions. If you do not know the answer, simply tell them you do not know and will get back with them. Try not to bog the visitors down with information- we do not want them to get bored.

Boyhood Home:

Sam lived in this two story log cabin until he was five years old when his family moved to the main house we interpret today. This is NOT the original location; the house stood near present I-24 in Smyrna. In 1974 the Board of Directors of the Sam Davis Memorial Association purchased the home and moved it to our property. Until 2002 the house stood near the entrance of the property. [Note: The 1974 deed (when the Association bought it) to this house states Sam was born there. In 1845 Charles purchased the house, which was after Sam’s birth. Also, in an interview in 1919, Andromedia claims Sam was born here. This could mean the family rented the house before they purchased it.]

Pathway to the House:

(Point out the three slave cabins.) These are original slave quarters but are NOT original to our site. The Davis family owned seven double-penned cabins known as “Blackman’s

Row.” According to oral legend, in order to raise money for the farm the original slave cabins were sold to the pencil factory in Shelbyville, Tennessee around the time of Oscar Davis’ death (1927). These cabins were moved here around 1940. The three single room cabins come from the Rattle n Snap plantation in Springhill, Tennessee and the Dogtrot cabin comes from Lascassas community in Rutherford County.

Overseer’s Cabin:

(Invite your guests to look inside the cabin). In 1860, the Davis farm included 830 acres, 51 slaves, and 7 double-penned slave cabins. They cultivated wheat, Indian corn, cotton, peas and beans, and Irish potatoes. The overseer’s job was to ‘over see’ all of the work on the farm, including the slaves. This cabin is original and the overseer used it as his office. In 1860, he earned \$550 for his work. Since he was a neighbor, he probably rarely slept in the cabin and would eat meals with the Davis family in the dining room. Today we still own 160 acres, and cultivate 100 acres in various crops.

Side Yard:

The front of this house is a two-story log house, much like the boyhood home, and was constructed between 1810 and 1820. Charles purchased the house and property in 1848 for \$20 an acre (1/3 upfront, 1/3 due the next March, and 1/3 in March of 1850). He added the white weatherboard (also known as clapboard) to the outside of the log structure. He also added the front porch and veranda as well as the entire back “L” wing of the house. (All wood-frame construction). The slaves built the new addition to the

house, along with their cabins. [As you pass by the chimney] The slaves made bricks on the property. They packed the mix and fired it in a kiln, which was once on the property. Notice the toe prints left by a slave.

Front Porch:

After Charles' death, Oscar acquired the house and property. [Note: there was a court battle between family members for this land.] In 1927, after Oscar's death, the farm and property was sold to the State of Tennessee. In 1930 the Sam Davis Memorial Association took over operation of the historic site. The house has never been abandoned or vandalized.

Front Hallway:

Most of the original furniture was divided among the family before the final sale. Over the years the Sam Davis Memorial Association has been able to acquire some of the original furnishings from the Davis family and I will point those out to you on the tour. However, all furnishings in the house are period correct (1800's pieces). Charles bought the Hall Tree (hat rack) around 1870 for the house.

The Pier Table is not an original Davis family piece, but they likely had one similar. Pier tables were used to help reflect light in dark rooms. (Note: This is sometimes also referred to as a Petticoat mirror. Proper southern ladies would look at the mirror to see the bottom of their skirts to make sure their petticoat was not showing.)

Original: Hall Tree

Formal Parlor:

The Davis family was upper middle-class. They were well off but did not have the type of wealth found on larger plantations such as Belle Meade or the Hermitage in Nashville. The formal parlor was the fanciest room in the house and the Davis' would have entertained in this room. Notice the wallpaper. Wallpaper was more expensive than paint and used to impress visitors. The wall-to-wall carpet is also a sign of wealth. The square-grand piano is not original to the Davis'; however, they had one like it where the Davis girls would entertain guests.

The family laid out Sam's body in this room during Christmas time of 1863. By this point, Sam had been dead over a month and was not embalmed.

The three chairs and two couches are original pieces. John, Sam's half-brother, co-owned a steam ship, the David White, and went up and down the Mississippi river after the Civil War. John picked up the horse-hair furniture in New Orleans. His partner in business was Mr. H. B. Shaw, also known as Mr. Coleman. John Davis was killed in 1867 when the steam boat exploded on the river. Notice the wheels on the furniture- they made moving the furniture easier and are common of the time period.

Original: Two couches, Three chairs, Carpet

Parlor Bedroom/ Informal Parlor:

This room was used for semi-formal entertaining and was an 'overflow' space for larger gatherings. If you look on the right of the room you will see a bed. This room was used as a guest room. Because travel was so rough, and sometimes dangerous, guests would stay for weeks or even months at a time. Often friends and family would visit the Davis'. The stereoscope on the table is not original but the Davis' were wealthy enough to own one. This one shows a picture of an African-American man eating a watermelon.

Original: Bedside table

Storage Room/ Male Guest Room:

If the family had large amounts of visitors, they would use this room for an extra sleeping area for male guests. This is the only room in the house without a fireplace and because of this would have been used for storage in the winter; but in the summer, spring and fall this room was a pleasant sleeping area, especially if the doors to the veranda were opened. The bed is Shaker-style and belonged to the family. The trunk at the end of the bed also belonged to the family.

The wallet on the small table belonged to Jon Love, a tent mate of Sam during the war in the 1st Tennessee.

Original: Shaker-style bed frame, Blanket chest

Boy's Bedroom:

All eight boys slept in this room (though not all at the same time). In the 1860 census Sam and his older half-brother John are listed as Farmers. The boys helped out on the farm as soon as they were old enough and learned to shoot early. To the right of the fireplace is a trunk similar to one the Davis boys owned. Sam would have taken this trunk with him to the Western Military Academy in Nashville just before the war began. Notice that the walls are white and the furnishings are bare compared to the parlors. All the money for decorating the house would be used in the parlors where the guests could see it, not in the family portions of the house.

Original: Chair (from Kitchen); Tea table/Candle stand

Cistern:

[Point out the well pump and the cistern] The Davis family was very innovative when it came to their drinking water. The roof would catch rain water, channel down copper rain pipes on the corners of the porch, travel into the white catch tank, which filtered out any leaves and debris from the roof, then into a holding tank underground, then pumped up through the well pump.

Dining Room:

Before entering the dining room, you will notice a wash basin and soap. The Davis family and guests would wash their hands with lye soap (made on the farm with pig fat and ashes). Meals were prepared in the detached kitchen (seen through the window),

brought in the side door, and set on the sideboard to be served. When the family needed more room, the two drop-leaf tables would have been added to the main table. The white china in the cabinet belonged to the Davis' and was considered their "daily ware." When the family had visitors, and on Sundays, they would have used something fanciers, such as what is now on the table.

The item hanging from the right of the fireplace is a shoo-fly and is original. Most likely, a small slave child would have been in charge of waiving the peacock shoo-fly near the food to keep the flies away.

The family would have had a sugar chest, like the one here. In the 1800's sugar was expensive and difficult to get. As the mistress of the plantation, Jane kept a key to the sugar chest with her and would have kept it locked at all times. The bottom drawer held a logbook that would be used to record when and how much sugar was taken.

Original: White china, Shoo-fly

Sam's Window:

According to oral legend, during Sam's last visit home he hid his horse behind a rock in front, snuck to this window, and lightly tapped on it. His mother opened it and let him in. This is when Sam's mother gave him the Union coat she tried to die brown.

Back Hallway:

On your left is the informal parlor from a different angle. This would have been the back of the original log cabin before Charles added this back wing. Notice the door frame in

the original log portion of the house- federal style. Look at the door frame in the parent's bedroom. This is a Greek Revival style which became popular in the early 1800's. (Note: Even Greek names became common. Jane and Charles used a Greek name for their daughter, Andromedia, for the Greek Andromeda.)

Parent's Room/ Family Den:

This room was the center of family activities. The family gathered here at night to catch up on the days events. They would close the doors leading into the front of the house and have the back portion all to themselves. The "Plantation Rug" is made in three foot sections – the width of the plantation (or barn) loom. Once the sections were the desired length, they were placed on the floor and sewed together. This was done until the rug covered the entire room.

The plantation desk is original and was likely made by one of the slaves. It is called a plantation desk because it can be taken apart, separated into two pieces (top and bottom), and taken onto the fields so the overseer could record the daily activities of the enslaved and the yield of crops coming out of the field. The ledger on the desk belonged to Alfred Davis.

The dresser on the right wall came with Charles and his second wife from Virginia.

Notice the cradle and trundle bed. Though the Davis family was moderately wealthy, they did not have the kind of money that paid for a separate nursery room (like the kind

you find in larger plantation homes in the south). The Davis children would sleep in their parent's room until they were four or five years old. At this point the boys would go to the boys' section of the house and the girls would go upstairs.

Original: Small and Large chair- belonged to Jane and Charles, respectively; Cradle, Dresser, Ledger on Plantation desk.

Older Girl's Bedroom:

The older girls occupied the room. Though this is a room from the original cabin, there is no way to get to the "boys section" of the house. The two older girls attended boarding school- Margaret attended Mary Sharp College in Winchester, TN and both girls attended the Nazareth Convent school (although they were not Catholic). The Prussian Blue woodwork is identical to the original color for the trim in this room.

The trunk on the end of the right bed belonged to the grandmother, Elizabeth Collier Simmons, who brought it back from Virginia when she moved in with her son-in-law and daughter. (It was made in Brunswick, VA).

Original: Trunk (at end of right bed)

Grandmother's Bedroom:

We do not know much about Charles' first wife Margaret. She died (in VA, on her way here, or after arriving?) Charles needed a mother to help raise his four small children and looked to his second cousin, Jane, to wed. When they married Charles was 41 years old, Jane was 18 years old, and Jane's mother was 38 years old. (Elizabeth was younger than

her son-in-law.) Elizabeth's husband, Edmund Simmons, died in 1824. She taught the girls how to be proper southern young ladies- they learned how to sew, knit, stitch, weave, spin, and quilt, among others.

This is Elizabeth's original bed. The stool had a dual purpose. Not only did it help Elizabeth get up to her bed, but it is also a chamber pot. (Lift lid so visitors can see how this works). During the Victorian era it was not "proper" for southern ladies to use the outhouse at night. On the bed is Elizabeth's quilt called either "May Apple" or "Chips and Whittles."

Each of the rooms in the 1850 addition of this house contains a closet. In middle Tennessee it is odd to have closets because families had little need for them. Typically, armoires were used for clothes.

Original: Bed, Quilt

Little Girl's Bedroom:

The younger Davis girls slept in this room. Their toys were typically made on the plantation by a woods craftsman. The side-saddle beneath the window belonged to Sam's sister, Andromedia. During her life, American society considered it improper for a woman to straddle a horse.

Though the walls now have wallpaper (in this room and the grandmother's room), they would have been plain when Sam was alive. Wallpaper was added later.

Original: Blanket Chest, Sewing Machine, Child's Washstand, Side Saddle

Courtyard:

The area between the house, kitchen, and smokehouse contains a large brick courtyard (now mostly covered by grass). House servants and family used this area when weather was nice. The servants escaped the heat of the kitchen, and the family could bring chores outside to complete (such as sewing).

Kitchen:

Kitchens during this time were usually detached from the main house because of the threat of fire and to keep the heat from the fireplace out of the house (in the summer).

This kitchen was built in 1850 when Charles renovated the house. The candle molds over the mantle are original. The family made their own lard candles. They would also make their own butter. The butter mold is original and made butter 'presentable'. The two pie safes would keep flies and children out of the pies before dinner.

The white item above the table is another type of Shoo-fly. A small child would pull the shoo-fly back and forth to keep the flies off the food. The kitchen would have also contained an herb rack. The Davis family had a large herb garden and used these herbs for flavoring food and medicinal purposes.

Original: Candle molds, Butter mold, Coffee mills, Sausage grinder, Bundt pans

Smokehouse:

Along with crops, the Davis family had a hog farm. (In 1860, they had 230 head of hog). Late fall/Early winter was butchering time. The enslaved workers used the large, flat rock by the creek to slaughter the pigs. This smokehouse holds 3,000 pounds of meet. There are three layers of beams. Each would be filled with meat and a fire was kept going until all of the meat was cooked.

Outhouse:

This is the original family outhouse, but not original to this location. It would not have been this close to the kitchen or smokehouse. It is a “three-holer” and if you look closely you can see that they are sized- small, medium, and large.

Cemetery:

This is the third burial spot for Sam Davis. He was first buried in Pulaski, Tennessee, where he was hanged. After Mr. John Kennedy retrieved his body the family held a funeral for him during Christmas time. Before the Civil War, the family cemetery was located on the opposite side of the creek. After the war, Jane Davis wanted her son moved to the garden, and created a new, closer family cemetery. The Italian marble monument was erected ca.1866 by the family and the Coleman Scouts. Today Sam is joined by his mother, father, grandmother, brother Oscar, Oscar’s wife, and sister Andromedia.

Slave Cabins:

(Cabin 3-next to Dog-trot) When the slaves were not working they were in their cabins. Typically, they were given Sundays off for religious activities and to tend to their own affairs. The slaves built and maintained the cabins but had little control in their design. A family lived in each cabin (about five to six people in each cabin.) Rope beds, like the one in the corner, consist of wooden railings with ropes strung across. The bed sack (mattress) is made from canvas, stuffed with straw or corn shucks, and sewn together. The Davis family also had these materials inside their mattresses. Children would often sleep around the fireplace on their pallets. According to history books, the landowner would distribute blankets each year, but younger children frequently had to share. In the corner you can see some woven baskets. These would be used by the slaves or sold to make extra money for themselves. Also, there is a candle mold on the mantle. Slaves made their own candles so they could function after dark.

Slave children made their own toys. Common were handkerchief dolls and rag balls made with leftover cloth. They played such games as “ante-over”- an early form of stickball. In an archeological dig we found clay marbles and pieces of china dolls which indicates that the Davis family gave their slaves hand-me-down toys from the Davis girls.

Slaves also spent time in their garden. For the slaves, the garden represented a small amount of freedom. According to history books, since masters’ rationed food to their slaves it was important for slaves to keep a garden of their own.

APPENDIX F: “Seasons on the Farm” Script

Seasons on the Farm Scavenger Hunt

Objective: Children will discover various seasonal chores on the Davis’ 19th century farm.

- Please note there are 2 sides to the scavenger hunt – one for younger grades 1-4, one for grades 5-8. The hunt for older children include directional clues to they will have to rely on their property map to find the locations (this side is labeled 5-8).

Ask the children if they’ve ever been on a scavenger hunt. Explain to them that historians are kind of like detectives in the way they piece together clues from the past to answer questions about our history. They will be reading clues to learn more about specific jobs that people had on a 19th century farm in Middle Tennessee.

Directions:

- Divide children into 5 groups. (for younger children, one chaperone needs to accompany each group of children).
- Each group will receive one clipboard with a property map, answer sheet, and pencil. (Make sure they have the grade appropriate clipboard!)
- Each clipboard has a clue on the back. The color of your clue is your “team color.” Explain to the children that when they go from each location they will be reading ONLY their color clue.
- Show them the property map on their clipboard. Explain to them that they are starting at the MUSEUM.
 - For older grades, emphasize the importance of the map to the older children. They will have to use their compass rose to find locations on the map.
- Also explain that no clues are located outside of the fence line in the backyard or past the road.
- Rules for the groups:
 - NO RUNNING
 - Stay with your group – work together!
 - It is not a race to finish – finding the correct answer is more important than finishing first.
 - When you complete all eight questions, return to the veranda.

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Kate-

From the information you presented this research you are collecting does not fall under the IRB's definition of human subject research, and no IRB oversight is required.


Thanks and let me know if you need anything further.

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