

How the Visitor team think about play

Comments and feedback during a session to write a play statement for the museum, Summer 2013

The kids really enjoy doing things together

On one of our playful days, Ailsa gave one family the egg. This was a fake dinosaur egg – actually a blown goose egg. I saw a girl carry it up stairs. She looks down and says “I can't wave I am holdings the egg!”

The biggest achievement is that on a happy museum day we get more people in. We usually have busy days but it has changed, a lot has changed, years ago it was more like a library. No it is a place where families enjoy coming really.

It could be better if we could get extra staff in

I'm alright doing it. The day goes quicker really when you are having fun (laughs)

It wasn't planned but we found some foam pieces, and all we told the kids was how high can you build something? , not how to do it. The biggest joy was seeing Showa, a little girl knocked something boys did down continuously. Maxine

Watching the basket-tennis ball on spoon and making swords made me smile, Haddy

Its entertainment that's not paid for.

I was surprised that people will do much more of a range of things than expected and will play with some stuff and have fun.

Sometimes there we frustrations, when the task was a bit too complicated, it didn't work as well. Passing the Olympic Torch between children around the museum and passing the dinosaur egg to gallery staff were really simple

ideas and worked really well.

The playful museum is about you interacting with visitors. It has to involve the staff. To make your journey through the museum more enjoyable
Fun interaction, It should involve all the family not just the children
You are encouraging a playful way of looking at the museum; you are not changing what's there. Balance right between museum and playground.
Still a place for learning or learning through play.

A friendly place and to encourage people to spend more time here and to have a more enjoyable time, this is an opportunity for them to be creative, a little push or suggestion to not sit like a lump of rock in the fossils gallery.

By the fossils gallery parents are tired and kids still have energy, so instead of just sitting there they have something to do.

Reactions from staff.

Some surprises- those that I thought wouldn't like, did, and vice versa.

Lisa: You have a set programme, then you are Playing. This challenges that.

Luke: Goose eggs – I gave to kids. Watched them walking slowly. 'You have to be careful. Walking through the galleries. Great fun.

L: I drew faces on the eggs because they were goblin eggs.

Sometimes coming up with the ideas. I seem to go blank. But I am happy to do them

Shaun. sometimes it is frustrating coming up with ideas.

S: the parents actually got involved with kids.

L: Perception changed.

S: the old games the parents got involved because they remembered them from their childhood – hopscotch etc.

L: Golden goose eggs would be an idea

S. I think it's got to be a space where no danger from objects.

L: There has always got to be considerations of this. I mean the eggs was ok...

Play is Interaction, dynamic, fun, original, different from, not prescribed
D. Something about it being for everyone, not just for kids. Something also about it being related to the collections; linked in some way.

D. We need to say something about why we are doing it.

Hannah [2]. To enhance the experience of it, to get as much out of it as possible.

D. Play is important for learning.

D. Maybe something about the kind of activities that they do... Over to you on the galleries...

H. Are they random things?

D. We had stuff about archery, about football where they scored a goal

H and D. Something about seemingly random, simple resources, to engage visitors and enhance the experience, using basic materials, inspired by particular events.

D. With it being a museum it is about learning, but it is making it more fun for a wider range of people.

H. Encouraging imagination?

D. So how can you make it more understandable for people that do not know anything about it.

P. Perhaps a website where you can put pictures up [unclear]

H. Using unexpected resources? Like the monster box. It isn't what people would expect...

Victoria. How do we show visitors that come to the museum? How do we physically demonstrate it?

E. it's not easy... Perhaps identify the opposite, what would an unplayable museum look like?

H. Silent signs. No talking...

P. it used to be like that.

P. I remember a child screaming because he was scared of Stan. I took him to say, 'look its ok.' Mum then went 'arrghhh!' I thought 'why did you do that?'

E. there is a balance between the big scary place, and a place that is boring and can't be touched. What does that look like?

D. Thinking about the opposite. Maybe you could have a list of the opposite, a series of short statements.

P. but if you put that it might put people off... 'Im not going in there...'
D maybe you have a picture of a researcher, then something more playful.
E. so you are saying a blend within the museum; something that exists in the broader context of roles and functions of people and of the space?
D. Is there a McDonald's advert that show a series of people that do different things... 'We all make the games..'

Ailsa

Statement written. Playful day Tuesday of next week. Technology (iPads) really helpful, so many ways of recording. Children's comments can be recorded (say it again)

C. If another museum was doing it what would you say?

Don't stress out.

It will evolve into what you make it.

P. Expect the unexpected.

Stuart. It's the little things. Remember the what ifs...

K: it wasn't as if it was totally new, there was already that playful element there, it's just now focused.

Stuart: The kids will be playful next week as well. Just capture that ordinary stuff.