

What Do We Mean by Facilitation?

Methods or actions which make the content
easier to understand or more accessible to
visitors

Opportunities for Facilitation

- Exhibits
- Activities
- Guided tours
- Presentations
- Classes
- Films
- Planetarium shows

“Visitors who heard a live speaker were better able to recall key science facts than those who heard identical narration on film.” Marino 2003

Constructivist Learning

- Focus on the learner (not on content)
- Learners construct knowledge/meaning for themselves as s/he learns
- There is no knowledge independent of the learner – but only the knowledge we construct ourselves

Learning is not understanding the ‘true’ nature of things, but rather a personal and social construction of meaning out of the bewildering array of sensations and information which have no order or structure besides the explanations which we fabricate for them. (Hein)

Own Your Content

Definitional

(vocabulary, concepts, background, current events)

+

Perceptual

(audience POV, relevance, key ideas, exciting vs. boring)

Working Knowledge

Focusing on the Learner (Guiding Inquiry)

- Listen to learners' ideas
- Encourage observation, wonder and investigation
- Ask questions rather than provide answers
- Suggest connections of content to everyday understanding
- Encourage use of additional resources

Facilitation Guidelines

- Own your content
- Foster a personal connection (create a close encounter with the content)
- Be a guide on the side (facilitate discovery, allow learners to engage the content)
- Assume 2 –7 minutes of interaction
- Keep learning goals simple and few
- Build on prior knowledge, but address misconceptions
- Be an interpreter of the content (armed with metaphors relevant to common experience)
- Prepare for family groups, learners who are pre-teen and young adult, make it scalable
- Remember that your audience is in recreation mode, it is a social event (keep it fun)

Development Steps

- Research Content (definitional + perceptual, identify misconceptions)
- Establish Learning Goals (simple & few, know your outcomes at the onset)
- Consider type of activity (experiential approaches)
 - Challenge games
 - Guided conversation (Q &A)
 - Object-based activities (balloons for MarsQuest)
- Prototype (variety of focus groups, time, effectiveness, enjoyment)
- Trainability

Further Reading

- Durant, John. 1996. "Science Museums, or Just Museums of Science?" Exploring Science in Museums. Pearce, Susan, ed. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone.
- Hein, George E. October 1996. "What Can Museum Educators Learn from Constructivist Theory?". Committee for Education and Cultural Action Study Series. Paris: International Council of Museums.
- Loomis, Ross J. October 1996. "Learning in Museums: Motivation, Control and Meaningfulness". Committee for Education and Cultural Action Study Series. Paris: International Council of Museums.
- Marino, M. and Koke, J. "Face to Face: Examining Educational Staff's Impact on Visitors". ASTC Dimensions: January/February 2003.
- McLean, Kathleen. 1996. Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions. Washington, DC: Association of Science-Technology Learning Centers.
- Semper, Robert J. 1990. "Science Museums as Environments for Learning". Physics Today 43 (11): 50-56.
- Thomas, Gillian, and Caulton Tim. 1996 "Communication Strategies in Interactive Spaces". Exploring Science in Museums. Pearce, Susan, ed. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone.