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Audience-Centered

The first principle of the Science Museum Group's Digital Strategy is Audience-Centered. This principle is created with the intention of retaining a focus on the experience of the audience and the value of the institution to the audience. The SMG wishes to do this in several ways each occurring in tandem with one another. The first aspect to the achievement of this principle is the accumulation and dissemination of qualitative and quantitative responses that will give insight into the wants and needs of their digital audiences. The next step in their process is an analysis of said insights and a production of new content which uses these insights as a foundation. The final step in this audience-centered approach is the creation of simple and accessible products which grow with the capabilities of the institution and the user.

Sustainable and Scalable

The second principle, Sustainable and Scalable, is self-explanatory acting as the guidelines by which the Group ensures longevity and relevance while maintaining growth and reducing structural stress upon an institution. The sub-principles outlined here display a preparedness for technological changes in the field and express a need to remain adaptable. Altogether this principle prepares professionals for the tentative nature of digital technology within museums and encourages them to be long-term proactive thinkers rather than short term responders.

Entrepreneurial and Innovative

The third principle, Entrepreneurial and Innovative, builds off of the second principle by demanding that museum professionals put to use all of their preparative actions. Far too often exhibits and museums, as a whole, get bogged down by the intimidating task of implementing a digital strategy. This principle breaks down the ways in which a professional can actively and repeatedly make use of new skills, connections, and discussions. By encouraging museum professionals to respond to the changes in the field and to incorporate other professionals when they respond the principle reinforces the collaborative nature of exhibition design while increasing the distribution of relevant skills and experiences.

Open, Reusable, and Sharable

The fourth principle, Open, Reusable, and Sharable, builds a foundation for the next generation of museum professionals through the creation of open-access content. Such an initiative represents a larger unity between the information profession and encourages collaborative work by making access to vital information easier. It literally deconstructs institutional competition and replaces it with collaboration.

Embedded Across the Organization

The fifth principle, Embedded Across the Organization, is concerned with the conceptual and literal infrastructure of museum organizations. This principle demands a fundamental reworking of the museum workflow to incorporate technology use, practice, and skill development across every level. This principle is fundamental in the success of the other four principles because it is consistently the most apparent reminder of an institution's digital objectives.

Synopsis

The Science Museum Group's Principles and Objectives are foundational parameters for the implementation of a digital culture at an organization. Throughout the Principles and Objectives there is the reiteration of a tone that emphasizes coworking and shared experiences, two pillars of culture, both socially and professionally. The Digital Museum Group's construction of their dialogue in this manner speaks to the paramount issue of a much-needed cultural shift within the information profession. The profession has not been stagnant in its technological development but the slightest perusal of the age distribution of professionals in libraries and information centers will clearly show a scale tipped toward an older generation. This generational preference has created a strong disconnect between institutions and digital development as clearly referenced by the NMC Horizon Report and the discouraging figures associated with digital strategy development among museum leaders and professionals.

The five principles mentioned in the Science Museum group's Digital Strategy will guide my approach to creating interactively digital & engaging exhibits by acting as a reinforcement of interactivity in the work place. The principles and objectives mentioned in the Digital Strategy actively encourage cooperation amongst coworkers. Although it is not blatantly stated coworking is essential in the creation of interactive exhibits because of the diverse professional backgrounds needed to create such a piece of content. This principle is clear on almost every level of a museum's framework. Coders, graphic designers, marketing departments, historians, archivists, catalogers, reference librarians, and visitor services, along with administrative assistants are all necessary for the creation of a single digital exhibit, especially if that exhibit is interactive. These links often go unrecognized until the very moment they are needed and at such time when they are the related individuals are unable to communicate their thoughts and intentions to one another clearly. Take for instance the seasoned archivist unfamiliar with digitization and related skills such as photoshop. In a scenario when said archivist needs an artifact digitally reproduced, he is:

- 1) unable to do it himself
- 2) unable to communicate his needs to his digitization department (assuming there is one)
- 3) is unaware of the time commitment and practicality regarded in digitizing said material
- 4) is unaware if his department even has the tools to produce his request

Such an example as outlined above is problematic because the apparent issues are not isolated. One individual's lack of digital awareness now affects the exhibitions department ability to make digital exhibits, the marketing departments ability to display interesting and attractive material, and so on. Therefore, the principles and objectives outlined in the Digital Strategy will, as a whole, remind me to actively discuss digital implications upon the exhibits I create with my coworkers and to encourage them to do so as well.

As information professionals we blend the digital and physical worlds in our museums in a multitude of ways. The most apparent blending of the two worlds within the museum space is arguable digital kiosks. Kiosks are not the extreme in interactivity or engagement, but they are a baseline of the two objectives that is accessible to the majority of institutions. They can provide a wide range of information about the collection, the exhibition, or even visitor services and offer a more personalized experience as no two visitors are likely to search for the same things. Altogether, the kiosk is a benchmark by which other tools for implementation between the physical and digital worlds can be judged.

Museum professionals also blend the physical and digital worlds in a variety of mediums. For example, many museums offer audio tours that can be accessed using on-site hardware or even one's personal smartphone. My museum-partner the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum incorporates a Pen tool that users can both save information to and sketch designs with on touchscreen tables. Museum professionals have a diverse array of mechanics from which to approach the fusion of the physical and the digital; it is ultimately up to the designers of tools and exhibits to decide which mediums they will incorporate and what types of experiences they will create.

My museum-partner blends the physical and the digital worlds through their robust Pen tool. In my previous museum-partner observation I articulated how the Pen tool was available to a wide range of audiences and is capable of creating an experience that lasts beyond the museum doors. Now, I would like to build on this observation by pointing out specific examples which represent the user experience and demonstrate the seamless integration of the two worlds.



When you visit Cooper Hewitt, museum staff will hand you a Pen at the admissions desk and explain how to use it by following these simple steps:

- Use the pointed end to draw on interactive tables.
- Use the flat end to save: align the collect symbols and press.
- When you are ready to leave, drop your Pen in the return box at the museum entrance.
- At home or on your mobile device you can access your visit at cooperhewitt.org/you. Enter the code printed on your admission ticket to see everything you collected and created.

Need help accessing your visit online? View answers to [frequently asked ticket and visit code questions](#).

In the screenshot above you see a demonstration of how the Pen works in a physical space (the saving of an artifact in Step 2) as well as a physical reinforcement to the museum (the code on the admission ticket). This screenshot encapsulates the fundamental use of the Pen tool while assigning additional relevancy to overlooked physical objects such as admission tickets. The admission ticket has gone from a one-time-use slip to a vital source of reconnection between audience member and institution. In addition, the audience member is more likely to save the admission ticket over a longer period of time leading to a possibility of incidental museum

exposure to audiences they may not normally reach. This would start the cycle again as new potential audiences will likely start their introduction to the Cooper Hewitt through their website and hopefully be pulled in for a physical visit.

In the video found [here](#) we see the Pen at peak performance as it operates as a physical writing instrument on a digital canvas in real time. The user is not only interacting with the museum's collection but is actually immersed in the design process. The user is able to save information about the object they are viewing as well as the sketch they have made and can view all of this information and more once they are home, as long as they save the code provided on their admission ticket.

Since the Cooper Hewitt has a tool as dynamic as the Pen, I think the next step in creating interactivity surrounding the [English pendant](#) I chose earlier in the semester is the creation of dialogue between audience members who have expressed interest in this object during past visits. I believe this can be done in a multitude of ways and is not strictly limited to my object. From a design perspective I think it would be extremely engaging if Pen users could view other Pen users sketches of the English Pendant, especially if those sketches can be recorded and from start to finish and replayed in a time lapse. It would allow the Cooper Hewitt's audience to view the different ways in which people design the same item and promote general collaboration. From a social perspective I think the museum could increase interactivity amongst its audiences by hosting physical or digital forums in which people can discuss what such an item represents in a historical setting. The English pendant I chose is inspired by the Celtic cross and influenced by floral designs. Such a diverse background surrounding one object is capable of bringing together religious communities, cultural communities, and scientific communities while retaining interest in the item itself.

References

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