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LIS 258: Museum Informatics
Assignment: Interactive Technology
Infomatic Blog Post: <https://wp.me/p7yR0N-eQ>
April 3, 2018

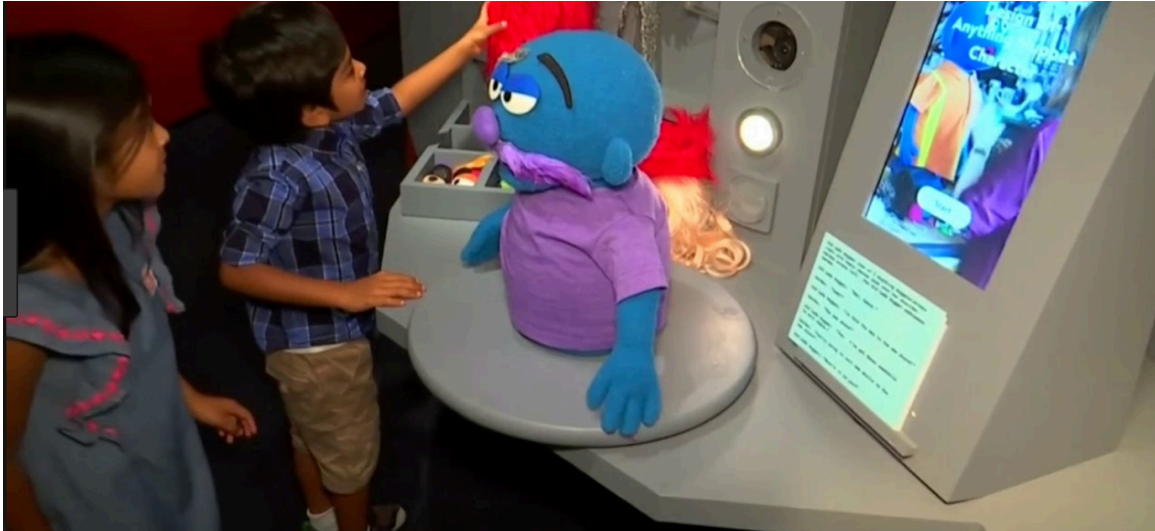
The Jim Henson Exhibition: An Interactive Display of Puppetry and Media

<http://www.movingimage.us/exhibitions/2017/07/22/detail/the-jim-henson-exhibition/>



The Jim Henson Exhibition at The Museum of the Moving Image

The Museum of the Moving Image in Queens recently introduced an exhibit that highlights puppeteer Jim Henson, the creator of the Muppets. The interactive, multimedia exhibit features drawings, sketches, videos, original Muppet prototypes, costumes, and other artifacts from the mind of Jim Henson. The exhibit includes several digital videos that explore the history of the Muppets and Jim Henson's creative career. Some videos require headphones for viewing and the public is encouraged to bring their own sets so that they can listen in on the interactive videos. The exhibit is supplemented by screenings and live events featuring Jim Henson's Muppets and Sesame Street episodes, and other films, like *Labyrinth* and *The Dark Crystal*. One interactive feature of the exhibit is the build-your-own-Muppet kiosk, which is primarily targeted towards children. A table has blank Muppet bodies on which visitors can place costumes, wigs, and facial features. Visitors can capture an image of the Muppet that they created.



Build-Your-Own-Muppet Kiosk at at The Museum of the Moving Image.

The Features

The interactive components of the Jim Henson Exhibition are well-suited to the context and content of this specific exhibit. Jim Henson's legacy lies in his whimsical creation of popular puppets for film and media, now dubbed Muppets. For an exhibit that documents the creation process of Muppets and Jim Henson's contributions to the world of television, the hands-on opportunity for visitors, specifically children, to design their own Muppets, grants greater insight into the creative process behind Jim Henson's conceptions. Jim Henson's creative energy is the highlighted in the exhibition and curators parallel the information presented in the exhibit by inviting visitors in to exercise their own creativity through the Muppet kiosk.



Sesame Street and Muppet Kiosk of the Jim Henson Exhibition

The American Museum of Natural History: Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples, *Javanese Puppet Theatre*, Interactivity Applied

Active participation in a process allows people to gain a better understanding of a specific topic (Falk, Dierking, & Adams, 2006). And so I propose that the American Museum of Natural History may follow a similar approach to integrating interactive displays with my museum object, *Javanese Puppet Theater* as the Museum of the Moving Image's Jim Henson Exhibit. The type of interactivity displayed in the Jim Henson Exhibition directly correlates with the puppetry demonstrated in my museum object. A similar puppet-building exercise can be applied to *Javanese Puppet Theatre*, with a decorate-your-own-puppet stand or special events featuring a traditional Javanese puppet building workshop. Additionally, media may be introduced to the exhibit, for example, interactive, touch-screen, videos that present the traditional Javanese and Balinese puppet building process, as well as step-by-step tutorials. Inviting the visiting public to participate in an information-based activity helps customize visitors' experiences and make the exhibit more memorable and engaging (Kirchberg & Tröndle, 2012).

The interactive features would be pertinent to children, who will find the hands-on experience of building or painting a two-dimensional, paper puppet more rewarding than reading a description about Javanese Puppet Theatre. Children would also have a souvenir to bring home with them and use in the creation of their own puppet theatre. Researchers of Pacific Peoples may also find detailed, instructional tutorials in puppet building more informative than passively viewing an object. An effective exhibit is one that engage with visitor's natural curiosity, rather than presenting learning as a burden (Falk, Dierking, & Adams, 2006). The Jim Henson Exhibition successfully teaches visitors about Jim Henson's career and the history of Muppets through an aesthetically attractive and interactive, physical environment. The American Museum of Natural History would benefit from more exhibits that rely on interactive displays that produce stronger reactions from its visitors by engaging them through context, in addition to valuable content.

References

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Kirchberg, V. & Tröndle, M., 2012, "Experiencing exhibitions: A review of studies on visitor experiences in museums", *Curator: The Museum Journal* 55, no. 4.

Museum of the Moving Image, 2018, "The Jim Henson exhibition", Museum of the Moving Image, accessed March 30, 2018 from <http://www.movingimage.us/exhibitions/2017/07/22/detail/the-jim-henson-exhibition/>

Serrell, B., 2015, "Who is the audience (and what do they want)?", *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretive Approach*.